



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 503 17 April 2019 50p/£1

Against the Netanyahu-Trump annexation plan



ISRAEL OUT OF THE WEST BANK!

Labour and Brexit: call a Special Conference!



Two nations, two states

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Dangerous nonsense

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Rebellion and politics



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Extinction Rebellion (XR) started their “International Rebellion” on Monday 15 April, with thousands of people participating in road blocks across central London: Marble Arch, Oxford Circus, Waterloo Bridge, Piccadilly Circus, and Parliament Square.

There were hundreds in each location, with festival-like atmospheres, and people staying overnight in some. At the time of writing, Tuesday lunchtime 16 April, there are still some active blockades with hundreds of people.

Participants are mostly a mixture of pensioners and people in their early 20s or younger. The police have reported over 100 arrests so far. There seem to have been significant transport disruptions. Some protesters glued themselves to Shell Headquarters, which was also graffiti'd.

There have been blockades internationally: Brussels, Belgium; Stockholm, Sweden; Lausanne, Switzerland; Berlin, Germany; Ottawa, Canada; and probably elsewhere. There have been protests or actions in New Zealand, Istanbul, Barcelona, Lisbon, Seattle, and beyond. In Adelaide, a protest was staged inside South Australia's state capital, and was then forcibly removed.

These “rebellions” are helping to raise the importance of urgently tackling climate change in many people's consciousness. They are encouraging people to think about, and feel empowered to take, bold and confrontational climate actions. This is good.

But their core message, and strategy, fall far short. Their demands are extremely vague, and their message boils down little more than that our current situation is a climate emergency, and that the government should recognise it as such and do something.

Non-specific demands, up to a point, have their place. In aiming to build a mass climate movement, we cannot detail an exact blueprint for the transition. The details should be worked out democratically by a mass movement, in which workers in the industries which will be most significantly transformed — energy, transport, etc. — are central. This would make way for a better as well as more democratic transition.

However, XR's demands fail to point, even generally, in the direction of socialist environmentalism or a worker-led just transition.

Indeed, many in XR have proclaimed that it is a “non-political” campaign, simply a moral reflection of the urgency conveyed to us by science. Climate change has political causes. There are political reasons for action on it being blocked. Political action is need to tackle it. The whole thing is inherently political.

To tackle climate change we need to overthrow capitalism, and most

immediately tackle the power of fossil capital. We need to expropriate wealth from the ruling class to fund a rapid transition. This requires us to change millions of people's minds, but it also requires us to build power, and leverage, to force changes and to ultimately build a new society.

Capitalism cannot be overthrown simply by shutting down particular companies, by causing disruption, or by putting pressure on a state or some other capitalist institution to abolish it by decree.

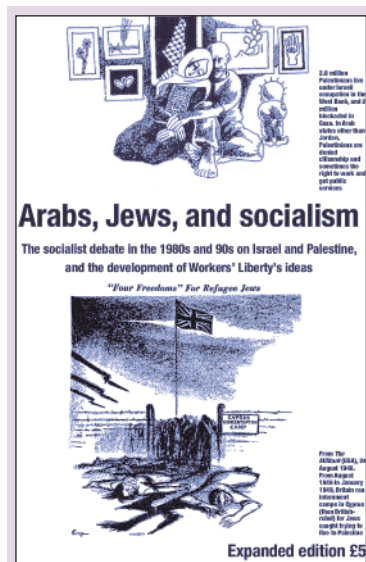
To overthrow capitalism, we need to transform the labour movement, to build democratic power of workers organised in the workplace, and convinced of socialist environmentalist ideas. For this reason, our organising must orient towards not just “citizens” executing their “sacred duty to rebel”, but to the working-class, to trade unions, to the labour party.

Nor can we move beyond capitalism by convincing enough people that tackling climate change is really important, and perhaps understanding in our own heads — but keeping it to ourselves — that the logical conclusion of this is that overthrowing capitalism is really important. Our demands must be environmentalist, but they must be socialist.

Concrete demands around the environmental transition of the energy and transport sectors, for example, which see workers retrained rather than made redundant, could win a much wider layer of people. These are demands which workers in those industries could organise around: the most democratic way a transition can happen, and the fastest way we could win it.

XR can hopefully contribute towards laying the groundwork for better, socialist, working-class environmental movements. As socialists and activists in the working-class we must contribute much of the groundwork.

We should intervene in XR's rebellions, but also argue for socialist environmentalism.



Out soon: *Arabs, Jews, and socialism: the debate from the 1980s and 90s*. Postage free on advance orders: £5 at workersliberty.org/payment



Different “lefts” at NUS conference

By Maisie Sanders

The National Union of Student (NUS) Conference, 9-11 April in Glasgow, overwhelmingly voted through the biggest ever cuts to its democracy with the vocal support of the newly elected “left” leadership.

The reforms gut student control and entrench a right-wing vision of NUS as little more than a toothless lobby group.

But the Student Left Network produced a daily bulletin and held regular left caucuses to campaign against the reforms and discuss the next steps in building a national, campaigning student movement and transforming NUS.

Left-wing motions were passed on stopping Brexit and fighting for free movement, working with the labour movement to campaign for a £10 minimum wage and against zero hour contracts and outsourcing, organising student workers and actively supporting workers in struggle.

If the dominant figures of the soft left had joined the Student Left Network in campaigning and speaking against the reforms, instead of rallying behind them, it seems certain the changes would have failed to get the two-thirds majority required to pass.

The outgoing leadership engineered the conference to ensure the reforms passed with little opposition. Attendees at the delegates' briefing were told it was crucial they voted for the motion if they wanted NUS to survive. For the first time ever, elections took place on the first afternoon before any motions could be debated.

The normally publicly available livestream of conference was hidden behind a log-in wall. No official fringe meetings were allowed to take place. This situation was made worse by the soft left leadership's failure to build opposition to the reforms in student unions prior to the conference.

Most positive amendments from the soft left passed, such as retaining elections for delegates to National Conference and keeping liberation campaigns, officers and committees, but the amendment to keep the National Executive (NEC) fell in favour of setting up an apolitical “Scrutiny Council” instead.

In a caucus organised by the soft

left “Save NUS Democracy” campaign, some argued they would vote for the motion only if all pro-democracy and pro-liberation amendments passed, for fear that NUS management would implement the reforms unamended if the motion fell.

Others said that if the amendments passed, those who cared about the “most marginalised students” had a duty to vote for the right-wing reforms which strip NUS of its ability to fight and hands student control over to unelected officials.

Student Left Network campaigners argued for votes for the positive amendments and against the reform motion even if those amendments passed. We called an indicative vote in the caucus and narrowly won.

The newly elected “left” leadership and those leading the ‘Save NUS Democracy’ campaign voted for the reforms and cheered when they passed, despite losing the amendment to retain the NEC, which will be scrapped from 2020.

None of their speeches raised any opposition to the undemocratic way the changes were drawn up (by an unelected and unaccountable “Turnaround Board” made up of two right-wing officers and NUS and student union management, without the input or even knowledge of most students).

President-elect Zamzam Ibrahim gave a glowing speech to sum up on the motion, despite pledging to build a “fighting NUS”. Liam McCabe, recently re-elected NUS Scotland President on a left-wing ticket, said the democracy-gutting reforms promised a “better future for this movement”.

A significant number of this year's 700 delegates were broadly left-wing. Soft left candidates beat the right to win four out of five officer positions. Student Left Network candidate and Workers' Liberty supporter Justine Canady won eighty first preferences in the Presidential elections.

The soft left have shown that whilst they talk of radical change, their leadership is politically impotent. We cannot count on NUS to lead the kind of national campaigns we need against marketisation, campus cuts and attacks on student living, working and studying conditions. Equally, we should not disaffiliate from NUS while no

alternative currently exists.

Student unions, elected officers and left-wing students who want to keep fighting for a campaigning student movement need to link up to discuss the way forward and make plans for the next term.

We should aim to build a federation of fighting students' unions to campaign against the country, organise demonstrations, and continue the work that a campaigning NUS should be doing.

We need a network that both looks back towards NUS with the hope of reclaiming and transforming it and points outwards to take the political space NUS has abandoned.

SLN members Justine Canady and Hamzah Sheikh stood for the NEC. Results are yet to be announced.

Israeli Arabs

By Rula Daood

In this election cycle, we saw the lowest voter turnout in the Arab community. But the election-boycott movement did not actually achieve its goal. Instead of 13 seats for Arab parties, we now have 10.

A great swath of the community is apathetic towards politics, and that apathy actually hasn't changed much over the years. Some of the young people who received the right to vote for the first time decided to boycott, claiming that the Knesset is part of the Zionist structure, in which they refused to take part. Some portion of the voters also wanted to punish the Arab parties, and show the power that they could wield over them if they do not perform.

If we are looking at the big picture, there is a great sense of frustration and disappointment in the Arab community, and there has yet to emerge real leadership that can answer our needs and represent us.

• Rula Daood is a community organiser and member of Standing Together, a left-wing Jewish-Arab social movement.

The current West Bank.

A and B are Palestinian Authority administered, over 160 separate patches.

Area C, under direct Israeli control, surrounds them.

■ Areas A and B
□ Area C

Israeli right plans to annex West Bank

By Ira Berkovic

Israel's right-wing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is expected to secure a fifth term, after his Likud party won 36 seats in the country's 9 April election.

Likud's nearest rival, the centre-right Kahol Lavan (Blue and White) coalition, won 35, but in Israel's coalition-based system, Netanyahu can rely on smaller right-wing parties to support him.

Before the election, Netanyahu announced his intention to formally annex "Area C" of the West Bank. In the West Bank, Areas A and B are governed by the semi-autonomous Palestinian Authority, but those areas are made up of over 160 distinct Palestinian population centres, each one surrounded by the settlements, roads, and military presence of Israeli-controlled Area C. Annexation would make Area C formally part of Israel proper, rather than a non-Israeli territory under military occupation.

This "Greater Israel" chauvinism seeks to wipe out the possibility of Palestinian national rights, and make the Palestinian population of the West Bank, numbering nearly three million, formally second-class citizens under the domination of (but without any rights in) a Jewish state. Palestinian self-government

would be limited to the Gaza Strip, which is strangled by an economic blockade maintained by Israel, with the support of Egypt.

Against this bleak backdrop, characterised by a deepening national chauvinism in Israel, the left in Britain and internationally can best serve the cause of the Palestinians by supporting those forces, such as Standing Together, fighting for Jewish-Arab unity, and for a settlement to the conflict that ends Israeli occupation and blockade of Palestinian Territories, grants full equality to the Arab minority in Israel, and acknowledges the national rights of both the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs.

The 9 April election results were bleak for the left. The Israeli Labor party was all but wiped out, reduced to just six seats. The left-Zionist Meretz took four seats, and Hadash-Ta'al, an alliance between the Israeli Communist Party's electoral front Hadash, and the Arab nationalist Ta'al, took six seats.

Responding to the exit polls on Twitter, Alon-Lee Green, national director of Standing Together, said that activists should respond by "shaking off conservatism" and "building a new left".

4.75 million Palestinians living under Israeli colonial rule (directly, in the case of those in the West

Bank, and indirectly, as a result of economic blockade, in Gaza) had no right to vote in the Israeli elections, despite having a very great deal at stake. Israeli Arabs, part of a 20% minority within Israel, have voting rights, but many boycotted the election, leading to historically low levels of Arab turnout. 6.5 million Jews, including those living as settlers in Palestinian Territories, were able to vote.

There were numerous accusations of gerrymandering and intimidation of Arab voters. Likud supporters were caught installing cameras and recording devices in polling booths in Arab towns in order to intimidate voters away. Israel claims to be "the only democracy in the Middle East".

But it is a democracy distorted by national chauvinism, and by the discrimination against its Arab minority.

Protest against annexation, for an independent Palestine alongside Israel! Two nations, two states!

• **Bloc: 12 noon Saturday 11 May at the BBC, Portland Place, W1A 1AA — bit.ly/2n-2s2**

• **Protest @ Israeli Embassy: Thu 18 April, 5:45pm, Kensington Court, W8 5DL — bit.ly/2n2s-1**

Jewish-Arab unity to fight back

By Hannah Pollin-Galay

The horrifying re-election of Netanyahu and his right-wing bloc, a government which will pursue the most extreme policies yet, including annexing the West Bank and dismantling the Supreme Court, is the result of incidental, tactical problems as well as, most importantly, deeply structural ones.

On the tactical level, there was the disastrous decision on the part of the Labour Party to leave Avi Gabay in charge, as he tried repeatedly, and failed, to pander to center-right voters. There was Gantz and Lapid's superficiality, their macho-photo-op style, their expressions of Jewish exclusivity, while running mostly on "not being Bibi". The Arab parties deciding to split up into two and waste time infighting rather than campaigning. Meretz's old guard protecting itself and keeping some new politicians with good ideas from rising up and changing the party's 90s style political language.

These mistakes all certainly mattered. And we must be honest and say that a "centrist" government under Gantz would have been better than the Likud and Kahanist coalition that won: at the very least,

he would not have attempted to dismantle the Supreme Court and he would have been sensitive to pressure from the left. As much as I am disgusted by Gantz, I admit that his loss is nonetheless a loss; the old adage of "the worse things get, the better" is a form of lazy self-defence on the left.

But, the structural problems that led to these results go beyond any of these personal campaign errors. The biggest setback in this election was the decline in Arab voter turnout — dropping from 60 to 50%, dropping from low to very low. As a point of contrast, consider how the Haredi (Chasidic) voter turnout is close to 90%.

The drop in Arab voter turnout meant not only a loss of seats for the Arab parties (falling from 13 to 10 seats), but also allowing each right wing vote to count for more (since there were a fewer number of total voters in the whole country).

The decline was the result of blatant voter intimidation — Likud openly hired a PR firm who would keep Arabs away from the polls — as well as a conscious choice on the part of some in the Palestinian-Arab community not to participate in elections after the Nation State Law acted as the last straw.

I can sympathise with that anger.

It is not my place to scold Palestinian-Arab voters who skipped the election. There are very strong voices within their community who are working on this internal conversation, like the rapper Tamer Nafer and the journalist Odeh Bisharat.

The most important thing to do now is to fight for the conditions of true Jewish-Arab political and social partnership. This is both a moral commitment and a tactical one.

One of the most critical steps to ending the occupation and fighting for a just peace for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza is to create a movement that bridges the gap between Jewish Israelis and Palestinian-Arabs of Israeli citizenship. Numerically speaking, there is no way to defeat the Israeli right without such a partnership.

And by partnership, I certainly do not mean Jewish party leaders simply getting angry when Bibi does something racist, or mentioning that Palestinian-Arabs are welcome to join the party as an afterthought.

I mean that the party and the campaign needs to be built on true equality, both in its policies and in its personnel, from the very start. I am open to the idea of combining

existing parties or forming a new one. Either way, an urgent project.

In fact, the will for Jewish-Arab political partnership does exist, is growing and it must be properly organized: Meretz members voted to put two Arab politicians in their top five in their primaries, and as a result doubled the number of Arab votes in this election from the last. Without those votes, the party would have been completely erased, since their traditional supporters, Jewish urbanites, chose to vote for Gantz en masse as a so-called strategic, lesser-evil choice.

Similarly, Hadash-Ta'al, the Arab-led party that is most dedicated to Jewish-Arab partnership, maintained its size despite the drop in Arab voting, a sign that their message does work.

And over the course of two days following the election results, over 300 people have joined Standing Together, the grassroots joint Jewish-Arab left movement, as dues-paying members. We have to harness the energy of those who are already convinced of this message, a minority though they be at the moment, and use it to create a massive cultural and moral change.

The second major structural problem is the minimal attention to issues of economic justice and pub-

lic welfare, in this election cycle especially.

Currently, elderly patients have to sleep in showers in our hospitals because of the shortage of beds. Our schools are completely underfunded. Working-class wages have not risen with cost of living. And yet Bibi gets away with declaring that this is "a time of economic prosperity", just because no-one challenges him on it sufficiently.

I believe we need to go into those crowded hospital lines, show up in schools, and show people that they deserve better and that this can change. This was not done in the current election and, as a result, populist racism won out.

Lastly, the rise of the international right has great sway over voters here. People were waving Trump flags at Bibi's election party. In my fieldwork, I hear all the time how "Europe loves the Likud." Israeli voters are feeding off of the energy of right-wing movements all over the world.

We cannot make the change alone without international political changes as well.

• *Hannah Pollin-Galay is a Yiddish researcher and activist involved in Standing Together, a left-wing Jewish-Arab social movement.*

True, but never mind that...



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

“These things really happened, that is the thing to keep one’s eye on. They happened even though Lord Halifax said they happened ... and they did not happen any the less because the *Daily Telegraph* has suddenly found out about them when it is five years too late” — George Orwell, *Looking Back on the Spanish War* (1942).

On April 7 the *Sunday Times* carried a front page lead story claiming that the Labour party has failed to take action against hundreds of members accused of antisemitism. The story was apparently based upon leaked emails and a database from Labour’s HQ.

The details were shocking, including members posting online comments like “Heil Hitler”, “Fuck the Jews” and “Jews are the problem.” The article also alleged that (named) members of Corbyn’s office and Labour HQ had – despite previous denials — insisted on an “overview” of cases and in one instance had “frustrated” efforts to fast-track an investigation.

Surely, the main concern for socialists

ought to be whether or not the allegations are true – not the motives or style of the *Sunday Times* or, indeed, of the Labour official who allegedly leaked the information?

But, no: two days later the *Morning Star*’s editorial, opening with heavy sarcasm, responded by accusing the *Sunday Times* and the Jewish Labour Movement of a conspiracy:

“Doubtless it was a complete coincidence, but a conference of the Jewish Labour Movement at the weekend passed a motion of ‘no confidence’ in Jeremy Corbyn on the very day that the front page of the *Sunday Times* screamed: ‘Labour’s hate files expose Corbyn’s anti-semitic army’.

“According to the latter, the leaked contents of a mystery hard drive and database reveal a backlog of delays, obstructions and improper interference in the party’s investigation into complaints of anti-semitism against hundreds of Labour Party members.

“According to JLM delegates, this confirms that the party is ‘institutionally anti-semitic’ and that Jeremy Corbyn is ‘unfit for office’ as a prospective prime minister.”

The editorial goes on (again, with heavy sarcasm) to suggest that “it can only be a matter of days, therefore before the JLM disaffiliates from the Labour Party... after all no decent person would want to remain in a vol-

untary organisation that is guilty of much more than espousing objectionable policies...?”

The issue which seems to exercise the *Morning Star* in particular is the suggestion that Labour at present might be “institutionally antisemitic”, as though such a suggestion is simply an outrage.

Institutional racism was defined by William Macpherson in the 1999 Lawrence report as: “The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people”.

Macpherson did not say that if somebody says they experience racism it must be true. Neither did he say that victims of racism have the right to define their own oppression (in the sense that whatever the definition, no-one else can question it). But he did say that victims of racism should be taken seriously: something that the *Morning Star* consistently refuses to do when dealing with claims of antisemitism within Labour.

Instead, the *Morning Star* perpetuates the conspiracy theory that “combating anti-

semitism is not the primary motivation... No, their prime motivation is becoming clearer by the week. It is to prevent a rare parliamentary champion of the rights of the Palestinian people from achieving the highest political office in Britain... This has been the common aim of leading lights in the JLM and Labour Friends of Israel and their associates in the Israeli embassy...”

So there we have it: the default assumption about allegations of antisemitism within Labour is that they are made in bad faith, motivated by hostility to the Palestinian cause and probably directed by the Israeli embassy.

Except that tucked away in the middle of the editorial is this: “What appears to be undeniable is that no action has yet been taken against some individual party members whose comments about Jews or Israel are reprehensible, whether born of ignorance, prejudice or both.”

What a pity that the *Morning Star*’s conspiracy theory about the *Sunday Times*, the JLM and the Israeli embassy (a conspiracy theory that itself verges on anti-semitism) completely obscures its small-print admission that the central claim made by the *Sunday Times* is, in fact... true.

Just revoke!



Letters

We should advocate the revoking of Article 50 by Parliament. A second referendum was a tactic that has outlived its usefulness.

The point of a second referendum was that it was thought a more acceptable, less divisive way of stopping Brexit than revoking Article 50; and that since both parties are officially for Brexit, it took it out of Parliament’s hands.

But now the second referendum is less popular in many polls than stopping Brexit. People are tired of the division and focus on this issue. A referendum will sharpen the divisions and suck up all politics and news.

Anecdotal, plenty of people who voted Leave, like my entire family and many of my



workmates, now think Brexit should just be stopped.

Moreover, there are massive hurdles over what the question would be in a referendum and how it would be carried out. A second referendum has no legitimacy or support among Leavers. There is a real danger of them boycotting it, fatally undermining its legitimacy and leaving the result open to question.

And anyway, it looks equally likely that Parliament might vote to revoke Article 50.

Luke Hardy, Leeds

We still need new public vote



Letters

Support for outright revocation has risen, but so has support for no-deal. There is a polarisation going on, not solely a shift toward Remain.

There are Remainers who no longer feel there’s a need for a referendum and just want revocation, and there are also Leavers hardening their views. The political dispute isn’t going to go away by having this Parliament revoke Article 50 — it will only intensify, as outraged Leavers protest that there’s been a reversal without even a serious debate.

At least a new referendum gives us an opportunity to have the argument out in public. Hard-core leavers will always feel robbed, but softer leavers can be persuaded that democracy has been served. We are in favour

of bringing out the divisions and dealing with them in a political battle.

The alternative to *this* Parliament revoking Article 50 would be Labour winning an election pledging revocation. But there is a strong chance that even if Labour, or pro-revocation parties as a group, have a parliamentary majority, they would not have a popular-vote majority. What then?

In any case, Labour revoking Article 50 is some distance off! We demand things of Labour that are distant hopes, yes. But they are on matters of principle and politics, not process.

We should keep our focus our agitation on pressing Labour to commit to the political point — loud opposition to Brexit — and on process keep promoting a new referendum as the most realistic path to cancellation.

Ben Tausz, London

Assange and dimensions



Letters

Around 2011, in the early stages of my political activity, I was quite vocally and actively a part of a movement that took the view that the sexual assault charges against Julian Assange were part of a fabricated plot led by US imperialists and their allies in order to undermine the work that Assange and Wikileaks had done in exposing US war crimes.

I’m pleased that as I gravitated towards the labour movement and particularly towards Workers’ Liberty there were some decent socialists and feminists who were willing to

argue with me. I realised that at best this view was un-nuanced, and at worst it was a misogynistic conspiracy theory.

To suggest that Assange is just a virtuous anti-imperialist hero you have to find a method of removing the women who made allegations of sexual assault in Sweden from the equation. By claiming that the women are lying or unwitting stooges. By claiming that the laws around sexual assault in Sweden are dramatically skewed against men. By claiming that the Swedish prosecutor was a feminist with an agenda.

Or, by claiming that because Sweden dropped the charges (for bureaucratic reasons) the allegations no longer matter. Or by conveniently “forgetting” the charges altogether, and just focusing on the nasty US im-

perialists.

Would the US have used Assange’s detention in Sweden to extradite him and face charges of hacking? Quite possibly, but we need to remember that essentially our politics are about defending principles, not simply defending individuals, and on that basis we defend the principle of the survivors’ right to seek justice through the law, which has no lesser value than the principle of freedom of the press and freedom from state oppression.

It is not contradictory to support the work Wikileaks did in exposing US war crimes, or that it does in releasing information for public interest, and it is not contradictory to oppose the US’s attempts to extradite Assange to face charges which would represent an alarming and draconian escalation in the re-

striction of press and publishers, and a severe encroachment by the oppressive arm of the state that seeks to quash any forms of resistance to militarism, surveillance and war.

These cultish political theories around Assange emerge from the dominant form of reactionary anti-imperialism on the left, where enemies and allies are dogmatically reduced to binary opposites without consideration of the nuances or apparent contradictions that social reality produces.

Andrew Francis, Milton Keynes

Aristotle plus Hegel

Letters

Martin Thomas's references (*Solidarity* 499) to Aristotle's categories of thought are brief and poorly defined. As they stand, you would never guess their centrality to helping Marx crack the problem of exchange value, or as Marx preferred to call it, the "value form".

It might be useful for the reader to check out the many references in Marx's work to the achievement of Aristotle and his categories of thought, in being the first and the clearest up to the emergence of classical political economy in the 18th century.

Martin does not bring clarity to Aristotle by the translation of one term, "Essence", as "...the what it was to be" and as "soul". Now, if this gives you the idea of a religious or supernatural system of thought, then Martin has been "successful" in introducing you to the scholastic vulgarisation of Aristotle's works by the medieval church in Europe. He has not introduced you to Aristotle.

To do that, Martin would at least have to introduce us to the rest of the categories that "essence" is situated in. This might begin with uniting with "essence" the categories of: law, necessary and accidental change, form and content, potential and realisations of potential, adequate form and finished form.

The text of *Das Kapital* is saturated with these categories, as are the texts of the incomplete *Theories of Surplus Value* and the overall plan for Marx's new science in the form of the *Grundrisse*. Of course, Marx critically develops the categories of Aristotle's thought, they are not destroyed.

It's worth repeating that Marx explicitly refers to the use of these categories by Aristotle in almost solving the mystery of the value form in ancient Athens! The problem being not the categories, but the reality to which they refer, not being "mature" enough yet; specifically the "finished form of wage-labour" not existing, therefore, not being subject to analysis.

Martin now brings on the Hegel. Martin says: "... a partial approximation to Hegel can be found in Aristotle..." This is something along the lines of "things changing as their essence evolves".

Firstly, this is a tautology – when some-

thing changes, it changes. Secondly, the fundamental difference (which is the beginning of all wisdom) between Aristotle and Hegel is this: that for Aristotle, development is a property of real entities with natures that have potentialities that are realised if not interrupted by accident. For Hegel, development is a property of Logic not actual, material entities in the world, like newts and money.

In this quiz, Hegel needs to phone a friend! Martin now brings on the Marx. Martin says, "Marx in his dialectics was particularly emphatic about rejecting 'teleology' (the idea of a predetermined goal inherent in things, their "essences")."

Firstly, this appears to be a version of "teleology" belonging to Jason and the Argonauts, not Aristotle. Again, this is the vulgarised version of "Telos", systematically taught by the mediaeval church, that is, the world governed by a guiding intelligence, e.g. God.

However, it is possible to have some fun kicking the concept of "Telos" around; consider the working class, in the form of having become a "class-for itself", as becoming the "guiding intelligence" of the "coming-into-being" of an emancipated humanity, the Telos of communism.

Secondly, for Aristotle and Marx, entities like bacteria and societies develop from immature to mature forms, if not interrupted by the accidental, e.g. plague. The difference between Aristotle and Marx is that Marx takes the concept of "contradiction" from Hegel and makes it a central property of the real entity that is developing. Contradiction is missing as a property of real entities with Aristotle.

The whole object of Marx's new science is the analysis of the development of the various forms "value" takes, from the simple commodity to its final form as "capital" and its generalisation to a world system. This is the reality behind the accidental and contingent events of history.

Watch Marx working on a "synthesis" of Aristotle's "real material essences in unity" and Hegel's "abstract unities in contradiction", in all his work, and it remains a work in progress for comrades to contribute to.

In a final letter I will comment on maths and physics and being.

Paul Cooper, London

£979 to reach target by 1 May

This week we thank Bryan Edmands for £200 towards our fund appeal, and notch up another £9 in sales money from Janine Booth's booklet on 1919.

That brings us up to £14,021, just £979 short of our £15,000 target.

As ever, the fund appeal money is what pays for everything we do on top of the minimal ticking-over basics of covering rent and utilities and basic supplies at our office, printing *Solidarity*, and paying stipends to some of our office staff.

This week, for example, it's enabled us to get a new banner with slogans to use at our protests on 18 April and 11 May against Netanyahu's plan to annex Area C of the West Bank.

It's enabled us to print a broadsheet on climate change for use especially on the student walk-outs.

It's allowed us to get a new (second-hand) computer at the office and to pay for qualified technical help on our website.

The fund appeal money has even allowed us to replace our rusty and falling-to-bits office microwave by a new one.

It should go some of the way, at least, to allow us to put back into circulation an expanded edition of our long-out-of-print pamphlet *Arabs, Jews, and Socialism*, making available once again the long and lively socialist debate in the 1980s which brought Workers' Liberty to our "two nations, two states" policy on Israel-Palestine.

We need a lot more money, immediately, to help us do public activity with Labour for a Socialist Europe.

• www.workersliberty.org/donate



A "Remain and Transform" voice in Euro-election

Hundreds of Labour and trade union activists have signed a statement put out by Labour for a Socialist Europe demanding a radical, left-wing, anti-Brexit platform for Labour in the Euro-elections due on 23 May.

The signatories include Julie Ward, Labour MEP for the North West, and Jude Kirton-Darling, Labour MEP for the North East.

With the excuse of rush, the selection of Labour candidates for the Euro-elections has been done with minimal democracy. The whole process is scheduled to terminate on Wednesday 17 April, the day after *Solidarity* goes to press, and the best information we can get from chat in the corridors is that it looks bad for left-wing and pro-Remain candidates.

The Labour machine has a problem, though. Most of the sitting Labour MEPs will be standing again; they are all pro-Remain, and some of them are leftist.

Given the confusion, ambiguity, and lack of authority of "official" Labour policy, it is hard to see how the Labour machine will stop them campaigning on anti-Brexit and sometimes left-wing platforms.

Back in 1979, Socialist Organiser, the fore-runner of *Solidarity*, pioneered the idea of a

distinctive left-wing and socialist campaign within an official Labour election campaign. It was called the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

Constituency Labour Parties then largely ran their own campaigns, with relatively slight central control.

SCLV was able to get six constituencies officially to decide to back SCLV and use SCLV materials. Only six, and some of those used SCLV stuff only marginally, alongside more conformist electioneering.

But it was enough to make an impact. And in many other constituencies individual canvassers or groups of canvassers were able to use SCLV materials.

Since then, and particularly since the "Blair coup" inside the Labour Party in the mid and late 1990s, central control has been much tightened.

It could well be looser in these Euro-elections. We should certainly push.

We have a chance to do something much more like the SCLV of 1979 than was possible with smaller-scale similar efforts in 2010 and 2015.

• bit.ly/14se-23M

No. 504 will be out on 1 May

Solidarity 504 will be printed on 1 May, rather than 24 April as it would be on our regular weekly schedule. The reason is that, with the Easter holidays, this issue won't reach quite a few readers until 23 April anyway.

Updates on our website, www.workersliberty.org

Speaking out on LGBT+ inclusive education

By Khakan Qureshi

Khakan Qureshi spoke to Gemma Short and Kate Harris about protests against No Outsiders and LGBT+ inclusive education in Birmingham.

KQ: I've worked in social care for the last 20 years across the spectrum of vulnerable adults, and I currently work with the homeless.

I founded the first LGBT+ south Asian support group in Birmingham, which is now five years old.

I became involved in the situation at Parkfield and Anderton Park schools by tweeting my responses and thoughts on the protests. The Deputy Head at Parkfield School (creator of the No Outsiders project) invited me in and I have become a sort of spokesperson for the program. I am also a Stonewall LGBT school role model and a Diversity role model.

The situation at Parkfield feels very personal for me. It crosses two very important parts of my identity – being gay and being a Muslim. It is a three pronged attack – on LGBT+ people; on Muslims, with the far right picking up on and exploiting the fact that protests are majority Muslim; and on free speech in an allegedly secular and democratic society.

Gemma and Kate: What is the latest with the parent/community protests at Parkfield and other schools in Birmingham?

KQ: Parkfield had a consultation meeting with parents last week. Moffat was told by the DfE that he should not be at the meeting or speaking to the media. The No Outsiders program has been suspended at Parkfield. We don't know for how long or what form it will come back in, if it does.

Anderton Park protests are continuing every day. The police presence has been increased. The Head there has been very supportive of staff, but the police have had to warn teachers to carry out risk assessments as to their safety on their journeys to and from work.

G&K: What impact has this had on LGBT+ people from a Muslim background in the city? What response has there been to the protests?

KQ: I work with the social support group



Khakan Qureshi is the founder of Birmingham South Asians LGBT

Finding a Voice, but also with Supporting Education of Equality and Diversity in Schools, SEEDS, which was set up in response to the protests. It is made up of educators, and LGBT+ campaigners. Some in the group put the emphasis on mediation and finding solutions and dialogue, and have held meetings with parents. Others want to organise counter-protests and more action.

On one side I'm in agreement with counter-protests, but on the other side I'm trying to work out else can be done. The DfE have given Parkfield a glowing report, but on the other hand the school have suspended the program and the DfE has told Moffat not to speak to the media. So where do we go now? I can't see any immediate solutions.

It is also difficult to organise counter-action because, for various reasons, the majority of LGBT+ campaigners who come forward to protest are white.

G: Are LGBT+ people from a Muslim background keeping their heads down, staying out of it? Are people scared?

KQ: Yes, definitely both. In Birmingham itself there is myself speaking. Also, Saima Razzaq, and Hafsa Quershi, who works for the MoJ and is Stonewall's Bi role model of the year – but it is really only us speaking out as LGBT+ Muslims at the moment. There are LGBT+ Muslims elsewhere speaking out, but not in Birmingham. There needs to be more people speaking out in Birmingham.

G&K: Nobody seems to be talking about the impact on students at the schools. How are the protests affecting children from Parkfield and Anderton Park?

KQ: As far as I'm aware all the conversations that have been had are with adults. We need to be looking at how this is affecting children.

I was at Anderton Park school recently when protests were taking place, and you can just see children's innocence being destroyed. Children will go home and ask their parents what is going on, what they are protesting about, and what is "homosexual". I asked the Head at Anderton Park school about what happens the day after a protest when children and parents have been chanting and shouting at them, and she said lots of children are in tears. They are distressed and they say to her "we don't want you to leave, Miss!" It is heart-breaking. They look quite

torn.

G: And some of those children will become adults who are not straight.

KQ: Yes, and this is the time when some of those children will be thinking about who they are and finding their identity. That is why programs such as No Outsiders are so important for those children, an adult saying that it is ok and helping to prevent a whole range of mental health issues, including suicide.

That fear of being an outsider, and being told that is something wrong with you and having conflicting identities. This is where conversion therapies end up gaining victims, and particularly in the south Asian community — marriages of convenience.

G&K: Why the protests now? What forces are at work here? Has there been other moves against LGBT+ people in Birmingham and in particular against LGBT+ Muslims?

KQ: When this was brought to my attention, with the particular mother at Parkfield, I thought it was one of those things that was one person's opinion. I did not expect it to become as big a thing as it has. Where there appears to be Muslim majority populations there are protests or meetings cropping up.

The program has been going on for four years at Parkfield with great success. There is a video with mums looking at the books students read and giving positive comments.

But the more I'm watching and getting involved I realise there is a lot more going on behind the scenes. I was watching the Channel Four's Unreported World about Brazil, and the language and the ideas were the same. Some of the protests in Birmingham have had platforms which included Christian Voices, who are anti-Muslim. Rabbis have been attending the protests. One of the campaigners shared a tweet by Nick Griffin.

Dr Kate Godfrey-Faussett [the controversial psychologist and advocate of conversion therapy] has had a particular influence on the protests, she is apparently the person that many of the Muslim protests are following. Many parents when interviewed are quoting her verbatim, like a broken record.

The coordination of the protests is really clever, with whatsapp chats, it is well coordinated and the propaganda is carefully targeted. The propaganda harks back to section 28. But there is plenty of parents who don't understand what is going on, whether a language barrier or cultural barrier. If you took away some of the key protestors, some of them who are not even parents, the issue would be less.

At Anderton, the leader is called Shakeel Afsar, a young man of 31 who is not a parent and is leading the meetings. From what I understand there is a lot of harassment going on within the Muslim community.

Another thing we have overlooked is the levels of literacy of the parents themselves. If we have people, without any disrespect to the community, who have migrated from parts of the world with low levels of education and literacy due to poverty, and often lack of challenge to religious doctrine, you have to question where these doctrines come

from. If you can't read and write how can you read about and question this religion?

K: The media approach has often been a simplistic clash of civilisation narrative.

KQ: Yes, when we're sharing stories and experiences we don't tend to look at issues inside the Muslim community itself. For example I shared my story and thoughts with the local newspaper.

I can handle trolls usually, but my own nephew has been putting up that I want to be famous and I'm lying. He is also from Alum Rock. Are his views a product of that environment or are they personal viewpoint?

As part of the SEEDS group we met with some of the protestors in a curry house a few weeks ago. They started talking about Prevent and targeting of Muslims. Parkfield school did include this in Powerpoints advocating No Outsiders four years ago. However if your aim is to protest Prevent, which would be fair enough, why would you target LGBT+ people? All the material is about LGBT+ people. The right and Islamist organisations have grabbed this opportunity to exploit this situation.

In a bizarre way I'm kind of glad it is happening, for years I've been saying we need to talk about this, about religion and sexuality. It is good in some ways that the dialogue is now happening in communities. Last year I went to my former Sixth Form College, which has majority Muslim students, and I encountered students who said you can't be gay and Muslim.

It was a bit of a first for me. I usually talk to audiences that are liberal, it is like preaching to the converted.

K: How do you tackle talking to students about Islam and sexuality?

KQ: There can be different responses — 1. You can be gay and Muslim because I am; 2. You are not here to judge, that is for Allah; 3. The story of Lot. I want them to offer their personal opinion about what that story is about – I encourage people to go away and reflect on the issues raised in that parable. The message is always the same throughout Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

This experience made me realise we may have been complacent, and has lit a fire in my belly. It will stay with me. If we are trying to change people's views and attitudes we need to have these more difficult conversations. Something good may come out of this.

I just want people to remember that this is the education of a young child that people are breaking, the well being of the child has to be important more than anything. There are same-sex parents out there, heterosexual parents, thinking about how to bring their children into a better world.

This is regression, and it is nationwide – in fact global, in some ways we have become complacent but we need to continue this struggle every single day. I want to see in 20 years' time that being LGBT+ is not an issue.

I would like parents to state that "my child is LGBT+ but that is not an issue with me".

More: bit.ly/2U2wgm5 and www.facebook.com/findingavoice



Capital rules by exploitation, not by nudging



Review

By Matt Cooper

Review of Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for the Future at the New Frontier of Power* (Profile Books, 2019)

In 2014 a new toy hit the shops, My Friend Cayla. This doll was unlike other dolls: responding to its playmate's voice; programmable with the names of family and pets; and, through its Bluetooth internet connection, giving spoken responses to questions.

But Cayla had its own agenda: collecting data from the child's speech for targeted advertisements including product placement in its speech. The spy-doll was banned in Germany, but "the smartest friend you'll ever have" is still available in the US.

The central focus of Shoshana Zuboff's new book is that Cayla is but a foot-soldier of surveillance capitalism, harvesting data from a subjugated public. Websites now search you, maps follow you and TVs watch you.

This book mainly examines Google/Alphabet and the more narrowly focused social network corporation Facebook, along with a host of smaller tech companies, arguing that they are progressing beyond gathering data on individuals' activity online to more via smartphones and the internet of things.

More speculatively, Zuboff argues these companies' monopolisation of knowledge is creating a new undemocratic power over the individual which she calls "Big Other" (fusing Orwell's Big Brother with the behaviourist psychologist B F Skinner's view that human subjects should be viewed as detached "others").

Google's ever increasing array of user-interfaces (Google Maps, Gmail, Google Chrome, Streetview and the dominant smartphone operating system Android) creates the unprecedented ability to gather data on its users. Google's self-defined mission is to use this data to pre-emptively satisfy each user's needs.

Without regard for privacy, data is scraped from voice activated household gadgets (like Cayla) searching for key words ("like", "want", "love") to keep tabs on your prefer-

ences. Google's users are not its customers but rather its raw material, supplying behavioural data which is the basis of its business. When Google was launched in 1998 it had no clear business plan. Only after 2000's dot-com crash did it develop the capacity to record users' activity across the internet and beyond as the basis for selling advertising.

When Zuboff theorises more grandly, her critique of surveillance capitalism is both overly elaborate and half-baked. The book offers no understanding of what capitalism is.

She sees state regulation as allowing good market capitalism to thrive and suppressing the excesses of free enterprise, such as the bad capitalism of surveillance capitalism. While Google and Facebook are viewed as the product of neo-liberal, unregulated, markets, good capitalism has "reciprocities" with state regulation, ensuring workers get something back. (The term and broad framework comes from the mid-twentieth century social-democratic theorist, Karl Polanyi). Her anti-capitalism is rhetorical. She appears to want capitalism with privacy laws, appropriate state regulation and responsible corporations. That capital rules our lives in the workplace is faded out from her picture in favour of speculations about capitalism ruling us by marketing nudges.

Yet her claims are sweeping: "established capitalist 'laws' such as competitive production, profit maximisation, productivity and growth ... now operate in the context of a new logic of accumulation that also introduces its own distinctive laws of motion", this being "the foundational framework for a surveillance-economic order" where "the 'means of production' now serve 'the means of behavioural modification'."

She sees Google's users being exploited for their behavioural raw material as dispossession – a renewed but vampiric capitalism.

But the tech sector is only ten per cent of even the US economy, and the so-called surveillance capitalists are a minor part of this sector. And Zuboff does not even analyse closely how the "surveillance capitalists" make their money, namely through advertising.

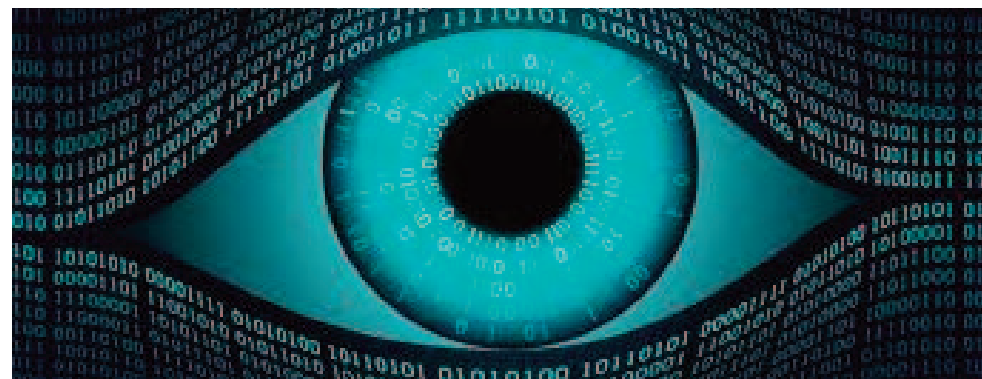
ADVERTISING

New forms of advertising are unlikely to transform capitalism: companies that sell advertising are reliant on other industries to make goods which (with the advertisers' help) are sold at a profit. Adverts themselves cannot create new profit.

Zuboff touches on the possibility that the surveillance economy may intervene more directly in the production process through big-data and machine learning, but does not develop this.

The argument that offering free content to sell advertising constitutes exploitation of the user/viewer is not new. There is some (poor) Marxist theory that argues that people who watch TV adverts are performing unpaid labour for capital (Dallas Smythe) and this has also been applied to the internet (Christian Fuchs).

A better way of understanding Google and Facebook is that they produce use-value (a search engine is certainly useful, and many people find social media so) to create an au-



dience for the advertising they sell. Marx saw activities like advertising as unproductive labour – they do not directly produce surplus value, but only allow the advertising capitalist to scoop up a bit of the surplus value produced elsewhere. Advertising is a cost of circulation, a price the commodity-producing capitalist may have to pay to sell their products and "realise" surplus-value in the form of money-in-the-bank profits.

It would be possible to analyse how the internet has transformed advertising. It can be more focused. It is affordable for smaller producers. It has squeezed press and commercial broadcasting revenues. It may move advertising from an old model of using imagery, suggestion and psychology to create new or artificial desires to a new(ish) model that attempts to nudge the consumer into parting with their money.

The need to sell advertising affects the nature of the use-value offered as free content on the internet (which explains much about social media), but Zuboff touches on this only tangentially.

Instead, Zuboff builds up a speculative theory that the huge amounts of data being gathered on individuals' behaviour, combined with the ability of machine-learning to identify usable patterns in this mass, constitute an existential threat to human agency.

She calls the resulting undemocratic power of "Big Other" "instrumentarian" power, a term that is never fully defined, but would appear to combine pragmatic goal-directed practice (instrumentalism) with the desire to control the individual of totalitarianism. She depicts a society where human behaviour is conditioned by impersonal machine-learning systems that shape our behaviour for no purpose other than economic gain.

Zuboff's speculative dystopia obscures the problematic present, but this is where we should start. We used to navigate with paper maps bought as a commodity. We now use free maps on smartphones paid for by advertising (both on the map and other adverts using the information we have surrendered about our journey). While the information on the paper map is relatively neutral, we now use cartography conditioned by economic interests.

While this might seem trivial, it is scaleable. Google are developing urban spaces where people and their "needs" are tracked and predicted by machine-learning. The resulting information supplied to us is created by matching our behavioural data with the interests of the companies paying Google. Such a Google city would, in a sense, privatise both public space and personal life. As Google's Dan Doctoroff stated, "We ex-

pect to make a lot of money from this."

This does not, however, constitute the kind anti-political authoritarian power that Zuboff suggests. It warps our knowledge of our environment in the interests of commodity-producing capitalists who pay for the services we use via our smartphones. Zuboff speculates about this warping becoming full-on control, although she can furnish few examples of such control.

Several times she uses the example of leased cars refusing to start if the payments are not kept up — hardly the harbinger of a new authoritarian system and not the kind of coup that she is seeking to demonstrate.

She suggests that the incipient technology of insurance companies gathering data on policy holders' driving habits is a threat to liberty. Zuboff's objections are of an anti-social libertarian type — what if I am late and have to drive recklessly, I don't want my insurance premium to go up!

ATOMISED

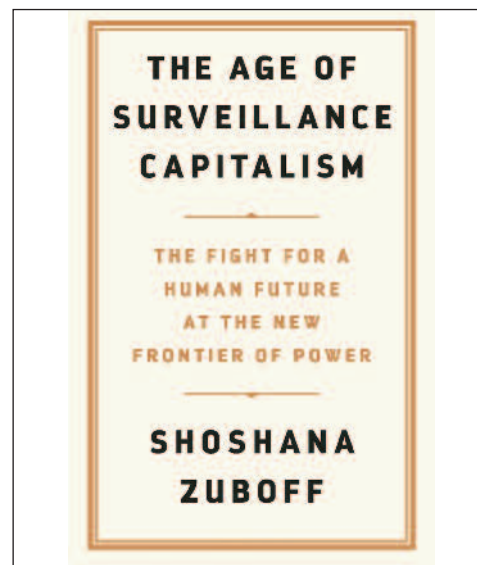
It may be that such surveillance will push onto the individual costs of their own (bad) decisions in an undesirable way, creating a more atomised, self-regarding and fragmented society.

People with unhealthy lifestyles could be forced pay more for their health insurance, although Zuboff has a tendency to blame the surveillance (the cost of health insurance going up) rather the capitalism (a market in health care and health insurance). Her implied solution is a regulated market, spreading costs between individuals with different lifestyles (very Obamacare).

This vague social liberalism contains sharp fragments of right-wing individualism. She poses the problem of the use of data analysis to predict human behaviour not as one of it being skewed and used by commercial interests, but rather as one of the whole business being antithetical to individual freedom. Similarly, she opposes in principle the collectivism of the "hive mind" which Zuboff sees as being created by online forums, and ignores its potential for new forms of collectivism.

There is much good material in this book, but the idea that capitalism is transformed by such surveillance is overblown. If Zuboff's speculative dystopia has a purpose it is that it will be to encourage more careful and considered research into the cultural, political and economic consequences of the gathering of private data for commercial gain.

Although the digital world is distorted by profit, its technology does extend human potential. Another internet is possible.



Amritsar, a hundred years on

By Len Glover

On 13 April 1919, in Amritsar in the Punjab, India, 50 soldiers under the command of the British General Dyer opened fire on a crowd gathering in the Jallianwala Bagh – a garden cum open area popular for meetings and social or religious gatherings.

Many of the crowd were there to celebrate Vaisakhi, the Sikh New Year. No-one was armed, there were no disturbances, it was peaceful. The British authorities put the number of dead at 379, with more than a thousand injured. The actual number of fatalities will never be known.

After the shootings Dyer returned to British Military Headquarters in Amritsar without bothering to inspect the casualties or offer any medical treatment or assistance to those who were wounded. It is quite possible that many more would have been killed, but the armoured car which accompanied Dyer's detachment could not navigate the narrow streets and had to be left behind.

Indians were horrified and outraged and the massacre was a pivotal event in the growing resistance to British colonial rule in India.

A Commission of Inquiry led by Lord Hunter was critical of Dyer but seen as a whitewash by most Indians.

In Britain the General was hailed as a hero

by the Conservative Party, although he was eventually dismissed from the army... on half pay. There was even a public collection for Dyer, supported by Rudyard Kipling, which raised £26,000, no mean sum in those days.

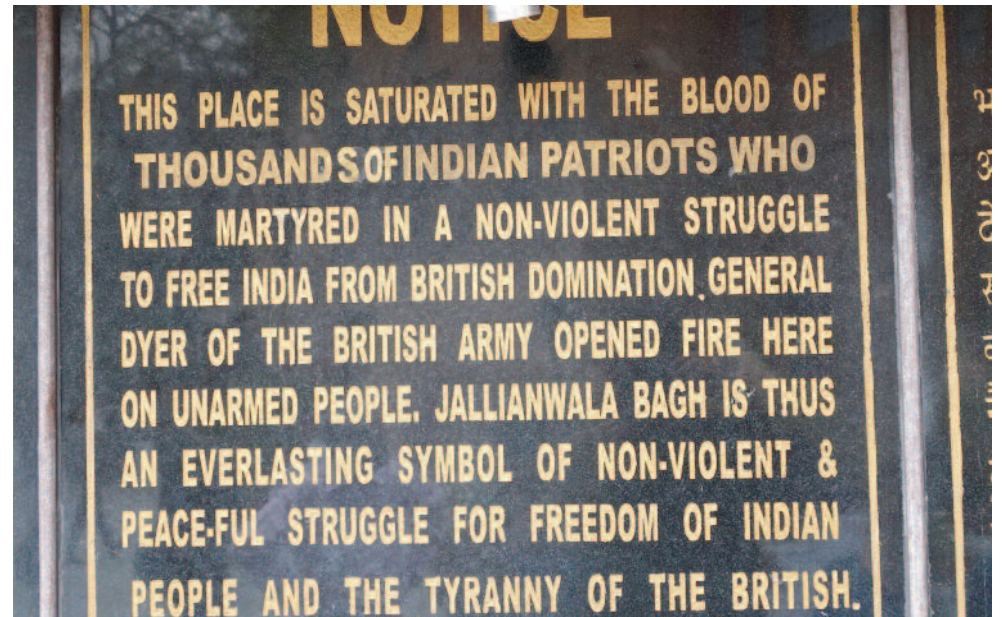
The "Butcher of Amritsar" (the title of a book on Dyer by Nigel Collet, 2005) died in 1927. He was given a standard military funeral in his home village but then, astonishingly, was also given a full ceremonial funeral in London (akin to state funeral). His coffin was conveyed by a gun carriage, to a service in St. Martin-in-the-Fields.

Such honours have usually been reserved for servants of British imperialism of the magnitude of T. E. Lawrence and, much later, Winston Churchill.

In Parliament, Churchill (whose hands were hardly free of blood) argued that the massacre was "...an extraordinary event, a monstrous event, an event which stands out in singular and sinister isolation".

Yet just a few days after the massacre the RAF bombed rioters in Gujranwala, about 50 miles north of Amritsar. In places such as Delhi, Allahabad, Kanpur, and Lucknow, the British Army had carried through huge massacres after the defeat of the Indian Rebellion of 1857-9.

After Amritsar, the British colonial administration attempted to reform the manner of



Memorial plaque at Jallianwala Bagh

its rule in India..

Yet British domination of the Indian sub-continent was still based primarily on military power, intimidation and brutality. Resistance to British rule grew steadily and was to lead ultimately to indepen-

dence.

Acknowledgement, and further reading: *Amritsar 1919: An Empire of Fear and the Making of a Massacre* by K. A. Wagner, Yale University Press, 2019; and a review of that book in *London Review of Books*, 4 April 2019.

The Good Soldier Schwejk



Review

By Jill Mountford

Jill Mountford reviews 'The Good Soldier Schwejk (and His Fortunes in the World War)' — written by Jaroslav Hasek, published 1923, adapted and directed by Christine Edzard, Sands Films, 2017. Currently being shown in Rotherhithe, London, and soon to be released on DVD.

Christine Edzard has made it her mission to revive interest in what was possibly the first satirical comedy about the absurdity of war. She adapted 'The Good Soldier Schwejk' (sometimes spelt Svej, pronounced Shvake) to mark the centenary of World War 1.

It is about a naive and foolish patriot, unquestioningly loyal to the Austro-Hungarian state. Some doctors in the army have officially certified him as an idiot, while others claim he is faking his idiocy to avoid fighting at the front.

He gets caught up in the most ridiculous adventures and he never makes it to the front.

His escapades are laugh-out-loud funny, but are laced with the horrors, misery and degradation of war. Neither Edzard as the film-maker nor Hasek as the creator of Schwejk deprive us of that dimension.

Edzard has chosen an unconventional style in which to make the film: seven live on-stage performances over ten days to a total audience of more than 550 people. With several familiar faces playing the roles, it is a high quality production on a relatively low bud-

get.

It is much more than a filmed stage play. With imaginative, inexpensive sets and a three-piece orchestra, including an accordion, playing pieces by Mozart off-stage, the film is all the better for the chosen format.

Scattered in the audience are characters from the story, and who from the stalls, have their say. The one who stands out most is the swaggering, arrogant top boss of a munitions factory where the Vickers machine guns firing 500 rounds per minute were produced. That was the gun that forced soldiers into trench warfare for their own "protection".

In a critique of the global arms trade Edzard makes it clear that the fundamentals of weapon sales have not changed much since 1918. Arms companies sell weapons to all sides in conflicts, all in the name of profit.

Hasek wrote 'The Good Soldier Schwejk' from his personal experience of the madness, chaos and irrational nature of World War 1. A decade before the war he became an anarchist, and as a young activist helped produce an anarchist publication *Progressive Youth*. He was repeatedly imprisoned during the war for insubordination and showing contempt for officers and war-mongers.

When his books were published in 1923 they quickly became best sellers. They have been translated into 60 languages; were banned for periods by the Czech, Bulgarian and Polish states; and burned by the Nazis.

His work inspired Joseph Heller's *Catch 22*, Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five*, and Joan Littlewood's *Oh, What a Lovely War*. Berthold Brecht continued the story of the Good Soldier Schwejk in a play about World War 2. And it's not hard to see where the inspiration came from for several of the characters in M.A.S.H., the 1970s US comedy set in the Ko-



rean War.

Unlike his character Schwejk, Hasek did see some action in the war. He was captured by the Russians in 1915 and spent a short time in a Czarist prison of war camp.

During the October Revolution Hasek became a Bolshevik. In December 1918 he was recruited to the Fifth Siberian Army. In early 1919 he was given the task of organising a print works in Ufa (it had been partially destroyed in the civil war and Bolsheviks needed it to produce a newspaper for the Red Army). When the White Army overcame the town in March 1920 he was one of the last to leave.

Though he wanted to settle permanently in the Soviet Union he was sent back to Czechoslovakia to help with the newly formed Czech Communist Party. His arrival in Prague was just four days after the failed uprising, and Czech CP members were all imprisoned.

He spent the last two years of his life writing books and sketches including *The Good Soldier Schwejk* and *The Bugulma Stories*, a collection of sketches employing a much gentler humour about his time in the Red Army and the fight against the Whites. He remained

committed to the Russian Revolution to his death.

Bourgeois accounts of Hasek usually fail to mention his Bolshevism and instead focus on him as a satirical writer with an anarchical approach to life, a prankster (while editing a natural history magazine, *Animal World*, he made up exotic animals and advertised a pair of thorough-bred wolves for sale), a heavy drinker, a dog thief (he stole dogs, clipped and dyed their coats, docked their tails and sold them on as rare exotic breeds) and a bigamist (he had a bourgeois marriage in 1910 which effectively lasted a year or so and then secular marriage to a print press worker in Ufa whom he stayed with until his death).

He was all of the above and more. He was someone who seriously considered in whose interests capitalism worked and was firmly on the side of the class who needed to smash it.

The Good Soldier Schwejk is often in "best 50 books you never read" lists. If you like a laugh before you go to sleep then this is a book worth keeping on the bedside table.

And the film is worth more than a peek once out on DVD.

Dangerous nonsense: Bower on Corbyn

By Dale Street

Every Labour canvasser will have come across him. (And, invariably, it is a he.)

Leering out of his doorway he delivers a deranged tirade about how the country is going to the dogs. Communist-run trade unions. Moscow gold. Economy wrecked by strikes. Scroungers living off the dole. Better off than him, honest hardworking man.

Of course, not a racist. But too many immigrants. Especially Muslims. Bogus asylum-seekers. Should stay in France. Got a council house instead of his daughter. Live off the state. He's accused of racism for telling the truth. In his own country!

And, in the more up-to-date version of this litany of complaints, there is Corbyn – Communist, likes Muslims and terrorists (same thing), disgrace to Britain, hates his own country, go back to Russia, God help us if he ever becomes Prime Minister.

Imagine working up that swivel-eyed screed into a 350-page book, with large excerpts reprinted in the *Daily Mail*. The result is Tom Bower's *Dangerous Hero – Corbyn's Ruthless Plot for Power*.

Oddly, sections of the Labour left are promoting a review of Bower by *Daily Mail* journalist, maverick Tory, and friend-of-Iran Peter Osborne as their favoured critique. No need to resort to such false friends.

Osborne does demolish many of the book's factual inaccuracies. Mostly he wants to tell us that everything Bower has to say about antisemitism is dross too. But on that subject Bower has copied heavily from Dave Rich's and Dave Hirsh's books, which are much more solid than his other sources.

Where Bower has added anything of his own on that, it is as far from the mark as on other issues. He claims that Corbyn saw himself engaged in "a brave personal fight against exploitative Jewish employers of sweatshop labour", while working for the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers in the early 1970s, and that made him antisemitic.

Bower also claims, completely wrongly, that Chakrabarti's report on antisemitism in the Labour Party "declared that any Labour Party members who were guilty of antisemitism should not be disciplined".

Bower's "insights" are mostly drawn not



Tom Bower

from sources but from the sort of imagination that fills the pages of the *Daily Mail*.

The late Eric Heffer MP was "a bullying Trotskyite". Former NUT General Secretary Christine Blower is "a Trotskyist agitator".

Mark Serwotka is "the Trotskyite general secretary of the PCS". Former MP Katy Clark is "a hard-left bruiser". John Mann, however, is "a moderate Labour MP".

Socialist Organiser, a forerunner of *Solidarity*, was "the weekly newspaper representing the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League [Militant tendency]". It was Ken Livingstone's "mouthpiece for the ambitious Trotskyite group inside the Labour Party".

RUBBISH

In the mid-1980s McDonnell was "a member of three Trotskyite groups – the London Labour Party, London Labour Briefing and the Workers Revolutionary Party" (page 91).

Bower forgets that at the same time he was also "a member of Liverpool's Trotskyite Militant Tendency" (page 54). That makes four.

Liverpool was "destroyed by Marxist-led strikes after 1945". The British Medical Association is "under the control of Momentum". Len McCluskey and Jon Lansman "control Labour and, by extension, Jeremy Corbyn".

"Class collaboration" is "the old Marxist notion that the bourgeoisie would eventually unite with the working class". Gramsci advocated that socialists should "ignore the state and Parliament".

"The Red Flag" is "a murderers' anthem". The RMT (not affiliated to the Labour Party) nominated Corbyn for party leader in 2015. And Len McCluskey's son has two mothers: Karie Murphy (page 170) and Jennie Formby (page 279).

In the 1960s and 1970s, writes Bower, Britain suffered from "industrial anarchy orchestrated by communist conspirators". There were "widespread strikes often orchestrated by Marxists or Trotskyists" who were intent on "destroying the country".

"Red Robbo", a British Leyland shop steward, "delighted in furthering the ruin of Britain's motor industry". Trade union leaders, "some of them on Russia's payroll, were sabotaging the economy in order to topple the government".

Corbyn welcomed Britain's "industrial turmoil" as "an opportunity to destroy capitalism". He has "always promoted a Marxist-Trotskyist government" and had "an unvarnished commitment to communism".

Corbyn is dedicated to "destroying Western liberal society", "turning Britain into a communist country" and "destroying



Peter Osborne

Britain's liberal democracy".

As a Haringey councillor in the early 1970s he "wanted citizens to live together in Soviet-style communes". He wanted to "turn the borough into a mini-Marxist state". Corbyn and Lambeth Labour councillor Ted Knight "made no effort to conceal their Trotskyist agenda".

Corbyn and his allies turned Haringey into "a barmy borough". The council "outlawed the use of the word 'immigrant' in its communications, banned Irish jokes, and provided gym mats for lesbian self-defence courses."

Unsurprisingly, "the aspirational white working class fled Islington".

His advocacy of "community politics" is "a euphemism for using the Labour Party to spread revolutionary socialism". His goal is "equality of poverty, not equality of opportunity to earn wealth". He believes in "universal confiscation of the middle class's wealth".

Corbyn was elected Labour leader in 2015 because "none (of his opponents) were brave enough to say outright that a future Labour government should not make life better for skivers than for honest citizens."

Today, Corbyn is surrounded by "fellow Trotskyists, including Len McCluskey and Seamus Milne". And his idea of a day out is to "go to Highgate cemetery and study the grave of Karl Marx".

Mixed in with these delirious outpourings there is a nasty racist undercurrent: Corbyn does not really care about the indigenous white voter. (And only white voters are indigenous.)

Corbyn's vote in the 1992 general election increased because "as usual, he relied on the immigrant vote". In his constituency work, "he was focused on them [new arrivals from Somalia, Pakistan and Bangladesh]".

Corbyn "did not reveal the extent to which British Muslims were beginning to influence his calculations". He believed in "unrestricted Muslim immigration" and did not care that this would "alienate the white working class".

In the 2010 general election (which "Corbyn hoped that the Tories would win") he recognised that his core vote was "low-income families, especially the migrant community" and was "contemptuous of middle-class citizens demanding value for their taxes".

Bower even fails to explain the sub-title of his book. Indisputably, it was only by chance and reluctantly that Corbyn became the left candidate in the 2015 leadership contest. No-one seriously expected him to win.

Where's "Corbyn's Ruthless Plot for Power"?



www.workersliberty.org/books



Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

More online at www.workersliberty.org  Workers' Liberty  @workersliberty

Equalise civil service pay!

By John Moloney

John Moloney is standing for the Assistant General Secretary position in the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), as part of an Independent Left slate for the union's National Executive Committee.

He spoke to *Solidarity* about his election campaign, and PCS's current ballot for industrial action over pay in the civil service.

The union's headline demand is for a 10% pay increase. That has been variously interpreted as a demand for a 10% increase to the overall civil service pay budget, or a 10% increase per worker. The Independent Left argues that the union should foreground the demand for the equalisation of civil service pay.

Currently, there are literally dozens of different pay rates for the same grade within the civil service. "Executive Officer", the most common civil service grade, has 60 or 70 different pay rates across different departments and areas.

The union does advocate equal pay, but it's not usually a headline demand. We think it may be more effective to mobilise people around the demand for equal pay than around a percentage figure.

The pay ballot campaign is making steady progress. The sense amongst activists is that we may make it to the 50% turnout, but it is extremely hard work. The national union was better prepared going into this ballot, after we missed the thresholds in a previous national ballot, and there's a sense of grim



determination to get the result. The ballot opened on 18 March and closes on 29 April.

Although the focus is understandably on getting the vote out, there are discussions ongoing about what kind of action we should take if we get the necessary turnout. Independent Left has argued for a varied industrial strategy to maximise impact, combining mass national strikes with selective strikes in particular departments.

It's likely there'll be an initial one-day national strike, followed by selective actions in departments and regions, possibly supplemented with further national walk-outs, possibly over half days. There is a consensus that we need a more varied and creative approach to action in this dispute. That's positive, and very necessary, as it's likely we'll need to prepare for a prolonged dispute.

Although the government is in crisis, we can't expect them to cave. The Tories could solidify around opposing a union dispute amongst government workers.

We should bolster our industrial action by seeking political support, primarily from the Labour Party

but also from parties like the SNP. It's also not inconceivable that the DUP, which relies on working-class supporters, could come under some pressure from their own base if we take action in Northern Ireland.

In terms of the Assistant General Secretary and National Executive Committee election campaigns, Independent Left is running its most vibrant campaign ever. We have a good social media presence and have already begun mass leafleting at workplaces, with more planned.

There've been two hustings with the three AGS candidates (myself, Chris Baugh, and Lynn Henderson) so far, with several more planned in various parts of the country, where members can question the candidates first hand. The two that have happened so far have been comradely debates where discussions have focused on real issues in terms of how we organise around industrial issues and how we win, so I'm hopeful that, whoever wins the AGS election, those discussions having taken place will put us in a stronger position to build and win disputes.

Our basic policies for rank-and-file democracy, such as the policy that all full-time officials should be elected and should be paid an average PCS members' wage, rather than their current inflated salaries, are getting out to more people than they ever have before.

Getting those policies out there and building a layer of people prepared to fight for those kinds of democratic reforms is the start of fundamentally transforming the union.

Jackie Walker: the curtain comes down

On 27 March Jackie Walker was expelled from the Labour Party. Her case had been running for three years, since she was first suspended from the Labour Party in May 2016.

Back in 2016, we opposed her suspension — for remarks which surely had antisemitic connotations, but were offhand fragments from social media and meetings — though we supported her removal from the position of vice-chair of the Labour left group Momentum.

Walker eventually got her case heard by a National Constitutional Committee panel whose members, on their records, were neither right-wing nor likely to be unreceptive to a reasoned defence. Then Walker quit the hearing without offering a defence, on the grounds that she was not allowed to make an open-

ing statement. (But regular court proceedings don't start with a statement from the defendant...)

The groups organised around Walker's three-year campaign — Labour Against the Witch-hunt, Jewish Voice for Labour, Labour Representation Committee — have been subdued. They have got signatures for a letter to the *Guardian* (which wasn't published, though another was), but it comes across only as "making the record".

By contrast, over the three years, Walker and her associates have campaigned to present the whole life of the Labour Party as a drama pivoted around themselves. Their hostility to Israel makes them the main target of the conservative forces, and almost all complaints about antisemitism in the Labour Party are concoctions by those conservative forces. "Right-wing" is

pretty much identified with "pro-Israel". So has gone the story, with a film, a touring one-woman show, attendance at international conferences, and more.

Maybe some have become half-aware that this agitation, by automatically disqualifying almost any concern about antisemitism, paints itself into the antisemitic corner.

Substantively, not to expel Walker would have been a slap in the face for all the Jewish Labour Party members raising concerns about antisemitism.

We accept the NCC's decision. We argue for it to be a spur to the discussion and education on antisemitism (including its modern variants sailing under the "anti-Zionist" flag) which the Labour leadership has lamentably failed to develop.

Four days or 996?

By Rhodri Evans

A group of Labour Party members, has launched a campaign to cut the standard working week to four days rather than five, with no loss of pay.

It's a good initiative, at a time when, for almost the first time since the early 19th century, and despite all the talk about new technologies displacing human labour, average work hours per week are now increasing.

From 1945 to the early 1980s, workers shortened their average work week at rate of about 20 minutes per year. Then the decrease slowed to five or 10 minutes a year. After 2008 progress stalled, and now it is being reversed, at the same time as retirement ages are rising and more and more working-age people are in jobs (of sorts).

Unions need to push back. And where workers do not have independent unions, as in China, they need them.

About the same time as the "Labour 4 Day Week" campaign launched, Jack Ma, boss of China's biggest internet company, Alibaba, (and a member of the Chinese "Communist Party") declared:

"If you join Alibaba, you should get ready to work 12 hours a day, otherwise why do you come to Alibaba? We do not need those who comfortably work 8 hours".

He told workers they would have to toil 9am to 9pm, six days a week — "996" — and like it.

@Labour4DayWeek



A new pamphlet from Workers' Liberty summarises our arguments on Brexit, Europe, international solidarity, free movement, immigration, and how to build socialist politics cross-borders.

40 pages A4. Cover price £4. With postage — non-UK £6, UK £5. Cheap rates for bulk orders: four for £15, ten for £35, twenty for £60.

• Buy online at bit.ly/r-rebel

York Deliveroo to strike

By Zack, IWGB National Deliveroo Committee Chair

York couriers will strike on Friday 19 April, following previous very impactful strikes.

They will hold a “flash strike”, a tactic aiming to maximise disruptions while minimising pay lost.

They have announced that they will strike between 5pm and 10pm, but only three of those five hours, to be announced on the day.

Nottingham couriers held another protest on Friday 12 April, demanding higher pay and better working conditions.

It was organised by Nottingham Riders’ Network — IWGB, and comes as part of national rolling actions and strikes. Nottingham have had multiple previous strikes and are planning more on the Mayday weekend.

Deliveroo brought an advertising bus into Nottingham that day, distributing food, leaflets, and discount vouchers. The protest was kept secret so that the bus wasn’t cancelled, and the protest could have maximum impact. As part of the national rolling strikes, couriers travelled from elsewhere to show solidarity. Several Nottingham-based socialists also joined to show solidarity.

We held a lively rally by the bus, with chants, loudspeakers and flags. We did not discourage members of the public from taking free food, but we did systematically talk to them and give them leaflets about our pay and conditions. Many were shocked and wanted to support our struggles.

Tom Harrington, national Couriers’ and Logistics Branch Secretary, said:

“Nottingham riders haven’t just built a union they’ve built a community, and that was apparent on Friday. Riders stood side by side with climate change protesters, volunteers for the homeless, commu-



Deliveroo riders protest in Nottingham

nity groups and trade unionists, they shared jokes (and burritos) with their fellow workers employed by the PR company running the bus event. The protest was a lively, good humoured affair, with Deliveroo overwhelmingly coming across as the bad guy”.

Deliveroo have been spending vast amounts of money on promotion for expansion, while riders have seen falling hourly pay. We know Deliveroo are feeling the pressure. By undermining Deliveroo’s advertising campaign, this protest put more pressure on.

We’ve won some small steps forward in Bristol, Nottingham and elsewhere. But we won’t be placated and we won’t go away until we properly win our demands for higher pay.

To the press, Deliveroo reiterated their classic claim that “Deliveroo riders earn on average over £10 per hour”. Doing pay analysis on our members in Bristol, so far we’ve found that the average has been below that for half a year. In January, before we hit them with three strikes, it had fallen to below £8/hour, significantly less still if you take into account the costs of being “self-employed”. At best Deliveroo have been doing extremely creative accounting.

Greg Howard, chair of the NRN-IWGB said:

“Deliveroo use false mathematics to calculate average rider earnings, these don’t factor in the costs of being self employed. Our riders are earning well below the national living wage. We continue to campaign in Nottingham for minimum base fee and distance fee increases, along with paid restaurant waits.

“Today, Tuesday 16 April, we will send a demand letter to Deliveroo and request that they meet with us to discuss prior to full strike on 4 May.”

Our first national bilingual bulletin, puncture, has been well received: bit.ly/punc-b.

There is a transnational “platform economy” couriers’ conference to be held the 25-26 April, in Barcelona. The format looks like one of discussions with academic-sounding-titles, rather than attempting to move towards collective discussions.

However, four Deliveroo couriers and IWGB members will go, and it will be a good opportunity to make links, to hear about other people’s struggles, and to tell them about ours.

•Donate to our strike fund: bit.ly/couriersnetwork

Audio and e-reader versions

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper! Links to the audio version on SoundCloud are at www.workersliberty.org/audio.

To be sent our e-reader version of *Solidarity*, email awl@workersliberty.org.

This may be helpful for dyslexic readers. E-readers enable you to choose the font, type size, and line-spacing you prefer, in a completely uncluttered layout.

Please give feedback so that we can find out whether these efforts are worthwhile, and, if they are, improve them.



Our new pamphlet, *The German Revolution*, has Luxemburg’s major articles from 1918-9.

They span from when the 1918-9 German revolution began, and her release from jail, through to her murder by a Social Democratic government protected right-wing militia.

Paul Vernadsky’s introduction tells the story of the German revolution and discusses findings of recent scholarship on it.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage — non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders. Buy online at bit.ly/r1-gr

More on the ISO collapse

In the next issue of *Solidarity* we hope to have further coverage from one of our people who is in Chicago for a while, and will have a chance to talk face-to-face with ex-ISOers and other left-wingers who’ve been able to observe the ISO up close. Chicago was the ISO’s main base. For now we refer readers to another article on our website, bit.ly/iso-mt, though with more questions than answers.



Tickets for our summer school, Ideas for Freedom, are £30 waged, £17 low-waged and students, £7 unwaged until 21 April, and then £38/£22/£9 until 26 May.

Prices will increase in steps until the event, around 22-23 June.

The 22-23 June weekend agenda will include presentations and debates on issues around Brexit, antisemitism, climate change, 1919, 1989, and more. We are continuing to add speakers and events in the run up to the event.

There’ll be a walking tour on

Thursday 20 June looking at “Queer Brixton” and an evening debate on Friday 21 June between Workers’ Liberty and Paul Embury of the Fire Brigades Union on socialists views on Brexit.

Venue: Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 2DB.

Free creche. Overnight accommodation will also be available free. Contact awl@workersliberty.org for further details.

www.workersliberty.org/ideas

NEU votes for primary tests boycott

By David Pendleton

At the conference of the National Education Union (NEU: Liverpool, 15-18 April) the left has won a major and hard-fought-for victory to ballot all primary members for a boycott of all high-stakes summative tests in primary.

That position has been lost at conference for the last four years in favour of vague promises over surveys and building for a future ballot. The architects and main drivers of this victory have been Workers’ Liberty supporters and the main motion was moved by a Workers’ Liberty member.

This is the first conference of the new union, formed by merger of NUT and ATL.

It is a conference of around 1,500 from a union of some 450,000 education workers.

Encouragingly, conference has shown signs of a real determination to fight against the opposition of an allegedly left-wing but do-nothing leadership. Fears that ex-ATL members would move conference to the right seem unfounded. Maybe even the contrary, as they are less factionally loyal and more willing to listen to debate.

The leadership attempted to move a gutting amendment on primary testing, which fell heavily. Another amendment tried to water down the main motion, calling for a members’ survey before a ballot, but after four years of these sort of

equivocations being passed at NUT conference and the leadership not following through, conference voted that down too.

Having lost all the weakening and wrecking amendments the leadership disgracefully attempted to vote down the main motion. The initial vote was close. After a re-vote, the chair, Kiri Tunks, part of the leadership faction, called the motion lost.

The floor refused to accept Tunks’s ruling. In the end she allowed a digital vote, and the motion passed 56.13%-43.87%. The struggle to achieve this had a transformative effect on the mood of conference. Left activists now have a spring in their step and the leadership group are on the back foot.

We have important discussions coming up, and a lot still to fight for at conference. On pay, where the left is arguing for a claim of 10% and a serious strategy to win it. On support staff, where Workers’ Liberty have led the way arguing for an industrial strategy, actively recruiting non-teachers and fighting for bargaining rights for them (we have, largely, pulled the left behind us on this). On fighting the anti-union laws, there is another motion, written by Workers’ Liberty members.

Now we need to take the vote to ballot on boycott and pressurise the leadership to follow through and build in our areas to make it happen and win it.



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For a workers' government

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Labour: stop seeking deal with Tories No Brexit! New public vote!

By Chris Reynolds

More and more Labour activists are demanding that Labour's leaders break off the talks with the Tories on a Brexit deal.

If the last few months of political turmoil have shown anything, it is that no good or acceptable (left alone left-wing) Brexit deal is remotely on the table.

In accord with the wishes of the big majority of Labour members and supporters, the electorate should have a chance to end this mess by a new public vote with an option to Remain.

But the talks are going on in secret, with no report-back other than brief comments to the media by Labour figures. They have been going on for two weeks now, and according to Tory deputy prime minister David Lidington are set to continue until Parliament reconvenes on 23 April, or maybe a few days later.

What has so far stopped a rotten

deal being cooked up and slammed through on the back of "Brexit fatigue" has not been any Labour insistence on working-class or democratic principle, but the Tories' internal divisions.

Theresa May and her close associates would probably be willing to add a customs union with the EU to the "declaration on future relations" (after December 2020) which accompanies their "withdrawal agreement" (stating the conditions for the UK to quit the EU but remain within EU rules for a "transition period").

They have not done so because that step would risk an outright split in the Tory party. But, as the options narrow and political discredit heaps on them, they may yet decide that the risk is the lesser among a string of evils.

That outcome would mean Labour making itself responsible for enabling a rotten Brexit deal and allowing the Tories to get through their crisis with reduced



damage.

The talks are also proceeding – according to the Labour negotiators' words to the press – without any argument between Tories and Labour about free movement and migrant workers' rights.

Yet we know that the Tories' Immigration Bill would give them open-ended powers to enforce drastic restrictions. Their plan is to restrict entry to workers with already-fixed jobs at over £30,000 a year.

So-called "unskilled" workers, on less than £30,000 a year, would only be able to seek permits for twelve months at a time, and be barred from seeking another permit for a further 12 months after each 12 month stint.

Most migrant workers would be reduced to an insecure, temporary, vulnerable status, making it very difficult for them to integrate into society and into the labour movement, or even to enforce what minimal legal rights might remain to them.

The vast majority of Labour members and supporters are for free movement. Either they are positively for it, as such, seeing it as an expansion of human rights and an enrichment of culture and of the labour movement; or they are for Remain or a Norway-Plus variant, and accept that free movement comes with those options.

Some people in Jeremy Corbyn's Leader's Office have been saying that Labour's commitment to a new public vote on any Brexit deal which may get through Parliament applies only if Labour considers the deal a bad one.

That stance can only look like cynical manipulation to the millions who want a new public vote: "you can have your vote if we don't like the deal. But if we do like it, then tough luck". And not just look like that! It's an attitude which can come out of the Leader's Office only because of the dominance in it of long-time Stalinists.

Moreover, even the fudge

passed at Labour's conference in September 2018 explicated a new public vote on the argument that a government which had thought a deal good enough to go through Parliament should not fear to put it to the electorate.

Rather than retreating from its "new public vote" commitment, Labour should be arguing for that new public vote to include EU migrants (who are on the electoral register and vote in local and Euro elections) and 16-17 year olds (who are most affected by the Brexit decision, and voted in Scotland's separation referendum).

Rather than haggling with the Tories, Labour's leaders should be discussing and debating with Labour and trade-union members.

Labour's Brexit policy is scarcely less of a mess than the Tories'.

Labour for a Socialist Europe, Open Labour, and other groups are demanding an urgent special Labour conference to debate out a coherent policy.

•bit.ly/14se-w

Love Socialism, Hate Brexit MPs Tour

The emergence this year of "Love Socialism, Hate Brexit" as a group of left Labour MPs speaking out explicitly against Brexit, and organising with the wider anti-Brexit left, has been a positive development.

It was very helpful for organising the thousands-strong Left Bloc on the 23 March demonstration.

Now LSHB are going on tour, to speak to CLPs, trade union meetings and Momentum groups around the country.

This can help anti-Brexit activists get more organised, draw in new people and continue the discussion with those who are not yet convinced.

•To request a speaker:
bit.ly/lshb-rs.

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