

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

STOP THE SLAUGHTER

» **Equal rights**

» **Two states**

» **Ceasefire**



See inside

Pic: @oren_ziv

Protest at Israel's MoD, Tel Aviv, 11 November, demands ending the war, ceasefire, hostage exchange.

More on Israel-Palestine

We're working for a distinct voice in the calls for ceasefire

Pages 2-5, 7-10

Carbon dioxide removal

Fossil-fuel emissions have not been cut fast enough

Pages 11-12

Women's rights in China

Xi Jinping tells women to take on more domestic burdens

Page 6

Six months' jail for marching

Phoebe Plummer is jailed for breach of bail conditions

Page 7

Peace, two states, equal rights



The death toll from Israel's war on Gaza continues to rise. There is a talk of a limited hostage deal and a brief ceasefire, but with the deaths soon resuming.

Lack of access to food and water has created real risks of starvation and deaths from thirst. The majority of Gaza's population is now displaced and homeless. Gaza City, Gaza's largest population centre, has been substantially destroyed.

Attacks by both settlers and Israeli security forces in the West Bank have also continued. 206 Palestinians have been killed since 7 October.

There is still no sign of a viable "end-game" for Israel's war, signalling the prospect that the war could drag on for months.

Behind the vengeful rhetoric from many Israeli leaders – promises to reduce Gaza, described as "the city of evil", to "the city of rubble", and talk of displacing the entire population to Egypt – they only ever make one concrete aim discernible: to "destroy Hamas."

Wanting to disable Hamas from repeating 7 October is one thing. But "destroying Hamas" entirely was never achievable. The horrifying civilian death toll and the enormous physical destruction wreaked on Gaza are the price being paid by the people of Gaza for the way Israel has run this war.

As we go to press, Israel's incursion into the Al-Shifa Hospital complex continues. The hospital, like most in Gaza, is now a site of great suffering as the hospital runs out of basic supplies and fuel to power generators.

Israel says it has intelligence showing the hospital housed a major, perhaps the main, Hamas "command centre", and may have been where many hostages were held. Maybe. But even if evidence of a big Hamas presence in the hospital does emerge, the notion that Hamas could be definitively "destroyed" by knocking out rocket launch sites and a few "command centres" was always fantastical.

A long, drawn-out war will be a horror for the people of Gaza. It will bring no advance towards Palestinian rights and equality. But it has political benefits for Hamas, many of whose leaders are safe in Qatar or elsewhere.

Hamas officials openly declared that their intent with the 7 October attacks was to create a "permanent state of war" in the region. They are willing to see large casualties both among their fighters and among the helpless civilian population. Ongoing conflict allows

them to rally Palestinians to their cause. The longer the war drags on, the more Hamas can claim victory simply by continuing to exist.

Netanyahu is under mounting domestic pressure to do more to free hostages, for example by prisoner exchanges. If fighting continues for a prolonged period without the return of large numbers of hostages, and by the very fact of its continuation proves that Hamas has not been "destroyed", pressure on him will increase. But a drawn-out war also has potential upsides for Netanyahu; he may be able to use the war to stave off political reckoning.

Israeli civilians' need for defence has been shown much more starkly this time, with the 7 October attacks showing the death and brutality Hamas would unleash more widely if it could. But self-defence has been swamped in collective punishment.

And Israeli governments' policies for decades now have made the Israeli people less safe, not more so. On 7 October the tilting of its security resources to defend settler terror in the West Bank left civilians on the Gaza border undefended, and the right-wing government's determination to perpetuate the political domination of the Israeli state over the Palestinian people locks both Palestinians and Israeli Jews into vicious circles that will inevitably produce eruptions of violence.

The need to change that political reality makes the efforts of groups like Standing Together, which is mobilising both Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel to demand peace and equality, so vital.

Israeli society

Diplomatic pressure on Israel may compel it to some restraint, but a longer-term democratic settlement also requires social upheaval inside Israeli society itself. Although explicit mobilisations against Israel's war and demands for a ceasefire remain marginal, international solidarity with those efforts – and with the wider campaigning of Standing Together and others, developing joint Palestinian-Jewish mobilisation for equal rights – can help them grow.

Here in Britain, 56 Labour MPs rebelled against party discipline to vote for a Scottish National Party motion calling for an immediate ceasefire, several resigning from front bench positions in order to do so. Labour's own amendment, tabled in a last-ditch effort to maintain party unity, marked a dramatic shift from the tone of the leadership's earlier responses, towards much more critical language about Israel's attacks on civilians in Gaza and about settler violence in the West Bank.

The reaction of many activists, who concluded from the episode that the



Labour Party is irredeemable, is a serious misjudgement. In fact the events show that Labour will shift under pressure. Under greater and more direct pressure (i.e., through its own party structures and the link with affiliated unions), it might shift more.

Calls to vote out Labour MPs who voted against a ceasefire – which, in the big majority of seats, can only mean returning Tory MPs – are also misjudged. Putting more Tory MPs in the House of Commons will not help the Palestinians.

Protests, marches, and rallies against Israel's war continue to mobilise many on the streets of Britain. Most actions are called under the single, and necessary, demand for a ceasefire. Many homemade placards and banners emphasise, as *Solidarity* does, the call for peace.

But many of the groups with the most visible profile on the marches offer a political narrative that runs contrary both to calls for peace and the specific demand for a ceasefire. "Ceasefire now" was more chanted on 4 November than on previous demonstrations, but still the most print-placarded and megaphoned slogans are different from the official demonstration demands.

The Socialist Workers Party, one of the largest groups on the UK left, prevaricates on the ceasefire demand and says socialists should, instead, have "unconditional support for Hamas." To call for a ceasefire, to march for peace, means opposing Netanyahu's war on Gaza's people, but also opposing Hamas's war. The asymmetry of power and capacity between the two sides does not make Hamas's war aims any more just.

The ambiguity of the most popular chants on the marches – "free, free Palestine", and "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", both heavily promoted by the SWP – helps bury the political tension between those genuinely marching for peace, and those marching because they support Hamas in some way.

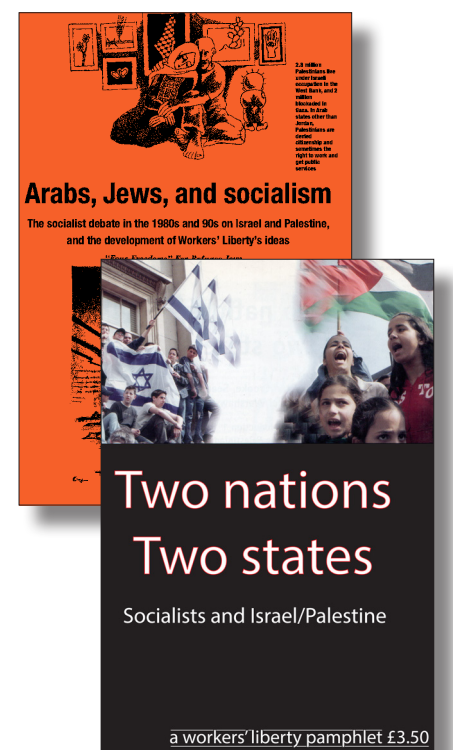
The slogan "Free Palestine" was brought into currency on demonstrations in 2002 precisely because it was

ambiguous. It could mean freeing Palestinian territories from Israeli occupation and founding an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel (i.e., two states for two peoples). But its promoters meant "freeing" the whole of 1918-1948 Palestine from any "Zionist" (i.e., Jewish) presence whatsoever.

And whilst many Palestinians see the "from the river to the sea" slogan as an expression of their right to live free lives in their historic homeland, with no particular constitutional arrangements endorsed or specified, the chant can also be (and originated as) a call for the revanchist reclamation of all 1918-1948 Palestine from any Jewish presence. That is certainly what Hamas, and their supporters on the UK left, mean by it.

Workers' Liberty wants to see the largest possible presence on the streets, demonstrating for ceasefire, peace, and equal rights in a conscious way. That means intervening in the current protests with a distinct political message, not just to add to the numbers or blend in with the crowd, and in order to draw out, rather than keep buried, the political tensions. Imagine if the energies of even a fraction of the hundreds of thousands who marched on 11 November were directed towards efforts of practical solidarity with groups like Standing Together.

We will continue to mobilise for anti-war protests to make this message – for a ceasefire; for peace; for an independent Palestine alongside a secure Israel; for equal rights between the two peoples – more visible. If you support that message, please join us. □



Buy *Two Nations, Two States* and *Arabs, Jews and Socialism* together, discounted to £6.50. workersliberty.org/2-i-p

The left in Israel and Netanyahu



Interview

By Assaf Talgam

Assaf Talgam is a member of Maki and Hadash, and sits on the Central Auditing Committee of Hadash. He spoke to Solidarity on 14 November.

Unfortunately, I can't really say there is an anti-war movement in Israel as such, but there are elements which are resisting the war and protesting against it. This has been mostly led by Hadash and other groups. For the first two weeks people were in shock and did almost nothing against the war, since then people have come to their senses, but it is still weak.

Public opinion is very pro-war, and even calling for a ceasefire to allow a prisoner exchange is seen as an unacceptable extremist stance. Protests are likely to get attacked by fascists or the police. There have been 200 or 300-strong protests held in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, but they are not enough.

There have been very large public gatherings in support of the hostages' families, which overall are not very political and put forward no straightforward message other than supporting the families and wanting to bring the hostages home. Some protesters say the army should continue the attacks on Gaza to bring back the hostages, some say they should negotiate without stopping the offensive.

There are 236 Israelis currently held hostage, both civilians and soldiers. Unfortunately, public opinion doesn't really distinguish between the two. Obviously taking civilians hostage is a war crime and Hamas should release them, but it is a different situation with the soldiers. Israel also has lots of Palestinians as prisoners. We should demand that the civilian hostages are released point blank, and there should be a prisoner exchange deal for the soldiers.

There are left-wing elements on these

demonstrations. I participated in one in Tel Aviv, and I was very moved by a speech by the father of one of the hostages. Many of the villages that Hamas attacked were left-leaning, and many of the hostages were actually peace activists (we found out today that one of them has been killed). This speaker called for a ceasefire, and a prisoner exchange where Israel frees all of its Palestinian prisoners, and the Palestinian militant groups free all of their hostages and captives.

The protests aren't very political, but many of those who take part in them traditionally vote to the left of centre. On another protest one speaker called for the assault to continue until everyone is released. In reality the hostages will not be freed by force, but by a deal. However, the undertone is critical of the government. People are blaming Netanyahu's government for this catastrophe, and for the military failure at the beginning of the war when the division headquarters were overrun. There are many calls for Netanyahu to resign, not just from the left, and he is regularly compared to Neville Chamberlain: I would say that most Israelis want the war to continue, but about half of them want Netanyahu to resign now, and a big majority either now or at the end of the war.

Settlements

People are very angry about the settlements, as the army was sent to guard settlers which left the border wide open to the Hamas attacks. Even Likud voters are angry about this: a poll came out yesterday saying that a large majority of Israelis want a government to be formed without the settler party. On the eve of the war 32 battalions were helping settlers, but only two and a half guarding the border. The settlers need the army to defend them when they carry out provocations. They attack villages and burn down olive trees with soldiers standing there as their bodyguards refusing to stop them, but they shoot at Palestinians when they start



Hundreds participated in a Jewish-Arab demonstration in Tel Aviv on 18 November, organised by Hadash, calling for ceasefire and a hostage exchange. It was the first anti-war protest to receive a permit, following a Supreme Court appeal, though previous protests had been held without permits. Police checked every placard before allowing people into the assembly point.

throwing rocks.

People on the left and on the centre are blaming the settlers for the failure, and now the settlers have the audacity to call for more settlements in the Gaza Strip. They are to blame for what has happened, and they are trying to use it as an opportunity to build more settlements.

Since the beginning of the war there has been a surge of fear and national animosity against Palestinians, including Palestinian citizens of Israel. Many Arabs have been fired by their employers since the start of the war, and many municipalities have forbidden them to work in these areas because of public hysteria around seeing Arabs on the street.

During the last big Israeli attack on Gaza in May 2021 there were clashes in Israeli cities between Arabs and Jews. Many expected this to happen again, but so far it has not. This is largely due to the responsible behaviour of the Arab leadership in Israel, who have tried to calm things down. On the other side, we have Ben-Gvir trying to stoke animosity. He wants violence to break out as an excuse to strengthen his militias and to justify judicial attacks on Arab rights, but the Arab leadership in Israel is trying not to play into his hands.

There have been some important displays of solidarity, primarily the Arab-Jewish solidarity guards which have been set up on the joint initiative of Hadash and Standing Together. These are pretty unique however, and in most places both communities have retreated into themselves and are bracing for intercommunal violence, which so far has not come. I can't say I am very optimistic about solidarity between Jews and Arabs these days, as the fear is too great.

There are also a minority of Arabs in Israel who serve in the military and carry out ostentatious displays of support, such as donating free meals to soldiers. This is a small minority, and

they are used by the government when they need to show how inclusive they are by embracing these army-loving Palestinians, but this is basically government propaganda.

I would like to talk a bit more here about the possible extension of the war. Netanyahu has declared that after the war Israel will be in complete military control of the Gaza Strip, and that this direct occupation will continue indefinitely. This would effectively guarantee low-intensity fighting against Palestinian guerrillas, which would also prolong the war indefinitely.

There is also a risk that after fighting Hamas in Gaza, Israel will turn to fighting Hezbollah in Lebanon. Several high ranking generals and intelligence figures have said that once Hamas has been taken care of they need to deal with Lebanon. I don't know how seriously to take these threats, but if they are true this would be terrible not only for Lebanon but Israel too. Hezbollah is able to wreak much more destruction against Israel with rockets than Hamas has been able to.

I really hope it is not up to Netanyahu when the war ends. I think that the USA might pressure the Israel government into accepting a deal earlier than they want to. I have read that the Americans are talking about January as an end-point for the operation in Gaza.

Maki make up about 70% of Hadash, so there is not much difference in the political programme. We have three main demands: an immediate ceasefire in Gaza; a prisoner exchange deal in which all Palestinian prisoners held by Israel are exchanged for all hostages held by Palestinian militants in Gaza; and the beginning of negotiations towards a permanent peace situation between Israel and the Palestinians.

Unfortunately we are the only party in parliament calling for these things in Israel right now. Previously that would have included Meretz, but now they are no longer represented in Parliament. □



Over a hundred turned out for a Nottingham Friends of Standing Together vigil on 19 November. Local Labour MP Nadia Whittome came, as well as five Labour councillors. A sizeable minority of those attending were Jewish, but many non-Jewish people there said they felt uncomfortable about the Palestine Solidarity Campaign demonstrations, and welcomed the chance to protest without the overheads of those demonstrations. Nadia Whittome's speech is online at bit.ly/nw-19n



The Holocaust as moral instruction?

By Daniel Randall

"My grandpa didn't survive Auschwitz to bomb Gaza", reads a [placard](#) held by a Jewish woman at a protest in Mexico against a previous Israel assault on Gaza. A photo of the placard went viral on social media in 2021. More recently, the American group Jewish Voice for Peace has shared a [photo](#) of a protestor at a demonstration against the current war with a banner reading "My grandparents didn't survive the Holocaust for Israel to commit genocide in Gaza."

In both current and prior wars, politicians in Israel and internationally have invoked the memory of the Holocaust to justify the collective punishment of Gaza. No doubt the placard-makers were motivated, in an instinctive way, to push back against this by somehow reappropriating Holocaust memory in opposition to Israel's wars, rather than in defence of them. But this framing is not only misjudged but risks bolstering antisemitism.

Nazis

Their Holocaust-survivor grandparents, the placard-makers seem to tell us, survived for some higher moral purpose – unlike, presumably, Zionist Holocaust survivors who failed to sublimate their own experiences of genocide, and whose survival can therefore be seen as in some sense "wasted" on them. Would the placard-makers have perhaps preferred for the Allied armies, on liberating the Nazi death camps, to have said to the Jewish inmates: "We'll allow you to leave as long as you promise neither you nor any of your descendants will ever do anything oppressive"?

This thinking links to the claim sometimes encountered in critiques of Israel that Israel, or "the Zionists", are the "[new Nazis](#)". This is, first and foremost, simply untrue. Israel's colonial occupation and oppression of the Palestinians is brutal. But it is not directly comparable to the

Holocaust and its extermination camps. Within Israel itself, the 20% minority of Palestinian citizens faces racism and discrimination, but it is also politically self-assertive, for example participating in a general strike in 2021, and has political representatives in the Israeli parliament. This is not meaningfully comparable to the situation of Jews under Nazi rule.

If one wishes to indict Israel by comparison, rather than simply opposing its oppression of the Palestinians on its own terms, there are, sadly, plenty of readily available contemporary comparators: Russia's occupation of Chechnya and its attempted occupation of Ukraine; the oppression of West Papua by Indonesia; the colonisation of the Kurds by Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran; the Sri Lankan state's oppression of the Tamils; China's colonial projects in Xinjiang/East Turkestan and Tibet; Morocco's occupation of Western Sahara. But for those for whom "anti-Zionism" represents an entire, politically-determining worldview, invoking these comparisons might risk "normalising" Israel by locating it within trends of which it is only one example, rather than the ultimate, quintessential expression.

If one really wished to, one could argue that any situation in which a state suppresses the rights of a minority population, buttressing that suppression with ideological claims about their cultural inferiority, is latently Nazi or a potential Holocaust-in-waiting. But that would be an emotional spasm far more than a serious analysis shining any light on either the contemporary situation in question, or on the history of Nazism itself. In the case of Israel, the Holocaust comparison is invoked not because it has any real explanatory value, but to needle and provoke (other) Jews.

Deutscher

The experience of the Holocaust transformed Zionism from a widely contested political current within Jewish life, jostling for hegemony with many other currents, into the majority political identity it is today. As Isaac Deutscher put it, in his 1954 [article](#) *Israel's Spiritual Climate*: "The anti-Zionist urged the Jews to trust their gentile environment, to help the 'progressive forces' in that environment to come to the top, and to hope that those forces would effectively defend the Jews against antisemitism. 'Social revolution will give the Jews equality and freedom; they have therefore no need for a Zionist Messiah' – this was the stock argument of generations of Jewish left-wingers. The Zionists, on the other hand, dwelt on 'the deep-seated hatred of non-Jews



towards Jews' and urged the Jews to trust their future to nobody except their own state. In this controversy, Zionism scored a dreadful victory, one which it could neither wish nor expect."

A significant proportion of the soldiers who fought in the Jewish forces in the 1947-9 wars over Israel's foundation were Holocaust survivors. [According](#) to Yad Vashem, perhaps as many as half. In the course of that war, it is certain Holocaust survivors were involved in war crimes against Palestinians. Clearly, those crimes were not somehow "less wrong" because they were perpetrated by survivors of genocide. But they were not "more wrong", either. Nor is what Israel is doing today "more wrong" because the pilots bombing Gaza may be descended from Holocaust survivors, as some surely are. All that is needed to oppose Israel's war is a commitment to universal rights, such as the right to self-determination. Colluding in the implication that some Jews have failed to learn the correct lessons from the Holocaust demeans that commitment.

Today, when Holocaust survivors are held hostage by Hamas, their families might retort with a placard of their own, in support of Israel's war: "My grandmother didn't survive the camps to be taken hostage by Hamas." Where could a "debate" on those terms possibly get us? Ventriloquising Holocaust survivors to promote one's own interpretation of the conclusions they should have drawn from their experiences, to bolster a pre-existing political analysis one would articulate anyway, is, to say the least, unseemly.

Elsewhere, Deutscher likened the Jewish flight from Europe (he might've added the later flight of many Mizrahi Jews from persecution) to a person jumping from a burning building, only to land on and injure someone walking in the street below, and then continu-

ally kick them back to the ground for fear of reprisal for having landed on them in the first place. It's limited, like all metaphors, but it goes some way to encapsulating the historical tragedy of Jewish escape to what they hoped would be a safe national home involving the dispossession of another people.

Something of the same idea was implied by Edward Said's description of the Palestinians as "the victims of the victims and the refugees of the refugees." One does not have to draw a crude and inaccurate equals sign between the Holocaust and the Nakba to understand that both Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Arab national identities are shaped by experiences of oppression. An intervention into contestations around Jewish identity that seeks to develop this into a politics of mutual recognition and coexistence surely has more emancipatory potential than one which seeks to excoriate some Jews for not having learnt the right lessons from the Holocaust.

History

To face, let alone shape, the future, we have to study and learn from history as it actually occurred, and not as we might wish it to have occurred. Who would not agree with Deutscher that "it would have been better that Israel should remain unborn and the six million Jews should stay alive"? Who amongst us "Jewish left-wingers", people who still believe that "social revolution will give the Jews equality and freedom", does not wish that history had unfolded in a way that affirmed our arguments, rather than seeming to affirm those of the people who preached statist nationalism?

We can, and should, lament these historical tragedies. We can, and must, strive to build political forces that can fight for a better future, seeking to redress historical injustices by winning equality for those living today. And we can, and should, celebrate Jewish radicals who managed to carry their politics more-or-less intact through the nightmare of Nazism, and became advocates for Israeli-Palestinian equality. But we inhibit the struggle to win that equality if we promote the idea that the Holocaust should have served as a moral instruction to Jews. □

• Abridged, with thanks, from JewThink bit.ly/jt-dr

No Antidoto

Jim Denham has been away, so no Antidoto this week. □



Activist Agenda

Islington South, Nottingham East, and Edinburgh Central Constituency Labour Parties have all passed motions calling for a ceasefire in Israel-Gaza, condemning Hamas's 7 October atrocity, and calling for peace and "two states". Some Labour Parties are still trying to stop debate, but many motions are not being ruled out of order. □

• Motion texts and info on many campaigns at workersliberty.org/agenda



Israel, Hamas, and us



Letter

A letter from the editor

The “Neither Netanyahu, nor Hamas” headline we had last week was wrong.

It could be read as like “neither Israel, nor Hamas”. That is not our view.

We are for “two states” the right of both nations to self-determination and to defend themselves. Israel has the right to defend itself. The Israel of today, not just a future internationalist Israel, has a right to defend itself against attacks like 7 October, and to seek to disable and deter the attackers, as well as against being totally wiped out. The right to self-determination for nations is not conditional on nations being virtuous.

There is no equivalent “right to defend itself” for the revanchist theocratic-fascist movement Hamas.

The civilian population of Gaza has the right to defend itself, but because of political expropriation by Hamas lacks the means.

We call for ceasefire and peace because in the current Israeli military action, as shaped by Netanyahu’s chauvinist government, the element of self-defence is swamped by horrors against the civilian population of Gaza.

Hamas is embedded in the civilian population and hides in and under civilian buildings. That cannot justify the Israeli military’s seeming indifference to the huge civilian casualties. There has got to be a better way.

In any case this way is no good.



Netanyahu’s policy won’t “destroy Hamas”. In the medium term it, and the increased Israeli violence in the West Bank, will raise up new recruits for Hamas itself or similar groups (in the West Bank, in Lebanon, in the Palestinian diaspora, as well as in Gaza). The US war in Afghanistan 2001-2021 and Israel’s war in Lebanon 1982-2000 teach us that.

Netanyahu’s government has no workable “endgame” for its military, so will flounder. The floundering, and pressure of the ultra-rightists within the government, may well bring even worse than the horrors we already see.

Hamas wants to continue and spread the war to the maximum with no regard to civilian casualties. It will be a bad outcome if it can do that, eventually grind down the Israeli military, and emerge

triumphant from the conflict.

The idea with the headline was to signal opposition to the horrors against Gaza’s people. But it wasn’t clear.

In current “pro-Palestine” marches, with chants and placards dominated by “Free Palestine, from the river to the sea” and similar, it has become almost an “un-fact” that this episode began with the murder of 1,200 Israelis, in-

cluding small children, and the kidnapping of 240 Israeli hostages. Hamas did to them what it and its allies (Hezbollah, Iran) would do to all Israeli Jews if they could, if the forces of the Israeli state did not exist. Despite the official ceasefire slogan, those marches are not peace or anti-war marches, but anti-Israel, pro-Hamas war marches by sections of the left and by political Islamists and others for whom destroying Israel is the aim. We differ. If we could leave aside the question of methods, we are in favour of Israel suppressing Hamas.

We can’t detail what would be good self-defensive action; we can’t be military advisers to the Israeli government. It got here by stalling all peace negotiations for 20 years now, seeking to “contain” the Palestinians indefinitely in scattered patches of land (165 patches in the West Bank, plus Gaza), and more...

We call for peace. At present there is no agency for peace. We build support for movements like Standing Together which are the nucleus of a future agency.

Comrades may disagree. Let’s discuss it. □

Martin Thomas

School climate strike in Sydney



By Janet Burstall

Sydney, Australia, saw a school strike for climate on 17 November. The downside is that the march was about 600, where the biggest school strike climate march in 2019 was 60,000.

That reflects Covid lockdowns interrupting the movement; in-school organisation falling apart as 2019 students move out of school; loss of momentum; and maybe that the evil climate denial of the previous government was more galvanising than the

nitty-gritty policy issues under Labor.

Publicly-owned renewable energy is in the platform of School Strike 4 Climate, but there was no mention of public ownership or socialism in the speeches, anti-capitalism so far being limited to hostility to large fossil-fuel corporations.

There is a belief in the power of protest on the streets, and talk of “just transition” without as yet a concept of a labour movement beyond trade union officialdom. □



Upcoming meetings

Workers’ Liberty meetings are open to all.

Sunday 26 November, 3pm: Hong Kong 47 protest by Workers Against CCP Repression, Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL

Monday 27 November, 7.30pm: What is Hamas? Discussion by North London Workers’ Liberty. Menard Hall, 14 Galway Street, EC1V 3SW

Thursday 30 November, 4.30pm: Workers’ Liberty Students: How do we fight for climate justice? George Birkbeck Bar, 4th Floor, Birkbeck University, London WC1E 7HZ

Saturday 2 December, 12pm: Workers’ Liberty Student Dayschool, The Red Deer, 18 Pitt Street, Sheffield S1 4DD

Monday 4 December, 7.30pm: The rise of the Israeli right. Discussion by North London Workers’ Liberty. Menard Hall, 14 Galway Street, EC1V 3SW

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



The “demographic crisis” and women’s rights in China



Women’s Fightback

By Özge Turk

Moral panic and societal anxiety over “the demographic crisis” have become a consensus shared by more and more governmental officials and mainstream media of China in the past few years, concurrently and paradoxically accompanied by the burgeoning of the internet feminist movement and the deterioration of gender equality both at home and in work.

The [video](#) showing a woman wearing a chain in a rural village in Fexian, Jiangsu, in February 2022, who was then revealed to have been kidnapped and forced to bear eight children with a man called Zhiyong Dong, has aroused national rage and [criticism](#) against the local authorities and even the self-claimed progressive policies of CCP

regarding the gender sphere. Only with this background can an analysis of Xi Jinping’s 30 October speech at the National Women’s Congress, which includes language like “reinforce the guide for the young generation in their values in marriage and love, childbirth and family”, make sense.

In Xi’s speech, despite the rhetoric of “the basic national policy of gender equality”, the content reveals a different purpose: Xi considers women must play an active role in promoting the traditional moral values of the Chinese nation and family principles.

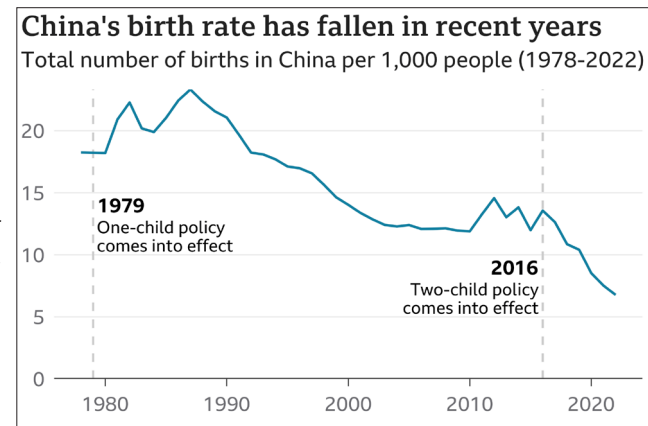
He claims that the current working focus should contain fostering a novel culture of marriage and reproduction that supports reproduction policies and deals with the issue of the ageing population. On the visible gender gap in workplaces, the advice from Xi is only to strengthen the power of the women’s congress in different economic and societal organisations, without stat-

ing any exact policy goals.

There is an accelerating shift toward a more family-centred mode of gender policy in China. Of course, it is not suggesting a real-life reincarnation of *The Handmaid’s Tale* that prevents women from entering the workforce.

The legacy of Mao’s rule ensures wide female [participation](#). However, the [reality](#) is that the high female labour participation in China does not liberate those women from the unequal distribution of household work and childcare inherited from the gender-segregated division of labour in patriarchal traditions.

In other words, Chinese women are enduring a “double oppression”: the patriarchal tradition in the family, reproduction, and housework sphere, and then there is the exploitation of the capitalist political-economic system.



Xi’s speech may alert some observers by its mention of the promotion of traditional Chinese values, and raise worries about the regression of the whole society or a so-called return of traditional China.

At its core, Xi’s effort concentrates on exploiting the production and reproduction power of Chinese women to a more extreme scale to provide foundations for the continuation of Chinese capitalist imperialism. The culturalist tone has its political and economic basis. □

Polls and an American nightmare



Eric Lee

I pay attention to politics in a number of countries, some of which I also vote in. I’m an optimist by nature and I see real possibilities for wins by parties I like. For example, in the UK most polls for a long time now have shown Labour forming the next government, which would be a good thing. Polls in Israel show Netanyahu’s support in free-fall, and that too is good news.

But public opinion polls in the United States are the stuff of nightmares.

The website RealClearPolitics aggregates all the major polls. The eight most recent polls regarding the 2024 elections – from respected pollsters including NBC News, the Economist, Reuters and others – all show the same thing. Trump defeats Biden.

In one of those polls, Trump has a 53 – 47 lead, which could mean a landslide – and the Republicans capturing both houses of Congress. Thanks to Trump’s previous term in office, the Republicans already control one branch of the fed-

eral government (the judiciary). If Trump wins decisively, they could control all three.

The election is one year away. In the next few months, both major parties will begin the process of choosing their candidates. No surprises are expected here. Trump leads all the other Republican contenders by a wide margin. And Biden has no credible opposition, with the sole candidate getting any traction at all being Marianne Williamson. Williamson is best known as the “spiritual advisor” to Oprah Winfrey and does not represent a serious challenge to Biden.

There are no significant third party challenges either. Cornel West seems to be running, possibly as an independent, or a Green, or on the People’s Party ticket (and no, I never heard of them either).

If nothing dramatic changes, in early January 2025, Donald Trump may find himself standing on the steps of the US Capitol, bible in hand, swearing allegiance to a Constitution that he neither understands nor respects. No one knows what happens next, but it will not be good.

It is very hard for most peo-

ple on the left to understand how this could happen. Biden has turned out to be a far more progressive and ambitious president than anyone expected. He’s more overtly pro-labour than any recent Democratic President, much more so than Obama was. He’s passed very ambitious legislation to help battle climate change while creating jobs. On the international stage, he’s provided outstanding leadership on two major challenges – the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Hamas’s war on Israel. And yet most American voters seem to believe that he’s not been doing a very good job.

Trump seems to be spending most of his time defending himself in courtrooms. He’s accused of illegal campaign spending (to pay off a porn star he had an affair with), of exaggerating his wealth illegally, and of pressuring civil servants in the state of Georgia to confirm that he won the 2020 election there. He’s also accused by a court in Washington DC of organising an insurrection in January 2020. For most politicians, any one of those accusations or trials would be career-enders.

But not for Trump. It seems that many Americans support Trump for reasons that many of us find incomprehensible. For example, Trump is seen as someone who doesn’t want to waste money (let alone the lives of US soldiers) to prop up the independence of Ukraine. This taps into a longstanding streak of isolationism in American politics. Trump talks about being tough on crime, often denouncing “Black Lives Matter” protestors while having nothing to say about illegal killings of Black people by cops. This also taps into a centuries-long history of white supremacist racism. He appears to be someone who will protect Americans’ right to own

guns, including assault rifles. He says he will finish building his wall on the Mexican border. And he will jail his opponents, if need be.

All of these have roots in American history, with its gun violence, xenophobic hatred of immigrants and dark periods of political repression (the McCarthy era being the most recent).

Any one of those policies should be enough to keep one awake at night. All of them together constitute a political nightmare of epic proportions. For that reason, defeating Trump means unity across all the constituencies that are threatened by the possibility of a second Trump term – including workers and their unions, women, LGBTQI people, and ethnic minorities.

And it may mean thinking about pressing Biden to step down as a candidate and to allow a younger, more articulate and more energetic Democrat to stand instead.

I for one do not have any answers. And this keeps me up at night. □

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



Listen

Listen, download or subscribe to audio recordings of our paper, pamphlets, and many meetings.

See workersliberty.org/audio for episodes and info on subscribing. Through most podcast providers search “Workers’ Liberty” or “Solidarity & More”. □

Who are “Friends of Al-Aqsa”?

By Simon Nelson

Friends of Al-Aqsa (FOA) is one of the most prominent organisations at the Palestine demonstrations. It has large numbers of stewards in green bibs and seems to have successfully monopolised the production of Palestine flag stickers, all emblazoned with the FOA website and logo.

FOA, established in Leicester in 1997, is another spin-off loose affiliate of the [Muslim Brotherhood](#) (MB), one of the world’s oldest political-Islamist groups, Egypt-founded but global.

FOA’s public focus is solely on Palestine activism. It is the main MB-sympathetic group in Palestine activity. FOA holds a seat on the Stop the War steering committee, and has frequently collaborated with STW, which in its heyday of 2002-3 brought previously-struggling MB-affiliated organisation in from the margins by publicising the then-tiny Muslim Association of Britain as co-sponsor of the big protests against the invasion of Iraq by the US and its allies.

FOA’s website lists support for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel; promoting Palestine in Parliament; and supporting student activities on Palestine, as its main focus. It says it distributes a lot of literature on the issue. Its founder, Ismail Patel, has writ-



ten a number of books on the subject and on Islam and Muslims in Britain.

Patel was one of the founders of the British Muslim Initiative (BMI) a now-defunct 2007 split, led by Anas Altakriti and Azam Tamimi, from the Muslim Association of Britain.

The MAB has, it appears, reabsorbed the majority of those who went to the BMI, but other BMI people have turned to the FOA venture. The MAB’s name is now prominent on the large London Palestine demonstrations called since 7

October, but not as prominent as FOA.

It seems that in 2007 the BMI had a more activist orientation than MAB, seeking closer partnership with George Galloway’s Respect operation and with Stop the War. It developed following unease at Anas Altakriti running for Respect in the 2004 European elections. Some MAB leaders favoured a turn back towards Islamic education and

community development and away from outward political campaigning with sections of the left.

The FOA is diplomatic about its profile. Nothing in FOA’s presentation at the demonstrations is explicitly Islamist, and indeed the slogan on its stewards’ bibs is “Peace in Palestine”. The speeches of Patel at demonstrations since the early 2000s and his writings, however, show where he stands. [Political Islam](#) means government and law based on religious interpretation, as in Iran, Afghanistan, etc.

In an [article](#) about former Egyptian MB President Muhammed Morsi, Patel said “In the Middle East it has been secularism and the refusal to accept God that has oppressed the minds and bodies of citizens”.

Patel has met Ismail Haniyeh a Hamas leader, and has praised Hamas as the legitimate resistance to the Israeli state. FOA’s indoor rally in the West Midlands on 19 November featured talks from “campaigners, scholars and nasheeds (Islamic hymns)”. □



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



Six months jail for marching

By Colin Foster

Just Stop Oil activist Phoebe Plummer has been given six months in jail – on remand, until 16 May 2024 – without even being convicted.

Plummer has already served a month on remand, late last year, after throwing soup at Van Gogh’s Sunflowers picture (no damage to it).

Since then Plummer has had an ankle bracelet as part of bail conditions, confined to student accommodation except for 12 hours a day for

classes.

The new spell in jail is for breaking those bail conditions to go on a march.

UN Special Rapporteur Ian Fry has written to the government protesting at the fierce sentences on JSO activists, notably Morgan Trowland (three years) and Marcus Decker (two years) for climbing on the Dartford Crossing Bridge. □

• juststopoil.org



Manchester Ten appeal fails

By Alan Gilbert

A sentencing appeal on 10 November for three of the “Manchester Ten” failed. The next court date for the three will be an appeal against conviction in Spring 2024.

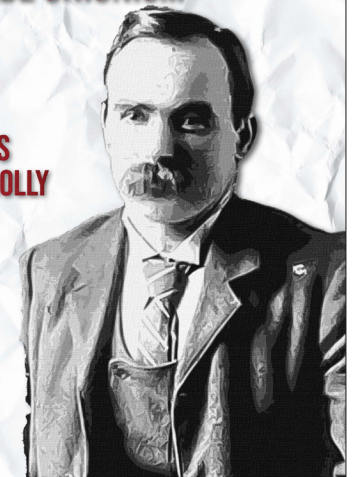
In July 2022 the ten young men were sentenced to a total of 131 years in jail on charges of conspiracy to murder and conspiracy to cause grievous bodily harm. The “evidence” conspiracy was a short Telegram group chat after a friend of theirs was killed and long before the actual harm-crime, which most of them were not involved in.

Campaigners say that the young men are victims of police “gang culture” constructions, as was [Osime Brown](#), though the joint enterprise law was not used in this case. □

• linktr.ee/kidsofcolour

EFFECTIVE TRADE UNIONISM

JAMES CONNOLLY



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly’s organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to from the turn of the century to his death was industrial unionism, workers’ solidarity across grades and trades, and sympathetic strikes. That is how he saw his work in the Irish Transport Union. 64 pages £5 □

workersliberty.org/publications

“Your empathy

By Mushon Zer-Aviv

Why binary partisanship in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is hurting both sides, and what to do about it.

“They shot dad, they shot mom and they shot Avigail” said Michael (9) to his uncle on the phone. On October 7th, when Hamas terrorists invaded their home in Kfar Aza, Michael and his 6 year old sister Amalia were hiding in the closet. Their dad carried their 3 year old sister, Avigail, and ran out of the house, when the terrorists murdered him. For 14 hours Michael and Amalia were closed in the safe room together with the body of their dead mother. Little Avigail managed to release herself from her father’s dead hands and was found by neighbours, only to be kidnapped along with them into Gaza.

Habiba (8) had big hopes for the future. She grew up learning about the international convention of children rights, including the right to education and the right to health. When the airstrikes on Gaza started, Habiba couldn’t stop trembling in fear. On the morning of October 14th she finally appeared more composed. At the sound of explosions she consoled her mother, saying, “Don’t be afraid”. She picked her colours and began drawing the TV as it was reporting the news about the war. An hour later an Israeli missile struck the family home, injuring everyone inside and ending Habiba’s short life.

It shouldn’t be hard to empathise with the pain of the Israeli victims, or the pain of the Palestinian ones. But paradoxically, it seems almost impossible to empathise with both sides at the same time. Why is that?

Empathy

This question, apparently is not exclusive to this conflict. In a study focusing on stories of starving children, participants showed a distinct drop in empathy when asked to assist two identified victims as opposed to just one. Psychologist Paul Bloom argues that empathy is indeed a treacherous path, likening it to a spotlight that illuminates one individual, leaving others in the dark. According to Bloom, we are more likely to direct the spotlight of empathy toward those we perceive as more similar to us. This tendency plays a significant role in both parent-child bonding and the ugliest forms of racism. The light we shine on those we identify with and consider more deserving of our care casts a shadow on the suffering of others.

Moreover, cognitive empathy is a

form of intelligence that even psychopathic murderers possess. The Hamas terrorist who streamed the killing of an elderly woman on Facebook Live did it exactly because he cognitively empathised with the pain it would cause her family, who indeed found out about her death by witnessing her recorded execution.

In his book “Against Empathy” Bloom goes further to argue that empathy should not serve as a moral compass. Instead he advocates for compassion which goes beyond feeling another’s pain; and involves a deep sense of concern and a genuine desire to alleviate suffering.

Zizek

Ten days after the Hamas attack, philosopher Slavoj Zizek delivered a powerful address at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Zizek not only condemned Hamas unequivocally but went further to justify Israel’s right to retaliate. Despite some protests from the audience, he dedicated most of his address to exploring the background of the occupation and the Israeli government’s ongoing systematic oppression of the Palestinian people. Without siding with either Hamas or the Israeli government, Zizek managed to present a crucial analysis of the current situation and its history.

While I sympathise with the message, I’m afraid that most Israelis and Palestinians will find it very difficult to simultaneously advocate for both sides right now. Tortured souls are not necessarily lost, but they are overflowing with stress, fear and grief.

Can anyone really expect us, Israelis or Palestinians, to shine a wide ray of empathy while we’re still in the dark, under attack, burying our dead, unable to know if our loved ones are dead or alive, and fearing our own children will be next?

With so much pain, how should the international community respond?

Does “standing with Israel” and removing Hamas from power justify the destruction of Gaza and the thousands of casualties in this unprecedented humanitarian crisis? Is that truly a means to ensure a secure future for Israelis? And does “solidarity with Palestine” necessitate turning a blind eye, downplaying, or sometimes even justifying Hamas’s crimes against humanity? How does endorsing bloodthirsty nihilists contribute to the broader Palestinian cause?

It might have been magnitude of the attack, the brutality, and the graphic documentation of violence, or perhaps



Tel Aviv, Israel

the sheer intensity of human tragedy, but there is no denying that the world did not turn a blind eye to this war. Leaders condemned, protests filled the streets, funding and military support was provided, and social-media flame wars erupted.

The responses have mostly been either of three types:

1. Yes / no: To judge by social media, the world is divided into good and evil. No nuances, no context, no grey areas. Thus, to truly eradicate evil one must make a clear cut and choose a side: you’re either with the victim or you’re with the perpetrator.

Sadly, this blanket refusal to acknowledge complexity is intensified by the algorithmically induced cycles of engagement / enragement. The more extreme your position, the more tweetable or instagrammable it becomes, and the more likely it is to be shared and go viral. And conversely, the more nuanced and devoid of catchy slogans your stated position is, the more it gets suppressed by the algorithm.

Does likening Hamas to ISIS imply it should be eliminated “by any means necessary”? Does drawing parallels between the Jewish victims of Hamas and those of the Nazis in the Holocaust justify the “Dresdening” of Gaza? Moreover, how can we anticipate genuine concern for Israeli lives without demonstrating sincere concern for Palestinian lives?

And what compelled the respected artists who signed the open letter advocating for a ceasefire in Gaza to overlook Hamas’s rampage of slaughter and rape? Did they believe that acknowledging these horrific crimes could somehow justify the destruction

of Gaza? How would a plea for the release, or at least an acknowledgment of, the hundreds of Israeli civilians held hostage in Gaza, including many children, detract from their commitment to the Palestinian cause?

2. Yes / but: Yes, the world is indeed complex and cruel, there are innocent victims on the other side, but...

... but they voted for these leaders and continuously support them

... but they educate their children to hate and kill

... but they constantly lie to the international community

... but they get enough support from the super-powers backing them

... but they systematically missed every opportunity to sign a peace agreement

... but they actively sabotage any peaceful solution to the conflict

... but they call for annexation and genocide, and are actively pursuing it

This line of reasoning is compelling and can be used, to a certain degree, against any side in this conflict. It paints a grim picture of the world that destines us, as my father often says, to forever live by the sword. Both sides are corrupted by the conflict, and both sides suffer; however, any acknowledgment of the other side’s pain is accompanied by a significant “but...”. Though it doesn’t fully see the world as one-sided, it unmistakably demands one-sided actions.

If “yes / no” is a clear binary division, “yes, but” presents a range of arguments that ultimately leans towards justifying one side. In many cases, it still results in the same one-sided call to action and seldom provides a sincere account that considers compassionate

is killing me"

concern for the other side.

3. Oh dear: Choosing a side to empathise with and to fight for provides an engaging reaffirmation of one's own morality. Fighting the good fight and protecting the good victims from the evil perpetrators is indeed a noble thing to do. But what if the lines between good and evil are not so easily drawn? The biggest danger in acknowledging complexity is resignation. And indeed we know too well, that as the war goes on, the media attention fades away, and the public, no longer motivated to fight the good fight, (especially when it isn't purely good) moves on to find other things to care for.

Documentary film maker Adam Curtis described this phenomenon as "Oh Dearism", in a short opinion video clip he claims that:

"Political conflicts around the world, from Darfur to Gaza, are now portrayed to us as simple illustrations of the mindless cruelty of the human race, about which nothing can be done, and to which the only response is: Oh dear."

A few weeks in, we're already beginning to see this happen. The newspapers front pages move on to cover other things, and the self-righteous slogans and tweets feel repetitive and futile. If this horrible war will end with another "oh dear", we will be bound to repeat it again and again. We will forever "live by the sword" until we're left to fight with sticks and stones.

Bonus Round: Yes / and... Complexity is indeed hard and acknowledging it is generally unrewarding, but I want to suggest it is not impossible, and that it is indeed essential.

Truthful

A fourth potential response to the war is to replace any "yes, but" with a "yes, and..." Although they may sound similar, they do not negate or justify each other, nor do they compete on an imaginary unified scale of righteousness. Instead, they coexist as truthful statements, serving as adjacent factors to be addressed both separately and simultaneously.

Yes, the Hamas attack against civilians in Israel is an indefensible crime against humanity,

And nothing can justify the indiscriminate bombing of civilians in Gaza.

Yes, the occupation cannot be ignored as the context for this violence,

And Israel has the right and the duty to defend its citizens.

Yes, IDF bombing causes un-proportional damage, leaving Palestinians defenseless against it,

And Hamas continuously shells Israeli cities and holds hundreds of civilians hostage.

Yes, Hamas cannot be trusted for cease fire negotiations,

And a cease fire may be the only way to stop the indiscriminate killings and release the hostages.

Yes, Palestinians will be forever traumatised by this war,

And Israelis will be forever traumatised by this war.

Yes, trust between Israelis and Palestinians is at an all time low,

And diplomacy and trust are required to achieve conflict resolution, security and justice.

Many of us may not find the emotional energy to contain a "Yes, and" approach, especially not now. But we must uplift those who can. We need "Yes, and" leaders, and indeed we should demand "Yes, and" policies. If anything, we should at least think twice before demanding everyone aligns neatly to our one-sided lowest common denominator.

"River to the sea"

Pro-Palestinian protestors have been chanting: "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free." Since the 1960s, this phrase has been associated with calls to dismantle the Jewish state. Specifically, Hamas employs the phrase in advocating for ethnic cleansing and the genocide of Jews in favour of an exclusive fundamentalist Muslim state extending from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.

Yes, this is actually what some protestors on the Pro-Palestinian side are actively advocating,

And most protestors do not equate Palestinian freedom with Israel's destruction.

Yes, Israel's founding addressed a prolonged historical injustice,

And Israel's founding caused another grave historical injustice.

For ten months before the war, we Israelis have been protesting against our government's attempt to change the rules of the democratic game and overhaul the judicial system. Many of us in the Anti-Occupation Block insisted on highlighting the connection between the anti-democratic turn within Israel and the ongoing anti-democratic occupation of the West Bank and the blockade on Gaza. We see Palestinian freedom not as a danger but indeed as an essential condition to Israeli democracy. And hence, one of our most prominent chants was: "From the river to the sea, we all deserve democracy" (rough



translation, it rhymes better in Hebrew).

This is our darkest hour, for me, my children, my loved ones. We, Israelis and Palestinians who believe in a shared equal society are grieving, we are violently attacked by the warmongers on both sides, and we are rejected by our international allies for not turning our backs against each other. We need your help, not through short-sighted one-sided empathy, but through sincere, stubborn and hopeful compassion. Progressive politics is rightfully demanding to think beyond binaries. And while this non-binary "Yes, and" may be harder and more tasking, it is urgently required:

Yes, our past is ridden with injustice, with villains and with victims,

And Yes, our present is bleeding,

And Yes, our future will depend on whether we bend the arc of the universe towards justice, or away from it.

So let me suggest we start here:

Yes, from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free,

And so would Israel.

Yes, And Now What?

A Land for All – Two States, One Homeland

This is our "Yes, and" proposition for ending the conflict. A Palestinian/Israeli political movement calling for an end to the occupation by establishing a Palestinian/Israeli confederation that shares the homeland from the river, to the sea. (I am proud to be a member of the council of this movement)

There are many examples of "Yes, and" from those who paid the highest price and refuse to give up on the

hope.

"Yes, and" is a known improvisation technique to build on top of each other's storytelling. It could be a good exercise for thinking beyond the politics of division. □

• Taken from a post on [Medium](#). Mushon Zer-Aviv is active with "Two States, One Homeland – A Land For All".

Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](#) including:

- China and Trotskyism
- Women's Fightback
- The German Revolution: selected writings of Rosa Luxemburg
- For Workers' Climate Action
- Two Nations, Two States
- Workers Against Slavery
- How to Beat the Racists
- Shapurji Saklatvala: Socialist Rebel in Parliament
- Stalinism in the International Brigades
- The story of Sylvia Pankhurst
- Left Antisemitism: What it is and How to Fight it
- Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: Socialist Debates on Israel/Palestine
- The Occupation of the Cammell Laird Shipyard, Birkenhead 1984
- When workers beat the fascists
- Automation and the working class □

workersliberty.org/publications/

Israel-Palestine: a vicious spiral since 2001

By Rhodri Evans

The political expropriation of the people of Gaza by Hamas comes not from ancient tradition, but from a swing to the right in recent decades.

Israeli politics has swung to the right since the assassination (by a right-wing chauvinist) in 1995 of Yitzhak Rabin, a former nationalist hardliner who had been negotiating with the Palestinians, and even more so since the collapse of serious negotiations in 2001. Palestinian politics has swung to the right, too, with the two swings forming a vicious spiral.

When Zionist settlers first started arriving in what was then the vaguely-defined Palestine area of the Ottoman Empire, in 1904, even broad Arab nationalism, let alone more specific Palestinian nationalism, was weak there.

The population were mainly very poor peasants, with little working class or bourgeoisie.

Arab nationalism

But the Young Turk revolution of 1908 in the Ottoman Empire, and the general uptick of nationalist revolts against the big empires late in and after World War One and the Russian workers' revolution, stimulated Arab nationalism.

At the start of the "British Mandate", in the early 1920s, the Jewish proportion of the population was actually lower than in 1914, and not growing fast, but Arab alarm at the incomers was greater.

There was no Palestinian Arab nationalist party, unlike say in Egypt, where the Wafd was formed in 1919. The British set up a Supreme Muslim Council and appointed Amin al-Husseini, from a wealthy landowner family, both to head that council and to religious post of Grand Mufti of Jerusalem.

Al-Husseini and his family dominated Palestinian Arab politics for decades. They had a minor rival, another landowner clan, the Nashashibis, reputedly more inclined to compromise.

In 1936-9, Palestine saw an "Arab Revolt" (general strike followed by guerrilla warfare), demanding a ban on Jewish immigration and land purchases, and an Arab-majority government. In 1937 al-Husseini fled Palestine to evade arrest by the British, but the British continued to deal with the al-Husseini clan.

In 1939 the British imposed strict limits on Jewish immigration and land purchases.

Al-Husseini went to Germany, where he made radio broadcasts for the Nazis and sought to help them recruit Bosnian Muslims for the SS. After the war he fled to Cairo. Palestinian political

mobilisation would be slight for years.

After World War Two, the Jewish community in Palestine went to war against the British, demanding that Jewish survivors from the Holocaust be allowed into the country. The Palestinian leadership was sidelined, but through an Arab Higher Committee set up by the Arab League (itself initiated by Egypt in 1944-5, with Britain in the background) lobbied against allowing Jewish immigration and then against the United Nations decision in November 1947 to partition Palestine.

The guerrilla war which developed after that decision was mainly driven by volunteer Arab militias crossing the border from Syria, some of their members coming from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. Palestinian Arab villagers generally sided with the Arab militias, but mostly were victims rather than combatants.

After the Jewish community declared a state on 14 May 1948 following British withdrawal, the Arab states invaded. Arab leaders proclaimed they would "drive the Jews into the sea", but were defeated by the highly motivated Jewish troops.

About 160,000 Palestinians remained in what became Israel, with votes in national elections but under local military government until 1966. 700,000 Palestinians had fled or been driven out, mostly to the West Bank and Gaza. The West Bank area allotted for an Arab state was taken by Jordan; the Gaza area, by Egypt (despite a nominal "All-Palestine government" headed by al-Husseini kept for show for a while).

The Palestinians' political hopes were forcibly swivelled towards hoping that the Arab states would make war on Israel again and win. They didn't.

1960s

Autonomous Palestinian politics re-emerged in the 1960s. A forerunner had been the Arab Nationalist Movement, founded in Beirut in 1951 by Georges Habash and others. As Rosemary Sayigh describes an ANM member recounting it: "At first we had three slogans, unity [of the Arab world], liberation [from European domination], and vengeance. Then we changed vengeance to the restoration of Palestine because we felt that vengeance was a fascist slogan".

From the ANM in 1967 came the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Maoist-oriented group. It saw itself as socialist and secular, yet it was mainly famous for small but spectacular and bloody attacks on Israeli Jewish civilians. It got support from the Syrian government.

Fedayeen fleeing to Israeli-controlled West Bank from Jordan, 1971



The Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine was a split from the PFLP in 1968, also Maoist and militarist. It was distinguished by trying to make links with Israeli Jewish leftists, and (in the early 1970s) by being the group which put a (form of) two-states settlement on the agenda.

Fatah had been founded in 1959, a specifically Palestinian secular nationalist group led mainly by highly-qualified Palestinians who were or had been working in the now oil-rich Gulf states.

The Egyptian government had set up a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), at first just as a puppet, in 1964. Distrust of and disillusion with the Arab governments, including the "radical" ones like Nasser's in Egypt, and a more distinct Palestinian nationalism, increased especially after 1967. Host government control over the refugee camps, mostly in Jordan and Palestine, weakened. Fatah and the other groups became the dominant force in the camps and in the PLO (which still exists, mostly as a shadowy back-up to the Palestinian Authority formed in 1994).

In 1970 the Jordanian government reasserted control over its camps, in the Black September massacre (Fatah leader Yasser Arafat, probably exaggerating, said that cost 20,000 lives); in 1982 the Beirut government and the Israeli army forced core PLO forces out of Lebanon. But Fatah and other PLO groups remain politically hegemonic, except where Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad are.

In 1969 Fatah put forward the idea of a "secular democratic Palestine", with religious rights for a Jewish minority, to replace the old talk of "driving the Jews into the sea". It was not a workable scheme: for the two nations, Palestinian-Arab and Israeli-Jewish, to merge, both would first need substantial experience of recognition of their right to secure national existence. But it was a beginning.

In 1987-8 the first Palestinian Arab mass movement since 1936-9, the first intifada, erupted in the West Bank and Gaza, under Israeli control since the 1967 war. Young Palestinians threw

stones at the Israeli soldiers, avoiding setpiece gunfights but making the Israeli occupation, as it was then anyway, untenable.

In 1988 the PLO officially moved to "two states" and to recognise Israel's right to exist. Israel moved to recognise the PLO and to consider "two states".

Agreements were made in Oslo in 1993 and 1995 supposed to set in motion a process towards "two states". But they were stalled, especially after the assassination of Rabin in 1995 and Netanyahu's first spell in power, from 1996. Renewed negotiations broke down in 2001. Netanyahu, prime minister most of the time since 2009, and Ariel Sharon, prime minister 2001-6, have positively favoured stalemate since then.

In the 1960s and 70s, the Palestinians had been markedly more secular than most Arab peoples. Hamas originated from a Muslim-Brotherhood-linked group in Gaza at first focused on preaching, welfare work, and demanding women show piety by pressing or forcing them to wear the hijab.

Intifada

In 1987-8 it joined the intifada. It was still a minority force, but growing. The disappointments after 1993, and the perceived corruption and ineffectuality of the Palestinian Authority, made political space for it. Support from Iran (with some disruptions) and from Hezbollah in Lebanon have given it a further boost. The fact that the first intifada produced only an unworkable "halfway house", and the failure of political action for decades now, have created reversion to a variant of the old stance of waiting for the Arab states to crush Israel, but now with Iran and God in place of the Arab states.

The leftish Palestinian factions have declined. The DFLP, the pioneer of the "two-states" programme, is now weak. It boasts that its (small) forces in Gaza took part in the 7 October atrocity.

The chief site of new hope in Palestinian politics now is, paradoxically, among the 20% Palestinian-Arab minority in Israel. That is a story for another article. □

Why scientists say CDR is necessary



Environment

By Paul Vernadsky

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fifth Assessment Report (2014) highlighted the potentially important role for carbon dioxide removal (CDR) technologies in keeping global temperature rise below 2°C. The report defined CDR as methods that “involve removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing the carbon in land, ocean, or geological reservoirs”. CDR is also called “negative emissions technologies” (NETs).

The IPCC’s fifth report discussed

CDR technologies such as land carbon sequestration by reforestation and afforestation; soil carbon management, or biochar; ocean carbon sequestration by ocean fertilisation; weathering through the application of ground silicates to soils or the ocean; bioenergy capture with geological storage (BECCS); and direct air capture (DAC). Similarly, the Paris Agreement at COP21 (2015) made frequent references to carbon dioxide removal technologies.

The IPCC’s special report, *Global Warming of 1.5°C* (2018) underlined that all the pathways that limit global warming to 1.5°C project the use of carbon dioxide removal. It stated that “CDR would be used to compensate for residual emissions and, in most

cases, achieve net negative emissions to return global warming to 1.5°C”.

Like the IPCC, climate activists emphasise that CDR technologies are not a substitute for mitigation efforts to reduce emissions at source. However given the concentration of historic greenhouse gases, the continued growth of emissions, and the increase in global temperatures, such technologies have a complementary role to play in tackling climate change.

Nascent

It is also clear that these technologies are at an early, nascent stage of development. The IPCC has stated that these methods “vary greatly in their estimated costs, risks to humans and the environment, potential scalability, and

notably in the depth of research about their potential and risks”.

The general socialist attitude is to support research into these technologies, and we also raise political demands around them. Research should be publicly funded, conducted by public bodies such as universities and government research organisations, overseen by lay committees and with results published openly and accessibly for anyone to question.

Socialists also need to understand and interrogate specific technologies, weighing up their costs and benefits, unintended consequences as well as implications for workers. Probably the most controversial CDR technology is direct air capture. □

DAC: research under public ownership and workers’ control



Environment

By Paul Vernadsky

What is direct air capture (DAC)? The IPCC’s fifth report defined it as the “chemical process by which a pure carbon dioxide (CO₂) stream is produced by capturing CO₂ from the ambient air”. Direct air capture “uses a sorbent to capture CO₂ from the atmosphere and the long-term storage of the captured CO₂ in geological reservoirs”.

A review of the literature by Mahdi Fasihi, Olga Efimova and Christian Breyer, *Techno-Economic Assessment of CO₂ Direct Air Capture Plants*, published in the *Journal of Cleaner Production* (2019), explained that capturing carbon dioxide from ambient air was first applied in the 1930s, and then later for life support systems in space stations and submarines.

Larger-scale, as early as 1990, Walter Seifritz wrote in *Nature* journal that one way to reduce carbon dioxide emissions was to “collect... and to dispose of it in empty natural gas fields or the deep ocean”.

Klaus Lackner, then working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory, is usually considered the original proponent of the technologies involved in DAC: the machines that capture the CO₂ from the air and the means of storage. In 1995, Lackner co-authored a

number of papers advocating building machines covering 100km² to extract 20% of atmospheric carbon dioxide. He also proposed combining carbon dioxide chemically with raw materials to form stable carbonate minerals, involving either the direct carbonation of minerals at high temperature or processing in aqueous solution.

Lackner has attracted some controversy in the past. In November 2000, he told an international conference on global warming and energy policy, sponsored by the Global Foundation in Florida, “our approach to internalising the cost of carbon emissions to the atmosphere is rooted in free-market principles”, supporting tradeable permits to create a carbon price. In 2004, Lackner founded Global Research Technologies (GRT), a private company engaged in producing these technologies.

In 2010, Lackner published an accessible article, *Washing Carbon Out of Thin Air*, in *Scientific American* magazine. He suggested that with improved sorbents, 10 million machines across the planet could reduce carbon dioxide concentration by five parts per million a year. With mass production, Lackner claimed the machines might capture carbon dioxide at \$30 a ton. By this point, Lackner was leading a research team at Columbia University.

In 2017, Lackner, now working from Arizona State University, argued that “climate change is a waste management problem”. He claimed

rather wistfully that DAC did not require “drastic reductions in energy use, changes in lifestyle, or transformations in energy technologies”. The waste management perspective therefore did not “threaten the political, social, and economic interests associated with the fossil energy system – and does not automatically trigger opposition from those interests”.

His statement that DAC could “take back emissions that are difficult to avoid, such as from aircraft, heavy trucks, and ships... [and] even makes it possible to collect and dispose of carbon dioxide that has been emitted in the past” is however relevant even for us as activists challenging the interests linked to fossil fuels and free-market profiteering.

Private sector

So far, direct air capture has largely been developed by private sector firms, although some have made associations with universities. Fasihi, Efimova and Breyer (2019) list a number of these companies and their affiliations.

Carbon Engineering, established in 2009 by David Keith in Squamish, Canada, has developed high temperature aqueous-solution-based DAC. The company is partly funded by Bill Gates. It launched a demonstration plant in 2015, aiming to establish broad commercial deployment of synthetic fuels production based on their DAC technology.

Global Thermostat, formed

in 2010 in New York, is one of a number of low temperature DAC companies. It developed catalysts with the Georgia Institute of Technology, while running pilot and commercial demonstration plants at SRI International in Menlo Park, California. Infinitree, founded in 2014 and located in Huntington, New York, providing carbon dioxide for urban farming projects.

Other DAC projects include Antecy, founded in 2010 in Hoevelaken, Netherlands. The company collaborated with Shell on a pilot plant. Oy Hydrocell Ltd is a Finnish company that has provided a DAC system to VTT Technical Research Center of Finland. Skytree, founded in 2008 and located in Amsterdam, Netherlands, commercialised carbon dioxide capturing technology as a spin-off of the European Space Agency.

Climeworks is probably the best-known DAC company. The firm developed in 2007 from research at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, ETH Zürich. In 2011, Climeworks built its first demonstration prototype. In 2014, in partnership with Audi and Sunfire, the company launched a pilot plant in Dresden that captured carbon dioxide and converted it into synthetic diesel. In 2015, a Climeworks system was commissioned for the world’s first synthesis of renewable methane from atmospheric CO₂. In 2017, Climeworks commissioned the world’s first commercial DAC plant in Hinwil, Switzerland. It

provided carbon dioxide for a nearby greenhouse. In 2018, Climeworks announced its partnership with Coca-Cola Switzerland to supply carbon dioxide to its mineral water brand Valser.

Other firms have been experimenting with various types of carbon dioxide storage. From a climate perspective there is little purpose in building air capture machines unless the carbon dioxide can be disposed of with confidence. One type of sequestration, namely mineral storage, illustrates a possible direction of development.

The CarbFix project was founded in 2007 by Reykjavik Energy, University of Iceland, CNRS in Toulouse, and Earth Institute at Columbia University in New York. The project’s early history is described in more than 60 peer-reviewed papers, including an accessible account by Matter and others, *Rapid carbon mineralisation for permanent and safe disposal of anthropogenic carbon dioxide emissions* (*Science* journal, 2016).

The project aimed to develop technologies for permanent carbon dioxide mineral storage in basalts. The first pilot injections took place in 2012 in the Hellisheidi power plant in Iceland, firstly of carbon dioxide dissolved in water and then a gas mixture of CO₂ and 25% hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) injected under the same conditions. In 2014, the project was scaled up industrially.

continued on page 12 →



→ from page 11

The research found that over 95% of the carbon dioxide injected into the CarbFix site in Iceland was mineralised to carbonate minerals in less than two years.

In 2017, the CarbFix2 project was launched with European Union funding. The project was led by Reykjavik Energy, University of Iceland and CNRS in Toulouse (France), along with Amphos21 in Barcelona (Spain), and Climeworks. The CarbFix2 project combines the storage approach developed in Iceland with the DAC technology developed by Climeworks, to create an integrated carbon dioxide removal process with the potential for global application.

In 2017, the first facility in Iceland, known as Arctic Fox, marked the beginning of permanent and safe carbon dioxide removal via direct air capture. In 2021 the Orca plant located in Iceland became the world's first large-scale carbon dioxide removal plant. In 2022, a second and larger direct air capture and storage plant, Mammoth, was announced.

The CarbFix projects have demonstrated that DAC technologies, from

the direct air capture machines to geological storage, are at least possible. The projects have taken important steps toward scaling up and begun to address some concerns about economic and ecological viability. However the research has also generated public dissent.

Two of the original scientists involved in CarbFix, Eric Oelkers and Sigurdur Gislason, have recently published an account of the project, *Carbon Capture and Storage: From Global Cycles to Global Solutions*, in *Geochemical Perspectives* journal (2023).

In 2018, Reykjavik Energy trademarked the CarbFix name on their own without the knowledge or agreement of the other partners. In 2019, Reykjavik Energy established a subsidy with the name Carbfix (with a small "f"), fully owned by the firm and again without prior knowledge of the original collaborators. In 2020, Oelkers and Gislason were invited to remain as part of Carbfix as the company's unpaid scientific advisors. They concluded:

"This twist of events in the CarbFix story should serve as a warning to our fellow scientists. One needs to beware and wary of the actions of private sec-

tor partners. Once they sniff profit from one or more of your ideas, they have a large motivation to discard you once you develop the technology to the level that it is profitable."

The experience with direct air capture has also given rise to some important questions about it. An early assessment by the American Physical Society (2011) concluded that it was "not currently an economically viable approach". Serious concerns have been raised about the energy and other resources needed for it.

DAC requires large amounts of electricity. In most places, any time soon, new low-emissions electricity generation would be better used directly to replace fossil-fuel generation than for the roundabout way of drawing back the CO2 once emitted. Scaling up renewable energy sources is crucial first to replace fossil fuels, and then to support CDR technologies.

Iceland's electricity generation is almost all low-emissions. There, the researchers can draw upon geothermal sources. Elsewhere, DAC could be powered by other renewable sources such as wind or solar, built close to suitable sites for geological storage.

The biggest constraints are political. Currently, private firms, including some in the fossil fuel industry, are funding and developing DAC technologies. Bourgeois states, even those funding universities and other research bodies, play second fiddle to these capitalist firms. Given the profit system, capitalist competition cannot be trusted to roll out the technology fast enough or at the scale needed to contribute to prevent dangerous climate change.

To test the potential global viability of DAC research requires public ownership and democratic control. It requires bourgeois states to fund these projects and support international cooperation to ensure new developments are shared and generalised. It means open source publication and no exclusive patenting, so the benefits of the technologies can be shared widely.

At present, we cannot tell whether DAC will work at a global scale. Climate activists and socialists should campaign for public research under democratic control, where scientists work with civil society and the labour movement to supervise and hold these projects to account. □



Buy our books

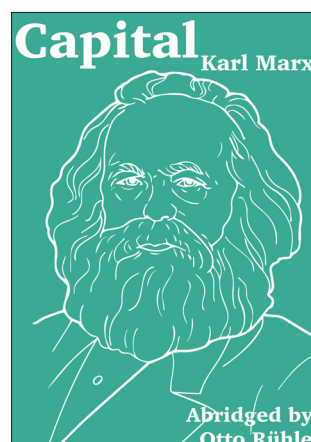
Order from workersliberty.org/publications

Browse, basket, and buy books, pamphlets, and publication bundles – and find more info, related resources, study guides, reviews and so on, from the same place. Some books are free to download or as audiobooks.

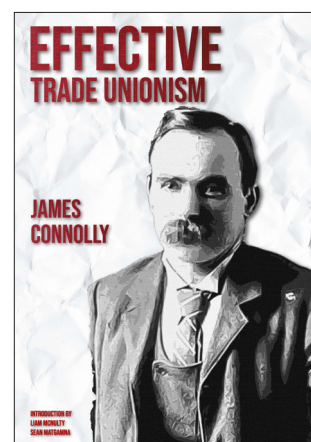
Prices listed exclude postage and packaging: £1 for small items, £3 for larger items, free over £30. Every third publication is half-price and 15% off over £50. □



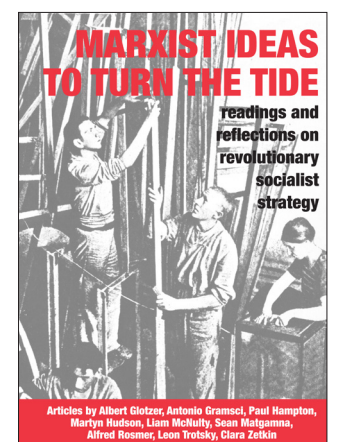
Lessons for socialist and left activists 60 pages **£4**



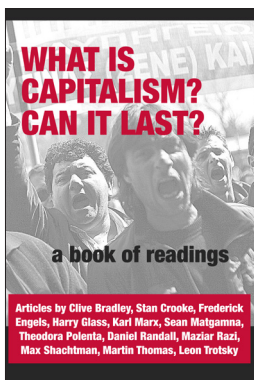
Rühle's abridgement is a good intro 131 pages **£6**



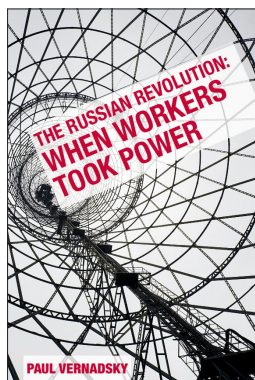
Writings by James Connolly 64 pages **£5**



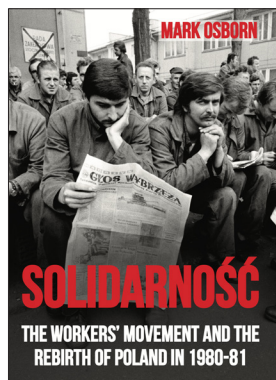
Revolutionary socialist strategy 138 pages **£5**



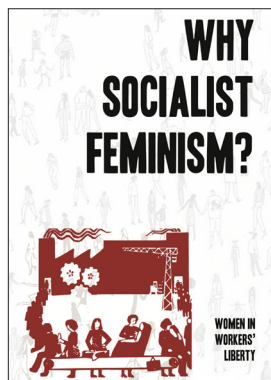
Socialist readings to understand and fight capitalism 128 pages **£5**



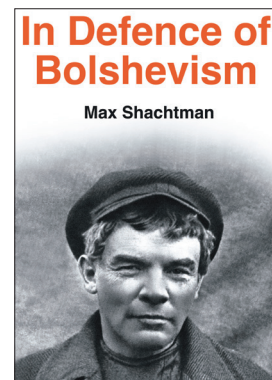
The 1917's revolution's real history, and lessons 374 pages **£12**



The history of Solidarność, from its dawn until the coup 116 pages **£5**



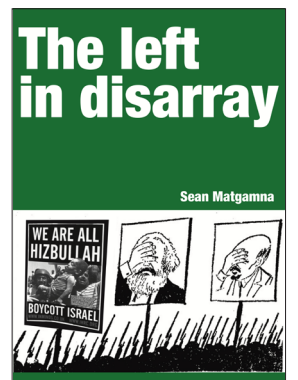
A socialist approach within recent "waves" of feminism 102 pages **£5**



Defending the Bolsheviks and their relevance today 312 pages **£10**



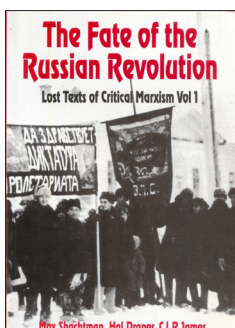
A debate on reform, revolution, Labour, democracy, more 107 pages **£5**



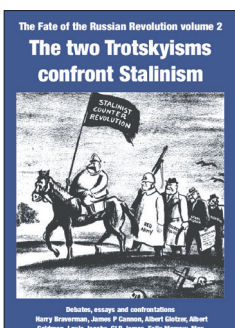
Critical history of the disoriented left, and the way forward 408 pages **£12**



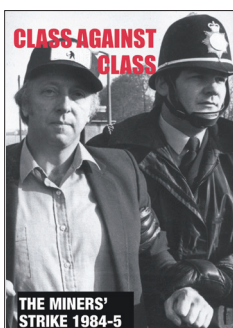
Can Socialism Make Sense? **£8**



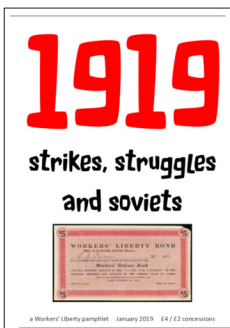
Fate of the Russian Revolution vol.1 **£8**



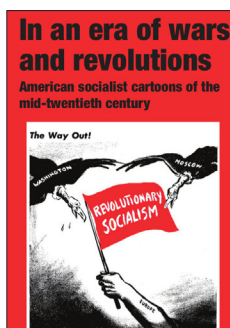
FRR vol. 2: The Two Trotskyisms **£20**



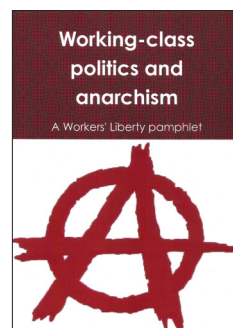
The Miners' Strike 1984-5 **£9**



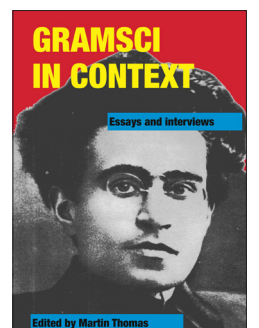
1919: Strikes, struggles, soviets **£4**



In an Era of Wars and Revolutions **£9**



Class Politics and Anarchism **£5**



Gramsci in Context **£6**

A splurge of self-puffery

By Martin Thomas

The Socialist Appeal group has announced that from January it will rename its fortnightly paper *The Communist*, and, from May, the group as the Revolutionary Communist Party. Already it has taken to using the hammer and sickle and star insignia of the old USSR.

The hammer-and-sickle goes back to Lenin's day, but is dated now – how many peasants using sickles are there in Britain? – and inescapably overlaid by decades of Stalinist misuse.

Since the Stalinisation of the once-revolutionary Communist Parties in the 1920s, Marxists have generally called our organisations league, alliance, group, current, or such, rather than party. Sometimes that is because we have operated as tendencies within broader parties; often, just to signal a



sense of proportion when we are not yet even a sizeable minority of the broad working class.

The Militant Tendency, forerunner of Socialist Appeal, was emphatic in scorning “party” self-proclamation even when it was many times stronger

than Socialist Appeal today.

The “Healyite” SLL declared itself the Workers’ Revolutionary Party in 1973; what was then IS re-named itself SWP in 1977; the other main descendant of the Militant Tendency, Militant Labour, re-branded as Socialist Party in 1997.

In all cases they had more working-class clout than Socialist Appeal, which has grown among students, but with little capacity to organise action even among students and little footing in the labour movement.

In all those previous cases, the groups’ idea that they had reached a

new bracket proved vainglory, with the “party” declaration soon followed by decline or retrenchment.

Socialist Appeal’s increasing self-puffery has gone together with a political self-transformation. Some time ago they shifted to uncritical [admiration](#) of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. The new iconography meshes with that propensity to see “revolution now” abstracted from working-class action and with “campism”, including de facto support for Putin in [Ukraine](#).

They have discarded (without much comment or accounting that I can find) the old Militant Tendency’s attempts at structured political theory (poor though we [thought them](#)), and replaced them with agitation in the style of *Socialist Worker* on a bad day. How did this intellectual decay happen? A question for future articles. □

Arma 3 and faked war footage

By Kayden Jones

A tweet/x [post](#) purporting to depict an IDF helicopter being shot down by a Hamas missile has garnered 9.3 million views.

The account supported both Hamas and Russia, and the post is an example of the use of computer-game footage made with Bohemia Interactive’s military simulator Arma 3. Videos propagating false information about the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria are a regular occurrence, and some

have even made it to national television.

A 2016 research [paper](#) on Russian-originated disinformation found a “firehose of falsehood”, with impact increased by a high number of channels and messages. Messages are pumped to far-right celebrities who will then re-send them to their fan base. The far-right are often willing participants in the deception.

Nick Griffin, ex-leader of the BNP and antisemite, posted Arma-3-manufactured footage of vehicles being destroyed

and [gloated](#): “Every plume of smoke is another Israeli army vehicle destroyed, and they’re not even in the rubble killing fields yet”.

Arma 3 is said to be “ultra-realistic”, but, released in 2013, it is actually quite dated and far from being photo-realistic. The vast quantity of repurposable video available on YouTube for fake military footage is what makes it so powerful. In addition, it shows things from a greater distance than other video games, assuaging the lack of detail.

Arma lets the user design scenarios and record them with a free camera view. Players have the ability to modify the game by adding their own content. A map of a location in Eastern Europe and models of Russian tanks may be downloaded with ease by someone looking to disseminate false information about Ukraine.

The base game already has a Mediterranean arid environment and an almost exact replica of Israel’s Merkava battle tank, making it even easier to create misinformation

around Israel-Gaza.

A [video](#) about identifying misinformation has been released by Bohemia Interactive. False footage often features shaky camera; unnatural visual effects; no characters, just vehicles; no sound; and deliberately low resolution.

Future disinformation campaigns will employ more life-like military simulators, like Arma Reforger, to produce more believable false information. Worse to come. □

India Labour Solidarity ups activity

By Mohan Sen

The India Labour Solidarity campaign (ILS), established late 2022, has been active on several fronts.

On 15 November ILS held an event at Parliament, organised with socialist MP Nadia Whittome and NGO Trade Justice Movement, to discuss a potential UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The event briefed MPs, parliamentary staff, trade unionists and others on the issues and made the case for negotiations to be [suspended](#), a position, supported by the TUC but not campaigned for in the labour movement.

Another organisation participating in the 15 November event was Unau Welfare, representing members of the

Kuki-Zo tribal community, which is experiencing brutal persecution in the eastern Indian state of Manipur. ILS has been working extensively with Unau Welfare to raise awareness of Manipur in the UK.

The campaign recently helped launch a [statement](#) in support of Bellsonica workers in Haryana state, auto components workers whose union is being attacked for attempting to organise agency workers.

ILS promoted, participated in and reported on the 1 October demonstration by garment workers in Leicester, predominantly of Indian heritage or origin, fighting against job losses and for improved wages and conditions in the industry.

The campaign tries to make opposition to caste discrimination and caste oppres-

sion central to its work. It has been working with the Anti Caste Discrimination Alliance to launch a new initiative seeking to raise caste in the UK labour movement, chairing its first public event on 25 October.

On 27 Oct ILS co-sponsored a meeting on outsourcing of workers and systemic racism with the IWGB union and Black Lives Matter UK. On 22 November we are speaking about India at a Workers’ Liberty meeting in Sheffield.

The campaign has also attended Gaza demonstrations, and promoted statements from Indian unions opposing the war. □

• ILS: [bit.ly/i-l-s](#) for model motions, briefings, etc. and [bit.ly/inlabsol](#) to sign up for update.

More online

Red lines

On reluctance to condemn Hamas: [bit.ly/r-lines](#)

Five interpretations

Views on Hamas from left and right: [bit.ly/hamas-yc](#)

Bonapartism

The story of a word: [bit.ly/w4w-b](#)

Wood theft laws

And Marx’s socialist awakening: [bit.ly/wood-jc](#)

“” 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

A long and winding road



Diary of a trackworker

By Matt Shaw

To continue my reminiscences of decades as a railway trackworker, the development of Health and Safety law on the railway has been a bit of a double-edged sword. It has generally been to the benefit of workers. Legislation has enabled us to stop the more egregious practices. But it has also made us a bit lazy, with workers looking to legislation rather than taking direct action and sometimes being fobbed off despite being in the right.

In the early days of my job there were no health and safety reps as such. The job was usually done by one of the staff reps as a secondary role. The supervisor being the management representative, it was all a bit too "pally". Inspections, where they took place, were seen as a day out away from work and usually resulted in no further action taking place.

This started to change from the mid 1980s, especially after the disaster at Clapham Junction in 1988. My union, NUR at the time, started pushing staff

to become designated safety reps. The significance of what they could do was backed up by educationals on the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 and later legislation.

Management lagged behind at this stage, and were often made to look foolish. They were forced to concede and stop being, effectively, blustering bullies. On site conditions were improved, with access to cleaning and toilet facilities becoming a right. That was all on the upside, and it helped to give us an idea of what could be done under Health and Safety.

Longstanding complaints, such as having to buy your own safety boots, high-visibility clothing, waterproof coats and protective gloves fell under this umbrella, and we won much higher level of availability.

More attention started to be paid to how many hours we were working. Pre-Clapham, it was a case of work as much overtime as you wanted, no questions asked. My own personal record was an 18 hour day, but I knew of one guy who stayed 24 hours before being sent home. The wages were absolutely appalling, and you often worked a six day week when it was available.

We were often using old buildings, in an unfit state, with old style materials



used in their construction, whose original condition was not improved upon handing over. Things only really started to improve for us after the health and safety rep pointed out the use of asbestos in the roof.

The general trend during that period was progressive, even if we were using the legislation rather than our own industrial strength to achieve our aims. It started to change with the approach of privatisation.

Management had started to get its act together and were becoming quite clever in skirting round the letter, if not the spirit as we saw it, of the legislation. As we began to fight privatisation, we saw the results of allowing our industrial muscle to atrophy from low use and relying on the legislation as our main weapon. □

Amazon workers prepare for 28th strike

By Ollie Moore

Workers at Amazon's BHX4 facility in Coventry are preparing to strike on 24 November, "Black Friday", a major trading day for Amazon. The walkout will be the workers' 28th of the year, with official strikes having first taken place in January. 2022 saw unofficial strikes over pay at a number of Am-

azon facilities.

Amazon workers in the USA, Germany, and Italy will also strike on Black Friday, with protests planned in other countries, organised via Make Amazon Pay, a coalition of unions and campaign groups.

GMB union membership at BHX4 now stands around 1,000, five times the level prior to the first strike in

January. The strike is demanding a £15/hour minimum wage, as well as other improvements to workplace conditions.

Amazon bosses maintain the strikes at BHX4 have little impact on their operations, as the facility is not a "fulfilment centre" which dispatches goods directly to customers. But impacting BHX4 slows up the distri-

bution of products to other parts of the Amazon network.

As many GMB activists and organisers have concluded for some time, forcing major concessions from Amazon will require spreading organisation, and the strikes, to other warehouses and facilities. □

The Beer Hall putsch on screen



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

It is November 1923, Munich. Germany is still recovering from the trauma of defeat in World War One and lurches from one crisis to another. The demagogue Adolf Hitler rallies his motley band of supporters for an attempted take-over of power.

The putsch fails miserably: Hitler ends up in prison (with a lenient sentence) and writes *Mein Kampf*... the rest, as they say, is history.

There are some documentaries of the

event. The only fiction film I know of is a two-part 2003 Canadian TV drama *Hitler: The Rise of Evil*, directed by Christian Duguay, which has been screened in the UK and is available on DVD.

The script changed a number of key events, earning the wrath of the consultant Ian Kershaw, author of a biography of Hitler, who withdrew from the film, taking his name taken off the credits. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* called it "a flat melodrama... Hitler for stupid people".

However, the film is saved by the acting of Robert Carlyle, a cold, frightening Hitler, and Peter O'Toole as the blundering President Hindenburg, outfoxed by Hitler in his rise to power. Worth watching if only for those, and other, fine performances. □

Join Workers' Liberty!

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

College strike against cuts

By Dale Street

After a pause for a re-ballot of the membership, the EIS-FELA strike at the City of Glasgow College recommenced on 14 Nov. EIS-FELA is the Further Education section of the Scottish teachers union, the EIS.

The disputes date back to October 2022, when management issued a briefing claiming that the college faced financial difficulties and that “cost-cutting measures” would be needed.

Without consultation with EIS-FELA, despite it being the recognised union for teaching staff, cuts to courses were imposed.

In February of this year staff who had opted for voluntary redundancy were given notice of dismissal – meaning further cuts to courses and an increased workload for remaining staff.

EIS-FELA balloted its members in the college on industrial action in April, resulting in a majority for strike action and also for action short of a strike. A series of rolling strikes, varying from one day a week to a full week, commenced in June.

Unison, which is also a recognised union in the college and had members at risk of dismissal as a result of the proposed cuts, also balloted its college membership. Turnout failed to meet the 50% threshold.

In the meantime, management announced its intention to make a hundred staff redundant, with notice of dismissal due to be served in mid-June. Taken together with the voluntary re-



Pic: @Dhruvaanu

dundancies, this amounted to a 17% cut in the teaching workforce.

Despite (or because) management brought in external HR consultants to handle the implementation of the redundancies, the legally required consultation process quickly degenerated into a farce.

Attempts were made to pressure staff into attending “consultation” meetings in the absence of a union representative and/or when they were on sick leave or annual leave. Different departments operated different procedures. Staff were told that they had no right of appeal.

The rolling strikes were resumed

when the college reopened after the summer break and continued into September.

A re-ballot of the membership was held in October, resulting in a slightly higher turnout and a higher majority for continued rolling strikes. [Dates have been set](#) for strikes each week until the Christmas break.

The political side of the campaign against the job cuts is also being stepped up, with EIS-FELA representatives having met, or having demanded to meet, Glasgow MSPs and the Scottish Government Education Minister. □

Train drivers call December strikes



Off The Rails

By Gerry Bates

Train drivers’ union Aslef called one-day strikes and a nine-day overtime ban in its long-running dispute over pay with the Train Operating Companies (TOCs)

Drivers will strike at East Midlands Rail and London North Eastern on Saturday 2 December; at Avanti West Coast, Chiltern, Great Northern Thameslink, and West Midlands on Sunday 3 December; at C2C and Greater Anglia on Tuesday 5 December; at Southeastern, Southern/Gatwick Express, South West Rail main line, SWR depot drivers, and Island Line on Wednesday 6 December; at CrossCountry and Great Western on Thursday 7 December; and at Northern and Trans-Pennine on Friday 8 December.

Drivers will also refuse overtime on 1-9 Dec.

This dispute, in which the Rail Delivery Group (the bosses’ consortium) has made no new offer since April, is distinct from the RMT rail unions’ dispute with the TOCs. In that, there is a new offer which RMT members are balloting on (up to 30 November). The RMT Executive is making no recommendation, but the [Off The Rails](#) bulletin calls for rejection. □

Italian government partly bans strike

By Hugh Edwards

The General Strike called for 17 November by the leaders of Italy’s two most powerful union confederations, CGIL and UIL, in protest against the budget of the government of Giorgia Meloni, was declared [unlawful](#) in transport beyond four hours.

Never before in the history of the Italian republic has such a general strike had the law used against it in this way. Transport minister Matteo Salvini cited a 1990 law restricting strikes from “damaging the economy unduly in times of crisis”.

But for the working class worse was to come. Their union leaders decided to comply and reduce the transport workers’ protest to four hours, instead of the eight hours for other sectors.

The union leaders added



Pic: @FpCgilNazionale

insult to injury by claiming that they were only doing it because the government’s threats of a €50,000 Euro penalty for the union and fines of €1000 or €2000 for individual workers were too onerous a burden in such a time of crisis.

It was the umpteenth proof of the total failure of the line of social peace presented by the bureaucrats to the Meloni-Salvini government since it assumed

office a year ago. If Maurizio Landini, leader of CGIL and one-time metalworker radical, was counting on a fruitful recognition of the year long courtship between unions and government, he has got the proverbial kick up the arse.

The strikes called by CGIL and UIL against the budget are spread region by region over a period of four days, more a continuation of the record of a year-long capit-

ulation on the wage front, precarious working conditions, and financial regulation than throwing down the gauntlet.

The retreat has hobbled the prospect of a united militant drawing of the line. The 17 Nov action, covering the centre of Italy, has witnessed evidence of mass confusion among thousands of workers, aided and abetted by the government and its media.

The use of the law against the strike was more than an affront to the self-importance of the union tops. It was an open provocation to the working-class movement, a grave precedent for the future. It calls for a united response by the trade-union movement as a whole, on a scale equal to the depth of the provocation. □

Get Solidarity every week

Trial sub (6 issues) £7; Six months (22 issues) £22 waged, £11 unwaged, €30 European rate.

Visit workersliberty.org/sub

Or, email awl@workersliberty.org with your name and address, or phone [020 7394 8923](tel:02073948923). Standing order £5 a month: more to support our work. Forms online. □

Contact us



[020 7394 8923](tel:02073948923)



solidarity@workersliberty.org



Write to: 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG



Production team: Martin Thomas (editor), Sara Lee, Sacha Ismail, Dan Katz, Simon Nelson, Zack Muddle □



PCS: Left Unity gets rattled

By a PCS member

In the elections closing 14 Dec for General Secretary and Assistant General Secretary in PCS, the Independent Left (IL) is standing John Moloney for AGS and supporting Broad Left Network's Marion Lloyd for GS, on a joint ticket.

They run against the candidates of Left Unity (LU), which controls PCS but increasingly as a support mechanism for a narrow cabal of lay officials and senior bureaucrats.

For the whole of the week starting 13 Nov, John Moloney led an official PCS solidarity delegation to Ukraine and represented PCS at the congress of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine. In an unprincipled attack which elevated factional interest over international solidarity, a LU Vice President of PCS demanded that IL talk about why John "seems more interested in the Ukraine than Palestine."

He did so despite the fact that John, in his election address, called for an immediate halt to the (then pre-invasion) siege of Gaza; condemned Hamas' attacks, the collective punishment of Gaza, and settler attacks in the West Bank; and called for an independent Palestine alongside Israel. LU's candidates are completely silent on all international issues in their election addresses.

This shifty factionalism is one reason why PCS needs new leadership. But what is fundamentally



settlement in the public sector, after years of real terms pay cuts. They know that LU argue that members will not strike, except spasmodically, and have stopped collecting the Fighting Fund levy. They long ago returned thousands of PCS members to greater site based working.

In national talks which the leadership did not report to members, Government officials completely ignored the LU national negotiators' weak representations.

The LU leadership's response has been typically lacklustre and unconfident whereas the IL's [state-ment](#) on this issue has been well received and shows what a confident, competent, membership based, leadership could do. □

at stake, effective trade unionism, was thrown into stark relief by the recent Government [announcement](#) that civil servants should spend a minimum of 60% of their working time in the office.

The policy will especially hit carers, part time staff, and people with health issues, and will force workers to spend more money on commuting in the midst of lowered living standards. But the Tories do not care because the policy diverts public attention from their failings.

And the Tories are feeling confident, having imposed on PCS members the worst 2023/24 pay

Tax the rich! Restore the NHS!

By Rhodri Evans

Solidarity goes to press on Tuesday 21st, the day before Chancellor Jeremy Hunt's Autumn Statement. Speculation swirls about what tax cut the Tories will offer, and whether and how they will clip inflation-up-rating of benefits to suit.

The Tories have considered cutting inheritance tax (essentially, for millionaires only), but optics may push them to cut income tax or National Insurance rates instead.

Tax percentages are higher than before. The Tories have not changed income-tax

thresholds, so with inflation more people pay higher income-tax rates. VAT has been at 20% since 2011 (it was 10%, then 8%, before Thatcher).

Yet the NHS and public services are starved of funds.

The government is paying down debt from lockdown spending, including vast easy loans to businesses and big spending on dodgy PPE and test-and-trace contractors. In the year October 2022 to September 2023 it has spent £95 billion on interest payments to high finance on government IOUs (bonds), because of high debt, interest, and in-

flation rates. The rich are still super-rich, despite paying a bit more in tax than they used to. Yet Labour's leaders refuse to consider more than marginal tax tweaks. They may even be too scared to say they will cover any Tory tax cuts on 22 November by tax rises hitting the rich harder.

Instead they say that the NHS and public services should wait for the proceeds of economic growth to refloat them.

Recession is more likely in the next year or so. The NHS and public services cannot wait. Pledge now to tax the rich to restore services and benefits! □

Capitalism, religion, and reaction



Socialism vs Capitalism

By Martin Thomas

Capitalism, wrote Marx in the Communist Manifesto, had "drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervour... in the icy water of egotistical calculation", but it has also "compelled [us] to face with sober sense [our] real conditions of life and our relations with our kind".

Before capitalism and the sciences which arose with it, religion dominated human discourse. People had little possibility of understanding or affecting the mysteries and disasters around them, so (as the origins of the word disaster exemplify: bad stars) filled in with stories of the malice or benevolence of spirits or gods.

Yet the opacity of capitalism, the social helplessness of people in face of its crises and wars, can also revive religion. Marx had written before about religion as "the self-consciousness and self-esteem of those who have either not yet won through to themselves, or have already lost themselves again. But humanity is no abstract being squatting outside the world. Humanity is the world of humanity – state, society.

Inverted

"This state and this society produce religion, which is an inverted consciousness of the world, because they are an inverted world. Religion is the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic compendium, its logic in popular form, its spiritual point d'honneur, its enthusiasm, its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification. It is the fantastic realisation of the human essence since

the human essence has not acquired any true reality. The struggle against religion is, therefore, indirectly the struggle against that world whose spiritual aroma is religion.

"Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people..."

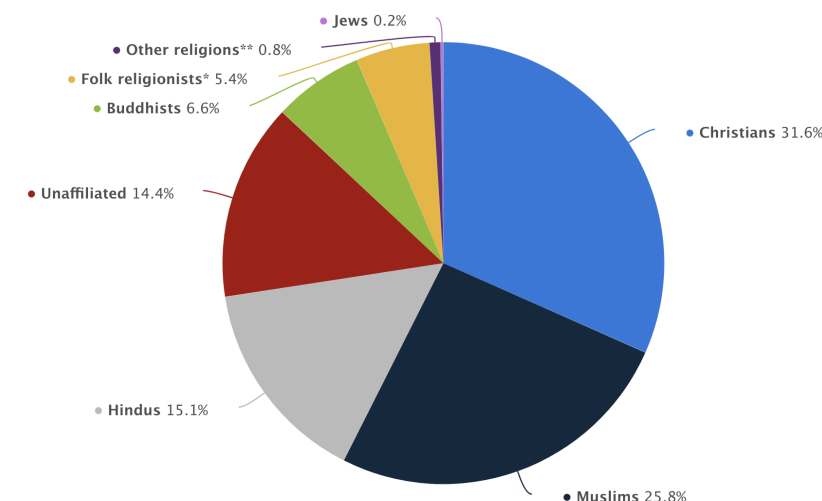
"Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that humanity shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that humanity shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower. The criticism of religion disillusiones humanity, so that we will think, act, and fashion our reality like people who have discarded their illusions and regained their senses..."

We see religion gone rancid today in Hamas, in the "White Christian Nationalist" component of the Trump movement in the USA, in the religious-chauvinist wing of Netanyahu's government in Israel...

Religion will not vanish until well into the socialist future. Working-class movements and emancipatory national movements can take us forward at times even when heavily coloured by religious residues. That happened with the Solidarnosc movement in Poland in 1980-1, though its Catholic canker has taken its toll since.

But when strivings for improvement or relief become subsumed into a drive for the subordination of humanity to the mode of an idealised past when rules from God dominated, or for God to strike down the infidel enemy, that can only be anti-human, oppressive.

Then, as Marx wrote, "the criticism of religion is the prerequisite of all criticism". □



Share of global population affiliated with major religious groups in 2022, by religion. Non-religious people fall under "Unaffiliated". Source: statista



Solidarity

For a workers' government

AFTER THE RWANDA COURT RULING

By Ben Tausz

On 15 November, the Supreme Court upheld the Court of Appeal's [judgement](#) that the government's plan to deport refugees to Rwanda, rather than let them apply for asylum in the UK, is unlawful.

The judges unanimously agreed that there is a real risk refugees will not be safe in Rwanda. Rwanda's authoritarian government is itself accused of torture, extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Crucially for this case, Rwanda's asylum system – deemed seriously and systematically defective by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees – is liable to send refugees with valid asylum claims back to their countries of origin to face human rights abuses ("refoulement"). It has refused the claims of 100% of asylum seekers from Syria, Yemen and Afghanistan. Rwanda even has a record of breaking protection guarantees made in the context of a previous similar deal with Israel (which collapsed after significant pro-refugee protests in Israel and a legal case).

Importantly, despite right-wing Tories' efforts to make the European Convention of Human Rights their new bogeyman, the Supreme Court made clear that the ban on direct and indirect non-refoulement is protected not only by the ECHR but other international conventions and UK law too. (Of course, this is unlikely to stop the Tory Right



trying to junk the ECHR.)

This is a victory for the refugee rights organisations, the PCS union, and the defendants, who brought the case. It is a reprieve for the defendants and others like them, threatened with removal to Rwanda. However, the fight is far from over. The ruling also established that fobbing off Britain's responsibilities for asylum seekers onto a third country is not unlawful in principle.

A blizzard of schemes to save the Rwanda plan followed the ruling. Sunak announced plans for an emergency bill that would simply declare Rwanda safe – like getting Parliament to vote that $2+2=5$.

Whether Rwanda removals ever go ahead or not – immigration lawyer Alasdair MacKenzie, for example, thinks them unlikely to happen soon if ever – it is clear that the Tories want to make the show of pursuing performative cruelty a core plank of their "culture war" electoral strategy.

Meanwhile, the Labour leadership continues its feeble, cowardly approach of avoiding a political challenge to the Tories' agenda, and promising mainly to be more competent and cost-effective managers of the border regime.

A century of Labour pandering and compromise with xenophobia has shown that this strategy of triangulation simply allows the racist right to dictate the narrative and drag politics ever rightwards. Instead, as migrants' rights campaigner Zoe Gardner [argued](#) after the ruling, "we need to get much bolder, very quickly". We must step up the political fight – making an unapologetic case for migrants' rights, including free movement, safe passage, sanctuary and equality for all. □

- 6pm 24 November, Sunny Sands, Folkestone: vigil remembering people who died in the Channel while seeking safety, and demanding safe routes.

- Labour Campaign for Free Movement: labourfreemovement.org
- Abridged. More: bit.ly/rw-sc