

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

SIDE WITH UKRAINE



Pic: bit.ly/embassy-r

» **Down with Putin!**

» **Back anti-war protests in Russia**

» **Arms for Ukraine**

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The religiosity of James Connolly

Connolly criticised the Church, but never Catholic religion

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Stand with Ukraine!

6699 Editorial

Putin's disgusting war in Ukraine grinds on.

We oppose Russia's war and demand that Russian troops leave Ukraine. We are for Ukraine's right to self-determination and, therefore, back Ukraine's war of self-defence.

Russia's attack on Ukraine is causing immense suffering. In Mariupol, on the Black Sea coast, 2300 civilians have been killed. The town has been surrounded by Russian forces and a relentless artillery barrage has destroyed much of the city.

In Rynok Square in the western town of Lviv a terrible monument is taking shape, a memorial to all the children killed during the Russian invasion. 109 empty prams have been placed in the Square, one for each child's death.

Putin may well have suffered more military losses than he anticipated, and his war seems to have been rolling on for longer than he initially expected. And yet he still has significantly more troops and weaponry than Ukraine. So this war seems set to continue for some time, and the brutality of the war could yet become more extreme.

In fact Putin has to continue the war until he can conclude a peace deal which he can plausibly present as a victory. If he fails to do that he will make himself politically vulnerable inside

Russia. So there is no chance of Russian forces leaving Ukraine voluntarily (without being forced out) any time soon.

Minimally Putin will demand that Ukraine formally accept Russia's annexation of Crimea, occupied by Putin's army in 2014.

Putin will also want Ukraine to agree that occupied territory in Eastern Ukraine is now part of Russia. How much extra territory Putin demands, beyond the areas of the so-called Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics, also seized in 2014, remains to be seen.

Peace talks have been continuing, hosted by Turkey. Ukraine is demanding a ceasefire. It may be the case that eventually Russia accepts a ceasefire with the intention of permanently annexing much of the territory it has overrun since this war began in February.

Putin will also demand that Ukraine disarm, that it formally agrees it will not join NATO and becomes a neutral state. This, if it happens in this way, will be a victor's peace, imposed on Ukraine. It might even be the case that the Western powers press Ukraine to sign away its rights. France and Germany acted in this way in 2014-5, demanding that Ukraine sign the pro-Russian Minsk agreements so they could stabilise relations with Russia.

To scare the Western powers into helping him bully Ukraine in 2014-5, and to intimidate Ukraine itself, Putin increased the violence in Donbass, in Eastern Ukraine. And now Putin might intensify the fighting, while simultaneously holding talks, to get a better deal



for Russian nationalism. We oppose any attempt by the West to force Ukraine to sign away its rights to determine its own future. We support fast-tracking Ukraine into the EU, which will give it some political protection. And we find Johnson's attempt to liken the struggle of Ukraine to the UK's vote for Brexit to be risible; particularly so as Ukraine is desperate to join the EU.

We demand the Western powers arm Ukraine and we support Ukraine's war. We continue to fight for Western labour movement support for the Ukrainian left and trade unions. That includes, of course, opposing Ukraine's government when it acts against the Ukrainian working class.

We oppose new restrictions on workers' rights, agreed by Ukraine's parliament, which will allow bosses to sack workers more easily.

We are for Ukraine against Russia's war, and for the Ukrainian workers against its government.

If Ukraine is forced to sign an unequal agreement with Putin, it would be un-

just. Depending on the details, it may be understandable given the suffering and devastation Ukraine is suffering.

It is one thing to understand that Ukraine's government might be forced to sign a poor deal, to end the Russian carnage, to avoid something worse. It is another thing entirely for sections of the Western left to advocate such a deal.

The union-funded pro-Russian rag, the *Morning Star*, which assured us Putin would never invade Ukraine, now wants "peace" on the basis of the (obsolete) Minsk Agreements. The Stop the War Coalition, run by Stalinists and similar, agrees. Ukrainians in the UK know exactly what the Minsk "agreements" mean, and that's why passing StW placards were ripped up outside Downing Street last Saturday during a protest for Ukraine. Ukrainian activists have contempt for Stop the War. So do we, though we're not for ripping up placards.

Victory to Ukraine! Defend the Ukrainian trade unions! □

Academic boycott would help, not hurt, Putin

By Martin Thomas

Some people are calling for an [academic boycott](#) of Russia. *Solidarity* opposes this call.

We are for workers' boycotts which hit Putin and the oligarchs close to him. We are for them even if (as we'll see) their impact is moral and symbolic. The fate of Ukraine will be decided by the vigour of Ukraine's resistance and of the anti-Putin movement in Russia, and actions which harass Putin and help that movement contribute.

Such are the actions by dockers to refuse to handle Russian shipments of gas and oil.

That mandates maximum communication between the labour movement here and

dissidents or even potential dissidents in Russia. Those are most likely to be found among the young, including students and young university workers.

To signal general hostility to Russians harms solidarity. To limit communication to those already bold enough to speak out against Putin (knowing that in Russia that is likely to mean jail or the loss of jobs) also harms solidarity.

The boycott of apartheid South Africa is often cited as a model. But that was never all-encompassing. Our comrade Robert Fine wrote his book *Beyond Apartheid* jointly with Dennis Davis, who was (and still is) a university academic in South Africa, and Fine got his university in Britain

to offer special scholarships to students from South Africa, not to shun them. When the Communist Party and such cited boycott to try to block direct links between British unions and new non-racial unions in South Africa, we opposed them. As regular readers will know, we counterpose links with democratic and internationalist movements in Israel-Palestine against any general boycott of Israel.

Politics will decide, not academic boycotts or vain hope of nudging US and European governments into ideal and sufficient economic measures which can substitute.

Russia is not short of military-production capacity, nor of fuels, and according to a US

government [factbook](#) is "self-sufficient in nearly all major industrial raw materials". Reduced exports of oil and gas are more than balanced by increased prices for them. At the start of the year, Russia was earning \$200 million per day from gas; on 3 March Europe paid [\\$720 million](#). Over months Russia will have difficulty building new planes or repairing old ones, but over months.

Academic boycotts will also make it easier for Putin to cut or limit international communication for dissident or potential-dissident Russians. □



Boris Johnson's friendly tyrant

By Colin Foster

The seven-year war in Yemen by Saudi Arabia and its allies has killed around [400,000 people](#), and Saudi air strikes have killed some 9,000 civilians. The UK has supplied £22 billion of weaponry to Saudi in those seven years.

On 12 March the Saudi regime officially killed 81 people on grounds such as "deviant beliefs".

So on 16 March Boris Johnson visited Saudi Arabia and the UAE, trying (unsuccessfully, it seems) to schmooze them into increasing oil and gas pro-

duction to cover lost Russian supply. Johnson declared that "Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are key international partners in that effort" for "an international coalition to deal with the new reality".

What did he offer them for their help in this "new reality" of bloody imperialism and yet more carbon emissions?

Pals

Johnson is pals with the Saudi crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. "They just seem to hit it off", [comments](#) Eddie Lister, Johnson's chief of staff 2019-21 and now director of the Saudi British

Joint Business Council. Shortly before the murder of Saudi journalist [Jamal Khashoggi](#) – which US intelligence says the prince ordered – Johnson lavished public praise on his friend and visited him on a luxurious trip funded by the Saudi government. This was after he resigned as foreign secretary.

And so this was Johnson's chosen bit-part in the effort by the US and its allies to boost non-Russian oil and gas output and deflect pressure for a forced-march shift to renewables and nuclear. Venezuela and Iran are also being wooed.

The Saudi regime imposes an apartheid like set-up on the majority of its

population – migrant workers, religious minorities (mainly Shia Muslims) and women. The regime officially killed another three people the day of Johnson's visit.

From a "security" point of view, Saudi Arabia is a breeding ground for far-right Islamist militarism and terrorism, with intermittent encouragement from its far-right Islamist government.

Nottingham East MP Nadia Whittome has called for an end to arms sales and military assistance, and sanctions against the Saudi regime. The Labour leadership should be calling for that. □

Sudan's school workers step up

By Mohan Sen

The "Sudanese Revolution" to overturn October's military coup is continuing in force. As explained by trade unionist Mohamed Nagy Alasam in [Solidarity 625](#), workers' struggles are a very important part of the revolt. Workers have struck to support the fight for democracy and for their own workplace and industry demands.

Now Sudan's school workers have stepped up. Following a series of strikes earlier this month, the Sudanese Teachers' Committee (STC) have called for workers to come out

till the end of March. Most of the reports refer to teachers, but the STC statements seem to suggest the strikes are by other "public education" workers too.

They are demanding an increase in the minimum monthly salary from 12,000 to 24,000 Sudanese pounds (£20 to £40) and overhaul of the pay structure.

The STC says that so far turnout for the strike has been "no less than 99%" around Sudan and more like 100% in the capital Khartoum.

It says Sudanese teachers and school workers are writing "the most beautiful let-

ters of struggle... conclusive evidence that what unites us as teachers is enough to put us in the place we want, and increas[ing] the understanding of parents...A cloud of goodness roamed Darfur and Kordofan and covered the White Nile, Al Jazeera, Sennar, Blue Nile, Khartoum, and the northern states."

Beaten

The military-Islamist regime is afraid of teachers. When the coup began it pre-emptively arrested hundreds. Now predictably the strike is facing repression, with the STC telling the UK MENA Solidarity

campaign that strikers have been "beaten and insulted" by officers. A striking teacher has produced a video detailing how tear-gas grenades were thrown into a girls' primary school in the city of Atbara.

The STC has called for "teachers and public education workers... to unite to achieve our full demands without paying attention to... pressure, terrorising and threats".

School students across Sudan have protested in support of the teachers and for their own demands around the cost of living.

In Khartoum on 21 March, the "Resistance Committees"

that lead the struggle against the coup held local marches to protest against the repression, under the slogan "restoring the dignity of teachers". Interestingly, they have also called for all groups of workers to form strike committees and coordinate with them.

Over 1,000 people have been detained since 25 October, including 148 children. At least 89 have been killed; the latest victim, on 22 March, was 17. Solidarity messages to the STC on Facebook [bit.ly/sudan-t](#) – messages of protest to Sudanese embassy: [bit.ly/sud-e](#) □

Karnatka decision sharpens communalism

By Sacha Ismail

In [Solidarity 625](#) we discussed the row in the south Indian state of Karnataka about whether Muslim women students are allowed to wear the hijab at college. On 15 March the state's High Court upheld the ban, which sort of spiralled into existence from the end of last year and was generalised by the court in February. Its decision is being appealed to India's Supreme Court, but that may move slowly. Meanwhile in what seems like an act of straightforward vindictiveness, Karnataka's government has said that Muslim students who missed classes and exams either because they were excluded from college or in pro-

test at the ban will not be able to do their exams at all.

There have been protests by Muslims in the state at the high court decision, including student walkouts and shopkeepers shutting up. Muslim religious organisations called for a "strike", but I can't see if any workers struck against their employers.

For reasons I haven't yet worked out, the legal argument was about whether hijab-wearing is an "essential" part of being Muslim and "therefore" constitutionally protected. I can't see anything in the Indian [constitution](#) that explains why this should be the argument.

The right to do something

should not depend on it being mandated somewhere. It also seems very odd and undesirable to have the courts of a supposedly secular state declaring what is essential to a religion.

The fact that Muslims are an increasingly persecuted minority in India gives the need to defend their distinct rights extra force. And on the other hand, the idea that Muslim women *must* wear the hijab should also be regarded as a problem for human rights, if currently a much smaller one than the Hindu bigots' anti-Muslim crusade.

The controversy seems to have reinforced that idea and those pushing it. □

Upcoming meetings

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

Thursday 24 March: Matt Bolton & Daniel Randall talk "Confronting Antisemitism". Online meeting. Organised by the London Centre for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism

Saturday 26 March: Labour Left Internationalists monthly meeting: Ukraine with Julie Ward and speakers from the Ukrainian Solidarity Campaign and left-wing activists in Ukraine

Sunday 10 April: Ecosocialist reading group: Energy: Nuclear, renewables, incinerators, hydrogen, biomass

Sunday 8 May: Ecosocialist reading group: The Lucas Plan

Friday 27 Sunday 29 May: Come to LO Fete with Workers' Liberty. More info [bit.ly/wl-lo](#)

Friday 1 – Sunday 3 July: Ideas for Freedom 2022, Camden School for Girls – book now!

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



Defend Ukrainian workers' rights

By Ben Tausz

In the midst of the war, Ukrainian MPs have rushed through a broad assault on workers' rights. Below is a [translation](#) of the 16 March statement by left group Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), demanding President Zelenskyy veto the bill. As SR comrade Vitaliy Dudin told the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign's 14 March rally: "War did not cancel the class struggle". We back SR's alternative call: to fund defence and rebuilding, confiscate the wealth of Ukraine's biggest capitalists.

On March 15, 2022, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine approved the draft Law of Ukraine "On the Organisation of Labour Relations in Martial Law" 7160 (hereinafter – the Draft). It is assumed that for the period of martial law, the provisions of this document will take precedence over the provisions of labor law. Referring to the need to adapt labor legislation to the conditions of war, he expands the capabilities of employers through workers' rights.

Certain restrictions on rights during the war are inevitable. Achieving a balance between human rights and a nation struggling for its existence is not easy. However, a compromise between the social partners and democratic principles should be the guiding prin-



ciple. It seems that the law was passed without taking into account these safeguards against abuse.

The main conventions of the International Labour Organisation in the field of human rights provide a number of rights on such issues as equal working conditions and the rights of trade unions and workers, derogation from which is unacceptable during a state of emergency; derogation from other rights is permissible, but only to the extent necessary in view of the severity of the situation (paragraph 68 of the 1985 Syracuse Principles).

Restrictions imposed to protect the public interest must be proportionate to the achievement of the objective pursued. The project is designed to strengthen defence capabilities, but establishes the possibility of exploitation of workers at enterprises of any industry throughout Ukraine. In other words, the emergency rules provided by it can be used not to carry out work in the interests of defence, but to increase the profits of the owners.

The biggest concerns are the rules on:

1) the possibility of deterioration of significant working conditions without compliance with the two-month notice period (Article 3 of the Project);

2) dismissal of an employee during the period of temporary incapacity for work and leave, as well as dismissal of trade union members without the consent of the trade union committee (Article 5 of the Draft);

3) increase of the maximum duration of the working week to 60 hours and reduction of the time of uninterrupted rest to 24 hours (Article 6 of the Project);

4) opportunities to involve pregnant women and women with young children in night work in case of "extreme necessity", as well as the abolition of the rule on reducing the duration of work at night (Article 8 of the Project);

5) the right of the employer to refuse to grant leave if the employee is involved in the performance of work on facilities related to critical infrastructure (Article 12 of the Project);

6) suspension of the employment contract in connection with the military aggression against Ukraine, which excludes the possibility of his work (Article 13 of the Draft).

A number of restrictions go beyond the limits set by the Decree of the President of Ukraine on the imposition of martial law in Ukraine no. 64/2022. This Decree allows for the restriction of the rights provided for in Articles 30-34,

38, 39, 41-44, 53 of the Constitution. However, the legislative initiative also restricts the rights provided by the following articles of the Constitution of Ukraine:

Article 24 – guarantee of legal protection of motherhood, which includes the provision of benefits to pregnant women and mothers. The project allows the involvement of these categories of women in night work;

Article 36 – citizens have the right to participate in trade unions in order to protect their labor and socio-economic rights and interests. The project allows to dismiss trade union members without the consent of trade unions;

Article 45 – everyone has the right to rest. The project increases the duration of work (especially at night), allows dismissal during vacation, and leave at critical infrastructure facilities becomes optional;

Article 48 – the right to an adequate standard of living for oneself and one's family. The project will legalise the suspension of the employment contract, which could deprive citizens of their livelihood.

It should be emphasised that the rights provided for in Article 24 of the Constitution cannot be restricted at all (Article 64 of the Basic Law).

Increasing the burden on workers does not compensate for the loss of the economy, but will make workers more vulnerable in relations with the employer. In the speeches of the President of Ukraine there was a call to the working people to do their job 100%. However, the approved Project increases the length of the working week by 20 hours, ie will force many to work by 150%.

According to the NGO Social Movement, restrictions on labor rights can be avoided by achieving legitimate goals in other, more equitable ways. To ensure the defence of Ukraine, it is necessary to confiscate the property of Ukrainian oligarchs on the grounds of public necessity. The capitals of Ukrainian oligarchs must work for the economy! The main goal of the policy at this stage is to unite society in counteracting Russian aggression and to preserve the rights of the affected people as much as possible. Ukraine's economy will definitely be revived at the expense of state support, proper organisation of work and decent wages.

Therefore, in view of the above, we ask you to veto the Law of Ukraine "On the Organisation of Labor Relations in Martial Law" (Bill 7160) adopted on March 15, 2022 in connection with the inconsistency of its provisions with Articles 24, 36, 45, 48, 64 of the Constitution of Ukraine and the principles of the welfare state. [Apologies for any translation errors. Original Ukrainian: bit.ly/SR_vs_7160] □

Statement on temporary ban on some parties

The Social Movement has also [criticised](#) the "temporary suspensions" of the activities of a number of Ukrainian political parties.

The list includes both major opposition parties and less known ones that use words "progressive", "left", or "socialist" in their names. President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky accused them of "connections with Russia"...

We clearly realise that at least some members of these parties, and particularly their leadership

- downplayed the danger of Russian chauvinist ambitions and bordered on justifying the aggression if not directly worked with the Kremlin;
- misdirected popular frustration caused by neoliberal policies of the governments into fighting the caricature image of "the West" destroying "Slavic civilisation";
- spread xenophobia, anti-semitism, homophobia and hatred.

Thus, even those using, but in fact hijacking, left-wing phraseology, in reality just served the oligarchic con-

sensus. Nevertheless, any possible cooperation of the aforementioned organisations, as well as of their individual members, with Russian imperialists has to be investigated, and then tried by the court.

Concrete persons involved in sabotage of the popular resistance have to bear individual responsibility for their actions.

We recognise the importance and symbolism of democratic freedoms and believe that indiscriminate party bans have no place in today's struggle.

We have already seen how the government tried to abuse the situation of war to attack the labor rights of Ukrainian workers, now its actions are aimed at limiting political and civil freedoms. We cannot support this.

Moreover, we would like to warn against any attempts to stigmatise left and social movements in general by the absurd linking of progressive agenda to the Kremlin which embodies everything opposite to it. □

Why banning RT is a bad idea



Eric Lee

By Eric Lee

A few years ago, when I was working on the Bernie Sanders campaign, one of our volunteers came to me with an interesting proposal. It turned out that he worked in London for Russia Today (now known as RT). He suggested that I or another campaign spokesperson might make an appearance on one of their shows. It would be good publicity for the campaign, he said.

I politely declined and explained why. RT is a propaganda arm of the Russian state and I wanted nothing to do with it. Nor did I want the Sanders campaign to be associated with it.

This week Ofcom banned RT from broadcasting in the UK. European Commission President Ursula von der

Leyen did the same across the EU, also banning Sputnik, another Russian channel.

I think those decisions were the wrong ones and will have - are already having - disastrous consequences. Especially for the Russian people.

The ban on RT was quickly denounced by the Russian government, but welcomed by many in Europe. RT has no particular "right" to broadcast its lies to the British and European publics, especially not at a time when Russian artillery are pounding Ukrainian cities into rubble. My initial reaction to the news was to think "good riddance" and well done to Ofcom and the European Commission. But I have changed my mind.

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) came out strongly against the decision to ban RT.

"The total closure of a media outlet does not seem to me to be the best way to combat disinformation or propaganda," said EFJ General Secretary Ricardo Gutiérrez. "In our opinion, it

is always better to counteract the disinformation of propagandist or allegedly propagandist media by exposing their factual errors or bad journalism, by demonstrating their lack of financial or operational independence, by highlighting their loyalty to government interests and their disregard for the public interest."

It's not entirely clear what Ofcom and the European Commission thought they would achieve by banning RT or Sputnik. Blocking RT's broadcasts doesn't put an end to Russian state propaganda. As we know, Russian intelligence services work overtime to influence public opinion and even to change the results of elections - with some measure of success. Of all the means the Russian state has at its disposal to influence public opinion in the West, RT was perhaps the least effective. I don't know anyone who watches it, and I doubt it has any effect at all about how people think.

Still, having said all that, if there were no cost to the banning decision, then

why not? If it makes us feel better about ourselves, like hanging a Ukrainian flag in our windows, that's fine.

But there is a cost and a very serious one to this decision, and that's why I oppose it.

The Russian state will retaliate by trying to ban access to Western broadcasts, including those of the BBC. They already banned the German broadcaster Deutsche Welle (DW).

As we know from the many years of the Cold War, and during the Second World War as well, the BBC broadcasts were like oxygen to people living under dictatorial regimes. That is true today as well.

Though RT was watched by hardly anyone, the BBC, DW and other Western broadcasters have large audiences in Russia. They are trusted to tell the truth.

If we're making a trade - we shut down RT, they shut down the BBC - we do not come out ahead. And the Russian people, who are hungry for the truth, are the real losers. □

Mental-health pill-popping escalates



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

The number of people in the UK prescribed drugs to reduce anxiety is rising, driven by major increases among women and young adults, [new research](#) shows. Women are more than twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with anxiety and prescribed antidepressants or other medication to relieve its symptoms.

Use of anti-anxiety medication was steady between 2003 and 2008 but then began ris-

ing the year of the financial crash. From 2008 to 2018 new prescriptions issued for anxiety rose from 25 or 26 per 1,000 person years at risk - a measure of the prevalence of anxiety - to 43.6. The study found that the biggest rises in prescription of anti-anxiety drugs after that were in 25- to 34-year-olds, closely followed by under-25s and those aged 35 to 44. However, the "substantial" rise in new diagnoses of anxiety among 18- to 35-year-olds is likely to be the result of individuals having been refused care from NHS child and adolescent mental health services (Camhs) when they were under 18, Archer

suggested.

"For example, in 2018-19 over a quarter of referrals to Camhs were rejected, potentially leading to an increase in prescribing amongst the youngest age group [studied]." A third of all Camhs teams faced cuts or closures as a result of Tory cuts. Services are struggling to and cannot adequately meet demands. The NHS-funded paper, published in the British Journal of General Practice, is based on analysis of the care given to almost 2.6 million adults registered with 176 GP practices across the UK from 2003 to 2018. The new research does not cover the period of the

Covid pandemic, which has led to a growing number of people presenting with mental health problems.

Dr Charlotte Archer, the study's lead author does not conclude that women are necessarily suffering from anxiety at a greater rate. "It may be that women are more likely to seek help for anxiety, or are more willing to take medication for their mental health, and are therefore more likely to be prescribed anxiolytics [anti-anxiety drugs]"

For several decades it has been apparent that there are differences between women and men in how they express mental distress as a cohort.

This is seen in the prevalence of mental illness; pathways into treatment and support and in therapeutic preferences. There are well established links between the risks of mental illness and the social realities of women's lives. These include women's relatively lower incomes and access to household resources and responsibility for children.

Archer warned that some people with anxiety are likely to be suffering "unintended harm" as a result of being prescribed drugs for which there is scant evidence that they work, such as beta blockers, or which contradict clinical guidelines, such as antipsychotics, or which may not be effective if taken long-term, such as antidepressants.

NICE stepped-care guidelines recommend psychological therapy at step two, followed by the option of medication at step three. In reality many of those seeking help for mental distress are offered drugs before or whilst on the waiting list for therapy. We need to change society to push down inequality, and meantime get NHS mental health care to be fully funded and improved so that more people can access therapy rather than taking drugs. □

Letter: learning from collapse of SDS

Eric Lee is right ([Solidarity 628](#)) that Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) activists need to learn from the collapse of SDS in 1969. An account by Third Camp socialists at the time is on our website: bit.ly/s-sds. I think it shows Eric's presentation is skewed.

The trouble with SDS was not excessive influence of previously organised "far Leftists" with "their own agendas", i.e. of groups with some previous

political education and overview. Just the opposite. Many of those who wrecked SDS did it under the banner of spurning the "Old Left". Meanwhile, those round Michael Harrington, initially in pole position, defined themselves out; the Orthodox Trotskyist SWP saw SDS as too much of a mess to even try; the Independent Socialist Clubs (with Hal Draper) tried, but with little effect.

Maoists (PL) intervened with some prior "theory": they were

effective despite their small prior organisation because so many "neophytes" saw the Chinese Cultural Revolution and such as good coin.

The main SDS factions were surely ultra-left, but worse, and decisively, Stalinistic: they not only exaggerated how close revolution was, but saw revolution on a Stalinistic model, militarist, authoritarian, populist. The drift of DSA is hardly ultra-left or purist, but it is Stalinistic. Witness

the DSA International Committee's warmth towards the Maduro regime in Venezuela.

Among the best of those pushing against that drift are the "far Leftists" (including some ex-ISOers) who have some prior socialist "agenda" different from kneejerk siding with the USA's power-politics enemies. □

Martin Thomas, Islington

Denialism, power, and Putin



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

On 28 February 2022, for the first time ever, the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [called out](#) the "vested economic and political interests" that had "generated rhetoric and misinformation that undermines climate science and disregards risk and urgency", resulting in "public misperception of climate risks and polarised public support for climate actions".

Capitalist society is saturated in denialism. As Michael Mann documents in *The New Climate Wars*, many of the for-hire scientists who have led the charge on rubbishing climate science honed

their trade on the misinformation campaigns of Big Tobacco.

Denialist propaganda and intrigue is not limited to Western fossil capitalists. As the world's biggest petrostate, Putin's Russia is a wellspring of denialist misinformation. Putin himself denies anthropogenic climate change and believes that Russia will benefit from global warming. Sitting on top of a third of the Earth's oil and gas reserves, the Russian state is an embodiment of implicatory denial and has orchestrated some of the most effective and elaborate denialist campaigns.

In 2009, hackers with links to Russia and WikiLeaks broke into the emails of IPCC scientists and released these emails in a way that portrayed climate change as a hoax. This campaign, run in concert with fossil capitalists like the Koch brothers, was instrumental in preventing even limited progress at the

Copenhagen climate talks.

In 2018 Russia's pro-Trump intervention into the US election was motivated in part to get sanctions lifted on Russian fossil fuels. Obama's sanctions, imposed after the 2014 invasion of Ukraine, had scuppered a \$500 billion Rosneft/Exxon Mobil deal to explore previously untapped petroleum reserves in the Russian Arctic. Trump was likely to lift the sanctions, Clinton was not.

In the event, the Russiagate scandal created enough pressure that the sanctions stayed in place. But not before the Russian Internet Research Agency had flooded American social media with conspiracy theory and Russian intelligence had hacked and released damaging material from the Democratic Party.

The intervention into US politics demonstrates that the Russian state-organised misinformation campaigns are not limited to production and promotion of misinformation of climate science. There is a broader project of deception designed to shore up denialist power and privilege. Years of Russian state disinformation about Ukraine provided the ideological justification for the recent imperialist invasion.

The maintenance of these lies requires substantial financial resources and acts of tremendous violence, including now in Russia 15 year prison sentences. While few on the left would believe the climate change denial, many would-be leftists willingly regurgitate Putin's lies about Ukraine.

The pro-Putin "left" are the zombie remains of Stalinist denialism which has corrupted socialist politics over for many generations. In the 1930s many Western leftists denied Stalin's subjugation of Ukraine, comforting themselves instead with conspiracy theory.



Would-be socialists like HG Wells and the pro-Stalinist Fabian Society parroted the Stalinist lie that the Holodomor was a hoax perpetrated by the capitalist establishment to discredit the Soviet Union.

Just as those latter day "socialists" could not see the Russian imperialism in the 1930s, their political descendants cannot see it now. Political ideology blinds these people to reality even when this reality comes in the form of a 40 mile column of heavy artillery.

Real life consequences of denialism are finding brutal expression on the streets of Ukraine and in escalating climate breakdown. For socialist politics to revive and to take up the challenge of the IPCC to resist the forces of denialism we need to follow the example of those who steadfastly resisted the Stalin school of falsification:

"To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one's program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives – these are the rules". □

Friend of Farage should not be Labour MP

By Mohan Sen

Manchester Labour MP Graham Stringer is a climate change-denier. That is long-established.

Stringer, once seen as being on the Labour left, is a trustee of the Global Warming Policy Foundation (GWPF). GWPF is a climate change-denying lobby group which is known to have received a lot of money from at least one major Tory donor, hedge fund boss Michael Hintze.

Stringer's climate denialism jumped into the news because he has agreed to speak at the Bolton launch, on 26

March, of the "Vote Power Not Poverty" anti-net-zero initiative founded, led and fronted by Nigel Farage, alongside a set of Faragist right-wingers.

Stringer is also a longstanding and militant Brexiteer.

Stringer has now told local Labour members he will not be attending after all. But he should be vigorously challenged, and Blackley and Broughton Labour Party members and trade unionists should "trigger" him and deselect him as their candidate. □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/g-stri

Pisa: militant but wrong

By Sacha Ismail

The Italian union USB (Unione Sindacale di Base, Grassroots Workers' Union) says that its members at Galileo Galilei airport in Pisa have refused to load weapons for Ukraine.

It says the workers were lied to about the cargo, told it was humanitarian aid. What is positive is the workers' militancy, their willingness to use industrial action as a political weapon and their exercising of distrustful oversight and controls over the actions of

their bosses and the state. I've also been told there is a more general practice of unions in Italy blocking the shipment of weapons on anti-militarist grounds. Still, unless we've misunderstood something, the action was wrong.

Three days before the Russian invasion of Ukraine the USB International Department [condemned](#) Ukraine and supported the Russian nationalist forces in eastern Ukraine. USB is affiliated to the Stalinist World Federation of Trade Unions, which also includes the state labour fronts in China

and Syria. Perhaps not all the workers who took part in the action, perhaps for a range of reasons, share that viewpoint. But it is surely relevant.

UK and West Coast US dockers have refused to unload Russian state-linked cargo in solidarity with Ukraine. Politically that is actually the opposite of the Pisa action.

Think

Socialist Worker – which as far as I can see has mentioned such actions by dockers here only in passing – has hailed the Pisa action, as part of its

wider opposition to weapons for Ukraine.

In his 1938 article "[Learn to think](#)", Leon Trotsky wrote:

"Let us assume that rebellion breaks out tomorrow in the French colony of Algeria under the banner of national independence and that the Italian government, motivated by its own imperialist interests, prepares to send weapons to the rebels. What should the attitude of the Italian workers be in this case?..."

"Should the Italian workers prevent the shipping of arms to the Algerians? Let any ul-

tra-leftists dare answer this question in the affirmative. Every revolutionist, together with the Italian workers and the rebellious Algerians, would spurn such an answer with indignation...

"At the same time, the French maritime workers... would be compelled to exert every effort to block the shipment of ammunition intended for use against the rebels. Only such a policy on the part of the Italian and French workers constitutes the policy of revolutionary internationalism". □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/it-blk

In the badlands of Donbas

By Tom Harrison

According to the Putin propaganda machine, the self-styled “people’s republics” of Donetsk and Luhansk (DPR and LPR) in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine were ‘liberated’ from “neo-Nazi” rule in 2014.

Presumably their governance shows what other areas of Ukraine can look forward should the Russian army successfully subjugate the rest of the country.

Putin’s kleptocracy in Russia itself can fairly be described as a “mafia state”, and similar arrangements are replicated in the Donbas fiefdoms.

Ever since these areas were seized from Ukraine, they have been subject to internecine violence, with gangland hits taking down separatist warlords. Between 2015 and 2018 several leading figures were wiped out in events akin to the revenge finale of a Godfather movie.

First to get whacked was Alexander Bednov – aka “Batman” – mown down with seven of his bodyguards in what his supporters described as a “gangster ambush”.

Next was Arsen “Motorola” Pavlov, one-time leader of the Sparta battalion, notorious for its war crimes. Pavlov had gone on record admitting the murder of Ukrainian POWs. “I don’t give a fuck about what I’m accused of ... I shot 15 prisoners dead... I kill if I want to.” A bomb in elevator of his flat did for Pavlov, but the motive for the killing was not his failure to read the Geneva Convention.

Pavel Dremov was killed by a car bomb just after celebrating his wedding. Aleksey Mozgovoy – another car bomb, followed by a machine gun attack just to make sure. Yevgeny Zhilin, gunned down in an upscale Moscow restaurant. Attacker wearing false moustache, yellow-tinted sunglasses, and a Panama hat.

Then Gennadiy Tsytkalov, one time prime minister of LPR, “committed suicide” after being arrested for allegedly plotting a coup against his successor. According to his jailers, Gennadiy felt so guilty about “the gravity of his crime” that he hanged himself in his cell. Evidently he didn’t want to risk being shot whilst trying to escape!

Former “People’s Governor” of the LPR Valery Bolotov officially died of heart failure. His wife said he was poisoned, claiming his health started to deteriorate soon after drinking a cup of coffee at a business meeting with two men he knew. Starkly similar to the murder of Alexander Litvinenko in London in 2006, but it wasn’t the tea this time!

The most significant termination was of Alexander Zakharchenko, who had served four years as Prime Minister of



DPR. He held political opinions as a belief such as that democracy encouraged people to be gay, and was a firm believer in the death penalty.

On Russian TV he called for the conquest of Britain, which would usher in a “Golden Age for Russia.” Zakharchenko was blown up in a cafe in Donetsk.

All of the murders were naturally blamed on Ukrainian operatives, yet if this were so the Ukraine must have the most super efficient secret service in the world. So many assassinations of leading local political figures in the space of four years, and not a single perpetrator caught!

Feuds over the control of trade routes and contraband energy resources are more likely parts of the truth, plus a desire by the Kremlin to clean up its act in the Donbas by purging first generation rebel leaders and giving the separatist regimes a more acceptable appearance. The way the eliminations were conducted bear all the hallmarks of Russian special forces operated by the state’s military intelligence arm – the GRU.

One warlord who helped Putin illegally grab parts of the Ukraine in 2014 still around, at least for the time being, is Igor Girkin. Wanted in the Netherlands for his role in bringing down civilian airliner MH-17 in 2014 over separatist territory, with over 300 deaths, he has no fear of answering for that crime as long as he stays in Russia. He shares the same protection as the state sponsored murderers of Litvinenko and the Salisbury GRU poisoners.

However, his proclivity towards indiscretion is somewhat risky.

It is something of a mystery given the DPR-LPR death toll that Igor Girkin is

still alive, as in his fondness for giving interviews he frequently contradicts the Kremlin line. He claimed last December that Moscow ordered Zakharchenko’s murder.

Girkin trashed claims that those running the so-called “republics” enjoyed any kind of local support as pure fiction. Girkin now says these breakaway regions in the Donbas are now “a dump” or “black hole”, and because of those conditions hatred of Russia is to some extent justified. Dangerous sentiments!

Putin expected his latest invasion to result in a re-run of what happened in Crimea in 2014. Ethnic Russians and Russia speaking Ukrainians would welcome the invaders as “liberators”. Yet in the intervening years the example of the regimes in the Donbas statelets has further educated the Ukrainian population on what can be expected under Putin puppet rule.

On the Freedom House 0-to-100 scale Ukraine, which they regard as “partly free”, clocks up a score of 61 (so, somewhere between Indonesia and Colombia). The Eastern Donbas statelets rate a 4, just one up from North Korea.

The constitution of Stalin has been restored, as has capital punishment (the only region in Europe with it except Belarus). The secret police monitor all communications. Arbitrary arrests are numerous, especially of those who don’t make “contributions” to the hoodlums in charge.

According to Ivan Dale, a human rights group spokesman: “The cellars where prisoners are held in Donetsk and the widespread use of torture are the most obvious human rights issues. You could say that the political repression in Russia is doubly felt in Donetsk and Luhansk.”

The people of the Ukraine, whether of Russian or Ukrainian mother-tongue, have seen this, and also know that these areas have become an economic basket case thanks to the mismanagement and pilfering of the crooks and thugs running the show.

“It looks like the 1930’s in the Soviet Union, a classic gulag,” says Stanislav Aseyev, a journalist, himself a one time kidnap victim of the regime.

One of the features of Stalin’s time was its antisemitism, a notable example being the notorious “doctors’ plot”, where scores of predominantly Jewish doctors were accused of conspiring to assassinate USSR leaders.

According to Igor Plotnitsky, head of the LPR from 2014 to 2017, in a speech he made at a Russian university, the Euromaidan revolution of 2014 was actually a Jewish plot because the name was actually “Evriemaidan”, Russian for “Jewmaidan”. It is reminiscent of the notorious Tsarist forgery, Protocols of

the Elders of Zion, or modern variants of such twaddle like QAnon. It doesn’t take long for George Soros to crop up in the discourse of these reactionaries bemoaning Russian “victimhood”.

Such antisemitic conspiracy theories should be the first warning sign that the invasion of Ukraine is not some kind of move against “neo-Nazis”, or a heroic rerun of the Second World War, as the Putin propaganda machine likes to present it.

Russia has more than its share of Nazis itself. Ultra-nationalist politics spreads across the political spectrum in Russia and much of it can be described as “far right”.

Morning Star articles on Ukraine regularly mention the Azov battalion in an attempt to follow the Kremlin line of tarring the entire Ukrainian resistance as a bunch of neo-Nazis. No mention will be found, however, of Rusich, a Russian neo-Nazi paramilitary group responsible for past war crimes in Ukraine and no doubt currently carrying out plenty more.

Included in the ranks of Rusich are such charmers as Yan Petrovsky, who was photographed over the dead bodies of Ukrainian soldiers he and his mates had mutilated, and Alexei Milchakov, who infamously posted videos of himself torturing puppy dogs and called for the extermination of homeless people in St Petersburg. Other fascist groups too have also been encouraged by Putin’s inner circle to aid the secessionists in Donbas.

Neo-Nazis will obviously seek to exploit the current situation for their own perverted ends whatever side of the battle lines they choose, yet the “anti-fascist” claims from Putin apologists are further weakened when the composition of visiting “fact-finding” delegations to Donbas is examined.

These have included numerous figures from the European far right such as Manuel Ochsenreiter, a German neo-Nazi (a somewhat strange invite to a 9 May event to mark victory against Nazi Germany).

Ochsenreiter, who worked in the Bundestag for the AfD, was accused in 2019 of organising a “false flag” attack carried out by Polish fascists on a

continued page 8 →



For socialists to understand and confront left antisemitism from primitive or Stalinist roots to the “anti-imperialism of fools”. 265 pages, £9.99 ☐ bit.ly/shop-wl

Putin, Eurasianism, a

By John Cunningham

What makes Russian President Vladimir Putin tick, ideologically? One starting point could be the body of ideas called Eurasianism and the writings of Alexander Dugin, sometimes referred to (fancifully) as "Putin's Rasputin".

In times of political and social dislocation, ideas and theories can emerge from the fringes of society which challenge the standard divisions of right and left. The period after the collapse of the Soviet Union was one such time. There are many historical examples; for example, the varied sects that arose during the English revolutionary period of the 1640s. Mysticism, the occult, extreme nationalism, eugenics, varieties of fascism, race theory, antisemitism and anti-feminism can all spring to the fore. In this murky pool we can locate Eurasianism.

Eurasianism took shape in the 1920s among exile Russians living in Paris and Berlin, particularly Ivan Ilyin and Nikolai Trubetskoi, although it had precedents in strands of mystical and nationalist thought in Tsarist Russia. Unable to understand the revolutions of 1917, these exiles cast around for intellectual and conceptual tools to understand their predicament.

Eurasianism evolved and changed shape over the years. In this early White Russian exile version there were three main considerations:

1) Russian civilisation is neither "Asian" nor "European", nor is it a "mix" or "blend" of the two. Eurasia is therefore a unique geopolitical concept and



Alexander Dugin

extends beyond Russia's borders.

2) The main enemy of Russia is the West and, surprisingly, many of the early Eurasianists supported the 1917 Russian Revolutions because they believed it halted the "westernisation" of Russia. However, the October Revolution's internationalism and atheism was anathema. Eurasianism is multi-confessional but sees the Russian Orthodox Church as central.

3) Russia would "evolve" into some kind of statist, nationalist, Orthodox Christian entity with minimal or no western influences such as liberalism. Therefore, they opposed any attempt by émigré groups such as ROV (Russian All-Military Union) based in Serbia, to mount military operations in the Soviet Union.

Counter-intelligence operations by the USSR secret service eroded the Western European-based Eurasianist movement and it ceased activities in 1929. Eurasianism underwent a revival around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union, partly due to the descendants of those earlier White Russian exiles returning to Russia and becoming advisers to government officials and think-tanks.

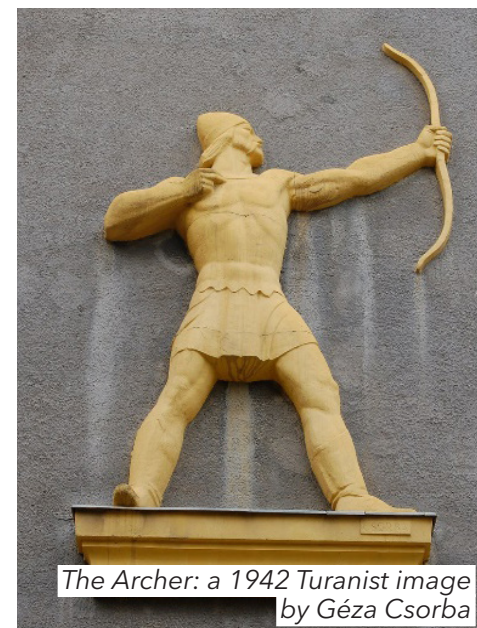
And from the Gulag via the archives of the Hermitage Museum came Lev Gumilyov, considered the founder of what became known as Neo-Eurasianism, arguing that Russia is closer to Asia than Europe and Eurasia includes much more than Russia.

His mother was the renowned poet Anna Akhmatova, with whom he had a troubled relationship. She mentions him in her collection *Requiem* ("You are my son and my horror" is one telling line, Poem 5, 1939). Gumilyov spent most of 1938-1953 in labour camps; after Stalin's death he was freed and got employment with the Hermitage. There he continued his studies of the peoples of the Central Asian Steppes, particularly the Khazars, a nomadic people who established a huge commercial empire in south Ukraine, Crimea and Kazakhstan in the sixth century CE. He was particularly interested in what caused the great population movements (Huns, Tatars, Mongols, Kazakhs etc.) from Central Asia into Russia and Europe. For Gumilyov the Russians and the Turkic-speaking people of Central Asia form, in his words, a "super-ethnos" – something similar to the idea of a "civilisation", a set of shared values which cross national boundaries. Turanism, of which a Turkish/Turkic version exists, shares some of these concerns (bit.ly/turanm). He has been accused of antisemitism and both his research and methodology have been heavily criticised.

Dugin

Alexander Dugin, born in 1962, joined various semi-fascist organisations, including the so-called National Bolsheviks, and in the 1980s he was a member of the Yuzhinsky Group, delving into extreme nationalism and mysticism. In June 2002 he helped found the Eurasia Party. Amongst the "thinkers" who have influenced him are Wolfram Sievers (a Nazi who was executed at Nuremberg in 1948); Julius Evola (Italian fascist, mystic, and "race-theorist"), Jean Parvulescu ("speaker of the occult parliament of the planetary elite of the awakened", according to one website entry).

Dugin rejects what he calls Atlantism and the dominance of the USA and its allies: Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand. He wants "strategic control" of the USA (whatever that might mean), advocating a total rejection of the liberal values which he associates with the West. From this will rise a Eurasian empire, stretching from the Bal-



The Archer: a 1942 Turanist image by Géza Csorba

tic to the Pacific, a geo-political space, which includes more than just Russia and the Turkic-speaking Republics. He even considers Korea to be part of this sprawling emporium.

Dugin is not quite a nationalist. However, the role of Russia is central: "... only the Russia people have been virile enough to liberate all Eurasia from the countless genocidal schemes of both the East and West – of both the telluric [land-based] powers and the thalassocratic [sea-based] powers of non-Aryan and Aryan national chauvinists alike."

He and his supporters see Ukraine as part of a Western Slavic Alliance, a component of the Eurasian ethnos. The fact that most Ukrainians do not see themselves this way – as recent events so clearly demonstrate – doesn't appear to bother them. Individuals influenced by him include Alexander Borodai, a PR man who was deeply involved in the annexation of Crimea. Later he shifted his attentions to Donetsk and Luhansk, and was, briefly, the appointed prime minister of the so-called Donetsk Republic in 2014.

To what extent Putin is actually influenced by Dugin is hard to tell. There is no record of them having met. And one of the few concrete manifestations of Eurasianism – the Eurasian Economic Union (consisting of the Russian Federation, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Moldova), appears to be little more than an argumentative customs union.

More online

Unite to defend Ukraine: bit.ly/u-l-u

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Socialist Appeal and Socialist

Worker: bit.ly/sa-sw

The Minsk deals bit.ly/minskd

Maidan 2014 bit.ly/t-maid □

from page 7 →

Hungarian cultural centre in Ukraine. The attack was designed to damage relations between Ukraine and Hungary. Ochsenreiter was charged with sponsoring terrorism, but fled to Russia, where he died last August of heart

failure at 45.

Far right figures like Farage and Le Pen are now scurrying to distance themselves from Putin, and much of the "far left" is in disarray. It is as if they are stuck in a perverted time warp where the USSR-USA Cold War is still going on, and copy from Stalinist and

semi-Stalinist depictions of that Cold War to see Putin's Russia as some kind of progressive anti imperialist state.

In fact Russia today is a far-right imperialist power run by kleptocrats who have systematically robbed the Russian people. It is also a tyranny.

If you can't recognise a tyranny when

you see one you aren't much of a socialist. Away with all tyrants, whether they be in Saudi Arabia, North Korea, Syria, China, or Russia! Socialists have no preferred tyrannies. Just leave that to the useful idiots. □

and Alexander Dugin

Yet Dugin's influence can also be seen in the Russian military where trainee officers are recommended Dugin's book *Foundations of Geopolitics*. Putin has used terminology like Gumilyov's or Dugin's in speeches and statements, though his hostility to "the West" may have as much to do with political developments since he came to power. As the reforms associated with Mikhail Gorbachev and then Boris Yeltsin, particularly the attempt to embrace western liberalism, collapsed, Putin – the former KGB man – began to turn his gaze elsewhere.

In his 2012 address to the Federal Assembly, Putin declared:

"I would like all of us to understand clearly that the coming years will be decisive [...] who will take the lead and who will remain on the periphery and inevitably lose their independence will depend not only on the economic potential but primarily on the will of each nation, on its inner energy which Lev Gumilyov termed *passionarnost*: the ability to move forward and embrace change". (quoted in Charles Clover's book *Black Wind, White Snow*)

Gumilyov's meaning of *passionarnost* is rather more severe than Putin's. Essentially, it means a capacity for suffering, and specifically in the way an individual can make a sacrifice for the "greater good". This according to Gumilyov is what will make Russia great again. The idea of sacrifice surfaces at many points in Russian (and Soviet) history and culture: from the building of Saint Petersburg (between 25,000 and 30,000 construction workers died), to the battle of Borodino (35,000 dead) and Stalingrad (478,000 dead); it can be found in the novels of Dostoyevsky, or the films of Andrei Tarkovsky (whose last film was called *Sacrifice*). No doubt



Turanism is an ideology similar to Eurasianism, centred on Hungary and Turkey.

it has never entered Putin's head to sacrifice himself. Like many who walk through the pages of history talking of sacrifice – it is usually someone else who is offered up as the sacrificial lamb. In reality the idea of "sacrifice" means a callous disregard for human life. Under Putin 330 hostages, half of them children, from a school in Beslan (held hostage by Chechen separatists) were "sacrificed" when Russian troops mounted a reckless, ill-thought out attack to take the school.

Pragmatist

Putin can often sound like an increasingly hard-nosed pragmatist (although hardly consistent) as his attitudes, particularly towards any liberal reforms, become more repressive, as in his hos-

tility towards the LGBTQ+ community and the extinction of media freedoms. At other times he can sound like a mystic-nationalist. When he announced the annexation of Crimea, from the Hall of Saint George in the Kremlin, his words evoked a misty, almost Arthurian kind of Russian nationalism,

"Everything in Crimea speaks of our shared history and pride. This is the location of ancient Khersones [city originally founded by Greek settlers], where Prince Vladimir was baptized [he adopted Christianity in 988 – the beginning of the Russian Orthodox Church] ...The graves of Russian soldiers whose bravery brought Crimea into the Russian empire are also in Crimea".

All this is difficult to unravel. By the middle of 2021 it appeared that Dugin was thinking of a successor to Putin,

"I think Putin cannot do what I advised him to do. Putin is not capable, in my opinion of doing what he must do now. Of course he is a hero. He saved the country from complete destruction. He is a true hero, a true gift of fate, because he grabbed hold of the country when it was on the edge of a precipice, perishing and torn asunder by liberalism, degeneration and banditism. For this he will go down in history as a heroic figure [...] He cannot do more. He has fulfilled his historic mission..."

Is Putin using the language of Eurasianism for his own ends or does he actually believe in this farrago of national-imperialism, race theory and mythology? As Putin is dragged deeper into the Ukrainian quagmire, resist-

ance, casualties and domestic opposition continue to mount. He may gloss over the growing death-toll by the use of terms such as *passionarnost* but the Russian mothers whose sons are coming home in body-bags will no doubt have different words.

Putin may ultimately be the architect of his own downfall; whether this will see the end of Eurasianism and the influence of Gumilyov or Dugin remains to be seen. □

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The religiosity of Connolly

Introduction: Connolly, Larkin, and the Irish Worker



Connolly, politically unexpurgated

By Sean Matgamna

Both Jim Larkin and James Connolly were Catholics, children respectively of Liverpool and Edinburgh Irish immigrants. Connolly was a “mick-mac”, an Irish Scots Catholic. Both received the religion as part of what they were. Both passed themselves off in Ireland as Irish-born, Connolly from Monaghan.

Connolly’s real age and origins were given in the official history of the Social Democratic Federation in 1935. With Desmond Greaves’s biography in 1961 they became more widely known.

Connolly was married in a Scottish Catholic church to a Dublin Protestant woman, Lillie Reynolds. That meant that they both promised to bring up any children as Catholics.

Waiting to be killed by the British Army in May 1916, Connolly received the Church’s death rites and the assurance that his soul would go straight from the killing yard to eternal bliss in Heaven.

While on the Executive of the Communist International in Moscow, wherein, he was, he told Dublin crowds, one of the rulers of the world, Jim Larkin went to Catholic mass.

This dimension is important in explaining that whole phase of Irish history. The Church was activity hostile to the Irish Transport Workers’ Union which Larkin and Connolly led. It denounced it, tried to get members to leave, strike-broke during the 1913 Labour War, and collaborated with the strike breakers and thugs of the anti-union Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin). Yet there was no big or stable

break of workers towards secularism, as there had been in some European countries.

Republicans too were denounced by the Church; in detention in the mid 1920s some of them discussed forming a break-away Irish national Church, but did not. The break for the Dail in 1921 in the middle of discussing the Treaty, and the Catholic pressure to which Dail members were subjected “at home” over

Christmas, may have won the eventual majority of seven for the Treaty. The Church denounced the Republicans in the civil war of 1922-3, saying in effect that by ignoring the priests, they were Protestants.

The four anti-Treaty Republicans, Liam Mellows, Rory O’Connor, Joe McKelvey and Richard Barrett, believers all, six months captives of the Treatyite Free State, told in December 1922 that they would

be shot within hours as hostages, had to haggle in their last hours with political priests for their souls.

Yet all the leaders were and remained Catholics. So also Larkin and Connolly.

This was the more remarkable given that the great divide in Ireland took the form of religious division. It was much easier to get Protestants and Catholics to see the whole super-nature thing as nonsense

than to get either to adopt the other’s history or theology.

A break with the Church was the natural course for both Protestant and Catholic. But that required leaders who had themselves broken. It also required commitment to an intra-Irish solution to the communal divide, and commitment to a secular labour movement and a secular national movement. Those conditions were not given.

Connolly’s Yiddish leaflet to workers in Dublin

Running in a municipal election in 1902, Connolly distributed a Yiddish leaflet written for him by East London Jewish socialists.

The Dublin Municipal Elections, 15 January, 1902

Friends! On 15th January the Municipal elections will take place and you are asked to consider for whom to cast your vote. But, before you reach your decision we, Jewish Social Democrats, wish to say a few words,

There are three candidates on the list for the Wood Quay Ward: you have here a Home Ruler, another a publican, and one labour candidate of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, James Connolly, who is supported by the Dublin United Labourers Union.

For which of the candidates will you vote on 15th January? For the Home Ruler, the candidate of the bourgeoisie?

No, you cannot and you ought not do that! It is the bourgeoisie which always has the bag of gold before its eyes. Everything that stands in its way, everything that does not agree with its gut inter-

ests it tramples underfoot no matter how sacred that may be. It is the bourgeoisie that arouses race hatred, incites one people against another and causes wars. The bourgeoisie is the cause of anti-Semitism; with its press it provokes hatred of the Jew and seeks to throw the blame for everything upon the Jew in order to deceive the people and conceal its sins against its own people.

No, you cannot vote for the Home Ruler, the candidate of the bourgeoisie! The Home Rulers speak out against the English capitalists and the English landlords because they want to seize their places so that they themselves can oppress and exploit the people. No matter how nicely and well the Home Rulers talk or how much as friends of man they seek to appear or how much they shout about oppressed Ireland – they are capitalists. In their own homes they show their true colours and cast off their revolutionary democratic disguise and torment and choke the poor as much as they can. And you, Jews, what assurance do you have that one fine day they will not turn on you?

You ought to vote for the Socialist candidate and only for the Socialist candidate. The Socialists are the only ones who stand always and everywhere against every national oppression. It is the Socialists who went out into the streets of Paris against the wild band of anti-Semites at the time of the Dreyfus case. In Austria and in Germany they conduct a steady struggle against anti-Semitism. And in England, too, the Socialists fight against the reactionary elements who want to shut the doors of England against the poor Jews who were driven to seek a refuge in a strange land by the Russian government’s brutality and despotism.

The Socialist candidate is the only one for whom you ought to cast your vote.

In conclusion, a few words to you, Jewish workers of Dublin. Upon you rests the obligation to support the Socialist candidate as much as you can. The aims of the Irish Socialist Republican Party ought to be close to you. These are your own interests, the interests for which every knowledgeable worker must fight. These are the objectives for which every worker must

strive. What does this party want? It wishes to abolish that system of private ownership under which the working class is condemned to labour, to create the wealth of the world and enjoy for itself absolutely nothing. It wishes to construct a system in which the worker shall have the right to benefit from his labour and live a free, happy and enlightened life without bosses and rulers over his body and soul.

Jewish workers! No matter how small your numbers are you can achieve much. Do your duty and work earnestly hand in hand with your Irish brothers. Canvass for votes, vote yourselves and persuade others to vote on the 15th of January for the Socialist candidate, James Connolly.

With Socialist greetings – The East London Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation.

You must cast your vote at the New Street School.

James Connolly, 26 Fishamble Street, Dublin.

• Translation from *Connolly Socialism and the Jewish Worker*, by Manus O’Riordan, Saothar, 1988 □

Ily and Larkin, part one

The Irish Worker, a weekly edited by Jim Larkin, started in May 1911, and in its first months was explicitly antisemitic.

What never disappeared, what with Connolly as editor while Larkin was in jail in 1913, became worse, was an element of Catholic sectarianism.

In an early issue of *Irish Worker* (26 August 1911) there is a nasty cartoon. Larkin was sufficiently aware that he put a self-excusing caption on the cartoon, but that made it worse. "We have no objection to any man, Jew or Gentile, on account of his Nationality or Creed. What we do object to is the practice, which is becoming all too common, of Foreigners masquerading under Irish Names". There are four or five all-print slurs on Jews. All that was before the Holocaust. But it fed into the Holocaust. These items read like material produced by professional "funny" papers and used to fill the *Irish Worker*. We know where that was leading, and they did not.

Except for circulating the paper in Belfast, where he was Transport Union organiser, I doubt that Connolly had

anything to do with this. Connolly on his earlier period in Dublin had issued literature from his Irish Socialist Republican Party to Jews in their own language (1902). Meanwhile had come the pogroms of Father John Creagh in Limerick city in 1904, which drove the small Jewish community to migrate to Cork.

There were probably protests about the antisemitism in the *Irish Worker*, because the antisemitic material ceased after a while.

The other sectarianism was presenting *Irish Worker* as explicitly Catholic, in a country like Ireland with a 26% Protestant population. 25% of Dublin were Protestants, including Sean O'Casey, the future dramatist, and first secretary of the Citizen Army, and Connolly's wife, Lillie Reynolds.

No paper that aspired to unite the workers, North and South, would have allowed that Catholic bias. *The Irish Worker* carried open speculation and comment on the election of a Pope (22 August 1914).

The third episode of Catholic sectarianism was the starting of a regular

column by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in *Irish Worker*. The Hibernians were split into the Board of Erin Hibs and a smaller AOH.

They had a chequered history. A group in the Philadelphia coalfields had responded with Irish agrarian secret society terrorism to the breaking of a strike, and wrote a glorious chapter in labour history, their methods notwithstanding; but the Board of Erin opposed unions and broke strikes. They provided thugs to beat strikers in the 1913-14 Labour War.

In 1909, under Joe Devlin MP, they took control of the Home Rule political party, provoking a split, and grew very powerful. They grew enormously in Catholic Ireland until they fell foul of the Catholic priests.

The other AOH steered clear of Joe Devlin and wrote as the AOH in the *Irish Worker*. It was probably to the union's advantage against the Board of Erin to have the other AOH faction write. But all Hibernians existed to promote Catholics against Protestants, whether or not they opposed the union.

Writers such as Patrick Pearse blamed

the activity of Devlin's AOH as much or more than they blamed the Orange Order for partition. Yet the AOH, albeit a different faction, had a weekly column in *Irish Worker*. □

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 as Home Rule reformist (1), [Solidarity 625](#)
- Connolly as Home Rule reformist (2), [Solidarity 626](#)
- Connolly as Home Rule reformist (3), [Solidarity 628](#)

Faith and Fatherland

By James Connolly

We gather from the American newspapers that our countrymen in the United States army and navy have been highly distinguishing themselves in the cause of the war with Spain.

This is as it should be and in consonance with all our Irish traditions. We are a fighting race, we are told, and every Irishman is always proud to hear our politicians and journalists tell of our exploits in the fighting line – in other countries, in other climes and in other times.

James Connolly: socialist, nationalist, and internationalist

A full biography, provisionally titled *James Connolly: socialist, nationalist, and internationalist*, by Liam McNulty, is with Merlin Press and due to be published late 2022 or early 2023. □

Yes, we are a fighting race. Whether it is under the Stars and Stripes or under the Union Jack; planting the flag of America over the walls of Santiago or helping our own oppressors to extend their hated rule over other unfortunate nations, our brave Irish boys are ever to the front.

When the Boer has to be robbed of his freedom, the Egyptian has to be hurled back under the heel of his taskmaster, the Zulu to be dynamited in his caves, the Matabele slaughtered beside the ruins of his smoking village or Afridi to be hunted from his desolated homestead, wheresoever, in short, the bloody standard of the oppressors of Ireland is to be found over some unusually atrocious piece of scoundrelism, look then for the sons of our Emerald Isle, and under the red coats of the hired assassin army you will find them.

Yes, we are a fighting race. In Africa, India or America, wherever blood is to be spilt, there you will find Irishmen, eager and anxious for a fight, under a n y continued page 11 →



GENTLEMEN OF THE JEWRY

[We have no objection to any man, Jew or Gentile, on account of his Nationality or Creed. What we do object to is the practice, which is becoming all too common, of Foreigners masquerading under Irish Names.—ED.]

Larkin's *Irish Worker* (26 August 1911) carried this antisemitic cartoon with a caption from Larkin trying ineffectually to disarm it

continued from page 11 →
flag, in anybody's quarrel, in any cause – except their own.

In that cause, for our own freedom and own land, we have for the last century consistently refused to fight. On any other part of the earth's surface we can shed our blood with the blessing of Mother Church and the prayers of the faithful to strengthen our arms, but in Ireland and for the freedom of the Irish people.

Anathema.

It is an impious thought and we must avoid it. Whatever we do let us keep on the safe side of the road and not quarrel with the Church – which denounced the United Irishmen and excommunicated the Fenians.

Faith and Fatherland. Oh, yes. But don't forget that when the Englishman was a Catholic and worshipped at the same altar as the Irishman, he plundered, robbed and murdered the Irishman as relentlessly as he did when, with sword in one

hand and Bible in the other, he came snuffily chanting his psalms in the train of Oliver Cromwell.

The question of religious faith has precious little bearing upon the question of freedom. Witness Catholic Spain devastating Catholic Cuba, the Catholic capitalists of Italy running down with cannon the unarmed Catholic workmen, the Irish Catholic landlord rackrenting and evicting the Catholic tenant, the wealthy Catholic feasting inside the mansion while the Catholic beggar dies of hunger on the doorstep.

And as a companion picture witness the Protestant workmen of Belfast so often out on strike against their Protestant employers and their Protestant ancestors of 100 years ago in active rebellion against the English Protestant Government.

"Our institutions in Church and State" is the catchword with which the wealthy Irish

Unionist endeavours to arouse religious bigotry among the Protestant working-class of Ulster and so prevent them coalescing with the working-class Catholic in a united effort for their common emancipation.

And "Faith and Fatherland" by linking the national demands with a specific religious belief serves the same purpose in the mouth of the Home Rule trickster.

For what other purpose than that herein specified are either rallying cries used?

To keep the people of Ireland, and especially the workers, divided is the great object of all our politicians, Home Ruler or Unionist.

And our great object in this journal will be to *unite* the workers and to bury, in one common grave, the religious hatreds, the provincial jealousies and mutual distrusts upon which oppression has so long depended for security.

The man whose forefathers manned the walls of Derry is

as dear to us as he who traces his descent from the women who stood in the breaches of Limerick. Neither fought for Ireland, but only to decide which English king should rule Ireland.

What have we to do with their quarrels? In the words of the United Irishmen – "Let us bury our animosities with the bones of our ancestors."

In the near future when kings and the classes who are makers of kings no longer encumber the earth with their foul presence, how our Irish youth will smile when they read that 200 years ago Irishmen slaughtered each other to decide which English king should have the right to rob the Irish people.

And that for 200 years after the descendants of the respective parties conclusively proved to their own satisfaction that the leader of the other side had been a scoundrel.

And the impartial world looking on examined the evi-

dence and came to the conclusion that on that point, at least, both parties were right. Both kings were scoundrels, ergo the followers of both were...

Well, never mind. □

• *Workers' Republic*, 13 August 1898. This has been republished under the headline *The Fighting Race*. It was originally titled only *Home Thrusts* (the regular column it was published in: that column moves to different subjects in its later sections).

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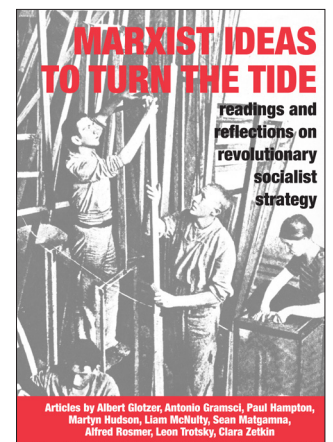
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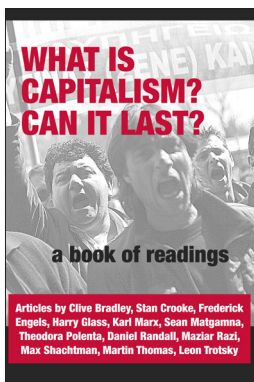
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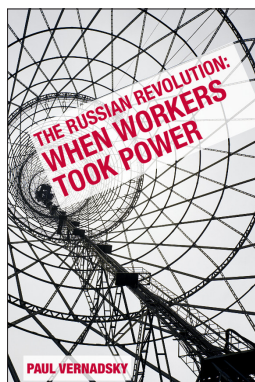
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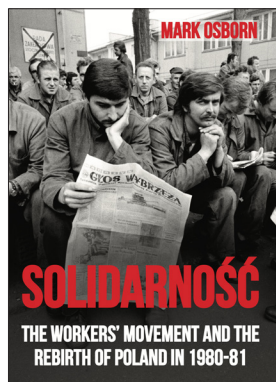
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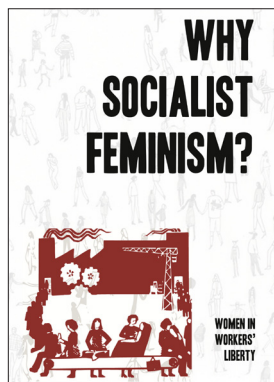
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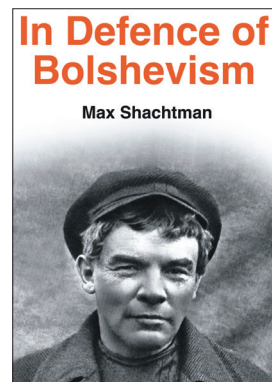
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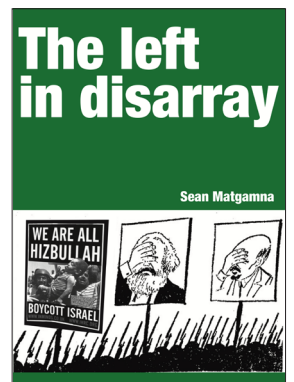
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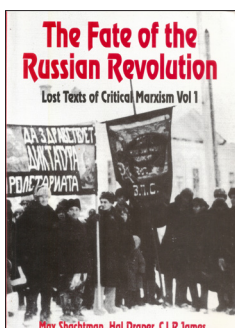
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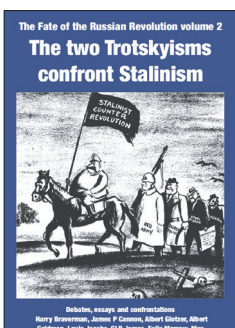
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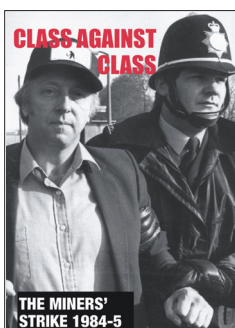
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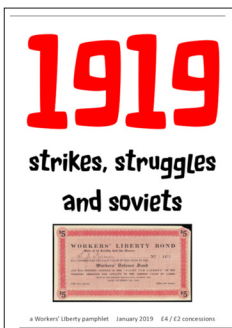
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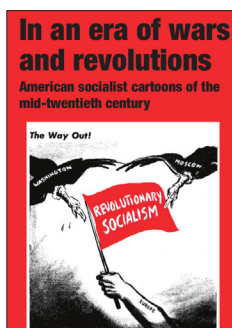
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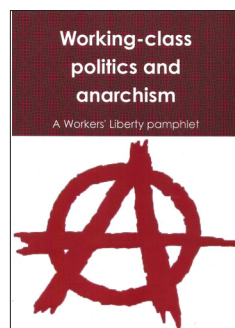
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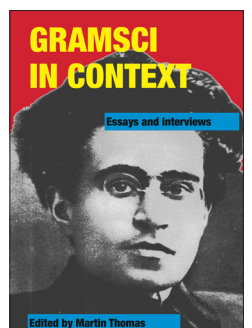
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Chile's new president takes office

By Gonzalo Cuadra Malinarich

On 11 March left-wing former student leader Gabriel Boric was sworn in as president of Chile. Gonzalo Cuadra Malinarich, a physician training to be a psychiatrist, was involved in Boric's campaign last year. He spoke to Sacha Ismail in February.

In 2018 four organisations from the libertarian wing of the left converged to create what is now Convergencia Social [of which Gabriel Boric is a member]. I am part of the coordination team of its Health Front. We have a Feminist Front, Workers' Front, Student Front and so on. The Health Front was very active in the pandemic, despite the difficulties organising. More recently we've promoted proposals for congress, for the constitutional convention [elected in 2021 to develop a replacement for the post-Pinochet constitution strongly associated with neoliberalism] and for the presidential manifesto, where I think we had a very good impact. Now we have to discuss how to relate to the new government – that is a discussion for the whole of the left.

How strong is Convergencia Social?

Four years after being founded, we have the presidency. The organisation started small but is growing very rapidly. We have tens of thousands of members but many are not active, so we have the challenge of strengthening the party.

Is it an anticapitalist party?

Until recently, at least, it was hard to have an impact in Chilean politics if you spoke in those terms. So we have been clearly anti-neoliberal, which is really what the struggle of the last two years [since the mass protests against inequality which began in October 2019, the *Estallido Social* or Social Outburst] has been. Then there are differences about what we mean by that. We are broadly libertarian socialists, but ones who understand that we are in a society where neoliberalism is deeply rooted,



Gabriel Boric

and we have to find a path out of it, to build a better society, with more social rights, in order to then move towards socialism. The further you go towards socialism the less clearly defined the politics are. There are many debates we need to have.

What's your analysis of the presidential result?

The centre had collapsed because of wide frustration with the post-dictatorship political and economic model, based on terrible inequality. Both the far right and the left benefited. In the first round the broadly left vote was more split up than the right-wing vote.

Franco Parisi is a maverick who ran on a platform I find hard to characterise, extremely eclectic, broadly anti-establishment but also conservative. He ran for president before; he also had the support of a well-known organisation that advises people on managing their pensions, a very big issue here. Parisi lives in the US; he didn't come to Chile and his entire campaign was online, but he came third!

I think the left underestimated concerns about security and crime, and we failed to present a thorough position on the conflict between the Chilean state and the [indigenous] Mapuche people and on immigration. [Far-right candidate] Kast's message was clear and easier for many to understand.

In the first round we were reduced to the centre of the country. In the north you have a lot of concern about migration, and we weren't able to give convincing answers. We didn't get the campaign out into all the territories of Chile as much as we did in the second round.

However, sectors of the north, particularly the areas of mining and connected industries, have a strong tradition of left organisation and voting left. I think in a context where many people distrust the left, Parisi was able to channel that better. The "entrepreneurial" spirit he projected appealed to many working-class voters more than the out-and-out right-wing politics of Kast. Plus in the

absence of strong first round ground campaigns, his online campaign could take hold.

I've read suggestions that Boric's campaign shifted to the right between the rounds.

Perhaps on being open to discuss the pace of reforms, but not the direction – the campaign was very clear that we will be moving away from a market-based society towards one based on social provision. On health we were actually able to include more proposals in the second round campaign.

On issues such as the Chilean state's conflict with the Mapuche people, we did adjust our message. We were forced to condemn violent attacks by Mapuche activists, but we were steadfast in saying that there is a debt of the Chilean state to the Mapuche people, that we want dialogue to resolve the conflict, not any kind of military or police strategy.

Boric has just named his cabinet. What's your assessment?

I don't like having members of the old Concertacion [the centrist-to-centre-left alliance of parties which dominated Chilean politics from Pinochet's rule until 2010 and was one of the two main forces until 2017].

However they only have five out of 24. Going beyond Apruebo Dignidad [the left alliance which elected Boric] is understandable given we don't have anything near a parliamentary majority [it has 24% of seats in the chamber of deputies and 10% in the Senate]. Though Chile isn't a parliamentary system this is still a major factor, particularly if you want to get major reforms agreed.

The majority are women; that's part of a wider vision of how feminism is key for the changes underway. Some prominent figures are well-known feminists. Izkia Siches, former president of the Chilean Medical College, is the first woman to run the interior ministry. There are also figures connected to social movements and struggles in the cabinet, and among the junior ministers.

Why didn't the left get closer to a majority in the parliamentary elections given its successes since 2019 or earlier?

I'm not sure any of us have completely understood. In the votes for the constitutional convention, we were clearly victorious. In October 2020 78% voted for a new constitution; and in May 2021 [six months before the general election] the left won the convention elections.

I think the momentum generated in 2019-20 faded, even though the desire for profound changes has not. Meanwhile the far right in Chile has been

getting more organised.

The right-wing election campaign attacked the convention, with fake news about it changing the national flag and so on, and that seemed to get grip. The attack wasn't just on the constitutional process but on the whole social movement that brought it about. There was a big campaign to associate the *Estallido Social* with violence and chaos. This in the context of the rebellion fading during the pandemic.

There was a lot of popular hope in the convention. Many were elected from outside parties entirely, from social movements or just maverick figures; there was some fiascos and scandals. I also think some of the early excitement faded away as the convention had to get down to more technical business.

What struggles do you expect to see in the period ahead?

I think we will see all kinds of protests. Protests to support the government and its reforms, protests to oppose them, protests to demand they should be more radical. Some issues, such as the conflict between the state and the Mapuche people, will generate real tensions.

The government shouldn't worry if there are demonstrations against it. It's entirely healthy that a government and a society face opposition and tension. Conflict and debate are an indispensable part of democracy. What is important is that it will be useful and positive to have people on the streets demanding more radical changes. Not protests aiming to overthrow the government – I don't think that would be useful, and in any case is highly unlikely – but protests demanding the program is fulfilled and developed further, absolutely. □

• Abridged: more bit.ly/boric-i. Background: bit.ly/chile-h, bit.ly/chile-k



Activist Agenda

The Uyghur Solidarity Campaign is demonstrating this month on Sunday 27 March (from 2pm at the Apple shop, 235 Regent St, London W1B 2EL, over Apple's use of forced labour in its supply chain), instead of the usual 5th of the month (skipped because of the clash with Ukraine solidarity protests). □

• Links and info for this and other campaigns, suggestions for labour movement motions and petitions: workersliberty.org/agenda

More online

The law and overwork

Janet Burstall investigates the overwork of young lawyers: bit.ly/law-j

GDST two-tier deal

Existing staff keep TPS, but new staff are out: bit.ly/gdst-2

Covid: two dramas

The current surge in cases may prove shallow, but the Tories are trashing safeguards for the future: bit.ly/c-cov

Alain Krivine 1941-2022

A Trotskyist who became a household name: bit.ly/a-kriv □

“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

The strike and the small mess room



Diary of a Tube worker

By Daniel Randall

I spend both days of our recent strike (1 and 3 March) picketing the station I work at. It rains almost continuously on the first day of the strike, but the feeling of empowerment from seeing the impact of our action, and the photos and videos pouring into union WhatsApp groups from picket lines around the city, helps keep our spirits up.

We're also boosted by linking up with UCU picket lines at universities near our station, and by a visit from a striking Great Ormond Street Hospital security guard from the UVW. Two of my fellow pickets, joining us from another station on our line, were first-time-pickers, one of whom was elected as a union rep for the first time in December 2021. Being part of a combine-wide dispute and strike is the best education he could get.

Back in work after the strikes, when workmates hear the picket lines had gone well, several assure me they'll endeavour to join them next time. We talk about discussing the strike with friends, family, neighbours. As ever, many report conversations with people stuck

on the idea the strike was about "Tube drivers" wanting "more money", a narrative the media pushes every time we strike – even when, as in this case, that strike has nothing to do with pay, and involves workers in all roles, not just drivers.

Our Regional Organiser John Leach does a good turn on BBC London News a few days after the strike; the clip goes round on WhatsApp, and it gives people a boost to see union officials effectively countering the anti-strike narrative in the media.

There's a range of views about next steps; some workmates are worried about the financial implications if the dispute escalates, but even they agree that 48 hours wasn't likely to force concessions on its own. People are prepared for further action.

Mess room

A combine-wide strike over "big" issues definitely helps put everyday workplace gripes in perspective, but it doesn't make them go away. A perennial problem at my station is the size of our mess room, too small for the number of staff.

I'm discussing that issue with a workmate as we stand in the main ticket hall looking at the new branch of Bagel Factory that's just opened in what used to be the ticket office. "They could've

just turned the whole thing into an additional mess room", he says, and then, after a pause, "no rental revenue in that, though. Making more money trumps staff well-being when it comes to the crunch, doesn't it?" The context of the dispute and the strike also helps make connections between the day-to-day issues and the "bigger" ones. The funding arrangement we're fighting for would mean Transport for London (TfL) and London Underground (LU) didn't have to pinch every penny in a corporate drive towards being "self-financing". Of course, if the company was allowed to run as a service rather than a business, the ticket office might never have been closed in the first place. There's also an office complex above the station that LU used to use; we've enquired about using that as an additional staff facility, but apparently that's being rented out, or sold off, too.

Getting a new mess room instead of a Bagel Factory or rented office space, let alone getting ticket offices back, is probably quite a few big strikes in the future. But the exchange reminds me that every strike is an opportunity to think about how things could be different if the people who make the job run took control, and how things might look like if workers, rather than accountants, consultants, and directors, were calling the shots. □

Striking every Friday in April

By Ollie Moore

Security guards at Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) will strike every Friday throughout April, from 1 April, as they continue their fight for parity with NHS workers' terms and conditions. The workers concluded a six-week strike, the longest continu-

ous strike in NHS history, on 18 March. A rally on 17 March was addressed by numerous union activists, as well as Labour MPs John McDonnell and Apsana Begum. Begum has also been prominent in supporting the recent successful strikes of outsourced workers at Barts NHS Trust, which is based in her

constituency of Poplar and Limehouse, which won direct employment for cleaners, porters, caterers, and others.

Cleaning workers at GOSH, who had been due to join security guards on strike, suspended their action after GOSH committed to bring them into direct employment from 1 April. The move leaves security guards the last remaining group of workers at the hospital not to be directly employed.

The workers' union, United Voices of the World, plans to continue rallies at the hospital. □

Left to die in the Balkans



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

No *Man's Land* (Danis Tanović, 2001) demonstrates the problems of intervention in the Balkan wars, problems that the film does not resolve. A Bosniak soldier and a Serb soldier find themselves trapped in a trench in no man's land. They argue, fight and almost shoot each other but they eventually calm down and begin to talk. They have a lot in common as they discover they come from nearby villages.

However, their situation is complicated by the presence of a badly wounded Bosniak soldier who earlier,

taken for dead, is placed on a landmine by a Serb. Any attempt to move him will detonate the mine.

Enter Unprofor French troops, followed by their British overall commanding officer, the arrogant Colonel Soft (Simon Callow). The situation gets even more complicated when the media arrives (thinly disguised Fox News), fronted by pushy journalist Jane Livingstone (Catrin Cateledge).

It is impossible to resolve anything. No-one can speak the other's language, except the Serb and the Bosniak. A German mine-disposal expert arrives, adding to the linguistic confusion, only to declare that the mine cannot be de-fused. Towards sunset everyone leaves and the unfortunate Bosniak soldier is left to his fate – it is inevitable that he will die. □

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Campaign on the April 2022 pay round



By a Unison member

The local government branches of the public services union Unison are only now being consulted on the pay claim for the year starting 1 April 2022. Following a failure in a union ballot to reach the 50% turnout threshold required by the Trade Union Act 2016, last year's pay deal (1.75%) was settled just weeks ago.

The options for a 2022 claim offered by the union leaders are 2% above the Retail Price Index (RPI) or a flat rate rise of £2,000.

Our fight to challenge low and unequal pay normally points to support for a flat-rate claim, but there are problems with a flat-rate claim this year. If RPI remains around 7.8%, then anyone earning more than £25,000 pa will face a real pay cut with a £2,000 nominal rise.

Inflation may well increase above 8%: energy prices are already rising

faster, and food may well do so too. And we've had ten years of erosion, perhaps an average 20-25% real terms pay cut since 2010.

A better plan would be to combine the two options – flat-rate and percentage – with a emphasis on winning a minimum wage of at least £15 per hour in local government

Then how do we convince members to support the action necessary to win? How do we prepare to achieve the 50% threshold in significant number of councils, or the majority? Union leaders are offering nothing on that.

We urge Unison members to raise issues in their branches and with regional and national representatives:

- an immediate branch-based strategy to update all members' emails, mobile numbers, and workplace details, to enable good communication
- an immediate effort to understand why so many members didn't vote in the last ballot, and plan to change things
- set the employers a short deadline to respond to our claim (four weeks) with the promise of action to start September at the latest, giving us four

months for the drives mentioned above

- plan for disaggregated ballot, with regions and the national union supporting key branches who had the highest turnouts last time and beat 50% in at least several branches in each region

- a loud and vibrant campaign now, including regional rallies with other unions, around the cost-of-living crisis and pay

- commit a significant national and regional funds and staffing to resource branch campaigning. Where branches have large reserves, which some have due to less spending during Covid, agree to match-fund branch spending from national funds.

Meanwhile, confusion reigns over plans by Unite for some action over 2021 pay.

Unison and GMB accepted the 1.75% deal (in Unison's case, because of our failure to pass 50% turnout), but Unite balloted local government members council-by-council in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. It reported on 28 February that it had beaten the 50% threshold in a number of councils and would soon publish a plan for "targeted action". Three weeks later, and just ten

days off the 1 April new pay year, Unite have still not reported publicly or to branch secretaries or members.

The exception appears to be Northern Ireland, where they have different public sector bodies. Unite plans a cross sector strike from 21 March including all eleven councils, the education and housing authorities, schools and colleges, to seek "locally-agreed improvements through raising pay grades, reduced working hours, more paid holidays and other benefits".

In the NHS, the government are proposing a 3% pay rise to the Pay Review Body from 1 April 2022, the same as the award from 1 April 2021. That means a pay cut for workers and a worsening recruitment and retention shortfall.

The unions had agreed a joint position within the Agenda for Change structure of demanding an above inflation pay deal that focused on retaining staff, but not putting a figure on it.

On 19 March the Royal College of Nursing broke ranks and submitted a claim of inflation plus 5%. It is not clear whether they tried to take other unions with them and failed, or this is a gesture. □

DWP plans 40 office closures

By a PCS activist

On 21 March the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) announced over 40 office closures. This will lead to massive redundancies, but, let's be absolutely clear, it is not a "surprising announcement".

The union knew about the vast majority of these closures in 2017 when the employer announced immediate

and transitional closure tranches. They refused to start an industrial campaign.

Those of us in the Independent Left on the Group Executive of the PCS union at the time warned that the employer were closing offices in tranches to limit industrial opposition and a joint response. We called for local and national campaigns, including a national ballot at the time to prevent closures. The union leadership, including indi-

viduals leading the current "opposition" Broad Left Network slate, voted that down.

In the end, only a handful of sites fought on their own, including 45 days of action in Sheffield. Because those sites were isolated, each and every one was closed.

We can still stop closures and redundancies, but not by repeating the mistakes of the past. Sites can't be left to

fight on their own. An injury to one is an injury to all. There must be a national response, including a group ballot, to put pressure on the employer to reverse their decision. □

Stirrings in student union

By Cathy Nugent

The policies put forward by candidates in the full-time officer elections and the (limited) policy discussions at this year's National Union of Students conference (28-29 March) reflect a growing layer of left-wing students campaigning in UK higher education.

The background to a push back against marketisation in HE is popularity for socialist ideas among young people, the experiences of the pandemic, and long-term failures in higher education to provide basic support particularly for mental ill-health.

However the student movement is not yet there on an adequate policy to reverse marketisation. One policy proposal at conference calls for increased hardship funds for less well off students. Yet only free education and non-means tested financial support from FE through to PhD can guarantee accessibility. Another policy proposal, "A new vision for Education", is better on identifying the problems of the marketised education system. The alternative - "a system of government block-funding, where money is guaranteed not dependent on false targets and extortionate student fees" - is

right, but not a bold stance for "free education".

Let us hope that whoever gets elected to the full-time officer positions can sharpen up this stance. There are four ordinary sabbatical positions plus three to represent Scotland, Wales and NUS-USI (in Northern Ireland, NUS organises jointly with the Union of Students in Ireland). There are left candidates - Shaima Dallali (President), Nehaal Bajwa (Vice President Liberation and Equality), Chloe Field (Vice President Higher Education) and Fin Deane (Vice President Further Education), Ellie Gomersall (NUS Scotland President), Mi-

chelle Francis (NUS Wales President - who look solid on free education, on support for UCU industrial action, the student housing crisis, anti-racism. One key weakness here, is that the only candidate to explicitly back reversing the 2020 undemocratic changes made to NUS - gutting its conference of policy debate and effectively abolishing its National Committee - is another left candidate, Radical Haslam. Such a change will be necessary if NUS is to be a national organisation capable of strengthening the local student campaigns, for now relatively small, but very important. □

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Fight to save P&O Ferries jobs

By Jamie Southwaite

Ferry company P&O announced the summary sacking of 800 workers, the bulk of its workforce, on 17 March, to replace them with new workers on worse pay and conditions.

The labour movement should demand P&O is taken into public ownership. The RMT union called for this [in 2020](#), but is so far not really making the call now (some RMT speakers have raised it at protests, one RMT press release hints at it.)

P&O Ferries complain of unsustainable losses, but P&O's parent company since 2006, the giant Dubai-owned DP World, paid £270 million in dividends to shareholders in May 2020. P&O received £14 million in furlough money – and asked (unsuccessfully) for a £150 million UK government bail out! In May 2021 the chair of DP World, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, announced that he was “delighted” with the company’s “record results”; revenue had grown 26% and profits by 52%. DP World’s profits were over £1 billion.

DP World has just sponsored the 2022 European Golf Tour, putting up £147 million in prize money – while refusing to plug the £146 million hole in the P&O pension pot.

Demand the UK government take over this important public service to keep it going on a better basis and guarantee and improve its workforce’s terms and conditions. Any new workers should



be hired as new employment on the same terms and conditions.

The RMT and Nautilus unions, which organise at P&O, both urged members to remain on board ships, effectively a form of sit-in, to resist the job losses. They were quickly evicted, but solidarity protests have been held in ferry ports and at DP World offices in London.

Some union statements on the job losses have focused on the fact that P&O workers are being replaced with “foreign labour”. It’s vital the campaign does not lapse into nationalist, “British jobs for British workers” rhetoric. Unions should seek to organise amongst the agency crews too. □

PCS gets 45% turnout, 81% yes

By Ollie Moore

Members of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) have voted by an 80.7% majority for industrial action over a range of cost-of-living issues, including pay and pensions, in their union’s consultative ballot. The turnout was 45%. As *Solidarity* went to press on 22 March, the union’s National Executive Committee was discussing next steps, which will likely involve assessing the picture of union organisation revealed by the ballot and determining the most effective way to move towards a statutory ballot, possibly disaggregated across different depart-

ments. A union statement said: “The result represents the highest yes vote for action, and the second highest turnout for a national ballot, in the union’s history. 70,000 members took part in the ballot across 246 separate employer areas. Our campaign demands include a 10% pay rise and pensions justice.

“PCS members in the public sector have seen their living standards fall by around 20% in real terms in the last decade.

“The government acted unlawfully yet refuses to refund the money members have overpaid for pension contributions – members are £500 a year worse off on average.” □

Couriers’ strikes spread and need more funds

by Michael Elms

Food delivery couriers’ strikes continue to spread across the UK as part of a pay dispute that has raged since December. This is the longest, biggest strike ever in the UK gig economy.

At the time of writing (22 March), there are daily strikes ongoing in Sheffield, Chesterfield and Middlesbrough (all targeting Greggs); there are weekly strikes taking place in Ashford in Kent, Reading, Worcester, Wolverhampton, Mansfield and the surrounding towns, Heckmondwike and Morley. There are meetings planned or plans being laid for the resumption of strike action in Leeds, Leicester, Farnborough, Medway, Colchester, Thanet, Redcar, and Guildford.

In most of these places drivers are members of, or in touch with, the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) union. On 22 March, a strike broke out in Belfast, organised by the App Drivers and Couriers’ Union (ADCU), another small union organising in the gig economy.

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 Leicester. A strike fundraiser has raised over £30,000 with more coming in every week. The Stuart strike has mostly been 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 “spontaneous” methods of strikes most often used 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 it is easier to sustain and enforce.

The task for socialists and the labour movement is to help these newly-organising groups of hyper-exploited gig economy workers to link up with each other and with the IWGB, and develop a strategy to beat the big platforms.

For leaflets and briefings on how to help spread the couriers strike to your area, contact AWL with the subject line “couriers strike” at awl@workersliberty.org. Strike fund: tinyurl.com/StuartStrike. Model motion: bit.ly/mo-pe □



Trade union protest for Ukraine 9 April

The PCS civil service union has decided to back a central London demonstration in support of Ukraine, demanding Russian troops out, for Saturday 9 April. Watch this space for more details! □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

HARD-HITTING ACTION NEEDED IN UNIS

By a Cambridge UCU member

As the University and College Union's (UCU's) higher education disputes are about to enter their sixth month this academic year (over the USS pensions and "Four Fights" issues of inequality, low pay, casualisation and workloads), it is clear that a new push is needed if the union wants to fight on to victory.

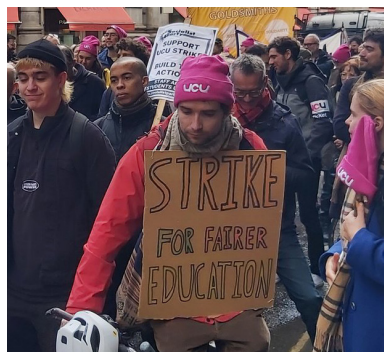
As made clear in last week's *Solidarity*, this must come soon: as *Solidarity* goes to press, UCU members have just two weeks to win re-ballots to see the action extended into the final academic term. With the UCU bureaucracy granting us just three weeks in total to beat the anti-union law 50% turnout threshold, we are already facing an uphill struggle.

Without a strong re-ballot result, our action this year could be all but over. And the right-wing of the union, the "Independent Broad Left" (IBL), is organising to suspend the strikes irrespective of the re-ballot outcome. A number of motions have been submitted to the union's Special Higher Education Sector Conference (SHESC, happening late-April) by prominent IBL members, which seek to pause this year's strike action. This body has the

power to bind the union, and so as well as winning re-ballots, rank-and-file UCU members need to stop these IBL motions too.

Workers' Liberty activists and supporters in Higher Education (HE) call on members to vote Yes to all options to continue our action. However we recognise that without a coordinated national strategy, strike action for the sake of it won't take us further in this dispute. The employers' representatives are so deeply entrenched that only hard-hitting action can force any concessions at this stage.

Given the struggle has failed to intensify, many UCU members are left wondering what further strikes will achieve, and are looking to put all their effort into building "actions short of a strike" (ASOS). But we warn against members voting for "action short of a strike" (ASOS) without the ability to back up ASOS with strikes. Employers have already shown how perniciously they will act - with up to 100% pay deductions for ASOS actions such as at Queen Mary University. Those members who want the ability to conduct effective teaching cancellations and marking/assessment boycotts need to keep open the option of striking to avoid a lockout.



The UCU are not the only HE union in dispute, with 11 Unison HE branches currently holding strike mandates. Unison action at City University of London in late February showed how easily other sections of the HE workforce can shut down whole campuses. Where possible, connecting Unison's pay rise campaign on campuses with UCU action is a must to deepen and intensify both ongoing disputes.

We also call for further student-staff solidarity in this next round of strikes. As we go to press, another student occupation has kicked off in Edinburgh in support of striking staff and other demands. Another wave of student action during these next two weeks can help to build leverage in these HE disputes. □

• More on HE: Ukraine, UCU NEC, Unison SGE, anti-union laws: bit.ly/more-he