

# weekly worker



**Solidarity with Ofer Cassif. Even members of Israel's Knesset are subject to intolerable attempts to silence them**

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No 1547 July 17 2025

Towards a mass Communist Party

Free to Palestine marchers £1/€1.10

# STOP ISRAEL'S GENOCIDE





# LETTERS



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

## Elementary error

Carla Roberts' article, 'Waiting for Jeremy' (*Weekly Worker* July 10 2025), contains an elementary error. The comrade wrote 'Andrew Murray', when in fact the *Morning Star* article she was citing was written by Andrew Burgin. True, they share a first name and both have a long history on the left, including in the Stop the War Coalition.

However, there can be no doubt that they are two different people. Comrade Murray is the former Straight Leftist and now a member of the Communist Party of Britain. Comrade Burgin has a background in Trotskyism - specifically the Workers Revolutionary Party during the 1980s. Today he is a leading figure in Left Unity (he serves as its membership and communications officer, its treasurer and its international officer - phew!).

The surname error was not spotted during the editing and proofing process. Indeed, the error was compounded. New material was added about Andrew Murray, his background, his Labour Party entryism and his relationship with John Rees and Lindsey German of Counterfire.

To have gone for a neat edit on the online edition by replacing 'Murray' with 'Burgin' was therefore unthinkable (and it would have been dishonest). We have to own up. Collectively we were guilty of a major cock-up.

Apologies are due to Andrew Murray and Andrew Burgin ... above all, though, apologies are due to our wider readership.

**Peter Manson**  
editor

## Popular front

As a committed and active anti-racist, I got involved in Stand Up to Racism shortly before the racist pogrom in the town of my birth, Middlesbrough, a year ago. Initially it was a group of people coming together via connections on various social media channels. With SUTR being the most visible national anti-racist organisation at the time and having an ex-member of the Socialist Workers Party in close contact, we decided to form SUTR Teesside, elect a steering committee, create WhatsApp groups and build something locally.

We organised a public meeting a couple of months after with support from some local trade unions and members of the local Muslim community. Taj Ali agreed to speak, along with Eddie Dempsey, but the first sign of what was to come was the insistence from the SUTR regional convenor that we have an SUTR national figure on the platform. We agreed, but the consensus was that Taj and the local speakers had a lot more to say than was worth listening to!

Since then things have got worse within SUTR. We were, quite rightly, hitting obstacles in building due to SUTR not taking a position on Palestine. We passed a motion in support of Palestine and shared it regionally. We were, in essence, told that we couldn't, and that there was no mechanism for proposing this at a regional or national level. We shared our position on various local social media outlets and also made common cause with a number of individuals within SUTR North East, who agreed that no anti-racist organisation worthy of the name could be neutral on genocide.

Among this group were younger

Asian comrades whose voices were being marginalised and ignored by the old, white anti-racists who 'knew better'. It also quickly became apparent that all dissenting voices in SUTR were being shut down, debate was made very difficult and there was no means of changing policy.

This came to a head when a regional 'clear the air' meeting was called, with most of the work done by former Corbyn shadow cabinet member Laura Pidcock, who has been excellent in trying to democratise the organisation. At this in-person meeting in Newcastle we heard from a leading figure in SUTR that we couldn't have a policy on Palestine, as we had Jewish people supporting us! Other leading figures in SUTR told us it would cause problems with the trade unions (read bureaucrats) who provide the funding. Then we also witnessed first-hand how younger Asian comrades were dismissed by SWP members as not knowing how to tackle racism - how very anti-racist!

So where are we now? About 50% of SUTR supporters have left throughout the region. For now, we are still called SUTR Teesside, but regularly debate whether we should be. We have kicked the regional convenor out of all of our SUTR chat groups on Teesside and are forging our own path. We get veiled threats on 'possibly being removed from SUTR' because of our positions. We will continue to argue internally how we move forward, while having a strategy that differs from SUTR nationally.

We believe it is impossible to be an anti-racist organisation without explicitly opposing the genocide in Palestine. We believe that just calling people onto the streets for counter-demonstrations is not enough. The successful ones in the region have largely got the numbers out due to the work of Asian comrades and student groups that are distanced from SUTR due to its politics. We aim to build links on the basis of anti-racism and an open and democratic structure that allows debate on the politics and actions we take.

We believe that simply putting out a leaflet against Reform near election time is an ineffective strategy. Large numbers of working class people voting Reform are doing so because they feel abandoned by a neoliberal consensus in all major parties. We need to be out in those communities now arguing for an alternative.

Despite the SWP's statement that SUTR is a united front, the reality is it's a *popular front* - undemocratic internally, and tightly controlled by the SWP and their fellow travellers. Their politics mean there is no challenge to the union bureaucracy and only a very limited calling out of the racism and rhetoric of this Labour government. It allows the 'left' union leaders to have an appearance of fighting racism, as they outsource this to the SWP by funding SUTR, appearing on their platforms and sharing it on Facebook.

Large numbers of people will have nothing to do with SUTR due to its lack of position on Palestine, its marginalisation of activists of Asian heritage, and the history of the SWP. We have overcome some of that at a local level (that we have no known SWP members in Teesside SUTR helps!).

We want to build a real united front and a working class organisation that encourages it. For us, for now, the jury is out in terms of the organisation name - we operate democratically on Teesside and allow debate. I think it would be wrong to walk away on our own. Being removed by the regional or national leadership is another matter, but I don't think that will happen.

We keep in touch with the other dissenting voices regionally who

broadly agree with us and I believe we may leave with others to form something better in the near future.

**Ian Elcoate**  
Teesside SUTR

## Socialism now!

Unfortunately, Andrew Northall once again demonstrates an unfamiliarity with the views of the Socialist Party of Great Britain that he criticises (Letters, July 10).

To begin with, I am not quite sure where Andrew got the idea that the SPGB believes that only an electoral majority of "50% plus one" is required for socialism (aka communism) to be implemented. Here, for instance, are some quotes from an old SPGB pamphlet, 'Questions of the day' (1978):

"Minority action is suicidal folly and could not lead to socialism, even if successful. For, unless the immense majority of workers want socialism, there is no possibility of it being established." And: "[As] has already been stated, the Socialist Party's view from its formation has been that there can be no socialism until the great majority of the working class fully understands and accepts the implications of what they are consciously setting out to achieve."

Secondly, Andrew asks about the "up to 49% of those who did not even superficially vote SPGB, let alone allegedly for full communism?" Well, what about them? Sociologically speaking, it would surely be more sensible to imagine that this minority, even if not "fully socialist", would mostly be well on the way to becoming so. It is not credible to believe that the substantial growth of a socialist movement would not also have a substantial impact on the entire social climate and, by extension, the character of the opposition faced by the movement. It is also not credible to imagine that anyone at this stage would be unfamiliar with what socialism meant, given today's instant mass telecommunications.

Thirdly, we once again come to this question of the so-called transition. As ever, Andrew's thinking on the subject seems muddled. He says: "No-one is suggesting that the period following the assumption of state power by the working class and the years - decades - required to implement all the above necessary preconditions for full communism would in any way be 'managing capitalism'. Or any form of hybrid capitalism and socialism. It would indeed be the 'lower stage of communism' - aka 'socialism' - as it emerged from capitalist society, as Marx put it."

Marx did not distinguish between socialism and communism - that's Lenin's invention! - but Andrew then goes on to describe socialism as the "dominant mode of production in the new working class-ruled society". Also, it will still be a society requiring labour to be remunerated, he suggests, implying the "existence of some form of monetary system".

This misrepresents Marx, who explicitly rejected the idea that his labour voucher scheme in any way corresponded to money (since his vouchers would not circulate). More to the point, Marx rejected the idea that this early phase of communism would be a class-based society. Andrew's "working class-ruled society" self-evidently presupposes the continued existence of capitalism (the "working class" - after all - being the exploited class of capitalism).

So, contrary to what he claims, Andrew is inadvertently advocating a form of capitalism in this supposed transitional stage of his, albeit a capitalism allegedly subject to "working class domination" via that quintessential class institution called

the state.

The problem is that this is a completely incoherent position to take. You cannot possibly administer an exploitative, class-based society in the interest of the exploited class. Andrew's working class government will inevitably evolve into just another capitalist 'labour' government.

Fourthly, Andrew is mistaken in thinking that the SPGB suggests that full, free access to absolutely everything would become instantly possible with the establishment of socialism. Read its literature more carefully and you will discover that the SPGB does indeed suggest some form of rationing might be needed (at least for some goods) in the early stages of socialism, though we have our own criticisms of Marx's labour voucher model of rationing.

Andrew claims that the material preconditions for socialism are far from being ready today, and this is what calls for a protracted transition period. Again, he overlooks the fact that a very substantial chunk of what passes for economic activity under capitalism today would immediately cease to exist in socialism. The redirection of all that wasted labour and resources, currently bound up with the capitalist money economy, would permit at least a doubling of socially useful output within a very short time indeed.

Shortages exist today not because we lack the technological wherewithal or resources to overcome them, but because capitalism, by its very nature, must strive to impose scarcity. Andrew disputes this and even suggests we are a "million miles from such a position" where we can adequately feed the world. Really?

On the contrary, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation, for instance, the global per-capita supply of calories has been climbing steadily and now averages around 2,900 kcal per person per day. This comfortably exceeds the average Minimum Dietary Energy Requirement of roughly 2,250 kcal per person per day, which is the threshold below which individuals are classed as undernourished.

An enormous amount of food today is simply wasted, dumped or destroyed at every point along the entire food chain. If anything, our food production system is groaning under the weight of surplus food it cannot efficiently dispose of and, for no other reason than that, food takes the form of a commodity today. Yet another reason for wanting to establish socialism now and not postponing it to some dim and distant future!

**Robin Cox**  
SPGB

## Distortion

In *Critique of the Gotha programme*, Marx refers to two phases of communist society: "the first phase of communist society" and "a higher phase of communist society". After Marx's death, a new terminology emerged which applied the term 'socialism' to what Marx had called "the first phase of communist society" and 'communism' or 'full communism', to what he had called "a higher phase of communist society".

Marx used the terms, 'socialist society' and 'communist society', interchangeably. Nowhere in his writings does he refer to the first phase of communist society as a socialist society.

This distortion of Marx's terminology opened the door to a falsification of his theory of a communal future. Amid the ensuing conceptual confusion, the term, 'socialist society', began to be misused:

■ sometimes to refer to the transitional

society between capitalism and the first phase of communist society;

■ sometimes to refer to the first phase of communist society itself;

■ and sometimes to encompass both meanings.

However, socialist society is neither the transitional society from capitalism to the first phase of communist society, nor the first phase of communist society itself, nor a period encompassing both. Rather, socialist society - in all its phases - is identical to communist society.

When Marx's writings are interpreted through the lens of distorted terminology, his analysis of the period of revolutionary transformation - from capitalist society to the first phase of communist society - is conflated with his account of that first phase itself. To illustrate this conceptual confusion, let us first examine the following passage through a faithful interpretation of Marx, and then through one shaped by misleading terminology:

"Between capitalist and communist society there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period, in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*" (*Critique of the Gotha programme* 1875).

A reading faithful to Marx's own terminology must interpret the above paragraph as follows:

'Between capitalist and *the first phase of communist society* there lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. Corresponding to this is also a political transition period in which the state can be nothing but *the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat*.'

Interpreted in this way, Marx's meaning remains intact and faithful to its essence.

We can summarise Marx's theoretical model as follows:

1. Between capitalist society and *the first phase of communist society* lies a period of revolutionary transformation.
2. This period is marked by the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.
3. Once this period ends - ie, once the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat has withered away - *the first phase of communist society* begins.

Now consider how someone who has internalised the distorted terminology - believing that the 'first phase of communist society' should be called socialist society, and the 'higher phase of communist society' called communist society - would interpret Marx's paragraph:

Here, we are confronted with a confused conflation of concepts:

1. Between capitalist society and *a higher phase of communist society* lies socialist society, which is taken to be the first phase of communist society. With the seizure of political power, society is said to transition into this first phase - ie, socialist society. Socialist society is regarded as the transitional phase towards 'full communism'. Within this first phase, 'the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat'. Thus, the dictatorship of the proletariat and the first phase of communist society - that is, socialist society - overlap.
2. Between capitalist society and *a higher phase of communist society* lies socialist society, understood as the first phase of communism. Prior to this, there is said to be a revolutionary transformation period. The dictatorship of the proletariat is then presumed to encompass both.

According to Marx, the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat corresponds to the period



of revolutionary transformation from capitalist society to the beginning of the first phase of communist society.

Lenin, however, takes a different position. As will be seen below, he extends the scope of the revolutionary dictatorship beyond this transitional period, to encompass the entirety of the first phase of communist society itself:

“In his *Critique of the Gotha programme*, Marx wrote: ‘Between capitalist and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. There corresponds to this also a political transition period, in which the state can be nothing but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.’ Up to now this truth has been indisputable for socialists and it includes the recognition of the fact that the state will exist until victorious socialism develops into full communism” (‘The discussion on self-determination summed up’, October 1916).

As the quotation shows, until Lenin wrote the above lines in 1916, Marx’s position had been “indisputable for socialists”. Yet, in the very same sentence, Lenin overturns Marx’s position - without offering a shred of justification.

Let us examine the line that distorts Marx’s position, bearing in mind that Lenin referred to the first phase of communist society as socialism and the higher phase as full communism: “...it includes the recognition of the fact that the state will exist until victorious socialism develops into full communism.”

As can be seen, Lenin extends the period of the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat to the very threshold of “full communism” - that is, to the point where the first phase of communist society ends and the higher phase begins. In doing so, Lenin invalidates Marx’s previously undisputed position with a single stroke, replacing it with his own invention.

Lenin maintains the same arbitrary approach in *The state and revolution*: “Until the ‘higher’ phase of communism arrives, the socialists demand the strictest control by society and by the state over the measure of labour and the measure of consumption; but this control must start with the expropriation of the capitalists, with the establishment of workers’ control over the capitalists, and must be exercised not by a state of bureaucrats, but by a state of armed workers” (August-September 1917).

According to Lenin’s account, “a state of armed workers” persists until the higher phase of communism arrives - that is, until the first phase of communist society ends. According to Marx, there is no state at any phase of communist society. In contrast, Lenin asserts that the first phase of communist society involves a state.

I invite comrades to reflect carefully on these two positions.

**Yusuf Zamir**

Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain

## Remember Boudin

Mike Macnair’s letter (July 10) on the ‘*Zusammenbruchstheorie*’ reminded me about a historic contributor to the debate on capitalist collapse that history has mostly forgotten about: Louis B Boudin. I have, by stops and starts, been working on a project to find and transcribe all of his English-language writings for the Marxists Internet Archive. In my opinion Boudin is the most relevant US-based theoretician of the Second International era to study in our time, and I hope this page will help to restore some of the esteem he enjoyed back in his own time.

If you’re surprised at that statement, it’s because he was never super-esteemed in the US: most of his renown came from Europeans reading him in German translation. As a 1937 author bio blurb breathlessly claims, Boudin’s 1907 book, *The theoretical system of Karl Marx*, “received the personal commendation of Lenin and since publication in 1905 has been translated into 30 languages”. The “personal commendation of Lenin” appears to be a single mention in the bibliography of an encyclopaedia entry (albeit one that lists it as a “Marxist” rather than “revisionist” work), and I have only been able to find evidence for four (maybe five) translations from the original English.

Four translations is still very impressive, however, and the German and Russian translations were performed by Luise Kautsky and Julius Martov. The German edition received a preface from Karl Kautsky, which does not seem to object to any of Boudin’s propositions that follow. I’m not sure of the exact sales figures of the book, but I can safely declare that it served as a popular introduction to Marxist economics for the activists of its time, and crucially one that deals with not just the first, but all three volumes of *Capital*.

I’m not here to discuss the theoretical merits of the book (it’s been almost three years since I last read it), but I remember it being an audacious exposition not only of the capitalist system’s organic instability due to the working class not being able to afford the products of their labour, but also one which asserts that “the development of capitalism has already reached that stage where the contradictions upon which it rests make themselves felt to its own detriment” and that the “passing” of the capitalist economic system is coming imminently.

I know comrade Macnair will get a laugh out of this: “Free trade is the typical policy of capitalism, as is the ‘free’ employment of private property, personal liberty and right to contract, with all that it implies. And protection in any form, or the interference with property and liberty in any manner, is a sign of either an imperfectly developed capitalism, or of capitalism in a stage of decay and tottering to its fall.”

In a stenographic report of a 1928 conference proceeding, Boudin actually expresses surprise that the “final crisis” of capitalism has not occurred yet. There is still more to read on Boudin’s theory of crisis: a complete unpublished manuscript of a proposed book on the subject (I do not know the year of composition).

Hopefully Boudin’s forgotten work on crisis theory, whether as a positive or a negative example, will help us sort out our differences on the ‘*Zusammenbruch*’ debate - and help us sort our differences on crisis theory enough that we can lay down an acceptable strategy on how to respond to them and write it into our political programme.

**Bill Wright**

USA

## Internationalism?

According to the UK government’s Labour Force Survey (2025), the percentage of workers in a trade union fell from 22.4% in 2023 to 22.0% in 2024. This slow decline may seem marginal, but it reflects a deeper crisis in the labour movement. Trade unions are indispensable to any socialist society - our collective action is what unites the working class and challenges capital. For decades, unions won higher pay, better conditions and protections that have benefited millions. So why are so many workers now turning away from them?

Marx, writing in 1871, described trade unions as “a lever for [the working class’s] struggles against the political power of landlords and capitalists”. And in the *Communist manifesto*, he famously urged: “The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Proletarians of all countries, unite!” These words should be printed on the membership card of every union in Britain. Yet today this most basic principle appears to have been forgotten. Gone are the Arthur Scargills of previous generations. Mick Lynch, while more media-savvy than most, has yet to generate the kind of industrial momentum needed. Meanwhile, the bourgeois press has gleefully demonised unions and their members, painting every strike or walkout not as a necessary defence of workers’ rights, but as some selfish nuisance to ‘ordinary people’ - who, ironically, are the very workers these unions represent.

I speak from experience. I’m a further education lecturer in Manchester and, until recently, I was an active member of the University and College Union, even serving on a branch committee. I have since resigned in disgust. Why? Because the national union has drifted from its intended purpose. Trade unions are, by definition, political - they must confront governments, fight cuts and resist employer attacks. But the UCU seems less interested in defending lecturers and more concerned with acting as a kind of NGO for every fashionable liberal cause under the sun. Our dues are being funnelled into campaigns by professional activists that do nothing to improve pay, conditions or job security.

Take the UCU’s 2025 Congress report. It includes 21 mentions of “Palestine” but just 12 mentions of “pay”. It calls on branches to campaign for policies that many would argue push the limits of legality - for instance, lobbying employers to “support the right to use gendered facilities which match gender identities”, despite clear conflict with single-sex provisions in the Equality Act. Elsewhere, the report offers a buffet of NGO-speak: “UCU is for They/Them, not Trump”; “Medical misogyny”; “Palestine solidarity and the right to protest”; and the ever-mystifying claim that “the category of ‘Woman’ is used by the Supreme Court to harass trans people”. Quite how any of this improves conditions for workers is anyone’s guess.

The 2024 Congress agenda itself is revealing. The term “Palest” appears 75 times, “Israel” 53 times, “Gaza” 23 times, and “genocide” another 23. In contrast, “workload” appears just 17 times, “redundanc” 20 times, “deficit” a grand total of once, “closure” seven times, and “stress” - a word that sums up most lecturers’ daily experience - just once. One might be forgiven for wondering whether the UCU still sees itself as a trade union at all, or whether it has been rebranded as a branch of *The Guardian*’s opinion desk. Yes, trade unions must be political. But the politics must be rooted in the class struggle - in the concrete, material conditions of our workplaces. What we are seeing instead is a flight into abstraction and symbolism. Marx warned against this. He wrote that unions must serve as instruments of class power, not as playgrounds for activist cliques more interested in identity slogans than strike ballots. Under Jo Grady, the UCU has moved steadily toward the latter. The union’s energy is consumed by international gestures, culture war distractions, and motions more suited to a student union than a workers’ organisation.

**ACS**

Manchester

# ACTION

## Tolpuddle Martyrs festival

**Friday July 18 to Sunday July 20:** Annual commemoration festival, Tolpuddle Martyrs Museum, Dorchester Road, Tolpuddle DT2. Tickets £65. Organised by Tolpuddle Martyrs: [www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival](http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival).

## National march for Palestine

**Saturday July 19, 12 noon:** National demonstration. Assemble Embankment tube station, London WC2. End the genocide. Stop arming Israel. Stop starving Gaza. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events/national-march-for-palestine-2](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events/national-march-for-palestine-2).

## We will not be silenced

**Saturday July 19: 1pm:** Scotland demonstration for Palestine. Assemble at Foot of the Mound, Edinburgh EH1. End the genocide; end the complicity; ceasefire now! Organised by Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign: [www.scottishpspc.org.uk](http://www.scottishpspc.org.uk).

## Big Ride for Palestine

Cycling events in seven cities. The Big Ride combines cycling with practical solidarity and raising awareness of the Palestine genocide. **July 19:** Cardiff; **July 26:** Bristol; **August 2:** Birmingham and Manchester; **August 9:** London and Sheffield; **August 16:** Newcastle. Organised by The Big Ride for Palestine: [www.thebigride4palestine.com/big-ride-2025](http://www.thebigride4palestine.com/big-ride-2025).

## Stop the arms fair

**Sunday July 20, 1pm:** ExCel walking tour. Meet at Royal Victoria DLR station, Victoria Dock Road, London E16. Learn about protesting against the DSEI arms fair, due to be held at the ExCel centre in September. Suitable for all fitness levels. Organised by Stop The Arms Fair: [www.instagram.com/p/DL4Lir9onDg](https://www.instagram.com/p/DL4Lir9onDg).

## Resist the global arms trade

**Monday July 21, 6.30pm:** Public meeting, Bethnal Green, London E2 (venue provided upon free registration). Discuss organising against the manufacture and distribution of weapons used in Israel’s genocide in Palestine and stopping the September DSEI arms fair. Organised by London for a Free Palestine: [www.instagram.com/p/DL7gdYEIttT](https://www.instagram.com/p/DL7gdYEIttT).

## Trump, imperialism and the Middle East

National speaking tour with holocaust survivor Stephen Kapos and other prominent anti-war activists.

**Tuesday July 22, 7pm:** Renfield Centre, 260 Bath Street, Glasgow G2.

**Wednesday July 23, 7pm:** 67 Westgate Road, Newcastle NE1.

**Thursday July 24, 7pm:** FMH, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2.

**Tuesday July 29, 7pm:** Main Hall, 112 Deepdale Road, Preston PR1.

**Wednesday July 30, 6.30pm:** Casa Bar, 29 Hope Street, Liverpool L1.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition:

[www.stopwar.org.uk/events](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events).

## Birmingham bin strike megapicket II

**Friday July 25, 6am:** Solidarity action on five picket lines across Birmingham. Support bin workers facing pay cuts of up to £8,000. Free Thursday night accommodation. Organised by Strike Map: [actionnetwork.org/events/megapicketii-25-july-2025](http://actionnetwork.org/events/megapicketii-25-july-2025).

## Troublemakers at work

**Saturday July 26, 9.30am to 4.45pm:** Conference, Central Hall, Oldham Street, Manchester M1. Rank-and-file workers discuss how to organise in unions and build strength to win disputes. Registration £15 (£5). Organised by Troublemakers At Work: [troublemakersat.work/conference-2025](http://troublemakersat.work/conference-2025).

## Defend the right to protest

**Thursday July 31, 9am:** Protest outside Westminster Magistrates Court, 181 Marylebone Road, London NW1. Stand in solidarity with Stop the War chair Alex Kenny and CND general secretary Sophie Bolt. Both face charges following the peaceful Palestine protest on January 18. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: [www.stopwar.org.uk/events](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/events).

## The racist pogrom - one year on

**Sunday August 3, 7pm:** Public meeting, Middlesbrough Methodist Hub, 54 Borough Road, Middlesbrough TS1. Marking a year since the racist and Islamophobic pogrom in Middlesbrough. To share experiences and discuss how to build the movement to counter the far right. Organised by Stand Up to Racism Teesside: [www.facebook.com/events/600642592759467](https://www.facebook.com/events/600642592759467).

## Stand up for choice

**Saturday September 6, 2pm:** Counter-protest. Assemble at the Millicent Fawcett statue, Parliament Square, London SW1. Oppose anti-abortion groups and stand up for the right to choose. Organised by Abortion Rights: [www.facebook.com/Abortionrightsuk](http://www.facebook.com/Abortionrightsuk).

## Remember Burston Strike School

**Sunday September 7, 10.30am to 4pm:** Rally, Diss Road, Burston, Norfolk IP22. Commemorate the longest strike in history. Free entry. Organised by Unite the Union and the TUC: [burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com/2025-rally](http://burstonstrikeschool.wordpress.com/2025-rally).

## Lobby the TUC

**Sunday September 7, 1pm:** TUC rally, Old Ship Hotel, 32-38 Kings Road, Brighton BN1. Urge the TUC to call a national demonstration against Starmer’s cuts. Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: [www.facebook.com/ShopStewardsNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/ShopStewardsNetwork).

## 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.



## SOLIDARITY

# Beyond the stench of hypocrisy

Yvette Cooper presides over a Palestine Action ban, yet celebrates WSPU suffragettes. Meanwhile, the Labour government facilitates Israeli genocide in Gaza. Anne McShane points the finger at the real criminals

As part of the government's ruthless crackdown on protests against the banning of Palestine Action, dozens of activists have been arrested across Britain on allegations of supporting a terror group. The government has made it illegal to fundraise for PA, to wear or display something deemed to be in support of it, or express "an opinion or belief" which might encourage support for it. Membership of or support for PA is now a *criminal offence* under section 12 of the Terrorism Act, punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

In central London 42 people were arrested at a peaceful protest at the Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela statues in Parliament Square. Participants carried placards condemning the ongoing genocide in Gaza, but also the banning of PA. Among them was Graham Bash, a Jewish anti-Zionist and socialist. In an online interview on July 13 his partner, Jackie Walker, described how the police appeared embarrassed to be arresting a group of mostly elderly protestors - many of them peace activists. The police were doubtless acting on orders coming from the government.

The 2000 Terrorism Act defines 'terrorism' as a threat or act of "serious violence against persons and property", a serious "risk to public health and safety" and "damage to electronic systems". There are 71 groups on the banned list - mainly Islamic jihadi and white supremacist organisations.

### Glorification

The reasons for the bans are listed variously as carrying out suicide bombings, armed attacks on communities, promotion of violence against migrants, and glorification of mass shootings. But PA is proscribed because it "is a pro-Palestinian group with the stated aim to support Palestinian sovereignty by using direct criminal action tactics to halt the sale and export of military equipment to Israel".<sup>1</sup> The targets listed are various arms manufacturers with immediate connections to Israel. PA activists have also sprayed red paint into the engines of two RAF Voyager aircraft to highlight their use for air-to-air refuelling of Israeli fighter jets.

Home secretary, Yvette Cooper, announced in the Commons: "Such acts do not represent legitimate acts



Exposing the arms trade with genocidal Israel

of protest and the level of seriousness of Palestine Action's activity has met the test for proscription under the Terrorism Act 2000." She made clear that spray-painting factories which produce weapons for use in the ongoing genocide is now "terrorism". Any defence of the group which carried out these anti-war actions is acting in support of such 'terror'. As PA recently said in a post on X, "The real crime here is not red paint being sprayed on these warplanes, but the war crimes that have been enabled with those planes because of the UK government's complicity in Israel's genocide."

In an interview with *The Guardian* just before the ban came into effect, PA co-founder Huda Ammori said she thought the government was frustrated by the fact that, despite being charged with serious offences, "activists have regularly been acquitted and, where convicted, jail time has been rare, although ... dozens have spent time in prison while awaiting trial." She continued: "They've tried to do a few different things to try and deter us, from making it harder to rely on legal defences or increasing use of remand, or they raid you a lot more and then put more severe charges on

you." However, that has not deterred Palestine Action, "so now they're hugely overreaching because they don't like us or agree with our cause".<sup>2</sup>

It is clear that the government is using these extraordinarily harsh measures to deter. A lengthy prison sentence is a big price to pay for attending a demonstration carrying the wrong placard. Those who defied the ban last weekend need to be commended for their courage. They need to be supported by the entire workers' and solidarity movement. We do not want them to be picked off and isolated. Therefore it is encouraging that trades councils and unions are speaking out about repression of PA and that there seems to be a determination to defy the ban.

### Pankhursts

On the same day that Yvette Cooper announced the proscription of PA, she posed in a photo call with another 200 female MPs, each wearing a handcrafted purple, white and green sash. These were in the colours of the Women's Social and Political Union, the suffragettes, who, between 1912 and 1914 fought for female suffrage using methods which included burning down the homes of politicians who opposed votes for women, bombing government buildings and churches, including Westminster Abbey and St Paul's Cathedral, booby-trapping post boxes, posting letter bombs, and making assassination attempts.

The campaign of the WSPU was relentless and audacious. Its most famous leaders, Christabel and Emmeline Pankhurst, described their actions as legitimate forms of protest. On July 19 1912 the Theatre Royal in Dublin was set on fire. Liberal prime minister, Henry Herbert Asquith, was due to speak. Just a few days earlier he narrowly escaped a hatchet thrown towards him by suffragette Mary Leigh (she attached a suffragette message to it). Another well-known government figure, the chancellor of the exchequer, David Lloyd George, was targeted for reneging on his promises to support women's voting rights. He and Asquith were sent letter bombs and constantly harangued on the street, with Emily Davison whipping a man on the street in Aberdeen in November 1912 who she believed to be Lloyd George in disguise. Lloyd George's home was

bombed by Davison in February 1913. As well as attacks on politicians and judges, the WSPU planted bombs on trains and in churches, and smashed thousands of windows.

By August 1914, when the WSPU decided to end the campaign in the patriotic interest of pursuing World War I, the costs of the damage was approximately £700,000 - equivalent to almost £85 million today. This does not tell the whole story - there were the serious physical injuries caused, particularly to postmen, and at least five deaths, including the famous trampling of Emily Davison by the king's horse at the Epsom Derby in 1913. She was trying to attach a WSPU sash to the beast.

The UK parliamentary website presents a short summary of the WSPU, including how the lack of government action spurred the group towards bolder actions, which "attracted a great deal of attention to the campaign for votes for women".<sup>3</sup> On February 6 2018, to mark the centenary of the Representation of the People Act, which gave women graduates and property owners over the age of 30 the vote for the first time, women MPs in Westminster wore symbols in commemoration of the suffragettes' struggle. Stella Creasy sported a T-shirt emblazoned with 'Daughter of Pankhurst'. Others wore sashes or rosettes in the colours of the WSPU, including Yvette Cooper. She herself had written in 2013, to mark the anniversary of the death of one activist, how "the centenary of the death of Emily Wilding Davison should be a moment to mark. A hundred years on from the shocking death of a suffragette, we should remember not just the trials of those who fought for the right to vote, but the generations of women who have campaigned against discrimination and injustice."<sup>4</sup>

Cooper and her fellow female MPs trace their privileged status as elected politicians back to the militant struggle of the WSPU. The bombings, arson attacks, hunger strikes, chainings to the railings of Downing Street, booby-trapping of train services a hundred years ago, or thereabouts - all are considered legitimate actions in the face of the continued refusal of parliament to concede the vote. They are proud and appreciative of the actions of their forebears, who

sacrificed so much to win the vote for upper and middle class women.

For our part, we are proud and appreciate the other Pankhurst, Sylvia, who broke with her mother and sister with the East London Federation of Suffragettes. Men were allowed to join and the ELFS demanded *universal* suffrage, including *all* working-class men and women, a goal only obtained with the Equal Franchise Act of 1928 which extended the vote to all women over 21, giving them equal voting rights with men. In 1914 the ELFS became the Workers' Suffrage Federation, and in 1918 the Workers' Socialist Federation. Needless to say Sylvia Pankhurst opposed World War I and observed no patriotic truce with the government.

### Genocide

While Cooper and the parliamentary feminists look back at the WSPU with admiration, albeit through sepia-tinted glasses, they actually play a contemporary role nearer in spirit to Asquith and Lloyd George. Palestine Action activists have been putting their personal freedom on the line as part of a desperate attempt to expose and stop a genocide - a genocide which has razed Gaza to the ground and cost the lives of more than 60,000. Gaza is the hungriest place on earth, it has the highest number of child amputees, its entire population of just over two million faces the prospect of imminent death due to deliberate Israeli starvation. Yet still the bombs rain down on them, they are shot in their hundreds when seeking food and water, and are now to be pushed into a giant concentration camp.

PA has taken direct action against Elbit Systems, a major developer of weaponry for the Israeli army. As the BDS movement reported in May 2025, Elbit Systems is Israel's largest arms company. It is privately owned, and provides 80% of the weapons and equipment for Israel's land forces and 85% of the combat drones used by the airforce. Elbit claims a double-digit growth across all sectors and it has been busy buying up competing businesses over the last eight years. The company is flooded with orders from the IDF as it fights its wars in Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Yemen and, of course, Gaza.

That Palestine Action is subjected to a state ban for alleged terrorism when its aim is to stop a genocide is extraordinary in and of itself. And when you take into account the fact that the minister who presided over the ban, Yvette Cooper, celebrates the WSPU, what we have goes way beyond the normal level of hypocrisy you would expect of Labour ministers.

She and the whole Labour government of Sir Keir Starmer are covering-up for, facilitating, Israeli genocide in Gaza. In the eyes of global public opinion that is an unforgivable crime. It is not the activists of PA, and the defenders of the right to protest, who should be in the dock facing trial. It is the Labour cabinet, Labour ministers and each and every one of the 385 MPs who voted for the ban ●

### Notes

1. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/) proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version.
2. [www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2025/jun/28/palestine-action-proscription-free-speech](http://www.theguardian.com/politics/ng-interactive/2025/jun/28/palestine-action-proscription-free-speech).
3. [www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/overview/startsuffragette-](http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/overview/startsuffragette-)
4. [labourlist.org/2013/06/100-years-of-campaigning-for-equality-from-suffrage-to-social-media-and-beyond](http://labourlist.org/2013/06/100-years-of-campaigning-for-equality-from-suffrage-to-social-media-and-beyond).

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## BANKFARE

# A Kafkaesque situation

Adding to a malicious prosecution for ‘terrorism’, the banks have joined in by closing accounts. **Tony Greenstein** describes the treatment meted out to those who dare defy the official narrative when it comes to Israel, anti-Semitism and genocide in Gaza

It is an iron rule that, whatever powers are granted to the police and the state, they will eventually be abused for purposes other than that for which they were ostensibly intended.

So it was with the proscription of Palestine Action recently. MPs were assured by ministers when the legislation was first being debated, that proscription under the Terrorism Act 2000 would only apply to violent ‘terrorist’ groups, but this has not proven to be the case. Palestine Action is a non-violent group, but that has not stopped it being proscribed - and, of course, judges have been only too willing to enable this abuse.

So it has been with the communications that the long arm of the law has sent to my banks. Under the relevant ‘money laundering’ or ‘terrorism’ legislation, they have powers to obtain information from banks and to inform them that I am a ‘security risk’ without me receiving any notification about these communications. Allegations can be made, but you will never know what they are. Banks can then close your account - and, of course, if they do it to me and other protest activists, then it is only a matter of time before they come for groups on the left.

It is a matter of common knowledge that I was arrested and have been charged<sup>1</sup> under the notorious section 12(1A) of the Terrorism Act 2000 which makes it an offence to “express an opinion or belief in support of a proscribed organisation” and to be reckless in doing so! Thus the mere expression of opinion or belief is classified as ‘terrorism’ - which is precisely how police states operate. It is worth quoting the former lord chief justice, Geoffrey Lane, who rose to fame when he turned down the appeal of the Birmingham Six, informing the court that, the longer the appeal had gone on, the more convinced he had become that the defendants were guilty (!): “Loss of freedom seldom happens overnight. Oppression doesn’t stand on the doorstep with toothbrush moustache and swastika armband - it creeps up insidiously ... step by step, and all of a sudden the unfortunate citizen realises that it is gone.”

### Filton 18

In theory you are innocent until proven guilty, but, as the Filton 18 have learnt,<sup>2</sup> once the word ‘terrorism’ is uttered, the state can lie with impunity and engage in any underhand smear tactics. They do this with the complicity of the judiciary, who go weak at the knees once the magic words, ‘terrorism’ and ‘national security’, are uttered.

Those of us with long memories remember *Spycatcher*, the autobiography of embittered MI5 agent Peter Wright.<sup>3</sup> British judges, all the way to the Law Lords, upheld an injunction against its publication despite it being freely available in the United States. It was only in October 1988, when the Australian Supreme Court ruled that it should be published, that their lordships realised that they were fighting a losing battle.

‘Terrorism’ has become a code word for effectively reversing the burden of proof. Only Westminster magistrates can hear cases related to ‘terrorism’. Only three courts in the south - the Old Bailey, Woolwich



Real life becomes ever more surreal. Philippe Halsman ‘Dali atomicus’ (1948)

and Kingston Crown Court - can try ‘terrorist’ cases.

And, if we look through the list of proscribed organisations,<sup>4</sup> then it is clear what they are: groups fighting repressive regimes that the British government does not like, such as Hamas and the Kurdistan Workers Party. They also include groups such as Islamic State and al Qaeda that western imperialism gave birth to when they invaded Iraq and, in Afghanistan, decided it would be a good idea to fund the Mujahadeen. Never has the saying that ‘One man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter’ been more true.

We see the duplicity of the home office in spreading false allegations of Iranian money having funded Palestine Action<sup>5</sup> - it gave anonymous briefings to any journalist willing to act as an unpaid government propagandist. Anyone who knows anything about Palestine Action knows that this is a lie: there is not a scrap of evidence to support it. But the same security sources that told us that Iraq had ‘weapons of mass destruction’ are now more than willing to manufacture ‘intelligence’ to the effect that Palestine Action is Iran-funded. After all, their activists can’t be attacking Israel’s Elbit arms factory unless they are doing it for money - such is the ‘logic’ of capitalism.

But, when you have waged a war on the basis of a ‘dodgy dossier’, as happened with Iraq, then lying comes easily to our rulers. As cabinet secretary Robert Armstrong conceded in the Australian High Court over *Spycatcher*, it is the duty of top civil servants and politicians to be “economical with the truth”.

In 2019 Priti Patel, who had been sacked by Theresa May for lying about a ‘holiday’ in Israel, where she met Benjamin Netanyahu, was brought back into office by that model

of probity, Boris Johnson, and she promptly amended the Terrorism Act 2000 to make it illegal to utter any words that might be construed as being “supportive” of a proscribed organisation. “Supportive” is another weasel word, which means you can be telling the truth, but that does not stop it being supportive of the relevant organisation. The definition of ‘terrorism’ in the act is so broad that it could catch out anyone who opposes British foreign policy in some area of the world.

### Closed accounts

In July 2024 my bank account at Nationwide was closed for “regulatory reasons”, which means they do not have to tell you why. At the time I believed that the closure related to a row between me and Nationwide over their refusal to send payments to the Al-Tafawk Children’s Centre in Jenin.<sup>6</sup>

Nationwide insisted that their hostility to transferring money to Palestinians was not the reason for the closure. Today it is clear that they had been contacted on behalf of the police/Crown Prosecution Service/security services and fed false allegations about me.

At the time I assumed that it was a one-off. Then, in March, First Direct, a bank owned by HSBC, that I had been with for 33 years, suddenly froze my account.<sup>7</sup> Equally mysteriously they unfroze it two weeks later, but without giving any explanation.

Last week I had an “urgent” email from them that I should log in to my account, which I did. There was a message that read:

At First Direct we conduct regular reviews of our accounts. Having considered our position, we’re writing to confirm we’re no

longer able to provide you with banking products and services.

We cannot provide any further information about the closure decision. However, if you have any other queries, please call us on 03456 100100. Lines are open 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. It is not our intention, or that of any member of the HSBC Group, to provide you with banking facilities in the future and you should not make any such application.

The first paragraph was a lie. There had never before been a “regular review” of my account. What had clearly happened was that the police/security services had provided false information to the bank, which I am not allowed to see and they are not allowed to divulge. I can only presume that they are saying that I am suspected of funding terrorist groups. At least that is what I suspect. Because in the ‘land of Kafka’ you are never allowed to know what the case against you is. Or, to quote Kafka’s *The trial*: “It’s not a matter of what you have done, but of what you are.” Because I do not know the allegations that have been made against me, it is impossible to rebut them.

Two weeks ago First Direct’s parent bank, HSBC, closed a joint account I had opened with my wife in February this year. The only purpose of the account was to pay in money for the care of our autistic son, but that is irrelevant, because the police and security services had presumably deemed that I was funding Iran’s ballistic missile programme or some such ‘terror’ activity!

When I complained, a ‘complaint specialist’ explained, in almost identical words to First Direct, that:

HSBC periodically reviews its services, products and accounts.

This means that sometimes we take the decision to close a customer’s accounts.

Following a recent review, the bank decided that it would no longer be able to provide you with banking services or products. I’m aware that a letter was sent to you on 27th June to advise that your accounts had been closed.

In my response I paraphrased Sir Henry Wotton’s famous remark, saying “Ambassadors are sent abroad to lie for their country, but it seems that HSBC ‘specialists’ are also trained to lie when they are given the opportunity.” In fact the original quote is that an ambassador is “an honest man sent to lie abroad for the good of his country” - but honesty is not a quality that HSBC seems to value in their employees.

And, just to round things off, Santander is also currently investigating my personal account!<sup>8</sup> So I think we can assume that none of this is a coincidence. But what it demonstrates in my case is that the prosecution is determined to do its best to undermine me in advance of a trial, which consists of trying to make it a criminal offence to support armed resistance against the genocidal Israeli war machine.

### Years in prison

There is a law on the statute book that makes aiding and abetting genocide a crime punishable by 30 years in prison.<sup>9</sup> However, if that law - section 52 of the International Criminal Court Act 2001 - were enforced, then most of the government led by Starmer would be locked up for a couple of decades.

First Direct also likes to boast of its high ratings on Trustpilot, which is ostensibly neutral. But, following an objection to my posting by FD, Trust Pilot took my review<sup>10</sup> down, stating that it removes “terrorism-related content” and content that “praises, supports or represents hate groups”. Neither of these apply. I said nothing about terrorism other than to point to my forthcoming prosecution under TA2000 and the fact that a protest group had been proscribed as a ‘terrorist’ organisation. It was one long lie, so people, when they read reviews on Trustpilot, need to bear in mind that anything critical of big corporations has probably already been weeded out ●

### Notes

1. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz7w4x0x5pno](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cz7w4x0x5pno).
2. [www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy3zw018jno](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cwy3zw018jno).
3. See [insidestory.org.au/dont-ever-expect-anything-from-me](https://insidestory.org.au/dont-ever-expect-anything-from-me).
4. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proscribed-terror-groups-or-organisations--2/proscribed-terrorist-groups-or-organisations-accessible-version).
5. [www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/24/uk-protest-group-palestine-action-denies-iran-funding-faces-ban-home-office](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/24/uk-protest-group-palestine-action-denies-iran-funding-faces-ban-home-office).
6. See [tonygreenstein.com/nationwide-is-an-anti-palestinian-bank](https://tonygreenstein.com/nationwide-is-an-anti-palestinian-bank).
7. See [uk.trustpilot.com/users/67d1b3ce8c2b69496972839c](https://uk.trustpilot.com/users/67d1b3ce8c2b69496972839c).
8. Here are a few email addresses for the relevant banks for those who would like to email them to ask for their reasons for debanking me: [customerservices.mmx@hsbc.co.uk](mailto:customerservices.mmx@hsbc.co.uk); [24hours@firstdirect.com](mailto:24hours@firstdirect.com); [Review.Team@nationwide.co.uk](mailto:Review.Team@nationwide.co.uk).
9. [www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/17/section/52](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2001/17/section/52).
10. [drive.google.com/file/d/1vNpIMRY0c3c1gQy84HnxQhMAQVDDHbkk/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vNpIMRY0c3c1gQy84HnxQhMAQVDDHbkk/view).



## CULTURE WARS

# Rise of the barbarians

Israel's apologists insist it defends 'western civilisation'. But, argues Paul Demarty, the truth is rather more complex. After all, 'civilisational' thinking so often plays out as barbarism, Israel today being the prime example

There is a cliché in circulation among pro-Zionists - that Israel is the easternmost redoubt of something called 'western civilisation', and that is why we must all rally to its 'defence'.

On the contemporary right - at least that part of it that maintains support for the genocidal Zionist state - this is such a weather-worn commonplace that its *content* is never seriously interrogated. There are different versions of it, of course, and we shall come to those; but they do not seriously *compete*. A premillennialist, 'end times obsessed' Christian may happily share in this proposition with a secular-Jewish neoconservative, entirely unperturbed by the substantive difference in their respective claims.

Why? One possible explanation would be that it is wholly vacuous. If we poke into the idea of western civilisation, we find simply nothing - or, certainly, nothing worth defending. We all know that Mahatma Gandhi, when asked what he thought of western civilisation, is supposed to have replied, "I think it would be a good idea" (although this is probably apocryphal). For many on the left, there is little to add to the pseudo-Gandhi but to fill out the details: the endless lists of crimes committed by colonial powers, most especially, which had western - or more particularly European - civilisation as their ideological veil.

This view is mostly correct, and certainly infinitely preferable to the 'westernism' of ideologues like Douglas Murray or the historical revisionism of the great empires undertaken by the likes of Niall Ferguson and Nigel Biggar. Yet we do have a problem, in that - whatever it is we mean by western civilisation - its products certainly include Marxism (and, moreover, purported replacements like Foucauldianism, post-colonialism, decolonialism and so on). It seems we must take a little more care.

## Western story

So, then, to the story of western civilisation. It begins suspiciously far east - in the eastern Mediterranean, with the development of the classical high point of Greek civilisation, which at its greatest extent (in the period of Alexander and the Macedonian kings) stretched deep into Asia and subordinated the far more ancient kingdom of Egypt. Greek became the *lingua franca* in much of this territory.

The voraciously expansionist Roman republic ended up absorbing the core of the Hellenic cultural zone, including its Syrian province, among whose peoples were the Judeans - a people linked together by a common religious heritage. The obstreperous monotheism of this people was a hindrance to integration into the imperial culture, yet there nevertheless had already developed a Hellenised version of the Jewish religion (many of the great Greek philosophers had flirted with monotheism, or at least distinguishing an ultimate 'Creator God' from the subordinate figures called 'the gods', so this was not an enormous reach).

So when a particular apocalyptic Jewish sect emerged, who believed the Jews' prophesied messiah had come in the person of Jesus, their propaganda spread along the (Greek-speaking) lines of least resistance. Their scriptural proofs came from the Septuagint, the then current Greek translation; and the body of



Francis Hayman 'Robert Clive and Mir Jafar after the Battle of Plassey' (1757)

writings that would become the New Testament, too, were all written in Greek (indeed, modern scholars sometimes talk of the 'Greek Bible' and 'Hebrew Bible' rather than the New and Old Testaments). Many of the early intellectuals of Christianity were steeped in Greek philosophy, especially in Plato, and grew up in cities like Alexandria - cauldrons of intellectual and religious conflict that often descended into vicious violence.

With the Roman empire's adoption, in stages, of Christianity as its official religious practice, and then the collapse of the western empire less than two centuries later, the stage was set for the first version of 'western civilisation'. While both halves of the empire survived, after all there was merely the ideology of *Romanitas* (Roman-ness) - a particular idea of the good life proper to (free, male ...) citizens of the empire, characteristically urban and focused on the acquisition of a certain very formal education and advancement in civil affairs.

The failure of the western empire destroyed the material basis of *Romanitas* in that territory, and the old elites were steadily replaced by what would later evolve into the feudal aristocracy, whose basis of power was rather rural and military. There was still one thing that connected the eastern empire with its former territories (leaving aside Justinian's brief reconquest of most of Italy): Christianity. So the first version of the 'western civilisation' ideal became the idea of 'Christendom' - above all, when much of the previously Christian world was conquered by adherents of a new monotheism, Islam.

'Christendom' was a notably resilient idea, surviving the east-west schism between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, and even periods of open conflict between the two sides that reached their nadir around 1200 with Orthodox persecution of Latin Christians in the Byzantine empire and the sacking of Constantinople by westerners during the fourth crusade. What distinguished west from east in these centuries was, of course, partly a matter of language, but also

of social formation: high-mediaeval feudalism versus late-antique slavery and imperial political forms.

## Capitalism first

Both these social formations were on borrowed time. The first merchant republics already existed in Italy (it was a financial tangle with the Venetians that sent the crusaders off to loot Constantinople, after all). The *Reconquista* in Iberia and the crusades refreshed - largely by means of looting - the western intellectual class with Greek texts preserved within the Islamic states. Between the first stirrings of capitalism and the fortuitous influx of these 'new', yet ancient, texts, conditions were created for the renaissance (literally 'rebirth') - an intellectual-cultural movement somewhat autonomous from the church, at least in its inspiration - and therefore the possibility of new ideas of Europe, the west, and so on.

The unity of western Christianity was shortly to be destroyed too with the reformation; the political structures of the mediaeval era were replaced by the first modern states, in republican and absolutist variants. The earlier merchant republics, meanwhile, had already proven themselves prone to extractive colonialism, in which respect they were to be grotesquely outdone by the northern Europeans. As 'Christendom' had rallied crusaders to fight the Seljuk Turks, so the greatness of the European/western intellectual heritage served well as a justification for subjecting conquered peoples to slavery and imperial exploitation.

So far as the *positive content* of this heritage was concerned, the main thing remained Christianity - by now thoroughly marginalised in its near-eastern homeland, under the control of the Ottoman empire, meaning the west alone remained to spread the gospel. (The fact that apparently no two westerners could *agree* on what that gospel actually was seemed not to bother the class of colonial administrators.) Yet Christianity was in decline even in this heartland; decisive advances in natural science and natural history caused serious

crises. The alliance of church and state itself was badly shaken across the continent with the French Revolution, whose radicalism and élan gave living form to the idea of a humanism that was not primarily of a religious character.

The French revolutionaries, as Marx was later to note, drew heavily on classical antiquity for their outward cultural initiatives. They did their work "in Roman costumes and with Roman phrases". Heroic neoclassicism abounded in art and architecture (itself partly an inheritance from the Baroque mode adopted by early modern Catholicism). Though Marx went on, in the famous first pages of *The eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, to argue that "the social revolution of the 19th century cannot take its poetry from the past, but only from the future", Marx himself was a student of classical philosophy, whose thought betrays a distinct debt to Aristotle via the renaissance humanist, Giambattista Vico.

The most stringent critics of western civilisation as it actually existed, in other words, drew on the same canon as its apologists. Marx has some affinity to Shakespeare's Caliban, who rebukes his slave-master, Prospero:

You taught me language, and my profit on't  
Is I know how to curse. The red plague rid you  
For learning me your language!

I bring this up not to commence some fatuous exercise of drawing up a balance sheet - on the plus side, Marx; on the minus side, the East India Company ... The point is rather that it is wrong to see in 'western civilisation' simply an ideological fig-leaf: a wholly empty category serving only to justify exploitation and murder. Rather it is born into trouble: it simply cannot do the job that 'Christendom' once did, and so it is contested from its very birth.

And so, it is quite true that Israel 'defends western civilisation', in that it *repeats* some of its worst crimes:

the genocidal settler-colonialism that all but wiped out the native peoples of North America, and entirely wiped out native peoples here and there (Tasmania, for instance). By doing so, it asserts what 'civilisations' must always assert when they conduct themselves in this way: that there is a hard membrane between civilisation and barbarism; that there are, forever, Greeks and barbarians (so called by the Greeks because their 'inferior' languages sounded like the ba-ba-ba of the infant). Civilisation is thus that which must be defended.

## Muslim other

Today's 'barbarians' are Muslims, and today's defenders of 'the west' are obsessed with 'halting the growth' of Muslim communities in Europe and the US. One could cite various pseudo-intellectuals here, but we will go for the real stuff, and mention the cretinous US Republican, Randy Fine, who got into hot water recently for tweeting at Ilhan Omar (after she objected to Benjamin Netanyahu's latest DC visit): "I'm sure it is difficult to see us welcome the killer of so many of your fellow Muslim terrorists".

His comments were so crude that even the Democrat leaders who so frequently denounce 'the squad' had to back up Omar on this one; but any idea that Israel defends western civilisation must in the end devolve to some equivalent idiocy. The idea of civilisation is reduced merely to 'not barbarian'; so evacuated, it becomes simply an occasion for ... well, barbarism - but better our *civilised* barbarism than their *barbaric* barbarism!

As soon as we return to some *positive* idea of western (or, for that matter, any other) civilisation, we find not some shining, perfect tradition, but a long course of struggle, between opposing ideas and opposing interests - and indeed opposing ideas about *how to conceive* such first-order conflicts. The problem is there in the very etymology, indeed - a tradition is, literally, a handing on of something; but that also gives us the word, 'traitor' (*traditor*), for those who 'handed over' the holy books to the Roman authorities in a particularly severe persecution of the early Christians. Those who hand on traditions also hand on the means of those traditions' dissolution and transformation.

There is, thus, good news and bad news for revolutionaries. The good news is that we have just as valid recourse to the moral and intellectual resources of 'western civilisation' - such as it is - as anyone else. It is good to have Aristotle in your locker - and Vico, Locke, Kant, Hegel and whoever else you like. All these thinkers have their limits - often blindingly obvious in retrospect - yet all push our thinking to certain distinctive extremities, and moreover each could only do so in succession with critical reference to their predecessors. What is handed on is an argument, and we take our place within it.

The bad news is precisely that western civilisation *as such* cannot be defended - what is best in its intellectual heritage overflows its boundaries and points *beyond* the opposition between the civilised and the barbarian. It therefore demands we leave behind 'civilisational' thinking as such, which ultimately - as we have seen - plays out in barbarism ●

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## TURKEY

# Cauldron of conflict

Abdullah Öcalan's call for the PKK to disband and disarm has seen well-publicised ceremonies. Meanwhile, regional developments point to war, rather than peace, writes **Esen Uslu**

**O**n July 9 a seven-minute video of a speech by Abdullah Öcalan was filmed on the prison island of İmralı. Flanked by six other long-term PKK prisoners - all wearing civilian clothes and all transferred to İmralı to serve as his secretariat - Öcalan was seen for the first time this century by the public.<sup>1</sup>

In February, Öcalan's 'Call for peace and a democratic society' was read by MPs from the People's Democracy and Equality Party (DEM) and a party delegation was allowed to visit him on İmralı. At the time the minister of justice stated that releasing a video message was not legally permissible. Now the state deems it appropriate to allow his message to be viewed. While the state-owned news agency TV channels preferred not to broadcast it, the video was widely viewed online.

The overwhelming response has been that he is doing his utmost to keep the peace process on track, as the 'farewell to arms' deadline is fast approaching. His command and control over the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), as well as the Kurdish freedom movement in general, will be tested to the limit. There are certainly many unresolved stumbling blocks on the way to disarmament - and the state's permission to release the video reflected the same concerns.

### New steps

In his speech, Öcalan said: "By convening the PKK's 12th Dissolution Congress, you provided a comprehensive, positive response to my call." And he continued: "The achieved level necessitates new steps for implementation." But the crucial part of the message was:

As a necessity of the process it is important to voluntarily take the weapons away and to ensure the comprehensive activities of a legally authorised commission established in the TBMM [Turkish Grand National Assembly]. While being wary of descending into illogical 'you first, me next' approaches, the necessary step should inexorably be taken ...

You should take it in your stride that your ensuring of the laying down of arms, before the witness of the public and related circles, would not only count with the Turkish Grand National Assembly and the commission, but also reassure the public and honour our promises. The establishment of a mechanism to lay down arms will take the process forward. What has been done is a voluntary transition from the phase of armed struggle to the phase of democratic politics and law. This is not a loss, but has to be regarded as a historical gain. The details of the laying down of arms will be specified and expeditiously implemented.<sup>2</sup>

When he issued this call, the formation of a parliamentary commission was not a set issue. There were speeches referring to such a possibility by MPs from the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), but the government was not committed to form such a commission. It is apparent that the talks between Öcalan and representatives of the state have come to a certain conclusion - a kind of agreed route-map.

The first symbolic step in the laying down the arms process was started by the Kurdish Regional



**PKK fighters: weapons into the cauldron**

Government of Iraq. A selected delegation of press, voluntary organisations and human rights observers were invited to witness the procedure. Everything about the ceremony was kept under wraps until the last moment.

But on July 11, in front of the Jasane Cave in the Sulaymaniyah governate, a stage was set-up for the ceremony and the visitors were brought there with strict security precautions. The Jasane Cave has a symbolic importance for the Kurdish freedom movement. In the 1920s, sheik Mahud Berzenji led the revolt against the occupying British forces and the Jasane Cave became his stronghold. His newspaper *Bangi Haq* ('Call for Justice') was based there. In the 1970s the cave served as the HQ for both the KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and the YNK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan).

The ceremony featured thirty PKK guerrillas - 15 male and 15 female, led by Bese Hozat, a female member of the PKK leadership - stepped out of the cave, and walked down the stairs to the platform carrying assault rifles. She and three others were seated at the table on the platform, and the guerrillas stood in parade formation behind them. Behind them was a backdrop of Öcalan's picture. There was a parasol-covered seating area for visitors, and in between them a large cauldron stacked with firewood.

Bese Hozat read a statement from the 'Group for Peace and Democratic Society':

In order to ensure the practical success of the 'Peace and Democratic Society' process, to wage our freedom, democracy and socialist struggle with methods of legal and democratic politics on the basis of enacting laws for democratic integration, we voluntarily destroy our weapons, before your presence, as a step of goodwill and determination ...

As you know, things did not come about with ease, at no cost, and without waging struggle. Quite the contrary, all gains came at a heavy cost, through struggling

tooth and claw. And what follows will definitely need compelling struggle. We are well aware of this fact.<sup>3</sup>

Then the guerrillas marched to the cauldron one by one and first placed their assault rifles, then their sidearms into the cauldron. They were very emotional, but all of them kept their control. A female guerrilla placed the last weapon into the cauldron and then Bese Hozat set light to the fire and the armaments burnt. So they were not surrendered, but rendered useless. Then the guerrillas all marched back into Jasane Cave in single file. So ended the ceremonial first step of disarmament.

### Old problems

While all this was happening, the conflict in the region was increasing, threatening to put an end to the Kurdish freedom movement's immediate hopes.

In the Kurdish region of Iraq, dissent began to emerge. In Erbil and Duhok, aerial attacks carried out by armed drones over two successive days rendered the oilfields unusable, while another attack on Erbil airport was thwarted. No group has claimed responsibility for the attacks, but Iraqi Kurdistan security sources said initial investigations suggest that the drones came from areas under the control of Iranian-backed militias.

The Sarsang oilfield is operated by HKN Energy, a privately held US oil and gas company active in Iraq's Kurdistan region. A few months ago, HKN was under pressure because it was operating in the Kurdish region without a licence from the central government. Now US secretary of state Marco Rubio is pressing ahead for increased oil production and asking everyone to respect the licences provided by the Kurdish region.

Just days before the burning of arms a clash between two tribal confederations took place. Members of the security forces, as well as some in the Harki tribe were killed. The conflict, due to a long-running land dispute, looked like it could turn into

a full scale war with the Harkis, who inhabit three countries. Roadblocks and other such measures could have stopped the ceremony, which had been prepared well in advance, and would have been a serious embarrassment to the regime in the Kurdish Autonomous Region. Only a quick intervention of Nechirvan Barzani, the president of the region, saved the day. However, the underlying tensions remain palpable.

Barzani's problems did not end with the temporary resolution of the Harki dispute. A major hurdle awaiting him is unifying the KDP and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan peshmerga forces under a single chain of command. Together they would constitute a 100,000 strong army. Ten brigades have been formed under the auspices of US forces, and the final brigade is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

US regional commander general Kevin Leahy met with Barzani, and urged him to make progress and avoid backtracking. During their meeting the continuing Islamic State threat and cooperation between the Iraqi army, the peshmergas and the US forces were the prominent subjects. While supporting the *Pax Americana*, the Pentagon has allocated substantial arms and financial resources to regional players, including the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF).

The debate over whether Öcalan's call for disarmament covers the YPG (the People's Protection Units in Syria), may rely on an answer from the US. If the PKK ceases to exist, the YPG would become an independent entity, no longer tainted by its earlier association. As long as the YPG is somehow incorporated into the newly formed Syrian army, it would be acceptable to the USA.

However, US policy-makers have a difficult balancing act on their hands - playing long and short at the same time. They want the new Syrian regime to bury the hatchet with Israel, accept the loss of territory, including Mount Hermon and villages in the Golan Heights occupied by Israel in recent months, and make peace by

joining the Abraham Accords. Israel's staunch ally, Azerbaijan, provided a platform in its capital, Baku, for Syrian president Ahmed al-Sharaa to meet an Israeli delegation face to face. However, initial reports indicated that the talks failed to achieve the desired outcome.

The Israeli delegation included Benjamin Netanyahu's special envoy, as well as top-level military and security officers, who were part of the negotiations with the Damascus government. They discussed issues related to Iran's presence in Syria, Hezbollah's weapons and the armed Palestinian groups based in Syrian territory and in Lebanon. Israel wants a demilitarised zone south of Damascus. But besides the possibility of Israel opening a permanent coordination office, there was no agreement apart from agreeing to keep on meeting.

There are also Islamist attacks in the Druze-dominated region near the Jordanian border in the south. Kidnappings, assaults and killings have happened under the guise of lawless actions carried out by Bedouin tribesmen. After the Alawite community along the Mediterranean coast was repressed in the same manner under the al-Sharaa government's benign gaze, the Islamists have now turned their attentions to the 700,000 strong Druze population in Syria.

### New army

The newly formed Syrian army moved into the mainly Druze city of Suweyda under the pretext of defending public order. A curfew was declared, and the confiscation of arms and ammunition from the Druze population began. Israel, claiming to have received desperate calls from its allies under sheik Hikmat al-Hijri, has upped its intervention in Syria. IDF planes struck at army columns, even the military HQ in Damascus. The Israeli army has also crossed the line of control under the pretext of returning its own Druze citizens who had crossed into Syria under the pretext of defending their relatives.

This emerging pattern - first applied to the Alawites and now to the Druze - bodes ill for the Syrian Kurds. Once those two regions have been suppressed, it will be the turn of the Kurds. Attempts to split the SDF into Arab and Kurdish components have been ongoing for some time. With Turkey pressing for the disarmament of Kurdish units in the SDF, internal fighting has flared up. The Hamzat and Sultan Murad brigades started fighting each other in the Hasakah governorate of Rojava. The clash happened very close to the centre of Rojava, the seat of power of the SDF, but the two brigades are not part of the SDF, they are part of the Turkey-sponsored Syrian National Army. Heavy artillery fire devastated large parts of the city of Serekaniye. All this is happening in the heartland of the Kurdish-controlled region.

Before he has been able to delve into the thorny issues within Turkey itself, regional conflicts have already created severe obstacles for Öcalan's peace project ●

### Notes

1. For the full video see [www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6VvJedBvXY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6VvJedBvXY).
2. For the translation of Öcalan's speech, see [bianet.org/haber/pkk-leader-ocalan-releases-first-video-message-in-26-years-ahead-of-disarmament-ceremony-309294](http://bianet.org/haber/pkk-leader-ocalan-releases-first-video-message-in-26-years-ahead-of-disarmament-ceremony-309294).
3. For the translation of Bese Hozat's speech, see [bianet.org/haber/full-text-pkk-statement-during-disarmament-ceremony-309371](http://bianet.org/haber/full-text-pkk-statement-during-disarmament-ceremony-309371).



## POLEMIC

# Cold war economism

Members of TAS have fielded all sorts of arguments - some serious, most spurious. **Mike Macnair** cuts through the thicket to show why we need a minimum programme and a period of transition between capitalism and the highest phase of communism

This article responds to Peter Kennedy's 'Socialisms have prevented communism' (*Weekly Worker* June 12 2025),<sup>1</sup> though I also make *limited* reference to Nick Wrack's June 11 posting on the Talking About Socialism site, 'Communist unity - a change is needed', so far as this reply to comrade Kennedy is made clearer by including reference to part of comrade Wrack's arguments.<sup>2</sup>

Since a good deal of our debate has been about the continuing significance of the middle classes, I have delayed replying in order for us to publish Ben Lewis's translation of Karl Kautsky on the 'new middle class' (June 26) and my own review of Dan Evans' 2023 *A nation of shopkeepers* (July 3).<sup>3</sup> I have also been delayed by academic responsibilities.

Comrade Wrack's article amounted in effect to an ultimatum to the CPGB, that we had to stop putting our *Draft programme* forward and maintaining our defence of sharpness in polemic if the Forging Communist Unity talks were to continue. But "what is truth, said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer": TAS voted on June 23 to withdraw from the FCU talks, without waiting for an answer to the ultimatum. The article nonetheless contains substantive arguments in support of comrade Wrack's views and against the CPGB's views, arguments which are worth discussing. Comrade Kennedy's article is a response to my May 29 piece, 'Questions of communism', which was, in turn, a critique of his April 22 post on TAS, 'Differentiating socialism and communism'.<sup>4</sup>

The discussion has evolved, but it is necessary to remember where it comes from. As soon as the FCU talks began, it was clear that there were two major differences. One is the CPGB's supposed 'bad culture', consisting of our defence and continued practice of the culture of sharp polemics on the left that prevailed down to the 1980s, outside those organisations which (like the Socialist Workers Party) had already become thoroughly bureaucratised. We have continued to defend this point elsewhere and it will only be marginal in this article.

The second was that for TAS comrades, as comrade Wrack puts it in his article, the CPGB's *Draft programme* "is not fit for purpose" and it has to be abandoned at the outset if there is to be any unity. This led, in turn, to the question *how* the CPGB's *Draft programme* "is not fit for purpose".

The original claim was about length, and the inclusion of an introduction; comrade Wrack still complains about the introduction, though in the discussions CPGB comrades pointed out that any unified new organisation would need a *new* introduction (and on the question of length, that the *Draft rules* could be treated as separate from the *Draft programme*).

The point then became concretised as the rejection of the level of detail in the 'Immediate demands': that is, the *minimum* programme. This, in turn, led to the question of the CPGB's arguments about why a minimum programme is needed and why its demands are consistent with



Founding congress in 1905 - and still going today

the continued existence of markets and money. And this immediately posed the issue of the nature of the transition to communism.

## Moral

Interlinked is the question of (as I have put it) "taking moral distance from Stalinism". Comrade Wrack objects that "I do take a moral distance from Stalinism. Doesn't Mike? Also a political, economic, democratic, human distance from Stalinism. Everything about Stalinism appalls me." Agreed, *but*. The *but* is is, that what I mean by "taking moral distance from Stalinism" is forms of hand-waving away the actual defeat of the Russian Revolution: asserting that our socialism, or communism, will be different from Stalinism, without accounting for *how* Soviet power slid into Stalinism.<sup>5</sup>

'State capitalism' of the Menshevik variety (the Russian Revolution as premature and therefore a form of the bourgeois revolution) omits imperialism, and hence the tragic choices the Entente powers and the German Hindenburg-Ludendorff regime imposed on the Bolsheviks in 1917-18. Tony Cliff state capitalism (Stalinism as a higher stage of capitalism) turns Marx's critique of political economy into nonsense. In both cases the mistaken choices of the *organised workers'* movement go missing and Stalinism is merely a product of capitalism: moral distance is taken at the price of incomprehension.

'All good under Lenin, all bad after his death' and the critique of 'Zinovievism' is personality-cult politics and naturally supports a personality cult of Trotsky and, after him, of a succession of Trotskyist *caudillos*. Again, it makes disappear both the tragic choices of 1918 and the *theorisation* of these choices in 1919-21.

Comrade Kennedy's argument makes Stalinism a part of a larger phenomenon, in which capitalism deploys socialism as a mode of defence against communism. But again this takes moral distance from Stalinism, *as opposed* to accounting for the tragic choices of 1918 and their false theorisation of 1919-21 - and as opposed to taking into account for future strategy the coercive deployment of Entente and German armed forces in 1918-21 and of what would now be called 'economic sanctions' in 1918-41 and 1946-91.

These arguments forget a very fundamental point made by Marx in 1852 in the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

Bourgeois revolutions, like those of the 18th century, storm more swiftly from success to success, their dramatic effects outdo each other, men and things seem set in sparkling diamonds, ecstasy is the order of the day - but they are short-lived, soon they have reached their zenith, and a long *Katzenjammer* [hangover] takes hold of society before it learns to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period soberly. On the other hand, proletarian revolutions, like those of the 19th century, constantly criticise themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew; they deride with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may draw new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals - until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out:

Hic Rhodus, hic salta! [Here is the rose, dance here!]<sup>6</sup>

I have made the point on more than one occasion before now that it is completely inconsistent with this idea, which expresses Marx's *scientific* socialism, to cling to the texts of Marx, or those of the first four congresses of Comintern, *as a dogma* without regard to the actual defeat of the Russian Revolution or the various other experiences of failed leftist reform projects and failed revolutions.<sup>7</sup> We do not have to have a common *theory* of Stalinism. But our theories of Stalinism have to yield strategic lessons that allow us to explain clearly why our revolutionary project will not produce the same failure.

## Negative

I remarked in my April 3 report of an online FCU meeting on March 30 that

... there is some danger of a 'negative dialectic' in which we in

the CPGB understate the radicalism of our *Draft programme*, while, on the other hand, the TAS comrades drive themselves, in opposition to it, towards the position of the Socialist Party of Great Britain that all that can be done is to make propaganda for socialism until there is a clear majority for immediate general collectivisation.

I think this danger has, in fact, materialised - but with understating the radicalism of the *Draft programme* appearing within the arguments of TAS comrades themselves.

I should make the point that SPGB comrades have pointed out that (whatever their past views) their current position is to support trade union struggles, and so on - but not to have specific minimum demands in a party programme or election manifesto.<sup>8</sup> Comrade Wrack says:

My argument is that the working class should not seek to come to power prematurely, before it can implement its programme. By that, I mean its maximum programme.

It is not enough for it to come to power and implement only a minimum programme that is compatible with capitalism, and then leave capitalism more or less intact.

On the one hand, this is close to the SPGB comrades' view. There should be no shame in that; and, conversely, saying that the comrades' position is close to the SPGB's is not a misrepresentation or smear. It is perfectly *possible* that the SPGB comrades are right and the various tendencies that came out of the Second International left and Comintern are all wrong. I have given reasons last month for thinking that the SPGB comrades are wrong, in the form of the point that the working class needs to take power because declining capitalism threatens human extinction or generalised warlordism, in spite of possible 'prematurity' from the point of view of the rise of the working class.<sup>9</sup> TAS comrades, from comments on Peter Kennedy's reply, disagree.<sup>10</sup>

On the other hand, the comrades *claim* that, because we oppose immediate nationalisation of the businesses of the petty-bourgeoisie, the CPGB - and I - want to defer communism into the distant future. This in spite of the fact that the *Draft programme* demands, among the *immediate or minimum* demands:

3.7 ... We call for the nationalisation of the land, banks and financial services, along with basic infrastructure, such as public transport, electricity, gas and water supplies.

Faced with plans for closure, mass sackings and threats of capital flight communists demand:

■ No redundancies. Nationalise threatened workplaces or industries under workers' control.  
■ Compensation to former owners should be paid only in cases of proven need.

3.8 ...

■ A massive revival of council and other social house building programmes. The shortage of housing must be ended. ...

■ A publicly-owned building corporation to be established to ensure that planned targets for

house-building are reached and to provide permanent employment and ongoing training for building workers.

3.9 ...

■ GPs, hospital doctors, consultants, etc who work in the NHS should be exclusively employed by the NHS.

■ The pharmaceutical industry should be nationalised, so that the development of drugs serves human need, not the generation of profits.

3.13 ...

■ Open free, 24-hour crèches and kindergartens to facilitate full participation in social life outside the home. Open high-quality canteens with cheap prices. Establish laundry and house-cleaning services undertaken by local authorities and the state.

3.18 ...

■ Confiscate all Church of England property not directly related to acts of worship: eg, land holdings, share portfolios and art treasures.

- as well as extensive workers' control measures in firms that are not yet nationalised; the active promotion of cooperatives; the abolition of limited liability; and so on. Would the implementation of this programme *really* "leave capitalism more or less intact"?

Paradoxically, the articles by comrades Kennedy and Wrack *might* in some ways have opened the way to narrowing the points of difference - if the TAS comrades had not voted to break off the talks. What follows will inevitably display a level of detailed engagement that may seem a bit labyrinthine. But this detailed engagement is necessary to clarity.

## Kennedy

Peter Kennedy's article responds to my 'Questions of communism' (May 29). This, in turn, responded to comrade Kennedy's 'Differentiating socialism and communism' (April 22). To respond to the latest, it is thus necessary to summarise the route by which we arrived at the issues in it.

The starting point is that the CPGB *Draft programme* follows Lenin's *State and revolution* (and others from the Marxist wing of the Second International, like Leon Trotsky in *Results and prospects*) in using the word 'socialism' to identify the regime that *immediately* succeeds capitalist class rule, and which in our view lasts for a significant period before passing into *communism* - meaning a classless and stateless society in which the means of production are held in common, and in which distribution is according to need. (My own *individual* view is that "working class rule" is better terminology for this transition period; but I agreed to *accept* the 'socialism' terminology in the programme as the basis for common action, given that the *Draft programme* does explain it in section 5.<sup>11</sup>)

TAS comrades have objected in the discussions, and comrade Wrack in his article objects, to this usage as either Stalinist (it is shared with Communist Party of Britain supporters, as the resident Stalinist of our letters column, Andrew Northall, has displayed in his own usage<sup>12</sup>) or as insistence on a "sect peculiarity" of the CPGB. The two objections are contradictory: if the



language is ‘Stalinist’, it is using the language of the large majority of the *world’s* left, albeit to give it a different meaning. It is only a ‘sect peculiarity’ of the CPGB relative to the dogmas of *Trotskyism* about the meaning of the word.

In ‘Differentiating socialism and communism’ comrade Kennedy argued (as I have said above) that capitalism deploys socialism as a mode of defence against communism. In ‘Questions of communism’ I responded that comrade Kennedy’s approach had the strength of seeing the transition from capitalism to socialism as already in progress under capitalist rule. But this narrative failed as a historical narrative, because it was built on Cold War assumptions. In particular, I argued that it disabled understanding of what the debate about ‘socialism in one country’ and ‘national roads to socialism’ from the 1880s to the 1920s was actually about: that is, not about the development of full or ‘higher stage’ communism, but about the possibilities of the proletariat holding on to political power and carrying on immediate socialist *construction* in a single country.

In ‘Points of disagreement’, Comrade Kennedy responds to a series of individual points of mine. The first few paragraphs are addressed to my historical narrative of uses of ‘socialism’ and ‘communism’. He rejects my claim that Marx’s uses are inconsistent; though his only actual evidence for Marx’s consistency are *The civil war in France*, where ‘possible communism’ plainly means a mixed economy under working class political rule, and the *Critique of the Gotha programme*. I ran a quick search for ‘socialism’ in Marx on Marxists Internet Archive; I put in a footnote here a series of references where Marx’s usage of ‘socialism’ is not consistent with comrade Kennedy’s. Just to quote one substantive example:

... while the struggle of the different socialist leaders among themselves sets forth each of the so-called systems as a pretentious adherence to one of the transit points of the social revolution as against another - the proletariat rallies more and more around revolutionary socialism, around communism, for which the bourgeoisie has itself invented the name of Blanqui. This socialism is the declaration of the permanence of the revolution, the class dictatorship of the proletariat as the necessary transit point to the abolition of class distinctions generally, to the abolition of all the relations of production on which they rest, to the abolition of all the social relations that correspond to these relations of production, to the revolutionising of all the ideas that result from these social relations.<sup>13</sup>

Notice that my point is not a positive claim about Marx’s usage, but merely that Marx’s usage *is* - as I argued - inconsistent.<sup>14</sup>

More generally, comrade Kennedy simply fails to respond to my arguments: first, that using ‘socialism’ for what immediately succeeds capitalism is not just Lenin, but leftwingers in the Second International (I gave an example from Trotsky in 1907); and, second, that without recognising this common usage in the early 1900s left it is impossible to understand the SIOC debate.

## Socialisation

In the second point, sub-headed ‘Socialisation’, comrade Kennedy’s arguments are fairly deeply obscure. It seems that, first, comrade Kennedy and I are in agreement that capitalism replaces household production with socially coordinated production.

Second, we are probably also in agreement that capital becomes a social power as such, which seeks

to manage the economy as a whole; but in disagreement about *when* this happens. In comrade Kennedy’s view it is a symptom of capitalist decay, following Hilferding and Lenin (and, in his first article, Marx on the joint-stock company). In my view this phenomenon already happens when capital *takes political power* and, as a result, creates deficit financing of the state and government securities markets (late medieval city-states; Netherlands in the 80-years war, 1568-1648; Britain after 1688).

Third, comrade Kennedy’s argument for “containment” of the working class through socialism is in my opinion an over-generalisation of the political regime of the front-line states in the Cold War period, which never applied in the USA and ceased to apply after the fall of the USSR. Capital in decline *does* need the support of the labour bureaucracy. But it *prefers* for this purpose Lib-Labism (trade union support for a liberal political party) as in the case of the British Liberals in the late 19th century, the US Democrats today, or the Italian ex-communist Democratic Party.

He poses a series of points which, he argues, lead inexorably to the conclusion “that ‘socialisms’ have prevented communism; socialisms are inherent to the class struggle against the working class”.

First, “that capitalism has been ripe for worker revolution and transformation to communism for more than a century”. This claim was rejected by István Mészáros and has also been rejected by Moshé Machover, on the perfectly satisfactory ground that capitalism could only be said to have exhausted its possibilities for development when it became fully global - that is, from the 1990s.<sup>15</sup> I have myself recognised the strength of this view, but argued that capitalism *entered into decline at its core* from the 1850s, while still expanding outwards, like a coral atoll or hollow tree, and that revolution was posed - by the destructiveness of capital - by the death agony of *the British empire* in 1914-48.<sup>16</sup>

Second, “that the period up to the mid-1930s was a period of capitalist stagnation”. This is straightforwardly untrue. The 1900s saw some recovery from the ‘long depression’ of the late 19th century. World War I produced stagnation *in Europe*, but the ‘Roaring Twenties’ in the USA.

Third, “that the period between the 1940-70s revived capitalist growth and that this period heavily involved Stalinism/social democracy (SU/SD).” The revival of growth in 1948-70 is certainly true. The reason is that the final overthrow of British world hegemony and the massive debt defaults of the war and immediate post-war years, sharply reducing capital values, enabled a major rise in the rate of profit relative to capital values, which supported extensive capital investments. *Meanwhile*, the US state’s policy of ‘containment’ of communism meant that the USA actively supported rightwing social democracy in western Europe with financial subventions and publicity operations, including academic interventions in the left.

Fourth, “that the period post-80s to the present (post-SU and SD) has been characterised by capitalist stagnation and financial parasitism”. This is over-simplified. The long boom ran out of steam around 1970. The USA broke with Bretton Woods in 1971, and began almost immediately to promote bank lending and ‘open economies’ in the ‘third world’ and in the Soviet satellite regimes. The Carter administration (1976-80) withdrew the support for rightwing social democrats, reallocating it to ‘human

rights’ agitators and neoliberals. While the result from the 1980s on has been deindustrialisation *in the core imperialist countries*, in the ex-Soviet countries, and in Latin America and the Middle East, on the one hand financialisation has allowed very substantial profitability in the USA, and on the other there has been extensive *industrial* growth in China and south-east and south Asia.

Thus, the logic demanding the claim “that ‘socialisms’ have prevented communism; socialisms are inherent to the class struggle against the working class” simply fails: the premisses are too over-generalised from the specific features of the cold war period.

I can add that comrade Kennedy’s argument about the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) is *also* a mere repetition of cold war narratives. It clung to these, even while attempting to ‘soften’ the point. I say again: these Cold War narratives about the history of the SPD were actively promoted by authors coming out of MI6 and the OSS-CIA in the early cold war period - Carl Schorske, Peter Nettl, and so on. Their purpose was to show that the only ‘real’ options were ‘romantic but wrong’ Luxemburgism or ‘repulsive but right’ Fabianism - because both options were and are safe for continued capitalist rule.

The underlying assumption of comrade Kennedy’s arguments is that the spontaneous movement of the working class is naturally *revolutionary*, but only held back by ‘socialisms’. There is warrant for this in the more optimistic side of Marx’s writings: I have quoted above his 1850 claim that “the proletariat rallies more and more around revolutionary socialism, around communism”. This turned out to be over-optimistic, and *hence* Marx’s 1852 observations about proletarian revolution in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, also quoted above.

The real ground for making the proletariat the centre of communist perspective is not this sort of over-optimistic romantic image of the proletariat, but rather that the proletariat is *driven to create collective organisations* - trade unions, cooperatives and so on, and collectivist political parties. This ‘warts and all’ ‘actual existing workers’ movement’ foreshadows the possibility of *generalised* cooperation as the alternative to capitalism.

## State

Finally, we come to the question of the state. Comrade Kennedy says, in relation to the issue of ‘socialisation’, that, through the concentration of capital, “A point is reached where considerations about maximising profits (surplus value extraction) are joined by considerations about maintaining control over the working class. All of which necessarily embroils the state in effecting class containment and class compromise. Brushing this away as statist only confuses what is at stake.”

‘Statist’ here referenced my observation in ‘Questions of communism’ that “‘Socialism’ was not a synonym for communism in the *Communist manifesto* (1848). On the contrary, ‘socialism’ meant statist and nationalist political trends, variously characterised as feudal, petty bourgeois, German, conservative-bourgeois or critical-utopian.”

*Why* does characterising the ‘socialisms’ criticised in the *Communist manifesto* as ‘statist’ “confuse what is at stake”? It is not at all clear in comrade Kennedy’s article, but it *seems* that he interprets the role of the state in managing

collective ruling-class concessions to the lower orders as resulting from the concentration and centralisation of capital reaching the stage of ‘monopoly’. Contrast Engels in *The origin of the family, private property and the state*, who sees it as foundational to *the state as such* (starting with Solon - died c560 BCE - in Athens).

## Decline

I say above and elsewhere that we can see capitalism *entering into decline at its core* in 1850s Britain. And this decline can be seen, I think, in concessions to the *middle* classes in order to stave off the bloc between the working class and the lower middle class that was Chartism: in particular, the Limited Liability Act 1855, which blunts the incentive structure of capitalism, for the purpose of protecting the ‘savers and strivers’. But (as I said above), capitalism *entering into decline at its core* in the 1850s does not imply capitalism is “ripe for worker revolution and transformation to communism for more than a century”, which I *guess* is comrade Kennedy’s point. And the concessions are not primarily organised by ‘monopoly capitalists’ directly, but by and through the state.

At the end of his article comrade Kennedy reiterates the claim in ‘Differentiating’ that “the transition from capitalism to communism under the democratic rule of the working class, through communes and through the state, overthrows the capitalist state order”.

But what, in this context, are “communes”? Remember that the Paris Commune was the Paris *local government* under the French Third Empire, which the workers, starting with its (legal) militia, took over and transformed for its own purposes. Or is this another name for workers’ councils (soviets)? (It seems so from comrade Kennedy’s responses to Barry Biddulph in the comments on ‘Differentiating’.)

And what is “the state” that the working class is to use to overthrow “the capitalist state order”? What, for that matter, is “the capitalist state order” that is to be overthrown?

Back to Lenin’s *State and revolution*. TAS comrades argue that Lenin went wrong by using ‘socialism’ to mean what Marx called the first phase of communism, in which *bürgerlicher Recht* (bourgeois right/bourgeois law), meaning payment according to work contributed, persists. But presumably they do not reject Lenin’s general characterisation of the state (following Engels) as “special bodies of armed men having prisons, etc, at their command”.<sup>17</sup>

OK. So what is the “capitalist state order” here and what is the “state”, through which the working class acts? Again, we are left to guess. In the comments on ‘Differentiating’ comrade Kennedy writes that “the state ruling apparatus (military, criminal justice system, etc) will be quickly abolished and replaced by a workers’ militia and system of justice. Most other aspects of the state will be depoliticised and become the administrat[iv]e institutions of the commune from which real power is exercised.”

So the Sir Humphreys, or the various lower-down managerial hierarchies of public bodies, are to be “depoliticised and become ... administrat[iv]e institutions”? The Bolsheviks thought they could do this, but found that the politics of the administrative bureaucracy was a tougher problem<sup>18</sup> - as they could have deduced from Marx’s 1843 *Critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right [law]*, where he points out that the bureaucrats pursue their individual interests, if this text had been available to them.<sup>19</sup>

I wrote against this policy at length in 2004 and 2007. I do not propose to repeat the arguments there; comrades can look them up if they want to (whether to explore them or to oppose them).<sup>20</sup> I think that the extreme unclarity of comrade Kennedy’s arguments on the question of the state illustrates precisely why my arguments then were sound; and why we *do* need to fight now for democratic-republican constitutional principles as giving the necessary form of the dictatorship of the proletariat ●

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## Notes

1. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1542/socialisms-have-prevented-communism. The text at talkingaboutsociasim.org/a-reply-to-mike-macnairs-questions-of-communism (June 2) is slightly different, since the *Weekly Worker* version is edited according to our style guidelines. The TAS text also has extensive comments.
2. talkingaboutsociasim.org/communist-unity-a-change-is-needed.
3. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1544/completely-different-foundations; weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1545/rising-middle-classes.
4. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1540/questions-of-communism; talkingaboutsociasim.org/differentiating-socialism-and-communism.
5. Consider also comrade Lawrence Parker’s different argument about this: communistpartyofgreatbritainhistory.wordpress.com/2025/05/07/taking-distance-from-stalinism.
6. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm. MIA has a long note on the Latin tag: www.marxists.org/glossary/terms/h/l.htm #hic-rhodus.
7. Eg, ‘Defeat was fault of enemy machine guns’ *Weekly Worker* May 24 2007 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/674/defeat-was-fault-of-enemy-machine-guns); and ‘Analysis of historical causes’, October 3 2024 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1539/analysis-of-historical-causes).
8. Adam Buick on *Cosmonaut* in 2021: cosmonautmag.com/2021/06/letter-for-a-maximum-program; Robin Cox at weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1535/letters (April 24 2025); Adam Buick at weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1544/letters (June 26 2025).
9. weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1541/capitalism-as-a-star-fort.
10. In particular Nick Wrack and Barry Biddulph.
11. communistparty.co.uk/draft-programme/5-transition-to-communism. I argued the point against the idea that Marx’s hypothetical ‘first phase of communism’ in the *Critique of the Gotha programme* should guide us in ‘Socialism will not require industrialisation’ *Weekly Worker* May 14 2015 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1058/socialism-will-not-require-industrialisation).
12. Eg, his letter *Weekly Worker* June 12 2025 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1542/letters).
13. *The class struggles in France* chapter 3: www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1850/class-struggles-france/ch03.htm.
14. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/08/07.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/epm/3rd.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/english-materialism.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/ch06\_3\_d.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/letters/77\_10\_19.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/bio/media/marx/79\_01\_05.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/letters/80\_11\_05.htm; www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1881/letters/81\_06\_20.htm.
15. I Mészáros *Beyond capital* New York NY 1995; M Machover: matzpen.org/english/1999-12-10/the-20th-century-in-retrospect-moshe-machover.
16. ‘Imperialism versus internationalism’ *Weekly Worker* August 11 2004 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/541/imperialism-versus-internationalism); ‘Leading workers by the nose’, September 12 2007 (web.archive.org/web/20081201225732/www.cpgb.org.uk/worker/688/macnair.htm).
17. www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch01.htm#s2.
18. L Douds *Inside Lenin’s government* London 2018.
19. www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/ch03.htm (first published 1927).
20. ‘Control the bureaucrats’ *Weekly Worker* November 11 2004 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/552/control-the-bureaucrats); “‘Transitional’ to what?” August 1 2007; ‘What is workers’ power?’ August 8; ‘For a minimum programme!’ August 30; ‘Spontaneity and Marxist theory’ September 5; ‘Leading workers by the nose’ September 12. All the above are conveniently linked at communistuniversity.uk/mike-macnair-programme-and-party-articles.



## ISRAEL

# Speech controls in Knesset

Israel boasts of being the ‘only democracy in the Middle East’, but even members of its own parliament are subject to intolerable harassment and attempts to silence them. **Ken Syme** urges solidarity with Ofer Cassif



**Ofer Cassif: speaks out**

**O**fer Cassif - a Hadash member of Israel's parliament, the Knesset, has been suspended. His offence? Accusing the Israel Defence Forces of committing genocide in Gaza.<sup>1</sup>

Hadash, the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, is, of course, a leftwing coalition in which the ‘official’ Israeli Communist Party plays the leading role. Comrade Cassif serves on its politburo. Hadash, as might be expected, calls for a so-called two state solution in Israel-Palestine and its activists were involved in creating the joint Jewish-Arab anti-occupation movement Omdim Beyachad (Standing Together). Hadash has been standing under that name in elections since 1977 and today has three MKs. The vast bulk of its support comes from Arab Israelis, not least Arab Israeli Christians, though, significantly comrade Cassif himself is Hebrew by nationality.

His suspension comes just a month after the end of his previous six-month suspension for supporting South Africa's case in the International Court of Justice. Comrade Cassif was accused of “undermining the State of Israel's ability to counter allegations of genocide”.<sup>2</sup> In both cases the action taken against comrade Cassif used the ‘Suspension Law’ passed in 2016, allowing the Knesset to expel any member if their actions are deemed to constitute “incitement to racism” or “support for an armed struggle against the state of Israel”. The Suspension Law is generally seen as a legislative attempt to silence anti-Zionist voices, Arab-based organisations and supporters of the Palestinian cause in general.

The Israeli state's attempt to silence any kind of criticism of the Gaza war again manifested itself in recent attempts to impeach Ayman Odeh,<sup>3</sup> another Hadash MK and the leader of the coalition - this time based

on a social media post in January this year, in which he “rejoices” over the release of Israeli and Palestinian prisoners. A Likud MK found this so objectionable that he raised a motion against Ayman Odeh. The vote to impeach him took place on July 14, but fell 17 short of the 90 supermajority required.

His situation attracted the attention of US senators Bernie Sanders, Peter Welch and Chris Van Hollen, who issued a statement on July 13 condemning the move and expressing their solidarity with Ayman Odeh.<sup>4</sup> In reality Bernie Sanders' engagement with comrade Cassif has not been so positive: in December 2023 he did not respond to the comrade's appeal for a ceasefire in Gaza.<sup>5</sup>

Comrade Cassif has been a lifelong anti-Zionist and has consistently spoken out against the war in Gaza. Almost needless to say, he, as with other Hadash MKs and activists, are subjected to constant Shin Bet harassment, questioning and spying. In December 2024 he briefly outlined his political career (including work to secure a Knesset majority for the Oslo accords in the 1990s), when providing written evidence<sup>6</sup> (mainly on Israeli settler violence) to the foreign affairs committee in the House of Commons. In his letter he says:

Since the outbreak of the war, my colleague and I have demanded an immediate end of the bloodshed, the release of all hostages and unlawful detainees, and called time after time for the protection of innocent lives and civilian infrastructure. We have supported every international measure to prevent the ongoing humanitarian calamity, famine and carnage.<sup>7</sup>

In the brief interval between his suspensions from the Knesset, Cassif recorded a conversation with Yanis Varoufakis, in which he stated his

belief that the war in Gaza was not primarily driven by the October 7 attack by Hamas, but it had been used as a pretext for the implementation of a plan developed by the current Israeli finance minister, Bezalel Smotrich, when he was a backbench MK in 2017. This ‘subjugation plan’ can be found in an English translation, where it is titled the ‘Tipping of the scale plan’<sup>8</sup> and the quotes below are taken from that translation.

After protesting the sincerity of his religious convictions, Smotrich begins:

This article is not a religious-faith manifesto, but a realistic, geopolitical and strategic plan. The plan is the result of an analysis of reality and its roots, and underpins factual, historical, democratic, security and political assumptions, leading to a solution that, to the best of my judgment, is the only one that has realistic feasibility - certainly compared to all the solutions proposed over a long period.

Ofer Cassif sees the Smotrich plan as having three key elements:

1. Israel must annex the occupied territories (then meaning the West Bank, now including Gaza), with no rights for Palestinian inhabitants.
2. Palestinians who did not accept their status as subjects would be expelled not just from their homes, but from their homeland.
3. Palestinians who resisted the imposition of this new regime would be killed.

Smotrich concludes his plan:

The Decision Plan is the only plan based on the vision of the Greater Israel. It is the only plan that has not given up on what was until recently the vision of the entire right, and it does not include the definition of any Arab national

entity in the Land of Israel. It is the only plan that is not based on leaving an Arab collective with national aspirations, and for that reason it is the only plan that is based on resolving the conflict and not on maintaining it with varying intensity. And, above all, it is the only one that believes in the possibility of realising the dream of peace and coexistence and is not based on despair from

this dream and its conversion into an impossible separation.

In Cassif's view, security and revenge were only part of the motivation behind the Israeli war on Gaza. It was an opportunity to implement the Smotrich plan - an earlier opportunity having been thwarted by popular opposition to Netanyahu's Judicial Reform programme.

As a hypothesis, it is consistent with what has happened in the course of the Gaza war, and may go some way to explaining what to most of us is the wholly disproportionate Israeli response to the October 7 2023 attack.

Comrade Cassif is very emphatic in his characterisation of the present Israeli administration, which he sees as a “fully fledged fascist government - with even worse elements than fascism”. Some may prefer Varoufakis's view of it as “an alliance of disparate bigots”.

Ofer Cassif deserves our solidarity and support: he is one of the few voices in the Knesset who has consistently spoken out against the Zionist project and has from the beginning argued against the war in Gaza ●

## Notes

1. [www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-07-10/ty-article/premium/knesset-suspends-of-cassif-for-accusing-idf-soldiers-of-committing-genocide-in-gaza/00000197-efc-d976-afbf-fffd32870000](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-07-10/ty-article/premium/knesset-suspends-of-cassif-for-accusing-idf-soldiers-of-committing-genocide-in-gaza/00000197-efc-d976-afbf-fffd32870000).
2. [www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/of-cassif-a-voice-of-reason-suspended-from-israels-knesset](https://www.jewishvoiceforlabour.org.uk/article/of-cassif-a-voice-of-reason-suspended-from-israels-knesset).
3. [www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-07-02/ty-article/premium/ousting-ayman-odeh-from-knesset-is-a-declaration-of-war-on-arabs-in-israel/00000197-c716-d78d-a39f-dfd603170000](https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2025-07-02/ty-article/premium/ousting-ayman-odeh-from-knesset-is-a-declaration-of-war-on-arabs-in-israel/00000197-c716-d78d-a39f-dfd603170000).
4. [www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/news-sanders-welch-van-hollen-issue-statement-of-solidarity-with-mk-ayman-odeh-following-expulsion-efforts-from-the-israeli-parliament](https://www.sanders.senate.gov/press-releases/news-sanders-welch-van-hollen-issue-statement-of-solidarity-with-mk-ayman-odeh-following-expulsion-efforts-from-the-israeli-parliament).
5. [maki.org.il/en/?p=31442](https://maki.org.il/en/?p=31442).
6. [committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/133253/pdf](https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/133253/pdf).
7. I have seen no evidence of a response from the foreign affairs committee.
8. [jewishnetworkforpalestine.uk/Activities/styled-2/Tipping](https://jewishnetworkforpalestine.uk/Activities/styled-2/Tipping).

## Fighting fund

## Open debate

**T**hanks to all those who contributed to the *Weekly Worker* fighting fund this week - you've done a pretty good job. A useful £589 came our way, taking the running total for July up to £1,313.

Mind you, with exactly half the month gone, as I write, we're just slightly below the halfway mark - don't forget that the amount we need to raise each month is now £2,750, so we need to step on the gas just a bit.

But those who contributed over the last week certainly showed us that it can definitely be done. Thank you, MM (£100), PB (£80), AN (£50), TR (£40), TW (£25), OG (£24), SA (£12), PM and CC (£10 each) and SO (£5) - all of those comrades paid either by standing order or a one-off bank transfer.

On top of that were those who clicked on the PayPal button on our website - thanks in particular to comrade BC, who came up with an unusual, but very, very welcome £96 (we'll take it!).

Then there was JC (£60), PM (£50), another PM (£10), JV (£7) and finally comrades AR and RD (£5 each).

All that shows us yet again how much the *Weekly Worker* is appreciated by so many readers. It's just about unique amongst the revolutionary left in providing a forum for open debate - whether you agree with us or not! And that debate is centred on one key question: what does the workers' movement need most of all?

The answer, of course, is a single, genuinely democratic-centralist, Marxist party, which starts by bringing together the best members of the existing revolutionary left in one united organisation. If you agree, do your best to support the *Weekly Worker* ●

**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](https://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate)



## TRADITION

# 139th Big Meeting

David Douglass reports on last Saturday's Durham Miners Gala and the accompanying controversies over Reform, drink and international politics

This year's Gala began against a flurry of controversy and anti-miner, anti-leftist posts on social media - the form is new, but the bellyaching about the miners and the gala is not. We were the 'drunken vandals' who had come to smash the quiet peace of Durham.

I remember the days when the city closed its shops, boarded up the windows of its genteel establishments, while eateries closed their doors to us 'savage and loutish' pitmen. Not so now, and we've become rather more genteel ourselves! The gala has by now become part of the heritage industry (and a colourful Hovis advert!). The 'problem' is that its character is still heart-and-soul political - still raw with class history, anger and memory. Yes, we mark our past - and it still is *our* past: the mining communities, the miners' wives, children, grandchildren and the miners themselves of at least two generations who form the base of this constituency.

My colliery was killed in 2014 along with Kellingley, but there are still about 50,000 miners in minerals, civil engineering and various ores. Many of them earned their pit sense down the coal mines. When a new coal mine at Whitehaven was a real possibility, they needed 500 underground men and some 5,000 applied from all over the country. That was just six years ago. So the gala is still about 'the mining communities' - there were 50 or so brass bands and lots of miners' banners, depicting various scenes of epochal battles and horizons still to bring into focus (63 lodge banners were there - slightly down on last year). Yes, indeed we have lost our 'work selves' - the thing which marks us still as miners, the thing which we will carry to the grave. But we are all pitmen still.

What caused all the fuss this year was Reform UK's sweeping of the municipal elections in Durham City (and Doncaster) to the point where they now run the council. Traditionally the leader of the council has always



On the march once again

been invited to join the guests on the platform. This year Alan Mardghum, the Durham Miners Association general secretary, told the local Reform leader that he was not invited and never would be, as Reform shared nothing in common with the DMA. It may have been wiser to let him quietly take his seat as just a traditional formality, but Alan is not that sort of guy. The gala needs council patronage and rubber-stamping to continue, so watch out for the trouble ahead.

This has been joined by a veritable tidal wave of hostile posts about the gala having lost its meaning and become too political and too 'woke'.

This was highlighted by the decision to allow a contingent of gay activists to march as a section. In the event the section was a small group of mostly old men and women who marched behind 40-year-old 'Gays support the miners' banners from the epochal struggle of 1984-85. They were undoubtedly for the mining community and its struggles.

The other cause of upset was the decision to invite Dr Husam Zomlot, the Palestinian 'ambassador', to speak. The crowd was absolutely with him and his speech was a heartfelt, well delivered one. But it is the 'outrage' that this had nothing to do with the miners, and that international issues were not the stuff of the gala, which really rattled me. We joined the International Brigades to fight fascism in Spain. We supported Irish republicans during numerous struggles for freedom. Galas were wracked by heckling and propaganda around the Vietnam War. Our opposition to the Gulf War was significant and Cuban ambassadors or miners from Asturias have long been features of the gala. Or just read the banners for god's sake. At least three - Chopwell, Bewick Main and Follonsby - have VI Lenin on them, as well as variously Marx and James Connolly, while Hatfield Main has Rosa Luxemburg.

Likewise, there is the charge that there are no miners there any more, so it's not a miners' gala. I confess that I've expressed fears that the TUC will take it over and sanitise it - Tolpuddle it, regiment it, make it all PC - but that hasn't happened yet: it is still very much the miners' day, and I meet up with hundreds of my old comrades and friends and their families. The old democracy of the DMA is gone, speakers are no longer selected by vox pop among the lodges, and some questionable decisions are being made with regard to who and what can be paraded. Like anti-coal, anti-fossil fuels groups, such as Friends of the Earth and Extinction Rebellion, marching with their banners, while I'm told the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) were told they couldn't display photos of Stalin.

Not my pin-up, but who decides?

Turning to this year's gala itself, the sun blazed down - in contrast to last year's torrential rain. Bare-chested young men marched like their fathers had in 1984, while sun tops and shorts were the common feature for the host of young lasses. Meanwhile, old 'Gamgees' like me still wore our traditional black with pocket-watched waistcoats. We couldn't get a consensus on numbers, but there were obviously more than in the drenching rain of last year. About half of what we used to have, I thought, while others thought it was about the same as usual at 150,000-200,000.

The speakers were union leaders Sharon Graham (Unite), Matt Wrack (NASUWT), Eddie Dempsey (RMT), plus Jeremy Corbyn MP, Chris Peace from Orgreave Truth and Justice, and, as I've said, Palestine's ambassador to the UK, Husam Zomlot.

Alan Mardghum set the pace and the tone for the whole platform, his voice boiling with anger - anger at this government, anger at the rise of Reform in our heartlands (but he was very clear in not condemning the voters of Durham, who remain 'our people' - good people). He railed against the slaughter of the innocents in Gaza and the vile nature of the Israeli state. Like many former socialist members of the Labour Party, he has been kicked out. But he tells me personally he still thinks Labour has a chance if it ditches Starmer and his Tory policies.

Corbyn, true to form, does not get rattled, is not given to public anger, and spoke in a quiet, measured tone. He gave nothing away about any possible new party - or the need for one.

Sharon Graham made what I believe was the speech of her life - and very much more my way of thinking. She has had it with Labour and, by extension, any rebrand. She strikes a much bolder syndicalist stance these days - withdrawing membership from Angela Rayner and hinting that the whole bankrolling of the corrupt Labour Party is about to end; that the workers' movement itself is better placed to elaborate our demands and action strategies to obtain them. She strained her voice to breaking point in a passionate condemnation of the capitalist system and the whole political superstructure which supports it. The whole thing gives the lie to the very notion that 'unions aren't political' or that political consciousness can't develop from those unions. The event itself, the nature of the debate - on the platform and among the crowd, in the crammed pubs later - was intensely political, as it is and will be in the unions themselves.

I was first taken to the gala as a bairn in a carrycot, and later went with friends as a teenager. Now I get there in a motorised wheelchair at the age of 77. I've changed, life and work has changed and we all have changed, but it's still in essence the miner's gala.

See you there next year! ●

## Online Communist Forum



Sunday July 20 5pm

**Trump, Patriot missiles and the Ukraine war - political report from CPGB's Provisional Central Committee and discussion**

Use this link to register:  
[communistparty.co.uk/ocf](https://communistparty.co.uk/ocf)

Organised by CPGB: [communistparty.co.uk](https://communistparty.co.uk) and  
Labour Party Marxists: [www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk](https://www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk)  
For further information, email Stan Keable at  
[Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk](mailto:Secretary@labourpartymarxists.org.uk)

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

## 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

**Reactionary and  
capitalist, not  
anti-imperialist  
and progressive**

## Regime change don't come easy

Iran's Islamic Republic survived the 12-day war. Those, including some on the left, who thought it would collapse were wrong. But those on the left who simply tailed the regime were wrong too, argues **Yassamine Mather**

**W**hat is an escalating crisis in the Middle East should not be understood as a struggle between an anti-imperialist Iran against western imperialism and its Israeli ally. Rather there is a conflict between rival capitalist powers, with no socialist pole in sight.

While some voices on the left continue to push narratives about China and Russia leading an anti-imperialist bloc, such a picture collapses under scrutiny. China and Russia are capitalist states pursuing their own capitalist strategic interests. In moments of violent conflict breaking out - such as the Israel-US 12-day war against Iran - China was largely absent. Some claim China helped restrain both Iran and the US, but there is no real evidence that Donald Trump ever planned a full-scale war. Indeed, it was he, using some colourful language, who held back Israel. His ceasefire, even allowing for a telegraphed Iranian retaliation against the US Qatar military base, suggests a broader strategy of containment rather than wanting immediate military escalation.

### Normalisation

Before the events of October 7 2023, there was significant momentum toward regional normalisation through the Abraham Accords. Saudi Arabia was preparing to join other Gulf Cooperation Council states in formalising relations with Israel, encouraged by economic incentives and US mediation. However, the outbreak of war in Gaza and Israel's subsequent genocidal campaign disrupted these plans - not because of a moral awakening, but due to fear of a popular backlash. Mass anger among ordinary Arabs - across Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates - made it politically risky to take the final step toward normalisation. These regimes, authoritarian and deeply unpopular, feared that overt alignment with Israel amidst genocide in Gaza would spark more than unrest.

The Abraham Accords, far from being a diplomatic breakthrough, represent a broader imperialist agenda to solidify US and Israeli hegemony in the region by coopting Arab states. October 7 may have been, as some argue, a desperate move to halt this momentum. Regardless of intention, the result has been the freezing of any normalisation processes.

Israel's long-term objective is finishing Iran as a regional rival. This strategy has unfolded in stages: first by weakening or removing Iran's allies in the region. Gaza has been a central target, and now, as we witness starvation, the potential setting up of concentration camps as a prelude to mass expulsion, Hamas is in no position to defend itself, never mind consider any retaliatory attacks in defence of Iran.

Lebanon has seen a similar approach. Hezbollah, historically backed by Iran, has been targeted through assassinations and military



From the start of the 12-day war people rallied to defend the country

pressure, substantially reducing its capacity to act. In Syria, Turkey has played a crucial role by supporting jihadist factions opposed to Bashar al-Assad, a reluctant Iranian ally. Though Assad was an unreliable partner, his regime provided Iran with strategic depth and access to Israeli borders. Weakening, effectively dismembering, Syria thus directly undermined Iran's regional strength.

Meanwhile, the repackaging of former jihadists, like Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, into respectable political figures acceptable to the west illustrates the monumental cynicism involved. While Israel wants Syria sliced and diced along religious and ethnic lines, the US is looking for engagement with the new Damascus government. Hence, while Israel strikes at the military HQ in Damascus in the name of defending the Druze population, the US urges restraint.

Leaked reports suggest that Benjamin Netanyahu persuaded Trump that a brief, intense bombing campaign - perhaps just a couple of days - could trigger regime change in Iran. However, military strategists were quick to reject such a chimera. Regime change, they reminded Trump, requires a viable alternative regime waiting in the wings and, presumably, boots on the ground, a land invasion and long-term occupation - none of which are feasible in the Iranian context.

Iran's geography, strong sense of national identity and complex state structure render a US invasion near impossible. As a result, Washington and Tel Aviv have pursued 'regime degradation' - a strategy aimed at weakening Iran economically, diplomatically and militarily without resorting to full-scale war.

Iran's nuclear programme is largely a pretext. As Narges Mohammadi, the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize winner, and western diplomats peddle alarmist rhetoric, the real

issue remains Tehran's regional ambitions and influence. Even if Iran completely abandoned its nuclear programme, it would still be targeted. Netanyahu has recently shifted focus to Iran's medium-range ballistic missile capabilities as justification for any renewed aggression.

The underlying motive is to weaken Iran. Even Iran's verbal support for Palestinian resistance is not to be tolerated. In fact, no challenge to the US-Israeli vision of an entirely compliant Middle East is to be allowed.

### Ambivalence

The Islamic regime presides over one of the most neoliberal economies in the region. Clerics, top officials of the Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) and government insiders have massive funds in western banks. Their children often live in the west. They aspire not to ally with Russia or China, but to rejoin the capitalist west, albeit as a junior partner. Alignment with the Brics bloc or Eurasian powers is purely out of necessity, not ideological commitment.

This explains the hollowness of the regime's slogans. Terms like 'imperialism' are deliberately avoided. Instead, for the benefit of its narrow, but not insubstantial, social base, Iran denounces 'western arrogance' - a vague and depoliticised phrase that enables the regime to appear oppositional, while maintaining its capitalist core.

Slogans - like 'Death to America' - are routinely mistranslated and misunderstood. Even the regime now tries to walk them back, adding they only mean 'Down with US power'. This ambiguous posture helps Tehran gain support in the Arab world, while not closing the door to a deal.

Following its retreat from sectarian religious slogans post-October 2023, Iran now promotes an image of Muslim unity and solidarity with the largely Sunni Palestinians. This helps it build soft power in the region, despite its actual policies being

thoroughly opportunistic and deeply repressive at home.

The regime thrives in times of crisis. By portraying itself as under siege, it justifies wage theft, strike-breaking and political repression. Any dissent is labelled as treasonous, particularly during times of an external threat. Nationalism and managed chaos are key tools for survival.

Nevertheless, the collapse of Iran - regardless of who governs it - would benefit no-one except the imperialist powers. Turning Iran into another Syria, another Libya, another Iraq would only fuel internecine civil wars, create proxy warlords and throw back any hope of reviving the working class movement.

However, all talk of imminent regime collapse, often echoed by sections of the exiled left, is just nonsense. Despite internal fractures and massive popular discontent, the Islamic Republic remains intact due to powerful ideological and economic glue. The economy is run by networks of corruption tied to sanctions. Sanctions have created black markets, and the IRGC profits massively from this illicit economy. This mafioso state structure has deep roots not only in Iran, but joins with segments of Persian Gulf capital, particularly in the UAE and Dubai.

The fantasy that the regime will collapse due to its unpopularity ignores the whole architecture of oppression, ideology and material interest. The Iranian left has been brutally decimated, leaving no organised alternative internally. Banking on spontaneous uprisings is not a strategy - it is an excuse to believe in and take comfort from a fantasy. Peddling such politics is certainly to mislead, to disarm, to betray the left and the cause of the working class.

It is right for the left in Iran to defend the country, its unity, its people, against Israeli-US aggression. But this defence can only be effective, can only be principled, if it is *revolutionary* defence. In other words, the best defence of Iran lies with democracy,

national self-determination and the working class. Certainly not relying on the ayatollahs and the military prowess of the IRGC.

### Global setting

Iran's admission into the Brics was not a victory: it was a last resort. Neither China nor Russia will defend Iran in the event of war. Vladimir Putin has explicitly opposed a nuclear Iran and has recently strengthened ties with Israel. China's economic relations with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Israel far outweigh those with Iran. Tehran can offer cheap oil, nothing much more. The Brics relationship is one-sided: Iran gives, others take. The Iranian leadership is painfully aware of this, but it has few alternatives.

The US and Israel have invested heavily in rehabilitating the image of the Pahlavi dynasty. Reza Pahlavi, the exiled crown prince, was featured on CNN, BBC Persian, Euronews and other outlets ... as if he were a real player, not a glove puppet. Israel and Saudi-funded Persian language media fuelled fantasies of his return. Some in the diaspora and the middle class were seduced by this mirage. But any limited support he might have had inside Iran vanished once he spoke out publicly in favour of the Israeli bombardment of Iranian cities. Civilians resented being considered mere collateral damage.

Even in Kurdish areas - where separatist tendencies are sometimes manifested - popular sentiment remains anti-regime, not secessionist. People demand rights and democracy, not a return to monarchy or foreign-imposed solutions.

Israel's military strategy of decapitating the leadership - assassinating IRGC commanders, military tops and nuclear scientists - has proven ineffective. The Islamic Republic is not a simple top-down state. While the supreme leader is a central figure, 70% of the state apparatus operates with relative autonomy. Power is networked, not hierarchical.

Yet, despite surviving the battering meted out by Israel and the US, the regime is fragile. Its military infrastructure is vulnerable. The government has temporarily softened domestic repression, but this is likely a short-term tactic to consolidate power before re-imposing restrictions.

If new waves of protest arise, and they surely will, there remains hope for genuine regime change from below. But without an organised left, the danger is that change will come from above - whether through foreign sponsored reformists, army generals or far right clerics.

Comrades on the left, both inside the country and living in exile, must abandon fantasies of easy wins and soberly face reality: we will not overcome a highly oppressive religious, military, capitalist state without working class political struggle, working class organisation and working class internationalism. Anything else is delusional ●