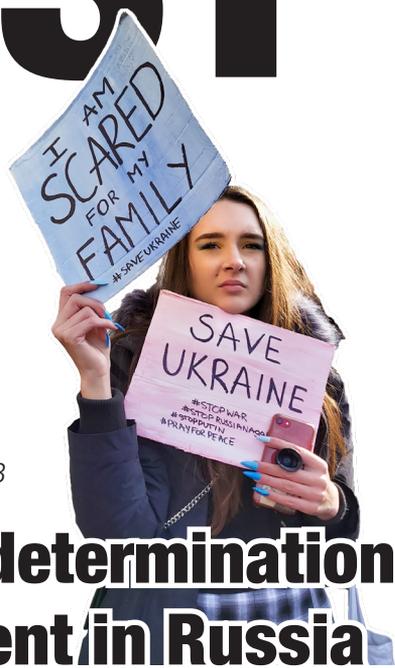




For social ownership of the banks and industry

# SUPPORT UKRAINE AGAINST PUTIN



» Russian troops out

» No trust in NATO

See pages 2-8

» Ukraine has right to self-determination

» Support anti-war movement in Russia

## 20 years ago: the Gujarat pogroms

The sectarian massacre in which Modi started his rise to rule India

Page 9

## Tube strikes on 1 and 3 March

Action against threats to conditions, pensions, and jobs

Page 15

## Biggest cleaners' strike ever

Churchill dispute is biggest railway cleaners' action ever

Page 13

## Connolly and Home Rule #2

The frame for Connolly's 1911 dispute with Walker

Pages 10-12

# Russian troops out of Ukraine!



Early on the morning of Thursday 24 February Russian President Putin appeared on Russian television to announce the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine. Within a few minutes 100 Russian cruise missiles had hit military and government targets across Ukraine and the first wave of Russian troops began to move into Ukraine from three sides.

By starting this war – and appearing at the same time to threaten a much broader conflict – Putin has upset the political equilibrium that has existed in Europe for 30 years, since the collapse of the USSR. The future in Europe now looks more dangerous.

However, from the very first moments of this war the much larger, more technologically advanced Russian armed forces began to meet stiff resistance. The big majority of Ukrainians are bitterly opposed to Russia's war on their country and the misery war is bringing. Across the country civilians have taken up arms to defend their country. Women in Kyiv are making Molotov cocktails in parks. Footage of pensioners berating shamefaced young Russian soldiers has been posted on line as has a film of hundreds of Ukrainians standing in the way of Russian tanks and getting the tanks to back off.

## Barrages

As war started, convoys of Russian army vehicles moved north from Crimea, an area annexed by Russia in 2014, south from the Russian client-state of Belarus, and west from Russia and the Russian-backed mini-states, the so-called Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), in occupied Eastern Ukraine.

The LPR and DPR were also seized by Russia in 2014 and have been run by local Russian-backed warlords acting on Putin's orders.

A simmering, low-level war has taken place around these Russian-controlled enclaves for the last eight years. Around 14,000 people have lost their lives, and many civilians have been displaced. Putin's decision to formally recognise the enclaves was a signal that the war was about to start.

Now, following Russia's new invasion, hundreds of civilians began to die in air strikes and artillery barrages. Within 24 hours 100,000 Ukrainians were displaced, fleeing the fighting; over 30,000 crossed the border into Poland.

There is now an emerging new refugee crisis in Europe. We demand that the UK open its borders to Ukrainian refugees.

As his forces advanced Putin called on the Ukrainian army to overthrow Ukraine's government. He described the government as US controlled, and run by drug addicts and neo-Nazis, but saw the army as a possible corrective. His crude language reveals his hatred and contempt for Ukraine. Putin is an aggressive Russian nationalist who denies Ukraine's right to exist as an independent entity.

Putin's stated aim of invading to "de-Nazify" Ukraine is absurd. It has an elected government, free trade unions, and a Jewish president.

Putin's real war aim is to subordinate Ukraine to his Russian state. The Ukrainian people have the right to self-determination and are right to fight the invasion. We support their fight and demand the immediate withdrawal of Russian troops from Ukraine.

Russia has had a long bloody history of repressing Ukraine. In 1932-3, for example, a famine, known as the Holodomor, was deliberately engineered by Russian Stalinists to crush Ukrainian opposition. It killed eight million Ukrainians.

The people of Ukraine saw the Soviet Union's empire in Eastern Europe collapse in 1989 and the USSR itself break up in 1991. Ukraine became an independent state in 1991. In a referendum in December 1991 92% voted to back independence. In eastern Ukraine, where there are more Russian-speakers, 80% voted for independence.

Ukraine asserted itself against Russia following the Euromaidan protests at the end of 2013. In February 2014 a corrupt Russian-backed Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, was overthrown after refusing to sign off an agreement which would bring Ukraine closer to the EU. Since that point Putin's Russia has been targeting Ukraine.

It is not yet clear how Putin intends the war to end. It is probable that he wants to seize and keep much more Ukrainian territory, to overthrow the government, and to impose a treaty on a rump Ukraine which leaves the country permanently subservient to Russia. Sergei Lavrov, Putin's thuggish, cynical Foreign Minister called for talks following the surrender of Ukrainian forces. Putin offered talks in the Belarussian capital, Minsk, a country run by a brutal dictator, Alexander Lukashenko, who is beholden to Putin. Talks in Minsk have been refused by the Ukrainian government which points out that Belarus was a willing junior partner to the invasion.

It is possible that Putin will try again to enlist the help of European leaders to force Ukraine to sign a lousy deal to end the war. We oppose any attempt by the leaders of France and Germany, or others, to help sign away Ukrainian rights.

The US suspects that Russia intends to assassinate the Ukrainian leadership and offered to remove President Volodymyr Zelensky to safety. Rightly Zelensky refused, saying he should stay and needed "ammunition, not a ride." Belatedly the US, Germany and Netherlands have started to provide Ukraine with new supplies of anti-tank and surface to air missiles to defend the country. The West should send military equipment to Ukraine.

Zelensky's government has asked for EU membership, which is currently denied. As an act of solidarity and as a measure of political protection EU membership should be granted to Ukraine.

The Ukrainian state has also, understandably, demanded sanctions against Russia. In general sanctions are not our preferred weapon. They are implemented and controlled by governments – like our own – who represent our capitalist class-enemy, and so are unreliable. They can have unpredictable, counter-productive consequences. Sanctions might even strengthen Putin's grip on power in Russia, allowing him to present himself as the victim of the West.

## Deterrence

On the other hand who could oppose, for example, attempts to seize the money of Putin's immediate circle? Not that such measures are likely to deter Putin.

Our method is international working-class solidarity. We campaign to defend the free Ukrainian unions, which are solidly against the Russian invasion. We demand the release of the many hundreds of brave people arrested in Russia for taking a stand against Putin's war. We know that there are two Russias: the authoritarian, mafia-Russia of Putin, and the progressive Russia of the anti-war left.

We advocate in Britain for the left and labour movement to do as we do. The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, has rightly stated that the UK must do "all we can to help Ukraine defend herself, by providing weapons, equipment, and financial assistance, as well as humanitarian support for the Ukrainian people."

Unfortunately, Starmer is also using the misguided support given by a few Labour left MPs to the Stop the War campaign to clamp down on left dissenters inside the Labour Party. We agree that the misnamed Stop the War campaign, which in the run-up submerged criticism of Putin in talk about NATO, and includes plenty of people who have supported Putin, should not be supported. That requires debate and political argument, not bureaucratic suppression of the Labour left.

It was good to see Labour MPs John

McDonnell and Clive Lewis backing Ukraine at the massive protest outside Downing Street on Saturday 26 February. Aslef and the National Union of Mineworkers are actively backing Ukraine, but where are the other unions and their leaders? And it is an absolute scandal that, aside from Workers' Liberty, most of the far left, including Socialist Worker and the Socialist Party, have not supported the protests for Ukraine. They have stayed away.

The excuse the far left uses to stand back while Ukraine burns and Putin tries to rip the country apart is that our main enemy in the UK is NATO. What an idiotic position! To emphasise opposition to NATO, now, in this war, where NATO is refusing to fight, is to do damage to political reality. The actual, real war in front of us is being conducted by a far-right Russian government which is viciously nationalist and imperialist against a smaller, much weaker country, with the aim of ending its sovereignty and its pro-Western democracy. What's too complicated to understand?

Opposition to this war must mean opposing Russian troops and defending Ukraine. It is now so obvious that sections of the Labour left, brought up on a diet of anti-Americanism and the idea that our enemy's enemy is our friend, have become deeply confused and disoriented. Some refuse to discuss the issue at all. They would do better to rethink.

On Friday 25 February the Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova threatened "military and political consequences" against Finland and Sweden if they attempted to become NATO members. The threat is outrageous. Of course we oppose NATO and would not want these states to join. NATO's chief concern is a deal to get stable relations with Putin, and it might well sacrifice Ukrainian self-determination for that if it could. But membership, or not, of NATO, is for Finns and Swedes to democratically decide, not for Putin to dictate using threats of war to bully them.

It is Putin's nationalist war and aggressive imperialism that is driving smaller states in Eastern Europe to rally around NATO. They want protection from the very real threat posed by Russia under Putin and cannot see anything better than NATO. They believe, quite reasonably, that Ukraine might well have avoided invasion if it had been already a NATO member.

Workers' Liberty will continue to fight for human freedom and advocate a future based on solidarity and workers' democracy. Help us. Join us, and fight for workers' liberty.

Freedom for Ukraine! Defend the Russian anti-war activists! Russian troops out of Ukraine! □

# A very short history of NATO

By Matt Cooper

NATO's history is that of an organisation constrained by the different (often imperialist) interests of its member states. It is dominated by imperialist states, but is not in fact a deployable supranational imperialist attack-force.

The motivation for NATO in the late 1940s came from European powers, particularly France and Britain, not the USA. They were responding to the coups against elected multi-party governments in Soviet occupied Eastern Europe in 1948 and the Berlin Blockade later that year. Many thought that the USSR now had designs on parts of western Europe. Powers like France and Britain did not want to commit forces they needed to try to hold on to what remained of their empires. Thus, collective security was never the whole story of NATO.

When NATO was formed it explicitly

ruled out involvement in protecting European powers' empires. The USA, cooler at first, came to see NATO as important in ensuring that European powers, including a rearmed Germany, were a solid military bloc against the USSR, and freeing the USA for operations in other parts of the world. The USA strengthened this view after the Korean War (1950-1953), in which NATO played no part.

After Korea, the US led in creating permanent Europe-based structures for NATO. At times the alliance was strained, for example over the French-British invasion of Suez in 1956, which was vehemently opposed by the US. Where European powers conducted colonial operations in a Cold War context (France in Vietnam, Britain in Malaya, and so on) NATO played no part.

This cut both ways. Although the US

was keen for NATO to play a part in broader Cold War operations, NATO's European members would not unite behind it. NATO members were unwilling to join in the USA's escalating war in Vietnam from the early 1960s. NATO didn't fire a shot in anger during the Cold War.

At the end of the Cold War in 1990 NATO developed a role of stabilising Europe, notably after Yugoslavia disintegrated and Serbia sought to domi-

nate, with its attempt to crush Bosnia's Muslim population in 1995, and a similar project in Kosovo in 1999.

The "expansion east" of NATO since 1994 is far from a project of imperial expansion. It was carried out in a period of post-cold war optimism that united the West European and US ruling classes in acceding to the ex-Eastern-bloc states' desire to integrate into an expanded Europe, not a drive to annex those states. □

## Open door for Ukrainian refugees!

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement has [called](#) for visa waivers and safe and legal routes for refugees from Ukraine to come to Britain. It is pushing against the Tories' grain. Russia annexed Crimea in 2014, and as a result 14,000 people were killed and 2,704 civilians were injured. Between Jan 2014 and Dec 2021 (reports journalist [Sian Norris](#)) a total of 661 asylum claims were made in the UK by refugees from either Crimea or Ukraine. 436 were refused and 167 people withdrew their application. □

## Workers' boycotts can hit Putin

By Sacha Ismail

On 27 Feb Unite the Union [declared](#) it would support its members at the Flotta terminal in the Orkney islands and at Sullam Voe in the Shetland islands, north of Scotland, if they boycotted a Russian government-owned oil tanker due to arrive soon.

The local councils, the Scottish government, and the UK government had batted the issue back and forth for a little while, seemingly unwilling to act. It may be that the threat of

workers' action pushed them. Now the UK government has said it will stop Russian-owned or connected ships from docking in the UK.

In general we do not support long-term blanket boycotts of whole countries. But workers' action specifically to target states and push demands like Russian withdrawal from Ukraine is another matter.

In 1999, when East Timor voted for independence and Indonesia deployed paramilitary groups, alongside its oc-

cupation army, for mass killings in retaliation, Australian unions [organised](#) large (and entirely illegal) boycotts of trade with Indonesia. Those helped force Indonesia to withdraw, both through directly and in their influence in making organisations such as the IMF withhold financial support for the Indonesian government.

That should be a model. □

- Speeches on defending Ukraine against Russian Imperialism at [youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK](https://youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK)

## Cuba defends Russian imperialism

By Sacha Ismail

The government of Cuba, which calls itself socialist, has essentially backed Russia in the Ukraine conflict.

While insisting that it "deeply regret[s] the loss of life" and that "the Cuban people had and have a close relationship with the Ukrainian people", the "[Declaration of the Revolutionary Government](#)" repeatedly blames the US and NATO for the war in Ukraine, says the "use of force" is a result of the denial

of Russia's "just claims" and suggests the war is about "Russia ha[ving] a right to defend itself".

Cuba fought off a US-sponsored invasion in 1961 and has had to defend its self-determination against various forms of US aggression, including the economic embargo, for decades.

That has not made its ruling bureaucracy sympathetic to other countries fighting for self-determination if they're in the wrong international "camp". □

## Defend the right to criticise NATO

By Mohan Sen

Keir Starmer has forced 11 left-wing MPs to withdraw their signatures from a Stop the War Coalition [statement](#) on the grounds that Labour MPs cannot oppose or criticise imperialist military alliance NATO. Media reports say the MPs were threatened with withdrawal of the party whip. And the party machine has seized control of the Young Labour (YL) [Twitter](#) account on the same basis – and now Starmer has apparently cancelled this year's [YL conference](#)!

The left should not support the Stop the War Coalition, which consistently apologises for Russia and anti-Western imperial powers. And Young Labour's weakening and bureaucratisation under "left" leadership since 2016, intertwined with Stalinist-influenced politics, is a huge problem. One result is that, because its "left" leadership has failed to build any real Labour youth movement, actually shutting down YL's internal democracy and life further itself,

it is now in no position to resist Starmer effectively.

Starmer's moves are an outrageous attack on Labour democracy. Even Tony Blair never threatened to purge MPs or shut down party units for criticising NATO. The reported cancellation of YL conference, as well as outrageous in itself, is yet another step in the leadership simply declaring changes in the party from above.

And while the idea that NATO is as much to blame as Russia for the war in Ukraine is ludicrous – this is fundamentally a war of Russian imperialist aggression – NATO remains far from a benign force. It is [imperialist](#).

In the days ahead the left and labour movement should focus on opposing Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But we should also maintain our independence from and criticism of the NATO powers, and resist attempts by Starmer and co. to intimidate dissidents. □

- On Stop the War and Ukraine: [bit.ly/stw-ukr](https://bit.ly/stw-ukr)

## Upcoming meetings

Workers' Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom (unless otherwise stated).

**Wednesday 2 March, 7pm:** Defend Ukraine, against Russian Imperialism – New Cross Learning, London, SE14 6AS

**Sunday 6 March, 6:30pm:** Capital study group

**Tuesday 8 March, 6pm:** Students – History of International Women's Day – The Pack Horse, Leeds, LS2 9DX

**Wednesday 9 March, 2pm:** Students – The Russian Revolution, when workers took power – Brunei Gallery, SOAS, London

**Wednesday 9 March, 6pm:** Students – The Bread Trick, Sheff.

**Thursday 10 March, 7pm:** India's elections: has the farmers' revolt thrown back Modi? – Details TBC

**Sunday 12 March, 9:30am:** Green Bans, Red Union – Q&A + Book Club

**Sunday 12 March, 9:30am:** Lessons of Saltley Gate and 1972, a year of strikes

**For our calendars** of events, updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, [see workersliberty.org/events](#) or scan QR code □



# Russians defy arrests to oppose war

By Michael Baker

Since the start of a widespread invasion of Ukraine on 24 February, the Russian people have mobilised impressively in anti-war protests and dissent. On the first evening, protests in around 60 cities saw enormous numbers of participants, leading to the arrest of over 1,800. OVD-Info reports over 5,000 arrests overall in the days since (at time of writing).

None of the protests have been sanctioned by local or national authorities, making the mere act of participation a criminal offence. Police have arrested and abused with impunity, and the government have introduced new measures to dissuade protesters and other Ukrainian sympathisers: for example, any financial help to Ukraine (including minor crowdfunding donations) while the war is ongoing will now be classed as treason, and carry a potential prison sentence of up to twenty years. Still, the protests continue.

Resources like [OVD-Info](#) are once again invaluable – created during protests against election corruption in 2011, the group tracks the arrest of protestors, and coordinates legal aid for those arrested. Their large following on Facebook may be one reason for the government's threat to block the social media site while the war is still ongoing. The popular messaging app Telegram has also become a focal point once more: its "channels" feature allows the quick distribution of text, images and videos to thousands of followers, invaluable during widespread protest and military aggression that state-owned news media refuses to report on.

On Sunday 27th, Telegram founder Pavel Durov suggested, most likely under pressure from the government, that the app could "consider [...] restricting the operation of Telegram channels in the countries involved for the duration of the conflict" due to potential misinformation, but after a strong backlash he backed down, and agreed that channels would stay open.

The sustainability of in-person protests is unclear: the numbers of protesters have dropped in the days since the initial strong wave, and with no central organisation it's hard to picture the public committing to protests that will almost certainly involve police violence and the risk of arrest or losing your job. But the protests are by no means dead, and anti-war sentiment across the country remains strong.

Celebrities from all walks of life – footballers, TV personalities, singers, even the daughters of some senior government members – have voiced concern and grief, often repeating what seems to have become an unofficial slogan, "No to War". One online petition has gathered over 600,000 signa-

tures, and much like in other countries, a huge array of open letters and group statements have proliferated online.

The Russian state has opted for war almost without reservation, but the majority of the public seem not to have followed suit. Putin's own messaging over the last eight years has focused on painting Russia and Ukraine as "brotherly nations" that have more common traits than differences. This is now being echoed in messages on social media and at protests, where people rightly question the idea of declaring war on their "brothers", for no benefit to the Russian or Ukrainian people.

The Russian left has been present in the vast majority of anti-war protests, although as the uncoordinated and spontaneous nature of the demonstrations would suggest, their role is more participating and trying to shape slogans and engagement than any prominent organising or leading efforts.

The first leftists were arrested before the invasion itself began: on Tuesday 22nd, Kirill Medvedev and Sergey Tsukasov, activists from the Mandelitte Russian Socialist Movement (RSD), were arrested for holding signs outside a government building in Moscow, criticising Putin's recognition of the DNR and LNR as independent states. The RSD, who have connections to one of Ukraine's few currently active socialist groups, [Sotsialnyi Rukh](#), has been vocal and unanimous in opposing the war, and has tried to pull other elements of

into opposing Putin's actions.

In a statement on Thursday 24th, they released an open address "To all members of the KPRF", the official Russian Communist Party, referencing the Leninist roots both groups claim, and calling for members to actively oppose the party's pro-government and pro-war stance. "Comrades! Do you really want our sisters and brothers to die in the trenches, while the Zyuganovs and Taisaevs [KPRF leaders] sit in their comfy armchairs in the state дума?"

## Expulsion

The statement encouraged members to speak out, and said that if they were expelled from the party, the RSD would "extend a comradely hand" and "welcome them into our ranks". Since the 24th, several members of the KPRF (including elected deputies Oleg Smolin, Mikhail Matveev and Vyacheslav Markhaev) have publicly called for an end to the invasion, but as of yet there has been no news either of expulsions or defections.

The Russian branches of both the International Socialist Alternative and the International Marxist Tendency have also been vocally anti-war and present in protests, with members of both groups arrested en masse. The fallout of the arrests will take a while to clarify, but given the left's loud support for the protests, it would not be surprising to see socialist activists and organisers faced with heavy sentences and fines for inciting violence, something many

of them will be familiar with after years of encroaching persecution by the government.

The KPRF are not the only group to suffer from conflicting internal opinions, nor the only group to avoid publicly opposing Putin's invasion: on 26 February, Alexey Sakhnin announced that he was leaving the executive committee of Left Front, a group he helped found, after the central committee voted against his proposal to denounce the invasion as imperialist.

Left Front was an amalgam group founded in 2005, with any number of conflicting opinions within it ranging from social democracy to Stalinism. Sakhnin lamented the influx into the party in recent years by members who supported the parliamentary programme of the KPRF, after Left Front decided to work closely with the KPRF to increase visibility (a decision Sakhnin still defended in his resignation statement). The new members supported the KPRF line on Ukraine, and eventually came to form an ideological majority within the organisation. Left Front is not particularly large, but it was a significant force around the 2012 protests, and Sakhnin's decision to leave is a noteworthy event in the landscape of the Russian left.

## Outliving

Anti-war protest has something of a tradition of producing structures and organisations that outlive the present conflict, and the invasion of Ukraine is proving no exception. One promising development is the foundation of the Feminist Antiwar Resistance, a coalition between multiple feminist groups and organisations with links to the editorial board of dissident student journal *Doxa*. In a [manifesto](#) published this week and translated into English for *Jacobin* magazine, the group notes that the feminist movement in Russia is one of the spheres of activism least badly affected by the past decade of government repression, which gives it a responsibility to leverage its platform and promote new struggles in any way it can. The group aims to loosely coordinate the actions of different feminist groups, collating information and spreading ideas for agitation and organisation without directly coordinating or instructing individual groups on what to do. Depending on the execution of this plan, this is a smart approach to modern Russian activism, and it's encouraging to see a generation of young activists taking on their government through whatever means available, even in the face of daunting odds.

Solidarity with the Russian and Ukrainian workers, solidarity with the Russian anti-war movement, and down with the Russian invasion of Ukraine! □

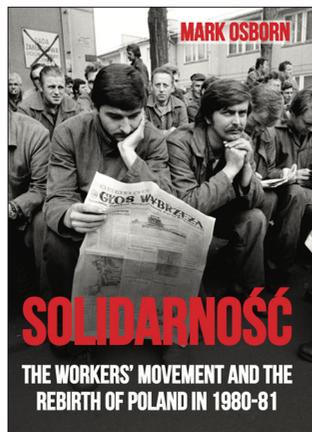


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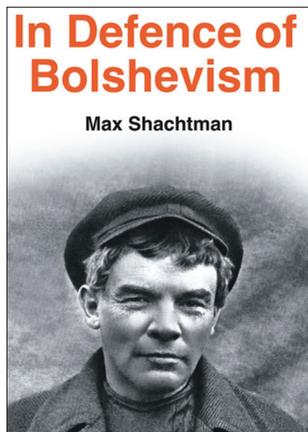
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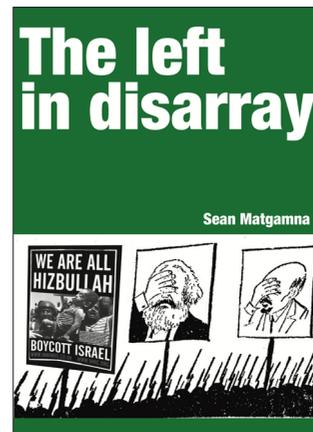
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A protestor arrested by police in St. Petersburg.



Pics: Avtozak Live Subscribers /Telegram

A sign that reads "No war."

# What anti-war Russians want you to know

By **Rett Perera**

It's Sunday night in central Moscow, and Rosgvardia, President Vladimir Putin's personal military force, is out in full force. It's been four days since war was waged against Ukraine and since then, a heavy police presence has dominated the centre of the city, with paddy wagons for protestors lined up and ready. In metro exits near Moscow's usual protest site, barriers are up. Everything is in place to make sure any anti-war protests can be quickly contained with perpetrators swiftly rounded up.

## The Russian enemy

On Thursday, 24 Feb 2022, the world woke up to news that would at once grip the entire planet: after weeks of mounting tension, threats, and uncertainty, Russia had invaded Ukraine. And Russia had gone in big.

Even as the war continues with new threats of Putin ordering his defence chiefs to put nuclear "deterrence forces" on alert while protests and marches opposing the war proceed around the world, global leaders continue to come out strongly against Putin's actions. US President Joe Biden blasted his Russian counterpart's actions as unprovoked and unjustified. "Russia alone is responsible for the death and destruction this attack will bring," he said, while similar comments were made by leaders of Germany, France, the EU, and beyond.

And while these statements are heard loud and clear along with the flight bans, sanctions, and financial ramifications they bring, many of Russia's citizens are desperate to have their voices heard, too.

For many, one word stands out: shame.

## Disbelief and shame

When he first heard about the invasion, Moscow resident Evgeny, 34, was overcome with shame – and a sense of absolute helplessness. "The Russian government is criminal," he said, "and the president does not represent the people of Russia."

For Kirill, a 26-year-old from St. Petersburg, it was disbelief. "I couldn't believe it," he said. "Until recently, I thought that this invasion of Ukraine would not happen."

This disbelief has since given way to anxiety and embarrassment. "It became very embarrassing for the state," said Kirill, "And I began to worry about my Ukrainian friends. I want to scream: Stop! Stop it! – This can't be. I oppose the war!"

In Russia's capital, while businesses continue to operate and services run without any delay, an unmistakable weight hangs on the shoulders of many – besides a shared border, many Russians have Ukrainian roots, family, or friends.

"I feel paralysed," said Yulia in Moscow. "Like I can't do anything to help my family in Ukraine. Like I am somehow responsible for what is happening though I did not choose nor this war, nor this president."

And while this opposition is not representative of the entire country – recent independent Levada polls revealed that 40 percent of Russians did not support the official recognition of the Donetsk and Luhansk "people's republics:" by the Russian authorities, but 45 percent did – around the country and on the internet, Russians who oppose the war have come together to make clear to the world, and to the government, that this move is not one they can or do support.

"When I first heard the news I felt shocked," said Gaya, 22, in Moscow. "I couldn't believe that in 2022, someone could do something like that – it's really strange. This isn't the middle or dark ages, where people can kill each other

to get something [they want]."

For her, too, it is sadness and shame that hangs over her.

"Now, I feel kind of ashamed, I feel kind of sad, part of me is angry," Gaya said. "The Ukrainian people have families, they have kids, they have jobs. And even though they say no civilians will be harmed? I don't believe that."

## What happens next?

With an uncertain economy and ongoing war aggression, the mood in Moscow and other cities remains bleak. While protests rage around Europe and the rest of the world, the narrative is complicated in Russia. Independent monitor OVD-Info reported that on Sunday, at least 2,114 anti-war protesters were detained across 45 cities throughout the country, bringing the total to above 5,000.

"There have already been protests, but we have no right to speak here!" said Kirill. "We are very afraid! My friends have already been arrested because they went to a rally against the war."

Heartbroken and ashamed, it is this feeling of helplessness that dominates, even as the war worsens and international retaliation revs up, leaving war-opposing Russians in the restless and devastating middle.

"I still feel frozen and unable to do anything," Yulia said. "I'm scared for them, for Ukraine and its people, and for myself and Russians, because I don't know what will happen tomorrow."

When markets opened on Monday morning, the ruble plummeted to the lowest rate it has in recent history – surpassing by far even the post-Crimea sanctions and the economic crash that followed. This too, brings regret to Russians who now watch a war they oppose continue to unfold, watching the repercussions of a president who has steered the country deep into international pariah status, an arrogant enemy of the world.

"I know that our future won't be sunny because of what's happening with the ruble now. We're going to get even

poorer than we are now!" Gaya said.

"He calls himself a president but he's a tyrant – that's all I can say."

## What the world needs to know

With an ongoing heavy police presence and a growing number of arrests, the ability to share their voice and protest with their neighbours and the world in any way they can is essential for Russians who do not support the war.

"I'm happy that we live in the age of the internet, so people in Ukraine can see that we are really sorry," Gaya said, "and that we don't want this war."

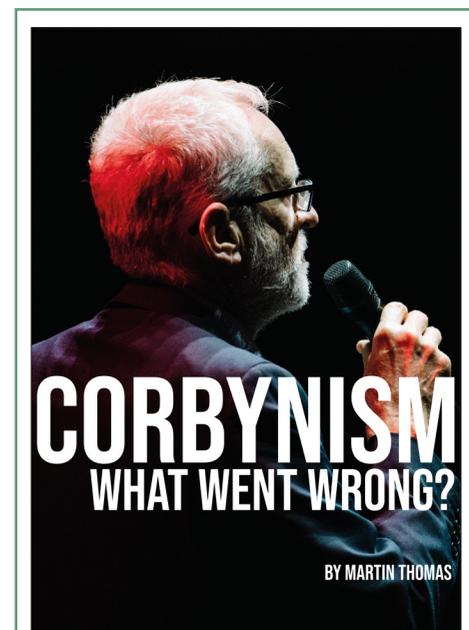
"I want everyone to know that we are *against war!* We don't want all this! We did not elect this president," said Kirill. "Nobody asked me my opinion about Crimea, LPR, DPR. Everything is decided for us! I love Ukraine very much. Help us!"

For Evgeny, it comes down to a simple fact: That the president does not represent the people of Russia. "Peace and love," he said. "Ukraine, stay strong!" □



Corrections

The Chagos islands are north-east of Mauritius, not north-west as in *Solidarity* 625. □



Lessons for socialist activists and the Labour left from the Labour Party under Corbyn 2015-20. 60 pages, £4. □

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# Against Putin, move to renewables



## Environment

By Stuart Jordan

Russia's invasion on Ukraine has revealed the geopolitical and ecological insanity of a European capitalist class addicted to fossil fuels. Russia is the world's largest petro-state, controlling one third of Earth's oil and gas reserves and producing 68% of the world's domestic gas supply. Fossil fuels constitute around 60% of Russian exports and around 40% of government income.

The overwhelming majority of those fossil fuels are bought by European and other NATO countries. The fossil fuel revenue has allowed Putin to amass the third largest military in the world. It also gives him considerable control over Europe's power supply.

Oil and gas prices are at an all-time high, in part due to stockpiling over the winter in anticipation of a Russian invasion. If Putin slows or switches off the fossil fuel supply, or if NATO countries extend sanctions to Russia's fossil interests, then prices will soar further.

Although the European states have taken some tentative steps towards impeding the flow of Russian fossil exports, it is difficult to calculate who would come off worse if a strict embargo was enforced. Russia is increasingly turning to China as a customer for its gas and oil.

In 2014, after the sanctions following the invasion of Crimea, China and Russia signed a \$400 billion 30-year gas deal involving the construction of the 8,000km Power of Siberia pipeline. That pipeline is now operational and another larger pipeline to China is in construction. These factors make Russia less reliant on European fossil fuel revenue. Putin might calculate that he can cause more harm to Europe and the US by switching off the energy supply.

For working-class people across the

world, rising fossil-fuel costs are driving inflation on all commodities, adding to transport, manufacturing, and food prices. The average household in the UK is set for a 54% price hike on gas and electricity bills in April as the government raises the price cap. Petrol and diesel are already at record high prices. Capitalist attempts to get the poorest to shoulder the burden of these rising costs will cost lives.

UK already has the second worst record in Europe for people dying early during winter for lack of heating. Even before the recent rise in fuel, 680,000 lived in fuel poverty and 10,000 of those people die needlessly each winter of cold.

While billions struggle to make wages stretch to cover the basics, the high prices are making bumper profits for fossil capital. BP's chief financial director Murray Auchincloss, told investors this month: "It's possible that we're getting more cash than we know what to do with."

Last year BP made \$12.8 billion; Shell \$19.8 billion; Exxon-Mobil \$23 billion and Chevron \$15.6 billion. Fossil capital's profits are being used to expand operations, which even the very sober International Energy Authority agrees is putting the future of human civilisation at risk.

All the big fossil giants have operations in Russia and are entangled with state-owned fossil companies Gazprom and Rosneft, which themselves have announced record profits this year, filling the coffers of Putin's war machine.

On 27 February BP announced it would "exit" its 19.75% share in Rosneft. CEO Bernard Looney and former CEO Bob Dudley have resigned from their Rosneft directorships. This gesture only highlights the way Big Oil has propped up and empowered autocrats like Putin over many decades.

So far Western governments have doubled down on their commitment to fossil fuels, citing concerns about



Pic: CC BY-SA 3.0 bit.ly/pos-14

Ceremonial joining of Power of Siberia

the firepower of imperialist autocratic petrostates. Liberating Europe and the US from fossil fuel dependency is the most effective way to undermine Putin and ensure energy security going into next winter.

Environmentalist Bill McKibben has argued for a war mobilisation to transition to renewables as an immediate response to the Russian invasion. In solidarity

with Ukraine, the workers' movement should demand governments take control of industrial production, as they did during World War 2, and build the wind turbines, solar panels, heat pumps and smart grids we need to decarbonise our economies.

This technology exists and is available to us given government support. The capitalist classes' unwavering commitment to fossil capital, involving \$5.9 trillion taxpayers' subsidies a year according to the IMF, has brought us freezing cold pensioners, a tyrant threatening World War Three, and climate breakdown.

A rapid transition to renewables would require a radical shift in politics, but the case for that shift is unanswerable. □

gilets-jaunes style protests if prices rise too high. The last few months have seen stockpiling and the opening up new sites of extraction. Coal imports to Europe rose 54% in January.

Also in January, the UK government sanctioned a new coal mine in Wales. Australia and China are increasing their coal production. Shale gas companies in the US which were mothballed during the pandemic have restarted drilling. The American Petroleum Institute, representing Exxon, Chevron, and Shell, is calling on Biden to deregulate and license more sites for extraction.

But burning more carbon is no answer to Putin or for longer-term energy security; and it is incompatible with any liveable future. Decades of oil and gas revenue from Europe has built up

## A third Starbucks unionises

By Angela Paton

On Friday 25 February 2022 the store on Power Rd and Baseline Rd in Mesa, Arizona, became the third unionised Starbucks store in the United States, following Memphis, Tennessee and Buffalo, New York.

Bernie Sanders tweeted: "Congratulations to the workers in Mesa, Arizona for voting overwhelmingly to form the 3rd union shop at Starbucks. The movement to unionise Starbucks is spreading like wildfire. When workers stand up and fight for their dignity, there is no stopping them".

107 stores across 26 states have filed for union recognition, and more workers are organising every day. Starbucks is the world's largest coffee chain, with a full year revenue growth of \$29.1 billion in 2020, an increase of nearly 10% on the previous year. In the last quarter of 2021 alone, they reported revenue of \$8.1 billion, a 31.3% increase compared to 2020.

The company has 33,833 stores world wide, with 8,900 company owned stores in the US (plus 15,444 licensed, i.e. franchised), and 349,000 employees in America.

The first three stores to successfully unionise were in Buffalo, New York in August 2021. The company retaliated by employing new staff in order to dilute the pro-union vote and cut worker hours to try to get pro-union workers to quit, but the union still won.

The workers feel issues previously ignored before the pandemic have come to the forefront, and they feel let down by the company, which has removed benefits and hazard pay and reduced safety measures and protections.

Starbucks has tried gambits like "we can't read the [pro-union] signatures, they aren't clear enough". They also forced out the manager of the Mesa store while she was battling cancer (after working while she was sick because she was denied paid leave and had her health insurance cancelled) for exposing the company's union busting efforts

These unionisation efforts signal new ways of organising workers, with the use of social media, particularly Twitter, @SBWorkersUnited. The average age of organisers and workers is 24.

Other unions and workers must support these unionisation drives against the backdrop of increased union activity during Striketober in 2021 and provide the young workers with the tools they need in their fight. □



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# Colombia decriminalises abortion



**Women's  
Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

A recent decision from the Colombian constitutional court will decriminalise abortion. Last month, the court voted that it would be legal to terminate pregnancies until the 24th week. Previously, abortion in Colombia was only legal in certain situations; pregnancy resulting from rape or incest, foetal abnormality meaning life outside womb would be untenable or danger to mother's physical or mental health. The punishment for illegal abortions was up to four and a half years in prison.

The constitutional court voted five to four to decrimi-

nalise abortion in Colombia. Colombia now has some of the best abortion rights in the world.

Campaigners point out that the majority of abortions take place a lot earlier than 24 weeks but say longer term limits protect those who need it most. For various reasons, women who seek abortions after the first trimester are often the poorest, most vulnerable, or have been victims of rape.

Until recently Colombia has some of the most restrictive abortion laws in the world. Prior to 2006, Colombia had a total ban on abortion with no exceptions. A 2006 Constitutional Court ruling, known as C-355, deemed the country's blanket ban unconstitutional and ruled that abortion must be legal in limited circumstances. In September 2020,

Causa Justa a coalition of women's and health organisations filed a lawsuit arguing that the rules on abortion were unconstitutional.

## Clandestine

The group, made up of various organisations, argued that abortion should be a public health issue, not a criminal one. Causa Justa points out that criminalising abortion does little to stop the practice. Instead, it drives women to seek clandestine abortions, endangering their health and putting them at risk of criminal prosecution.

It showed evidence that the rules unfairly persecuted already disadvantaged women. For example, Causa Justa showed that over the past 20 years:

- 97% of women reported for abortion lived in rural areas.

- 30% of women reported for having an illegal abortion had been victims of domestic or sexual violence.

The constitutional court has urged Congress to formulate and implement a comprehensive public policy as soon as possible. It calls for various legislative and administrative measures. These include:

- Giving pregnant women clear information about their options
- Offering tools and information to prevent and plan pregnancy
- Developing educational programs around sexual and reproductive rights

The decision will also benefit migrant women. The court acknowledged, as we that criminalisation "affects differently – and disproportionately – vulnerable women, including those under irregular mi-

gratory status". Many women from neighbouring Venezuela are migrating, including with unmet sexual and reproductive healthcare needs.

Colombia is the first country in Latin America and the Caribbean to remove abortion from its penal code, setting an important example of how to advance abortion access in the region. There have been recent victories in Argentina and Mexico as part of the green wave of reproductive battles across the continent. □

# Collective security and NATO



**Eric Lee**

By Eric Lee

There is a saying that generals are always ready to fight the last war. The same may be said of political leaders. The difference is that they are ready to stop the last war, and have learned the lessons of what caused it.

In the 1930s, when Japan, Italy and Germany began to menace neighbouring countries, a consensus began to emerge in the democracies – and in the Soviet Union – that only collective security could prevent another world war. But collective security proved to be unachievable, and by the end of August 1939 Stalin had signed his non-aggression pact with Hitler and the world war began.

A decade later, the leaders of Western European countries, Canada and the USA reached the conclusion that the only way to prevent a Third World War was to establish a permanent collective security organisation. That is how NATO was born.

Just as in the 1930s collective security was advocated across the political spectrum, from the Stalinists to Winston Churchill, so in the early days of the Cold War both Social Democratic parties and their conservative rivals agreed on the need for NATO.

And in the decades since, NATO has

largely succeeded in avoiding large-scale warfare on the European continent.

This little history lesson is needed because far too many people on the Left think of NATO as a four letter word. One doesn't say it – one sneers it.

This has been abundantly clear in the reaction of the far Left to Putin's criminal war on Ukraine. Even socialists who support Ukraine in many cases feel obligated to add – as if anyone were asking – that their support for Ukraine does not include any positive comments on NATO.

## Opposing NATO?

An email I received yesterday from a group I hadn't heard of before had the promising headline "Stop Russian aggression in Ukraine!" But this was immediately followed by "No Nato!" It demanded that NATO be disbanded, ending with a ringing call to "get rid of US troops and bases in Western and Eastern European countries!"

The Socialist Workers Party has produced articles with somewhat greater depth and fewer exclamation points. But the essential point is the same. One recent piece declared: "Any true socialist should stand up and oppose Nato and the system of imperialist rivalries that it represents."

Even some groups which I respect feel a strange compulsion to toss in negative comments on NATO whenever they criticise Putin. The Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, for example, opposes "the unaccountable manoeuvres of the big

powers and NATO deciding Ukraine's destiny," which rather misses the point. If NATO were the ones deciding Ukraine's destiny, there would not be Russian tanks in Kyiv.

The statement goes on to condemn NATO saying that "increased NATO deployments in other parts of Eastern Europe are motivated by Western rivalry with Russia, to protect business interests and influence, not the needs of Ukrainians."

This is the most simplistic, reductionist form of Marxism, a way of looking at the world that Karl Marx would not recognise. When he was alive, Marx was a sworn enemy of Russia's expansionist empire, going so far as to support British and French troops in the Crimean War.

In the struggle between Russian imperialism and Europe, Marx knew which side he was on. □

- Eric Lee is the founder-editor of Labourstart, writing here in a personal opinion column.



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## Activist Agenda

Some local Momentum groups, including those which have not generally been meeting, may meet in March to discuss recommendations (by 24 March) for motions Momentum will circulate for Labour Party conference 2022. The Labour Party's deadline for motions is in September, and local Labour Parties are likely to decide then, but many motions circulated by Labour Left Internationalists for month-by-month use ([bit.ly/mo-int](http://bit.ly/mo-int)) will be relevant, and LLI is working on adapted texts.

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement will submit a motion on free movement for this "policy primary". □

- Links and info for these and other campaigns, suggestions for labour movement motions and petitions: [workersliberty.org/agenda](http://workersliberty.org/agenda)

# Did the Morning Star believe Putin's denials?



By Jim Denham

Did the Morning Star believe Putin's denials of plans to invade Ukraine? Here's a brief synopsis of the paper's repeated claims that Russia was seeking a peaceful resolution and that fears of invasion were down to Western propaganda.

19 Jan: "Western countries say an armed build-up in Russia's west could be preparation for an invasion of Ukraine, something Moscow rejected as 'total disinformation'" (report by "Foreign Desk").

20 Jan: "Russia... called for the US to 'end hysteria over the Donbas issue,' referring to frequent claims being made that Russia is about to invade... 'We stress again: Russia is not going to attack anyone'" ('Foreign Desk').

21 Jan: "Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova alleged that Ukrainian and Western claims of an imminent attack on Ukraine were a 'cover for staging large-scale provocations of their own, including those of a military character'" (report, "World" pages).

24 Jan: "Western mainstream media claiming that the world is on the brink of war and portraying Moscow as the aggressor" ("Foreign Desk").

25 Jan: "The US issued [instructions to embassy staff to leave] saying that a Russian invasion could come 'at any time' despite Moscow's insistence that it plans no military action in Ukraine" ("Foreign Desk").

26 Jan: "Russia is watching with great

concern, a Kremlin spokesman said yesterday, as the United States continues its aggressive drive to war" ("Foreign Desk").

Jan 27: "Western mainstream media has sought to portray Russia as the aggressor, despite Moscow's insistence that it has no plans for military intervention in Ukraine" (article by Steve Sweeney, International editor).

Jan 28: "US and Germany cite imminent invasion but Russia says 'even thought of war' is off limits" (Steve Sweeney).

Jan 31: "So-called 'Russian aggression' has become an accepted fact in the mainstream press, although little concrete evidence has been presented to back the claims." (Steve Sweeney).

Jan 29-30: "Russia will not start a war in Ukraine, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said yesterday... 'There won't be a war as far as it depends on the Russian Federation. We don't want a war'" ("Foreign Desk").

1 Feb: "If Russia did act against Ukraine (and we should remember that it has not at any time threatened to do so)... (article by editor Ben Chacko).

2 Feb: "US, Britain and Nato escalated their aggressive drive to war... making unsubstantiated claims of an imminent invasion." (Steve Sweeney)

3 Feb: "The US and Britain [are] flood-

ing the region with arms and making false claims about the prospect of an imminent Russian invasion." (Steve Sweeney).

8 Feb: "British government claims that Russia is on the point of attacking its neighbour... despite the Ukrainian government itself vehemently rejecting the idea" (Editorial)

9 Feb: "No concrete evidence has been presented of an imminent Russian invasion" (Steve Sweeney).

12-13 Feb: "While the mainstream Western media continues to claim that Russia is about to invade Ukraine, despite Moscow and Kiev's insistence otherwise, it has ignored the 120,000 Ukrainian troops amassed on the contact line." (Steve Sweeney).

14 Feb: "Washington has continued to ratchet up tensions in the region with claims of an imminent Russian invasion" (Steve Sweeney).

14 Feb: "It is hard to escape the conclusion that the war scare is entirely artificial... The US war machine's game is strategic. Fear of Russia justified a Nato troop build-up in Eastern Europe. It could stop the Nord Stream 2 pipeline... potentially boosting US shale gas exports" (editorial).

16 Feb: "Russian President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Moscow is ready for talks... in a new sign of eas-

ing tensions over Ukraine" ("Foreign Desk").

17 Feb: "If the expectation of Western intelligence agencies was that Ukraine's fascist forces... might provoke the Russians into an incursion, they have been disappointed" (editorial).

18 Feb: "Russia's reputedly imminent invasion of Ukraine has yet to occur... [Nato, British and US claims] are being roundly mocked by Russian officials" (Steve Sweeney).

19-20 Feb: "Czech President Milos Zeman poured scorn on Washington's claims. 'The Russians aren't crazy. There will be no invasion of Ukraine.'" (Steve Sweeney).

21 Feb: "Last Wednesday... passed without incident. Unfazed, Boris Johnson still declared... 'the evidence points to' imminent Russian invasion plans. This narrative needs to be challenged." (editorial).

22 Feb: "Joe Biden predicted that Russia would invade Ukraine last Wednesday. That didn't happen – but now he is certain that it will happen this week... yet there has been no public evidence for such claims" (article by Stop the War's Lindsey German).

28 Feb: "Vladimir Putin's invasion... is a catastrophe with horrific consequences for millions" (editorial). □

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## Londonski glaz or London Eye

By Len Glover

There was a time when the River Thames was an open sewer. Contemporary diarists tell how the stench was great that it was impossible to walk by the side of the river and not choke. Today, the pollution has a different origin and it doesn't smell.

The "laundromat" of "Londongrad" processes the huge amount of Russian money sloshing around the capital and has turned it into a thief's paradise, corrupting anything and everything it touches. In the (anonymous) [words](#) of one Russian financier, "In London money rules everything. Anyone and anything can be bought".

In 2002 the Blair government brought in the "Highly Skilled Migrant Programme". This soon became the "Tier 1" visa system for wealthy individuals intending to invest in UK bonds or companies. The

minimum investment was £1m, soon raised to £2m. In 2014 there were 2,995 "Tier 1" visas issued. 618 were from Russia.

After the Salisbury poisonings the government launched a review of the scheme but it doesn't appear to have been published.

"Unexplained Wealth Orders" were introduced in 2018 to allow for the confiscation of property where its financial origins cannot be properly explained. To date only four UWOs have been issued and only one has led to property being confiscated.

Transparency International reported that £1.5 billion of United Kingdom property was bought by Russians accused of corruption and the owners of 90,000 properties in the UK are unknown to the government and police. An estate agent [reckons](#) that £8 billion worth of houses in London are owned by wealthy

Russians. Some names:

Alexander Bronstein. Owns a neat £40m mansion in Highgate.

Lubov Chernukin. Wife of Putin's former Deputy PM. Paid £135,000 for a night out with Theresa May and a large sum to play tennis with Gavin Williamson. She is the largest female individual donor to the Tory Party in its history.

Roman Abramovich. Bought Chelsea Football Club for £150m in 2003.

Oleg Deripaska. Aluminium magnate. Owns a fine mansion in Eaton Square. In December 2014 Deripaska donated £300,000 to a charity set up by Tony Blair. In the summer of 2008, Labour invertebrate Peter Mandelson was a guest on his yacht in Corfu, along with Tory George Osborne.

Evgeny Lebedev. Owns *Evening Standard* and *Independent*. Was awarded a peerage, totally unconnected to the free trips to his Italian villa accepted by

Boris Johnson.

Mikhail Fridman. Lives at Athlone House, Highgate, bought in 2016 for £615 million; he has spent an extra £30m refurbishing it. Estimated wealth £11 billion.

Alisher Usmanov. A former investor in Arsenal. Lives at Beechwood House (Highgate) which he bought for £28m in 2008. Estimated wealth £13 billion.

Maxim Demin. Owns Bournemouth Football Club.

Just how much of this money gets back to Russia to feed Putin's militaristic-expansionist mania is anybody's guess. Successive governments have known for years about the "Laundromat" and have done nothing about it – mainly because they have benefited from it. (Mention in this report does not mean those named have been involved in illegal activity). □

# Mass killings that launched Modi's rise

By Sacha Ismail

It is the 20th anniversary of the horrific, arguably genocidal, violence against Muslims in the Indian state of Gujarat which started on 28 February 2002, with its government implicated in the pogroms. Gujarat's chief minister then was Narendra Modi, now prime minister of India.

The 2002 events were linked to a chain of smaller sectarian clashes in the state, involving Hindu-chauvinist attacks on Muslims, going back to the late 60s.

In 1987 the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (Indian People's Party, BJP) took control of the most populous city, Ahmedabad, where the state's Muslim population is disproportionately concentrated. Then, the BJP was still weak nationally. It took control of the state in 1995. The first national BJP-led government (1998-2004) was in power when the Gujarat massacres took place.

Until 2001, when the BJP promoted him to chief minister of Gujarat, Narendra Modi was not a public politician but a full-timer for the far-right Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Volunteer Organisation, RSS) paramilitary organisation and then a BJP organiser.

Five months after Modi took office, on 27 February 2002, a train carrying right-wing Hindu "pilgrims" returned from Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh – long a rallying point for anti-Muslim activism. After heckling between some of the passengers and Muslim vendors in Godhra station, the train somehow caught fire, and 59 people inside, including nine children, died.

What exactly happened has been widely disputed. Within hours Hindu nationalist organisers and BJP politicians were spreading conspiracy theories about a mass Muslim assault on the train organised by Pakistan. The state government issued a release quoting Modi describing Godhra as a "pre-planned inhuman collective violent act of terrorism".

Organisers of the right-wing religious organisation Vishva Hindu Parishad (Universal Hindu Council, VHP) took the bodies off the train and paraded them through Ahmedabad. With support from BJP leaders, the VHP called a bandh – a "strike" that was actually a street mobilisation of Hindu-chauvinist mobs.

During the next few days many hundreds were murdered. Official state figures say that by the end months later 790 Muslims and 250 Hindus had been killed; other sources have the count above 2,000, and more heavily Muslim. (Muslims are fewer than 10% of Gujarat's population.) Rapes took place on a large scale, in many cases followed by killing. Many witnesses described horrifying atrocities including the slicing



open of pregnant women's bellies and a Muslim boy being made to drink petrol and then swallow a lighted match.

Human Rights Watch points out "exceptional bravery" by some Hindus to try to protect Muslims.

Much of the killings was carefully orchestrated by VHP and RSS teams armed with clubs, guns and swords – but also voter rolls and other official documents to identify where Muslims lived.

In a few areas where the police did seriously intervene, the violence was quickly stopped. But for the most part they not. Evidence would emerge of senior police officers having refused to direct their forces into action; many of Gujarat's police were Hindu nationalists. In some cases police shot Muslims and others trying to resist the pogromists.

In one of the worst massacres, carried out by the VHP's youth wing in the working-class district of Naroda Patiya, a hundred Muslims, including 35 children, were killed in an orgy of rape, torture and extreme violence. It took place next to a police encampment.

The state government held up national army troops though various means and they were not able to move into action until 2 March.

150,000 were displaced, 230 mosques and 274 Muslim shrines, destroyed or damaged. Some Hindus were killed by Muslims, and also received little police protection.

The former Indian Supreme Court justice who chaired a "Concerned Citizens' Tribunal" to investigate described the massacres as "organised crime perpetrated by the chief minister and his government".

Local and state politicians participated in the mobs. Investigative journalists exposed active planning and participation by leaders of the VHP and RSS – and the BJP. So prominent was the role of one Gujarat assembly member and soon-to-be minister in Modi's

state government, Maya Kodnani, that she was eventually jailed for 28 years and at one point faced the death penalty. (Once Modi became Indian prime minister the courts overturned her conviction.)

Modi himself, after making statements inciting violence, seems to have disappeared during the crucial days.

So obvious was his role that for more than a decade afterwards the US and UK governments banned him from entering their countries. (The Tories lifted the ban in 2012, giving the US an excuse in 2013.)

After the massacres Modi publicly disparaged the victims. He opposed state aid for the displaced, calling refugee camps "baby-producing centres" (the Hindu right is obsessed with Muslims reproducing too fast). In 2013, asked if he felt guilty, he replied: "If we are driving a car... if a puppy comes under the wheel, will it be painful or not? Of course, it is... If something bad happens anywhere, it is natural to be sad" (his Hindi term for "puppy" can also be a term of abuse, roughly "son of a bitch").

Modi's supporters claim he was given a "clean chit" exonerating him on the grounds that a "Special Investigation Team" appointed by the Supreme Court declared there was no basis for legal proceedings (2012), and this was upheld by the Gujarat high court (2017). That is not the same as saying he was innocent or not politically responsible; and the proceedings seem to have blatantly discounted extensive evidence.

Gujarat's home minister in 2002, Haren Pandya, though a BJP'er, was alarmed by the actions of Modi's government. He is said to have testified to the Concerned Citizens' Tribunal that Modi told a meeting of senior police officers they should not get in the way of any "Hindu backlash" against Muslims.

Resigning from his post in August 2002, Pandya was assassinated the

next year. Senior police officer Sanjiv Bhatt claimed that the Modi government – specifically Amit Shah, now India's home minister – had directed him to destroy evidence in the Pandya murder case. In 2011 he testified to the Special Investigations Team that he had been present at the same meeting as Pandya, and that Modi had told officers that Hindus should be allowed to "vent their anger".

In 2012 the Gujarat government switched its stance on a 1990 death-in-custody case, and Bhatt was charged with murder and sentenced to life.

There have now been some convictions for the 2002 violence, but only in the low hundreds. These are basically foot soldiers, not those responsible more widely. Many Muslims were wrongly convicted for the Godhra train incident and eventually released, but only after their lives had been ruined.

Not only the BJP government in power till 2004, but the Congress-led governments that followed did little to bring those responsible to justice. Congress had (and has) no desire to challenge Hindu chauvinism vocally. There were allegations that Congress organisers in Gujarat took part in the 2002 violence. For sure the party has its own record of persecuting minorities, notably the horrendous massacres of Sikhs that followed Indira Gandhi's murder in 1984.

Many who later sought to return to their homes or areas faced further violence or social boycotts.

The ethnic geography of Ahmedabad and other towns in Gujarat was transformed, with communities increasingly segregated and most Muslims crowded into slums.

In the December 2002 state assembly elections, the BJP jumped to almost 50% and won a landslide. Immediately, however, this did not benefit the party nationally. Expected to win the 2004 general election, it lost to Congress' United Progressive Alliance. Outgoing BJP prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a right-wing bigot but more measured than Modi, blamed Gujarat for the defeat. The BJP lost in 2009 too, by a bigger margin.

But with a confident and radicalised base in Gujarat, and solid support from big business due to his aggressive neo-liberalism, Modi and his RSS comrades were able to take over the national party, turn it even further rightwards, and bring it back to power in 2014.

The BJP leaders have worked hard to downplay what happened and draw a veil over their complicity.

As the left in India struggles to push back the Hindu right in the aftermath of last year's farmers' struggle, we must help it keep the memory of the Gujarat massacres alive. □

# Connolly and Hom

## A Plea for Socialist Unity in Ireland



### Unexpurgated Connolly

By James Connolly

*These two polemics, from 1911, are based on Connolly's argument about what he thought was necessary for "first elections in Ireland to a Home Rule Parliament", which then, like others, he saw as a certainty, and soon.*

All thoughtful men and women who observe the political situations of their countries must realise that Ireland is on the verge of one of the most momentous constitutional changes in her history. Some form of self-government seems practically certain of realisation, not because of the increased fervour of the national demand, nor yet because, as Tory bigots blatantly assert, of the position of Mr. Redmond, but from the fact that there is no economic class in Ireland today whose interests as a class are bound up with the Union. The Irish landlords who had indeed something to fear from a Home Rule Parliament elected largely by tenant farmers, as would have been the case in the past, have now made their bargain under the various Land Purchase Acts, and, being economically secured, are now politically indifferent. Only the force of religious bigotry remains as an asset to Unionism.

It may be assumed that the 12th of July parade in Belfast this year will be exceptionally large, as every effort will be made, and no money spared, to make an imposing turnout in the hopes of, at the last moment, averting Home Rule, but the parade will be as the last flicker of the dying fire which blazes up before totally expiring. A spell of bad trade in Belfast might have enabled Orange orators to stir up rioting among idle mobs, but the rush of good trade we are at present enjoying destroys any chance of such senseless exhibitions. The Orangemen of today may hate the Pope, but he hates still more to lose time by rioting, when he might make money by working, and in this he shows the "good sense which pre-eminently distinguishes the city by the Lagan."

Home Rule, then, is almost a certainty of the future.

What are Irish Socialists doing in these circumstances? Are they exhibit-

ing any Statesmanlike grasp of the situation, or are they still peddling along on sterile street corner theorisings without making any effort to consolidate their forces to seize the greater opportunities that are almost at their doors?

Let me attempt to answer this question.

There are in Ireland today two forms of Socialist organisations – the Independent Labour Party and the Socialist Party of Ireland. The former is strongest in the North, the latter strongest in the South, although it also has an active Branch in Belfast. The question which naturally arises as to whether there is any fundamental difference in policy or tactics between those two parties can be best answered by stating the attitude of the Socialist Party of Ireland (SPI) towards the Irish Branches of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). The SPI, then, is so convinced of the need of unity among Socialists in Ireland that it is ready at any time to have a joint convention with the ILP, and to give to the delegates of such convention the power to debate and agree upon all questions of tactics, policy, and name for a new organisation to embrace all sections of the movement in Ireland. It believes that these questions which divide Socialists are not serious enough to warrant separate organisations in the one country, but can well be debated within one organisation; it maintains that the points upon which we disagree are not nearly so serious as the points upon which we thoroughly agree, and that there are more serious points of divergence between the various sections of the ILP (or of the SPI) than there are between the ILP and the SPI, as organisations. What, then, keeps the two organisations divided?

Laying aside all questions of personality, personal ambitions, and personal jealousies as being accidental and inessential, it may be truthfully asserted that the one point of divergence is that the ILP in Belfast believes that the Socialist movement in Ireland must perforce remain a dues-paying, organic part of the British Socialist movement, or else forfeit its title to be considered a part of International Socialism, whereas the Socialist Party of Ireland maintains that the relations between Socialism in Ireland and in Great Britain should be based upon comradeship and mutual assistance, and not upon dues paying, and should operate by exchange of literature and speakers rather than by attempts to treat as one two peoples of whom one has for 700 years nurtured an unending martyrdom rather than admit the unity or surrender its national identity.

The Socialist Party of Ireland considers itself the only International Party in Ireland, since its conception of Internationalism is that of a free federation of free peoples, whereas that of the Belfast branches of the ILP seems scarcely distinguishable from Imperialism, the merging of subjugated peoples in the political system of their conquerors. For the propagation universally of our ideal of a true internationalism there is only required the spread of reason and enlightenment amongst the peoples of the earth, whereas the conception of Internationalism tacitly accepted by our Comrades of the ILP in Belfast required for its spread the flash of the sword of militarism, and the roar of a British 80-ton gun. We cannot conceive why our Comrades should insist that we are not Internationalists, and that we can-

not be, unless we treat the Socialists of Great Britain better than we treat the Socialists of the Continent, or of America, or Australia.

This is a unique conception of Internationalism, unique and peculiar to Belfast. There is no "most favoured nation clause" in Socialist diplomacy, and we, as Socialists in Ireland, can not afford to establish such a precedent.

Observe how this peculiarly Belfast attitude affects the development of Socialism in Ireland.

As everyone acquainted with Ireland knows, Nationalist Ireland contains all the elements of social struggles and worrying political theories. The fight of the landlord against the tenant, and the capitalist against the labourer, and vice versa, has ever waged in Ireland as fiercely as elsewhere. In the Nationalist ranks the democrat and the aristocrat, the revolutionist and the opportunist, all fight their battles, and, though weaker than the others, the Socialist also holds his own and delivers his message.

But in all this warring the advanced sections of Nationalist Ireland have looked in vain for help to the "sturdy Protestant democracy of the North."

At last, however, there arises in Bel-

*continued page 11 →*

### Part of a series

- Connolly and the Catholic "Orange Order", [Solidarity 613](#)
- On the yellow unions in Ireland, [Solidarity 614](#)
- The churches and the mobs in the battle for human freedom, [Solidarity 615](#)
- What is the sympathetic strike?, [Solidarity 622](#)
- Who was James Connolly?, [Solidarity 623](#)
- Connolly's critique of De Leon's Marxism, [Solidarity 624](#)
- Connolly and Home Rule, 1910-14, [Solidarity 625](#)

Further reading:

- [bit.ly/irelandt](http://bit.ly/irelandt) – "Ireland: theory, debate, history" contents page on our website
- [bit.ly/lysaghtd](http://bit.ly/lysaghtd) – Debate and discussion between Rayner Lysaght and Sean Matgamna on Ireland and permanent revolution, and questions of the history of Marxist politics in Ireland □



## Our videos!

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- The State, Crime, Prisons, and Police
- Socialist Feminism
- Black Lives Matter
- Socialist commentary on the Covid-19 crisis
- ABCs of Marxism, an introductory series
- An introduction to Marx's Capital, in 19 parts, with Martin Thomas
- Tubeworker/Off The Rails, videos by the producers of the bulletins □

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# e Rule, part two

## Ireland, Karl Marx and William Walker

By James Connolly

A few days ago, when conversing with an astute observer of things Socialistic in Ireland, I asked him, as he was neither of Belfast nor Dublin, what he thought of my appeal for Socialist Unity in Ireland. He replied, much to my astonishment, that I had mistaken the nature of the real objection certain dominating elements in Belfast felt towards such a course. "You will find," he said, "that their real objection is not based upon Internationalism, but is based upon Parochialism."

When reading Comrade Walker's astounding article, I felt how true the above statement had been. Beginning with the absolutely false statement that I "had utilised the first two paragraphs of my article to attack Belfast and all within its borders" (for the refutation of which statement I refer the reader to the arti-

cle itself). He next proceeded to overwhelm us with a mass of tawdry rhetoric, cheap and irrelevant schoolboy history, and badly digested political philosophy, all permeated with an artfully instilled appeal to religious prejudice and civic sectionalism carefully calculated to make Belfast wrap itself around in a garment of self-righteousness, and to look with scorn upon its supposed weaker Irish brethren. All this is, of course, in the approved Walker style. But it does not touch the fringe of the question at issue. That question, as readers of *Forward* will remember, I propounded as follows:

There are in Ireland two Socialist parties; there should only be one. The only real dividing issue, apart from personal elements, is the question of recognising Ireland as entitled to self-government. Any Irish Socialist who recognises Ireland's right to self-government should logically embody

his political activities in a form of organisation based upon the principle of Irish self-government. I proposed, therefore, that the two Socialist organisations in Ireland should each recognise that basis, and then sit down in convention to frame a programme and policy for such a party suited to the present and impending political situation of the country. Further, I pointed out that the trade unions movement in Ireland was considering the advisability of establishing a Labour Party, and that the same elements which keep the Belfast ILP from recognising officially the right of Ireland to self-government had acted and voted last year in the Irish Trades Congress against a proposition to establish a Labour Party in Ireland, and were about to do the same this year. This, I contended, and still contend, was and is a crime against the International Labour movement – a crime

committed in the name of Internationalism – prostituting the name in the act of invoking it.

Now, how does Comrade Walker meet this friendly appeal for Socialist Unity? First, he declares that I am obsessed with an "antipathy to Belfast and the Black North," and proceeds to give a long defence of Protestants and glorification of Protestant rebels in Ireland. The first "sturdy Protestant Democrat" is Lord Charlemont, an aristocratic poltroon, who deserted, denounced, and betrayed the Irish Volunteers when they proposed to use their organisation to obtain a Democratic extension of the suffrage and religious toleration. That he should be cited by Comrade Walker as a Democrat proves that there is a kink somewhere, either in Walker's conception of Democracy, or in his knowledge of Irish history.

But friend William blunders

on from absurdity to absurdity. Remember that he is opposed to self-government to Ireland and then admire his colossal nerve in citing the glorious example of "sturdy Protestant Democrats," who gave their whole lives in battling, suffering, and sacrifice for the cause of National Freedom, which Comrade Walker rejects. He cites Theobald Wolfe Tone. Wolfe Tone recognised that National Independence was an essential element of Democracy, and declared that "to break this connection with England, the abiding cause of all our woes," was his object. He cited Fintan Lalor. Lalor declared that the Irish people should fight for "full and absolute independence for this island, and for every man in it." Lalor was not a Protestant; but our Comrade also cites Lalor's contemporary, Mitchell, whom he wrongly declares a Presby-

*continued page 12* →

*from page 10* →

fast the Independent Labour Party, and hope of assistance springs up in the breasts of the battlers in the South. At last reinforcements are coming, it is thought, Protestant and Catholic working men and women can now unite as they have not done for a century in a common warfare against our common enemy. But slowly the news penetrates to us that Belfast refuses to recognise Ireland; its Labour men are so busy cheering Labour victories in England that it can give no time, nor hope, nor even encouragement to the men and women who are pioneering in Ireland. Finally, Belfast runs a Labour candidate, who declares publicly that he will vote against Home Rule or National Freedom, and the conviction spreads throughout Ireland that the rise of the ILP in Belfast means nothing for social democracy in Ireland, but is simply the sign of a family quarrel among the Unionists.

Finally, ILP men, delegates to the Irish Trades' Congress, vote at that gathering against the establishment of a Labour Party in Ireland. And this crime against the rise of a native Labour movement is

committed in the name of Internationalism!!!

I have a great admiration for Comrade Walker, of Belfast, and I regretted the manifesto issued against him by the Irish Socialists during his Leith contest, but I am glad that he was defeated in North Belfast. This victory would have killed the hopes of Socialism among Irish Nationalists the world over. Not only in Ireland, but all over the continent of America and Australia, wherever Irishmen live and work, a vote given by Comrade Walker in the House of Commons against Home Rule would have filled the Irish with such an unreasoning and inveterate hatred of the cause that they would be lost to it for a generation. But imagine what our situation would have been in the rest of Ireland if the only Irish Socialist M.P. had voted against Home Rule. The cause in Ireland would have been completely discredited and damned. Nor would his opposition to Home Rule have softened the wrath or averted the hatred of the loyalists. Amongst the loyalists the ILP in Ireland are believed to be Home Rulers, but, as they refuse to organise on an Irish basis, amongst the Home Rulers the ILP are looked upon

as Unionists – Labour Unionists, it is true, but still Unionists. And Unionism in Ireland means Toryism.

Now what is going to be done! Another Irish Trades' Congress is at hand, and already I see from the agenda that the same crime is being planned against the idea of a Labour Party in Ireland. The Trades' Council of Dublin have a motion in favour of the establishment of a Labour Party in Ireland; the Trades' Council of Belfast have a motion recommending, as the best means of securing Labour representation, that Trades Unions in Ireland be recommended to join the Labour Party (in England). The Dublin motion sets an example which every Trades' Council in Nationalist Ireland would follow: the Belfast motion would be limited in its following to Belfast. But then the Socialist movement would be saved the danger (?) of the rise of a political Labour movement in Ireland. So would Irish capitalism and clericalism.

Is it too late to appeal to our Belfast Comrades of the ILP to come out of their impossibilist position? Why sacrifice all Ireland for the sake of a part of Belfast? The Socialist Party of Ireland asks them what harm can come from

organising on the basis of Irish political life, in view of the fact that in a few years some form of legislative independence is sure to be established in Ireland. Are we to wait until that event occurs, and then rush around trying to do by means of meetings and oratory what should have been prepared for by long and patient organising and upbuilding? If the first elections in Ireland to a Home Rule Parliament finds the forces of Socialism unprepared to enter the field, there will be an awful responsibility at the door of some party, but not at the doors of the Socialist Party of Ireland.

We, I repeat, are willing and anxious to sit down in Convention with our ILP Comrades in order to frame a programme and decide upon a policy and name for a Socialist organisation in Ireland, provided that it be conceded that such organisation be controlled in Ireland, recognise Ireland's right to self-government, and maintains *equal friendly relations* with Socialists of all nations, irrespective of the Government under which they live.

Is that too much to ask for? □

• *Forward*, 27 May 1911. The versions available in pamphlets and on the web are complete.

from page 11 →

terian. He was instead a Unitarian. Mitchell summed up his political ideal in these words:

"We want Ireland, not for the peers nor for the nominees of peers in College Green, but Ireland for the Irish people – an Irish Republic, one and indivisible."

Comrade Walker also cites Joseph Gillies Biggar, a sturdy and uncompromising Home Ruler. In fact, practically all the "sturdy Protestant Democrats" he cites are men who would have treated with contempt Walker's pitiful straddle in Irish politics. They are all men to whom he would have been opposed were he living in their time. He minds us of this section by quoting, among the names of Irish "rebels", Grattan, Butt, and Shaw, a quotation that must have brought a grin to the face of anyone who read it, and had even a rudimentary knowledge of Irish history.

In passing, let me remark that the names cited by Comrade Walker but confirm my point. We do not care so much what a few men did, as what did the vast mass of their co-religionists do. The vast mass of the Protestants of Ulster, except during the period of 1798, were bitter enemies of the men he has named, and during the bitter struggle of the Land League, when the peasantry in the other provinces were engaged in a life and death struggle against landlordism, the sturdy Protestant Democracy of the North was electing landlords, and the nominees of landlords, to every Protestant constituency in Ulster. When Comrade Walker is doing propaganda work in Belfast he does not fail to remind his hearers of their remissness in such matters. Why, then, does he mount another horse in his letter to *Forward*?

All these men will live in history because they threw in their lot with the other provinces in a common struggle for political freedom. In the exact measure that we admire and applaud them must we condemn and deplore the sectional and parochial action of Comrade Walker.

But, he says in his peroration, "My place of birth was accidental, but my duty to my class is world-wide." Fine, man! Grand!! On a platform, delivered in your best style, it would sound heroic; in cold print, it smells of clap-trap. If the place of your birth was ac-

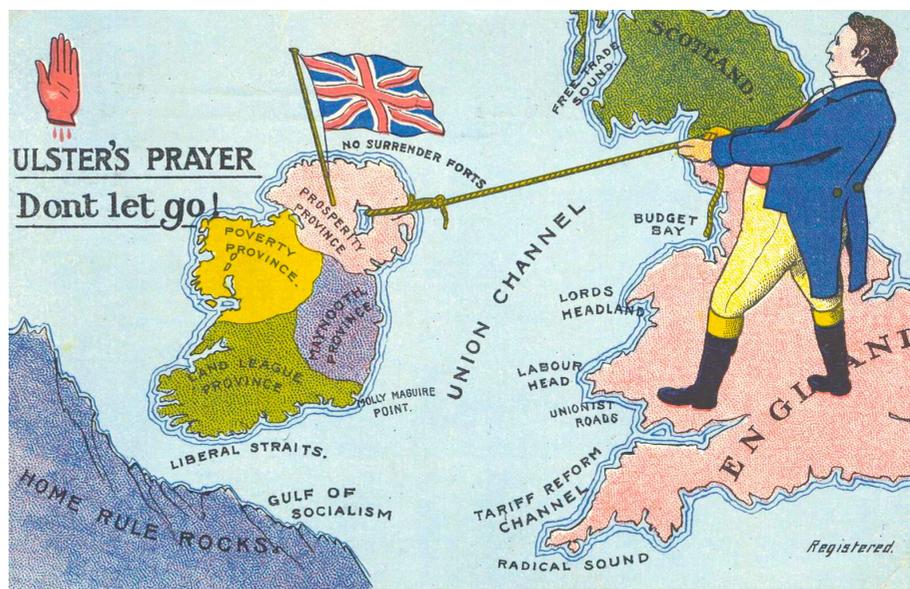
cidental, was not the fact of your birth in the working class an accident also? You might have been born in Buckingham Palace a prince of the blood royal, or even a princess, for all you had to do with it. I do not care where you were born – (we have had Jews, Russians, Germans, Lithuanians, Scotsmen, and Englishmen in the SPI) – but I do care where you are earning your living, and I hold that every class-conscious worker should work for the freedom of the country in which he lives, if he desires to hasten the political power of his class in that country.

Our Comrade says, in his genial style, that these are "reactionary doctrines alien to any brand of Socialism" he ever heard of. He must be singularly ignorant of classical Socialist literature. Karl Marx was not much of a reactionist, and he knew a thing or two about Socialism. Let me then quote, for Comrade Walker, the opinion of Karl Marx on Socialism and Ireland.

I quote from a letter sent to his friend, Kugelman, on 29th November, 1869, from Toulon, and re-printed in the *Neue Zeit* of 1902. Read:

"I have more and more arrived at the conviction – though this conviction has not entered the mind of the English working class – that we shall never be able to do in England anything decisive if we do not resolutely separate its policy in all that concerns Ireland from the policy of the dominant classes, so that not only will she be able to make common cause with the Irish, but will even be able to take the initiative in dissolving the Union founded in 1801, and replacing it by an independent Federative bond, and this aim should be followed not as a matter of sympathy with Ireland, but as a necessity based on the interest of the English proletariat... Each of the movements in England remains paralysed by the struggle with the Irish who even in England form a considerable proportion of the working class... And it is not only the social evolution established in England which is retarded by these relations with Ireland, but also its external policy, notably with Russia and the United States."

Written in 1869, Comrade Walker, but reads like a statement of what is happening today.



A Unionist propaganda postcard, 1912

At every International Socialist Congress a separate vote and recognition is given to such subject nations as Finland, Poland, and the various nationalities within the Russian Empire; at Stuttgart a reception and message of sympathy was given to a delegate from India, speaking not on behalf of the Indian workers, but primarily on behalf of Indian Nationalism; and at the Paris Congress of 1900, the delegates from the Irish Socialist Party were seated, and given the same votes as the delegates of independent nationalities, such as Germany or England. At Stuttgart, Comrade Bebel declared that one consequence of the growth of Socialism would be a renaissance of national culture and sympathies in countries now politically suppressed, and he welcomed such a renaissance on the ground that the civilisation of the future would be all the richer from the presence of so many distinctive forms of intellectual growth arising from different racial and national developments.

Such, in brief, is the real position of International Socialism towards subject nations. It is a concept based upon the belief that civilisation needs free nations just as the nations need free individual citizens, that the internationalism of the future will be based upon the free federation of free peoples, and cannot be realised through the subjugation of the smaller by the larger political unit. But Comrade Walker says these are words, and mean that the SPI desires the Irish to divorce themselves from all Trade Unions, Friendly Societies, and Co-operative Societies across the water. Not necessarily. If we look at the two nations across the Atlantic, we can see that every Trade Union and

Friendly Society which does business in the United States also does business in Canada and vice versa, yet the two nations are independent politically of each other. Why can England and Ireland not be as industrially intermingled, and yet politically separate?

Our Comrade is sore over my attitude towards his election campaign in North Belfast. But he should have reminded the readers of *Forward* of his attitude in that campaign. He should have told them that he pledged himself to oppose Home Rule and religious equality. That he pledged himself to oppose any alteration in the Coronation Oath – that oath which the King of England recently objected to take because of its stupid reactionary intolerance. The oath was too much even for a royal stomach, but Comrade Walker pledged himself to maintain it. He should have reminded his readers that in the 17th and 18th centuries the ferocious bigotry of the governing class placed upon the Statute Book of Ireland laws against Roman Catholics so atrocious that they are regarded by modern sentiment as the very incarnation of sectarian malevolence, and that he promised to maintain them in his answer to the following question:

"Will you resist every attack upon the legislative enactments provided by our forefathers as necessary safeguards against the political encroachments of the papacy?"

Answer by W. Walker – "Yes." We progress as we get away from the bigotry of our forefathers, but Comrade Walker was willing to make their bigotry our standard of legislation.

In a country overwhelmingly of our religious faith, he pledged himself to oppose

the entry of members of that faith into certain political and legal offices; he pledged himself to "make an effort to obtain a redistribution of Parliamentary seats for the purpose of diminishing the extravagant representation of Ireland by means of which the Roman Catholics and disloyal party has hindered the business of the House of Commons," and he declared that "Protestantism means protesting against superstition; hence true Protestantism is synonymous with Labour," thus leaving it to be inferred

that if a Catholic embraced the cause of Labour, he also embraced the Protestant religion.

Well, Comrade Walker may feel scandalised at my statement that I am glad of his defeat, but I refuse to endorse the idea that because a man styles himself "Independent Labour" or even "Socialist," he has a right to be a renegade to every other principle of progress. When he has purged himself of such reactionary ideas, as other men have done since the same election, I will gladly support him in his contest for a Parliamentary seat in an Irish House of Commons.

Finally, the fact remains, and we may yet have to appeal to the tribunal of the International Labour movement on the question, that Comrade William Walker, a member of the Executive of the Labour Party is vehemently opposing the formation of a Labour Party in Ireland. We may have to ask the aforesaid tribunal whether Comrade Walker, in such action, has the support of his Executive, or is speaking with their mandate in thus doing the work of the enemy joining with the bigoted Orangeman, and the equally bigoted follower of Mr. Redmond to stifle the aspirations of the more militant section of the Irish Working Class for a party of its own, to fight its battles against the common enemy.

I, for one, do not believe that any one of the men whose genius have made the Socialist movement what it is, would hail the uprising of a Labour Party in Ireland, and the consolidation of our Socialist forces, with anything save joy and satisfaction. □

• *Forward*, 10 June 1911. The versions available in pamphlets and on the web are complete.

# Churchill cleaners' strike: spread the action!



## Off The Rails

### From Off The Rails

February 23 saw hundreds of cleaners employed by the contractor Churchill strike across contracts on Thameslink, Southern, Great Northern, Southeastern, Eurostar and HS1 to demand £15/hour and full sick pay. The strike is the biggest single strike of railway cleaners

in history. Many of the cleaners earn just £8.91, the minimum wage (laughably referred to as the "National Living Wage" by the government).

Picket lines were held at stations across the region, including major London terminals such as St. Pancras, before cleaners converged on Parliament Square for a lively rally addressed by numerous left-wing Labour MPs, as well as striking security guards from Great Ormond Street Hospital, who are members of the United Voices of the World union.

The rally then processed to the Westminster offices of Go Ahead Group, one of the largest shareholders in some of the train companies which contract to Churchill, for a noisy and boisterous protest.

Cleaners' reps who addressed both protests emphasised that the strike was just the start of a campaign of action. With RMT cleaner members also in dispute on Avanti West Coast, and with the TfL cleaning contract due for renewal in September, the union has an opportunity to spread and coordinate

campaigns across a number of transport sector cleaning contracts. Activists need to replicate the energy shown outside Go Ahead's offices on similar actions outside City Hall, to demand Sadiq Khan brings TfL cleaning back in-house.

Reports of engineers at one of the train depots where cleaners struck refusing to cross their picket line also show the potential for mobilising solidarity from directly-employed railway workers. □

## Rebuilding in local government



## Unison

### By a Unison member

Since the [re-election victory](#) of Paul Holmes (the new elected left-wing national president of the Unison public services union) as branch secretary in Kirklees Unison, local press [reports](#) that six members of admin staff and two Unison reps have gone off sick, refusing to work with him.

There is little more information available on this matter. Workers' Liberty supporters are calling for an independent labour move-

ment inquiry to deal with the complaints made against Holmes. Having such an inquiry as quickly as possible is the best way to address the serious complaints and also to challenge his sacking by the employer, done on the basis of the complaints.

Unison local government membership figures have declined over the last 12 months. In the northern region the average reduction across local government branches (which include members in councils and schools) is 5.5% in the last twelve months. In London, all branches except Lambeth have had declines.

These figures come after a failure to win sufficient turnout in

the local government ballot over the April 2021 pay round. Unite, a union which is smaller in local government, did 400 "[disaggregated](#)" ballots on the pay issue rather than one aggregate one as Unison did, and evidently hit the 50% turnout threshold in some: it promises "targeted industrial action" in March.

Extensive work-from-home is probably a factor in the loss of membership, but return-to-workplaces doesn't guarantee a recovery. To regain membership the union needs to be more active on issues like local government cuts in the April 2022 budgets and the April 2022 pay settlements. □

## GDST needs more strikes

### By a Lewisham teacher

On 21 February, the trustees of the Girls Day School Trust (GDST), a chain of 23 private schools, issued the decision from their "consultation" over proposed changes to teachers' pensions.

Under pressure for the National Education Union (NEU) members in their schools, who had already struck once and had strikes set for later that week, the decision offered some sweeteners, the most significant being a delay in coming out of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) until 30th September 2023; a

minimum 11% pay rise over two years; and a signing-up payment of £2,000.

But the GDST still wants to take workers out of TPS. The NEU continued with its strikes on 23 and 24 Feb, which again were solid with large picket lines and despite petty harassment from GDST management. At Sydenham Girls, in south London, the picket coordinator (a local NEU official) told a manager to call the police if she was so bothered; she did, but the police were uninterested and left quickly.

Next week the strike escalates to three days, 1-3 March. The NEU must name further dates soon. □

## Longest strike in NHS history

### By Ollie Moore

Striking security guards at Great Ormond Street Hospital in central London marked the 24th day of their planned 44-day strike, on Friday 25 February, with a rally at the hospital, which was addressed by strikers and supporters from throughout the labour movement, including John McDonnell MP.

The strikers, who are employed by outsourced contractor Carlisle,

are demanding parity with directly-employed NHS workers terms and conditions. Their strike is the longest strike in NHS history.

The rally came after GOSH spent £40,000 to pursue a legal claim resulting in an injunction that prevented the strikers from picketing effectively. Negotiations with their union, United Voices of the World, led to the easing of some of the restrictions, but UWW officials still

describe the remaining conditions as "oppressive".

UWW is also pursuing a series of its own legal claims in a number of workplaces, challenging outsourcing as a form of indirect racial discrimination which creates two-tier workforces, with majority-BAME outsourced workforces on significantly worse terms and conditions than majority-white directly employed workforces. □



## Highs and lows as union meets

### By Janine Booth, SGM delegate

The Special General Meetings (SGMs) of the rail union RMT, held in Leeds on 21 and 22 February, refused to withdraw default support for Labour candidates, added trans rights to the union's rules, and addressed internal issues in a rather faltering way.

The first of the two SGMs dealt with the motions that the 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) had not reached. It voted down a proposal moved by Socialist Party members that they union strengthen its ties with the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and bar branches from backing Labour candidates without prior permission of the National Executive.

### Trans rights

It voted (with no votes against and just one abstention) to add "gender transition or identity" to the anti-discrimination clause in the union's rule book, with the proposer stressing that trans rights are a working-class issue.

However, the SGM rejected a proposal to

add dispute committees to the rule book. It also rejected a series of rule changes proposed by branches frustrated by the actions of the union's bureaucracy, said not to be necessary as the bureaucracy had not been adhering to the existing rules!

The SGM took some decisions, notably on confirmation of minutes, that overturned anti-democratic action from the top of the union.

The second SGM addressed a woeful situation which has festered within the union for the past year. The previous General Secretary made a staff member redundant when the government withdrew Union Learning Funds. Union members rightly objected to this, but subsequent actions by the sacked staff member and his immediate allies have alienated much of his supporter. The union leadership created the problem and it is unlikely that the decision made by the AGM will resolve it.

Delegates donated £550 to a collection for striking Just Eat / Stuart couriers. □

## “” What we stand for

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

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

The working class must unite to struggle against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, in the workplace and 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, 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, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans 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 full openness in debate

If you agree with us, take copies of *Solidarity* to sell – and join us! □

• [workersliberty.org/join-awl](http://workersliberty.org/join-awl)

# Another day “up the wall”



## Diary of a tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

“What the hell is going on with TfL at the moment?”, an angry passenger says as they walk towards my driver's cab, squeezing past everyone else as they stand looking slightly bewildered on the platform, after an announcement that my train will be emptied there because of a signal failure.

I've seen them with one eye and with the other I'm watching how many cars back the CSA [Customer Service Assistant, station staff] has got down the platform, shutting the doors. Their mask now pulled down, they address me again, “What is this? Will there be another train? What's going on? And you are on strike next week! [1 and 3 March] I've paid for my travel. How is this acceptable?”

I know what I want to say, to talk about the impending cuts, the managed decline of the service, how signal failures will become more and more

likely as investment is scaled back and the attacks from the government go unchecked. And that's why next week's strike is important, not just for us on the job but for everyone using the service. I also know what I really need to do is to get this train empty and reverse back west.

Another passenger intervenes. “Oh come on, it's not his fault is it?” I'm grateful for the support, but really I just need everyone to go upstairs and away from me and the poor CSA.

“Well, I hope you make this clear to your managers!” That's the last I hear as everyone slowly heeds my advice and that of the public address system to exit the station. Of course I may likely never even see anyone who makes these decisions. I've tried to pin down Sadiq Khan himself [Mayor of London] in person twice and got the brush off!

Today had already started badly. I came in to find the service “up the wall” with multiple signal failures, and I've just got caught up in that going wrong again.

It's luck of the draw in these scenarios. You might get cancelled and have your second half completely gone, so a

couple of hours extra off your shift. But I'm not so lucky. I got most of my first half cancelled, so I had to sit around for four hours before heading back into more trouble.

Once I have reversed, I'm hoping I'll get told to stick the train in the depot. No such luck. I'm heading back to another reversing point in the west. 40 minutes later, I'm heading back east, hoping I'm going to be turned round in the sidings and back to the depot.

The radio: “Right, driver, it's busy now so I'm going to stick you in the sidings and bring you back out for your departure time on the west”. So that's 40 minutes sitting in the train, in the dark, in the sidings, all to finish my duty and prevent them making another cancellation.

I pull up next to another driver when I've changed ends. We open our doors and ask the same question. “You got anything out of this?” He has, I haven't. I sit back and hope my phone battery lasts long enough to pass the time. □



## Post-USSR disillusion



## Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

*Was Here*, directed by René Vilbre (who directed the excellent Estonian film *Klass*), was released in 2008 and, in some senses, is a typical film from countries once part of the Eastern Bloc.

The hope and optimism generated by the collapse of the Soviet Union has largely evaporated. Capitalism was never the Nirvana some thought it would be. For Rass (played by Rasmus Kaljujärv), a 17 year old with zero pros-

pects, the future looks bleak. He lives in a run-down suburb in an unnamed Estonian town and life offers him little but petty theft, drugs and alcohol. Family life hardly exists; he doesn't get on with his father, and his mother is dead.

He runs up debts and attempts to pay them off by working for the local drug dealer, Olari. He becomes drawn further and further into drug running and its attendant violence. His “escape route” is an illusion and has become a trap.

The film is adapted from a well-known novel by Sass Heno, *I Was Here. The First Arrest*. Rass is arrested; as the sub-title of the novel suggests, this may not be the last time he sees the inside of a prison. □

## Free Sepideh Gholian!

From the Shahrokh Zamani Action Committee

Sepideh Gholian – a student, social rights' activists and journalist imprisoned in Bushehr Prison, in Iran – has had stomach bleeding. She now has Covid-19, her condition is deteriorating, her life is in danger, and she has had no medical treatment. The prison authorities have refused to release her and her family's repeated requests for a visit have been ignored. Sepideh Gholian was arrested on 18 November 2018 while supporting and reporting on the strike of the Haft Tappeh Sugar Cane workers. □

• More: [bit.ly/se-gh](http://bit.ly/se-gh)

## Join Workers' Liberty!

Want to be part of an organised long-haul collective effort to spread the socialist ideas you read in *Solidarity*, and to link together activities in diverse campaigns and conflicts around that consistent socialist thread? Then take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell each week, and contact us to discuss joining Workers' Liberty, the group that produces and sustains this paper. Check it out and contact us via [workersliberty.org/join-awl](http://workersliberty.org/join-awl) □

# Opposing Borders Bill and Putin



**John Moloney**

I was proud to speak on behalf of the union at two demos over the weekend. The first was on Saturday 26th outside Downing Street at the Ukrainian solidarity demonstration, and on Sunday 27th I spoke at the protest against the Nationality Bill in Parliament Square.

At the Ukraine protest, I set out PCS's position which condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine and supports the call for immediate withdrawal. Further, that we stand by the trade unionists and people of Ukraine at this terrible time. This is in line with PCS's long-standing commitment to campaign against war and for the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

## Bill

On Sunday, I set out PCS's opposition to the Bill. I also reiterated the union's position of supporting freedom of movement and therefore that "refugees are welcomed here".

From the international to the domestic: the union is in the midst of a consultative ballot of members (running 24 Feb to 21 Mar) over the cost of living crisis. We've made a solid start, but we all recognise there's much more to do, not just to get to 50% but to get to a super-majority in the vote. If we mobilise activists. I believe this is possible.

Over the last few weeks, at least two Tory ministers have said we need a smaller state, with Rees-Mogg saying that he wants over 60,000 staff to be cut from the UK civil service. He ignores that post Brexit, the service has to be bigger to carry out functions previously undertaken by EU institutions, but of course that won't stop him trying.

Although the consultative ballot is around the cost of living, by re-activating the union, after the long Covid pause, we hopefully will be in a better shape to fight back against this coming attack. §

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the civil service union PCS, writing here in a personal capacity.

# Tube strikes: prepare for more



## From Tubeworker

Ten thousand Tube workers struck on 1 March, with a near-complete shut down of the network. We will strike again on 3 March.

This is the largest strike on London Underground since 2015.

A strong strike may force London Underground (LU) to reconsider cuts. But in all likelihood, the strikes on 1 and 3 March will not be sufficient to win the dispute. We will need further action.

The pensions review is due to report on 31 March. Striking now gives us a chance to shape its outcome by making it clear we won't tolerate attacks on our pensions. Our strikes are "pre-emptive self-defence". But if the review recommends detrimental changes which LU makes plans to implement, we will need to strike again. We must have action named in advance for late March or early April.

We need to be prepared to step the action up. The simplest form of escalation is to strike for longer. That would mean striking for at least three days. That would be a financial hit, especially for lower-paid grades and part-time workers, so the union must organise hardship funds.

We suggest a voluntary monthly levy, means-tested against income, that goes straight into a strike fund. We also recommend that those for whom strike days fall on rest days or annual leave donate some of their wages if they can.

With so many workers involved, and with many of them paid fairly well thanks to historic union power, paying full strike pay isn't financially feasible. But funds should be accessible for those who really need them. If it makes the difference between a stronger strike and a weaker one, it's worth it.

But there are also forms of escalation other than striking for more days. As well as all-out strikes, where all functions and grades strike together, we must consider rolling and selective action, with different functions striking at different times. This has the potential to maximise disruption whilst minimising the financial impact on members.

If service controllers strike on Monday, that will have an impact on the service disproportionate to the number of workers involved. If train maintainers strike over Tuesday night, how many trains will run on Tuesday morning? If station staff strike on Wednesday, we know from our 2017 strike that the network will shut down. You get the picture. It's not without possible complications, but models of selective action should at least be seriously considered.



Alongside our industrial action, the union must reach out to allies in the wider labour movement and working-class communities to launch a public campaign for the future of public transport. Unless regular, adequate funding for Transport for London (TfL) is secured, then not only our jobs, terms, and conditions are at risk, but so is the very service we provide to the public.

When LU announced the "Fit for the Future" scheme in late 2013, with its plans to close all ticket offices and cut nearly 1,000 jobs, RMT launched the "Hands off London Transport" campaign to build alliances to resist. We need to relaunch that type of campaign now. We need protests outside the Department of Transport, City Hall, and TfL/LU offices, demanding an end to cuts and adequate long-term funding for TfL.

These strikes are the first that many Tube workers, especially on stations, have seen. Anyone who started since 2017 has never seen a strike on stations. Anyone who started since 2015 has never seen a combine-wide strike.

And, although strikes elsewhere in the economy have revived somewhat in early 2022, overall strikes are still at historically low levels. So we can't take the basics for granted. The golden rule of trade unionism is: never cross a picket line.

Management want us to see striking as a matter of individual and personal choice; in reality it's a fundamentally collective decision. Anyone who chooses to work during a strike is actively undermining their workmates' collective effort to defend and improve everyone's conditions, including theirs.

It would be remiss not to mention here the bulletin distributed by TSSA (a union which organises some clerical staff on the Tube), which disgracefully urges their members to work during the RMT strike. Worse, it misleads

them about their legal rights. To be absolutely clear, all workers, whichever union they're in and even if they're not in a union at all, have the same legal rights to participate in the strike.

Wherever you work, and whatever union you're in (or even if you're not in a union): do not cross the picket line. And that applies whether there's a physical picket at your workplace or not. "Scab" is an unpleasant word, but that's the historic term in the labour movement for someone who chooses to work while their workmates strike. The simplest way to avoid being called a scab is not to be one. □

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# Couriers' strikes spread to south

By Michael Elms

JustEat drivers and other food delivery couriers are striking across the UK against low pay. Up to late February, action had been in the north of England (since 6 December), but now one-day strikes have sprung up in the south of England. In Folkestone, Colchester, Aldershot and Farnborough there have been strikes by couriers working for JustEat, Deliveroo and UberEats.

Longer-running action has been co-ordinated by the IWGB union across the north of England. At the time of writing drivers in Sheffield are in the 69th day of strike action; couriers in Middlesbrough, Chesterfield and Leicester are also taking action every day. Delivery workers in Redcar recently staged a one-day strike action; and in Heckmondwike and other nearby towns in West Yorkshire, drivers are organising weekly day-long stoppages.

The bulk of the strikes in the UK are directed at the delivery firm Stuart. Stuart is a same-day logistics firm based in France and it supplies delivery service for JustEat in many UK towns and cities. In 2021, they rolled out a new pay structure which reduced the per-delivery base rate of pay for drivers from £4.50 to £3.40.

The strike began in Sheffield on 6 December, when Stuart finally rolled out the pay cut to the last group of towns. The roll-out had been delayed in Sheffield because of the militancy and organisation of the drivers there. Since 2019, activists in Workers' Liberty have been helping delivery couriers to organise a union, which has won various fights on local issues. With 80 members at the start of the strike and more now, this is a stronghold of union power in the gig economy in the UK. No other city has so far had such a powerful or established gig economy workers' union.

From Sheffield, the strikes spread to Stuart workers in Blackpool, Huddersfield, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, the West Riding of Yorkshire and most recently Leicester. A strike fundraiser has raised over £30,000 with more coming in every week. The Stuart strike was mostly run on the basis of putting pickets on high-volume restaurants in order to shut down deliveries from major Stuart clients. This is a change from the traditional methods of "spontaneous" strikes by platform workers, which normally involve asking all workers to simply switch off their apps and stop taking deliveries from all restaurants, including the smallest ones. The targeted strike is more effective because easier to sustain and enforce.

In January, Stuart made concessions to drivers. They said that from April they would start paying drivers for time spent waiting in restaurants – a perk which they had previously abolished a year or so ago. But they didn't specify the rate. They also conceded another long-standing demand of the union: to create a better web-page and management system for uploading insurance documents, as bugs in the existing system had long been causing drivers to be suspended in error. In spite of these concessions, there was no movement from Stuart bosses on pay. The strike continued for another month, and Sheffield drivers redoubled their efforts to spark action in other cities. With the renewed spread of action, their grit and determination has paid off.

## Other platforms

But strikes are now affecting other delivery platforms than just Stuart. Firstly, discontent has spread to other parts of the JustEat empire. Stuart is not the only delivery system used by JustEat. In a small number of cities, some or all of JustEat's deliveries are provided via the "Scoober" model, which is to say, by couriers who are employed (not spuriously self-employed, as everyone else in the sector is) by the labour agency Randstad. In other places, mostly smaller towns like York, Barnsley or Redcar, JustEat contracts self-employed couriers directly. Pay for these self-employed JustEat drivers is in general relatively good: after the Stuart pay cut, it is now probably the best in the sector. Drivers are paid for their journey to the restaurant to collect their order: not just for the journey from the restaurant to the customer, as on all other platforms. They get paid waiting time, and the base rate of pay is generous by the standards of the industry. But the pay is not keeping pace with the rising costs of living, and in particular with rising costs of fuel. This is what has sparked strikes in Redcar and southern towns like Aldershot and Farnborough.

Despite pay cuts or stagnation, JustEat and Stuart represent the high end of pay in the sector. Their main competitors, Deliveroo and UberEats, have progressively reduced their level of pay over years. In 2019, Deliveroo abolished their per-drop minimum pay of £4.25, and pay has spiralled down since. UberEats is widely considered by drivers to be a by-word for bad pay, with jobs frequently coming in at little more than £3.

One driver in Sheffield joked, while picketing McDonald's (where both UberEats and Stuart riders work), that you can tell who works for

what platform by their walk: the UberEats workers were dashing, harassed and unhappy, while Stuart riders were striding calmly and confidently. This was a joke, but it expresses something real: conditions of work on UberEats are intolerable.

Where strikes break out sporadically on UberEats or Deliveroo, for now IWGB activists consider that their prospects for a big win are small. Without national co-ordination, you can't force a change in policy by the big platform. Those strikes may be (and sometimes in the past have been able) able to prod the platforms into temporarily increasing the "multiplier", a bonus payment not unlike the historic dockers' "plus", which is used to tempt more drivers out to work when demand is high and supply of couriers is low.

On JustEat, the existing pressure of the strikes affecting Stuart means that prospects are better. JustEat management are surely alarmed at the prospect of contagion from one part of their empire into another, and have already suffered quite a lot of reputational damage from the Stuart strike. So a push to link up self-employed JustEat couriers with the Stuart dispute seems like a goer. □

- Donate to the strike fund: [bit.ly/StuStrike](https://bit.ly/StuStrike)
- Move support in your union or Labour Party: [bit.ly/c-motion](https://bit.ly/c-motion)
- Join the solidarity protest at Just Eat's London HQ, Monday 7 March, 5:30-6:45, 2 Fleet Place, London EC4M 7RF: [bit.ly/JEStrike](https://bit.ly/JEStrike)



Michael Gove and the Tories claim to be "levelling up", but are boosting inequality. Cartoon by George Newman, @gewman

## Police Bill: prepare to defy and repeal!

By Mohan Sen

On 28 February the Tory majority in the House of Commons voted to reverse ameliorating amendments the House of Lords made to the Police Bill (though they didn't try to reintroduce the drastic worsening amendments Tories put in the Lords which were defeated there). The Bill now goes back to the Lords, which might reinstate some of ameliorating amendments. Soon, though, the Bill will become law, and substan-

tially as first introduced in March 2021. We need to discuss how to drag the labour movement, largely absent from the fight to stop the Bill despite opposing it on paper, into defiance. As with other protest-restricting laws like the Public Order 1986, the impact of this law will depend heavily on how confident the police are to use it. *Solidarity* calls on Labour to commit to repeal this new law in its entirety, along with the restrictions in the 1986 and other Acts. □



# Solidarity

For a workers' government

## THE UNIVERSITIES DISPUTE AFTER 2 MARCH

By a UCU member

The first two weeks of spring action by the University and College Union (UCU) saw solid action in many universities. But to win the pension and Four Fights disputes we need to escalate the disruption.

Management want to ride this out. We need to make that impossible. On 22 February university bosses [voted](#) to confirm USS pension cuts. UCU members were furious, while Unison's success in winning ballots means the possibility of shutting down campuses is now greater.

We do not yet know what strategy UCU's Higher Education Committee has decided on for the weeks after the current schedule of strikes ends on 2 March. To win we need three things:

1. Escalation. Say "escalation" and this will often be interpreted as "more and longer strikes". More strike days are important, but we also need to improve turnout for the strike, and develop active, visible and targeted striking, for example to hit Open Days.

There is a lot of talk about "creative strategies" for the dispute. Some activists will remember the successful marking boycott of 2006. However, sixteen years ago that was a guerrilla tactic and management were not prepared for it. Since

then, they have been planning, and in the last two years Covid has taught them that in "emergencies" they can get away with changing the rules on assessment. The action must be at a level where even that becomes impossible to manage.

2. A strategy on deductions of pay for Action Short of Strike (ASOS). Management at several institutions have threatened deduction of full pay for refusal to reschedule classes hit by strike action. It is not clear that this would be legal, but the legality cannot be clarified until the deduction actually happens and is then challenged in an Employment Tribunal.

Our biggest defence is not, in fact, the law, but ongoing action that will make management think twice about deducting pay for fear of a backlash. To reassure members about coping with the impact of deductions, it is vital that at branch and national level we raise strike funds, made available as swiftly as possible to those facing threats of additional ASOS deductions.

3. A swift re-ballot, and other unions to ballot. The law allows only six months of action following the closure of a strike ballot, which means most branches have mandates only until 4 May. With Easter falling in April, we need to re-ballot swiftly for action to continue into the summer term.



City University of London shows that with other unions on board it is possible to secure complete campus closures far more effectively than UCU alone can manage. Unison, Unite and the GMB (and in Scotland the EIS) all organise university workers. Whether on a local or national issue we need staff at all levels to get involved. None of the issues at stake in this strike is exclusive to UCU members.

Winning these demands is likely to need an urgent special higher education sector conference of the UCU (SHESC). We call on activists to pass motions demanding an urgent SHESC, referring to Rule 16.11, which can be sent to Justine Mercer ([jmercer@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jmercer@ucu.org.uk)) and Paul Bridge ([pbridge@ucu.org.uk](mailto:pbridge@ucu.org.uk)), as already done by UCU branches such as Cambridge and Birkbeck. □

### National Union of Students walk-out

Wednesday 2 March.  
Rally [from noon](#) at  
Torrington Square, London  
WC1E 7JL □