

Zionism, meetings and the Unions.

I proposed the following piece to my local pro-Palestinian group to fill the back of a leaflet advertising a meeting to discuss the events of the 7th October, which remains a live topic, as it still used to justify the genocidal attack on Gaza. When we march or do vigils locally it is brought up over and over again.

OCTOBER the 7th 2023 THE LIES THAT FUELLED A GENOCIDE.

The first use of the anti-Semitic trope that Jews were killing Christian babies in Europe took place in Norwich, England in 1144. Fast forward nine centuries to October the 7th 2023, and this time it was the Zionists claiming that 40 of their babies had been beheaded by Hamas who had also ripped foetuses from the wombs of dying Jewish mothers. Throughout the centuries Jews were accused of trying to destroy Christendom. Fast forward to 2023 and this time it was the Zionists accusing the Palestinians of intending to destroy the Jews. And likewise the Palestinians were cast as sinister and cruel. And then came the repeated accusations of mass rape.

Why did the Zionists resort to these anti-Semitic diatribes, which like the previous accusations against them, turned out to be unfounded? Why did the Zionists become the same persecutors who had previously terrorised the Jews. The short answer is that these tropes are common to all racist oppressors and colonisers seeking to demonise their opponents, to whip up the blood lust needed to fuel pogroms, and to justify their actions.

Our meeting will begin by examining three podcasts from investigative reporters, two outside Israel and one within Israel, who have not only debunked these accusations but have exposed what really occurred on the 7th October. To mute their criticisms, the Zionist media have predictably branded these investigative reporters to be '*holocaust deniers*'. Following these podcasts the meeting will be open to discussion, further analysis, and the sharing of interpretations. We operate on the principle that while everyone has the right to their opinions, no one has the right to be ignorant, which means we welcome tolerant and informed debate. Be part of the discussion and help get the truth out.

People die when reporters lie.

I was told it was too wordy for a leaflet. I countered with the argument that times had changed. Due to the livestreaming of the genocide, a movement of opposition had arisen, and people were interested in what was going on and wanted to learn more. I thought their criticism to be dated, that they could not see what had changed. While it is true social media has shortened the attention span of users, that news was now mere headlines and sound bites, this was not immutable. The human quest for information and knowledge is not going to be so easily stifled, not when lives are affected.

As workers grow more disaffected, sensing that things must change, they will be keener to study the alternatives. As long as we can argue our positions propagandistically we will find an audience. That is why I was so emphatic we should adopt the above, which has now been agreed. In short, the ideological struggle is the overture to the symphony of revolution.

A further objective raised was that it should have simply stated the objectives of the meeting was to dismantle the lies. But this is a mechanistic approach. The purpose of the leaflet was to address a deeper enigma, how to explain the Israelis turning from being the persecuted into being the persecutors. Both issues had to be addressed simultaneously, the lies around October the 7th and how and why those lies came into being in the first place.

UnitetheUnion

The following extract was written to inform staff of the current issues facing the Union. I have provided the section on Palestine. This bleat from the Union comes after a number of members, particularly in London, were pressing the leadership of the Union during their Executive Committee meeting, to publicly commit the Union to supporting the solidarity struggles here in Britain. The Union leadership has been notoriously silent of late.

“Palestine

Of all the issues that have been used in these attacks, probably the most abhorrent is the attempted weaponisation of the conflict and the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and the collective punishment of the people of Gaza. Unite, through the General Secretary and the Chair of the Union and the Executive Council, was the first major union to publicly and unambiguously call for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza. We were very clear. We have watched on with horror the bombardment and destruction of Gaza, and the unbearable terror, suffering and death of its innocent civilians. We have been unequivocal that the deliberate killing of civilians, hostage-taking and collective punishment are war crimes and should be identified as such. Unite has also donated £50,000 to Médecins Sans Frontières/ Doctors Without Borders specifically to help the many victims of this horrific conflict. Most recently the General Secretary has written to the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) offering our solidarity after the horrific bombing of their Gaza headquarters which, alongside providing services to workers, was also functioning as a kindergarten and bakery. However, we cannot and will not endorse any organisation which decides unilaterally and without any discussion (let alone agreement) with the workers themselves, to support the targeting of our members' workplaces or their jobs. To be clear, this will not happen. No outside body, no matter what their political position, will be allowed to dictate terms to our Union and our members. It is important to highlight here that it is a core principle of Unite that as a trade union the 'first claim' on our priorities is always the protection and advancement of our members' interests at work. It is very simple. Unite cannot and never will advocate or support any course of action which is counter to that principle. We are a trade union, not a political party or single-issue campaign group. Therefore, there is no contradiction for a trade union to hold a position of solidarity with Palestinian workers, while at the same time refusing to support campaigns that target our members' workplaces without their support. Similarly, we cannot be expected to affiliate to organisations that actively work against our members and their jobs. Examples include groups that look to build networks inside trade unions to undermine the defence industry or demand the disbandment of NATO and AUKUS. Whatever anyone may think personally about those objectives is irrelevant. We are a trade union with thousands of members employed in the defence industry. It is the views of affected members that take precedence in a trade union. That will not change and nor should it. Unite members have recently been attacked directly, been spat at and called “child killers”. We cannot and will not endorse this.”

This piece is so abhorrent and anti-working class that it needs to be taken apart limb by limb. The leadership of Unite seek to dismiss the criticisms of the union by smearing their critics, accusing them of weaponizing the conflict together with the suffering of the Palestinian people. Translated this means, these critics are taking advantage of the conflict to further their own malign aims to discredit the leadership and damage the union. This is cheap and shameful, the kind of trope the Zionists have been using by converting anti-Zionism into anti-Semitism. I have followed the debates, and all the critics to my mind, have had the interest of the union to heart. All they have asked for, was for the union to take a stand on Israel, by instructing their members to stop arming Israel, and to support them against their employers should there be retaliation.

In doing so Unite would be acting in accordance with the wishes of the [Palestinian Trade Union Movement](#) itself. This is what they called for:

We are calling on trade unions in relevant industries:

- 1. To refuse to build weapons destined for Israel.*
- 2. To refuse to transport weapons to Israel.*
- 3. To pass motions in their trade union to this effect.*
- 4. To take action against complicit companies involved in implementing Israel's brutal and illegal siege, especially if they have contracts with your institution.*

The main call was to stop building and to stop transporting weapons to Israel. Thus it seems it is the Unite leadership of Unite who are in the wrong on this issue, not its critics. Given the way they treated their critics, could it be the case that the Unite leadership by extension considers the Palestinian Unions to also be weaponizing this issue in order to embarrass Western Unions cowering in the shadow of imperialism.

In this extract we find the leadership recognising what is occurring in Gaza as a war crime. But if what is happening in Gaza is a war crime, then those contributing to it are complicit. Many armament firms in Britain are providing arms to Israel which are being used to kill Palestinians. The workforces in some of these firms are members of Unite. Does this not make them not complicit if they are knowingly producing these arms for this purpose? Of course it does. So what will their defence be: *we were only following our managers' orders*. But in the case of genocide, as we are reminded by the Nuremberg Trials, taking orders is no defence. In short Unite's *hands off position* is indefensible.

At the very least the Union could have warned the workers of the legal issue. I notice the UN is about to investigate arms suppliers. At the very least the Union could have pledged to support any worker taking industrial action to prevent the export of these weapons. Instead they remain silent, only coming out fighting when criticised and attacking, not the Zionists, but their own concerned members.

So why does the leadership adopt this rotten position. It is because they adhere to the Bernstein doctrine first formulated in the 1890s that their first and only duty is to: *priorities always the protection and advancement of our members' interests at work. It is very simple. Unite cannot and never will advocate or support any course of action which is counter to that principle*. So if supporting Palestinian lives could cost British jobs, they know which side they are on. They consider their job done if they can win a pay rise for the workers in the defence industry, no more no less. What a betrayal of the international working class including those in Palestine. No wonder the enlightened elements of the capitalist class tolerate such unions.

They then continue asking how they can be expected to affiliate to organisations that act against the interest of the union and its members. Could they be referring to the Thatcherite Labour Party. No silly me, they are referring to *Stop the War*. So if you support the union you must keep your hands off the workers in the Defence Industry. It will be interesting to see how the Union leadership uses this argument when one day these arms are used against striking and rioting British workers.

And here comes the rational, the get-out-of-responsibility card: *We are a trade union, not a political party or single-issue campaign group*. At last the narrow economism which has offered up the unions to the bosses on a plate. We are only a trade union. We must know our place in society. We must not stray from our mission. This is the contract we have with our exploiters and oppressors. But if one neuters the union by stripping it of politics it becomes a tool of the ruling class to be continuously used against workers at home and abroad.

Let us be clear, the early British Trade Union Movement was political in so far as they set up their own party – The Labour Party. But once they set up the Party, like religious folk, they bowed down before it, worshipping it and taking instruction from it. Politics now belonged to the Labour Party, the same party which in good times offered them crumbs and in bad times, like now, repeatedly stabbed them in the back. At no point in this letter to their staff do the leadership of the union suggest that they wrote to the Labour Party nor whether they pressurised the Labour Party to soften its support for the Israeli Government.

Why is the leadership so wedded to their members, so focused on narrow labour relations to the exclusion of all else. It's because the members are their paymasters. It is their dues which keep the top echelon of the Union in their exalted and comfortable positions. It is these dues which finances their salaries often quadruple the median wage. If they defend the union as a thing in itself it is because the union has elevated them above the general conditions of their members. If they do not want to rock the boat, this is because they fear being turfed out of their first-class accommodation.

Which is why it is essential for no trade union official to earn more than the average wage. For regular elections. For their immediate dismissal for failing to carry out Conference decisions nor to honour the spirit of the Conference which itself should be called every 6 months, especially when history is moving so quickly.

The vilification of their critical members tells a story. In the end the labour bureaucracy, of which the NEC of Unite is part of, fears their members more than they do their bosses. They know that while the bosses may tolerate them, militant, politicised and organised workers never will. Thus they act to damp down any opposition to them even in the middle of a genocide.

Brian Green, 28th March 2023.