

Hallo Daniel

Your probably right. At least for the moment. We haven't got anywhere and aren't going anywhere.

So to make our position clear.

We don't think we can have anything approaching a political relationship.

Meanwhile, you are, of course, free to write in the letters pages.

Best wishes

Jack Conrad
(for CPGB)

Jack:

Rest assured, I have NOT come around to your point of view on the "genocide" question. I still regard the term as a meaningless epithet, much like "war crime" or "terrorism." Yes, exploding a bomb on a crowded bus is reprehensible. But so far no one has been able to explain why using an F-16 to pulverize a crowded refugee camp is any less so. If, as you say, the actual scale of killings doesn't matter as long as "there is/was the intention of destroying an entire people or the part thereof," then Israel could just as easily accuse Hamas of genocide thanks to Ghazi Hamad's pledge to do Oct. 7 "again and again." A movement whose sole slogan is "stop the genocide" is one that suffers from debilitating weakness. I don't care if it has staged "15 huge national demonstrations" and has gotten five "Gaza" MPs elected. Like all bourgeois protest movements, it is going nowhere fast.

And I also don't care if you have dropped me as a WW contributor or "featured CU speaker." If WW had flunked the Ukraine test by, say, supporting NATO, I wouldn't want to be associated with it. Fortunately, you didn't so I was happy to continue contributing. But you have failed the latest test, which is no less important. The only article I am interested in writing for WW at this point is a merciless dissection of the entire war, one that highlights the essential symmetry between Zionism and the Muslim Brotherhood / Hamas and argues that there is no way out of the nightmare unless both are overthrown. But I am quite sure this is one Gaza analysis you will never run.

As for comparisons with the Easter Uprising or Warsaw ghetto rebellion, all I can say for the umpteenth time is that they did not engage in bloody ethnic reprisals – and that, if they had, we would view them through a very different lens. When a botched Irish Brotherhood prison break resulted in 12 civilian deaths in London in 1867, Marx and Engels were furious. The deaths were entirely inadvertent, yet the former called it "a great folly," adding: "The London masses, who have shown much sympathy for Ireland, will be enraged by it and driven into the arms of the government party. One cannot expect the London proletarians to let themselves be blown up for the benefit of Fenian emissaries. Secret, melodramatic conspiracies of this kind are, in general, more or less doomed to failure." Engels agreed, replying a few days later that the Fenians were "fanatics," "asses," and "cannibals."

Imagine their outrage if Irish nationalists had *intentionally* killed 100 times that number? It would have been boundless. While we should still defend such forces against British imperialism, we should simultaneously criticize them in the most stringent way possible. Mass murder is not the socialist way. It is a dead end that can only lead to ruin for all concerned, the oppressed most especially. That is something we should say over and over again no matter how much it upsets peace protesters who don't want to hear anything negative about their beloved "resistance." If they insist on burying their head in the sand with regard to Hamas, there's nothing we can do. But we shouldn't help them via a policy of strategic silence.

You insist on describing the Oct. 7 fighters as "heroic," stating: "When thousands of fighters prepare over the course of a year and eventually set off on a mission in which most expect to die, what should we call it? Cowardly?" But would you describe the 9/11 hijackers as "heroic"? Certainly, they had guts. But the dictionary defines "hero" as someone "who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities." I don't find anything the least bit noble about the 9/11 hijackers, and I don't find anything

noble about the Oct. 7 fighters either. Your persistent use of this term is an example of your ongoing apologetics. It is as un-Marxists as it gets.

Re your statement: “The aim of October 7 was not to kill as many Israelis as possible. No, it was to destroy a series of specific targets associated with the Israeli structure of oppression: border posts, army bases, police stations, etc. Meeting a totally unexpected lack of military opposition some fighters went on the rampage. They certainly appear not to have been under any real-time central command and control.”

This is a faith-based statement that is devoid of evidence except for a documentary by an outlet (Al Jazeera) known for its pro-MB sympathies. Otherwise, we have no information as to what the fighters’ instructions were. Still, considering that the first wave of airborne militants killed some 350 unarmed young people at a music festival, I think we can safely assume that sparing civilian lives was not among them. There is absolutely no reason to absolve Hamas of responsibility for such atrocities.

Re: “You seem to be suggesting that a Hamas attack *within* Gaza is legitimate. A Hamas *outside* Gaza is illegitimate. That is not a Marxist approach.” Wrong. Marxists distinguish between offensive and defensive operations. Pancho Villa shooting up Columbus, New Mexico, in 1916 was one thing. Shooting back at Jack Pershing’s forces once they invaded Mexico in response was quite another. Marxists oppose one but support the other even while recognizing that Villa was a primitive brigand who brought his countrymen nothing but misery. Anyone interested in writing about modern Mexican politics should of course deal with the pernicious role of US imperialism. But he (or she) should also discuss the pernicious legacy that Villa and his ilk left behind. The symmetries are all too abundant in this instance as well. We should not shrink from pointing them out.

Finally, my use of “viler and more reactionary” is not a case of “plucking a disembodied quote” out of thin air. The phrase was central to Trotsky’s argument that the fact that China was poor and undeveloped did not make the native bourgeoisie any more worthy of sympathy or support. To the contrary, it meant that the native bourgeoisie was even *more* contemptible than that of more advanced countries such as Russia. He did not oppose temporary alliances, but criticized the Stalin-Bukharin coalition for failing to draw an unambiguous class line between the KMT and CCP. Thanks to your apologetics, this is something that you repeatedly fail to do with regard to Hamas.

Sorry if I use KMT as “a swear word.” Considering that Chiang Kai-shek murdered thousands of Chinese workers – not to mention the 20,000 or so Taiwanese he slaughtered in 1947 – it’s hard for me to do otherwise.

“You want to start on October 7,” you say. “Marxists need to go much further back. Balfour and 1917, the 1947-48 war, etc, etc.” Yes, one side wants to talk only about Oct. 7 while the other wants to talk about everything before or after Oct. 7 but not the 7th itself. But Marxists eschew such blinders. We want to discuss everything involving not only the Zionists but the Palestinians as well. And we want to do so openly and objectively while letting the chips fall where they may. There’s plenty of wrongdoing to go around. That’s something we need to point out.

Unfortunately, I think this exchange is going in circles. Whenever I say something negative about Hamas, you respond with comparisons to Lincoln, the Easter Rising, etc. that are all designed to get it off the hook. But why not toss in the Sermon on the Mount, the Code of Hammurabi, or something else equally ridiculous? If there was ever a case of a declining rate of profit, this discussion is it. So let me know if you want me to write the above-mentioned article about MB-Zionist symmetries. I think it would be a means of sparking a much-needed debate. (Don’t worry – I’m not holding my breath.) Otherwise, I think this back-and-forth has accomplished all that it possibly can.

Dan.

Jack:

I think this exchange has helped clarify our differences. **Good. Hopefully areas agreement too.**

You characterize Oct. 7 as “a heroic act of defiance ... an act of desperation.” You make all sorts of absurd comparisons with Lincoln, the Warsaw ghetto, and the 1916 Easter Uprising in order to put a positive spin on Hamas’s actions.

Don’t think the comparisons with the Warsaw ghetto and the 1916 Easter rising are in the least absurd. Like October 7 2023 they were heroic and born out of desperation. Both amounted to acts of revolutionary suicide. We should also note that October 7 not only involved fighters from Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The PFLP too was an integral part of the operation.

As for Lincoln and the Yankee north. The point being made here, is that his administration was popularly elected and yet also served to oppress those whom elected him: mainly workers and small farmers. You were saying, remember, that Marxists were obliged to simply call for a revolutionary overthrow of Hamas. I was simply trying to establish that things were not necessarily so simple. That

Marx-Engles could and did support the north and envisage the overthrow of capitalist rule ... after its victory in the civil war.

I see this as an outrageous capitulation to a movement that is “viler and more reactionary” (to quote Trotsky) than even political formations like the Kuomintang. **To say October 7 had parallels with other ‘heroic acts of defiance’ is not a capitulation of any sort. BTW. You are using Kuomintang as a swear word, plucking a disembodied quote from Trotsky. Worth pointing out then, the revolutionary origins of KMT and cooperation with Comintern in the early 1920s and the role of comrades such as Mikhail Borodin. Undoubtedly Kuomintang established a mass base with the Xinhai 1911 revolution and the overthrow of the Qing dynasty.**

Hence, it was surely correct for the Soviet Union to defend the KMT regime against warlords and foreign colonial powers. The CCP was encouraged to form a united front, that provided it maintained political and organisational independence. As far as I know, nether Lenin nor Trotsky objected to this course.

However, it is clear that persuading the CCP to drop criticisms of Kuomintang, admitting it into Comintern as an affiliate in 1926 and electing Chiang Kai-shek as an honorary member of the ECCI was rank opportunism. We can leave aside 1927. I presume we once again agree here.

The point I’m really making, is that we have to look at things in the round. Just denouncing Hamas as ‘vile’ and ‘reactionary’ - which is undoubtedly true - is not enough. Eg, we need to take full account of its role in the resistance movement, its mass base in the oppressed Palestinian population and its standing in the wider region.

Oct. 7 was not heroic in the least - unless, that is, you find something heroic in bloody ethno-nationalist reprisals. **When thousands of fighters prepare over the course of a year and eventually set off on a mission in which most expect to die, what should we call it? Cowardly? The aim of October 7 was not to kill as many Israelis as possible. No, it was to destroy a series of specific targets associated with the Israeli structure of oppression: border posts, army bases, police stations, etc. Meeting a totally unexpected lack of military opposition some fighters went on the rampage. They certainly appear not to have been under any real-time central command and control.**

I see it as irresponsible adventurism at best and, at worst, a deliberate attempt to bring down Zionist wrath on the Palestinian masses so as to generate thousands of martyrs and thereby lay the foundation of pan-Islamic jihad. If so, the strategy has been a pipedream that ignores the entire course of Mideast political development over the last 50 or 60 years. As any real Marxist could have foreseen, it has not sparked a pan-Islamic revolt and has done nothing but bring down ruin on the Palestinian masses.

What were the immediate results of Easter 1916 and Warsaw 1943? Certainly wrath was brought down by the oppressor. Britain shot leaders and imprisoned the rest. However, the real military struggle kicked-off in 1919 and only ended in the 1921 truce. Well over 2,000 died. Many more were killed in Warsaw. The ghetto was systematically destroyed block by block. On a few survived. As for Hamas. Do we really expect it to adopt a Marxist strategy of revolutionary patience. And, if it did, it would, anyway, be an Islamic strategy of (counter)revolutionary patience.

Hamas is now engaged in a resistance campaign as it battles Israeli troops inside Gaza - and, to be sure, all genuine Marxists must defend Gaza from Zionist attack.

Okay, here we definitely agree. **But resistance takes many forms, including defence and attack. Two sides of the same coin.**

October 7 was an attack, that is beyond dispute. However, it happened in the context of decades of Zionist settler-colonialism and more recently siege warfare. Those under siege often organise surprise sorties against their besiegers. We do not, however, fetishize who attacked or who counterattacked. Nor do we fetishize where an attack takes place.

You seem to be suggesting that a Hamas attack *within* Gaza is legitimate. A Hamas *outside* Gaza is illegitimate. That is not a Marxist approach. Instead we ask ‘who is the oppressed and who are the oppressors’. On October 7 you want to headline Hamas as ‘vile and reactionary’. On October 8 you want to headline the Zionist attack and defending Gaza. Remember, you said that under no circumstances “must any equation be made between Hamas and the Palestinian masses.” But who is doing most of the fighting on the Gazan side? Hamas, of course.

War is the continuation of politics by other means. October 7 was a continuation of October 6 and October 8 was the continuation of October 7. That equally applies to Zionism.

But Marxists know that we should present the whole truth rather than cherry-pick the evidence – and that they must therefore point out that the party that is resisting the IDF now is the same one that sparked the IDF onslaught in the first place.

No, not the correct approach. You want to start on October 7. Marxists need to go much further back. Balfour and 1917, the 1947-48 war, etc, etc.

Your statement that “Hamas was the choice of the biggest bloc of the Palestinian electorate in January 2006 (and has gained popularity in Gaza and the West Bank since October 7)” is no more than half correct. Yes, Hamas won a plurality nearly 20 years ago, but a lot has happened in the years. I’m sure that its standing inside Gaza has plunged as the catastrophe has deepened, a judgment that the latest press accounts seem to support.

Who knows about its standing in Gaza? From the polling evidence that I’ve read, albeit thin, their support is being maintained, maybe even extended.

I agree support may be growing on the West Bank – press reports certainly suggest that is the case. But if so, it’s due to four factors: the remorseless Zionist land campaign, the reactionary nature of the PA, the absence of any Marxist alternative, and the realization among young Palestinians militants that, with all other options exhausted, armed resistance is the only remotely conceivably way out.

Exactly! We agree! This has been my argument all along.

But Marxists must point out the grim truth that this is illusory. **Again, we agree.** Not only does a military solution not exist, but any attempt at a military solution can only deepen the impasse Palestinians find

themselves in. Absolutely everything that has occurred since Oct. 7 supports this point of view. **Again agreed! Have a look at my *Weekly Worker* supplement and many previous articles.**

A couple of other points:

- I don't see how a statement that Israel's goal is military and that "eliminating Hamas as a political force is secondary" amounts in any way to "a capitulation to Zionism." As is frequently pointed out, Hamas is *politically* advantageous in certain respects from a Zionist perspective, which is why Israel encouraged Islamic fundamentalism in the first place. But Hamas as a *military* threat is another story, which is why the IDF is determined to eliminate its military capabilities. And I don't see how this statement constitutes "a capitulation to Zionism" since I oppose the Israeli military effort. Language like this is not helpful.

What constitutes a "capitulation to Zionism" is painting October 7 as an inexcusable adventure against which the IDF is responding, albeit with unnecessary savagery, in an attempt to prevent a repetition. As you rightly say: in "the absence of any Marxist alternative, and the realization among young Palestinians militants that, with all other options exhausted, armed resistance is the only remotely conceivably way out."

- The Warsaw ghetto was not a modern Masada. While the ghetto fighters certainly understood the propaganda value of an uprising, their chief goal was escape, something that a small number of partisans actually succeeded in doing. Of course, this had propaganda value too since escapees would then be able to spread the truth about what had gone on inside.

Don't think 1943 was militarily a serious escape attempt. Nor was October 7 2023. Propaganda, yes. The truth about inside the ghetto was, surely, widely known, if one wanted to listen to the Polish and the Polish-Jewish resistance movement. Same with Gaza.

- "[I]n my assessment," you state, "it [the Zionist onslaught] is about creating the conditions for a second Nakba. That is what the coalition government wants to achieve and thinks it can achieve ... with a second term Trump presidency." This is woefully off-base. "Nakhba" means catastrophe, which is already upon us – not Nakhba II, but Nakhba squared. Conceivably, the Zionists may opt for 1948-style mass expulsion as a final solution. But leaving the Palestinians in situ hardly seems better since they will be reduced to slavery as they try to eke out an existence amid the ruins. This is what the Hamas dictatorship has wrought – utter bleakness whichever way you look.

You want to primarily blame Hamas for the plight of the Palestinian people in Gaza. You might as well primarily blame the 'official' Communist Party, PFLP, DFLP, Fatah, etc. I, on the other hand, want to primarily blame Zionism and its imperial enablers: Britain, France and now the US.

- The "15 huge national demonstrations, student encampments and the election of five 'Gaza' MPs" that you cite are not unimportant. Certainly, they have helped change the nature of the debate. But we should also point out that such protests suffer from a substantial weakness, which is their inability to come to grips with Hamas. It is also worth pointing out that they have done nothing to halt the fighting. As you point out, the situation will go from bad to worse if Trump is elected. This alone is why we must adopt a more critical stance.

Don't think the major weakness of the pro-Palestine movement is Hamas. Nor should we expect mass demonstrations in Britain to stop the fighting in Gaza. We need a party, a mass Communist Party in the UK, in the USA ... and in Arabia. That is the main question.

To sum up, the Gaza war is a catastrophe in every sense of the word – military, political, moral, and humanitarian. It is the gift that keeps on giving in that Gaza is now an open wound that can only spread death and destruction throughout the broader region. It is an emergency that Marxists should be endeavouring to stop. Tired old thinking is not helpful.

We are all against 'tired old thinking'. My supplement mapped out the sort of thinking that is needed.

Footnote: given your non-mention of genocide in the above text, I take it that we have arrived at some sort of broad agreement on the issue? Trust so. But, I would too, urge a rethink on the above too. Hamas is reactionary, of course. Indeed we have criticised Hamas and the SWP, etc, for tailing it. However, especially as we live in the belly of the beast, we have a fundamental duty to stand with the oppressed Palestinians against Zionist settler-colonialism and its enablers.

Nuance, placing a particular emphasis here or there, coming at things from a different angle, all are more than welcome in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*. However, we don't want to be seen to line up with Israel and the Zionist lobby, especially when it comes to making Hamas the prime blame target, or even an equal blame target. Nor do we want to be seen to be denying ethnic cleansing and its logical outcome, which is downright genocidal.

That is why we decided not to run your genocide article, drop you as a *Weekly Worker* contributor and featured CU speaker.

I think we are slowly but surely arriving at sufficient agreement on absolute basics, so that we can soon move on. I always enjoy reading your *Weekly Worker* articles and appreciate your OCF contributions. Disagreement is natural and healthy, however we must set definite boundaries, as I am sure you appreciate.

Look forward to your next response.

In solidarity
Jack Conrad

Hallo Danael

Yes, the discussion is worth continuing.

Once again, I'll comment on what you are saying in red:

Your last letter

Jack:

I'm not sure this discussion is worth continuing, but I'll give it one last try by making my points as clearly and succinctly as I can. To wit:

1. Hamas is bourgeois. As such, it is the class enemy. The Marxist movement may enter into temporary alliances with the class enemy as part of the anti-colonial struggle. **Agreed**. But it must maintain freedom of both operation and criticism and, hence, must explain at every turn why it is allying with the native bourgeoisie even though proletarian internationalism is the only force capable of achieving national liberation. **Freedom of criticism, yes. Not sure about national liberation. Of course, it depends on what you means by national liberation. I would, for example, say that India has achieved national liberation. It is no longer part of the British empire and is no longer subordinate politically to Britain.** Similarly, the Marxist movement must withdraw from any such alliance if it in any point threatens to turn against the working class. **Agreed**.
2. Freedom of criticism means being fully open and frank whenever the comprador class engages in some reactionary or adventurist action that threatens to undermine the freedom struggle. Workers be kept informed so they can fully understand what is going on about them. **Yes, but to make the obvious point, we live in the imperialist heartlands. The US, and to a lesser extent the UK, are diplomatically backing and militarily enabling Israel in Gaza. That means we have particular responsibilities. Petty bourgeois forces are more than prone to engage in what you call "adventurist action". The Easter Uprising in 1916 comes to mind (petty bourgeois and working class leadership). Here in the UK, the Labour Party was quick to denounce this crazy act of revolutionary suicide. Elsewhere centrists held it up as an example of the dead end of nationalism. Lenin, rightly or wrongly - I think rightly - denounced those denouncing it as a "putsch". He denounced, instead, Britain and the Labour social-imperialists. Not the brave Irish rebels (who were more than open to criticism, after all leave aside Patrick Pearse, James Connolly hatched more a conspiracy than a popular uprising). It was an act of revolutionary suicide. You previously raised, *as a model*, the 1943 Warsaw ghetto rising. Militarily it stood no chance whatsoever. It too was an act of revolutionary suicide and certainly brought terrible retribution and suffering. Personally, however, I would not dream of denouncing what was a heroic act of defiance.**
3. Above all, socialists must never lie, prevaricate, or try to cover up native-bourgeois misdeeds. If a Hamas leader like Ghazi Hamad promises to "do this [i.e. Oct. 7] again and again" because that "we are proud to sacrifice martyrs," we must not make excuses for him on the grounds that he is engaging in "largely totally empty" rhetoric so as to "bolster morale." Rather, we should take him at his word and point out the extreme danger of such rhetoric. Anything less is a betrayal of the working class. **Don't agree. October 7 was an act of desperation. What do we expect after years of siege and decades of oppression. We should, do and have criticised Hamas - fine. But we should, do and have put prime blame on Zionism and its imperial enablers. And frankly, anyone who thinks another October 7 is on the cards is living in cuckoo land. There is now a death toll of at least 38,000 Palestinians in Gaza. The IDF can attack what it wants, where it wants and when it wants. That Hamas can fight back at all is almost miraculous.**
4. Sorry, but your definition of genocide – "the intentional destruction of a people in whole or part" – does little to clear up the confusion. **No, intention matters. If a state starts killing with the intention of destroying an entire people that constitutes a particular sort of crime: genocide. Eg, Nazi Germany with Jews and Roma (with plenty of evidence dating right back to *Mein Kampf*). What does "part" mean – one percent? three? thirty? Could be one percent ... if there is/was the intention of destroying an entire people (or the part thereof which inhabits your state, or is controlled by your state). Were the Anglo-American terror raids during World War II genocide? No, because, as far as I know, while they were morally, even militarily, unjustifiable, the intention was not to exterminate the entire German nation. How about the British**

blockade of Germany during World War I, which may have killed half a million people? **Same answer.** Or any number of medieval sieges aimed at inducing disease and starvation? Indeed, can you think of a war that, under your definition, is NOT in some way genocidal? If everything is genocidal, then nothing is. **No, that's like saying murder, is murder, is murder. There are different kinds of murder (in the US first, second and third degree). There are also different kinds of mass killings, eg, Stalin's purges and the Hitler's regime's programme of killing all Jews in German occupied Europe between 1943-45.**

5. Shocking as it may sound, I don't think Israel's goal is simply to kill civilians. Rather, I think its goal is to eliminate Hamas as a viable military force and, in its utter ruthlessness, does not particularly care about the thousands of civilians who have gotten in the way. Eliminating Hamas as a *political* force is secondary.

Disagree. But it's a judgement. IDF spokespeople say Israel cannot defeat Hamas, neither militarily nor politically (it has, after all a strong base in the West Bank too). But it is not a question of killing as many civilians as possible either. Clearly not the case. Otherwise we would have a million dead. Not tens of thousands. However, in my assessment, it is about creating the conditions for a second Nakba. That is what the coalition government wants to achieve and thinks it can achieve ... with a second term Trump presidency. Of course, I'm not insisting on this line. It's a judgement, yes, though, based on an assessment of the political economy of Zionist settler colonialism. But with your line, we would effectively line up behind Netanyahu and his US and UK enablers; ie, the October 7 attack was, in your words, an inexcusable adventure, and, therefore, in self-defence, all Israel is doing is trying to eliminate the Hamas threat militarily (but is going about things in a ham-fisted fashion). A capitulation to Zionism.

6. Your use of the term "resistance" is also less than crystal clear. Yes, we consider Hamas to be part of the resistance to the degree it helps defend Gaza against the Zionist onslaught. **It is resistance, we do not need to start by calculating degrees.** But Oct. 7 was not resistance but the opposite, i.e. an act of adventurism that could only bring down death and destruction on the heads of the Palestinians. This all-important fact must not be covered up or excused away. **No, I disagree. The opposite of resistance is collaboration. October 7 was hardly that. Desperate, militarily, yes, desperate politically, yes. The Palestinian people were in danger of being negotiated away, their land taken bit by bit, the population confined to every smaller reservations. In Gaza they lived/live in a giant open air prison. You have cited the Warsaw ghetto uprising of 1943. Was October 7 really that different?**

7. Neither must any equation be made between Hamas and the Palestinian masses. **Clearly untrue. Hamas was the choice of the biggest bloc of the Palestinian electorate in January 2006 (and has gained popularity in Gaza and the West Bank since October 7).** This is what you do when you declare "that the oppressed will resist their oppression and that the methods they choose are often horrendous." Hamas is not the oppressed - it is the oppressor. The Palestinian masses suffer under a dual dictatorship of the Muslim Brotherhood and Zionism. **Not a good idea to draw an equals sign between Hamas and Zionism. Zionism is a colonial-settler movement imposed on the Palestinian population (supported, yes, by an overwhelming majority of the Hebrew population). There is a fundamental difference between Hamas and Zionism. If we don't recognise that, then we would discount all wars as being illegitimate, well, if they were conducted by a bourgeois state of some kind or another. There is, for example, no doubt that Abraham Lincoln's administration was an elected oppressor regime, but that did not stop Marx and Engels supporting the north in the civil war. We certainly need to distinguish between oppressed nations (including their leadership) and oppressor nations (including their leadership). The purpose of international socialist revolution is to overthrow both. Of course, that hardly needs saying. The working class needs to take the lead in the Palestinian national liberation struggle and, yes, that can involve temporary, episodic, alliances with Hamas, but nothing more. It is a reactionary movement ... as stated in my latest article, 'Searching for solutions' and in many more articles besides.**

All of which strikes me as fully in keeping with Lenin's 1920 call "for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries." If you can see yourself to agreeing to at least some of the points, then I think the discussion should continue. Otherwise, I'm afraid it's at an end.

Dan.

So Daniel, we can agree on some things. Indeed we can agree on many things. But carrying an article, dismissing the idea of genocide as "garbage", is not something we are prepared to countenance, especially given what is going on right now in Gaza ... and the impact that this has had on our domestic politics with the clamp down on free speech, 15 huge national demonstrations, student encampments and the election of five 'Gaza' MPs on July 4. As said, I think you are wrong on a whole number of other issues and these, given an overall balance, we are more than prepared to debate in letters, OCF, etc.

Your first letter

Hallo Daniel

For the sake of clarity I'll answer your points in red:

A reply to Jack Conrad:

Dear comrade:

Thanks for your letter. It is very helpful in clarifying areas of agreement and ... disagreement. But if you go back and re-read my article, I think you will notice two things. One is that I did not criticize the concept of genocide merely because a right-wing Zionist created it. Rather, I described the various ways in which it is inherently contradictory. To wit:

- The doctrine is nationalist and “racialist” in that elevates the *genos* over the people who comprise it.
- It is inhumane in that it implies that killing six million members of different ethnic groups is somehow not as bad as killing six million members of just one.
- It suffers from a numbers problem in which it is unclear what portion of a *genos* has to suffer before the genocide threshold is crossed.
- It is culturally conservative because holds that national churches are also inviolate.
- It is also conservative in that it inveighs against alcohol, pornography and other foreign influences that supposedly sap the national will.

Your letter mentions none of these arguments – why?

Well, because as I said, Marxists are not tied to this or that establishment/UN/Zionist definition, we can use something simple, something straightforward or develop our own. How about ‘genocide is the intentional destruction of a people in whole or part’. What I stressed is that there is no need to reject the concept of genocide in toto because it has reactionary origins. That is what all the stuff about first, second and third degree murder was all about. Eg, we do not reject the concept of manslaughter because of its specific historic origins in ancient Athens.

The second thing you will notice is that nowhere did I specifically say the word is *verboten*. I’m willing to grant that my invocation of the GIGO principle was on the algebraic side and that I was over-emphatic in stating that concept “imposes a reactionary frame of reference wherever it is applied.” The word “wherever” is clearly too strong. So I exaggerated in the heat of the moment, for which I apologize.

Accepted. That is exactly what I was trying to establish.

But the issue reminds me of a WW article in February in which someone named Thomas Suárez declared:

“...I do not like the term, ‘anti-Semitism’, and think it should be dropped in favour of ‘anti-Jewish bigotry.’ The use of a dedicated term for bigotry against Jews – as opposed to bigotry against anybody else – feeds into the notion of Jewish exceptionalism. It is also illogical and inaccurate in its use of the term ‘Semitic’; and above all, for reasons I will explain, the term ‘anti-Semitism’ aids Israeli impunity; it is an asset in its wielding of the smear of anti-Jewish bigotry to silence critics.”

The WW editorial leadership apparently found nothing wrong with Suárez’s word-play even though I thought it was juvenile and politically loaded in that its purpose was clearly to dismiss, in the most condescending manner possible, fears that the Gaza war might lead to an upsurge in anti-Semitism. However, Suárez went on to say: “But I will continue to use the word ‘anti-Semitism’ here to avoid distracting from the larger issue at hand.”

We do not take political responsibility for Thomas Suárez. Rejecting anti-Semitism because it ‘exceptionalises’ Jews is facile, given that Jew have been exceptionalised, above all in Europe, and, of course, Nazi Germany. Rejecting anti-Semitism as a term because of Israeli/Zionist ideology is clearly a political misjudgment - throwing out the baby with the bathwater. More than that, is needlessly hands a weapon of Israeli/Zionist ideologues.

If he is willing to grant that “anti-Semitism” still has use value despite what he regards as inherent semantic difficulties, then I suppose I should do the same. Marxists are free to use “genocide” as far as I’m concerned provided they are fully cognizant of its difficulties and limitations.

Good.

But that is not how the word is being used today. Rather, it is being used as a debate-stopper. Once one agrees that Israel is guilty of what the UN classifies as the crime of crimes, then analysis and discussion disappear and politics give way to simple-minded moralism.

Yes, words will be used and misused.

This is why the concept – not just its history and meaning but its *use* – requires interrogation. The purpose of my article was to begin the process. Your goal, apparently, is to stop it in its tracks.

No, but we do not want to be seen to be rejecting the concept. Not least given the nature of the Zionist project in Palestine and the current reality, especially in Gaza.

Your own letter shows the problems at hand. You write that “democratic opinion has mobilised throughout the world and is charging Israel with carrying out or preparing a genocide in Gaza.” Carrying out or preparing – which is it? Is genocide an act or merely an intention? You continue: “Israel is a particular form of settler-colonialism: it is a work colony, an exclusion colony. That means getting rid of the indigenous population by one means or another.” Does that mean that Zionism has been genocidal from its inception, which is to say from the moment the first settlers began arriving in the 1880s?

Zionism’s original aim, its programmatic intention, was to establish a work colony. Do not think there is any doubt about that. However, separating the indigenous population from the land went from a steady trickle in the 1920s and 30s and became a flood with 1947-48. Saying this has nothing to do with moralism.

Suárez would no doubt agree. But moralism of this sort leads to a problem. If genocide is an eternal by-product of Zionism, then the implication is that the Gaza war does not represent anything new, but is merely a variation on an age-old theme. This leads to a curious kind of complacency that Moshé Machover gave vent to a few days after the Oct. 7 raid. As he put it:

“Paradoxically Israel has no real interest in annihilating Hamas. What would be the alternative if Hamas was completely destroyed? Who would govern Gaza? ... Therefore I believe that the most probable scenario will be an Israeli land incursion into the Gaza Strip with a view to destroying as much as possible, killing as many Palestinians as possible and then withdrawing and declaring that revenge has been exacted.”

We shall see.

Subsequent events have shown this up for the nonsense that it is. Those of us whose thinking is not quite as static knew all too well from the beginning that the Israeli response would not be another case of “mowing the lawn,” but something new: total warfare aimed at eradicating Hamas as a viable military force regardless of the consequences for the broader population. Annihilating Hamas was indeed the goal. This is why Gaza now represents a political emergency of the first order – and why we must look at the crisis with fresh eyes. Marching about with the same tired old slogans will not do. Hurling the same old terms of abuse will not do either.

My own assessment is that annihilating Hamas is a nonsense. IDF spokesperson Daniel Harari made this perfectly clear: “This business of destroying Hamas, making Hamas disappear - it’s simply throwing sand in the eyes of the public.” As he explained, in a June 19 interview: “Hamas is an idea, Hamas is a party. It’s rooted in the hearts of the people - anyone who thinks we can eliminate Hamas is wrong,” Netanyahu knows it too. But he cannot say it. His aim is, though, to keep the war going till at least November-January. Firstly, because of the possibility of a Trump presidency is very real; secondly, because he needs a war to keep out of jail (note the latest arguments of his lawyers saying he cannot possibly testify in his corruption trial till March 2025 because of the war). But there is a bigger aim: getting rid of the biggest number of Palestinians from Gaza that circumstances allow.

I also pointed out in my article that tagging Israel with the crime of crimes makes everyone else look good in comparison and hence leads to apologetics Hamas’s behalf. We thus hear that Oct. 7 amounted to a “jailbreak” (as Mike Macnair put in WW on May 16), or that atrocities were “undoubtedly hugely exaggerated,” as your letter now states. Both statements are wrong. Ordinary Palestinians are undoubtedly desperate to break free of the Gaza prison. But we should oppose an equation of ordinary Palestinians with Hamas. For Sinyar & Co., Oct. 7 was not a jailbreak but a raid whose purpose was to inflict mass casualties and bring back as many hostages as possible for use as bargaining chips. As for “hugely exaggerated,” the Al Jazeera documentary that you specifically praised at an OCF not long ago spoke of no more than two or three dozen Israeli deaths that may have been due to friendly fire. This means that Israeli statistics are 97 or 98 percent accurate.

The aim of Hamas was indeed to put the Palestine question firmly back on the diplomatic agenda. In that, it has succeeded. The killings, hostages, etc, are a secondary question. Jailbreak is a perfectly fair analogy. It is a prison break, though, of course, it does not, and cannot lead to freedom. Hence, it was, yes,

an act of desperation. As for exaggeration. I was referring to the beheading of babbies, the mass rapes, the torturing, the mutilating and other such Israeli claims. Not the total body count ... or for that matter the Hannibal directive and the IDF's killing of Israelis (which does, we agree, seem to have happened).

So “hugely exaggerated” is not only unwarranted, but denialism of the most dangerous sort – a decent into Tony Greenstein-style lunacy. Is this how you purport to lead the working class – by putting out misinformation? If I’m willing to admit that certain aspects of my genocide argument were off-base, then you should do the same with regard to this horrendous misstatement.

If my words were taken in the wrong way, then I am more than glad to make things crystal clear. However, that said: main responsibility for the horrors of October 7 2023 - and what has happened afterwards - lies with Israel and its government, not Hamas.

Of course, Israel has also put lies about babies being beheaded or cooked in ovens. But such propaganda would never have gone anywhere if Hamas atrocities weren’t so horrendous to begin with.

We can argue about that. All I would say is that the oppressed will resist their oppression and that the methods they choose are often horrendous.

Let me dispose of one or two other points that I regard as relatively minor before moving on to a couple that are more important.

One is the Warsaw ghetto. You accuse me of “setting [it] up a virtuous opposite,” which suggests that I plucked it out of thin air in order to score a point. But I didn’t – it is a regular talking point among anti-Zionists such as Rafaat Alareer (as I noted in a footnote), the Palestinian journalist killed in an Israeli bombing raid in December. You speculate about what might have happened if certain “out-of-control” ghetto fighters “had gone on the rampage and took vengeance on the German settler population in Poland. That would not lead us to condemn the Warsaw ghetto uprising, nor would we put an equals-sign between the Jewish resistance fighters and the Nazi extermination regime.”

Incorrect. The left-wing ghetto leadership, composed of Communists, Bundists, the semi-Marxists of Hashomer Hatzair, and perhaps even a few Trotskyists, was barely on speaking terms with the Revisionist right. If the Revisionists had gone on such a rampage, then I have no doubt that the left would have denounced them in the harshest terms possible to the point of declaring that such atrocities were a betrayal of everything the ghetto uprising stood for.

Maybe. But what if the rampaging elements had not been the Revisionist right? Killing collaborators, the Jewish police and German soldiers can surely lead, if there is not tight discipline, to resistance fighters, and others, taking a wider vengeance. War is a beastly business, even when fought by our side.

The implication would have indeed been to “put an equals-sign between the Jewish resistance fighters and the Nazi extermination regime.” But so what?

So what? So everything! There is no equals sign for us.

If people behave like fascists, then leftists should denounce them as such.

No, criticism, maybe, but no equals sign. You are getting carried away with yourself ... moralistic condemnation.

If the guilty parties claim to be allies engaged in a common struggle, then we should denounce them even more vehemently. The same goes for Hamas. If its behaviour is barbaric, then we should open up with both barrels.

Both barrels? No. Especially in the midst of what is going on in Gaza and might well soon start in Lebanon. We can distance ourselves from Hamas politically ... and the actions of its fighters. But that should go hand-in-hand with calling out Israel and placing prime blame for what is happening on Israel and its allies, crucially, the world hegemon. The US is arming Israel out of public funds, it is a clear co-belligerent. So any criticism of Hamas must be very clearly subordinate to the defeat of ‘our side’.

But now on to the major areas of disagreement, of which I see three.

The first is whether Hamas is “part of the resistance movement, against Israeli occupation and expansionism,” as your letter states. I suppose that it is to the degree it battles the IDF within Palestinian territory. But otherwise the term is a puzzle. How is provoking a mass attack on the part of the enemy and thereby offering your own people up for slaughter an act of resistance?

See Warsaw ghetto uprising 1943. Clearly it was an act of desperation. It had no chance of success militarily. It amounted to suicide. It showed, though, that the Jewish population was prepared to fight ... even if that meant certain death.

Instead of advancing the goal of liberation, it destroys it.

How many survived the Warsaw ghetto? A few hundred at most. Around 13,000 died.

My article quoted extensively from newspaper reports of ordinary Gazans cursing Hamas for ushering in nothing but death and destruction. Yet your letter makes no mention of such material. What are you afraid of – that Palestinians will turn against Hamas just as Chinese workers and peasants turned against the “resistance” of the Kuomintang? If so, how will you respond – by denouncing them for their lack of militancy?

Silly. No, instead I quoted the widespread reports of people wanting to join Hamas (not least on the West Bank). Of course, we would welcome a shift from Hamas (and Fatah). It really does not need saying. But in the real world there has to be a real alternative. In China people could turn from the KMT because there was the CPC.

If the Comintern was at fault for not pointing out the reactionary class character of the KMT in the period leading up to the 1927 Shanghai massacre, then Marxists are at fault for not doing the same today.

“We should not expect Hamas fighters to behave with socialist kindness, sweetness and enlightened solidarity,” you write. This is correct. But we should point out that failing to do so can only lead to defeat. “Focusing on the bloodcurdling pledges, largely designed to bolster morale, largely totally empty, by Hamas leaders to repeat October 7 – operation Al-Aqsa Flood – again and again till Palestine is free from the river to the sea, is to miss the point entirely,” you add. But how do you know that such pledges are empty? Do you have any evidence or is the statement purely faith-based? For my part, I pay Hamas the compliment of taking it at its word and will continue doing so until presented with evidence to the contrary.

Empty? Why? Simply because as a military force Hamas has been considerably depleted. October 7, operation Al-Aqsa Flood, took a year in the preparation. It is hardly in a position to repeat that under today’s conditions. In the future, who knows.

You compare Oct. 7 to the 1857 Sepoy insurrection. This is a favourite argument of left-wing Hamas apologists the world over, but it is misleading. The Sepoy insurrection was a spontaneous uprising whereas Hamas is the opposite, ie the product of a century-old political movement with a highly evolved ideology and organizational structure. So the two events are comparable at all.

Yes, the Sepoy insurrection was unplanned, lacked a clear leadership and there were few outstanding military commanders. Most were leaders were Muslim preachers of one kind or another and looked to the Mughal emperor in Delhi. However, both October 7 and 1857 were desperate acts of resistance. That is the key point.

You write that “the *prime* blame for all these horrors, lies not with Hamas leaders sitting in plush Qatari hotel suites, though they are doubtless reactionary to the core, but with the Zionist colonial-settler project of Theodor Herzl [sic], the 1917 Balfour declaration, 76 years of Israeli statehood and 18 years of siege warfare on Gaza.” But what is the point of such moralistic hair-splitting? Yes, *prime* responsibility lies with Israel. But *immediate* responsibility lies with Hamas, whose adventurism has opened up the gates of hell. “Our task, in the imperialist heartlands,” you continue, “is not to join the media chorus against Hamas, as if it were a crazed death cult of the Isis and al-Qa’eda type. It has a proven, and, if anything, a growing mass base.”

The question of a mass base is irrelevant. Zionism has a mass base in Israel while American exceptionalism has a mass base in US, but neither is one bit more legitimate as a consequence. Rather than joining in the media

chorus against Hamas, our job is to analyse the situation as clearly and objectively as we can without fear or favour. Truth is what matters, now more than ever.

I have written extensively on the Muslim Brotherhood in general, including Hamas. The point about its mass base is hardly irrelevant: it is a party “an idea rooted in the hearts of the people”. Same, yes, goes for Zionism in Israel. Which is why we must propose a positive alternative.

A second major area of disagreement concerns the Arab revolution. Although your letter doesn't mention it, I sense its presence throughout. But for the life of me, I can't understand why if pan-Slavism was reactionary in the 19th century, pan-Arabism somehow progressive in the 21st.

We are not talking about promoting a pan-Arabic nationalism. But we recognise a definite historically constituted nation. Hence, forget the pan-Slavism and instead think about the unity of Germany and Italy in the 19th century and, for that matter Irish unity in the 21st. The working class should take the lead. Certainly not leave the question to this or that nationalism.

The problems with the concept are legion. It dovetails all too neatly with pan-Islamism.

Incorrect. Historically there have been big populations of Christians. But this really is beside the point.

It strikes fear in the hearts of Berbers, Christians, and Jews not to mention the South Asians, Filipinos, etc. who constitute a majority in the gulf states.

Why on earth a working class-led struggle for the national unity of Arabs, where minorities would have full democratic rights, including, in the case of actual nations, eg, the modern Hebrew nation, the right to self-determination would be greeted with fear is beyond me?

And it suggests that the solution to Zionism is national war against the Jewish state when in fact the only solution is class war against the bourgeois states of the Middle East, including Israel, Hamas, and the PA.

No, it does not. Why do you say such nonsense? See, eg, my last article on the Palestine question.

The third concerns the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general. Yes, Israel is the colonizer and the Palestinians the colonized. But while we must clearly support the latter in their struggle against oppression, we must also break with narrow nationalist conceptions.

Agreed. See above.

The Spartacist concept of “interpenetrated” peoples is the only formulation that makes sense. Despite decades of conflict, the two nations' fates are more intertwined than ever. Hence, they can only realize their national aspirations through common struggle in a democratic socialist framework. Otherwise, the former will face nothing but death and destruction while the latter will wind up under the heel of a fascist dictatorship on the part of Ben-Gvir, Smotrich, and their ilk.

Disagree. There is an Israeli-Jewish nation, the Hebrews. The working class should recognise that this nation should have national rights. And, of course, we put that forward in the context of the wider socialist programme.

If ever there was a case of a struggle ending “either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large or in the common ruin of the contending classes,” this one is it.

As I said, our differences are extensive. But our areas of agreement are extensive as well, which is why I hope our collaboration can continue. As you note, we are basically on the same wavelength when it comes to the United States where I have tried to follow a clear class line with regard to US imperialism, the nature of the US state, and the struggle of the American proletariat, not just at home but internationally. I credit you with attempting to do the same with regard to Britain, the EU, and the Russo-Ukrainian war. But you seem to have a blind spot with regard to Israel-Palestine and perhaps third-world nationalism in general.

On a personal note, I should say that I certainly enjoyed batting ideas back and forth with you and Mike in April. But perhaps I enjoyed it too much since a businesslike airing of differences would have been more in order.

I look forward to your response.

Best,

Dan

Feel free to engage with my points.

Best wishes

JC

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Daniel Lazare

Dear comrade

The PCC has asked me to write to you about your recent *Weekly Worker* submission ('What is genocide?'). Frankly, we are not willing to see it published in our paper. We did consider running it alongside a considered rejoinder. However, we rejected that idea. Running your article would - rightly - be seen as a betrayal of the Palestinians - in particular, of course, those inhabiting Gaza, the world's largest open-air prison.

Already the death toll has exceeded 37,000. There is the distinct possibility that this gruesome total could be multiplied many times over, by the withholding of food, medicines, clean water and other such vital supplies. Nor should a mass expulsion into the Sinai - a second Nakba - be discounted.

Under these appalling circumstances democratic opinion has mobilised throughout the world and is charging Israel with carrying out or preparing a genocide in Gaza. That is not hyperbole.

We have no problem with debate and controversy. On the contrary. However, we sometimes insert pointers, indicators, which show readers where we stand. As you well know, we have carried some of your articles accompanied with a 'health warning' - eg, over the question of BDS. Or we have published direct or indirect replies - that or critical letters.

Nonetheless, on balance, we have valued your contributions. You are a talented and thought-provoking writer. Your emphasis on democratic and constitutional questions in the US certainly chimes with our general outlook. That said, your 'What is genocide?' goes way beyond the pale. Running it would damage the high reputation that the *Weekly Worker* has earned over the years and would in turn, therefore, damage the reputation of the CPGB. Something we are not prepared to countenance. Instead, we must unequivocally side with the Palestinians and be seen to unequivocally side with the Palestinians.

We would, therefore, ask you to radically reconsider your formulations.

Merely because the word 'genocide' was first coined by a conservative Jewish-Polish lawyer, Raphael Lemkin, in 1943 or 1944, does not, and should not, oblige us to reject it as a concept. Words and concepts, especially when they involve class, national and party interests, are always subject to fierce struggle, and constant making and remaking. Take the term, 'nation'. Doubtless it dates back to ancient times and has historically been used for reactionary purposes: ie, cohering the mass of a particular population behind the ruling class. Eg, blood and soil nationalism. However, that does not mean Marxists have rejected or should reject 'nation' as a term. We have, indeed, developed our own definition(s) and have, when necessary, championed the right of nations to self-determination.

Surely it is the same with killing. We do not take the simplistic view that a death is a death, is a death. There is premeditated homicide, there is unpremeditated homicide or manslaughter (a concept, which apparently dates back to the 7th century BCE and one Draco, a slaveowning aristocrat and legislator in ancient Athens).

Should we reject distinctions such as first-degree murder, second-degree murder and third-degree murder because of Draco? Should we not distinguish between murder and abortion? Or between the violence of the oppressed, in a just war, and the violence of the oppressors in an unjust war? That, despite the doctrine of a 'just war' having origins in the writings of St Augustine of Hippo.

No, nor should we reject the concept of social murder or targeted mass murder, or targeted mass murder directed against a whole people - ie, genocide - merely because, as a word, it was coined by Lemkin and then was subsequently used to ideologically underpin Zionist Israel and promote the American agenda in the former Yugoslavia and with the Uyghurs in Xinjiang (the latter being a particularly egregious example of misuse). Marxists can and ought to give the term their own content, based on historical, class and materialist analysis.

Eg, the murderous regimes of Stalin and Hitler are joined together under the category of 'totalitarianism', or something very similar, by mainstream bourgeois ideologues. But Marxists rightly distinguish between the two socio-economic formations, when it comes to historical origins and political economy. The same goes for their modes of killing: Stalin's terror was designed to atomise the population at large and exterminate 'enemies of the people' - in proportionate terms, especially at the top. Hitler, by contrast, aimed to exterminate particular categories of people: communists and trade union militants, but also entire peoples, centrally the Jews. There is, therefore, no need whatsoever to reject the term 'genocide', when we try to get to grips with the horrors that happened in Europe between 1942 and 1945.

The claim that 'genocide' is such a useless term that it produces nothing but garbage is in itself garbage. Israel is categorically different, when compared to Nazi Germany. Israel is a particular form of settler-colonialism: it is a work colony, an exclusion colony. That means getting rid of the indigenous population by one means or another.

Hitler and the Nazis aimed for a Greater Germany purged of the Bolshevik menace ... and a giant living space to the east, *Lebensraum* - a model based, explicitly, on the British Raj - where the indigenous population of Slavs would labour for, supply and serve the German 'master race' of farmer colonists. The mass extermination of the Jews, was, therefore, an epiphenomenon, when it came to the political economy of Nazi Germany: industrial, banking and retail capital largely continued as before (minus its Jewish personifications). The holocaust, therefore, owed more - far more - to a highly warped, highly irrational, highly aberrant petty bourgeois ideology than any innate political economy.

Either way, warning about the danger of genocide in Gaza (and throughout Greater Israel) is not faux-moralism. On the contrary, it goes to the heart of the matter: the nature of Zionist settler-colonialism and Israel's political economy. The indigenous population has to be disposed of one way or another.

As for Hamas. We certainly consider it a reactionary Islamic organisation. We have explained and elaborated upon our position in many *Weekly Worker* articles. Hamas, is also, however, part of the resistance movement, against Israeli occupation and expansionism. We cannot, and will not, therefore, draw an equals-sign between Hamas and the Zionist state. To do so would be to desert Marxism for myopic liberalism.

A parallel can be drawn between the leadership of Hamas, and people such as Bakht Khan and Kunwar Singh of the 1857 Sepoy insurrection, Patrick Pearse and Éamon de Valera of the Irish Volunteers in 1916 and Dedan Kimathi and Masa Mwariama of the 1952-60 Mau Mau rebellion. Their politics doubtless owed a deal to a highly romanticised past. That much is undeniable. However, they were fighting against intolerable oppression - in the case of Hamas, Zionist settler-colonialism backed, nowadays, to the hilt, by the US global hegemon and its closest allies.

Setting up a virtuous opposite, ie, the 1943 Warsaw ghetto uprising, whose resistance fighters, we are assured, would never have exacted horrible vengeance on their oppressors, is a straight cop out. Leave aside the execution of Nazi collaborators, they never got the chance, of course. The ghetto was destroyed block by block. A total of 13,000 Jews died (about half burnt alive or suffocated). There were, on the other side, 117 German casualties, 17 of them fatal. But say, instead being a hopeless battle, a battle that the ŻOB and ŻZW resistance fighters were bound to loose, the beleaguered population had been rescued by a general Polish uprising or the Soviet army making a spectacular western breakthrough. Say, after such a miracle, out-of-control elements had gone on the rampage and took vengeance on the German settler population in Poland. That would not lead us to condemn the Warsaw ghetto uprising, nor would we put an equals-sign between the Jewish resistance fighters and the Nazi extermination regime.

Take Marx, writing on 1857 India. He does not flinch from the "outrages committed by the revolted Sepoys". They are "indeed appalling, hideous, ineffable". That said, the "infamous" conduct of the Sepoys "is only the reflex, in a concentrated form, of England's own conduct in India, not only during the epoch of the foundation of her Eastern Empire, but even during the last ten years of a long-settled rule" (K Marx, 'The Indian revolt' *CW* Vol 15, London 1986, p353).

Cruelty, like everything, has its fashion, changing according to time and place. Doubtless, the left forces who led the Warsaw ghetto uprising, would have found anything like the atrocities committed by Hamas fighters on October 7 completely reprehensible, unacceptable and even morally impossible. One would hope so. But the killing of innocent civilians, the rapes, the mutilation of bodies on October 7 - undoubtedly hugely exaggerated - well, the *prime* blame for all these horrors, lies not with Hamas leaders sitting in plush Qatari hotel suites, though they are doubtless reactionary to the core, but with the Zionist colonial-settler project of Theodor Herzl, the 1917 Balfour declaration, 76 years of Israeli statehood and 18 years of siege warfare on Gaza.

We should not expect Hamas fighters to behave with socialist kindness, sweetness and enlightened solidarity. Focusing on the bloodcurdling pledges, largely designed to bolster morale, largely totally empty, by Hamas leaders to repeat October 7 - operation Al-Aqsa Flood - again and again till Palestine is free from the river to the sea, is to miss the point entirely.

The conflict in Israel-Palestine is militarily highly unequal, so, yes, resistance will, therefore, produce many, many martyrs amongst the oppressed. But that should not lead us to condemn resistance, when it is resistance to

oppression, to colonisation, to the threat of historic erasure. Note, during the 1857 revolution some 6,000 British were killed, a figure which includes civilians. Meanwhile, an estimated 800,000 Indians perished (likely many more, because of famine and disease).

Our task, in the imperialist heartlands, is not to join the media chorus against Hamas, as if it were a crazed death cult of the Isis and al-Qa'eda type. It has a proven, and, if anything, a growing mass base.

No, we must expose the 'Anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' big lie. We must build solidarity with Palestine. We must warn about the danger of ethnic cleansing and genocide. We must condemn the complicity of the US, Britain, Germany, etc. We must support mass demonstrations, BDS demands and the student encampments.

Certainly, when it comes to dismissing the concept of genocide, especially, therefore, the danger of genocide in Gaza, we urge a rethink. If that is not forthcoming, certainly, if you intend to publish the 'What is genocide?' article unchanged on some other platform, print, electronic or otherwise, then we shall have to break with you.

Withdraw, rethink, substantially rewrite, the article, and then we can continue and hopefully deepen our comradely relations.

Best wishes

Jack Conrad