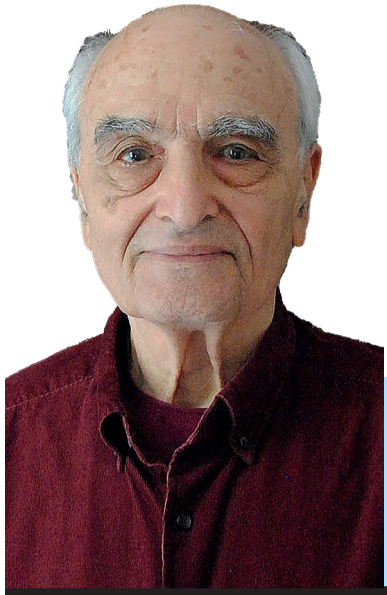


A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



Revolt of hopelessness: Moshé Machover explores the background to the Hamas attack and the likely consequences

- Letters and debate
- Labour's conference
- Glasgow by-election
- Communist unity

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LETTERS



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

Dues issues

Sam Turner is full of idle advice and idle pub-room chatter, but his main beef is money (Letters, October 5). He even claims that the key question that divides the CPGB from the rest of the left is the "huge financial burden" placed on our membership. He writes of "bankrupting" comrades by demanding 10% of their wages. That puts off him and his brave-hearted friends from joining the CPGB. Oh dear.

Well, let us clear things up for comrade Turner and co. Our *Draft rules* state the following: "The Central Committee determines the level of membership dues. Dispensation can be negotiated in particular cases by the basic committees, but have to be ratified by the Central Committee."

Certainly when it comes to the low-paid, students, unemployed, pensioners, etc, our normal practice is to accept a token sum. Well-off comrades are, though, yes, expected to donate 10% of their (net) income. That is very much open to negotiation, however: ie, a comrade might be a single parent with two young children, a hefty mortgage and loads of credit card debt.

We do not believe there is anything extraordinary in our approach. Devout Muslims, Jews and Christians pay tithes at that level: "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy" (Leviticus xxvii:30). And, when it comes to CPGB MPs, councillors and elected labour movement officials, we are quite explicit: they would be expected to live on the average wage of a skilled worker and hand the balance over to the party.

Comrade Turner says that the CPGB is "essentially a Zoom discussion group and a website" and no different to the likes of "Why Marx, Talking about Socialism and RS21". Errrr, no. The CPGB is a partyist project, united around a definite programme. We have an elected leadership, regular aggregates, committees, members and agreed rules. We operate according to the principles

of democratic centralism: unity in action, freedom of criticism.

That means comrades have a right - even a duty - to raise political differences, including openly. But, crucially, we unite in actions, ranging from strike support and street protests to the various unity projects: the Socialist Labour Party, Socialist Alliance and even that abomination, Respect.

Take Left Unity. Four of our comrades were elected to its national committee, but rightly we ensured that the Communist Platform split because of a steadfast refusal by the majority to actively intervene in the Labour Party - that despite the election of Jeremy Corbyn and the influx of some 300,000 new members.

In the Labour Party our comrades worked under the banner of Labour Party Marxists and fought for a new, genuinely socialist clause four, the right for all left groups to affiliate and an unremitting war against the pro-capitalist right. We distributed many, many thousands of copies of *Labour Party Marxists* and produced *Red Pages* daily during Labour conferences. Our comrades also played a leading role in Labour Against the Witchhunt, which, of course, Sir Keir proscribed, along with Socialist Appeal, etc.

I could go on and on. But I shan't. The point has been made. The CPGB is not "essentially a Zoom discussion group and a website". The idea is just too silly.

Comrade Turner wants to know where the money goes. We are not going to present accounts or even give a rough breakdown to satisfy his curiosity. Suffice to say, we publish a weekly paper, produce books and pamphlets and run the annual Communist University in central London. As I write, our comrades have just vacated our BnB accommodation in Liverpool - once again we had a team working in and around the Labour conference. All that costs.

Finally, I ought to make it clear to comrade Turner and co that joining the CPGB is not a matter of merely wanting to join. Membership applications are accepted or rejected on the basis of their seriousness. We certainly take the payment of dues as axiomatic. Lenin famously proposed that a party member should be someone "who accepts the party's programme and supports

the party financially and by personal participation in one of the party's organisations" (VI Lenin *CW* Vol 7, Moscow 1977, p242).

When we get someone writing to us just asking, 'Have you got a branch in xxx and how much does it cost to join?', we are inclined not to treat that as a serious membership application. Communists start with programme, politics, principles and proven consistency ... not with convenience and bargain basement deals.

Jack Conrad
London

Within and around

In response to Mike Macnair's letter I will focus on the example of Socialist Appeal, because I think it has important lessons to consider in terms of the approach of the CPGB.

In Mike's talk at Communist University he likened Socialist Appeal's communist turn to other previous turns by Workers Power, Socialist Resistance, etc towards popular movements as a tactical question of recruitment. As I argued, however, this is likely to have qualitatively different implications to that of turns towards the anti-globalisation or environmental movement, as it represents a turn towards those whose demands and interest are likely to be *political* rather than *activist*. In his recent letter, Mike again makes a comparison and this time to the Young Communist League, who Socialist Appeal are characterised as "imitating the stunt-imagery of" - again I would say this is a mischaracterisation, in particular in the way that matters: *the implications*.

Firstly, the current approach of Socialist Appeal predates the YCL shift, which gives it a different underpinning. It is ostensibly based off a 2013 survey that indicated wide support among young people for communist politics, motivating the leadership to recognise the potential in a turn in that direction. This was initially thrown off course by Corbynism, then returned in its current form after their expulsion from the Labour Party.

The YCL turn meanwhile can be understood more directly as a feature of the collapse of Corbynism and the carrying over of particular interpretations of Trotskyists as wreckers within Momentum, etc, influencing the symbolic embrace of Stalinist imagery and the language of vigilance - one of the key points here being that the YCL shift has represented a type of effort towards radicalism *against* the leadership of the Communist Party of Britain, whilst remaining contained within its wider political perspective.

The cases of Socialist Appeal and the YCL have clearly different implications for their organisations and leaderships - and this is evident when talking to their comrades and listening to their understandings of their own projects. These are differences which should *clearly* inform the approach of the CPGB, as each instance contains its own implications for how things may develop - implications that the CPGB surely should be directed at intensifying. Communist unity involves an interest in the particular development of left groups and their subsequent impact on the left as a whole, and particular pressure points may create developments, ruptures and transformations.

What I mean to highlight through this example is that the approach the CPGB takes towards engaging with the rest of the left needs developing. A more informed knowledge of

developments on the left is required in order to make effective and focused interventions - and a more substantial engagement is also required, in particular, given (as it sounded like - I may be wrong) the engagement of the CPGB with Socialist Appeal during this turn has amounted to sending an email requesting a debate. I don't think this is the basis from which to make informed and meaningful interventions.

A more active orientation towards the left in a real day-to-day way is part of what is needed (eg, attending events and discussing widely with others, engaging in joint activities like strike fundraising, etc). At the very least this would provide a richer knowledge from which to make developed analysis of the left. Further it would allow estimation of the particular pressure points to push at in particular contexts to advance the development of the left as a whole, and further still, it is precisely to be a living, breathing part of the left in this way which gives polemic traction and meaning. These are the conditions and form that actually encourage most people to engage meaningfully in discussion, allowing polemic to be understood then as a contribution to a movement of which we are *a part*, and guarding against detached, unmoored and distant critique.

I'm glad Mike ended his letter, though, by noting that it is "not immediately obvious" how to break through in the current circumstances and advance the project of communist unity - I agree. This appears, though, slightly different to the ending of his CU talk (ie, to continue "banging away" with the CPGB's approach to ideological polemic). The implications certainly are different - if it is "not immediately obvious" how to go forward, then we are surely served best not by "banging away" with the same approach in the same form with no ready example of its meaningful success, but instead by an approach and process of questioning, humility, reflection, creativity and experimentation. This must be driven by open discussion of approach both *within* and *around* the CPGB, and informed by a wide and active engagement with the left as a whole.

Caitriona Rylance
Bolton

Outsider

Paul B Smith gives us a perfect example of how not to pursue communist unity (Letters, October 5). No, we don't want at the outset to exclude comrades from organisations such as the Communist Party of Britain or other true believers in socialism in one country. This is for exactly the same reason we wouldn't want to exclude or purge Trotskyists from this process.

Smith's note reaches the very apogee of silliness when he talks of entryism (in which, surely, is a debased form of unity) and splitting organisations that he has *a priori* excluded from Marxist unity. People such as Smith really have learnt nothing from history and, in a supreme irony, actually end up sounding quite *Stalinist* when they talk about trends they don't like in the workers' movement.

I do appreciate Mike Macnair's letter in response to my article in the same issue and his honest appreciation of the "logjam" of revolutionary politics at the present time. The comments he makes around the CPGB-PCC's intervention in Left Unity and the

Corbyn movement are interesting. I agree with the comrade about the objective difficulties of organising in the latter and that, in reality, the immediate political gains for Marxists were likely to have been slim. But what about the particular actions of the CPGB-PCC itself? After all, I don't think it is much of a revelation that the organisation was in a fair degree of internal trouble, as the Corbyn movement began its disintegration in early 2020, and I wonder if the shock and isolation of the pandemic insulated the CPGB-PCC from further discord and disaffection.

In Left Unity, the CPGB-PCC organised a Communist Platform. This was mostly CPGB-PCC, but it did seemingly attempt to organise comrades outside the group and ran a series of open meetings. I was quite surprised with the Labour Party Marxists (LPM) enterprise (which had, of course, been founded long before the Corbyn movement) that the CPGB-PCC, to all intents and purposes, ran as a front. It seemed to function either as a mere subcommittee of the faction or an alternative badge for CPGB-PCC members who were working in the Labour Party. There was an attempt by some members to involve other Marxists in LPM in 2016, but this idea was quickly sat on by others.

LPM ended up as an unattractive and sterile front (apart from interventions at various Labour conferences, which seemed more effective), which had a poorly presented free broadsheet that often just rehashed *Weekly Worker* articles. This gave the impression of being a partially disconnected critique. In this situation, and as a false counterpoint to the overall direction of LPM, it appeared that some CPGB-PCC comrades (and not just one) had thrown themselves practically and emotionally overboard into the Corbyn movement in the sense of somehow wanting to improve and preserve it.

One example: when people started walking out of Labour in 2020, one CPGB-PCC comrade told me he had spent days on end arguing with leftists to stay inside Labour. On one level, it is reasonable to have a brief argument and generally propagandise against just walking out. But what struck me was his degree of *emotional* involvement in the Corbyn movement. And it was clear that this comrade was going to have literally no effect, as numbers of low-level members had begun voting with their feet. I thought similar things about the formation of the Labour Left Alliance, which seemed partially an attempt to *preserve* the tame and insipid Corbyn movement. But these responses were obviously *surrogates* for the ineffectiveness of LPM and, frankly, were not the tasks of communists.

As comrade Macnair says, the objective circumstances of clicktivism and Corbynism probably precluded any serious advance, but LPM wasn't a widely admired enterprise on the revolutionary left and its nature as a front organisation for the CPGB-PCC meant it was an impediment to partyism. No, I wouldn't have expected the CPGB-PCC to pick up thousands of Labour Party members, but I might have expected it to have influenced Marxists more generally in that arena and become a pole of attraction.

Comrade Macnair tells us that the CPGB-PCC has not lost confidence in its party conception. He adds that "we are in a somewhat different situation after a prolonged

Fighting fund

Don't let us down

As usual for the second week of the month, the last seven days saw a bit of a drop, compared to the first. As I reported last week, we raised £336 in the first four days of October, while in the second (full) week just £225 came our way.

So now we have just £561 towards our monthly target of £2,250. In other words, just under a quarter of the target with over a third of the month gone! But, as I say, that's typical for the second week and, as usual, we're hoping for a sharp rise in donations, particularly in the next couple of weeks.

Anyway, thanks very much, first of all, to those comrades who contributed by bank transfer and standing order: BO (£35), NH (£30), DV and GD (£25 each), JD (£20), and SM, LG and CC, who each donated a tenner. Then there was RL with his excellent

monthly PayPal donation of £50 and MH, who contributed £10 by the same method (on top of his separate subscription payment, that is).

So will we see the usual (and very necessary) stepping up of the pace in week three? Well, you can help make sure we do! Please send us a cheque (address at the foot of page 2), make a bank transfer to 'Weekly Worker' (sort code 30-99-64, account number 00744310), or click on the PayPal link on our website (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/donate).

The *Weekly Worker* relies on our readers and supporters to keep us going, so please don't let us down - I know you won't! ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

engagement with a left that appears to be in fairly severe political decline, relative to where it was in the middle 1990s - not in numbers or in fragmentation, but in decreased political education and increased tailism of mainstream bourgeois ideas". I agree with this summation, but then it is not just an issue of the CPGB-PCC's morality and sense of right in regard to partyism, but also a question of the toll those years of failure and defeat have taken on the group. This latter is immediately apparent to anyone outside the CPGB-PCC. Some comrades, such as Mike Macnair, wear those scars well, others less so.

In that context, I don't accept that the CPGB-PCC faction can be the *only* organisational sieve or funnel for a future Communist Party. Comrades should collaborate with it, where appropriate, but when comrade Macnair asks me for positive proposals I have to reply, that is really up to the CPGB-PCC's membership. Removing Jack Conrad from the membership 'hotline' would most probably be a positive move. But, beyond that, the CPGB-PCC itself needs to take ownership of its political destiny.

Lawrence Parker
London

Criticise Hamas

Moshé Machover made three assertions in his October 8 Communist Forum talk about the Hamas offensive that should not go unchallenged. One is that Hamas is a force for national liberation. Another is that progressives must "side with" it in its struggle against the Jewish state. A third is that criticising the group is *verboten* because it means supporting Zionism. All are false and pernicious and have no place in a Marxist organisation.

Hamas is not national in character. Rather it describes itself in its 1988 charter as a "universal organisation" dedicated to Muslim hegemony throughout the world. Its sectarianism therefore brings chaos, wherever it goes. In Syria, it supported cut-throat jihadis during the civil war led by al Qa'eda. In Egypt, its supporters began torching Christian churches as soon as it took power in 2012. In Palestine, as Machover conceded in his talk, its military operation will bring not liberation, but the opposite - ie, death and destruction, for the Palestinian masses.

While Marxists side with oppressed people and support without qualification their right of resistance and revolt, they do not side with rightwing organisations claiming to speak in the people's name. Hamas is a profoundly reactionary movement that condemns the French and Russian revolutions and holds Jews responsible for both. It has not held an election in Gaza since 2006, it sent its thugs into the street to break up protests against poverty and unemployment in 2019, and it did the same when similar protests arose this summer. It constitutes a threat to workers on both sides of the divide. Marxists should no more support Hamas than they should support Islamist forces in, say, Mali, Niger or Burkina Faso.

Machover's efforts to stifle criticism go contrary to the entire working class movement. The first duty of Marxists is to tell workers the truth, no matter how unpleasant or inconvenient it might be. This means telling Palestinian workers exactly what we think a short-lived Hamas 'victory' will mean. It's not only our right, but our duty. Suppressing the truth about Hamas in any respect is nothing short of a betrayal.

Lenin is not an oracle whose

words are holy writ. But his 'Draft theses on nationalism', written in 1920, laid the problem out quite clearly. A plank concerning the relationship between communists and the emerging national liberation movements of the day is particularly relevant. It stressed "the need for a determined struggle against attempts to give a communist colouring to bourgeois-democratic liberation trends in the backward countries" and added:

"... the Communist International should support bourgeois-democratic national movements in colonial and backward countries only on condition that, in these countries, the elements of future proletarian parties, which will be communist not only in name, are brought together and trained to understand their special tasks: ie, those of the struggle against the bourgeois-democratic movements within their own nations. The Communist International must enter into a temporary alliance with bourgeois democracy in the colonial and backward countries, but should not merge with it, and should under all circumstances uphold the independence of the proletarian movement even if it is in its most embryonic form ..."

Given that Lenin indicates elsewhere in the document that he regards the "struggle against pan-Islamism" to be a top priority, it's questionable whether he would include Hamas in the bourgeois-democratic category at all, no matter how broadly defined. But even in the best of circumstances, his emphasis was on the importance of struggling against such movements and of maintaining strictest independence. This does not mean merely organisational independence, but political and ideological independence as well. While Marxists thus support bourgeois-democratic demands, they must also continually point out the difference between their methods and those of the national movements in question, between how they view colonialism and other such problems and how bourgeois nationalists see them instead.

Such principles are all-important, now that the entire region is plunging into war. Yet none of the CPGB leadership protested when Machover argued that criticism of Hamas was somehow a betrayal of the anti-Zionist struggle. Why?

Daniel Lazare
New York

Wet dreams

In his last letter (October 5) Andrew Northall claims the "indubitable reality that socialism was indeed built within the Soviet Union". Stalin proclaimed socialism to be on its way in 1934 and then in November 1936 that "socialism has now been fully achieved in Russia". Of course, the idea that what existed in the USSR in 1936 was socialism is not only the ridiculous, lying propaganda of the Stalinists, but also serves all anti-communist, imperialist propagandists: 'If this is socialism, do you want to go there?'

What else was happening in that fateful year? To the absolute horror of the conservative bureaucracy in the USSR, a socialist revolution had broken out in Spain. Workers seized control of all workplaces and peasants seized control of the land, in what is wrongly termed the 'anarchist revolution'. The overriding concern of Stalin and his apparatchiks in Spain was to return the factories to the capitalists and the land to the landlords, so they could forge a popular front with them against fascists, even though these capitalists had almost all fled in fear of the risen masses.

The political capitulation of the leadership to this popular front government is the story of why that revolution was lost. But, suffice to say, the Communist Party was on the right wing of the entire workers' movement. In their determination to crush this revolution they assassinated anarchist, Trotskyist centrist and genuine Trotskyist revolutionary socialists. Stalin's counterrevolution triumphed in May 1937.

The first Moscow trial - the 'Trial of the 16' (including Zinoviev and Kamenev), began in August 1936 as a direct consequence of the revolutionary uprising in Spain. These 16 had endured many months of torture both physical and physiological, including threats to shoot their families if they did not 'confess' to crimes they could not possibly have committed. Of the 1,966 delegates to the 17th Party Congress of January-February 1934, 1,108 were arrested and tried in secret - the Tukhachevsky Affair. Of 139 members of the central committee, 98 were arrested between 1936 and 1938, and executed - most without any due process whatsoever.

Leon Trotsky, as the implicit inheritor of the internationalist perspectives of world revolution from 1917, was the chief target in the Moscow trials, including the 1937 'Red Army trial'. The Red Army was led to victory by Trotsky, but Northall is too modest to inform us. Lenin said that there could be "no better Bolshevik" than Trotsky in September 1917 and Stalin praised him in 1918 as the principal organiser of the Bolshevik uprising.

One can only conclude from Northall's letter that he has wet dreams of being able to murder all his political opponents like Stalin did. Getting his rocks off on mass executions without the KGB/NKVD secret police to help him is as foolish as you can get. I once heard Gerry Healy recount how Stalinists threw him in the fountain in Trafalgar Square for denouncing Stalin after Khrushchev's secret speech in 1956. That's about the best Northall can now hope for against his political opponents.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Schrödinger's cat

Tony Clark states that "being does not determine consciousness, but influences it, so the Marxist position, which gives the greater power to being, is wrong. There is no quantum physicist that I know of who would disagree with me on this point" (Letters, September 28).

The nature of consciousness is not within the remit of quantum mechanics. The practice of quantum mechanics is not dependent upon a theory of the nature of consciousness. The outcome of quantum mechanical processes is not dependent upon consciousness. The reduction of a wave function occurs whether or not it is observed.

Erwin Schrödinger's cat is alive or dead, irrespective of whether he has looked in the box. Schrödinger came up with his famous thought experiment in order to demonstrate the absurdity of the claim that a physical system would continue in a superposition if it was not observed.

Uranium atoms in the Earth have been decaying since before there were humans to observe them. A quantum wave function is an expression of our knowledge of a system, but it is not actually the system itself. We must not confuse our representations with actual physical reality.

Quantum mechanics has nothing to say about the relationship between being and consciousness.

John Wake
Harlow

ACTION

No need for nuclear: renewables can do it

Saturday October 14, 10.30am to 4.30pm: Conference, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1. Why nuclear power is bad for the climate, is bad for the environment, is not energy-efficient, is not carbon-neutral and is not good for our pockets. Organised by Greater Manchester and district CND: www.facebook.com/events/326197746433749.

Bargain books

Saturday October 14, 11am: Book sale, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Get your hands on Marxist classics, socialist histories and rare pamphlets. Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/440.

March for Palestine

Saturday October 14, 12 noon: Demonstration. Assemble at BBC, Portland Place, London W1. Solidarity with Palestine. Demand Israel ends its occupation of Palestinian land and apartheid rule. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.facebook.com/palestinesolidarityuk.

Stand with Gaza, support Palestinian resistance

Saturday October 14, 12 noon: Rally, Platt Fields Park (next to costume museum), Wilmslow Road, Rusholme, Manchester M14. Stop the Israeli genocide of the imprisoned Gaza population. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign Manchester: www.facebook.com/events/798697475273953.

Building for peace in trade unions and beyond

Saturday October 14, 1pm: Public meeting, Friends Meeting House, 6 Mount Street, Manchester M2. The pro-war vote won at the TUC - the anti-war vote must win next year. Oppose arms sales, escalation of wars and horrific levels of military spending. Organised by GM Stop the War Coalition and Unite NW70209: www.facebook.com/events/3648479168806074.

Support strikes, fight anti-trade union laws

Saturday October 14, 1pm: March and rally. Assemble Forbury Gardens, Forbury Road, Reading RG1. March to The Butler, 85-91 Chatham Street, Reading RG1 for rally. Speakers from PCS, FBU, NEU and Aslef. Organised by Reading Trades Union Council: www.facebook.com/events/975734263713831.

What it means to be human

Tuesday October 17, 6.30pm: Talks on social and biological anthropology. Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1, and online. This meeting: 'A return to action: a discussion revisiting the values of action anthropology'. Speaker: Toyin Agbetu. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: www.facebook.com/events/1753076791779311.

Abortion doesn't belong in court

Wednesday October 18, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Houses of Parliament, Westminster, London SW1. The case for decriminalisation and the removal of abortion from the courtroom. Registration free. Organised by Abortion Rights: www.facebook.com/Abortionrightsuk.

Resisting the rise of racism and fascism

Saturday October 21, 11am: Conference, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1, and online. Discuss how to mobilise against racism from the government and a resurgent far right. Registration £5. Organised by Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/events/1335514390724342.

The current stage of the capitalist crisis

Wednesday October 25, 7pm: Online and onsite lecture, Marx Memorial Library, 37a Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. Speaker Michael Roberts will analyse the current phase of the world capitalist crisis and Britain's place within it. Admission £5 (£3). Organised by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk/event/439.

Reform, revolution and opportunism

Thursday October 26, 10pm: Online book launch. *Reform, revolution and opportunism* is a collection of debates at congresses of the Second International (1889-1914), edited by Mike Taber. Additional speakers: David McNally, Anne McShane and Tom Alter. Organised by Haymarket Books: www.facebook.com/mike.taber.315.

Latin America solidarity day

Saturday October 28, 10am to 4pm: Speakers, films and music and information, Unison Regional Office, 24 Livery Street, Birmingham B3. Briefings on Cuba, Nicaragua, Chile and Bolivia. Free admission, includes lunch (booking required). Organised by Birmingham Cuba Solidarity Campaign: cuba-solidarity.org.uk/events.

No more police killings or state violence

Saturday October 28, 12 noon: March: assemble Trafalgar Square, London WC2. Demand justice for those killed in custody. Organised by United Families and Friends Campaign: www.facebook.com/UFFCampaign.

Acknowledging Israel's apartheid

Saturday November 4, 9.30am to 3.30pm: Conference, Temple of Peace, Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff CF10. Examining the origins and intentions of the Israeli state and what needs to be done to bring freedom and justice to Palestinians. Speakers include Beth Winter MP and Naomi Wimborne-Idrissi (Jewish Voice for Labour). Organised by Amnesty International and Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.acknowledgingisraelsapartheid.com.

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.

LABOUR

Two-term chatter being heard

James Harvey reports on the stage-managed Labour conference, the courting of big business and unconditional support for Israeli colonial oppression

Apart from the incident involving Yaz Asmawi, the People Demand Democracy protestor, who covered Sir Keir Starmer with green glitter (and which he was able to turn to his advantage with a stoic one-liner on the differences between 'protest' and 'power') the Labour conference went completely according to plan for the party's machine.

Everyone on the platform and in the hall was on message, while delegates enthusiastically cheered and gave the required standing ovations for fairly mundane rhetoric and largely content-free speeches. It was the very model of a modern party conference - more of a carefully choreographed theatrical performance than a political event, with carefully framed sets and Union Jack backdrops and almost flawlessly managed throughout. Even the unscripted 'defeats' on energy and rail nationalisation were used to good effect by the Labour leadership to demonstrate that, whatever the conference proposed, it would be Sir Keir who *disposed*.

Compared with previous years the corporations were everywhere: Goldman Sachs, Boeing, Google sponsoring special events. At evening receptions CEOs shmoozed with shadow cabinet members. The *FT* even dubbed it "Liverpool Davos". And the money is pouring in from companies and rich individuals, now that "Labour is the party of all businesses": £8.6 million of it so far in 2023 (more than trade union contributions).

In that sense, this year's Liverpool conference was just the latest stage in the Starmer project to make Labour the *preferred* eleven for capitalism and demonstrate his credentials as a reliable, alternative prime minister. With the chaos of Boris Johnson and his "fuck business" approach, the shambles of Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak's complete lack of strategic thinking (apart from a desperation to avoid a drubbing in 2024), Labour's managers think they have it in the bag ... unless there is some kind of almighty blunder. So steady as she goes is the message.

With just over a year expected before the next election, the Labour leadership has to persuade the largely mythical 'centre ground' of Labour's 'responsibility' and 'credibility': code for Tory voters. Sir Keir's electoral strategy of triangulation was clearly on display in shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves' speech on the economic programme of the next Labour government, as well as framing the leader's keynote speech on October 10.

Charm offensive

Reeves built on the pro-business line that she had been setting out in interviews with the *Financial Times* and during her charm offensive in the boardrooms over the past three years, with promises of fiscal discipline and responsibility: economic growth would not be generated through higher taxation and the unsustainable stimulus of government borrowing, but through a new relationship with business and a state-backed National Wealth Fund - to all intents and purposes, a rebranding of the Blair government's 'private-public partnerships', albeit in the very different and much less favourable capitalist economy of the 2020s.



Sir Keir with his former boss ... 'left' MPs dread sharing his fate

For this commitment to 'realistic politics', she was rewarded by the endorsement of former Bank of England governor Mark Carney and the rather favourable response from other business leaders, who saw her as a politician and potential future leader they could work with. So, after the disorder and uncertainties of the Corbyn years, the capitalist class can be reassured that rightwing 'order' has finally been restored.

If Rachel Reeves set out the pro-capitalist framework of the next Labour government's economic programme, essentially maintaining the status quo with vague commitments to growth and "rebuilding Britain", it was left to Sir Keir to draw the threads together to reach the "inner soul of the British people" and provide potential Labour voters with an uplifting vision of "getting Britain's future back". His speech was received rapturously in the conference hall and attracted a record number of standing ovations, with the shadow cabinet team and others on the stage acting as a claue, engaging in a competitive form of sycophantic gymnastics to see who could stand up most frequently and more quickly than the rest. The anthemic dance music, and Starmer's return to the stage after finishing his speech for an encore with his wife, only added to the theatrical atmosphere and the echoes of 1990s New Labour.

The content and the rhetoric of the speech also referenced Blairism, drawing on the 'achievements' of the Blair government and using a similar language of reform, renewal and rebuilding. There were few specific policy commitments beyond a promise to "bulldoze" planning restrictions to enable new development, create new towns and build 1.5 million homes - alongside nebulous proposals on local devolution of power away from Westminster and more ominous references to 'reform' (privatisation?) in the NHS and other public services.

This was a pre-election speech, in which the Labour leader was trying to set a tone, whilst leaving

few hostages to fortune that could be dragged up by the Tories when the campaign proper begins. With his references to realism and the difficulties ahead, it was obvious that Starmer was promising very little.

Pro-imperialist

As if we needed any reminders, what we learnt from the speech is that the next Labour government will be the most rightwing and explicitly pro-capitalist in the party's history.

Not only will it meet the needs of British capitalism and the dictates of the market domestically, but it will be a loyal servant of the constitutional order at home and the interests of British imperialism and the US hegemon internationally. Starmer underlined this with his references to the role of the 1945-51 Attlee government in founding Nato and Labour's support for 'the west' during the cold war and beyond.

Starmer's unconditional support for the Israeli state's attack on Gaza and its continued oppression of the Palestinian people drew a very symbolic standing ovation, serving as a visual reminder that the massed Palestine flag waving at conference during the Corbyn years is now safely a thing of the past, though Labour has not gone quite as far as home secretary Suella Braverman in calling for police action against anyone displaying a Palestinian flag in public.

Naturally, Starmer repeated the big lie about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party under the Corbyn leadership, and smeared the left with his conflation of support for Palestinian rights and hostility to Jewish people. Thus, Starmer reassured the ruling class in London and Washington that the left had been finally defeated and that it was now *his* Labour Party, unquestionably loyal to the status quo at home and abroad, and ready to serve capitalism in whatever way was deemed necessary.

There was a hastily arranged demonstration outside the conference centre organised by local supporters of the Palestinian struggle, but in the conference itself the left kept its head down and raised

not a peep on this issue. So, as well as providing the Labour leadership with an opportunity to stand solidly behind Washington and its Israeli client state, the bombing of Gaza also shows how far the Labour left has fallen and how retreat has degenerated into a political rout.

With Sir Keir meeting foreign prime ministers and heads of state, big money pouring into the coffers, success in by-elections and huge leads in opinion polls, there is now the real prospect of a Labour government. There is even talk of two terms and burying the Tories for a generation. The nonsense peddled by sections of the left that Sir Keir did not really want to beat the Tories,

did not really want to get into No10 can be seen for what it really was all along - nonsense.

What passes for the official left therefore hides itself under vague calls for 'boldness': John McDonnell, Sharon Graham and Andrew Fisher being typical. 'Left' MPs do not want to be seen rocking the boat. The threat of deselection hangs over the head of every one of them. None wants to share the terrible fate of Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott and find themselves without their parliamentary salary and expenses accounts. True, Momentum claims conference victories over energy and rails - due, in fact, to the trade union bloc vote - but as an organisation it was a much diminished force. In internal elections - National Constitutional Committee, Conference Arrangements Committee, National Women's Committee - candidates of Labour to Win trounced the Centre-Left Grassroots Alliance by a margin of around 3:1. The World Transformed was itself a turgid and timid affair, though on the final day there was an informed session on solidarity with the Palestinian rebellion presented by the British chapter of the Palestinian Youth Movement.

The question of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle will, of course, be to the fore for the working class movement in Britain and internationally, especially given the way that US imperialism and its Nato clients have rallied behind Israel's war. Like the Tory government, Sir Keir has attempted to delegitimise support for Palestinian rights and opposition to Israeli repression by smearing the left and the Palestinian solidarity movement with false accusations of anti-Semitism. In that he is, disgracefully, being urged on by the likes of the Alliance For Workers' Liberty and turncoats such as Paul Mason - from Workers Power to warmonger. He desperately wants to become an MP and - who knows? - eventually defence minister in a Starmer government ●

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MEDIA

Backing a winner

Rupert Murdoch may well bring his papers in behind Sir Keir - but how great is his influence in Britain nowadays? Paul Demarty investigates

As part of the promotional tour for his new book on Rupert Murdoch, *The fall* (which I reviewed last week¹), Michael Wolff gave an interview to *Politico*, the political news website (owned, it so happens, by the company bearing the name of that great German reactionary press baron, Axel Springer).

Among other things, he speculated that Murdoch, or the people who will be nominally in charge of his affairs after his pseudo-retirement, may yet bring his British holdings behind Sir Keir's Labour Party next year:

"He's done it before. Could he do it now? For sure," Wolff said when asked if Murdoch could back Labour. "I think the voice of his daughter in London is an important voice," Wolff added, referring to Elisabeth Murdoch, who is based-in the UK. "And I think that if he saw a Labour government being to his benefit, he would of course support it. If he saw Labour as a certain winner, his support would begin to bend in that direction."²

Scandal sheets

Sir Keir would no doubt welcome such a move; his tenure as Labour leader has more or less been a Tony Blair tribute act, with the promises of fiscal probity, the army of youngish clones being forced through in selections, and the ruthless intolerance of dissent on what remains of the Labour left (in this area, if in no others, Starmer exceeds the achievements of his model).

He moved quickly to bring Peter Mandelson back on board, whose pithy summary of the last few decades of Labour's general election returns - "lose, lose, lose, lose, Blair, Blair, Blair, lose, lose, lose, lose" - indicated the direction of travel. More recently, Starmer and Blair have themselves appeared in public together.

Getting the Murdochs on board would complete the picture. It was undoubtedly a significant moment in Blair's rise; sheer exhaustion with close to two decades of Tory rule may have near inevitably entailed a Labour victory in 1997, but the thumping margin was surely abetted by the extravagantly obvious corruption and endless scandals that dogged the John Major government. The shift of the *Sun*, *Times* and their Sunday sister papers to Labour was quite decisive in creating the impression of unlimited incompetence and graft. All bourgeois governments, after all, are corrupt; but not all are *seen* to be corrupt. There are no scandals without scandal-sheets.

Of course, 1997 was a very different time in many respects. The media landscape has changed markedly. Blair fought, let us say, the last two general elections in which the internet played no more than a trivial role. Considering the effective neutering of broadcast news in this country by 'impartiality' guidelines, print had a free run to set the agenda. If there was some hubris in the famous claim, made in 1992, that "it's *The Sun* wot won it", the power was undeniable.

It is at least *questionable* now (and Wolff's book does question it).



Rupert Murdoch might have won it for Blair, but will he, can he, do it for Starmer?

The Sun is no longer profitable; it seems likely that the *Daily Mail* is more influential, thanks to its more aggressive posture on the web (*The Sun* wasted years behind a paywall - a decision which is generally accepted to have been a total disaster). The *Mail*, however, cannot take its influence for granted, since there is a whole jungle of far-right digital media organisations out there, funded lavishly by psychopathic billionaires. The papers have to sing for their supper; and, while legacy media branding makes a difference, there is no longer quite the same glamour of invincibility.

We might ask who, out of Murdoch and Starmer, needs whom the more. "It's *The Sun* wot won it" is a cheerful boast, but also an albatross. In order for Murdoch to get anything in return for his support, people must believe that he delivers victories (or at least makes enough of a difference to earn his treats). But then it is always necessary to be on the winning side. It was not exactly a hard call in the mid-1990s, and nor is it now (in 1992, backing the Tories was a risk; and, in 2005 perhaps, backing Blair). For what it is worth, we expect the Murdoch papers to back Starmer in the end - absent some total disaster befalling brave Sir Keir. Delaying the decision allows more horse trading; but Starmer need not give anything major up unless he actually needs the leg-up, especially since he is perfectly happy playing the good ultra-Blairite anyway.

That is the paradox of Murdoch's situation. In order to get his pound

of flesh, he must appear powerful. But in order to appear powerful, he *must* back Starmer (assuming that the Labour lead is as unassailable as it looks), so why *give him* the pound of flesh?

Starmer, to be sure, has other reasons than the directly sphenological to want that support. In my line of work - 'software as a service' - there is a high premium on landing certain companies, or even individuals, as paying customers: those whose decision is likely to signal to others that the product is worth the money ('influencers' in the broadest sense). For political parties in this country, press barons and companies have often served this purpose, and none more so than Murdoch.

Following the Labour conference, and despite the interruption of Starmer's speech by yet another tiny direct-action group - you can practically hear the returns diminishing - the signalling is clear. We are back to business as usual, with the emphasis on *business*. Having taken a cautious distance during the Jeremy Corbyn years, the lobbyists are well and truly back, especially now that victory *seems* inevitable. Murdoch's support will confirm that the bonanza is on.

One other datum is relevant here - the decline of legacy media is *relative*. As I discussed last week, it cannot be doubted that new digital media have caused a severe shock to the underlying business model of the press and TV broadcasting, and introduced much more competition

for viewers' attention. But, because the new media produced monopolies not of content so much as advertising, with news organisations subordinated to the great platforms, there is a coordination problem that *prevents* the new media from securing consensus in the old way.

So long as the Murdoch papers (and TV channels and so on) have some reach and influence, that influence is outsized, because Murdoch can coordinate their political lines. In 2016, shortly before the Brexit vote, *The Sunday Times* published an editorial backing 'remain'. Murdoch was incandescent with rage; this must not be repeated on the daily. So, according to an anonymous source for *Private Eye*, CEO Rebekah Brooks was dispatched to have a chat with the then *Times* editor, John Witherow, "to put some lead in his pencil". YouTube cannot do this to the thousands of individual culture-war ranters that make up its own 'commentariat'.

Utility

Can this change? *Perhaps*. The drift in western societies is towards greater levels of control over speech, and it is easy to imagine this requiring an attack on the power of the platforms, whether through anti-trust enforcement or something else.

A rather eclectic crew of political malcontents pursue this line, from the social democratic, libertarian writer, Cory Doctorow, to many on the right and far right, who believe that they are unfairly subject to much greater censorship than the left. Suppose that

there *are* serious efforts made by the responsible authorities, however, and the platform monopolies are broken up or subject to far more strenuous regulation. The result - as *right* libertarians typically argue - will be favourable ground for incumbent media organisations to flip the script, and make their relationship with YouTube and friends more like their former relationship with the paper-mill.

Doctorow objects to more *centralising* approaches to the problem of tech monopoly - nationalising Google, say - partly on possibilist grounds (all you have to do, after all, is enforce the laws already on the books, in theory), and partly on libertarian grounds (suppose you nationalised the platforms: would that not give a Donald Trump or Jair Bolsonaro too much power?) Possibilism is a red herring - in the US, at least, you have a chair of the Federal Trade Commission with a bit of, ahem, lead in her pencil for the first time in many decades; but all her suits must make it in the end through a gloriously corrupt Supreme Court. Cronyism and servility runs even stronger in British institutions (just look at the Labour conference...). The realistic option is to fight to change the parameters of what is 'realistic'.

The Bolsonaro point is more serious, but ultimately a counsel of despair. Either the left can prevent a further slide into insane tyranny, or it cannot. The media are in enemy hands already. We need first to think of what we *need*, and fight for that. In that regard, the honest petty bourgeois outlook exemplified by Doctorow has some merit applied to the media. I do not think we want a single, giant, nationalised media organisation monopolising the discourse. Part of the use value of media *for communists* is to give voice to infinitely diverse opinions ('Let a hundred flowers bloom' and all that); and part of its value for the bourgeoisie is the ability to *restrict* what views are available - which facts are ready to hand and which buried. News is not a generic good, like an electricity supply, for example, where you simply need it to run at the correct voltage and with the AC at the correct frequency.

The platform, however, *is* a bit like that. From basic cloud infrastructure up to modern media applications like YouTube, the economies of scale are massive; these are natural monopolies, and must become socialised utilities, like consumer internet access, electricity and water. In so doing, we gain a very sharp weapon against the Murdochs of the world: the ability to simply put an end to advertising as a business, more or less at the flick of a switch. His papers would no longer be propped up essentially by subsidies from the capitalist class at large, but would have to fight fair ●

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Notes

1. 'The last emperor' *Weekly Worker* October 5 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1461/the-last-emperor).
2. www.politico.eu/article/rupert-murdoch-empire-labour-keir-starmer-michael-wolff-uk-politics.

PALESTINE



Oppression breeds resistance

A revolt of the hopeless by the hopeless for the hopeless. Moshé Machover explores the background to the predictable Hamas attack on Israel and the likely consequences

It is a bit too early really to make any sort of the definitive assessment of what is going on in Israel/Palestine, because it is not clear how things will evolve.

To what extent will external factors and other players in this saga affect things? For example, will Hezbollah join the fight or not? It has, of course, signalled its support for the onslaught on Israeli colonialism, but whether it will become deeply involved remains open. Neither is it clear how far Israel will go in its 'revenge' actions. Whatever it does will be dire, but how far it will go - whether it will try to occupy the Gaza Strip, for instance - these are open questions.

While it is too early to make a definitive assessment of this attack of the Hamas resistance against Israeli colonialism, what we can say is that it was not only predictable, but actually predicted (not least by myself). But at the same time it was unexpected, as I will explain. I have previously pointed out, both in articles and talks, that things are escalating: the oppression of Zionist colonialism against the Palestinian people is intensifying, as is the reaction to that in the shape of acts of resistance, both organised and disorganised. And each, of course, feeds the other.

The only way the Israeli colonial regime is able to conceive of reacting to Palestinian resistance is through even harsher oppression and, of course, that in itself feeds resistance. So where will it all lead? It goes without saying that Israel holds much more power than the Palestinians

and therefore has the potential to eventually steer the culmination of this conflict in the way that Zionism has always aimed for: to get rid of as many Palestinians and possess as much of the territory of Palestine as possible - in other words, ethnic cleansing. But this may not yet be on the *immediate* agenda.

However, there have been steps in that direction, so in that sense the escalation of the colonial conflict was predictable - and it was also predicted by various people, including myself, that one of the focal points of the conflagration will be the holy places, especially the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. This is not only a religious compound, but has very strong symbolic value for most Palestinians, whether they are Muslims or not. That includes Christians or those not attached to any religion whatsoever.

Let me quote an article of mine published in the *Weekly Worker* on January 19:

The third and final way in which escalation is going to occur in the occupied territories is through religious provocation, and here I am talking about incursions into the holy places - especially al-Haram al-Sharif, known to Jews as Temple Mount, the mountain on which the mosque of al-Aqsa is situated. This is a focus of provocation. Not for nothing have these fanatics in the new Israeli cabinet been dubbed incendiaries or pyromaniacs: they are out to make deliberate provocation, calculated to heighten tension and

Gaza mass demonstration marking the anniversary of the founding of Hamas. A pan-Islamic organisation with links throughout the Middle East, Hamas is a deeply reactionary organisation but clearly with a mass base in Palestine. It is no isolated terrorist outfit. Its surprise attack on Israel was an act of desperation designed to provoke the Zionists into taking terrible retaliatory action and thereby creating countless martyrs and setting the whole region aflame

increase conflict in the occupied territories and beyond. I do not need to tell you that a major provocation on Temple Mount will have repercussions not only in Palestine, but in the entire Muslim world.

Here then is a possible point of ignition of a conflict which is going to go beyond the confines of Israel-Palestine.¹

Provocations

Indeed it is significant that Hamas has named its current operation the 'Al-Aqsa Storm'. In other words, its onslaught on Israeli colonialism is connected directly with al-Aqsa.

It is responding, among other things, to provocations that were deliberately mounted by the Messianic Zionists in the present Israeli cabinet - Itamar Ben-Gvir especially should be mentioned. He ordered the deliberately provocative incursions into the al-Aqsa compound with the intention of intensifying the conflict. He intends driving that conflict to higher and higher levels and ultimately bringing it to its ultimate conclusion via ethnic cleansing.

For its part, Hamas is interested in highlighting the al-Aqsa aspect in connection with this provocation, because in this way it is hoping to gain support beyond the confines of Palestine - beyond even the immediate Middle East, but throughout the Muslim world.

In a technical sense the present attack by Hamas against the colonial regime of Israel was even predicted by the Israel Defence Forces. In 2016 the Israeli military conducted an

exercise that assumed a scenario very similar to what is currently occurring: incursion of Hamas militants by land, sea and air into Israel (though not nearly on the same scale as the present onslaught). Yet, despite that, it caught Israel completely by surprise and it has not unreasonably been compared by quite a few commentators to what happened almost exactly 50 years ago: the Battle of Suez of October 1973. On that occasion the possibility of an Egyptian attack had been predicted, but largely ignored by Israel.

Both then and now the Israeli leadership has been a victim of its own hubris and racism, according to which the Arabs are too primitive and too incapable of doing anything on this scale. As a matter of fact, in recent weeks the dismal failure of Israel to prepare and react in time to the crossing of the Suez canal in 1973 has been broadly discussed, because, in accordance with the 50-year rule, various documents relating to that period have been released - if only in a very redacted form. So the failure of Israel to be prepared for this attack has recently been widely discussed in the Israeli press. There has even been speculation about what would happen if this mistake was repeated. Well, they did repeat it!

A recent article in *Ha'aretz* - 'Why Israel's defences crumbled in face of Hamas assault'² - has enumerated the points which encapsulated the failure of the Israeli establishment to prepare for a Hamas onslaught. The author mentions six points. First of all, intelligence. Israel has an extensive network of both spies and people planted in the occupied territories,

as well as surveillance operators unequal in any other country. Such surveillance supposedly allows it to locate not only every person, but every mouse, in the territories under its occupation, including the Gaza concentration camp, yet Hamas conducted an operation that obviously needed months to prepare (it was clearly not something that could have been cooked up in a few days), involving hundreds of people. So the fact that Israel apparently knew nothing about it is a failure of its legendary intelligence services.

Second, there was logistic failure. The Israeli army took a long time to realise the magnitude of the event, even when it started. There was no preparation to transport troops - the government had quite a few ground forces mobilised at the time, but not in the right place. They also had to wait for long hours at various gathering points to be deployed to where they were needed - a question not only of intelligence governance, but intelligence assessment. As in the Yom Kippur war, the security establishment top brass estimated that the enemy was not really interested in immediately starting a war.

All these points amount to dismal failure - and that is a main point in the internal Israeli debate about the current war, even while it is going on.

Media

In fact, if you really want to have any idea of what is going on, the mainstream media is not a place to look: their reporting is hopelessly skewed in favour of Israel. For example, you get the idea that Hamas is only killing civilians. It is true that, while Hamas is engaged in killing a lot of ordinary civilians, a major part of its operation is the clash with Israeli forces, in which it has been fairly successful so far. This you do not get from the mainstream media here.

But the assessment of much of the Israeli press (at least the liberal press) is that *at this stage* it has been a major success for Hamas. I am quoting again from an article in *Ha'aretz* entitled 'Whatever happens in this round of the Israel-Gaza war, we already lost' by Chaim Levinson. He writes:

Whatever Israel does from this point onward is meaningless. Even if it finds Mohammed Deif in his bunker and brings him to trial in the people's court. As in the Yom Kippur War, the loss came with the opening blow. The rest are stories for historians.³

So the very fact that Hamas managed to make this onslaught is already a defeat for Israel. And who is responsible? I will now provide a (long, but interesting) quote from the October 8 *Ha'aretz* editorial:

The disaster that befell Israel ... is the clear responsibility of one person: Benjamin Netanyahu. The prime minister, who has prided himself on his vast political experience and irreplaceable wisdom in security matters, completely failed to identify the dangers he was consciously leading Israel into when establishing a government of annexation and dispossession, when appointing Bezael Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir to key positions, while embracing a foreign policy that openly ignores the existence and rights of Palestinians.

Netanyahu will certainly try to evade his responsibility and cast the blame on the heads of the army, military intelligence and the Shin Bet security service, who, like their predecessors on the eve

of the Yom Kippur War, saw a low probability of war with their preparations for a Hamas attack proving flawed.

They scorned the enemy and its offensive military capabilities. Over the next days and weeks, when the depth of Israel Defence Forces and intelligence failures come to light, a justified demand to replace them and take stock will surely arise.

However, the military and intelligence failure does not absolve Netanyahu of his overall responsibility for the crisis ... Netanyahu also shaped the policy embraced by the short-lived 'government of change' led by Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid: a multidimensional effort to crush the Palestinian national movement in both its wings, in Gaza and the West Bank, at a price that would seem acceptable to the Israeli public ...

After his victory in the last election, he replaced this caution with the policy of a "fully-right government," with overt steps taken to annex the West Bank, to carry out ethnic cleansing ... This also included a massive expansion of settlements and bolstering of the Jewish presence on Temple Mount, near the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as boasts of an impending peace deal with the Saudis, in which the Palestinians would get nothing, with open talk of a 'second Nakba' in his governing coalition. As expected, signs of an outbreak of hostilities began in the West Bank, where Palestinians started feeling the heavier hand of the Israeli occupier. Hamas exploited the opportunity in order to launch its surprise attack on Saturday.

Above all, the danger looming over Israel in recent years has been fully realised. A prime minister indicted in three corruption cases cannot look after state affairs, as national interests will necessarily be subordinate to extricating him from a possible conviction and jail time.

This was the reason for establishing this horrific coalition and the judicial coup advanced by Netanyahu, and for the enfeeblement of top army and intelligence officers, who were perceived as political opponents. The price was paid by the victims of the invasion in the western Negev.⁴

So what is a reasonable prediction of what is going to unfold in the immediate future? The downfall of the government headed by Golda Meir in 1974 signalled the end of the era of dominance of the Israeli Labor Party. The Israeli leaders then were sufficiently 'civilised' to realise that this kind of failure must result in resignation. Back in the 1970s, both in Israel and in this country, political failure on a major scale led to the resignation of the responsible minister.

But this is not the current practice today - certainly not in the case of Netanyahu. There is not the slimmest chance that he will resign willingly as a result of his individual failure.

I should also mention that there were substantial Israeli forces mobilised at the time of the incursion, but not in the south. They were protecting settlers who were conducting pogroms against Palestinian villages and towns much further north and guarding the demonstrative and provocative religious celebrations at points they declared were 'holy places'.

Each Israeli settlement in the occupied territories has its own attached military force guarding it. Each

hilltop outpost of young settlers who are engaging in pogroms against Palestinian neighbours has got a platoon of Israeli soldiers protecting them. So, as I have said, there have been quite a lot of forces mobilised, but they were engaged in guarding the settlers and, of course, it took quite a long time for these troops to be transported to where they were needed in the south - and they were not even trained to engage in the kind of fighting that was necessary. The last exercise that Israel conducted with this kind of scenario was seven years ago and since then the focus has been on the annexation of West Bank and suppressing the resistance there.

What next?

How things will unfold in the next few days is not clear. Certainly Israel is going to continue heavily attacking the Gaza Strip, bombarding high-rise buildings and other civilian targets - and, of course, the civilian casualties that Israel will cause in the Gaza will far outnumber those caused by the Hamas onslaught. Whether this conflict will spread elsewhere in the near future is anybody's guess - it is not at all clear how far things will go.

Paradoxically Israel has no real interest in annihilating Hamas. What would be the alternative if Hamas was completely destroyed? Who would govern Gaza? The only alternative would be direct Israeli rule, but that would pin down a huge number of troops in order to police the two and a quarter million Palestinians imprisoned in this ghetto and would cost Israel an enormous amount in both finance and morale. This was demonstrated in the period that led to the first intifada in 1987.

While an Israeli land incursion into the Gaza Strip is perfectly possible and could well happen, to retain direct control of it is not a convenient or feasible option for the Israeli colonial regime. 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.

There is also another complication: Hamas has managed to take quite a number of Israeli soldiers prisoner and also take a substantial number of Israeli civilians as hostages. An Israeli land incursion or the heavy bombing of Gaza will put these people in great danger - a consideration that that cannot have escaped the minds of the present criminal government.

While in the short run this is clearly a victory for Hamas, as Israelis have pointed out, this is not the balance of the outcome in the more distant future. Let me repeat a prediction that I have already made: a further escalation of repression and resistance is inevitable and in the longer run, at least from the Israeli point of view, there is a possible way out of it: get rid of the problem by ethnic cleansing. This is a long-held dream of Zionist planners and it has been explicitly advocated by ministers in the current government.

This is not something you arrive at only by analysing the current balance of forces: it is *explicitly* what militant Zionists have been driving towards. It is something repeated especially by the more cerebral members of the Israeli cabinet. Ben-Gvir behaves more like a thug, while Smotrich is more like an evil planner. He is on record as explicitly advocating presenting the Palestinians with a choice: either you accept your subservience or you will be dealt with as in 1948. Whether Israel will manage

to carry it out is anybody's guess, but this is what is driving the present gang in the cabinet.

How should we relate politically to this war? You will hear a lot of people saying that Hamas is a reactionary force - look at the way they slaughter civilians. I think we should look at it in the way that history looks at such arguments: those who fight in anti-colonial resistance movements do not behave like ethical, gentle people. Take the colonisation of North America. The US Declaration of Independence refers to the indigenous people as "merciless Indian savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions." And they were certainly guilty of killing a large number of American settlers, yet whom do you now side with? The colonial settlers or native Americans? I think that is a question worth asking.

Let me also mention the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (better known as the Mau Mau), the resistance movement to British colonialism. It is estimated that they were responsible for the deaths of thousands of civilians. Whom do you side with? The British colonial regime, which, of course, was guilty of many more murders and various unspeakable atrocities? We do not side with them. We side with the KLFA. Similarly in Algeria the National Liberation Front was also responsible for thousands of civilian murders, so whom do you side with? the French colonial regime or the NLF?

I think we should draw the right conclusions from this and apply the same kind of standard to the present conflict.

But does Hamas have any real prospect of liberating the Palestinian people? Will it end up like the KLFA and the NLF? This can be ruled out. The balance of forces is massively weighted in favour of the Zionist colonial regime. As we in Matzpen have long argued, its overthrow would require the participation of the Israeli working class, and this in turn can only occur as part of a socialist transformation of the Arab east, leading to a regional socialist union or federation, including Israel.⁵ Hamas is leading away from this direction. Its present onslaught is an act of desperation. As a former senior US diplomat put it,

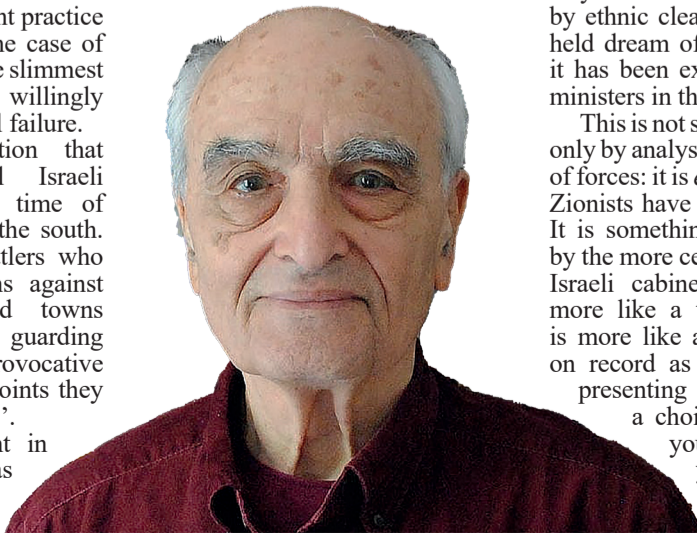
The Hamas attack on Israel was part jailbreak (from Gaza, the world's largest prison since the destruction of the Warsaw Ghetto), but, more than that, it was a revolt of the hopeless by the hopeless for the hopeless. Sometimes suffering becomes so unbearable that anything goes.⁶

This article is based on Moshé Machover's talk to Online Communist Forum on October 8 2023. See: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFa7Jg59E5s

Notes

1. 'Escalation on every front' *Weekly Worker* January 19 2023: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1426/escalation-on-every-front.
2. www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2023-10-08/ty-article/.premium/six-significant-failures-that-lead-to-one-point-collapse-vs-hamas/0000018b-0f15-dfff-a7eb-afdd0b80000.
3. www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-10-08/ty-article-opinion/.premium/whatever-happens-in-this-round-of-the-israel-gaza-war-we-already-lost/0000018b-0b9d-dc5d-a39f-9ff327c0000.
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5. See my article, 'The decolonisation of Palestine' *Weekly Worker* June 23 2016: weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1112/the-decolonisation-of-palestine.
6. justworldeducational.org/2023/10/amb-chas-freeman-likens-gaza-breakout-to-vietnams-1968tet-offensive.

Moshe Machover: Hamas attack predicted



LEFT

Following the national road

Defeat for the SNP in the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election is probably a foretaste of what will happen in the general election, yet much of the left still clings to petty nationalism. **Mike Macnair** offers a radical alternative

With the October 5 by-election, the Scottish National Party went down to an absolutely decisive defeat. Labour took 58.6% of the vote, the SNP 27.6%, the Tories and Liberal Democrats as well as the Greens losing their deposits, and the rest also-rans. The turnout was down from 66% in the 2019 general election to 37%, but this is completely normal in by-elections.

This paper recommended a critical vote for the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition candidate, Christopher Sermanni, who got only 178 votes (0.6%). The other left candidate, Bill Bonnar of the Scottish Socialist Party, got 204 (0.9%). These poor results are unsurprising. It is obviously unhelpful and too stereotypically sectarian to have two rival left candidates with marginal political differences between them, as Scott Evans pointed out two weeks ago.¹ This has been a pattern for decades now. But also, in this election, the left candidates will have been squeezed, as the Tories, Lib Dems and Greens were, by heavy tactical voting to defeat the SNP.

Tactical voting has not been unique to this by-election. It also featured strongly in the July by-elections in Selby and Ainsty (Labour win) and Somerton and Frome (Lib Dem win), though the Conservatives held off Labour in Uxbridge by their pro-driver campaign.

This marginal success has shaped their subsequent tactics. The Tories have chosen to attempt to retrieve their desperate situation in the polls by US Republican-style culture-wars campaigning. This already began with the ‘trans’ issue, on which they have had considerable success in knocking down Nicola Sturgeon and embarrassing the Labour leadership. It has also been reflected in the increasing ‘double or quits’ commitment to the harebrained ‘imitate the Australians’ scheme of sending migrants to Rwanda, even if this means breaking with the European Convention on Human Rights (and thus identifying the UK with Russia and Belarus).

It is reasonable to expect that the consequence of this Tory choice to embrace the role of the ‘nasty party’ will result in more tactical voting to get the Tories out at the general election that is due in 2024. In this situation, in Scotland tactical voting to get the Tories out at Westminster will *also* be tactical voting against the SNP, since it is plain that there is now a real possibility of Labour winning.

Hence, it is by no means impossible that, as some senior pro-capitalist electoral commentators assess,² the next general election could see the SNP hammered. And in consequence the salience of the Scottish national question in politics would be significantly reduced for a few years. Phil Burton-Cartledge argues: “Before anyone gets too exuberant, *that is not going to happen*” - explaining the result by the specific circumstances of the constituency and the SNP’s troubles over the police investigation of its finances. This seems to understate the SNP’s *political* difficulties after 16 years in Scotland’s government and without a credible path either to independence or beyond independence. And it seems to understate the Britain-wide political dynamics involved.³

The British left is basically characterised by ‘if it moves, salute it’ opportunism and tailism. It is this that has taken groups originally



Left tailism of bourgeois nationalism leads nowhere

openly opposed to Scottish nationalism into the nationalist camp. This is true of the old Militant, which gave rise to both the SSP and Tusc; and to Socialist Appeal, whose opportunist turn to Scottish nationalism only followed the 2014 referendum campaign. It is true of the Socialist Workers Party, and its offshoots in Counterfire and Revolutionary Socialism in the 21st Century. It was an *earlier* opportunist turn that took the old International Marxist Group into Jim Sillars’ Scottish Labour Party in 1976, though a minority faction of the IMG already before this turn argued for Scottish nationalism as part of their general perspective of “breaking Labour’s monopoly hold of electoral representation of the working class”.

Trotskyism

On this basis, one might expect that the practical defeat of the SNP’s political project, and a possible radical reduction in its electoral weight, will result in the various left groups drawing back from their nationalism. After all, these groups mainly claim descent from Trotskyism, which was defined (among other principles) by the *rejection* of the ideas of socialism in a single country and ‘national roads to socialism’.

Not yet; and possibly not at all. Anti-Capitalist Resistance (ACR), which is the remote descendant of the old IMG, seems to remain nationalist in principle. Iain Bruce, writing originally for the related site, ecosocialist.scot, referring on September 28 to the Tories’ decision to go ahead with the Rosebank oilfield under the headline “The UK’s suicidal Rosebank decision - Scotland needs a stronger response”, offered an entirely internal critique of the SNP’s failure to oppose this decision explicitly. He called for an announcement that “any government

of an independent Scotland would make a priority of closing down Rosebank and any other new fields, without compensation”.⁴ But what on earth does he *expect* from a party - the SNP - which for years argued that ‘It’s Scotland’s oil’ in order to support their claim that an independent Scotland would be economically viable? They did so, moreover, rightly at the time, in the sense that there is no way in which an independent Scotland *could* be economically viable without either oil exports, or Alec Salmond’s fantasy of a Scots ‘Celtic Tiger’ financial centre, like Ireland before the 2008 crash.

Geoff Ryan of ACR on October 3 shows the same nationalist commitment applied to Wales, which is not only far less likely to be economically viable as an independent state, but has never in recent years got above 30% support for independence and in most polls shows a clear majority against.⁵ Ryan’s article is mainly directed against the Tories’ deployment of their pro-driver, anti-children culture war against the Welsh devolved government. But the Welsh government is only one of the bodies targeted by the Tories’ campaign to defend the rights of rat-runners to kill child pedestrians: London and many other English local authorities are also targeted. Moreover, the Tories are not external to Wales: they hold 16 of the 60 seats in the devolved Senedd and 14 of the 40 Welsh constituencies in the UK parliament. The idea that Welsh independence would help with the problem of Tory culture wars is thus completely delusional.

Socialist Worker on October 5 (the day of the by-election) carried a story, ‘Why I left the SNP - and joined the socialists’. This is a report of the views of three activists, from Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow, who are now in the SWP.

All three are pro-independence. Dugald Macfarlane of Dundee says that “Imperialist Britain will never dissolve the union, and a new Scotland needs to be a socialist Scotland.” (Socialism in one country, anyone?) Beinn Grant of Edinburgh says: “The British state will not allow independence through parliamentary democracy; we clearly need stronger action.” Maryam Hally from Glasgow has the merit of identifying the SNP’s support for Nato over Ukraine as her “last straw”; but “I joined the SNP because we link independence to a wider struggle for social change.” The SWP thus presents itself as pro-independence; but its alternative route to independence is merely bigger and better demonstrations (and strikes) and they have no more credible path *beyond* independence than the SNP.

Chris Bambery, writing for *Counterfire*, comments on the Rutherglen by-election, mainly descriptively, but ending with this claim:

Leaving aside the never-ending decline of the UK state and economy, which created the rebirth of the national question in Scotland, if discontent grows with Starmer in office, the SNP are in place to offer themselves as a more left alternative. That requires sorting out a party in which internal democracy has been hollowed out, where continuity with Sturgeon is not possible, and Yousaf either needs to shift direction or go.

Meanwhile, polls show support for independence is at 50% plus, despite the SNP’s travails. That suggests the potential for a grassroots, pro-independence movement like the Catalan National Assembly. Scotland is crying out for that.

The first paragraph is essentially internal to the SNP. And what use, exactly, has the ‘Catalan National Assembly’ been?

SSPer Richie Venton’s ‘initial thoughts’ on the by-election downplay its significance.⁶ He emphasises the fact that this was a historic Labour seat, and was retaken by Labour in the 2017 general election, though lost again in 2019. He stresses the low turnout as showing voter dissatisfaction with the major parties (as Phil Burton-Cartledge notes, this argument is useless, since voter turnout is always down in by-elections). He blames Tusc for splitting the left vote. The article - and the campaign - seems from his report, in fact, to have been mainly about the ‘socialist’ aspect rather than about independence. This is also a feature of Philip Scott’s and Matt Dobson’s report of the by-election for *The Socialist* (October 6): “... it was an election that did not see independence feature heavily. It was the cost of living and the economic problems facing the working-class majority in the constituency that dominated.”

About half of their article is directed to the critique of the SSP (Venton only made a dismissive reference to Tusc). But the line is still very much pro-independence:

In none of the SSP material we have seen was there any criticism of the SNP’s strategy around

fighting for self-determination. Scottish Tusc said clearly: “Unlike the SNP and the Greens we fight for socialism. To win self-determination means convincing a big majority our lives would be better. We have no illusions that a bosses’ independent Scotland, where big business controls the economy, would deliver for the working class. That’s the SNP vision. We want to see an Independent Socialist Scotland.”

Once again, anyone for ‘socialism in one country’?

No short cuts

The SNP and its broader pro-independence camp did not lose the 2014 independence referendum because of the defects of ‘parliamentary democracy’ or even because of the defects of plebiscitary ‘democracy’ - referendums as an instrument of fraud, which Cameron’s 2014 campaign certainly was. They lost because they were unable to offer a credible path forward for Scotland *beyond* independence: the oil largely running out and radically undercut by cheaper producers, the dreams of Scots finance capital destroyed by the 2008 crash, the certainty that Spain and France would veto European Union membership for an independent Scotland.

‘Socialism in one country’ in Scotland is absolutely no alternative. The new regime would be utterly impoverished and under ‘sanctions’ - and attacked by US and British-sponsored sabotage and subversion operations - from the outset.

And yet, the SSP and SP(S) commentators on the Rutherglen and Hamilton West by-election are correct to say that what is needed is socialism. The problem is that we need to approach socialism in a radically different way to hoping that bigger demos will bring it about. Actually, to break out of the capitalist order, we need action on a continental scale (for us, a European scale). Before we can get to that point, we need to build up our organised forces *under* capitalism - through trade unions, through coops, and so on; and, most importantly, through the organisation of a Communist Party that does not seek short cuts to socialism, but aims to build up the organised movement and undermine the *political authority* of the constitutional order.

Tail-ending the nationalists is actually the *opposite* of the sort of policy that might begin to offer a real alternative ●

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Notes

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USA

Biden's sinking ship

The greater the disarray, the greater the odds that Trump will return to the White House. Daniel Lazare charts the administration's self-inflicted woes and the necessity of breaking with the Democrats

Joe Biden has 13 months to go until next year's presidential election, but already his administration is beginning to capsize.

Last week was particularly brutal. The action started on October 3, when Matt Gaetz, the rightwing firebrand from the Florida panhandle, filed a motion to "vacate" the House of Representatives speakership and boot out Kevin McCarthy as Republican leader. In other circumstances, a motion leading to weeks of Republican infighting might be good news for Democrats, but this time it was the opposite - for the simple reason that Republicans are in the majority.

If they are paralysed, consequently so too is the House. The same goes for Congress and the administration - they are paralysed too. The White House has no choice but to sit and stew, as Republicans struggle to find a replacement.

Bad as this might be, a number of factors make it even worse. One is Nato's proxy war in Ukraine. The 45-day stopgap spending measure that McCarthy manoeuvred through the House on September 30 - at the cost of his own speakership - failed to include military and financial aid for Ukraine: an omission that Biden hoped to remedy when a new spending measure became due. But, with McCarthy now out of the picture, the Republican sorting-out process could drag on for weeks, making the mid-November deadline for a successor bill harder and harder to meet.

Moreover, Jim Jordan, one of two top contenders for the post, is an Ohio isolationist who has vowed to shut down aid altogether. If he wins, US money will eventually dry up, meaning that Ukraine will have to scramble to find a replacement for roughly half its military aid.¹ Since the task is all but impossible, Biden could conceivably wind up presiding over a second military disaster equal to, if not greater than, the chaotic evacuation of Afghanistan in August 2021.

Finally, there is a third factor. In introducing his motion to vacate, Gaetz tossed in a real zinger: a call for McCarthy's replacement to be none other than Trump. Electing an outsider would be unprecedented, but, since the US constitution merely states that "[t]he House of Representatives shall choose their speaker and other officers", it is not out of the question.

The liberal response was to laugh it off as a bad joke. *The Nation*, the venerable old weekly (founded 1865) that serves as a left-liberal flagship, assured readers that a Trump speakership cannot happen due to an internal Republican rule requiring party leaders to "step aside if indicted for a felony for which a sentence of two or more years imprisonment may be imposed". Since Trump is facing 91 criminal indictments, most providing for two years or more, he would seem to be ineligible. So there was nothing to worry about. The magazine concluded that the threat does not exist.²

But it does. Any such rule is non-binding, meaning that House Republicans are free to repeal or ignore it, as they see fit. As a result, absolutely nothing stands in the way of a Trump speakership - nada, zilch. Given the party's razor-thin majority, moreover, anyone wishing to become speaker must win the support of 218 out of 222 House Republicans - just



The more they throw legal charges at him, the more he seems to rise

over 98%. Thanks to the deep divisions in Republican ranks, no sitting member can come close. But Trump can. He is the man Republicans obey without question - a *Führer* who is on his way to nomination by acclaim. He is the only one who can garner every last Republican vote. The greater the disarray, the greater the odds that he will wind up stepping into the breach.

But even if he does not, the mere fact that Trump is emerging as a Capitol Hill kingmaker is disturbing enough from a Democratic perspective. As *The New York Times* put it at the end of Biden's week from hell, "That a twice-impeached, quadruply indicted former president is exercising this much influence is baffling to historians far more used to defeated or disgraced politicians fading into obscurity."³

Indeed, the more charges Democratic prosecutors throw at Trump, the stronger he grows - and the more the Biden administration seems to sink beneath the waves.

Triumphant Trump

October 3 saw another blow: a 1.3% drop on Wall Street amid a startling rise in interest rates. Suddenly, the financial press was filled with hand-wringing over America's growing federal debt, currently at \$33.5 trillion (or 119.5% of GDP) - nearly double the level prior to the 2008 meltdown. Then came an announcement on October 5 that the administration would resume building the Mexican border wall that Trump initiated in 2017 and which Democrats railed against as racist and exclusionary during the 2020 campaign. "There will not be another foot of wall constructed on my administration," Biden vowed. "End. Stop. Done. Over. Not going to do it. Withdraw the lawsuits. We're out," he added.⁴

But with illegal crossings surging to 233,000 per month, the administration has had a change of heart: "There is presently an acute and immediate need to construct physical barriers and roads in the vicinity of the border of the United States in order to prevent unlawful entries into the United States," secretary of homeland security Alejandro Mayorkas announced.

Trump was triumphant. Noting

that the administration was waiving environmental regulations so construction could resume, he wrote on Truth Social, his personal social-media platform: "So interesting to watch Crooked Joe Biden break every environmental law in the book to prove that I was right when I built 560 miles (they incorrectly state 450 in story!) of brand new, beautiful border wall."

"A wall does nothing to deter people who are fleeing poverty and violence from coming to the United States," countered Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "You do not risk your life or your children's lives going through the Darién Gap or traversing hundreds of miles of desert if you have any other options."⁵ Quite right. But AOC gave no indication as to whether she would take back the endorsement of Biden's re-election bid that she issued in July (short answer: she won't).

Finally, there was Hamas's massive assault on October 7, which opened the floodgates of reaction. Republicans took turns bashing Biden for his "six billion dollar hostage deal" with Iran, as Trump described it. This was an agreement, announced in August, to free five American-Iranian prisoners in exchange for the unfreezing of Iranian oil assets. Never mind that the deal stipulates that the money can only be used for humanitarian purposes or that the funds are rightfully Iran's to begin with. For Republicans, the only thing that matters is that it bolsters Iran at a time when *The Wall Street Journal* was reporting that the Islamic republic gave Hamas the green light for the assault at an October 2 meeting in Beirut (a report, by the way, that was quickly disputed by other news agencies).⁶

It was left to Trump to tie the various strands together. He wrote:

The same people that raided Israel are pouring into our once beautiful USA, through our *totally open southern border*, at record numbers. Are they planning an attack within our country? Crooked Joe Biden and his boss, Barack Hussein Obama, did this to us!⁷

A young Ecuadorean mother peddling

candy on the New York City subways with two or three children in tow because the federal government refuses to give her working papers is apparently the same as a heavily armed Hamas militant. Support Israel, attack Iran, impeach Biden, deport the migrants - such was the message that Republicans pounded home again and again.

The administration's response was to delete a couple of tweets calling for a ceasefire and an end to "violence and retaliatory attacks", and to send an aircraft carrier to Israel as a sign of support.⁸ Biden thinks he will win because his ships are bigger than anyone else's.

Facing defeat

What does it all mean? Simply that the SS Biden is sinking and taking the neoliberal world order down with it. Secretary of state Antony Blinken's Middle East peace offensive - in reality an attempt to enlist Saudi Arabia in a US-Israeli alliance against Iran and China⁹ - is dead in the water. While Israel certainly welcomes US military assistance, the Saudis are keeping their distance due to the Arab roar of approval for Hamas. Hence, they are resisting US entreaties to issue a clear statement in support of Israel and against the Palestinians.

"It's a good opportunity for the Biden team to reflect on their utterly failed approach to wheeling and dealing with autocrats as a road to stability in the Middle East," Sarah Leah Whitson, executive director of Democracy for the Arab World Now - an advocacy group founded by *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi prior to his murder by Saudi agents in 2018 - told *The New York Times*.¹⁰ Whitson is right to a degree. Biden does like dealing with super-rich oil monarchs, which is why, after vowing to ostracise Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman for his role in the Khashoggi killing, he is now wooing him in yet another about-face.

It is not stability that Biden is concerned about, but the battle for control of the Persian Gulf and its vast energy resources, regardless of the consequences for the larger

region. In return for Saudi diplomatic recognition, all he asked of Benjamin Netanyahu was a few face-saving concessions, so that the farcical two-state Palestinian-Israeli peace process could stagger on for a few years longer. Of the Palestinians, similarly, all he asked was mute deference, while Israeli pogromists raged through their communities like members of the tsarist Black Hundreds. But mute deference is not in Hamas's vocabulary, and so the entire affair has blown up in Washington's face.

This is Biden's method of operation: bottle up social pressures and then stare blankly when they finally explode. He wonders why Latin American migrants will not stay home, even as US drug policies turn Ecuador and other countries into gang-ravaged, free-fire zones and US sanctions impose economic hardship on Venezuela and Nicaragua. He wonders why the bourgeoisie will not continue lending him money after expanding national debt by 24% since taking office. And he wonders why Trump will not sit meekly in the dock and plead guilty to the charges that Democratic prosecutors bring against him. "Rejoice, America: these trials should bring Donald Trump to ruin," the liberal *New Republic* proclaimed early last week.¹¹ But it is not Trump who is facing defeat, but Biden.

As difficult as it is to avoid feelings of *Schadenfreude* over Biden's self-inflicted wounds, it goes without saying that a Republican victory will pitch US society off the edge of a cliff. Amid vows to pardon January 6 insurrectionists, to expel "six or seven million" illegal immigrants and to bomb everything from Iranian oil facilities to Mexican drug labs,¹² a second Trump presidency will see a dramatic rise in war, oppression and authoritarianism.

But leftists who think the answer is to hold one's nose and vote Democrat should think again. The problem with a corrupt liberal establishment is its growing weakness and instability. The more Biden self-destructs, the more he paves the way for Trump, even as he pretends to fight him - and the more socialists end up supporting a bourgeois liberal who grows feeble by the day. Instead of relying on one wing of the ruling class to fend off another, the working class must mobilise independently to save itself - and society along with it ●

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AUSTRALIA

Heading for the rocks

Hand-picked advisors and no power. The Voice referendum offers no solution when it comes to Aboriginal rights, argues **Martin Greenfield**

On October 14 Australians will vote in a referendum on whether to alter the country's monarchist constitution to "recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice".

"The Voice" will be a body established by parliament to "advise on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples". If successful, its composition and details will be wholly decided by parliament.

On the face of it, who could be opposed to something so benign? Yet the 'yes' campaign - led by the Labor government with lukewarm backing from the Greens - looks to be heading for defeat. The conservative Liberal and National opposition parties are campaigning against, appealing to ignorance with the inspiring slogan: 'If you don't know, vote no'.

Given the conservative nature of the Australian constitution, no referendum in Australia's short history has won without support from both the government and opposition. The 'republic' referendum in 1999 to transfer royal prerogative from the crown to a parliament-appointed president was contested and defeated. Polls have the 'yes to Voice' vote at an even lower ebb. As well as winning a majority of the electorate, for a referendum to be successful it must win a majority of the six colonial-era states - an inbuilt handbrake on change.

Prime minister Anthony Albanese's Labor government and conservative Aboriginals, such as Noel Pearson, have been bending over backwards to assure the electorate that the Voice will have no powers: it will not lead to reparations for stolen lands and will only have an advisory role (one that can be ignored).

Children

An example of this appeal to backwardness run by some government MPs reads: "Schools have student councils, where each class picks a student to represent them. They don't run the school. They offer advice. They offer ideas. That's what the Voice will be." Leaving aside the orientalist insult that compares the colonised to children, it is an indicator as to why the 'yes' campaign is headed for defeat.

So the tenor of its campaign is to tell 'doubters' that the Voice will have no power and is not to be feared. Yet, on the other hand, it appeals to liberal 'progressives', claiming that 'history is calling'. Which is it? 'Yes' campaign advertising feels more like an Oxfam or Unicef appeal to give young black kids 'a chance'. There is no real attempt to win the mass of the population to the idea that this will be of mutual benefit through shared justice - because in reality, no justice can be delivered through the Voice.

Most - but not all - capitalist corporations are on board with the official 'yes' campaign. Much of mainstream society placates itself with reconciliation action plans and starts meetings with 'acknowledgements of country': performative gestures that are more about making middle class white people and their institutions feel good about themselves rather than building a movement for justice.

The 'Voice with no power' on offer has meant that, while a clear majority of 'First Nations' people



Not an empty land: occupied for some 60,000 years

(who make up just under four percent of the population) will vote 'yes', some radical voices in the Aboriginal movement are calling for a 'no' vote. Some, like veteran activist Gary Foley, will boycott the referendum. They argue that the Voice will not only be a sham, but without a treaty the Voice concedes Aboriginal sovereignty to the colonisers.

For its proponents, the 'Indigenous Voice to parliament' will right an historic fiction - that Australia was 'empty' when the British colonised it in 1788. Unlike in New Zealand, where the crown was forced to sign a treaty with the Maori, Australia was deemed *terra nullius*, so no reckoning with Aboriginal peoples was needed. It was not until the 1960s that indigenous Australians were even counted as citizens.

The successful 1967 referendum (initiated by a conservative Liberal government with bipartisan support) was for a "an act to alter the constitution so as to omit certain words relating to the people of the Aboriginal race in any state and so that Aboriginals are to be counted in reckoning the population". Ninety percent of Australians voted 'yes'. In 1992, a high court decision effectively quashed *terra nullius*, recognising that a group of Torres Strait Islanders, led by Eddie Mabo, had held continuous ownership of Murray Island (Mer).

At its heart, the referendum is an attempt by 'liberal' mainstream society to solve this constitutional contradiction. The ruling class is split on this question, with a large and powerful minority beholden to the mining industry and large agricultural estates opposed to any concessions to First Nations people. Most of mainstream bourgeois society, with its 'official anti-racism', seeks a rapprochement with the First Nations - albeit on the basis of incorporation into capitalist society.

The likely failure of this referendum lies squarely at the feet of the Albanese government. Pumped with hubris at the start of the year, when polls were nearly 70% in favour of the referendum, Labor pushed the legislation forward before securing the support of opposition leader Peter Dutton. A former

Queensland cop, with all that entails, Dutton had laid a trap for the prime minister, which Albanese walked into. Just ahead of the referendum, polls are now showing a lead of over 15% for 'no'.

History

The Voice originates from a national meeting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 2017: a National First Nations Constitutional Convention, convened by the unelected Referendum Council, which was formed under the previous Liberal government.¹ The convention was by invitation, but is seen as broadly representative of First Nations people. It issued the 'Uluru statement from the heart', which calls for "Voice, treaty and truth".² Its endorsement was not unanimous. A minority of Aboriginal voices then - as now - believe the process concedes First Nations' sovereignty that cannot be reconciled without a treaty.

The origins for this "most gracious request" by indigenous people, as the prime minister refers to it, comes from a generation of Aboriginal leaders, radicalised during the land rights movement in the 1960s and 70s, who have experienced defeat after defeat - often at the hands of the Labor Party.

When Bob Hawke led Labor to victory in 1983, he did so promising a National Land Rights Act - a process to return stolen lands to Aboriginal traditional owners. Labor also promised to ban uranium mining, much of which is on traditional Aboriginal lands. Hawke reneged on both, stabbing the Aboriginal movement in the back at the behest of the mining industry.

In 1991, a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody delivered a report to the then Labor government with 339 recommendations, including that all jurisdictions (state and federal) introduce land rights legislation and that the Commonwealth deliver funding autonomy for Aboriginal communities on a triennial basis. These and many other recommendations remain undelivered.

Arch conservative, John Howard, as PM, abolished the Aboriginal and

Torres Strait Islander Commission in 2005 - a statutory authority created by the Labor government, that also included elections by First Nations people to choose their representatives. While flawed, its democratic content was worth defending.

The history of the past 50 years has mostly been one of bitter defeats and disappointments for the Aboriginal peoples. Many Aboriginal leaders from the activist generation of the 1960s-70s hoped that a modest request for a 'Voice to parliament' would win bipartisan support and their efforts of a lifetime would deliver some sort of result. The entire strategy was focused on winning bipartisanship, but Albanese fumbled at the try line, pushing ahead with the referendum before securing backing from the opposition.

Up until the middle of this year, Dutton played along with the idea that the referendum might be bipartisan. A trap. An overconfident Albanese was lured into setting in motion the vote machinery and, when it was effectively too late, Dutton pulled the rug.

In one sense, Dutton's decision to oppose the Voice makes it a choice between an Australia that opposes racism and a country that is comfortable in its racism. That is the basis upon which many will vote - and will clearly be how the international narrative will run. But it is not that simple. Many in the 'yes' camp are running along similar lines to the Hillary Clinton campaign against Donald Trump in 2016 or the 'remain' campaign against the Brexiteers in Britain. A celebrity-led campaign is moralising against and dismissing anyone considering a 'no' vote as ignorant racists, much as Clinton bemoaned the "basket of deplorables", or 'remoaners' criticised the "gammon" working class who voted for Brexit.

But it is simply untrue that working class people in multicultural Australia are hopelessly racist. With opinion polls showing almost 70% in favour of the referendum on the Voice a few months ago, if it now turns out there is a 'no' majority on October 14, does that mean that a third of the population has suddenly become racist?

Left response

While lacking any clear politics, many of these voters are wondering why the Albanese government is prioritising a referendum during a cost-of-living and housing crisis, where real wages are continuing to fall and rents are skyrocketing. There is no campaign that unites working class economic concerns with a political programme for democracy and justice.

What is missing, of course, is an independent working class voice, a push to recognise Aboriginal sovereignty through treaty and land rights, combined with a militant campaign for a democratic republic and economic class rule. Workers have nothing to fear from a treaty that grants real land rights and allows for a process to pay reparations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for lost land.

Most of what remains of the revolutionary left is mired in an economic tailing of the 'progressive' bourgeoisie. They simply do not take constitutional or high politics seriously. So,

given the absence of an organised working class movement with its own programme on this matter, it is not surprising that most anti-racist, trade union and class-conscious workers will vote 'yes'. Given the opposition's position, it can be argued that this is an 'anti-racist' vote. It is a rational decision for most 'progressive' people to take.

And this is where much of the organised left has landed: the 'soft Stalinist' Communist Party of Australia, the ex-Mandelite/Castroite Socialist Alliance (formerly the Democratic Socialist Party) - even the Cliffite Socialist Alternative. They all say a 'no' vote will embolden the racists and those opposed to Aboriginal justice (and they are not wrong on that point).

Meanwhile, the smaller Cliffite group, Solidarity, is not advising any vote. It has pointed out quite clearly all the flaws in the Voice, but, without the courage of its convictions, tells those interested *sotto voce* that its members will individually vote 'yes'.³ It dismisses the call for a treaty and instead calls for an abstract and empty "mass protest movement uniting black and non-indigenous workers to fight for justice".

Active boycott

Only the Healyite Socialist Equality Party is calling for an active boycott⁴ - albeit one based on economic illusions, saying that effectively black and white workers have the same interests. Such an approach ignores the democratic questions around the history of colonialism - and cedes them to the capitalist class to try to solve. The SEP says 'socialism' will solve this problem. It rejects a call for a treaty in Australia and points to the Treaty of Waitangi in New Zealand, which has led to "Maori business empires". But this misses the main point at the heart of Marxism and Leninism. Democratic questions must be championed by the working class and its organisations for workers to become the ruling class.

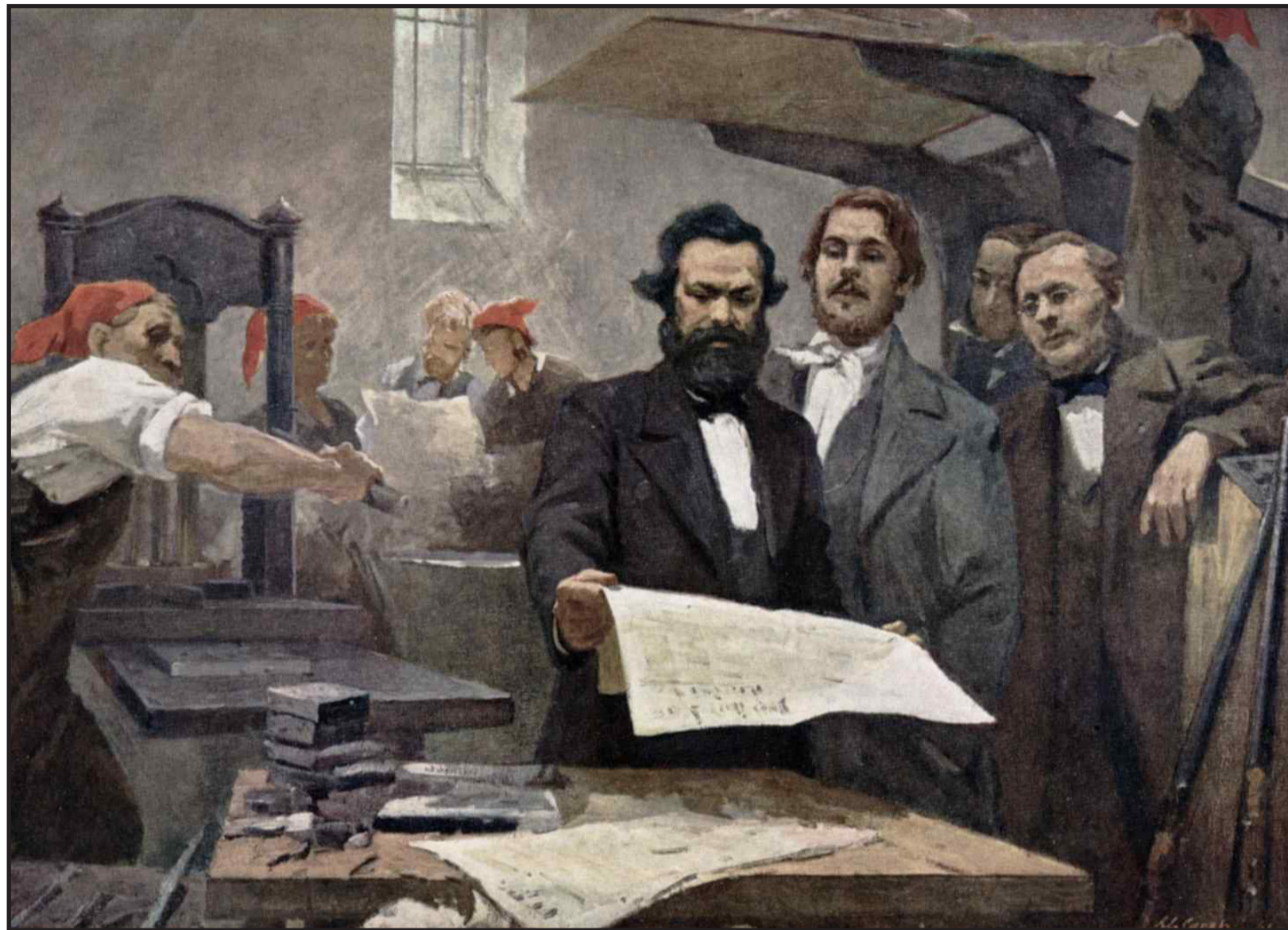
In abstraction, if there was a mass workers' party with links to militant Aboriginal activists (as the Communist Party of old did represent in some form), then an active boycott of this referendum would be the best course of action. But without such a party most of the left and most Aboriginal people will understandably vote 'yes' - some enthusiastically, some grudgingly.

No matter what the outcome of the referendum is this weekend, Aboriginal people will be left to deal with a mainstream society that has promised much and delivered very little. With or without the Voice, the contradiction at the heart of the constitution will remain, with the 'liberal' ruling class unable to solve it. The working class must be organised to sweep it aside and fight for a democratic republic that delivers a just treaty, with land rights and reparations for First Nations people ●

Notes

1. www.referendumcouncil.org.au.
2. ulurustatement.org/the-statement/view-the-statement.
3. solidarity.net.au/highlights/will-a-voice-to-parliament-deliver-change-and-is-there-any-alternative.
4. www.wsws.org/en/articles/2023/09/07/czlb-s07.html.

COMMUNIST UNITY



Neue Rheinische Zeitung comes off the press: communists agitate, educate and organise at the highest possible level

Get in touch with us

We have all been thrown back over the last 30-40 years. Will McMahon and Nick Wrack make a call to all who agree with, or can accept, their statement

In 'Talking About Socialism ... from a Marxist Point of View' we have a clear idea of what we want and we are prepared to talk about it with anyone who is interested. As Mike Macnair states, we want to work together with others who share our aim of creating the basis of a mass socialist/communist party.¹

Our website² was launched just over a year ago, but our fortnightly Zoom discussions have been going only since March 20 this year. We have held 15 of them so far.³ We launched a statement, 'Who we are and the ideas that guide us' on April 4, for all to see exactly what we are about.⁴ It is not a draft party programme, but a set of principles that we believe lay the ground for collaboration between Marxists who are committed to a socialist/communist project, based on democracy and a rejection of Stalinism.

As we say in the opening sentence of our statement, we are:

a group of Marxists who believe that we urgently need a serious, democratic organisation for Marxist ideas and activity, with the aim of building support for socialist/communist ideas and for the construction of a mass socialist/communist party.

Genuine socialist/communist ideas have been set back a long way both here in the UK and internationally over the last 30-40 years. We need to make them popular and therefore powerful. We need to make these ideas the accepted common sense of the working class: that the majority international working class should no longer accept its role as the provider of profit for the idle capitalist class; that it has the power to change

things fundamentally and forever. To achieve this, we believe that we need mass, democratic, socialist/communist parties across the world, linked together in common struggle with a shared goal.

We are a small group of Marxists. But our ambition is immense - we aim to change the world. We cannot do that on our own. How do we go from the small forces who share these ideas, separated as they are into different groups and atomised into 10,000 individuals, to the mass force we need?

We seek allies. We seek unity with others who share our socialist/communist views. We believe that these are to be found among the layers of Marxists who are not members of any party or group; those who are in existing parties and groups; and 'new layers' of working class militants and activists who want to find a way to confront and overcome existing class relations.

Talking About Socialism aims to provide a home for those many individuals who are not members of any existing Marxist group, who consider themselves to be Marxists, but who have rejected those groups because of their intolerant, undemocratic and sectish behaviour.

No-one likes to be hectorated, lectured, belittled or told what to think and what to do. Thinking Marxists want comradely debate. The 'Marxist' left abounds with the haughty arrogant egotism of sects and their leaders who think that their group is the party we need. Generally, they ignore each other, pretending that they are the only band in town, insulating or inoculating their members against the ideas of other Marxists. How narrow and short-sighted is their perspective! We need a party

that numbers many millions, not handfuls or even hundreds.

Many working class Marxists who have experienced the undemocratic internal regimes of these various 'Marxist' groups, which put their own narrow sect interests above the need for a genuine united socialist/communist party (and therefore above the objective need of the working class), have no desire to repeat that experience. Some have been spoiled by that experience, become disappointed, demoralised and even cynical.

But many have knowledge, experience, ideas and energy that could contribute to the building of a healthy, democratic workers' socialist/communist party. We do not want those precious individual capsules of communism lost to the movement. We want to create a party environment, in which the chemical combination produces a much more powerful force for communism than could ever possibly be obtained by individuals acting alone.

Things are more complicated with the larger Marxist groups, such as Socialist Appeal, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party. They are large enough to sustain themselves at current meagre levels through their cadre and turnover of members, apparently without ever seriously considering how much more impact they could have if they merged their forces. We do not suggest this would be easy. But it should be the aim, if possible. We propose for consideration the call for all genuine Marxist organisations to seek unity around a shared set of principles and a common programme.

Lastly, but perhaps most importantly, we come to the 'new layers'. These are the new generations who will build the party from its small

seeds into the powerful mass force it must become. These will be militants in the workers' movement. Not just trade union activists, but conscious communist workers who see the need for a political challenge and a systemic change: the working class taking power, deepening and extending real democracy to all areas of society, expropriating the expropriators and so laying the basis for the abolition of exploitation, classes, the state, borders, nations, economic rivalry and wars, and creating a society in which human life can flourish in a natural environment that we can all enjoy.

We aim, in short, to build a democratic, comradely, Marxist organisation with the clear aims set out in our statement. As we say at the end of that statement,

Through discussion and activity we aim to promote the ideas of socialism/communism, to make them popular within the working class and to build a group that campaigns to bring into existence the embryo of the new mass socialist/communist party that we need. To this end, we invite all who share our aims or who are interested in finding out more to join our discussions.

We appeal to all those who agree with our statement - or who at least accept it as a basis for collaboration - to get in touch.⁵ ●

Notes

1. 'It's good to talk' *Weekly Worker* September 28 (weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/1460/its-good-to-talk).
2. talkingaboutsocialism.org.
3. www.youtube.com/@talkingaboutsocialism/videos.
4. talkingaboutsocialism.org/about.
5. Go to: talkingaboutsocialism.org/contact-us.

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

Peace prize
given to a
rogues' gallery

Part of the western order

Yassamine Mather is not celebrating the 2023 Nobel Peace Prize won by Narges Mohammadi, a liberal but brave human rights activist. She is being cynically used as part of the ideological preparations for a military attack on Iran

Anyone examining the history of the Nobel Peace Prize cannot avoid coming to the conclusion that almost every year the award is granted to someone who espouses ideals compatible with liberal bourgeois perspectives - in other words, views currently endorsed by most western states.

There are rare exceptions, such as Le Duc Tho, a founding member of the Indochinese Communist Party, who was awarded the prize in 1973 alongside the odious Henry Kissinger. However, because there was no peace in South Vietnam Tho politely wrote to the Nobel committee declining to accept the award.

Then there is Nelson Mandela, he was not awarded the peace prize while he was in prison serving a life sentence for terrorist offences (ie, armed struggle), but after he was released in 1993. Mandela was once considered a socialist (a former member of the Central Committee of the South African Communist Party). However, he oversaw a smooth, managed, transition from apartheid and white rule that suited the interests of international imperialism. In other words, Mandela was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (alongside FW de Klerk, the final apartheid president) as part of the process of ensuring that his government pursued neoliberal economic policies. An economic model which he and the African National Congress adopted led to the enrichment of a small black elite, while dismally failing to address the extreme poverty of the black masses.

Then there is Mordechai Vanunu - the Israeli who was kidnapped by Mossad and spent 18 years in prison, including more than 11 in solitary confinement. He was nominated on a number of occasions by his supporters, but he never made it onto the final list. He did not fit in with the agenda set by the committee. He had been an Israeli nuclear technician and peace advocate, who, driven by his opposition to weapons of mass destruction, exposed details of Israel's nuclear weapons programme to the British media in 1988. There are, almost needless to say, many, many Vanunus. Julian Assange and Edward Snowden immediately come to mind when it comes to today.

The Nobel committee consciously or unconsciously follows the dominant liberal bourgeois agenda. Hence the long list of high-profile western politicians or dissidents from adversarial nations. There is Sir Austin Chamberlain (1925) and Arthur Henderson (1934) of a declining British imperialism and the US presidents Theodore Roosevelt (1906), Woodrow Wilson (1919), Jimmy Carter (2002) and Barack Obama (2009).

Others were rewarded for service rendered to the hegemon during the Cold War: Anwar Sadat (1978), Lech Walesa (1983), Desmond Tutu (1984), Dalai Lama (1989) and Mikhail Gorbachev (1990). There are the fools



A sell-out and two Zionist warmongers: Yasser Arafat, Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin showing off their Nobel Peace Prizes in 1994

and mere puppets too: Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan of the Peace People in Northern Ireland (1976) were used to undermine the armed struggle conducted by the Provisional IRA.

The selective moral scrutiny in awarding the prize is also notable. While some laureates have been rigorously evaluated for their entire moral and ethical stance, others seem to have been selectively scrutinised or have had particular aspects of their actions overlooked, because their general position potentially aligns with a bourgeois-liberal, pro-western perspective. And let us not forget the fact that notorious warmongers such as Henry Kissinger, Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin were granted the award, making a mockery of the word 'peace'.

Empowerment

In summary the prize tends to selectively empower certain voices, while silencing others, by granting international platforms to those who may already align with the dominant global narrative. This not only marginalises dissenting voices, but also structurally reinforces existing power dynamics.

The 2023 prize has followed the same principle. The latest recipient, Narges Mohammadi, is an Iranian human rights activist who has been notably vocal in opposing the regime's policies and actions, particularly regarding political prisoners and capital punishment. Mohammadi has faced persecution, arrest and imprisonment in Iran due

to her activism and, unlike other such activists, has refused to go into exile. Indeed, as far as I know, her original political association was with the 'reformist' faction within the Islamic Republic. However, like many others in this political grouping, she has moved steadily towards a position of supporting imperialist-led intervention against the regime.

In other words the 2023 Peace Prize has less to do with an imperialist peace and more to do with ideological preparations of some sort of war against Iran, conducted, perhaps, initially by Israel, but later, as Iran and its regional allies retaliate, the United States itself. Though we should not expect a direct invasion (that would be too stupid), there could easily be a sustained attempt to bomb Iran 'back to the stone age'. Doubtless the bombs will be 'smart' but tens of thousands would surely die.

In one of her letters to the European Parliament in 2022-23 Mohammadi wrote that "the people of Iran want a transition from the Islamic Republic of Iran" and that "the stable support of governments in accordance with human rights laws" should mean siding with popular protests in the path of defeating the "religious and misogynistic tyranny" in Iran. She urged:

In making any decision, have the approach of exerting maximum pressure on the government to realise and strengthen the civil society and guarantee human rights ... unfortunately, many governments of the world are

indifferent to the rights and wishes of the people, and have focused on securing their economic interests.

It is definitely true that the overwhelming majority of the Iranian people want the overthrow of the Islamic Republic, but how can anyone in the Middle East be naive enough to beg support from the EU parliament? How can anyone in their right mind have illusions in such institutions in the third decade of the 21st century after so many devastating wars and interventions that have left this part of the world as 'scorched earth'?

What would such intervention imply? Both the EU and the US are in fact extremely opportunist when it comes to policies of increased sanctions against the reactionary rulers of the Islamic Republic. We now know that over the last few months, in order to push the price of oil down for its European allies, the US has turned a blind eye to the massive oil exports from Iran, when it comes to sanctions.

Of course, Narges Mohammadi has never claimed to be anything but a bourgeois liberal, so we cannot blame her for accepting the Nobel Prize. But what is more astonishing is the positive coverage given to the event by sections of the Iranian left in exile. A joint statement signed by the former Marxist group, Rahe Kargar, and the Communist Party of Iran declares:

There is no doubt that the awarding of the Peace Prize to Narges Mohammadi, whatever the motives may have been, reflects the global impact of the decades of struggle of women and girls against religious apartheid, the revolutionary uprising of 'Women, life, freedom' and the sacrifices of women and men who died for freedom, equality and democracy in Iran. The issue of thousands of Iranian political prisoners and countless imprisoned activists has once again been in the focus of the world's public opinion and has helped the global campaign to free Iran's political prisoners.

You must be really naive or moving steadily to a bourgeois liberal position if you believe such nonsense. Who on the genuine left believes that in a class-divided, war-torn, global situation there is such a thing as "the world's public opinion"? What they are referring to, but cannot bring themselves to admit,

is US-led, pro-western government opinion. Of course, here I am not advocating authoritarian, pro-Russia or pro-China opinion with its own media outlets. However, despite these two horrible alternatives, millions of people are struggling against capitalism, imperialism and exploitation - be it from the US or its nearest rival, China. We should not allow either the pro-western or the pro-authoritarian media to dictate to them what is or is not global "public opinion".

Awarding the Nobel prize occurred a day before the events now shaking the Middle East, following Hamas's attack into Israel. Note, Donald Trump, the Republican Party and members of the US top brass see the hand of Iran - at the very least they blame Iran for giving finance, technical support and finally the green light. Secretary of state, Antony Blinken, not wanting further escalation at the moment, had to intervene and categorically deny any involvement by Iran in events in Israel.

Left delusions

However, if the current Israel-Palestine conflict continues to intensify, say with the opening of a northern front from Lebanon, I am sure the bourgeois media will drive the "world's public opinion" towards support for military intervention against Iran. Under such circumstances I wonder where the likes of Rahe Kargar will be. Of course, we in Hands Off the People of Iran have always maintained that, even in such circumstances, we will remain firmly opposed to both imperialism and the Islamic Republic.

There are, of course, those who openly say that such an intervention will be positive, as, in their opinion, the Iranian working class is not ready for a socialist revolution: it needs a period of bourgeois, liberal rule to develop trade unionism and political organisation. Recent examples of foreign intervention in the region have been such economic, political and human disasters that one can only laugh out loud at such stupidity (Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, etc, just to mention a few examples).

However, Rahe Kargar and the CPI are not in this category, so my honest question to them is: 'Where do you stand on foreign intervention, as called for by their latest heroine, the Nobel prize winner, be it increased sanctions or war?' ●

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