



Alliance for Workers' Liberty

Day schools:

- **Globalisation, imperialism, the Middle East (1)**

Saturday 4 October, 12 to 5, SOAS, Thornhaugh St, London WC1

Saturday 18 October, 12 to 5, Pennines Room, Sheffield University Student Union

- **Political Islam**

Sunday 9 November, London

Sunday 9 November, 12 to 5, Dales Room, Sheffield University Student Union

- **Globalisation, imperialism, the Middle East (2)**

Sunday 14 December, London

Sunday 14 December, 12 to 5, Dales Room, Sheffield University Student Union

Each school will include

- Short plenary introduction, flagging up the main issues for the day;
- Session 1: Small-group discussions
- Session 2: Small-group discussions
- Session three: sometimes small group discussions, sometimes a plenary discussion plus a short summing-up.

Reading

For copies of *Two nations, two states* and *Workers' Liberty* 2/2, 3/1, or 3/5, contact your local AWL branch or the AWL office (020 7207 3997, or awl@workersliberty.org)

Reading: **AWL pamphlet Two nations, two states**. Socialists and Israel/ Palestine
<http://www.workersliberty.org/taxonomy/term/51>

Texts by Samir Amin, Ellen Wood, and John Rees at
<http://www.workersliberty.org/amin-wood-rees>, and also available separately

Article and review on political Islam in **Workers' Liberty 2/2**
<http://archive.workersliberty.org/wlmags/wl102/political%20islam.htm>
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/4568>

Workers' Liberty 3/1: Marxism and religion
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-31-mar>

Workers' Liberty 3/5: Iran - revolution and counter-revolution 1978-9
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-35-rev>

Further reading

Mid-1990s debate on Israel, Palestine, and Zionism in *Workers' Liberty* (Paul Foot, Jim Higgins, Sean Matgamna)
<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/8210>

Workers' Liberty 1/63: special issue on globalisation

Workers' Liberty 2/3, "The new world disorder"

Workers' Liberty 3/7: "What is the Third Camp?"
<http://www.workersliberty.org/workers-liberty-37-what-third-camp>

Workers' Liberty 3/12: "Solidarity yes, boycott no"
<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-312-so>

Workers' Liberty 3/13, "Trotskyists and the creation of Israel"

<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-313-tr>

Workers' Liberty 3/15: "How can we best help the Palestinians"

<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-315-ho>

Workers' Liberty 3/16, "Marx's Telescope - The Grundrisse"

<http://www.workersliberty.org/publications/workers-liberty-magazine/workers-liberty-volume-3-september-2005/workers-liberty-316-ma>

Workers' Liberty 1/28 (or, rather, expanded version of article in WL 1/28): "Marxism and imperialism". www.workersliberty.org/marxism-and-imperialism

Recent debate on Israel-Iran: www.workersliberty.org/israel-iran

"Crib-sheet" for the day schools

October school: Globalisation, imperialism, the Middle East (1)

Small-group discussions one: the world today

The capitalist world has changed since the 1980s. "Globalisation" is the usual short name for those changes. Among leftists there are at least four radically different assessments (or, at least, emphases in assessment) of what's actually going on. Discuss these four assessments. For each one, identify the evidence supporting it (or seeming to support it) and the objections to it.

A: **US empire.** The world today is essentially an American empire. The USA so powerful that it dominates the whole world in roughly the same way that Britain used to dominate the British Empire. It is reversing the colonial liberation struggles of 1945-75 and re-establishing colonial-type control over the poorer countries.

Samir Amin: The United States took the offensive once more, in order to reestablish its global hegemony... [US] hegemony had been forced to accept the peaceful coexistence imposed by Soviet military might. Now that page has turned and the United States has gone on the offensive to reinforce its global domination. Henry Kissinger summed it up in a memorably arrogant phrase: "Globalization is only another word for U.S. domination." [Amin is a famous Third-Worldist, once semi-Maoist, economist; born in Egypt, educated and working mostly in France. More popular writers, like Tariq Ali and John Pilger, argue the "US empire" line without the qualifications which Amin adds].

B. **Exporting democracy and free-market development.** "Globalisation" means bringing democracy and economic development, imperfectly, in capitalist form, but substantially to more and more of the world.

Michael Hardt: There is an alternative to US imperialism: global power can be organised in a decentred form, which Toni Negri and I call "empire"... Empire is a network composed of different kinds of powers, including the dominant nation states, supranational organisations, such as the United Nations and the IMF, multinational corporations, NGOs, the media, and others. There are hierarchies among the powers that constitute empire but despite their differences they function together in the network... [a] decentred network power of empire.

Hardt and Negri, as summarised in WL 2/3: The US Constitution... instituted a "democratic interaction of powers linked together in networks". That explains the USA's ability to take a "privileged position" in the construction of Empire, "a global project of network power". [Negri was a prominent revolutionary activist in Italy in the 1970s, of an ultra-left/ "autonomist" bent. He has recently, with Hardt, written a book entitled "Empire" and arguing that this "decentred network power" is the dominant reality today].

Meghnad Desai, "Marx's Revenge" (as summarised by reviewers): Lenin... ignored [Marx's] warning that one type of social organisation can succeed another only when the former has

exhausted its capacity for development. Capitalism had not exhausted its potential when the Bolsheviks seized power, and their project was thus always doomed...
If Marx was right, capitalism, like feudalism, will go under once it has exhausted its potential. And the irony about recent efforts to deregulate economies is that they will hasten rather than retard this process.

So long as capitalism was shackled - by high taxes, tariff barriers, capital controls and so forth - its development was stymied. The truest friends of socialism, Desai thus hints, are the conservative leaders who liberalised markets. They restarted the historical process that will lead, ineluctably, to a socialism that is genuine because spontaneous rather than imposed by revolutionary upstarts....

Bill Warren, as summarised in WL 2/2: Warren came to paint the development of capitalism in the most glowing colours, not only recognising it (as Marxists must) but effectively praising and advocating it. Everything that pointed to capitalist progress in the Third World was played up, the other side of the picture played down.

C. Return of the old order. The USA is in relative decline, and trying to use its military power, in wars, to stave off that decline. World economics and politics have been made more fluid by the collapse of the USSR and its bloc. Those two facts create a world of unsettled rivalries similar to the world dominated by rival colonial empires before World War 1.

John Rees (SWP): For all that US power seems unassailable, the truth is that it has very real limitations... It does not have the economic capability to rebuild a world economy... The central feature of the new imperialism is that even the greatest of the great powers is no longer so great that it has the same capacity to structure the world... The new fractured 'multi-polar' world... As the Gulf War showed, international co-ordination is... necessary as well as desirable [for the US]... The need for international action speaks of US weakness, not strength... relative economic decline of the US. [The SWP's more popular literature adopts the "US empire" story, in direct contradiction to the account in their theoretical writings].

John Rees (SWP): The opening up of the great swathe of the globe dominated by Eastern Europe, Russia, the Caspian and Central Asian states to Western multinationals and military strategists after their long Cold War exclusion... marked a reversion to patterns of interstate conflict that predated... the Russian Revolution... 'The Great Game' [19th-century British/Russian rivalry in Asia]... so it is again today.

Alex Callinicos (SWP), as summarised in WL 2/3: Imperialism after the Cold War [is] in fact a more unstable version of the old ["classical", 1875-1945, imperialism].

D. "Empire of capital"/ "Imperialism of free trade". What's essentially new is capitalism, and capitalist nation-states, coming to cover the whole globe and relate to each other essentially through market mechanisms. The system is regulated by a set of cartels or coalitions of big states, mostly dominated by the USA.

Ellen Wood: For the first time, capitalism has become a truly universal system... This doesn't, by the way, necessarily mean the disappearance of the nation-state. It may just mean new roles for nation-states, as the logic of competition imposes itself not only on capitalist firms but on entire national economies, which, with the help of the state, conduct their competition less in the old "extra-economic" and military ways than in purely "economic" forms... "Globalization" [is] really just a code-word... for a system in which the logic of capitalism has become more or less universal and where imperialism achieves its ends not so much by the old forms of military expansion but by unleashing and manipulating the destructive impulses of the capitalist market. [Wood is an academic, of a Stalinoid political background, but who has shifted to a more class-based outlook over the years].

WL 2/3: The core exploitative mechanisms are those embedded in free trade itself... The imperialism of free trade *is* global capitalism... We have a world made up mostly of bourgeois states integrated into the world market in complex and multiple ways... Vast pauperisation, abrupt destruction of social safeguards, arrogant domination by a few billionaires - that is the world capitalist system today, as destructive as the old colonial empires... Yet it also generates vast potentials for subversion. The wage-working class... is probably a bigger proportion of the world's population than ever before - about one-third...

Small-group discussions two: Israel/Palestine - outline history

Each group to fix on two or three of the turning points listed below, and prepare a five-minute presentation on it.

1881-1906: start of Zionist colonisation in Palestine. The rise of pogroms in the East, and restrictions in the West, made many Jews see the road to assimilation as closed. The ideological project of establishing a Jewish state by colonisation begins to win sizeable support, and fixes on Palestine as a target.

World War 1, 1917-18: Britain acquires Palestine, and the Zionists acquire British protection. The Ottoman Empire collapses; Britain and France divide up its Arab territories; Britain gets Palestine; Britain endorses the idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (and also the idea of Arab independence) as gambits to win support in World War One.

Early 1920s: rise of Arab nationalism. Arab riots in Palestine, mainly anti-Jewish, in 1920-1 and 1929. Britain rows back on its support for Zionism; limits Jewish immigration; shifts to seeking to balance between Jews and Arabs in Palestine.

1933: Hitler comes to power. Socialist-internationalist and bourgeois-assimilationist alternatives to Zionism discredited. Millions of Jews seek to flee Germany, many to Palestine. Relative weight of Jewish community in Palestine increases a lot (40% of population by 1939).

1940s: Holocaust. Zionism massively reinforced among survivors. British imperialism comes out of World War Two weaker. Jewish community in Palestine abandons old policy of alliance with British, and turns to open revolt against British from 1944-5.

1947-8: Britain withdraws. Jewish community in Palestine establishes state of Israel. Arab-Jewish war within Palestine, followed by invasion by Arab states. Palestine partitioned; many Arabs driven out of territory which becomes Israel; remaining Arab territory in Palestine annexed by Egypt and Jordan; Palestinians dispersed and crushed. Arab states refuse to integrate them. Beginning of a flow of Jewish refugees from Arab states to Israel.

1967: Israel annexes West Bank and Gaza after Six Days War with Arab states. Israel now rules over a large compact mass of Palestinians, rather than just living alongside them. PLO begins to emerge as an autonomous force rather than just artefact of Egyptian government. (1977: Begin becomes prime minister of Israel - end of Labour hegemony in Israeli politics).

1987-8 to 1993: First intifada, to Oslo. Emergence of autonomous Palestinian mass movement in West Bank and Gaza. Pushes PLO into "two states" policy (1988) and Israel to recognise PLO (1993) and conclude Oslo Accords.

2000: Israeli-PLO talks break down. Second intifada. Spiral into mutual reinforcement of Hamas and Israeli right.

Session 3: plenary discussion on Israel-Iran now.

November school: Political Islam

Small-group discussions one:

Marxism and religion: each group to prepare a five-minute talk making three points on the Marxist attitude to religion.

Small-group discussions two:

Political Islam: each group to prepare a five-minute talk making three points about the history and the nature of political Islam.

Small group discussions three:

Iran: each group to prepare a five-minute talk on events in Iran from 1978 to the consolidation of the Khomeiny regime.

December school: Globalisation, imperialism, the Middle East (2)

Small-group discussions one: responses to globalisation

Various responses to globalisation are proposed by various currents on the left. There is a rough connection with the various assessments, but not an exact one. Some currents propose a response which corresponds better to an assessment different from their own; different currents with different general politics may propose different responses while having similar objective assessments.

A: **Anti-Yankee.** Solidarity with all forces fighting the USA; and, especially, solidarity with the forces fighting the USA most militantly, such as the Islamic fundamentalists. This anti-Yankee fight is basically of the same sort as the old colonial liberation struggles of the 20th century. Sub-variant: **Back to Lenin!** Imperialism today is basically the same as in Lenin's day (a world dominated by competition between bigger, richer powers for control over poorer regions), so we should have the same response as Lenin. And Lenin's big idea, so this current argues, was solidarity with all militant anti-imperialist struggles whatever their character.

John Rees (SWP): Lenin was determinedly opposed to those on the left who qualified their opposition to imperialism on the basis that those facing imperialism did not hold progressive ideas. "To imagine that social revolution is conceivable...without revolutionary outbursts by a section of the petty bourgeoisie with all its prejudices, without a movement of the politically non-conscious proletarian and semi-proletarian masses...is to repudiate social revolution... [which] cannot be anything other than an outburst of mass struggle on the part of all and sundry oppressed and discontented elements. Inevitably...they will bring into the movement their prejudices, their revolutionary fantasies, their weaknesses and errors. But objectively they will attack capital..."

SWP pamphlet on Afghanistan, as summarised in WL 2/2: World politics is shaped by a relentless "drive for global economic and military dominance" by a nebulous force variously named as "the world system", "globalisation", "imperialism", "the West", or "the USA"... Advanced capitalism (aka imperialism, aka "the West", aka the USA) is reactionary, and everything else, everything that comes into conflict with it, is progressive! Even... the Taliban...

B. **Create a multi-polar world.** The big trouble of the world today is the collapse of the USSR, which was a healthy restraining counterweight to the USA. First priority is to create a new counterweight, by encouraging the European Union to strengthen itself and stand up to the USA, or by encouraging alliances (EU-Russia-China), or by strengthening the UN. Sub-variant: **Restrain the US rogue state.** Objectively the world is moving towards more peaceful networked power. But the USA is reviving old imperialist methods. We must encourage the global majority of capital to restrain the US neo-con minority.

Samir Amin: The very existence of the Soviet system, with its successes in extensive industrialization and military accomplishments, was one of the principal motors of all the grand transformations of the twentieth century. Without the "danger" that the communist model represented, Western social democracy would never have been able to impose the welfare state. The existence of the Soviet system, and the coexistence it imposed on the United States, reinforced the margin of autonomy available to the bourgeoisie of the South.

Samir Amin: A multipolar globalization [is] the only strategy that would allow the different regions of the world to achieve acceptable social development, and would thereby foster social democratization and the reduction of the motives for conflict. The hegemonic strategy of the United States and its NATO allies is today the main enemy of social progress, democracy, and peace... The new European strategy could be intertwined with those of Russia, China, India, and the third world in general, in a necessary, multipolar construction effort.

Michael Hardt: Business leaders around the globe recognise that imperialism is bad for business because it sets up barriers that hinder global flows... In the long run their real interests will lead global elites to support empire and refuse any project of US imperialism

C. Support capitalist progress! Capitalist globalisation is bringing democracy and prosperity to the world - more slowly and unevenly than we would wish, but it's doing it. No immediate socialist alternative is possible. So the left should place itself in the camp of capitalist globalisation, trying along the way to assemble forces which can strive for something better at a later stage.

Hardt and Negri's analysis should logically lead to this conclusion, but in fact they recoil at what Bush is doing now, branding it as an old-style imperialist break with the logic of globalisation, and call for other bourgeoisies to restrain the USA (see above, B).

Meghnad Desai, "Marx's Revenge" (as summarised by reviewers): Lenin... ignored [Marx's] warning that one type of social organisation can succeed another only when the former has exhausted its capacity for development. Capitalism had not exhausted its potential when the Bolsheviks seized power, and their project was thus always doomed...
If Marx was right, capitalism, like feudalism, will go under once it has exhausted its potential. And the irony about recent efforts to deregulate economies is that they will hasten rather than retard this process.
So long as capitalism was shackled - by high taxes, tariff barriers, capital controls and so forth - its development was stymied. The truest friends of socialism, Desai thus hints, are the conservative leaders who liberalised markets. They restarted the historical process that will lead, ineluctably, to a socialism that is genuine because spontaneous rather than imposed by revolutionary upstarts....
[Meanwhile] for those who still express moral indignation at pronounced and prolonged inequality and poverty, the market is the most likely rescue route.
Whether it is called the market, or capitalism, or neoliberalism, it is a tool that has not yet been harnessed fully for poverty alleviation. As Desai points out, the market is a tool for eliminating scarcity. It is departures from the free market, such as big subsidies for agriculture in rich countries, that are doing most to solidify poverty.

Alan Johnson, from *Solidarity* 3/62: The political third camper accept that being for the 'third camp' means doing the difficult and messy work of building an alliance of democratic and progressive political forces out of a situation of extreme weakness. This dictates we attend urgently to what we might call 'real political time' and develop our political programme in its light. This kind of third camper wants to be a political lever not an abstract propagandist. We are working for the construction and eventual victory of the third camp not the coalition. But if we decide to live in 'real political time' not 'third camp time' we have to do that work in a particular way...
The real difference between us and Matgamna was captured by an AWL member months ago. "At least Alan Johnson takes his position to its logical conclusion and offers critical support to the occupation..."
There is no chance of a workers' militia fighting back the insurgents and once that truth lays waste to flat-pack politics there are consequences to be faced...
The road to the self-determination of the Iraqi people passes through the democratic process being overseen by the UN and the coalition. The role of the left is to build up our forces to fight within that process.

D. Save the state! The big trouble of the world today is that market forces are overwhelming states. Governments in the rich countries are being forced to scrap their welfare states; in the poor countries, to abandon populist measures introduced to uphold national independence and protect the poorest. The first priority is to help states regain the ability to defy global-market forces.

Writers for the French magazine *Le Monde Diplomatique*, as summarised in an article in *Workers' Liberty* 50/51: For some writers, [globalisation is] annihilating the state and society. It is "becoming increasingly difficult for corporate managers to manage in the public interest, no matter how strong their moral values and commitment", and globalisation is destroying governance based on the theme that "rich and poor alike shared a sense of national and community interest".
States are "withdrawing from their main responsibility, the regulation of the violence of social relations to ensure the common good". "The bourgeoisie of the Third World is no longer a national bourgeoisie working in the interests of its people but an international bourgeoisie working in the interests of international capital". "The right balance... a social market economy... is being lost... the engineers of the new global economy throw overboard the insights gained by those who first made it a success".
"Faced with the powerful rise of global firms, the traditional countervailing powers (State,

parties, unions) seem more and more powerless... Can citizens tolerate this new-type global coup d'état?". According to Martin and Schumann, our task is "to restore the State".

Hardt and Negri have the same view about states being outpowered, but draw different conclusions.

E. A "multi-polar social movement". In the fragmented, diffuse world of globalisation, ideas of working-class struggle become outdated. But a new social movement of resistance is emerging, as diffuse as the world it resists but all the more effective for that.

Samir Amin: A third technological revolution... divests the old forms of worker and popular organization and struggle of their efficiency and therefore of their legitimacy. The fragmented social movement has not yet found a formula strong enough to meet the challenges posed. But... an emerging multipolar global social movement (that [the capitalist centre's] potential counterweight, alternative, and successor) ha[s] elements already visible in outline.

Various "post-Marxists", as summarised by Ellen Wood: "The universal capitalism of the postwar world is dominated by liberal democracy and a democratic consumerism, and both of these have opened up whole new arenas of democratic opposition and struggle, which are much more diverse than the old class struggles... In this universal system of capitalism, there can be, can only be, lots of fragmented particular struggles within the interstices of capitalism.

F. The Third Camp. Capitalist globalisation is intensifying capitalist exploitation and capitalist pauperisation, but also expanding the working class and its possibilities of international communication. We should promote international working-class solidarity, against both the USA hyperpower and its allies, and the "paleo-imperialists" (like Islamic fundamentalists) who may clash with the USA.

Ellen Wood: It's time for the left to see the universalization of capitalism not just as a defeat for us but also as an opportunity—and that, of course, above all means a new opportunity for that unfashionable thing called class struggle.

WL 2/3: Vast pauperisation, abrupt destruction of social safeguards, arrogant domination by a few billionaires - that is the world capitalist system today, as destructive as the old colonial empires... Yet it also generates vast potentials for subversion. The wage-working class... is probably a bigger proportion of the world's population than ever before - about one-third...

WL 2/3: To be anti-USA is not necessarily a certificate of positive virtue. The USA's adversary may well be a "sub-imperialist" or "paleo-imperialist" power, one whose drive is for a more localised and primitive form of imperialism rather than for national or human liberation.

WL 2/3: Even if we can surmise that a particular US "globocop" action may - if all goes well, if there are no hidden hitches - bring some improvement on balance, we give no credit in advance... We seek to educate and mobilise the working class as an independent - which necessarily means, oppositional - force.

WL 2/2: Time was when "imperialism" could be used as shorthand for "the advanced capitalist states", without great confusion. To do that today is essentially to use the word "imperialist" as a way of branding advanced capitalism as a particularly bad form of capitalism. But the evil in advanced capitalism is capitalism, not advance.

WL 2/2: There is no way to "fight imperialism" of this [global-capital] sort by upholding the weaker predators against the stronger. Against political domination we fight for the right to self-determination of all nations and consistent democracy. Against the impositions of the IMF on poorer countries, we support the struggles of workers and peasants in those countries. Against the depredations of international capital, we fight for social ownership and for the planned use of the world's resources and technology to get rid of poverty... Only independent working-class struggle can do that. And the working class which can wage that struggle is growing in numbers... all across the ex-colonial world.

Small-group discussions two: Israel-Palestine - concepts

Arab nationalism

Periods: the following four, reduced to three however you wish.

1. Up to World War One. (Incipient; led by landlords and traditional hierarchies; anti-Ottoman, and partly British-controlled/fomented; pan-Arabist).
2. 1920s to 50s. (Some evolution into distinct nationalisms in different countries. Beginning of middle-class nationalisms. Beginning of anti-European, anti-Zionist focus).
3. 1950s. (Mass middle-class-led nationalism - Nasserism, Ba'thism, Qassem, FLN, Neo-Destour, etc. - which wins national independence, sweeping economic nationalisations, etc. New pan-Arabism - UAR etc.)
4. After 1967, and especially after 1979. (Decay of secular Arab nationalism and of pan-Arabism as an operative political force; rise of political Islam).

Versions: the following four, reduced to three however you wish.

1. Focused on independence from European, or previously Ottoman, rule.
2. Focused on uniting the different Arab peoples, either (a) from below (somehow), or (b) from above, by a Bismarckian or Cavourist process centred round some strong Arab state, e.g. Egypt.
3. Focused on eliminating Israel, or Jewish settlement.

Palestinian nationalism

Periods: the following six, reduced to three however you wish

1. Up to 1948. Dominated by Husseini (i.e. traditional hierarchy). As much conservative/ traditionalist as nationalist in the modern sense, though with some strands of modern nationalism especially in the 1930s.
2. 1948-64: virtual extinction. Palestinian question becomes "the refugee problem".
3. 1964-9: PLO under Egyptian sponsorship.
4. 1969 onwards: autonomous Palestinian nationalism (based primarily in Jordan until 1970, then Lebanon until 1982).
5. 1987 onwards: autonomous Palestinian nationalism with mass active base in Occupied Territories.
6. 2000 onwards: secular nationalists begin to be eclipsed by Islamists.

Versions:

1. Focused anti-British.
2. Focused on Palestinian autonomy as against other Arab forces.
3. Focused on hostility to Israel (or Jews).

There is a rational common thread, desire for Palestinian self-determination, with more or less admixture of chauvinism, etc.

Zionism

Periods:

1. 1904 to World War One: Major Labour Zionist immigration. Setting up of many Labour Zionist enterprises (though Histadrut comes after World War One).
2. 1933 to 1948: Mass Zionism shaped less by Labour-Zionist utopian schemes than by flight from Nazis, refusal to trust any non-Jewish authority.
3. 1948 to date: "Zionism" comes to mean defence of Israel, or maybe Israeli nationalism, or maybe vicarious Israeli nationalism.

Versions:

Could talk about Labour Zionism, Revisionist Zionism, "ordinary" bourgeois Zionism, and religious Zionism. Or maybe more instructively distinguish the following strands:

1. Ideological colonising project (and its converse, anti-semitic "Zionism" seeking to put the Jews somewhere "far away").
2. Search for refuge from Holocaust, etc.
3. Defence of Israel.

There is formally a common thread, the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine; but in fact defence of the self-determination of a compact Jewish community already domiciled in Palestine is entirely distinguishable from the earlier ideological colonising drive.

Anti-Zionism

Periods

1. Pre-1948 - Jewish bourgeois assimilationism, and socialist internationalism. (Also subsidiarily a version of anti-Zionist Jewish socialist nationalism - the Bund).
2. Increasingly after 1929, and even more increasingly after 1967 - revanchist, or vicarious-revanchist, hostility to the Jewish community in Palestine. Arab chauvinism, Islamic chauvinism, Palestinian revanchism. (Also, subsidiarily, British bourgeois Arabism - such anti-Zionism as that of Reginald Storrs in the 1940s, who in 1917 was British military governor of Jerusalem and relished the prospect of "a little loyal Jewish Ulster in a sea of potentially hostile Arabism.")
3. Especially after 1967 (but originating with the Stalinists after 1949) - the "anti-imperialism of fools², identifying Israel as the epitome of imperialism.

Versions

1. Bourgeois assimilationism
 2. Socialist internationalism
 3. Israelophobia (Israel as an outrage to "Arab land" or "Islamic land", or Israel as the epitome of imperialism).
- Subsidiarily, 4. Calculating British bourgeois anti-Zionism, as with Storrs above.
Note that there is no substantive common drive here.

Political Islam

Periods

1. From 1928 - Muslim Brotherhood
2. From 1979 - boost from Iran and Afghanistan
3. From around 1990 - boost from Algeria (though this later fails) and Palestine

Versions

1. Reformist-Islamists - e.g. latter-day Muslim Brotherhood
 2. Nationalist-Islamists - e.g. Hizbollah in Lebanon, Hamas
 3. Radical Islamists - e.g. Al Qaeda.
- (Also a distinction between Shia Islamists, who generally believe in rule by a clerical hierarchy, and Sunni Islamists, who have no clerical hierarchy).
Common thread: drive by modern means (and "modern" social forces, i.e. disgruntled urban middle classes) to impose a state based on supposed timeless and comprehensive Islamic law of 1200 years ago.

Small-group discussions three: Israel-Palestine - debates

Three key facts or relevant theoretical considerations are listed below on each debate. Each group to select two or three debates and make a five minute presentation on them.

1. The Israeli Jews are not a nation, but a colonial-settler caste, like the whites in South Africa or the European settlers in colonial Algeria.
 - a. Israeli Jews are a nation by usual criteria of common territory, economy, culture, language, felt identity.
 - b. Israeli Jews form a full society, all social classes, not a social caste on top of subordinate classes of other affiliations.
 - c. The demand by the Israeli Jews for national self-determination is different from the demand by the whites of South Africa or the Algerian settlers to minority rule over an oppressed majority.
2. The Palestinian Arabs are not a nation, but just a section of the general Arab nation. There is no reason why the Arab nation should not cede a small part of its territory to the Israeli Jews, and no reason for any special consideration for the Palestinian Arabs: they can just be absorbed by the other Arab states. If you want a Palestinian state, anyway, it already exists in Jordan.
 - a. Other Arab states oppress Palestinians.
 - b. The Palestinian Arabs, true, do not meet all the stereotype criteria of a nation, but they have been pushed into a distinct national identity by Israeli and other-Arab oppression.
 - c. Since the first intifada, Palestinian Arab nationalism is largely defined by a national-territorial base (in the Occupied Territories), despite the importance of the Palestinian diaspora.

3. The creation of the state of Israel was a crime - robbing the Palestinians of their land and driving them out. Redress is necessary.
 - a. Mandate Palestine in its later years contained two large distinct communities. Jews were 40% of the population in 1939, one-third in 1948. For both of those communities to gain self-determination - i.e. mutual secession, partition - was not in principle a crime. In practice, with the balance of forces, etc., it was done with horrors, but how could a merger of the two communities have been done without horrors?
 - b. Israeli forces committed crimes in the 1947-8 war. That is different from the whole existence of Israel being a "crime". The non-existence of Israel - i.e. the decisive defeat of the Jews in the 1947-8 war - would have involved greater crimes.
 - c. We do not support historical revenge, but a democratic settlement for future generations.

4. Israel has repeatedly offered peace. The real reason why peace has not been possible is the stubborn refusal of most Arab politicians to recognise the state of Israel as a fact and negotiate reasonable terms with it. In the meantime there is no other way to break down that refusal and deal with the suicide-bombers than the policy of the iron fist.
 - a. Episodically offered peace, more like.
 - b. Arab states have episodically offered peace, too.
 - c. In principle we are for Israel's right to defend itself. That does not at all imply support for the Israeli bourgeoisie's particular way of doing it. Our prime concern is working-class unity, and the search for that is not compatible with support for Israeli brutality.

5. There is no possibility of any socialist or working-class politics in anything like the present situation. The Palestinians have been pauperised, so scarcely have any economic basis for a working-class movement; the labour movement in Israel is deeply marked by its history as an instrument of Jewish exclusivism ("Jewish labour only", etc). All we can hope for is the USA or the UN to impose a more-or-less workable compromise.
 - a. The only true prophets are those who carve out the future they announce. It's true that present prospects are very bad. But our job is to create - or at least to start to create - or at the very least to proclaim the need to start to create - other prospects.
 - b. Even if some compromise imposed from above is the least-bad short-term option, even in that short term the very possibility of a compromise even being imposable, and the shape (workable, or disastrously botched) of that compromise depends on what is done "from below".
 - c. There are some positive stirrings in the Israeli labour movement and even a few among Palestinian workers. We should encourage them. Any improvement in the situation, even if engineered "from above", will increase the possibilities for such stirrings.

6. The answer is the Arab socialist revolution, made by the region-wide Arab working class. That revolution will of course sweep away the exclusivist state of Israel, but, being socialist, it will also give full equal rights to Jews.
 - a. A socialist revolution can only be made by the working class. For that the working class must be united across national borders and separated out from the bourgeoisie. That cannot be done on a chauvinist programme. The Israeli working class is not a negligible part of the working class in the whole region.
 - b. Even the victory of a workers' government does not automatically solve national questions. That workers' government would need a policy on national questions, just as the Bolsheviks needed one after 1917.
 - c. Given Israel's industrial and military strength, even the Arab states united could not just sweep it away. If they could, it could only be by huge slaughter. How could a new regime based on that slaughter be socialist? It would poison the hypothetical pan-Arab workers' socialist movement to direct it towards the conquest of Israel.

7. In principle we could concede that the state of Israel can continue. But that would have to be conditional on it abandoning racism, and in the first place recognising the right of return of the five million Palestinian refugees.
 - a. That "right of return" means collective repossession of the land, i.e. abolition or severe restriction of the self-determination of the Israeli Jews. To object to that is very different from racist objection to immigration of individuals.
 - b. The desirable freedom of movement between the Arab world and Israel can only be achieved on the basis of prior peace between nations. Freedom of movement between Poland and Germany is likely within the next few years; it could never have happened if Germany were demanding the repossession, as German, of the German territories which Poland annexed, and drove millions of Germans out of, after World War 2.

c. The five million are descendants of refugees, not refugees. We are for freedom of movement, not for "patrial" rights as in British immigration law.

8. The whole idea of a Jewish state is sectarian and bigoted. There's no way we can support the right of Israel to exist any more than we could support the idea of a separate "Catholic state" or "white state" being carved out on some other territory.

a. The Israeli Jews are not defined by religion. Most are not strongly religious, and many are completely irreligious.

b. The Israeli Jews are not defined by ethnicity, but form one of the most ethnically diverse populations in the world.

c. The Israeli Jews are a nation, not a religious or ethnic group. We support the right of nations to have nation states. Even though all existing nation states are discriminatory to one degree or another, advocating the general right of nations to self-determination is entirely consistent with advocating full equal rights for minorities within nation-states.

9. Israel is just an outpost of imperialism in the Middle East, and should be treated accordingly.

a. Israel was created by a war of the Jewish community there against British forces, and then British-officered Arab forces. It has had close relations with the USA since 1967, but its existence is separable from those close relations.

b. The rights of nations are not dependent on their international alliances.

c. Many Arab states also have close relations with the USA; or even have regional imperialist ambitions in their own right. The project of Arab conquest of Israel is certainly imperialist.