

Imperialist Barbarism in Palestine



*Publications on the War in Palestine, 2023-2024,
by the Internationalist Communist Tendency*

Who We Are

The IWG stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organizations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organization - a 'party' for want of a better word - not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class, the majority of the world's population, is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system, it will have to unite and overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites."

**The Internationalist Workers' Group is the US affiliate of the
Internationalist Communist Tendency.**

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently answered questions: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/about-us>

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The Latest Butchery in the Middle East is Part of the March to Generalised War

Statement of the Internationalist Communist Tendency

The unprecedented attack on Israel by Hamas is due to closely intertwined domestic and international motives:

1. The removal of Abu Mazen's Palestinian National Authority (PNA), a corrupt and incompetent body which colludes with the Israeli state, and which is now highly discredited amongst the Palestinian population, giving Hamas exclusive leadership in the fight against the State of Israel.
2. Undermining the path opened by the 2020 Abraham Accords, which sees (or saw) ongoing negotiations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and where the PNA also participated. The Abraham Ac-

cords were between Sunni countries and Israel, and thus Hamas felt isolated, fearful of no longer receiving financial aid from Riyadh and Qatar. More generally, Hamas's objective is to involve the Arab states in a sort of "holy alliance" against Israel: an Arab front (Egypt, Syria and Lebanon) in contrast with the pact between Israel and some Arab countries (the Emirates and Bahrain) with the prospect of including Saudi Arabia.

Further, it is also important to note that an action of this weight hinges on Iran and the ayatollahs, i.e. an anti-European, anti-NATO and anti-American imperialist front. Which means throwing fuel on the fire of the war in Ukraine: everything is linked together in the carnage of war that both "Western" and "Eastern" imperialisms are waging.

Iran has every interest in making the region a theatre of war against Israel, both to weaken its number one enemy, and to force its historical allies (Russia, China and North Korea) to support Tehran in its regional strategy, even if this is unrealistic at present.

The Western media point the finger at jihadist barbarism, but "forget" or downplay the discrimination, oppression and violence perpetrated by the Israeli ruling class against the Palestinian proletariat, even when they are citizens of Israel. Recently the violence has increased under the influence of the more or less religious far right, a leading partner in the Netanyahu government.

Let's not forget that Hamas was originally supported by Tel Aviv to counter Yasser Arafat's Fatah and the "left-wing" armed formations of the PLO. As for the Taliban, as for ISIS — both "sponsored" in their time by the USA — the imperialist "sorcerer" has lost control of the "monsters" of its own creation which are now strengthening enemy ranks. The dog is now biting the hands of those who fed it.

The ruling class has always tried to divide and oppose the various segments of the working class along "ethnic-national" lines, a practice taken to extremes by Nazism. This is also true in the supposedly so "democratic" State of Israel, where the working class of Palestinian origin is oppressed, harassed and exploited in the most brutal and "primitive" forms — as happens to migrant workers throughout the world. The Gaza Strip is an open-air prison, which the Israeli state often deprives of water, electricity and gas, and where healthcare is extremely parlous: in short, where the vast majority of people are forced to suffer inhuman conditions of life.

However, even in Israel, there exists an Israeli working class, which the current war exposes even more to nationalist and warmongering intoxication, precisely as on the other side the Palestinian working class is injected with the ideological poison of Islamist propaganda, to the point of putting it in the hands of the imperialism of the ayatollahs.

Thus the working class on both sides is driven to massacre defenceless populations and allows itself to be massacred in order to wage a so-called "holy

war" or defend a supposed "democracy", in reality for the interests of opposing bourgeoisies, who can perpetuate their domination only by the oppression, exploitation and blood of the proletariat. The fact that, historically, the number of Palestinians who died in Israeli repression and raids is much higher than that of the victims of the Islamist bourgeoisie — Hamas — does not make the latter less murderous or more excusable than the Israeli bourgeoisie.

Wars between the ruling class — nowadays that means capitalists — are always wars against wage workers: exploited, injured and killed as a matter of course in the workplace in peacetime; even more exploited and killed wholesale in wartime, when the conflicts between the bosses, their crises and economic interests, can only be resolved with weapons.

Every war reveals the true nature of political parties and trade unions which claim to be on the side of the working class. By lining up to support this or that capitalist faction in the name of the presumed right to self-determination of peoples, wars expose any illusion that social democracy stands for the working class. They do not understand, they cannot understand, that there have been no progressive wars of national liberation in the present epoch. Any possible new state would be just another prison for the working class, a tool to enable a faction of the world bourgeoisie to oppress its "own" proletariat, without sharing the fruit of that oppression with other factions of the world bourgeoisie. To obscenely rejoice over the massacres carried out by Hamas is to share the murderous logic of the Palestinian bourgeoisie, an attitude mirrored by those who deny the devastation created by the State of Israel: both are equally criminal.

Support for the deadly error of so-called national liberation struggles not only poisons the formations spawned by the degenerate Third International (Stalino-Maoism, Trotskyism, etc.), but also sectors of anarchism and even those who, falsely, claim to be internationalist. The war in Ukraine and, now, in Palestine-Israel is yet more proof of this.

In this context, the fundamental argument of class unity by all sectors of the working class — against the bourgeoisie, its states, its imperialist alignments

— regardless of the "national" origin of its constituent parts, is even more valid. We are well aware that in a context like the Israeli-Palestinian one it is very difficult to carry this out. But there is no other way to avoid becoming cannon fodder for one or other faction of capitalism, whether "democratic" or reactionary, secular or religious. All capitalists are equally mortal enemies of the working class, who should not shed one drop of blood for those who exploit them, much less for their national-imperialist objectives.

Accepting this viewpoint is the first fundamental step to beginning the fight against the wars of the capitalist class. We have to start with our "own" bosses, because the revolutionary principle that "the main enemy is at home" is always valid. This struggle has to begin in the workplace, where the exploitation that fuels the capitalist mode of production, and therefore bourgeois society, takes place. It is a struggle against both the open enemy — the bosses — and false friends, primarily trade unions and "left" political parties which confine workers' struggles within the legal framework of the system, undermining them to the point of suffocating them.

In the same way, anyone who supports only Palestinian workers and ignores the Israeli working class, jumps from the frying pan into the fire. They think that the former clashing with the latter is not important because the latter is just a slave to the ultranationalist policy of its government. But the Palestinian working class, in its turn, is under the thumb of a bunch of capitalists who have no hesitation about siding with the imperialism of the ayatollahs: one of the most vicious set of rulers when

dealing with internal opposition. Thus both sets of workers are trapped in the logic of capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism, where war is the only solution and not liberation from wage slavery.

After decades of capitalist attacks the world working class is still stunned, still struggling to raise its head, disoriented and confused by the material upheavals it has been hit with (restructuring, globalisation, precarity, etc.) and by the ideological blow felt by the collapse of state capitalism in the former USSR: the country which many deluded themselves into believing represented the socialist alternative to capitalism.

But the genuine alternative really does exist. Indeed, it is a vital alternative, given the dangers of localised wars developing into a generalised war which would destroy humanity or, equally, through a climate catastrophe which is already on the horizon.

Once the working masses shake off their fear and resignation and rediscover their own path of genuine class struggle, today's small revolutionary vanguards will be in a position to grow and bond with the more combative and class conscious sectors of the proletariat, to forge the indispensable political instrument for overcoming this bloody and inhuman society: the party of the world revolution, the new communist International.

Communism or Barbarism!

Internationalist Communist Tendency
11 October 2023



The Descent from Fantasy to Reality in the "Arab-Israeli Conflict"

That the situation is still in flux determines the following series of remarks, notes, assessments...

The aerial barrage is unleashed against the inhabitants of a Bantustan that is, on the one side, hemmed in by the sea, and on the other, by the sentries of the Jewish state. The press thrusts a microphone in front of a certain genus of mollusc, i.e. the humanitarians that abhor violence against civilians, but that vociferously defend the Zionists' right to direct the latest-and-greatest military hardware—the technological acquisitions of the proverbial, human slaughterhouse—against the Gaza Strip.

The Israeli minister Gallant speaks plainly. He calls the two million Palestinians confined to an area of 365 square kilometers "human animals". The truth is this: Gallant and his accomplices are the ones that are actually below the level of the animals, the animals of the world that have never been known to drop white phosphorus on other members of their own species.

Hamas touches off this latest round by killing 260

people at a rave on October 7. It raises the question: Why do armed groups in Palestine emphasize non-military targets? Simple: for the same reason the French colonial administration, the Front de libération nationale, and the Organisation armée secrète engaged in assassinations and terror to cleave apart the Arab, Kabyle, etc., workers from the European proletarians of Bab-el-Oued in Algeria. Then as now, the goal of all belligerents is to put an end to, or preclude, fraternization between the exploited—to permanently dismember the proletariat, and make it that much more prey to the demagoguery of different capitalist factions.

By creating an atmosphere of intense racial enmity, one that fosters tit-for-tat reprisals, silences (or accomplishes the physical liquidation of...) voices that do not abide by the cordon sanitaire erected between the colonized and the Jewish proletarians; by poisoning the air, the Arab and Jewish workers are placed in even deeper thrall to their respective exploiters, and to the various armed rackets. It is the classical, counterinsurgents' stratagem, and

equally the stratagem of those that are engaged in “insurgency” against a rival bourgeois gang, but that are nonetheless counterinsurgents vis-a-vis the colonized proletariat. In July, repression of proletarians’ mobilizations in Gaza showed Hamas cops are no less adept at using a police nightstick than Israeli cops. G. Munis says all there is to be said about the likes of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, the PFLP, ETA, the IRA, FARC, etc: “Like so many other falsifiers, what [ETA, but in this case Hamas] calls revolution is the centralization of the exploitation and oppression of the working class in a state of its own.”

From Algeria there are a few, specific parallels that present themselves. At the end of the “national struggle” of the 1950s and ‘60s, to strike a final blow at any remaining, fraternal bonds between European (usually Italian, Spanish, Maltese...) and Arab proletarians in Algiers, the OAS killed the Kabyle poet and teacher Mouloun Feraoun, alongside a number of his European and Algerian companions. He was not an FLN. However, because this man did not only write in his native language but in French, because he rubbed shoulders with both the European and Algerian literary figures, by killing him the OAS vanquished—symbolically—what he was thought to represent: fraternization between the immiserated, European proletarians of Algiers, and the Arab, Kabyle, and Amazigh proletarians. The FLN also struck at Algerians (and killed more Algerians than Europeans in the first phase of the war...). FLN leaders passed down orders to “kill any person attempting to deflect the militants and inculcate in them a bourgeoisien [conciliatory] spirit”.¹ Guided by the objectives sketched above, the FLN targeted cafés where the European students of Algiers gathered, so as to provoke pogroms against Algerians, drive the Algerians into the arms of the FLN, and sever the bonds between proletarians of different nationalities that—unlike the subsequent myths—did once abound.

On 24 February [1962], following the killing by the F.L.N. of a Bab-el-Oued taxi driver, a pied noir mob trapped a score of Muslim workers in a cul-de-sac and stabbed and beat them to death. Increasingly a kind of [separation], which had never previously existed, was growing up in the cities as Muslim work-

ers declined to enter European quarters—and vice versa.²

A comrade from the CWO notices this stratagem is repeated in many settings:

It reminds me of the Miami Showband killing in Northern Ireland in the '70s, which was denounced as senseless violence... They were a working class and "apolitical" band of kind-of-rock musicians, their tour bus was stopped and they were taken off and murdered after a gig. Everyone denounced it because they stood apart from the conflict, they were made up of both Catholic and Protestant musicians and both communities would go to hear them play—which, from our perspective, is exactly why they were murdered by one of the rival sectarian/ethnic groups, they were living proof that friendship and cooperation rather than sectarian violence was possible, and because proletarians from both sides were "fraternizing" at their concerts...

Some of the pied noirs were, for the last time, massacred as they left the country en masse in the spring of 1962. But the same guns that massacred the pied noirs were quickly turned against the Algerian proletarians, for whom the FLN’s acquisition of power was fêted to be a real victory... But that was nothing new. All along, as they vied to supplant the colonial administration at the head of the exploitation of labor by capital, the guns of the FLN were arrayed against the Algerian proletarians as much as they were against the pied noirs.

Observers say the Hamas incursion into southern Israel is an “uprising”, to be filed under “Palestinian liberation”. What they really cheer on are the maneuvers of a capitalist-state-in-information and its regional patrons, in which Palestinian workers are being led—blindfolded and at the end of a gun—into “national struggle” as sacrificial cows of world imperialism. They are cheering on a cynical gamble that, in the architects’ minds, is supposed to goad Israel into a new punitive expedition against the inhabitants of the open-air prison, the Gaza Strip. Indeed, the impetus behind—and the international dimensions of—events are becoming clear. The incursion was green-lit by Iranian rulers to sabotage “normalization” between Israel and Saudi Arabia, and to torpedo the geopolitical corollaries of normalization; because, à la russe,

the Islamic Republic is nervous normalization isolates them even more than they currently are. Now, the USA is sailing a carrier group into the eastern Mediterranean. The Middle East has become another flashpoint of the first order; once more, it draws in members of the main imperialist line-up. As the battle intensifies, reality continues to be shrouded by leftists' obsequious expressions of "solidarity" with a fraction of the Palestinians' oppressors—the Haniyehs and Deifs, whose guns are trained on the Arab proletarians, and who, from sumptuous lodgings in Qatar, execute brilliant geopolitical schemes, the consequences of which are shunted onto the population of Gaza via the bombs of the Israeli Air Force; bombs that do not touch the real, military infrastructure of the Islamists' rump-state (buried safely underground), so much as they incinerate the human beings that are unfortunate enough to inhabit the bottom rungs of Khamenei's celebrated ummah.

Another comrade says the following about the other genus of mollusc, that equivocates over massacres in the Negev:

The idea that some killings are "more justified" because of a past sin, and thus less worthy of denunciation, is not only rooted in obviously magical thinking... [It is also rooted in] a logic of "score-settling" that has been the *modus operandi*, since time immemorial, for bourgeois revolutions and seizures of power by a new exploiting class, but which is completely alien to the proletariat and the mass form which its struggle is naturally inclined to assume...

Revolutionaries repudiate the line that people at a rave are good targets because they are "settlers", that the Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon is a good target for rockets because it treats "settlers". Revolutionaries do not tell the world, "we are indifferent to the deaths of settlers who are struck by rockets". They do not justify this indifference by pointing to the many, many Jewish workers who undoubtedly exhibit disgusting and cavernous racism. Revolutionaries denounce the attacks on proletarians in Israel by Hamas, for the same reason they denounce the daily, Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank: proletarian internationalism... But the survivors that lived to tell the tale of

October 7 are not only "settlers" (Jews), but Arabs! The bullets of Hamas do not distinguish between them.

Fatma Altakat, 35 years old, was on her way to work at Moshav Mivathim. She was traveling in a car with her husband, her baby daughter and two other workers from Gaza. The head of Arara Council [Bedouin], Naif Abu Arar, told Ynet: "Fatma's husband told the terrorists, 'Don't shoot, we are Arabs,' but it didn't help. They put a bullet in his shoulder and killed Fatma and the two Gazan workers."³

As we have said, the utility of "senseless attacks" is this: They head off solidarity between Jew and Arab, as they did between pied noir and Arab and Amazigh. They disintegrate solidarity on class or on other bases. They place the colonized proletarians' struggle on national, statist bases, and succeed in diverting it from autonomous, classist bases. They place the Jewish proletarians in tow of the Jewish state, by creating an Israeli "9/11". Hamas has effectively gifted the Jewish state its own anti-fascist (recall the term "Islamofascism") crusade. It is a crusade that identifies the atrocities of October 7 as the justification to bomb Rafah and Khan Yunis, as previous crusades justified bombing Tokyo and Hamburg. The ground was sewn with the bones of Arabs and Jews alike by Hamas, to ensure unimpeded mobilization for the latest flareup of the "Arab-Israeli" conflict.

Every "liberation group" is a capitalist organization. But the PFLP identifies the Palestinian bourgeoisie as enemies, no? It is true, the Palestinian bourgeoisie basically functions as an appendage of the Israeli state. But whereas the Euzkadi bourgeoisie did not support "the national revolution", this does not extinguish the capitalist credentials of the ETA, whose qualification as a capitalist force is valid in the absence of—especially in the absence of—the support of a "comprador" bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie is obstinate; therefore, the creation of a new state is an objective that falls to the armed groupuscules. The Islamists and the radical reformists—that, upon the distant victory of the national revolution, will either entrust the greater part of the economy to the private sector, or opt to crack the "socialist" whip over the workers in state enterprises—vye for the administration of capital-

ism in Palestine, and do not countenance even the smallest inklings of autonomous, proletarian action. They definitely will not countenance the diffusion of an internationalist class program...

The latest confrontation is irrevocably connected to the machinations of the big imperialist players, engaged in a competition that foreshadows generalized war. For those who say Palestinians have

something to gain by being cannon fodder, in a conflict to decide which faction gets to administer their exploitation: the descent from fantasy to reality is vertiginous.

Y.I.

Internationalist Workers' Group

10/10/23

Notes

1 Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962*. New York Review Books, 2006, pp. 135.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 516.

3 "We were told that he was a hero and 'saved many citizens'; The families of the murdered are separated." Ynet, 8, Oct. 2023, [ynet.co.il](https://www.ynet.co.il)



There Is No State Solution: Only Class War

On 7 October, southern Israel was invaded by Hamas forces in an astounding, and largely unexpected, coordinated attack with militants breaking through the Gaza border, whilst air strikes reached as far as Tel Aviv in central Israel. For many Gazans, this was their first time outside their open-air prison, tearing down border fences, and the Israeli military's first time on the back foot in 50 years to the day since the Yom Kippur War. From a Palestinian liberationist perspective, this looked like triumph. But over a thousand civilians were indiscriminately massacred throughout the day. One Kibbutz lost 10% of its population. Reportedly, nearly 200 Israelis were found at the site of a now-famous desert rave. Pictures were shared of a family of four all dead, and others found out their

loved ones were dead from news footage. Around 150 estimated Israelis, soldiers and civilians, are being held hostage in Gaza as Hamas demand Palestinian prisoners freed in exchange for the hostages. Many pro-Palestinians have leaped to defend the massacre and consider ordinary Israelis to be settler-colonialists, including children, descendants of refugees, and even anti-occupation activists. Even if this were somehow true, the deaths of Bedouin, Nepalese students and Thai migrant workers make it hard to believe in justified murders. Before the end of the day, Iran and Hezbollah had made clear their support for Hamas and rival Palestinian Islamist faction Islamic Jihad. The Israeli state wasted no time in calling a war a war. The security failure had left Israel's leading

politicians and military officials embarrassed. The success of Netanyahu, the Likud party, and the right-wing generally relied on a confidence in national security. The fault popularly attributed to the ever-depleting capitalist left in Israel was not economic mismanagement, but a willingness to secede land at the risk of security at borders. In one morning alone, Hamas had debunked the myth for the Israeli public that they were safe with Netanyahu in charge. Netanyahu and his ministers predictably ramped up the nationalism, and made clear that Palestinians should expect vengeance, and that Hamas were to be completely eliminated. Tens of thousands of reservists were drafted into the army as the language of politicians stopped just about short on calls for genocide.

As landed fighting continued around the border towns, Israel unleashed its harshest violence through air strikes on the Gaza Strip, striking hospitals and refugee camps, wiping out a family of 19, and all generations of 45 families, and almost razing an entire town. A blockade was put in place denying water, electricity, food and fuel, an act since condemned by the UN. The densely populated Gaza Strip allows for little movement or evacuation for ordinary citizens and after an Israeli air strike had destroyed the Rafah border crossing with Egypt, Gaza is now under total siege. The thorough displacement of the Palestinian people continues as Israeli authorities ordered 1.1 million in the north of Gaza to move south in what is already a tightly-controlled ghetto. Even the UN have called for this demand to be rescinded. Casualties in Gaza are now approximately double those in Israel and the death toll of Palestinians grows larger and larger as Israel's military infrastructure dwarfs that of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, despite Qatari and Iranian financing. Though ethnic cleansing has long been an accurate description of Israeli attacks on the Palestinians, the scale of this war, and the reports of white phosphorus being used, are unapologetically genocidal. Rocket fire escalates on the Lebanese border between Hezbollah and Israel. The now-normal bouts of violence from far-right and religious fundamentalist Israelis in the West Bank have become intensified by increasing

access to guns as the war spreads.

As the bloodshed accumulates, the stories that carry the highest tragedy are those of working-class people, Israelis and Palestinians. Political and military leaders make snap decisions that cost thousands of lives just to cling onto electoral popularity. Until the outbreak of war, the biggest movement in Israel has been the persistent mass demonstrations against Netanyahu's government, in particular his self-serving and totalitarian attempt to weaken the judicial process. His campaign and support has relied centrally on national security issues so the initial Hamas massacre and subsequent hostage situation has severely undermined this claim. A disproportionate amount of military bases are focused on the West Bank, allowing the religious far-right to provoke and attack Palestinians, and protect them from any violent response. In the South, Hamas military prowess was underestimated, with urban working-classes, immigrant communities, and kibbutzniks left in the line of fire. Comparisons have been drawn with the 1973 Yom Kippur War which ended Golda Meir's career in office. Netanyahu however has already spent years becoming more and more accommodating towards the far-right. Annexation of the West Bank, Trump's decision to move the US embassy to the contested East Jerusalem, the passing of the Basic Law, softness on settler violence all have solidified Israel's shift even further to the right. There are now high-ranking ex-Kahanist cabinet ministers, a movement so extreme that it's still officially deemed terrorist by both Israel and the US. So far, nationalism is prevailing in full force and calls for the annihilation of Gaza are getting louder, at least under the guise of eradicating Hamas. In Tel Aviv however, families of hostages and casualties have been protesting and holding vigils outside the Defence Ministry. These are patriotic protests and neither anti-war, anti-occupation, nor economic in their demands, but they hold Netanyahu accountable for military failure, not doing enough to rescue hostages, and his totalitarianism more generally.

Most criminal is Netanyahu's own recent (cynical) assistance to Hamas. The semi-state represented by the Palestinian Authority functions primarily in

the West Bank and is not recognised by Hamas who control the Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Authority is represented by Fatah and the PLO. Officially a peace treaty exists between Israel and the PLO, and the PLO in turn favours a two-state solution and opposes terrorism whereas Hamas reject a two-state solution and the existence of Israel and favour armed struggle. The Palestinian Authority is largely secular and carries a political face while Hamas are extremist Islamists. In amongst the bizarre developments of imperialism, Netanyahu realised that Hamas could be useful; the moderate Palestinian Authority, headed by Mahmoud Abbas, were more likely to enter into political negotiations with the West and campaign for the slightly more realistic two-state solution, promised in the 1993 Oslo Accords. For as long as Hamas condone violence, Islamism and a one-state solution, they have little chance of getting Western support, and their largely ineffective rocket attacks in the South were manageable for the IDF. Netanyahu's government has granted an increasingly growing number of work permits to Gazan labourers to appease Gazans and indirectly facilitate more money into Gaza. Blind eyes have been turned to Qatari cash entering Gaza in the millions. Bezael Smotrich, Israel's extremist far-right Finance Minister, put it in so many words: "The Palestinian Authority is a burden, Hamas is an asset [...] No-one will let it put forth a resolution at the UN Security Council." Only three decades ago, the two-state solution was a moderate plan advocated by Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin (before his assassination by a far-right extremist). Now, the Israeli state would rather ally with those who want Israel's total destruction than risk political negotiations for a two-state solution.

For Hamas, this attack is an attempt to assert itself as the representative of the Palestinian people. Fatah maintain their peaceful face against increasing destruction in the West Bank, and resistance goes little further than demonstrations, skirmishes and individual attacks. Through this major attack, Hamas has presented itself as a force of resistance, in military strategy and funding as well as initiative. In July of this year, thousands took to the streets across Gaza in economic protests

against Hamas. With Hamas taxing Qatari donations to impoverished Gazans, it's no surprise that Palestinian workers were burning Hamas flags. On other occasions, Hamas have been more tactical in successfully laying the blame for economic unrest at Israel's door and turning the protests towards Israeli soldiers at the border. The other major contender for power in Gaza is Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which is more extreme and violent even than Hamas. The initial invasion may have garnered Hamas its renewed and reasserted popularity but it's not hard to imagine that some Palestinians now facing Israel's horrendous onslaught will be wondering whether the 1,400+ Israeli casualties are worth the new situation.

The Wider Imperialist Web

Under capitalism, no war is isolated and it doesn't take long before ancient ethnic, national and religious conflicts are hijacked by major powers in an imperialist scramble. The USA and, for the most part, the EU wasted no time in announcing support for Israel, while Iran and Hezbollah did the same for Hamas. Though Israel's vengeance in Gaza is drawing humanitarian condemnations comparable to Russia's actions in Ukraine, a war between Israel and Palestine threatens a proxy war between Iran and the USA. It's likely that imperialist economic treaties played a part in the attack in the first place. In the Abraham Accords of 2020 Israel signed Normalisation Treaties with UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, mostly to benefit economic trade links. This was a step closer towards the West for those Arab states but has intensified rivalries elsewhere. Morocco and Algeria, for example, severed ties shortly after, committing to their respective imperialist blocs. Over the course of the year, a Normalisation Treaty between Israel and Saudi Arabia has looked more and more likely, again cementing Saudi Arabia's alliance with the West but affronting Islamists as their main place of pilgrimage is in Saudi Arabia. As war continues between Russia and Ukraine, and conflicts escalate between Armenia and Azerbaijan, Turkey and Kurdistan, China and Taiwan, and Serbia and Kosovo/Albania, the major Imperialist powers adopt smaller states to exert their influence across

the world for military strategy and economic resources. The lines are not always clear-cut. It remains to be seen how Russia and China will respond to this new war given their strong economic ties with Israel and their growing closeness with Iran. Turkey have condemned the forced displacement of Palestinians with a moderate line seeking peace and mourning casualties on both sides, attempting to appease for the time being its uneasy alliance with both Israel and Hamas. States may politely call for peace but the logic of imperialism dictates generalised war is on the horizon. Religion and ideology may be the language of conflict but in reality, they play little part in the imperialist divisions of the world; the current violent competition is more to do with the economic crisis of the global capitalist system.

For Zionists, the security of Israeli Jews is threatened by Palestinian nationalism and the state and military must continue to defend its people. For us, it is axiomatic that security is not provided by the capitalist state. That state exists to protect the wealth of its ruling class. The military sends workers to die and be tortured for a pittance in the name of the homeland while the rulers sit around working out economic foreign treaties and, motivated by power-greed, duplicitously assisting the homeland's very enemy. Nor is a healthy and safe life afforded by protecting one nationality and bullying another; such a policy only exacerbates a cycle of war. Rami Levi, a major Israeli supermarket chain, has been recruiting 'volunteers' as retail assistants to assist in the war effort as reservists leave for military duty and Israelis stock up for emergency. Working for a profitable supermarket chain is unpaid labour yet amid the nationalism, it somehow becomes commendable. The Israeli proletariat will continue to be exploited even as they cheer on soldiers. As already evident with Rami Levi, the work will become harder as staff are lost to reserve duty, evacuation, or death, and wages will decrease as the government puts all its money towards war. Any strikes or economic protests will be immediately crushed under the weight of betraying the national cause. The enemy of the Israeli worker is not the Palestinian worker but the Israeli ruling-class.

Workers Have No Country

For Palestinian nationalists, quoting Franz Fanon, decolonization is necessarily violent. If Palestinians are to achieve an end to occupation and an independent state, it must come at the cost of Israeli lives. Unlike the Zionists, this is the most popular stance within the UK's capitalist Left. Decolonization is not a communist demand. In the first place, colonialism is a specific economic organisational form that does not apply to Israel. Israel is expansionist and uses military occupation and violence to destroy Palestinian homes and replace them with Israeli homes — this does not constitute an attempt at growing an empire. Moreover, of anti-colonial struggles in Algeria, South Africa, China, or indeed Israel, to name a few, not one has resulted in a proletarian revolution but merely new reactionary forces exploiting workers and being drawn into imperialist camps. Ben Bella, the first President of Algeria after fighting for its national liberation, later reflected that national liberation movements "have all failed. As long as we have not broken the world capitalist order, we remain exploited by the mercantile relations of production."¹ Even if a Palestinian state somehow came into being, whether it were to become an Islamist state, a secular social-democracy, or a Stalinist regime, it would bring Palestinian workers no closer to communist revolution. Only a stronger Palestinian bourgeoisie would emerge, exploiting its own and oppressing others. Nationalist movements dictate that workers put aside class struggle and join with their bosses to fight for the nation. That has never been a prerequisite of communism. That so-called socialists gather to wave a national flag and gush over Islamist massacres that have detracted from recent anti-Hamas economic protests is shameful. As for the few remaining liberals that call for a two-state solution, their committed optimism towards peace under capitalism is naive. Two states are no better than one as two sets of capitalist exploiters are no better than one. The fall of Apartheid did not end the white South African capitalists but only added a black South African bourgeoisie that could continue the exploitation of workers while presenting as equal representation. A two-state

solution multiples the standing armies, the imperialist contestation, and ultimately bloodshed. Our position is, and has always been, internationalism with no exceptions. No exceptions, not out of abstract idealism but out of a consistent materialist opposition to capitalism and its imperialist survival strategies. Proletarian revolution can only be internationalist and this requires all workers in solidarity against all ruling-classes as the enemy. In capitalism's imperialist epoch no true internationalist could suspend their class struggle to fight alongside their ruling-classes, their inherent enemy in the division of labour, to establish their 'own' new nation in which they can once again be robbed, but now by their own ruling-class and not another. Even Lenin's advocacy for self-determination, with which we part from Lenin, was a tactical policy, based on the belief that national independence was a necessary step towards an independent working class movement in the colonies. As we always have, we call on Israeli and Palestinian workers to turn their guns away from each other and towards their real enemies: the ruling-class. Many accuse this of being a pipe-dream and it's true that in the current situation, nationalism prevails on both sides. Our politics are consistent rather than opportunistic and we affirm the right choice for revolutionary workers rather than uselessly hijack popular movements until we are absorbed by them. We translate and spread our literature rather than re-appropriate national liberation for our own cause and give up on the class struggle. Besides, it is not such a pipe-dream. Mass demonstrations against Netanyahu have lasted throughout the year and not dwindled in number. These were patriotic liberals flying their own flag, the same flag waved by ultranationalists and the same flag that now adorns coffins. Nonetheless, there is internal discontent within

Israeli society. Mass demonstrations against Hamas made clear their opposition to Hamas' control and economic exploitation. These too included nationalists and nonetheless, these too prove discontent within Palestinian society. Workers oppose their political leaders. That is not a pipe-dream but reality.

We are somehow rare voices in our genuine internationalism but we follow in a revolutionary tradition. Let us hear from Pyatakov, Bosch and Bukharin, writing as early as 1915.²

It is therefore impossible to struggle against the enslavement of nations other than through a struggle against imperialism. Ergo a struggle against imperialism; ergo a struggle against finance capital; ergo a struggle against capitalism in general. To turn aside from this path in any way and advance "partial" tasks of the "liberation of nations" within the limits of capitalist society diverts proletarian forces from the true solution of the problem and unites them with the forces of the bourgeoisie of the corresponding national groups. ...

Therefore it follows that in no case and under no circumstances do we support the government of a great power that represses the insurrection or rebellion of an oppressed nation. At the same time, we do not mobilize proletarian forces under the slogan of "the right of nations to self-determination." Our task in this case is to mobilize the forces of the proletariat of both nations (jointly with others) under the slogan of civil, class war for socialism and to propagandize against mobilization of forces under the slogan of "the right of nations to self-determination."

Shraga
Communist Workers' Organisation
17 October 2023

Notes

Image: Al Araby (CC BY-SA 3.0), commons.wikimedia.org

1 libcom.org

2 From the theses written in November 1915 and submitted to the editors of Sotsial-Demokrat, the central organ of the RSDLP. To our knowledge, the theses were never actually published in the 1915 Kommunist. libcom.org



Falsification of History and the Warsaw Ghetto

Imperialist conflict has a tendency to revive historical traumas. As the Israeli government and Hamas trade insults over who's the biggest "Nazi", internationalists need to be able to parse the propaganda. *Reductio ad Hitlerum* rarely, if ever, makes for a convincing argument. Quite often, it's a tool of political deception hiding behind a calculated appeal to emotions. In the piece we have translated here, our Italian comrades criticise how certain Stalinists have abused the historical analogy of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising¹ in the context of the "Arab-Israeli conflict".

We have seen something similar in the English-speaking world. Apart from the usual leftist personalities, who make a career out of provocation and deserve no mention here, a cursory look through the recent output of some Trotskyist and Stalinist

groups brings up a number of examples. The *Morning Star* proclaims that the "closest parallel to the operation the Israelis threaten is the Nazi assault on the Warsaw Ghetto",² while for *International Viewpoint* "Gaza's latest counter-offensive brings indeed to mind the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising".³ The CPGB-ML thinks "Jews around the world should recall the daring and contempt for death of those of the Warsaw ghetto uprising against Nazism".⁴ The "anti-fascism" of the capitalist left, which cannot conceive of opposing something without first declaring it "Nazi-like", is on full display here.

The very real atrocities being committed by the Israeli state are not exceptional. They are not the result of "settler-colonialism" (lately a fashionable concept in academia), nor because Zionism is the

"new Nazism" (a trope promulgated by the far right itself). Israel is a "democracy" (as far as that means anything in modern day class society), a capitalist society (for which Palestinians have been a source of cheap labour-power) and the main outpost of US imperialism in the region (though, let's not forget, its foundation was at the time also supported by Stalin himself). Historically speaking, the process of state formation is a violent one, and many states have been founded on some form of ethnic cleansing. But the current clash owes much to the capitalist crisis, which narrows the field of play for the various actors and makes them ever more desperate. The massacres we are seeing today, whether in the "open-air prison" of Gaza, the "meat grinder" of Bakhmut or the "hidden siege" of Nagorno-Karabakh, are symptoms of the global drive to war, a taste of what's to come if the imperialist appetites of the contending ruling classes are not halted by the only social force capable of it – the global working class, united across all ethnic divides.

Communist Workers' Organisation 21 October 2023

How to Falsify History: Stalinism's Fake Analogies

Stalinism never disappoints, it neither changes its spots nor its taste for mystification. From the very start its systematic lies and distortion of facts were indispensable in first assassinating the characters, and then the lives, of communist opponents, both inside and outside the USSR.

Loyalty to that infamous method has emerged once again in a historical analogy that appeared on the Sinistrainrete website by the editors of Contropiano.⁵ In that article it is argued – shamelessly, of course – that the historical precedent that most closely resembles the Hamas attack of 7 October is the uprising of the Warsaw ghetto, which took place between April and May 1943.

What's the basis for Contropiano making this bold, i.e. totally fake, comparison? According to the Stalinists,

in Gaza as in Warsaw the choice to be made was limited to only two alternatives, both equally deadly. Either to accept being exterminated bit by bit, between bombardment and lack of food, water, or a

future, or to throw everything you had into the battle and leave a warning – and an example – for the rest of the world. Between accepting to disappear almost silently or making the besieging party pay a price, the second option was chosen.

Let us leave aside the objectives pursued by Hamas in its military action at the beginning of October and the context in which it came about – for this, we refer readers to the ICT statement⁶ – to point out a few things that may just appear historiographical, but which in reality have political value. The Palestinian population, particularly those massed in the Gaza Strip, has been forced to survive in inhuman conditions⁷, for at least seventy-five years, suffering oppression, brutality and violence of all kinds from the Israeli bourgeoisie, i.e. its state. However, if words have any meaning, it is not destined for extermination, if only because it constitutes, in its overwhelming majority, an 'inexhaustible' reserve of labour power to be exploited at very low cost by capital on the other side of the fence. This is not to minimise the suffering of the Palestinian population, starting with its huge proletariat, but to accurately put things in focus. In fact, in Gaza there is no 'final solution to the Palestinian problem', except from a political point of view⁸, unlike the 'final solution to the Jewish question' (Endlösung der Judenfrage) planned and implemented by Nazism, which, as we know, aimed at genocide, the extermination of all the Jews of Europe.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was really a heroic act of desperation, after nine-tenths of the people imprisoned there had been eliminated through hardship, or in the gas chambers of Treblinka: in April 1943, the deportation to this death camp of the last fifty thousand people still alive – the majority of whom worked as slaves in the German-owned factories located within the ghetto – was about to begin via the liquidation of the so-called Jewish quarter. But the Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB), an organisation that brought together almost all the anti-Nazi parties – the Jewish Labour Bund, the left-wing Zionists in Poale Zion, and the Stalinists of the Polish Workers' Party – did not have a single state behind it that financed and armed it in order to promote its own imperialist interests in

the area (as Iran or Qatar do today with Hamas), even though it had the formal support of the Allies, who did not lift a finger to support the uprising. Even the Polish resistance, apart from handing over a few weapons, did not support the uprising, not even with a 'demonstrative' general strike, as the insurgents (men and women) had repeatedly demanded. They were really alone, desperately alone, so much so that the Bund representative to the Polish government-in-exile, Szmul Zygielbojm, took his own life in protest at the total inertia of the national and international forces fighting Nazi imperialism: for the forces of 'anti-Nazi' imperialism, who were aware, of the genocide taking place down to the last detail, solidarity with European Jews was just a propaganda item. The same must be said, of course, for the Vatican, which must have been aware well before the Allies, of the systematic massacres being carried out by the Nazis in Eastern Europe.

Second, but just as importantly, the insurgents of the ghetto did not shoot unarmed people. They did not kill civilians just because they were citizens of the oppressor state: sure, they were forced to shoot at German proletarians in uniform (Wehrmacht units took part in the liquidation, not just SS units), but this is the horrible logic of the wars waged by the ruling classes (today the bourgeoisie) of every age, who force the exploited to kill and be killed by other exploited people to defend the class interests of the rulers. Indeed, it was precisely because of the failed attempt to prevent or at least slow down the extermination, that the armed response to the genocide was relatively late and limited. That is if

we exclude the Jewish partisan brigades who were mostly integrated into the Soviet army. A fact that did not prevent Stalin from later unleashing his anti-Semitic campaign after the war.

Hamas, on the other hand, knew full well that the bloody incursion into Israeli territory, mainly against unarmed civilians, would unleash massive destruction and even bloodier massacres than that of 7 October, at the expense, above all, of the Palestinian civilian population. But nothing else can be expected from a reactionary, obscurantist, fiercely anti-communist and anti-working class organisation, like Hamas. The systematic, extremely harsh repression of every proletarian protest demonstration against the cost of living⁹ and the scarcity of everything needed for a barely adequate standard of living, confirm, if proof were needed, that Hamas is as much an irreconcilable enemy of the proletariat as the state of Israel, as were the Allies and Nazis in their time. In short, whilst we are debunking far-fetched and false analogies, we are not aware that the ghetto insurgents ever repressed strikes...

We willingly leave it to others, to the Stalinists, to the radical-reformist left, in short, to the heirs of classical social democracy and the degenerate Third International, to raise Hamas as the champion of 'oppressed peoples' or of 'a multilateralism without emperors'¹⁰, i.e. of an imperialist project antagonistic to that of the current strongest imperialist powers the United States and its allies-vassals.

cb

Battaglia Comunista
20 October 2023

Notes

1 For our comment on the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, see: leftcom.org

2 morningstaronline.co.uk

3 internationalviewpoint.org

4 thecommunists.org

5 sinistrainrete.info

6 leftcom.org

7 To quote just a few figures, almost 82% live below the poverty line, 63.2% suffer 'food shortages' and so on...

8 Which, however, implies heavy human costs: as we are now seeing.

9 From just a few months ago: apnews.com

10 Contropiano, *ibid*.



The Tasks of Revolutionaries in the Face of Capitalism's Drive to War

The horrific massacres on both sides in the war between Israel and Hamas over recent days are just one more sign of what capitalism has in store for the rest of us. The poison of nationalism, a consequence of a class-divided society, is engulfing the workers of Israel and Palestine, whether or not they are signed up to support their own ruling classes; the overwhelmingly vast numbers of dead, injured and displaced are workers and their families on both sides of the border.

Hamas's invasion of Israel coincided almost to the day with the Yom Kippur War of half a century ago. Then, as now, the Israeli state was caught by surprise but the historical comparisons end there. In 1973 the world capitalist system was just entering the downturn in its cycle of accumulation. Today we are still in the throes of contradictions that have followed that downturn as capitalism has tried to restart the kind of profitable growth it enjoyed in the post-World War Two boom. So far globalisation and financialisation have only allowed a minority to get richer at the expense of the vast majority. They have not been enough to start another cycle

of accumulation.

This particular exchange of atrocities between Israel and the Palestinian nationalists is far more bloody than previous ones. This is no accident. Given the economic stagnation, imperialist tensions have reached new highs and, as we have argued since it began, the Ukraine war is only the harbinger of yet more violence and points to a more generalised war. Yes, there have been plenty of wars around the planet for decades, and very few of them have not been caused or exacerbated by some great imperial power interest. Ukraine though has been different. Not only is there no room for any form of compromise but the war has become a direct contest between NATO (openly arming Ukraine) and Russia. More than this, it has reformed alliances between the Western powers (NATO's demise is no longer under discussion) and is creating a more solid pushback from the "sanctioned powers" in Russia, China and Iran. The US has spent more time attacking China than Russia since the Ukraine war began, both rhetorically and economically.

In the wake of all this, the renewed bloodshed in Israel and Palestine is only one zone of conflict. In Syria the 12 year old civil war has led to the partitioning of the country as a series of big and little players all vie for control of this or that patch of ground. Turkey controls most of the northern border and the strip of land inside it to keep a watch on the US-backed YPG in Rojava, whilst Russia and Iran are supporting the Arab tribes fighting the SDF/YPG forces in Deir Al-Zor, Iran and Hezbollah still have troops in the south of Syria assisting Assad in regaining control but also assisting themselves in keeping open Iran's supply routes to its Lebanese ally. Add to this all the conflicts spreading from Burkina Faso and Niger through the Sahel to Sudan and Yemen (and not forgetting the continuing struggle for Libya). In them too the great powers are all highly visible. As the world watches in horror as Israel prepares to 'destroy' Gaza, other conflicts are being prepared. Azerbaijan, not content in having driven 100,000 Armenians out of Nagorno-Karabakh, is now threatening an invasion of Armenia to open up a corridor to the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan. Border disputes, ethnic cleansing and violence between different communities continue in many parts of the world, from Myanmar to Colombia.

It is the working class who are the prime victims of this violence. Everywhere, the working class is both enlisted, or even conscripted, by capitalism to fight its wars, and also the class that suffers most from them. The root cause of these conflicts is capitalism, or more specifically capitalism's economic rivalry and its recurring economic crises. Capitalism cannot exist without force, without dispossessing the working class of what they produce, of the necessities of life, using the state with its courts and police forces to contain the working class. It is the last class society of human development, a society in which our ability to work, to build, to create, is controlled by a ruling class which directs our labours and takes the wealth we produce for its own benefit. At best we get the crumbs from the table that we have prepared for our masters. At worst we end up as cannon fodder or "collateral damage" in the meat-grinder of their wars.

Because capitalism is built on competition, it is also

an unstable and violent system, where the dog-eat-dog competition between firms increasingly becomes a violent confrontation between states. At a certain point, when it is impossible to sustain profits by any other means, a massive destruction of capital value is necessary to restore the balance between fixed capital (machinery and other means of production) and variable capital – the value of the labour-power of the working class which produces the wealth of society – and war becomes the only way to do this. In the early twentieth century, capitalism entered the epoch of imperialism, when these conflicts twice brought the world into a state of world war, killing tens of millions of people. However, even the 'small' wars of twentieth- and twenty-first century capitalism are imperialist wars. They are fought to expand capitalist production, or to limit the capacity of economic and strategic rivals. Ultimately, the cause of war is the seeking of profits and redressing the falling rate of profit by searching for and controlling raw materials, cheapening the costs of production, including the price of labour power (wages).

There is no solution to capitalism's wars, as long as capitalism lasts. Even if a particular conflict can be brought under control, the causes of war do not disappear. The wish for strategic advantage, and ultimately the economic basis of capitalism as a system of obtaining profit, all drive states to war. In the midst of the ongoing crisis of capitalism, which has been desperately searching for a way to increase profits for more than half a century, war is increasingly an option that will be taken, especially by weaker states, to try and secure advantage.

In the midst of this violence it is the task of revolutionaries to remind workers that we are no more than labour-power for capitalism. When our labour is not required we may be reluctantly kept alive (in the richest states, to avoid 'social unrest'). But increasingly workers are left with no means at all but their wits to survive. We have no stake in helping capitalism to continue, yet more and more we are being drawn behind capitalism's national banners. It is in all our interests to oppose the horrific world capitalism creates. We can start by making a political stance by standing with our class brothers and sisters wherever we are.

We must reject nationalist poisons that pit worker against worker, that say that workers of one country should unite with the capitalists of that same country, and fight the workers of another country, who are in turn fighting in the interests of their rulers. All of the thousand-and-one varieties of leftists and liberals who support 'independence for the Palestinian people' or 'the right of Israel to defend itself' or 'national self-determination' or 'democracy against terrorism' do nothing more than enrol workers behind various national flags which serve eventually as their shrouds. While governments and opposition parties alike in the West issue statements saying that the mythical national 'we' "stand with Israel", leftist groups like the SWP in the UK say their support for Hamas is "unconditional but not uncritical" – their criticism however is not that Israeli workers are being murdered, or that the whole purpose of such atrocities is to drive a nationalist wedge between Israeli and Palestinian workers, but that there are not enough women and LGBTQ+ people doing the murdering.¹ Killing and dying for the states of our bosses, whether they're in 'oppressed' Palestine, 'democratic' Israel, 'anti-authoritarian' Ukraine, 'anti-fascist' Russia, US-backed Rojava or any other fraction of the ruling class and its desire to administer territory and workers to exploit, can never be in the interests of the working class, wherever it happens to find itself. The task of communists, of internationalists, of revolutionaries, is clear. It is to state that capitalism is the cause of these wars, and the only solution to this barbarity is in the action of the working class to oppose capitalism and all its states and wars.

The first step is raising the banner of international class solidarity and, as far as we are able, demonstrating to the working class in general that there are no capitalist solutions – only revolution will bring about an end to this horror-show. To this end, internationalist organisations issue declarations, communiqués, proclamations, statements, condemning the war – all the wars – and calling for workers to refuse the call to arms. Since the beginning of the latest hostilities in Israel/Palestine, there have been a gratifying number of these. The ICT has of course issued a statement² – and published further articles – condemning the war, and explain-

ing our interpretation of the events that precipitated it and the underlying causes. We will continue to do so on our website and in our territorial press.

Other groups which claim the heritage of the Communist Left have also released statements. The International Communist Current has published such a statement³, which includes the very clear internationalist call "For us, proletarians, there is no side to choose, we have no homeland, no nation to defend! On either side of the border, we are class brothers and sisters! Neither Israel, nor Palestine!", with which we absolutely agree. The International Communist Party's statement begins "All parties of the Israeli and Palestinian bourgeoisie direct their proletarians to the slaughter of a war for the defence of their profits and the survival of the rotten regime of capital. Against the imperialist warfare, for the revolutionary class warfare", and again we agree, with that part of the statement (whatever reservations we have about other parts).⁴ The International Communist Perspectives group in South Korea, which takes part in the No War But Class War Korea committee, has released a very clear statement which ends "Workers have no homeland! Oppose nationalism! Overthrow the genocidal system! Refuse to sacrifice workers and go to class war! Let's stop the war through international class struggle to overthrow the capitalist system!"⁵ The Groupe Internationaliste du Gauche Communiste (IGCL) have translated our own statement and issued it with a commentary explaining that "we are unequivocally on the same side of the class barricade with the ICT in the present moment and struggle, and more broadly facing the historical alternative, international proletarian revolution or generalised imperialist war."⁶ The group Internationalist Voice has also released a statement that begins with a clear internationalist message: "Against the reactionary war, against the brutality of capitalism, workers have no country!"⁷ and the group in Spain called Grupo Barbaria close their statement with the words "... To the flags of nationalism, no matter the colour of each one, we counterpose the joint struggle of the Palestinian and Israeli workers. For the Israelis, their bitterest enemy is the apparatus of the Jewish state, just as the PNA and Hamas are implacable enemies of the Pales-

tinians. Only by confronting them directly will they be able to get out of the hellish labyrinth in which they find themselves. In short, against imperialist war -and this is one- there is only room for its transformation into a class war".⁸

Other groups have also issued internationalist statements (and as we publish this we are hearing of others which we will add as we get them – see notes below). We know of the Czech group Třídní Válka ('Class War') which has issued a statement which we think expresses an internationalist impulse, though we would disagree with the immediate prospect of turning this conflict into a revolutionary attempt to overthrow capitalism. The statement does however include an internationalist message: "As communists, we call for a destruction of all states equally, as they are nothing else than the local expression of the global capitalist State, a structure of organized violence of the bourgeois class against the proletarian class!"⁹ In the UK, the Anarchist Communist Network (ACN) calls on workers to resist the drive to slaughter that capitalism has prepared for us in a thoroughly internationalist statement, closing with the words "Neither one state nor two states can end this cycle, no agent of capitalism is able or willing too. All their wars are against our class. Class War is our only response which is why there, as in the Ukraine we say resist their drive to war – No War But The Class War!"¹⁰. And the CNT-FAI (France) have also made their position clear "Once again, those who decide on wars are not those who die from them... Once again, it is the civilian populations who will toast, from Sderot to Gaza. All the ideologies used by those in power, namely nationalism and religions, are the pillars of this murderous logic which pushes people to kill each other for the greater benefit of the leaders of this world. Neither Hamas nor colonisation! As long as there are states there will be wars!"¹¹

Though we have some disagreements with all of these groups, we recognise that these are all statements on a class terrain. All put the central problem as being the continued existence of capitalism, and call for the working class to reject nationalism, instead opposing class struggle to capitalist war.

Also among the anarchists, the initial statement of

the Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is clearly internationalist: "Against the barbarism of capitalism and the march towards world war we call for working class unity, internationalism and preparation for mass movements that can implement social revolution and create libertarian communism. No war but the class war!"¹², though subsequent statements have cast doubt on this and we think show clear capitulations to leftist support for the Palestinian 'resistance' – that is, the murderous militias of Hamas and ultimately Iran's foreign policy aims. This demonstrates a worrying trend among anarchists who have supported various 'liberation' projects, from Rojava to the illusion of 'anti-authoritarian' brigades (fighting alongside actual ideologically-motivated fascists) in Ukraine.¹³ The ACG has been clear in its rejection of nationalism in Ukraine, but now seems to be entering the mire of bourgeois politics in Palestine.

We think the necessary duty of communist militants in situations like this is to state unequivocally that all nations are capitalist, there is no 'national' road to liberty, that all capitalist solutions are a disaster for our class and ultimately for humanity, that the only solution to war, misery and environmental destruction is the working class destroying capitalism and bringing about a world where production is planned to satisfy human need.

But this first step is not in itself enough. Revolutionaries also need to organise. We need to be able to take our message – a message that, let's not be modest here, we think is a matter of life or death for the working class – to the class, massively and repeatedly, wherever we can gain a hearing. It is not enough to proclaim that war is bad and decide our job is done. We must find ways to talk to workers, to have real conversations, to really influence people. We think that the No War but the Class War (NWBCW) committees, that we are participating in directly, in the UK, Canada, France, Australia and beyond, and those we have not been able to participate in but have welcomed in Korea and other places, are another vital step.¹⁴

What we do not think internationalists should be doing is attacking each other. We have always held the view that old polemics would be resolved or made irrelevant by the appearance of a new class

movement. After four decades of retreat we may even be on the verge of a new one appearing in response to declining living standards, war and environmental disasters caused by capitalism-made climate change. However that is not in the gift of revolutionaries and after decades of class retreat a new movement of the working class may take a while to emerge. In the meantime, the road capitalism is taking us down is such a great threat to the future of humanity that we need to find ways to work together. We are thus prepared to work with all groups and individuals that accept the basic premises of internationalism – that all states act in the interests of capital, that all workers have the same fundamental interests no matter what nation, sex, gender or race they are, that capitalism is a system that is bringing humanity to the abyss and that only its overthrow by the working class will allow humanity a future. When capitalism is bringing us ever closer to armageddon through war and increasing environmental catastrophe, it is a criminal desertion of our duty as revolutionaries if we let petty sectarianism blind us to the reality of the situation. The various state organs tasked with monitoring the revolutionary groups (we are not so naïve as to think there are none) must surely be laughing themselves silly with the antics of groups of supposed ‘revolutionaries’ who spend their exis-

tence on attempting to disrupt meetings of other groups and endlessly polemicising against those who they should be working with. The state does not need to send its agents to disrupt the work of revolutionaries if so-called ‘revolutionaries’ are doing that work themselves.

We shall continue to work in the NWBCW committees, with those groups and individuals who, though we do not agree with them about everything, nevertheless can agree to work together to bring an internationalist, anti-capitalist message to the working class. We would urge all revolutionaries, even if they cannot, due to disagreements over analysis or method, join the ICT, to at least try to work within the NWBCW committees, against this war, the last war, the next war, and for the self-organisation of the working class, against all the horrific and barbaric manifestations of capitalism that assail our class and humanity a whole. We have a very long road to travel before the working class worldwide will be capable of overthrowing capitalism. We do not have any illusions about that, but it is vital that we travel that road. If we do not, the future is nothing but an endless horror of war and destruction.

Internationalist Communist Tendency
22 October 2023

Notes

Since this article was published we have also received internationalist statements from the group Konflikt in Bulgaria (konflikt.org), from Mouvement Communiste in Belgium/France (mouvement-communiste.com) and Internationalist Perspective (internationalistperspective.org).

1 socialistworker.co.uk

2 leftcom.org

3 en.internationalism.org

4 international-communist-party.org

5 communistleft.jinbo.net

6 igcl.org

7 en.internationalistvoice.org

8 barbaria.net

9 autistici.org

10 anarcomuk.uk

11 cnt-ait.info

12 anarchistcommunism.org

13 anarchistcommunism.org

14 For more explanation about the purpose of NWBCW, see: leftcom.org



Imperialist Hypocrisy in the East and West

As the death toll in Gaza grows, many of the victims children, the double standards of imperialist realpolitik are laid bare. For our ruling classes, some lives are worth more than others. It is economic, political and military alliances which decide what atrocities get talked about and where. You only need to compare the different voting blocs in the UN resolutions on some recent conflicts, or how mainstream media across the world has covered them. Even better, let's look at the two-faced responses of just a few of our esteemed world-leaders:

- US President Biden has previously called the killing of Ukrainian civilians a "war crime", but in response to over 7,500 Palestinian deaths being reported he says he has "no confidence" in the numbers. His regime proclaims Israel to have "a right to

defend itself".

- Russian President Putin has spoken out about the "catastrophic" civilian deaths in Gaza, but publicly accepted no responsibility for a single civilian death in Ukraine (which officially stands at 10,000, but could be much higher).
- President of Turkey Erdoğan has declared Israel an "occupier" and denounced the "massacre" of Palestinians. Meanwhile, his regime continues to regularly bomb Kurdish areas in Iraq and Syria.
- After brutally suppressing mass protests in his own country (killing at least 500 in the process), the Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi is now denouncing Israeli "war crimes" and proclaiming it is the Palestinians who have the "right to self-defence".

Such statements should come as no surprise. Capitalist morality is little more than a PR exercise. In war, it is used to rally the public against a common

enemy, whoever that may be. Each of the contending sides denounces the “war crimes” of the other. For the West the denial of water and power to Ukrainian citizens was a Russian “war crime” but the same policy of total war by Israel in Gaza is justified. The various “rights” (to self-defence, to self-determination, etc.) are invoked when convenient, and denied when necessary. These “rights” are meant to give the violent reality of imperialist relations between nations a veneer of order and rationality. But it is the struggle over markets, raw materials, technology, land, and profits which really dictates international policy. And it is in this political context that the mutual accusations of “ethnic cleansing” or even “crimes against humanity” and “genocide” take place. Just over the past three years at least four conflicts have been described in those terms by various competing sources: Tigray, Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh, and now Gaza. Ethnically targeted acts of mass murder and mass expulsions are also a natural offspring of post-colonial regimes based on ethnic and tribal loyalties, but in the twisted logic of the system such episodes become part of imperialist competition. In modern war, even humanitarian concern becomes a political weapon to fuel further conflict, since capitalist actors realise it can herald international sanctions or foreign intervention in aid of whoever is deemed the victim.

For internationalist communists, the blame for the horrors being currently unleashed on the world – whether in Gaza, Bakhmut, Nagorno-Karabakh, or anywhere else – lies squarely at the door of the whole rotten imperialist capitalist edifice. For decades we have warned how the crisis of a profit starved system will result in increased military confrontations. We are now seeing the real-life consequences of this drive to war: cities and villages destroyed by rockets and drones, global supply chain disruptions, conscription and suppression of protest, massacres on the front-lines and mass displacement of civilians. The victims, those being forced to kill and die for “their” nation, are the

global working class.

Diplomatic solutions, dictated by one or another capitalist actor, can only postpone the inevitable. The contradictions of a system based on economic and military competition between hostile capitalist states will not be resolved within the framework of that system. Internationalist communists don’t call for “ceasefires”, don’t make appeals to “democracy” or for the “rights” of nations, not out of lack of compassion or detachment but because they see the system for what it really is. There is only one way out: for workers to “desert the war”, to fraternise across all borders, refuse to kill and maim their class siblings, to turn their anger against the ruling classes responsible for gradually turning our planet into a world on fire. Instead of taking sides in these imperialist total wars which level whole cities killing the non-combatants in greater proportion to the actual fighters, our task is to point to where these wars are taking us. Eventually that will be down the road to a more global conflict.

What is happening to the populations of Gaza, Israel, Ukraine, and Nagorno-Karabakh whether they support their “own” regime or not is coming to a place near you. The cynicism among the bourgeoisie is on full-display. A combination of atrocities, hypocrisy, and displays of self-serving, fake emotional concern by the spokespeople of capital. The videos and photos, the testimony of the victims, Gaza in ruins, these are for all to see on social media. Even if right now the vision of many is still obscured by Palestinian flags, this should be a wake-up call for all workers – it is the future that capitalism has in store for humanity.

The conflicts now happening give us a view of what capitalist barbarism looks like. Our alternative, the only one possible no matter how distant it may seem, must remain socialism. No war but the class war to end the system that produces such atrocities.

Dyjbass
Communist Workers’ Organisation
28 October 2023

Notes

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Workers Have No Country: No to Nationalism, Yes to Class Unity!

The raid by Hamas militants which overran two military bases and various Israeli municipalities killing soldiers and civilians and taking hostages, has set off the predictable response from the Israeli ruling class: the murder of Palestinian civilians by carpet bombing (including of hospitals), tightening the siege on the enclave (which has been in force since 2007), cutting off power, water, food and fuel. It represents a type of medieval siege aimed at starvation, sickness and death for the 2.3 million who live in Gaza. Civilians ordered to move south have had their convoys bombed. The Gazans are all descendants of the Palestinians kicked out of their homes at gunpoint by Zionist settlers in 1948. The Israeli ruling class seems now to be trying to expel them to Egypt as the permanent solution to

the Gaza problem. In other words, more ethnic cleansing. What we see today are the atrocities of Hamas fighters answered by further atrocities by the Israeli capitalist class. All this is a continuation of what imperialism has done in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Ukraine and elsewhere. These disasters are all the products of the global imperialist struggle which the current economic crisis of capitalism has intensified.

Neither Israel nor Hamas

Hamas is a pawn on the imperialist chessboard but so is Israel. Hamas was earlier funded and promoted by Israel itself, together with the US, to undermine negotiations for a settlement and keep the conflict on the boil while Palestinian land was stolen, and settlements and outposts built on it.

Today Hamas is funded by Qatar to the tune of \$30 million a month and provided with \$7 million of fuel, while it receives military support from Iran, which is now part of the Russia-China bloc. Israel came into being as a result of the victory of Allied imperialism in the Second World War and was initially supported by both the USSR and USA, but with the outbreak of the Cold War it became the massively financed and armed outpost of Western imperialism in the Middle East. The Hamas raid was connected with the latest initiative of US imperialism, particularly its attempt to normalise relations between Israel and certain Arab states under the so-called Abraham Accords. This was leading to rapprochement between Israel and Saudi Arabia and Hamas' raid was intended to throw a spanner into this process. Russia and China have both issued statements of support for the Palestinians while the US has moved its fleet with two aircraft carriers to protect Israel from a wider war. The war is clearly an expression of imperialist conflict and, like the Ukraine war, is paving the way for a wider global war. The massive US military buildup in the Middle East and threats to Iran are only the latest indications of this.

The war has, as usual, unleashed an orgy of nationalism demanding support for either the Palestinian people or the Israeli people. The truth is there is no such thing as the Palestinian people or the Israeli people. All nations are divided into classes and talk of the Palestinian or Israeli people really means the states of the Palestinian or Israeli capitalist class. The working class have no interests in supporting their exploiters in either state, as the bitter class struggles in both Palestine and Israel demonstrate. In July there were economic protests against the Hamas government in Gaza, which Hamas crushed, and in Israel airport workers and public sector workers struck earlier this year, and there were huge protests against Netanyahu's judicial reforms. The poison of nationalism now drives workers into the arms of their exploiters under the flag of the nation and allows them to be led into the slaughterhouse. We die there for the profits and dividends of our oppressors. We are seeing this in Ukraine and now once more in

Palestine. Any solidarity or fraternisation on the basis of class is prevented. But class solidarity is the only way forward in Palestine, in Ukraine and worldwide.

No Solution Within Capitalism

The Social Democrats, the Stalinists, Maoists, Trotskyists and even sections of anarchism urge us to support one side or the other in the name of "anti-imperialism" or "the lesser evil." But both sides are pawns in a wider imperialist battle. Only the overthrow of capitalism and its product, imperialism, can provide a solution to this problem. No matter what fine words our rulers use to hide the real purpose of their wars, they are all imperialist wars for the division of the spoils derived from our exploitation. They are consequently wars against the working class and today they threaten to suck us all into the maelstrom of global war. The left wing of capital's political apparatus peddle ideas of a two state solution or a single secular state with equal rights for all. All this is a pipe dream. While capitalism and imperialism dominate the planet the conflict will keep going.

Despite the obstacles, class unity of all sectors of the working class regardless of national origin is the only route out of the upswing of wars which our rulers are already imposing on us, and which are a prelude to a wider conflagration that would engulf the world. This alone is the basis for a fight of the global working class for a new system of production where we stop fighting each other, abolish national borders and start producing collectively for human need instead of profit.

The only alternative to capitalist war is for workers mobilised on all sides to fraternise with their fellow wage slaves on the opposing side. No to capitalist wars, no to nationalism.

No war but the class war!

The above article is taken from the current edition (No. 65) of Aurora, bulletin of the Communist Workers' Organisation.

Monday, November 13, 2023



US Capital on the World Imperialist Chessboard

Even the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie recognize that within the short-to-medium term, humanity faces the real possibility of a hot war between major imperialist powers. Capitalism, unable to overcome its profound crisis of profitability, compels states towards stronger competition with their rivals.

Imperialists are becoming desperate in overcoming that crisis; they are already broadcasting propaganda for a “good war” for democracy, preparing workers for their slaughter. There are no national solutions to overcome this congenital crisis. The solutions that capital proposes are militarization and war; capitalism opens the path towards world war. Only the working class led by a revolutionary organization can overthrow the capitalist system, bringing an end to imperialism. Let’s look at how “our” national imperialists, with

the world’s largest military budget behind them, contribute to this drive towards generalized war around the globe:

Israel and Palestine

The atrocious invasion of the Gaza Strip by the IDF was directly enabled by the US state. In the wake of the Hamas attack, the Biden administration gave Israel a blank check to attack with all means available to it: carpet bombing, sieging hospitals, blockading all aid for weeks. The message that the US is fully behind Israel’s war is backed up by a \$14 billion military package to Israel and the deployment of two US aircraft carriers to be used as a club against any state that wants to join the fray.

This has had ripple effects across the Middle East. The conflict has strengthened Iran and brought their allies closer into an anti-US block. Iran's

interest is in escalating this regional conflict to limit its own enemies and force its allies such as China, Russia and North Korea to give the Ayatollah's regime greater support.

The Abraham Accords, brokered by the US, normalized relations between Israel and Bahrain and the UAE, and talks were ongoing between Israel and Saudi Arabia until the conflict erupted. With fewer and fewer Arab countries supporting the creation of a Palestinian state, it was in the interests of both Hamas and Iran to break through this isolation. Iran is intending on Israel's indiscriminate slaughter of Palestinians and the impending refugee crisis to turn states such as Egypt away from the US. Additionally, in the aftermath of this latest imperialist butchery, proletarians both Jew and Arab are being mobilized around the national flag, taught by bloody massacres to run into the arms of their ruling classes, all too ready to sacrifice them in more slaughter. This all creates another flashpoint on capitalism's road to world war.

Saudi Arabia

The US is realizing it's not the only major imperialist power that has economic, political and military influence: its power is being checked even in countries that are its key allies, like Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is a major pillar of US imperialism, both militarily and in the extraction and sale of oil. Currently, other states are forced to purchase Saudi oil in USD, promoting dollar hegemony. However, there have been talks between Saudi Arabia and China in trading oil in the Chinese Yuan, which would pose a significant threat to US domination of the resource and region.

In May, China mediated the normalization of diplomatic ties between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This weakens the US' anti-Iran bloc in the Middle East, and follows the US condemning Saudi Arabia's bombing and blockading of Yemen. It is still up for debate if the US will help Saudi Arabia develop their nuclear energy program. The Saudis, like any imperialists, have interests that go beyond their allies; their relationship with their western allies has become increasingly strained. They have been increasingly modernizing their economy for military preparedness in order to better maneuver

in the imperialist arena for themselves.

Egypt

Egypt is in a similar position, their alliance with the US is tenuously based on military funding and economic assistance. A percentage of the yearly US funding is subject to "human rights" certification and in 2022, the Biden administration withheld \$130 million for human rights violations. There's been calls more recently to hold back \$300 million of the \$1.3 billion dollar assistance package over a corruption probe.

Egyptian relations with Russia have grown since the start of the Russia-Ukraine war. President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi was set to sell Russia 40,000 long range missiles in order to increase the state's revenues and receive food aid to help prevent the social situation in Egypt from worsening. The US made Egypt sell the missiles to Ukraine despite Russia funding Egypt's nuclear energy program.

The US has been pressuring Egypt to open its borders for Palestinian aid and refugees. Egypt opposes the entrance of Palestinian refugees, and this will cause them to move away from the west diplomatically. Egypt's most important asset is the Suez Canal which connects the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean for not just cargo, but war vessels as well. This is integral for the US imperialism's naval hegemony. American imperialism will fight to prevent decoupling from either Egypt or Saudi Arabia, two crucial states that it cannot afford to let escape its orbit.

Haiti

The US has invaded Haiti multiple times in history, most recently in 1995 and orchestrating a coup in 2004. As the social situation rapidly declines in Haiti, made worse by the assassination of President Jovenel Moïse in 2021 and with Port-au-Prince out of government control, the US state has been looking for a junior imperialist power to invade instead. The Biden administration tried foisting the task onto Canada, reasoning that the US is contributing a large amount of aid to Ukraine. Canada instead has utilized softer economic imperialist tactics, such as providing \$100 million for the state's policing and have sanctioned Haitians associated with gangs and assassination.

The US is interested in preventing Haitian asylum seekers from entering at all costs no matter how repressive the measures are. Already 200,000 Haitians have fled their homes, while workers are massacred daily by gangs and the national police. A multinational force led by Kenya is set for deployment at the start of 2024. Kenya's motivations are clear in leading the intervention; it gives them greater political and economic support in carrying out this favor for the US, showcases their military capabilities, and gets experience for any future war. Kenyan President Ruto has already received gratitude from Biden for leading the mission. Now, Haitian workers are in the crosshairs of both gangs and the Kenyan state.

Russia

The war in Ukraine has led to the consolidation of imperialist blocs, with NATO dominated by the US on one side, and Russia, junior partner to China, on the other. It is this war, since February 2022, that has opened capitalism's path to generalized imperialist war.

The war has led to the strengthening of the US bloc; Finland and Sweden moved to join NATO against Russia, and the USD is stronger due to military spending. The Biden administration has given Ukraine \$75 billion in military aid since the beginning of the war. The US' strategy in this war is to bleed Russia dry through the industrial slaughter of conscripted proletarians from Russia and Ukraine.

The Ukrainian state believes through continued western support that they can retake Crimea and the Donbass and are willing to feed workers to the meat grinder against the earthworks holding Russian territorial gains. Russia has only been able to offset the harsh sanctions imposed by the West through China and India's economic and diplomatic support. The US has been able to push Putin into implementing a regime of exception; the already worsening conditions for workers, coupled by martial law and conscription, is a gamble for the Russian bourgeoisie.

China

Biden and Secretary Blinken use every speech and press conference to underline China's threat to US imperialist interests. China's threat to US hegemony

is greater than the USSR's which relied almost exclusively on its military capabilities.

US-based military alliances with the intended purpose of containing China are multiplying, such as the trilateral security partnership "AUKUS" between the US, UK, and Australia and the "Quad", a security partnership between Australia, India, Japan and the US.

Despite the US not recognizing Taiwan, it poses a major threat to China's strategic interest. Taiwan received \$345 million in funding for the first time through the "Foreign Military Financing Program" that's reserved for "sovereign states." The "Taiwan Enhanced Resilience Act" also authorizes \$2 billion in military grants for Taiwan until 2027. The US predicts a Chinese invasion of Taiwan this decade, prompting the CHIPS act to move semiconductor production away from Taiwan to the US, Europe and Vietnam which has recently upgraded its diplomatic status with the US.

Biden has pledged that in the event of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan, the US military will come to the defense of Taiwan. It is the struggle between the US and China for control over Taiwan, the South China Sea, and the world's resources generally that presents the clearest path to a generalized imperialist war. The US and China are the poles around which are forming the battlelines for a new round of planetary destruction on a scale perhaps greater than the world wars of the last century.

The US bourgeoisie, along with their European and pro-NATO allies, frame their imperialist dispute as one for democracy. This is a proven way to take workers off of their own class terrain to withstand declining living conditions, and march off for war to kill or be killed by other workers.

US capital divided on how best to plunder

The US ruling class is divided on its commitment in continuing aid for Ukraine. The Republican Party is the most divided on the subject of Ukraine, partly due to former president Donald Trump. This division led to the historic removal of speaker of the House McCarthy. He maintained spending for military aid for Ukraine in the bill to raise the debt ceiling, against the position of most republicans who had voted down further aid several times. This

got the "neo conservatives" faction to support the Democratic party who they now see as the party of order best for US imperialism.

Despite the turmoil on the question of Ukraine, all camps of the American bourgeoisie are in favor of preparing the country for a struggle against its main imperialist rival, China. Biden's policies are a continuation of Trump's, especially regarding "economic nationalism" exemplified with the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and CHIPS Act. These acts are for contending with China in battery and semiconductor production and rearmament for military preparedness.

These major federal investments have their basis in the American state's need for building an economy capable of fighting a generalized imperialist war. On August 16, 2022, Congress passed the IRA which includes investments for "Green energy", constructing new nuclear reactors and EV battery plants. OPEC continues to cut production despite US pressure, while US strategic oil reserves are the lowest they have been since the 1980s. The green paint splattered over the IRA really prepares the US economy for self-sufficiency in the case of war and further integrates the unions for this purpose. Green energy acts and curtailing "de-industrialization" have the blessing of the AFL-CIO which are state offices to maintain discipline in the face of increased unemployment, declining wages and living standards. This disciplining of our class will only heighten in the event that production serves any future "war effort."

The IRA is part of the current project to revitalize American profits; aka, future revenue to fund war

production. The state is shaken by the crisis stemming from the failure of capital to accumulate further exacerbated by Covid-19, the war in Ukraine and inflation further reducing anemic profits. These conditions have empowered the state to further assaults on workers' living standards in the name of defense. National defense was used as the reason when the Biden administration passed legislation preventing railroad workers from striking against declining wages and workplace safety protection; we can only expect to see more of this as we move closer to world war.

No matter what political divisions rack the American ruling class, no matter what program they put forth for social peace, the capitalists' solutions are no solution for the working class. Our class, here and all over the world, can only expect more misery, slaughter, and the possibility of annihilation as capitalist imperialism threatens yet another world war. From the Straits of Taiwan to the Gaza Strip, the US is playing a key role in the strengthening of rival imperialist blocs. This can only be answered by the fight of the working class, who have nothing to gain from these deadly games, against the capitalist class in all countries and against the system of wage-labor itself.

No war but the class war!

The above article is taken from the latest issue of Internationalist Notes (#6 Fall 2023), bulletin of the Internationalist Workers' Group.

Wednesday, December 6, 2023

Afterlives of the Anti-Fascist War in the Senescence of a Decadent Social Order



The Gaza Strip has been designated as a garbage pail for the children and grandchildren of the fellahs dislocated by the wars of 1948 and 1967. It epitomizes anemic social and economic development... Except the omnipresent hum of congested transport arteries and electronic appliances—music corresponding to the life of a dilapidated social system and the bestial monotony of life under it—has been replaced. By what? The whistle of laser-guided munitions, destined to cremate a hospital and carbonize the patients.

To ring in the new year, some high-profile targets of the bombing profaned the “rules of war” every belligerent credits itself with following. On October 17, a hospital in Gaza City was hit and 500 or so were killed. On October 31 and November 1, 200 were killed in a series of strikes against a refugee camp(1). On December 24, another refugee camp was hit, killing 70(2). Prior to this, 4,000 Gazan migrant workers in Israel were interned, before being released onto the killing floor of the strip. The massacre has also been transposed to the West Bank. On October 15, Reuters reported 54 dead and 1,100 wounded in the West Bank since October 7. This is a fraction of the number who have died since then. Under the gaze of the armed rackets’ policemen—who, beneath the façade of national struggle and political Islam, perform the same task in Gaza City as Jewish cops perform in East Jerusalem—the victims emerge from the rubble to count the dead.

Israel’s patrons disown the atrocities, despite arming the perpetrators. Macron says “Nothing can justify a strike against a hospital. Nothing can

justify targeting civilians”(3). The hypocrisy is obvious, because any defense of Israel’s “right to self-defense” after October 7 is an affirmation-in-so-many-words of the right Israel really arrogates to itself, the right to vaporize city blocks and bomb “non-combatants”.

Macron cannot disown this, because Israel is simply aping the behavior of Macron’s forerunners. Israel abides by the same rules of engagement as those of les français libres, in the drama which forms one mythological base of the French state: la libération. The Jewish state is taking a page out of a certain war-time playbook, belonging to the authors of the victors’ peace of 1945. Like Israel, that—in order to justify reprisals and the doctrine of collective responsibility—cynically exploits the fact the armed rackets targeted Arabs and Jews alike during their rampage on October 7, the “sons and heirs” of democratic anti-fascism exploit the deaths at Auschwitz and Treblinka of the same Jews whom the USA turned back in the 1930s, in order to justify the crimes perpetrated by the architects of the anti-fascist war—crimes no less

despicable than those of the revisionist-fascist powers.

Before the great humanist Curtis LeMay quipped “we’re going to bomb [the Vietnamese] back into the stone age”, the American Air Force general and his British counterpart Arthur Harris drew up the policy of “area bombing” in WWII. The principles correspond to those LeMay enumerates in one of his proverbs, which echoes today in the remarks of the Israeli minister who says his country is at war with two million “human animals”: “There are no innocent civilians. It is their government and you are fighting a people, you are not trying to fight an armed force anymore. So it doesn’t bother me so much to be killing the so-called innocent bystanders.” Under these auspices, Dresden, Hamburg, Tokyo were decimated. And to round off this tally, it is not necessary to soliloquize about Hiroshima and Nagasaki in any great detail.

But the more incidents cited, the more the point is driven home, maybe...? Of course, the territories subjected by the Allies to fire and brimstone were not only the fatherlands of the Axis countries, but the occupied countries too. Aghis Stinas, the Greek revolutionary who was, successively (and tangentially, but his story is worth publicizing...), an internee, earmarked for execution by the pro-Axis camp administration; a fugitive, whose group of anti-Stalinist CP alumni in Athens—opting for the “defeatism” of Lenin’s era in lieu of the Fourth International’s defencism—rejoiced at news of strike waves in other countries; a militant, who, with the same enthusiasm as he received news of class struggle abroad, joined in on the looting of food caches, freely distributing to the inhabitants of a starving city materiel otherwise allocated to the Stalinists’ partisan war; and, consequently, a wanted man, hunted by the ringmasters of the partisan war, the Stalinists whom Stinas identified as a state-within-a-state (not unlike Hamas or other “liberation” rackets...); he, Stinas, recounts the onslaught of the Allied air forces, the one that befell Greece as Germany and Japan:

The Allies bombed as bestially as the Germans in their time, with even more fury. The American airmen were particularly resolute. Their objective was the working class neighborhoods. We knew

them here too, with the bombardment of Piraeus [a major port city near Athens], when the mortuaries filled up with dead and the hospitals with wounded. Here also it was almost all women, children and old people(4).

Modern war is total war. As LeMay says, belligerents are at war with millions more people than are in foxholes on the frontlines. The directive of the Allied air command to “focus attacks on the morale of the enemy civil population[,] and in particular the industrial workers...”(5) is totally consonant with the rules of engagement as they were elaborated in the “just”, imperialist war of 1939-45... As are Israeli directives to devastate the “human animals” in Gaza. And in the October 7 culling of 1,300 Jews, Bedouin Arabs, Thai Migrant workers, so on—the ones whom Hamas and their surreptitious supporters pass off as “settlers”—the autocratic, terrorist enemy simply demonstrated it, too, was another disciple of the Allied air command, to whom Israeli war planners must look as great teachers vis-à-vis the ongoing siege of Gaza.

So an Israeli official says it would be a good thing to create a famine in Gaza? A famine, maybe like the Bengal famine of 1943, induced by the need to allocate grain to the war against an overriding, illiberal evil? An evil yesterday known as fascism, today as the “Islamofascism” that menaces the sole outpost of democracy in the Middle East? An evil that is, moreover, abetted by the authoritarian, “revisionist”, anti-democratic powers, among whom we principally count Russia and China?

The picture is coming into focus. Now as then, a certain paradigm accompanies preparations for a general war by the USA and the lesser powers in its orbit, one that prefigures suppression of class divergences for the duration of the military emergency: a Union Sacrée, or, in English, a “Sacred Union”. October 7 attests to “our” adversaries’ immorality, and is depicted as one more link in the chain of their geopolitical designs. Obversely, it is a clarion call against, as the Secretary of State says, the “revisionist powers”(6).

The failure of Operation Prosperity Guardian to deter Houthi attacks on shipping lanes, plus the general decrepitude of an army strung too thin? To

prepare for the next confrontation, it is necessary to reverse this decline, to build more ships and expand the domestic industrial base as the gears of rearmament creak into motion. Reconcile the workers to preparations for the Third World War; rally them to US imperialism, under the guise of curbing wealth inequality or ecological transition; attain peace at home, by laying the foundations of a Sacred Union. And if the Israelis got a green light to flatten Gaza, is there so much wrong with the Atlantic Council's proposal to defeat an amphibious invasion of Taiwan with low-yield nuclear weapons?

As before, mobilization for a general war against the revisionist countries does not only hang on parochial nationalism, but on an enemy whose ideology poses an existential threat to the foundations of "our" civilization. True, historical analogies are unwieldy; however, the cache of pretexts for modern war is at least as shallow as comparisons to the last global slaughter are unwieldy. So, as Israeli ministers' remarks are reproduced in newspapers and on the internet, it feels as if General LeMay has been resurrected and is speaking to us. He is not firing Hamburg, Dresden, or Tokyo, but the cardinal principle of disregard for "the so-called innocent bystanders" is applied equally to the surplus proletarians of Gaza. Do not underestimate how penetrating General

LeMay's insight is. The real insight, only alluded to above: Gone is the epoch of pitched battles, in picturesque surrounds reconnoitered by men in epaulets and gold lace. In the epoch of imperialism and state-capitalism, the point is to destroy capital; specifically, as much of the enemy's constant (plant, equipment, machinery...) and variable (workers...) capital as possible. Since the beginning of the 20th century, it has actually become imperative if capitalism is to overcome crises of valorization and catalyze new cycles of accumulation. Partially comprising the process of overcoming these crises, destruction of noxious or superfluous capital values and members of the reserve army (in Gaza, people) in a conflict that combines states' management of surplus proletarians' population with inter-imperialist maneuvers (Israel-Hamas war) complies perfectly with the "rules of war", just as Israeli leaders insist it does. And as one piece of the puzzle of inter-imperialist maneuvers, this latest episode of modern war is adorned with the same narratives that yesterday acquitted the democratic imperialisms of all crimes during the anti-fascist war. Between Hamburg and Tokyo, Hiroshima and the Holocaust, it was the first really modern war. On display are the afterlives of that war, in the senescence of a decadent social order.

Y

**Internationalist Workers' Group
December 26 2023**

Gaza and Beyond:

The Bitter Fruits of Capitalism, Nationalism and Imperialism Threaten All Humanity

As we lined up ... four girls were ordered to accompany them to carry water for the [fighters]... Instead they took them to our empty houses and raped them. About seventy of our men were blindfolded and shot to death, one after the other in front of us. They ... took their bodies and threw them on the cement covering the village's spring and dumped sand on them.¹

They killed some eighty ... The children were killed by smashing their skulls with clubs.²

7 October 2023? No, this other sickening incident took place in October 1948. The “fighters” were actually Jewish soldiers of the Haganah (“Defence”) organisation. These were not isolated or spontaneous incidents but part of the Zionist forces’ carefully thought out Plan Dalet (Plan D). Posed ever since by Israeli governments as a defensive measure to ensure the Zionist movement would get what the UN Partition of Palestine had promised them, it was actually a plan for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinian villagers from their land. The Haganah was not the only Israeli force in operation that day. Alongside them operated the outright terrorist groups of Lehi (known by its opponents as the Stern Gang³) and the Irgun Zvai Leumi which would not accept that any sharing of the land could take place. It was the Irgun (encouraged by Haganah commanders) who had committed arguably the biggest atrocity of all, with the massacre of up to 254 villagers in Deir Yassin in April 1948. The fact that Deir Yassin was eighteen miles inside the territory that the UN had allotted to the existing inhabitants of the British mandate of Palestine gives the lie to any “defensive” intent behind Plan Dalet. News of this atrocity led many Palestinians to flee for their lives.

We are not recalling these details of the Palestinian Nakba to justify the horrors of 7 October 2023 carried out by the Hamas-led forces. Blame-game propaganda is a weapon in all wars and is being milked to the limit by both Hamas (acronym for Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiya or the “Islamic Resistance Movement”) and the Israeli state to justify their equally poisonous nationalist agendas.

The aim is to get workers massacring each other in defence of the property of their masters. Both must be rejected, along with the system that has spawned them.

Immediate Roots of the Current Slaughter

The latest round in this century-old “asymmetrical conflict” opened with the astonishing and unprecedented Hamas breakout from the confinement of the Gaza enclave. This led to the indiscriminate and inhuman butchery of up to 1,200 people (not all Jewish, even Arab Israelis who tried to talk to the fighters were gunned down) with a further 240 (from 40 different nationalities) taken hostage. It was still the greatest loss of Jewish life on a single day since the Holocaust.

In reply, in less than three months of fighting, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) has killed more than 22,000 Palestinians, some few thousand of whom are actual fighters but 45% are children.⁴ This too is a new record in horror for the Palestinian people. The level of destruction seen in Gaza has not been equalled in any urban setting since the Second World War. Israel has dropped nearly as many bombs on the Gaza Strip (which is about the same area as the Isle of Wight) in one week as the US-led coalition dropped on the entire territory of Afghanistan in one year. Several military sources indicate that the explosive equivalent is already greater than two nuclear bombs of the size that levelled Hiroshima (which had an area nearly three times bigger than the whole of Gaza). The IDF have made no pretence that there is any “precision” bombing (as the US and its allies tried to

claim in Iraq in 2003). 2,000 pound bombs simply knock apartment blocks down like ninepins even when they are not directly hit. Along with the blockade of essential supplies it has created a humanitarian disaster for over 2 million people, who are repeatedly told by the IDF to move to this or that safe place, the last an area not much more than 3 square miles – and even that is not safe. They already face lack of heating, starvation and disease, in a situation where nearly all medical facilities have been depleted, and a particularly wet winter is adding to the misery.

The ferocity of the Israeli response could have been foreseen by anyone who has been paying even minimal attention over the last few years. Indeed in May 2021 the Internationalist Communist Tendency put out a statement on the last bout of fighting between Hamas and Israel. Under a subheading of “Déjà Vu” we wrote:

We have been here before. Precisely three times before, since Hamas seized control of Gaza 15 years ago. The pattern is always the same. Israel makes yet another move to create “facts on the ground” such as the planned eviction of Palestinians from parts of East Jerusalem. Then Hamas fires off all the home made rockets it has been stockpiling and, as long as they do, the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) responds with all the weapons in its arsenal (except its unacknowledged nuclear one, of course). The US vetoes any condemnation of Israel in the UN Security Council as the rest of the “leaders of the world” airily call for “peace”.

The results also follow the same pattern. The number of Palestinians killed is always vastly disproportionate to the number of Israelis killed.⁵

However, despite the familiarities, this time is different. The 7 October 2023 attack by Hamas may have been due to the same grievances as in 2021 but it has occurred in an entirely different domestic, and in a much more dangerous international, context.

So what pushed Hamas into the massive and, for the people of Gaza, ruinous provocation of 7 October? There is obviously some truth in the official Hamas statement that the attack was planned as retaliation for the assaults on Palestinians at the al-Aqsa mosque, in East Jerusalem and the West

Bank. The equally provocative right-wing government, headed by Netanyahu, had given free hand to the convicted racist, Itamar Ben Gvir, and even created a special paramilitary National Guard to allow this Minister for Security to terrorise the Palestinians in those territories. Additionally, the Abraham Accords, through which the US had leveraged Arab states like the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco to sign agreements with Israel, further weakened the Palestinian position on the international stage. In the weeks before the Hamas assault, Saudi Arabia was also negotiating a treaty with Israel. “Hamas spokesperson Ibrahim Hamad also told Al Jazeera TV ... that the attack was “absolutely a message” to Muslim countries seeking normalization with Israel.”⁶ Hamas did not react when the earlier Abraham Accords were struck but the Saudis were believed to be demanding the revival of one of the proposals in the 1993 Oslo Accords;

... focusing on the so-called Area C, which constitutes 60 percent of the West Bank and is where most of Israel’s settlements are located. There are credible reports of various proposals made by the Palestinian Authority, the United States, and Saudi Arabia arguing that Israel should agree to transfer a significant portion of Area C to Palestinian control as part an agreement between Riyadh and Jerusalem to normalize relations.⁷

Such “normalisation” was not what Hamas wanted, as it would have given more power to the Palestinian Authority, and thus its secular rival, Fatah. Perhaps this was the “message” Ibrahim Hamad meant to deliver to the Saudis?

But there was a third possible motive. Hamas’ support in the Gaza Strip had been in decline, and the population were not just blaming their worsening social conditions on the Israeli and Egyptian blockade of the territory. A poll by Arab Barometer published in Foreign Affairs⁸, the New York Times and the Italian left-reformist paper Il Manifesto, showed that 62% of the population of Gaza did not support Hamas. Most would also settle for a two-state solution, which Hamas founding Covenant⁹ of 1988 rejects. We don’t need to rely only on opinion polls either. As Amnesty International reported in 2022:

In the Gaza Strip, a general climate of repression, following a brutal crackdown on peaceful protests against the rising costs of living in 2019, effectively deterred dissent, often leading to self-censorship.¹⁰

Things are no better today. Unemployment now stands at 60% (a massive increase from only 2 years ago when it was 40%). In this situation repression is not enough. The standard ploy of all nationalists is to provoke the enemy into a reciprocal atrocity¹¹ in order to consolidate support against “the other” and, just as importantly, silence internal dissent. As another recent poll in late November/early December by Khalil Shikaki shows, it has largely worked, at least for now. In the West Bank support for Hamas has surged from 12% to 44% whilst it is up from 38% to 42% in Gaza since the Israeli bombing began.¹²

Deep political division is also apparent in Israel. For all of 2023 there have been massive demonstrations against the new ultra-right wing coalition’s attempts to carry out judicial reforms which would make the Supreme Court virtually a rubber stamp for the Knesset. Many demonstrators and opposition politicians know that the legal reforms are just a precursor to further expand the settlements in the West Bank, and even to expel all Palestinians from Israel’s recognised borders. Netanyahu has a personal interest in undermining the courts to avoid being tried for corruption, but his ultraright wing allies from the religious orthodox and settler movement parties (there are now 750,000 such settlers in East Jerusalem and the West Bank) hold to a mirror image of Hamas’ aim – they really want the removal of all Palestinians from the territory of the former British mandate colony. Jewish settlements have been condemned by successive UN resolutions for half a century but, with US complicity, they can be ignored, and the settlements continue to be established in occupied territory. They are all part of a long standing Zionist project of creating “facts on the ground” intended to make any future Palestinian state impossible. In this Hamas has been Zionist nationalism’s “useful idiot”, since they too oppose any other solution than extinction of the state of Israel. Just as in the war in Ukraine, there is no room for any compromise.

It is well known that Hamas was encouraged by

successive Israeli governments to emerge as an Islamist alternative to the Fatah movement which dominated, then and now, the so-called Palestinian Authority. Israeli officials have confirmed it.

In 2009, Avner Cohen, a former Israeli religious affairs official who worked in Gaza for over 20 years, told *The Wall Street Journal*, quote, “Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel’s creation.” Another former Israeli official, Brigadier General Yitzhak Segev, said he was given a budget to help finance Islamist movements in Gaza to counter Yasser Arafat and his Fatah movement. Another former Israeli military official, David Hacham, said, quote, “When I look back at the chain of events, I think we made a mistake. But at the time, nobody thought about the possible results.”¹³

The day after the Hamas attack many Israeli observers were not slow to point the finger of blame:

Most of the time, Israeli policy was to treat the Palestinian Authority as a burden and Hamas as an asset. Far-right Knesset Member, Bezalel Smotrich, now the finance minister in the hardline government and leader of the Religious Zionism party, said so himself in 2015.

According to various reports, Netanyahu made a similar point at a Likud faction meeting in early 2019, when he was quoted as saying that those who oppose a Palestinian state should support the transfer of funds to Gaza, because maintaining the separation between the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza would prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state.¹⁴

Such open cynicism by Israeli leaders means we also have to ask why Hamas were allowed, not only to get over the border, but penetrate so far into Israeli territory, and spend so much time wandering around, killing at will, on that Saturday morning of 7 October. After all, the Israeli secret services are regarded as the most effective in the world. They have an unparalleled record of success, and have infiltrated, at one time or another, all the Palestinian organisations. How was it then, that almost exactly on the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, and once again on the Sabbath during a Jewish religious holiday (Sukkot), they did not expect some action? Why were the warnings from the Egyptian secret services ignored? Why

were the (female) soldiers who visually monitored the Gaza border, and reported training sessions where Hamas fighters practised bringing down the border fence ignored? The official responses have been unconvincing (you don't need to send the entire IDF to the West Bank to deal with unarmed Palestinians, especially when the trouble there is caused by armed Jewish settlers), and this has fuelled the horrible suspicion that the Israeli government allowed an incursion to happen to give them the rationale to eliminate Hamas once and for all. According to the New York Times (2 December 2023) the Israeli intelligence and military services had obtained a Hamas document a year before the attack. It detailed an assault that would overwhelm fortifications around the Gaza Strip, take over Israeli cities and target key military bases.

The approximately 40-page document, which the Israeli authorities code-named "Jericho Wall," outlined, point by point, exactly the kind of devastating invasion that led to the deaths of about 1,200 people, but Israeli military and intelligence officials dismissed the plan as aspirational, considering it too difficult for Hamas to carry out.¹⁵

This may also be true. Netanyahu originally tweeted a criticism of the intelligence services on the day of the attack but then deleted it. The only other comment came from Ronen Bar, the head of Shin Bet. He immediately admitted responsibility, with the blindingly banal statement that 'unfortunately we were unable to generate a sufficient warning that would allow the Hamas attack to be thwarted', but he quickly added: 'There will be time for investigations. Now we are fighting.'

One reason for any alleged complacency can be found in the failure of Hamas' attempts to cross the Gaza border in 2021 despite deploying some of the same weaponry and devices, like drones, that were used on 7 October. This seems to have given the IDF the sense that there could be no repeat for many years. The Israeli reporter Haviv Rettig Gur summed it up at the time:

Hamas was just forced to spend 11 days watching as Israel systematically disrupted its tactical innovations and demolished hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of its military infrastructure. The group has spent a decade building major new warfighting

capabilities meant to challenge Israel on new and unexpected fronts. All proved ineffective or outright useless.¹⁶

In addition scores of mid to high ranking Hamas officers were killed in 2021 (and their names listed by the IDF) indicating that Israeli military intelligence still operated inside Gaza, despite the withdrawal of settlements there 16 years earlier. Netanyahu boasted about this repeatedly, constantly extolling the extent of Israel's (undoubted) military superiority in technology.¹⁷ With this in mind it seems that there was too much reliance on surveillance technology. On 7 October Hamas skilfully targeted this first, alongside the communications system, so that calls for assistance did not get through. In some cases it was 20 hours before some Israeli units arrived to aid those under attack. Hamas leaders, on the other hand, seem to have learned from the defeat of 2021, and had gone in for some retro technology, using wired phones instead of cell phones deep in the tunnels below Gaza (according to the same New York Times report). Only top Hamas commanders knew the details of the plan which was only relayed to the other groups¹⁸ participating in the attack at the last moment. In this way it is alleged they were able to keep their plans secret until 7 October.

Historians might not have to wait the usual 30 years to get the full truth this time, since the splits at the top of the Israeli government are plain for all to see. It was only last March that Ben Gvir called for the sacking of Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant, for calling for a suspension of the judicial reform. For the settler right and ultra-religious leaders, Ben Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, this was a betrayal since it is part of their strategy for colonisation of all of the land of Israel. For a few days Netanyahu looked like sacking Gallant, but massive demonstrations in his favour forced an about turn. Whatever the truth, the fact is that the Hamas attack has not only helped to keep the squabbling ultraright wing coalition together, it has also brought about a sort of national unity and paved the way for the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians from Gaza. It has also led to the formation of a national unity government of sorts, as well as a five man War Cabinet, which includes opposition leaders, but ex-

cludes the far right. Netanyahu made a deal to freeze the judicial reforms “for the duration” in return for this “national unity”. And Netanyahu has told Israelis that the war will be a long one (for him personally, the longer the better).

For now, that national unity also goes beyond horse trading amongst the politicians. The now traditional Saturday night mass demonstration against the Netanyahu government’s planned judicial reform was called off immediately on 7 October. Some of its organising groups, who had previously refused the draft, called on their supporters to sign up for the coming war. War, as ever, has thus boosted the national consensus, leaving little or no room for dissenters on either side. For example, previously “moderate” radio talk show hosts like Ben Caspit have refused to watch videos of dead children in Gaza tweeting instead “They earned their hell honestly. I have not an ounce of sympathy”.¹⁹ The atrocities committed by the nationalist fanatics on both sides lead to this kind of deranged mentality.

One place where a few brave Israelis have shown dissent in support of Palestinians is on the West Bank, mainly via the work of the NGO, Yesh Din (“There is Law”). They monitor illegal settlements there and incidents of violence against Palestinian villagers which have been increasing throughout 2023 and were clearly a factor in the Hamas attack. After a month of the Israeli assault on Gaza;

Israel’s Yesh Din rights group said Friday that there had been over 172 incidents of settler violence and harassment against Palestinians in at least 84 Palestinian towns and communities in the West Bank since Hamas’s savage and murderous assault on Israel on October 7, which sparked a war with the terror group.²⁰

No one has even been questioned, let alone arrested, for these crimes. Teenagers from settlements can descend on Palestinian villages with sticks to knock the olives from their trees in order to destroy the villagers’ livelihoods. If the villagers try to stop them, either the settlers fire on them (Ben Gvir handed out 10,000 assault rifles to settlers in the days following 7 October), or the army moves in to arrest ... the Palestinians, or members of Yesh Din. It is quite clear that the aim is, as ever, to make life

unbearable for Palestinians on the West Bank. Adding that to the continuing destruction of Gaza a second or third Nakba is in the making. But to get a real perspective on what is happening we have to understand that the war for the Middle East is part of a much wider struggle.

Capitalism and Nationalism

Nationalism, and the nation-state, arose with capitalism when “the political revolution (of the bourgeoisie) overthrew ... feudal power and turned state affairs into affairs of the people”²¹. With its slogan of “liberty, fraternity and equality” the bourgeoisie claimed to be the embodiment of the people, even if property ownership meant that some were “more equal than others”. Liberty meant freedom from feudal limits on trade and growth of production and “laissez-faire” became the doctrine of the rising entrepreneurial class. The state was no longer that of an absolute monarch to whom “subjects” owed their loyalty but it was also the embodiment of the “nation”. The concept of the “nation-state” was the perfect integument for capitalist accumulation.

Declarations that “all men are created equal” may have been empty rhetoric for African slaves or indigenous peoples, not to mention the new exploited class of the proletariat, but for Jews, who had been forced to migrate from one place to the next in the sixteen centuries since the failure of their last attempt to restore Jewish independence in Palestine in 137 AD, it sounded like a real step forward. Instead, many of the religious persecutions²² and expulsions they had been subjected to were now supplanted by a new religious toleration. The emancipation of the Jews enabled them to own land, enter the civil service (although some had to change their religion to do so), and serve as officers in the national armed forces. This in itself aroused resentment amongst those who, in these new national states, considered they were, as they say nowadays, “taking our jobs”. Although the majority of Jews remained poor, sometimes only finding work in sweatshops owned by their co-religionists, these were obscured by the few who morphed from moneylenders (since the Catholic Church prohibited Christians from “usury”) to leading financial capitalists in Europe. This also

aroused even more envy, so that when the world capitalist economy experienced its first real financial (as opposed to the many previous industrial crises) crisis (1866-73), the thin veneer of toleration came off.

Capitalist Imperialism

The two decades that followed the crisis of 1873 dramatically changed the nature of capitalism. The further concentration of capital had not only created a world economy, it took capitalism into a new stage of development. Individual firms now gave way to new joint stock companies and then cartels, whilst banking or finance capital began to dominate each state's process of accumulation. Competition went from those between individual capitalists in the domestic market to that of competition between national state champions on the world market. "Laissez faire" and free trade were amongst the victims, as defence of the national economy gradually led to trade wars via the increase in protective tariffs.²³ The state everywhere was drawn into defence of the national economy, and not just the national territory, which led to a new form of imperialism.

The leading capitalist states in this period were competing to secure for themselves the cheapest sources of raw materials, cheap labour and captive markets. Eventually this rivalry led to the carve up of the planet into colonies, which were not only intended to give a boost to each national economy, but also to deny such a territory to its rivals. In reality the "Scramble for Africa" and other such ventures turned out to be less profitable than their supporters thought (as the faux frais of colonialism was a rising military budget). No matter. The point was that our imperialists expected to make a profit one day.

This new economic impulse also had other super-structural effects leading to a change in the nature of nationalism. No longer was this the epoch of "equality" and "fraternity" (however much of a con that had been) but of the assertion of the need for the predominantly white states to civilise the world. The idea of racial superiority had never been far from capitalist discourse since the Enlightenment, but now it really started to make itself felt. From Kipling's "taking up the White Man's Burden" to

the pseudoscientific social Darwinism that lay behind it, national identity was forged more and more on the assertion of racial differences.

This was most marked in newly formed nation-states like Germany where forging national identity after unification gradually became synonymous for some with "racial purity". It became easy to blame the "alien presence" of the Jews for any problem. It was in Germany too that the racial term "anti-semitism" was now popularised rather than the religious "anti-Judaism".²⁴ Social Darwinists turned this into a struggle for existence between races, with Nordic Aryan Germans seen as the *Übermensch*. All this was bundled together in the anti-semitic and racist nonsense of Wagner's son-in-law, Houston Stewart Chamberlain in the 1890s, but by then the new wave of anti-semitism was visible right across Europe.

In the Russian Empire, pogroms in Warsaw, Kherston and Kiev in 1881, following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II (wrongly blamed on Jews) opened up three decades of officially sanctioned murders of Jews. This led to mass emigration, sometimes to other parts of Europe, but mainly to the USA.

In the corrupt French Third Republic the anti-semitic background to the Dreyfus Affair brought another response. It convinced Theodore Herzl, a prominent Austrian journalist, himself agnostic and "assimilated", to respond to this rising tide of anti-semitic nationalism with a Jewish nationalism: Zionism. In his book *The Jewish State: An Attempt at a Modern Solution of the Jewish Question* (1896) he called for Palestine to become a home for Jews. Zionism thus arose in the colonial period of mainly European imperialism; a period in which there was an assumption that the rest of the world was almost empty or that the inhabitants were so "backward" that they could either be ignored or simply colonised for their own good. Zionism was also marked by this characteristic. Herzl wrote that a Jewish homeland in the Middle East would also benefit European interests; "we should there form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism".²⁵ However, in its early years Zionism's main appeal was to the most impoverished and persecuted Jews

of Eastern Europe (sometimes in the form of “labour Zionism”). Had Zionism remained confined only to Central and Eastern Europe it would have struggled to make any headway.

By this time capitalist imperialist powers pretty much dominated the globe. It was a far cry from when Marx and Engels had earlier supported the formation of some (but not all) bourgeois nation-states. They had done so since they saw that the spread of capitalism in these independent states would lay the material basis for socialism by leading to the formation of a larger working class majority. However, by the end of the nineteenth century conditions had changed. Any new nation-state which did emerge would only be able to do so as a client of one or more of the imperialist competitors for world domination. The Social Democratic Party of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania (whose most articulate advocate was Rosa Luxemburg) was the first to recognise this. Looking at the weakness of their “own” bourgeoisie they very quickly saw that it was so dependent on the world economy that it would always be subservient to one or other of the dominating powers. They thus concluded that the era of progressive bourgeois national struggles was over. Instead every national struggle would become a plaything in the imperialist strategy of the dominant powers. The working class no longer had an interest in supporting any national movement. Marx’s slogan from the Communist Manifesto that “workers have no country, you cannot take from them what they do not have”, had become fact.

Living in the Jewish diaspora of the capitalist world, the supporters of Zionism already had an insight that they would need the help of the Great Powers. Herzl had based his appeal on it without much success. When he died in 1904, the President of the English Zionist Federation, Chaim Weizmann, realised that the revival of Zionist hopes depended on the support of the largest empire on the planet. During the First World War, the British (and French) were already cheating Arab nationalists, by falsely promising them their own states in return for their help in the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.²⁶ Instead of a secret (and as the Arabs found out, worthless) promise, Weizmann lobbied to persuade

the British Cabinet to make public their support for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He did not have to lobby too hard. These British imperialists believed there were advantages in the long term to be gained from a Jewish state in the Middle East and, more immediately, were under the mistaken belief it would help bring the USA into the war against Germany (unaware it seems that US Jews were, on the whole, not keen Zionists). Issued in the name of the Foreign Secretary, the Balfour Declaration promised the impossible – a “national home for the Jewish people” where “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine ...”. In reality Balfour’s arrogant racist assumption was clear;

... Zionism, be it right or be it wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who inhabit that ancient land.²⁷

However when the British took Jerusalem in 1917 it looked more likely that an Arab state would be formed in Palestine after the war. Even Weizmann, who headed a Zionist commission there straight after, was “surprised by how non-Jewish Jerusalem and Palestine had become”,²⁸ and soon returned to Britain.

If Weizmann was disappointed in 1918, the Arabs called 1920 (when the terms of the Treaty of Sevres became known) *âm an nakba* (“year of catastrophe”). There was burning resentment against it across the Arab world when it was clear that the mandates (in reality, colonies) given to France and Britain meant that the Arabs had been cheated. In Palestine the arrival of the “distinctly Zionist”²⁹ Sir Herbert Samuel as British High Commissioner gave an early indication of how the Balfour Declaration would be implemented.

British imperialist rule in Palestine was characterised by gradual Jewish immigration, and divisions amongst the more powerful Palestinian families. Initially Jews largely bought land from absentee landlords or followers (and relatives) of the Mayor of Jerusalem, Raghib al-Nashashibi.³⁰ The fellahin (landless labourers, agricultural workers and peasants) were then evicted, mainly to the

shanties surrounding Jaffa and Haifa. The Jewish migrants built a state within the state, with their economic organisation, the Histadrut (which was both a trade union and entrepreneur) and a paramilitary force, the Haganah. The latter was supposed to be secret but was tolerated by the British administration. Arab rage only increased when it became clear what Jewish immigration implied. When it dramatically increased³¹ after the rise of the Nazis, violence broke out. An Arab general strike in 1936 did more harm to Arabs than the already self-sufficient Jewish community, but it forced the British to face up to the contradiction of the Balfour Declaration. The Peel Commission drew up the first plan for partition (the first “two-state solution”) in 1937. This proposed to give the Arab-majority Galilee to the Zionists, which only inflamed the conflict into an all out revolt which peaked in 1938.

The military defeat of the Arab Revolt in 1939 cost the lives of 5,000 Palestinians and left their leaders more divided than ever. Some like the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem came to recognise, as the Zionists had done earlier, that no national movement could win in the imperialist epoch without support of a major power and, with the British so clearly favouring the Zionists, solicited the aid of Nazi Germany. Hitler was ready to help³² but his obsession with defeating the USSR first, meant that materially he had little to offer. The Grand Mufti fled to Berlin from where he broadcast Nazi propaganda to the Middle East. Not only did he back a loser here, but the Nazis’ greatest and most perverse contribution to the post-war Middle East was the Holocaust – the case for Zionism was enormously strengthened, to the point where the Arab population were all but ignored. The Zionist lie of “a land without people, for a people without land” played well in the West.³³

However, this is to anticipate. The Arab Revolt had rattled the British so to try to buy calm, they flip flopped yet again. On the eve of the Second World War a new British white paper proposed restricting Jewish immigration to 75,000 over the next 5 years and to restrict or ban further land sales. The question of the ultimate status of an independent Palestine was put off to the post-war future.

The Zionists were outraged, but the winds of imperialism blew against the Palestinians in other ways during the Second World War. The British trained and armed Haganah elite units to attack the Vichy puppet regime in Syria, and the Zionists managed to establish their own munitions industry in Palestine. These factors gave the Zionist cause a military edge in the coming fight for land. At the same time British imperial decline was further manifest in its continuing contradictory policies on the ground. The British refusal to open its borders to Jewish migrants, even after the full horrors of the Holocaust – itself the perfect demonstration of where nationalist and racist fanaticism ends – only led to a terror campaign by the Irgun and Lehi after 1945. They blew up the King David Hotel, which housed the British administration, and murdered British soldiers and diplomats. As in India, where British policy of “divide and rule” between Muslims and Hindus led to communal riots and the division of the country, a bankrupt British Government decided to cut and run without worrying too much about the consequences. The Palestine mandate was handed over to the United Nations. At the same time, a new generation of Zionist leaders, made more determined by the experience of the Holocaust, and headed by David Ben Gurion, realised that they should now transfer their attention from the declining colonial powers to the new imperialism of the United States. President Truman, under pressure from the Zionist lobby in an election year, rewarded them by calling immediately for the admission of 100,000 Jews into Palestine, opening the final chapter in the catastrophe that was about to engulf Palestine.

National Liberation and Imperialist Domination

The 1947 United Nations partition plan demonstrated that not even the capitalists believed any more in the supposed “right of nations to self-determination”. Jews still only made up about a third of the population (and were in minority everywhere, except in a district of Jaffa) but were allocated 56% of the territory. This included the entire south where there were no Jewish people, but the Zionists had demanded it for access to the Red Sea. And standing behind them, then as now, was the United

States.

In reality, neither Arabs nor Jews accepted the partition. The reasons for Arab rejection were obvious enough. For extreme Zionists, like the Irgun leader and future Prime Minister of Israel Menachem Begin, "the partition agreement is invalid. It will not bind the Jewish people. Jerusalem was and will for ever be our capital. Eretz Israel³⁴ will be restored to the people of Israel. All of it. And for ever".³⁵

In fact, Begin was only articulating what has always been "project Israel" right down to today. Other Jewish leaders in 1948 were more coy about what they aimed for. They saw acceptance of the partition as just one more stepping stone towards the same aim. The crucial factor in 1948 was, not the clarity of the Zionist goal, but the fact that, as ever in the saga of national liberation struggles, it was who supported you that counted. Israel could count on the support of the two greatest powers to emerge victorious from the Second World. The wartime alliance of the USSR and USA had already collapsed, and the Cold War had already started (with the US announcement of its policy of "containing communism" in 1947). The USA had already stitched up an oil deal with Saudi Arabia³⁶ but saw Israel as a solid bridgehead of the West to defend its interests in a Middle East where other national states were now emerging and the future was unpredictable.

In the USSR, Stalin at first saw Zionism as an embodiment of a "national liberation movement" which would be "anti-imperialist" (i.e. would support the USSR). The Irgun had used weapons supplied by the USSR against the British and, in 1948, it was the first state to recognise the State of Israel, centred on Jerusalem (the USA hastily following suit). Even in 1953 the USSR was still supporting Israel against Egyptian attempts to close the Suez Canal to its ships. However, the USSR was soon forced to recognise that in economic terms it could not compete with the USA, which, once it found it could not establish an anti-Soviet alliance amongst the Arab states, was increasingly bankrolling Israel. In the early years of the Cold War Israel could not have survived economically without the financial support coming from the USA (which accounted for something like 80% of its revenue). The Suez Affair

of 1956 demonstrated that Israel still had to listen to the US government. When Egypt's Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, the old colonial powers, Britain and France, attempted to wrest back control by concocting a plan with Israel to invade Gaza and the Sinai. For the colonial powers the strategic value of the canal (through which much of the world's oil flowed) was the motive, but the Israelis hoped to gain more territory and restore access to the port of Eilat. It put the USA in an awkward position, especially when the USSR (now under Khrushchev) threatened to fire rockets at the invading force (there was even talk of nuclear weapons being used). Eisenhower was well aware that the US' previous support for Israel had harmed its interests in the Middle East, and yet the cause of Israel was popular (then and now) amongst Americans (especially evangelical Christians).³⁷ He, however, put the wider imperialist interests of the US first, and sought to balance support for Israel with the search for allies in the wider Middle East. The invasion of the Suez had led to a run on the pound sterling so the British went to the International Monetary Fund for support. As it was largely controlled by the USA, Eisenhower refused to support the request and this forced Britain and France to capitulate. A UN ceasefire was organised and an isolated Israel was told to withdraw from Sinai.

A decade later and the situation had changed. The post-war boom was coming to an end, and the USA was embroiled in the Vietnam War whilst the influence of the USSR in the Arab world was rising. The USSR had already (via Czechoslovakia) been selling arms to Egypt in 1956 but the ties between Moscow and Cairo intensified. Nasser turned his back on the USA when they refused to finance the Aswan High Dam project (the US wisely doubted Egypt could pay for it) so the USSR stepped in. When Nasser forged a defence agreement with Israel's Arab neighbours (Jordan, Syria and Iraq) in May 1967 it looked like Israel was facing a war on three fronts. On 5 June, Israel launched a pre-emptive attack on Egypt, destroying its air force in two and half hours. It easily then dealt with the invasions from Syria and Jordan and the war was over in six days. It left Israel in possession of the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank of the

Jordan, and Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Six years later Nasser's successor, Anwar Sadat, launched the Yom Kippur War which, via the Camp David Accords of 1978, restored the Sinai to Egypt and established the current territorial status quo.

From this point on the USA became the arbiter of what is laughably known as the "peace process" to the exclusion of all other powers. The USSR lacked the capital to counter US influence economically and exercised influence only by supplying weapons to any anti-US and anti-Israeli Arab government. The decline, and then collapse, of the USSR by 1991 forced the Palestinians to negotiate from a position of even greater weakness. With no counterweight to the USA to assist them, Yasser Arafat, the head of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), was forced to conclude the Oslo Accords, in which the PLO for the first time recognised the State of Israel's right to exist in return for only vague promises about a future Palestinian state. Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister had pulled off a master stroke which the Palestinian petty bourgeoisie, who are the natural constituency of the newly formed Hamas, rejected. But for the extreme Zionists even acknowledging the existence of the Palestinians was too much. Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish right wing religious zealot (of the kind now in the Israeli government) claiming to be acting on "the orders of God" in 1995.

Talk of a "peace process" was already hollow then, but everything that has happened since has only confirmed it as a sham. Article Thirteen of the Hamas Covenant explicitly rejects it: "initiatives, and so-called peaceful solutions and international conferences, are in contradiction to the principles of the Islamic Resistance Movement".³⁸ Meanwhile, the Zionist project has never intended to share Eretz Israel with anyone as the current war has made all too clear. The carpet bombing of Gaza with its threat of ethnic cleansing has been justified by several Israeli leaders. From the start, the exboss of the Israeli National Security Council has welcomed an epidemic in Gaza as an aid to victory³⁹ and has argued that "creating a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza is a necessary means to achieve the goal ... Gaza will become a place

where no human being can exist". Current Israeli President Isaac Herzog justifies Israel's collective punishment by claiming that "it's an entire nation out there that is responsible. It's not true this rhetoric about civilians not aware, not involved ...",⁴⁰ whilst the odious Netanyahu has turned to scripture for an analogy in the Jewish destruction of the city of Amalek:

... attack the Amalekites and totally destroy all that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle and sheep, camels and donkeys.⁴¹

If this is not the language of genocidethen we really are in Wonderland.

On the Road to World War Three?

The above only confirms that what is going on in Gaza is not only different in scale, but is taking place in an international context that is far more dangerous than at any time since the Second World War. Two years ago we highlighted this in our article "Ukraine and Taiwan: Flashpoints in an Uncertain Imperialist World".⁴² Written a couple of months before the actual Russian invasion of Ukraine, it argued that the global capitalist system was entering a new phase where the problems of the global economy were reducing any possibility of negotiated settlements of any issue between the world's leading powers.

Economically, half a century after the cycle of capital accumulation went into decline (aka the end of the "post-war boom") the system has been kept afloat by a combination of the super-exploitation of the proletariat of the "Global South" (which is mainly in the global East), and state support for financial capital via deregulation and incentives to invest in the national territory. This has resulted in massive speculation which has been accompanied by cuts in wages, pensions and social services. Financialisation has created a world where the gap between the mega-rich minority and most of the rest of humanity has grown a lot faster than the GDP of any national economy. Such contradictions are bringing world capitalism closer to collapse. Even wealthy states like the USA, Japan and half of Europe are living on debt. Growth is painfully slow, profit rates are falling and the problems of valorising capital for productive investment are increas-

ing. The so-called “BRICS” are doing no better, with China now faced by the same kind of crisis of financial speculation (mainly on housing as was the case in the US subprime bubble of 2007-8) as the “older” leading economies, whilst once rich countries, like Argentina, are in financial meltdown. Internationally speculation is increasing at uncontrollable levels, and now stands at 13 times world GDP by volume. Meanwhile global debt in January 2023 “hit a record \$300 trillion, or 349% leverage on gross domestic product”⁴³ and continues to increase. The system is now in visible decline.

The consequences are well-known. Wages as a share of GDP have been in decline for decades (since 1979 in the UK) and those jobs that are on offer are increasingly short term, inadequately paid and precarious. But even this hike in exploitation has not been enough to revive the accumulation process. Economic stagnation means that humanity is entering a vortex powered by many connected threads.

The global economic crisis is creating social meltdown in Africa, Latin America and parts of Asia. This is fuelling waves of migration across the world to the already cash-strapped “richer” countries. Migrants arriving in countries with increasingly limited economic opportunities are perceived as a burden (unlike in the past when they were needed). The perception is that they put more pressure on housing, and the social services accessed by the poorest of the working class. It is a ripe brew of resentment which can be exploited by nationalist politicians. As we have shown here in Israel and Gaza, fear of the “other” is a powerful poison to administer to any population, and has been exploited by the ultra-nationalist right across the globe.

Add to this the environmental disaster that capitalist production at any cost has wrought on the planet and we have a world increasingly on fire in both the climatological and political senses. In the Sahel region, rising temperatures have brought about the slow creep of the Sahara desert ever further south for decades. This has brought pastoralists into conflict with tillers of the soil, a conflict exploited from Burkina Faso through Niger, Chad,

Mali, the Central African Republic to Sudan by both imperialist powers, and the wannabe imperialist jihadists.

And these are not the only conflicts. The global economic crisis is driving more and more states to meltdown or turn to attacking their neighbours. The list is a long one but the most noticeable are in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen, Syria and Myanmar. In other places conflicts may be on hold (Serbia-Kosovo, Armenia-Azerbaijan, for example) but never end or simply morph from one atrocious episode to another. As in Israel-Palestine, the long arms of the major imperialist powers are never far away.

And as we have maintained for over two years, the global context has changed. The war between NATO and Russia in Ukraine shows that the crisis has now heightened imperialist rivalries to a level not seen really since before the Second World War. As in the war in Gaza, there is no possible compromise position and war, like the First and Second World Wars, is now a total one engulfing the entire society, silencing the voices of dissent whilst obliterating the economy and citizenry. The stakes are now too high. For Russia, NATO encirclement has proceeded inexorably since the collapse of the Soviet Union, whilst for the USA, the war in Ukraine has been very useful in bringing its lukewarm allies into line in the coming confrontation with their real global rival in China. In the run up to the Ukraine war, the USA had been gradually creating an informal alliance of the powers they had brought in economic sanctions against Iran, Russia and China. These were also acts of war which had the result of consolidating the cooperation between the three Eurasian powers. Today this also plays into the current crisis in the Middle East.

For the USA, Israeli policy in Gaza is a major problem, but having given the Israeli ruling class a blank cheque for six decades or more, they cannot now do a volte face. Given its ignominious retreat from Afghanistan in 2021, the US had to support its strongest ally in the Middle East. The US has thus now become a prisoner of its own client power. To avoid a wider conflict and deter others like Hezbollah and Iran from reacting to the attack

on Gaza, the US immediately sent two of its eleven aircraft carrier fleets to the Eastern Mediterranean. It was also quick to send weaponry to Israel to support its attack on Gaza and, as ever, it has vetoed all attempts in the United Nations to bring about a ceasefire. However it is well aware that the longer the collective punishment of the entire population of Gaza, and the killing of so many children goes on, the greater likelihood it will spark a wider conflict across the region and beyond. Hence Biden and Blinken's increasingly public calls for Israel to rein in the terror campaign. These calls have fallen on deaf ears with the consequence that the situation is deteriorating.

In Iraq, where the US has 2,500 troops to guard against a resurgence of ISIS, the pro-Iranian militia Kata'ib Hezbollah have already targeted their base in Erbil with drones, and the US have retaliated by bombing three of their bases.⁴⁴

More dramatically, the Houthis – the de facto government of Yemen after nearly 10 years of civil war – have demanded an end to the massacre in Gaza, supported by Iran with the approval of Russia and China. Using drones, they have attacked shipping in order to blockade the entrance to the Red Sea and, therefore, access to the Suez Canal, through which 15% of the world's oil and 20% of its foodstuffs and other goods pass. This is a direct challenge to the US domination of the world's shipping lanes. The Houthis have thus forced the US to deploy yet another carrier fleet to the Red Sea in order to try to keep this vital route open. If it does not succeed then the global economy will be faced with another inflationary shock which will exacerbate social tensions in the West.

On Israel's northern border with Lebanon, the Iranian proxy Hezbollah, a far more formidable military force than Hamas, has so far been more circumspect in its support for the people of Gaza. This is not so much due to the presence of the US fleets off the Lebanese coast as the difficult economic situation in Lebanon itself. There have been exchanges of rocket and tank fire across the border and many Lebanese villagers in the South have had to flee yet again, but that is as far as it has gone. This is largely due to the extreme weakness of the Lebanese economy which is still suffering the effects

of years of corruption and mismanagement which the massive explosion in the port of Beirut only exacerbated.⁴⁵ All the ruling factions have been discredited. Another Israeli invasion provoked by Hezbollah might be repelled, but only at enormous cost not only materially for the long-suffering Lebanese, but also politically for Hezbollah itself. In addition in 2022, the Lebanese government (of which Hezbollah is a part) signed an agreement with Israel for the joint exploitation of the offshore gas fields of Karish and Qana. Lebanon needs the gas and the revenue. This explains why the leader of Hezbollah, Hassan Nasrallah, has only given limited verbal support to Hamas, and has only asked Arab countries like Libya to cut Israel's oil, but not gas, supply (in which Israel is not only self-sufficient but exports to Egypt and Tunisia). The interests of trade, it seems, come before the interests of solidarity, but that is just one of the many contradictions of imperialist policy.

The same contradictions are playing out in the war in Ukraine. The struggle for Ukraine may have its origins in strategic considerations but one of its consequences has been a shift in the energy trade. Europe's seven decades of reliance on Russian gas cannot be replaced by the USA's liquefied natural gas (if you can call gas from fracking "natural") which is raising gas prices across the continent, and thus adding to inflation. In oil terms, with Nord Stream 1 blown up and Nord Stream 2 blocked, the majority of European countries have had to move towards other suppliers. US oil now accounts for 18% of Europe's supplies, but, closer to home, supplies are increasing from North and Central Africa as well as Azerbaijan, in addition to increases from traditional suppliers like Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states. Cheaper Russian oil has now increasingly gone to China and India as well as other countries in the global South (who also reject the sanctions regime of NATO and the West as illegal). Even Saudi Arabia has signed energy agreements with China, in defiance of its old alliance with the USA and was already demanding more concessions over its potential signing of the Abraham Accords before 7 October.

The repercussions of the current wars thus remain incredibly complex. The changed geography of the

energy supply chain will have, and is having, enormous consequences for the whole world in terms of the threat to living standards, and environmental disaster due to climate change. And there is still further potential for conflict in the growing trade wars over the new technologies and the raw materials they require such as rare earths, and other minerals like cobalt. The unresolved issue of Taiwan, source of many of the world's microchips, beckons as the next theatre of war – and this directly between the world's economic super-powers, the US and China, who regularly test each other's military readiness in the area.

While the international bourgeoisie write the script for an increasingly generalised imperialist conflict, which they all hope will revitalise their economy at the expense of their rivals, the consequences of the death agony of their system is suffered above all by the world's workers. Over-exploited in times of peace, massacred in times of war, the working class alone offers the only path to the end of the nightmare. However, under the false flags of nationalism, millions of workers are currently killing each other in the name of interests that are not theirs. Only an international working class political

organisation, independent of any support for imperialist powers, and their nationalist lackeys, can lead the way out of this capitalist black hole. As our sister organisation, Battaglia Comunista, wrote recently:

It's time to reverse the terms of the question. If we have to die for something, it might as well be the interests of the proletariat and not those of the class enemy, of nationalism and the imperialist propensity for war. The international proletariat is a single class, with common interests, which are certainly not those of mutual annihilation. The only thing that we have to destroy is bourgeois society, and its capitalist structure, and the wars which represent its way of surviving its own contradictions by having armies of wage slaves fight them.

The time has come to break our chains. NO TO WAR, YES TO CLASS WAR. No to the barbarity of capitalism in crisis, yes to the social alternative that destroys the first link of that chain, the one that binds us to the perfidious, unequal relationship between capital and wage labour.⁴⁶

Jock
30 December 2023

Notes

1. Nafez Nazzari, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee in 1948* (Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut 1978)
2. A letter from November 1948 by a MAPAM soldier (Israeli social democratic party whose heirs later supported a two state solution). Both sources here quoted in David Gilmour, *Dispossessed – the Ordeal of the Palestinians* (Sphere Books, 1980), p. 68
3. Lehi (in full "Lohamei Herut Israel Lehi", Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) was a split from Irgun Zvai Leumi in 1940 to seek an alliance with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, as it regarded Britain as the main obstacle to a Jewish state. After the Second World War ended it took on a pro-Stalinist direction identifying with the "National Bolshevism" of 1923 and aiming at a totalitarian state. Unsurprisingly, given this bizarre political history, it failed badly in the first Israeli elections. However one of its leaders, Yitzhak Shamir, became a Likud Prime Minister of Israel in 1983, in succession to the former Irgun terrorist, Menachem Begin. See S. Sofer. *Zionism and the Foundations of Israeli Diplomacy*. (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 253–254. Shamir's defence of the murders his group undertook could be a perfect justification for the dispossessed terrorism of the Palestinians today. It can be found in Nicholas Bethell, *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle between British, Jews, and the Arabs, 1935–48* (Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), p. 278.
4. <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-12-17/ty-article-opinion/.premium/in-israel-20-000-gazans-are-responsible-for-their-own-deaths-ive-never-been-so-ashamed/>
5. <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2021-05-20/neither-israel-nor-palestine-no-war-but-the-class-war>
6. <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2023/1010/In-Gaza-a-different-view-of-the-Hamas-raid-on-Israel>

7. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/09/13/oslo-accords-1993-anniversary-israel-palestine-peace-process-lessons/>
8. <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/middle-east/what-palestinians-really-think-hamas> “Arab Barometer’s survey of the West Bank and Gaza, conducted in partnership with the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and with the support of the National Endowment for Democracy, provides a snapshot of the views of ordinary citizens on the eve of the latest conflict.”
9. Although in 2017 Hamas issued another Document of General Principles and Policies which includes the contradictory statement that: “Hamas believes that no part of the land of Palestine shall be compromised or conceded, irrespective of the causes, the circumstances and the pressures and no matter how long the occupation lasts. Hamas rejects any alternative to the full and complete liberation of Palestine, from the river to the sea. However, without compromising its rejection of the Zionist entity and without relinquishing any Palestinian rights, Hamas considers the establishment of a fully sovereign and independent Palestinian state, with Jerusalem as its capital along the lines of the 4th of June 1967, with the return of the refugees and the displaced to their homes from which they were expelled, to be a formula of national consensus.” <https://palwatch.org/storage/documents/hamas%20new%20policy%20document%20010517.pdf> The passages in bold highlighted by us.
10. [https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/palestine-state-of/report-palestine-state-of/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/middle-east-and-north-africa/palestine-state-of-report-palestine-state-of/)
11. For an exploration of this tactic (including in Northern Ireland) see <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-10-12/the-descent-from-fantasy-to-reality-in-the-arab-israeli-conflict>
12. <https://apnews.com/article/israel-hamas-palestinians-opinion-poll-wartime-views-a0baade915619cd070b5393844bc4514> There have been no elections in Palestine territories since 2006 which allows IDF commanders to assert that 90% of Palestinians support Hamas to justify the collective punishment of the Palestinians. This poll like all previous polls show a surge in support for Hamas every time the Israelis carry out such actions, but even in these conditions, Hamas never achieve majority support. The most popular potential leader of the Palestinians is a Fatah leader, Marwan Barghouti who has been serving several life terms in prison for 2 decades for his alleged role in Palestinian attacks during the first “intifada”. With 90% wanting the old, corrupt and pro American president of the Palestinian Authority to go, it is not difficult to see why the Israelis have wanted to keep Barghouti out of circulation. Since we began this article a new poll after 2 months of Israeli bombardment suggest that 80% of Gazans now support the attack of 7 October – further confirmation of the thesis that one atrocity begets another.
13. Amy Goodman, https://www.democracynow.org/2023/10/20/divide_and_rule_how_israel_helped
14. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/for-years-netanyahu-propped-up-hamas-now-its-blown-up-in-our-faces/>
15. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/30/world/middleeast/israel-hamas-attack-intelligence.html>
16. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hamas-forever-war-against-israel-has-a-glitch-and-it-isnt-iron-dome/>
17. See, for example, the article by Yossi Melman in Ha’aretz on 21 May 2023 Netanyahu Boasts But Israel’s Latest Gaza Operation Changed Nothing.
18. At least five other militias joined the attack on 7 October, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67480680>
19. <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-12-17/ty-article-opinion/.premium/in-israel-20-000-gazans-are-responsible-for-their-own-deaths-ive-never-been-so-ashamed/0000018c-73e6-d798-adac-f7ef3c550000>
20. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/amid-shin-bet-warnings-ben-gvir-said-to-dismiss-deadly-settler-violence-as-graffiti/>
21. K. Marx, On the Jewish Question in D. MacLellan (ed), Karl Marx: Selected Writings OUP, 1977 p.55)

22. Although religion was often the cover for pure greed as in the massacre of York's Jews in 1190. For a simple account see: [https:// www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/ cliffords-tower-york/history-and-stories/ massacre-of-the-jews/](https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/places/cliffords-tower-york/history-and-stories/massacre-of-the-jews/)
23. For an expansion on the economic background see: [https://www. leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-02-28/ capitalism-s-economic-foundations-part-ii](https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-02-28/capitalism-s-economic-foundations-part-ii)
24. By the journalist and politician Wilhelm Marr in 1879. The semitic languages all have Middle Eastern roots and include Ugaritic, Phoenician, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, and most ironically of all today, Arabic.
25. Quoted in Maxime Rodinson *Israel and the Arabs* (Penguin, 1968) p.14
26. The secret Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1915 between the colonial powers Britain and France planned to divide up the Ottoman provinces after the war. The British had originally suggested that Jerusalem and the Holy places be administered by an international body but in the Treaty of Sevres (1920) which dismembered the Ottoman Empire they were "given a mandate" over the whole of Palestine plus Transjordan (and ruled in Iraq) whilst France received the mandates for Lebanon and Syria. The Agreement nearly fell apart when the Bolsheviks published its terms after the October Revolution in 1917. The British and French told Sherif Hussain of the Hejaz (who styled himself King of the Arabs) that the document was only a discarded draft.
27. Quoted in Peter Mansfield *A History of the Middle East* (Second edition Penguin 2003) pp.164-5
28. Mansfield p.164
29. Rodinson p.26
30. The rivalry between the two noble families of al-Nashashibi and the al-Husseini were to be major source of the weakness for Arab nationalism in Palestine. The Nashashibis were not only prepared to look for an accommodation with the British and the Zionists (to the point of accepting money from Weizmann's Jewish Agency to turn a blind eye to illegal Jewish immigration) whilst the Husseinis were opposed to the British mandate and Jewish immigration. The British made one of their sons the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem to buy their support, but after the failure of Arab Revolt (1936-9) he took himself off to Nazi Germany.
31. Over 130,000 Jews arrived from Germany in 1933-5 alone. In 1930 the number had been 4-5,000. See Mansfield p.205, Gilmour, p. 51
32. "The Arab Movement in the Middle East is our natural ally against England... I have decided therefore to encourage developments in the Middle East by supporting Iraq". A. Bullock *Hitler – A Study in Tyranny* (Penguin 1962) p. 639. In fact, as Bullock points out, this statement was by way of an excuse to his Generals. Rommel and Raedal who had pointed out it would have been a lot easier and strategically more significant to attack the British in 1941 when they were weak and neither the USSR nor the USA had entered the war. Bullock calls it one of Hitler's "supreme blunders".
33. In drafting this piece we recalled how teams of Israeli propagandists were allowed to tour British schools in the 1960s enticing older students to spend their summer holidays in kibbutzim as "socialist" pioneers of "making the desert bloom". Until the Six Day War we had no idea the Palestinians existed. The propaganda teams were still touring in the 1990s but with the Israeli Labour Party no longer in power the message was stripped of the idealist appeal of the kibbutz.
34. Eretz Israel translates as the "land of Israel" but it is a religious concept which has only the vaguest of geographic boundaries.
35. Menachem Begin, *The Revolt* (W.H.Allen, 1951) p.335
36. For details see *Revolutionary Perspectives 5* (Third Series) *Oil and the Shifting Sands of Imperialism*, [https:// www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2015-02-05/ oil-and-the-shifting-sands-of-imperialism](https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2015-02-05/oil-and-the-shifting-sands-of-imperialism)
37. The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee is today one of the most powerful foreign affairs lobbying groups in Washington and financially supports politicians in both parties (although Republican politicians get the majority of its funding) but it takes second place as a donor for the Zionist lobby to the

Christians United for Israel.

38. https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hamas.asp

39. <https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/2023-11-23/ty-article-opinion/.premium/giora-eilands-monstrous-gaza-proposal-is-evil-in-plain-sight/0000018b-f84b-d473-affb-f9eb09af0000>

40. Both quotes cited by Conor Gearty in "Short Cuts", London Review of Books 30 November 2023.

41. Also quoted by Gearty but for a fuller and more chilling investigation see: <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2023/11/benjamin-netanyahu-amalek-israel-palestine-gaza-saul-samuel-old-testament/>

42. See: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2022-02-06/ukraine-and-taiwan-flash-points-in-an-uncertain-imperialist-world>

43. <https://www.spglobal.com/en/research-insights/featured/special-editorial/look-forward/global-debt-leverage-is-a-great-reset-coming> 44. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-67819124>

45. See: <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2020-08-20/the-lebanon-disaster-a-metaphor-for-modern-capitalism> 46. Some Reflections on the War in Gaza and Beyond: <https://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/2023-12-27/alcune-riflessioni-sulla-guerra-di-palestina-e-dintorni>. Translation by the CWO. The last half dozen paragraphs of this article are based on this.



A Brief Critique of "Part-Time Internationalism"

The horrors currently being unleashed by imperialism – whether that's in Ukraine, Palestine, or any of the hundred or so other military conflicts that are taking place around the globe(1) – should serve as a wake-up call to the international working class. As it stands, we are on the path to generalised war. The seriousness of the situation calls for the unity of genuine internationalists. This however raises the question of what we really understand by internationalism.

In previous articles, we have criticised those responses of the capitalist left to the war in Ukraine which have "either been outright support for one or the other of the imperialist fronts (NATO or Russia), or a fake pacifism which hides the same positions."(2) We argued that such positions only serve to divert the working class from the struggle for socialism, a world without war. What we haven't ad-

ressed in as much detail are those in the Trotskyist, Stalinist, and Maoist milieu who have attempted to put forward an ostensibly internationalist position. That includes the likes of the International Marxist Tendency (IMT)(3), the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP)(4), the Communist Party of Greece (KKE)(5) or the Progressive Labor Party (PLP)(6), which have all invoked the slogans of "revolutionary defeatism" or "no war but the class war".

Not All As It Seems

These groups have come to the recognition that what's happening in Ukraine is an inter-imperialist war, and as such no capitalist side is to be supported – the only alternative is the working class struggle for socialism. So far so good. This is the yardstick for any revolutionaries for whom the Zimmerwald Left and the October Revolution still re-

main a reference point today. Trotskyist, Stalinist, and Maoist groups, despite being – we would argue – products of the counter-revolution, continue to claim adherence to that legacy.

The picture gets murky however, when we look at the response of the same groups to other conflicts of the past and present. In Palestine, the KKE sees the aim of the struggle to be only the "throwing off of the foreign Israeli occupation and the formation of the Palestinian state", and even criticises those who consider what's happening there to be an imperialist conflict which furthers the drive to generalised war.(7) The SWP, meanwhile, has expressed outright support for Hamas, which is not "conditional on their adoption of a socialist position", because anything less is, allegedly, "a collapse into pro-imperialism."(8) Both are blatant cases of what we might call "part-time internationalism"(9): picking and choosing which conflicts are imperialist, and in which ones it is permissible to take sides of capitalist forces.

The IMT appears a bit more consistent, at least when it comes to the Middle East. The IMT criticises the KKE for its "support for a two-state solution, its lack of a socialist programme for Palestine" and instead recognises that the "the struggle of the Palestinian masses can only succeed as a revolutionary struggle to overthrow all the reactionary capitalist regimes in the region".(10) But the IMT is guilty of similar confusions. When it came to Venezuela, the IMT praised Chávez as a "true internationalist" and a "threat to US capitalism".(11) Of course, Chávez's Venezuela was a significant military and economic ally of Russia and developed strong ties with Iran. This is the same Russia which today the IMT decries as an imperialist power, and the same Iranian regime which the IMT considers "totalitarian". Was Chávez a "true internationalist" when he cosied up to his "brothers" Putin and Ahmadinejad, or was the IMT just too excited about Chávez quoting Alan Woods on national TV to notice what else he was up to?

The PLP is another curious example. As they explain, the failure of national liberation struggles to end capitalism has made them reconsider some of their previous positions:

Anti-colonial struggles throughout the 20th century focused on national liberation from settler colonialism and imperialism. This strategy failed to end capitalism and exploitation. PLP has watched and participated in many of these struggles only to see the reversal of whatever gains were made in these battles.(12)

A rare admission. Yet it doesn't translate into a break with their Stalinist and Maoist past. The PLP may currently see no anti-imperialist axis among the capitalist states, but it still considers the USSR (until the 1950s) and China (until the 1970s) to have constituted such (because they were, according to the PLP, "socialist" states). Which brings us to the heart of the matter – the question of internationalism cannot be considered in isolation. Our understanding of socialism is inseparably linked to it. For those who see socialism to be synonymous with communism, a world-wide free association, without money, borders, classes, or states – it should be clear that both the USSR (a state capitalist regime born from the failure of a revolutionary wave to spread) and China (where no working class revolution took place in the first place) came to constitute imperialist rivals to the existing powers.

Legacy of the Counter-Revolution

These examples are not exhaustive but they serve to demonstrate the twists and turns of the capitalist left. All these groups, whether Trotskyist, Stalinist, or Maoist, accept a given set of tactical expedients inherited from the degenerating Third International. Whether they arrive at "part-time internationalism" through entryism into social democratic parties, participation in or support of leftist governments, belief in the "socialist" nature of the USSR or China, advocacy of united or popular fronts, or indeed simply support for national liberation, their answer to the following question is always a, more or less critical, yes:

In the imperialist epoch, can certain capitalist forces, whether of the "oppressed" or the "oppressing" nation, constitute an anti-imperialist axis?

To us, the answer is a categorical no. Lenin, whose writings and their interpretation have shaped the understanding of the question, thought wars of national liberation were still possible within the imperialist epoch (though he also understood they could be transformed into imperialist wars). The Third International would back national liberation struggles in places like Turkey and China to tragic ends. Today, we can see that every conflict between capitalist forces (state or non-state) is embroiled in the imperialist framework, a system which has advanced far beyond what it was in Lenin's day.

Whether the ostensibly internationalist positions of the above-mentioned groups are a temporary political expedient (to be discarded when circumstances change), or a genuine new orientation, these organisation of the capitalist left have long ago crossed the Rubicon. They have not learned the lessons of the past, and continue to repeat formulas which time and time again will eventually lead them, and any workers they manage to recruit, into a capitalist blind-alley.

In light of the accelerating drive to war, and with the understanding that the military clashes we are seeing now are not isolated phenomena, the Internationalist Communist Tendency (ICT) has helped to revive the "No War but the Class War" initiative, bringing together genuine internationalists from

different tendencies.⁽¹³⁾ The five points below serve as a starting point for joint activity:

- Against capitalism, imperialism and all nationisms. No support for any national capitals, "lesser evils", or states in formation.
- For a society where states, wage-labour, private property, money and production for profit are replaced by a world of freely associated producers.
- Against the economic and political attacks that the current war, and the ones to come, will unleash on the working class.
- For the self-organised struggle of the working class, for the formation of independent strike committees, mass assemblies and workers' councils.
- Against oppression and exploitation, for the unity of the working class and the coming together of genuine internationalists.

It's a long and difficult task, but a consistent and clear internationalist message, rather than "part-time internationalism", has to be carried into the class struggles already breaking out, and those yet to come.

Dyibas
Communist Workers' Organisation
22 January 2024

Notes

1. <https://geneva-academy.ch/galleries/today-s-armed-conflicts>
2. <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-07-05/the-no-war-but-the-class-war-initiative>
3. <https://socialistrevolution.org/no-war-but-the-class-war/>
4. <https://socialistworker.co.uk/features/ukraine-year-one-of-a-terrifying-imperialist-war/>
5. <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/No-to-imperialist-war-Greeces-involvement-must-stop/>
6. <https://www.plp.org/challenge/2023/3/16/editorial-one-year-of-war-in-ukraine-workers-must-turn-the-g.html>
7. <https://inter.kke.gr/en/articles/Short-answers-to-current-ideological-political-questions-concerning-the-Israeli-attack-and-massacre-against-the-Palestinian-people-in-the-Gaza-Strip/>
8. <https://socialistworker.co.uk/features/free-palestine-why-we-say-by-any-means-necessary/>
9. We borrow the term from our comrades in Italy, who used it in their critique of the statements on Palestine coming from within the SI Cobas base union. <https://www.leftcom.org/it/articles/2023-11-23/internazionalisti-part-time>
10. <https://www.marxist.com/the-communist-party-of-greece-and-the-struggle-for-the-liberation-of-palestine-a-necessary-debate.htm>
11. <https://www.marxist.com/a-tribute-to-hugo-chavez.htm>
12. <https://www.plp.org/challenge/2023/11/16/from-the-rivers-to-the-seas-communism-will-set-us-free.html>
13. <https://www.leftcom.org/en/articles/2023-07-05/the-no-war-but-the-class-war-initiative>

The Internationalist Workers' Group is the US affiliate of the
Internationalist Communist Tendency.

For more information about our organization and answers to frequently answered
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