

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

JULY 4TH

VOTE LABOUR



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No to Yakoob and Galloway

Anti-Labour
"independents" are not
a way forward

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Russian Marxists' second wave

Vladimir Ulyanov
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IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

20-21 JULY 2024

A weekend of socialist discussion,
debate, and education hosted by
Workers' Liberty: bit.ly/ideas24

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Vote Labour and organise!



Solidarity backs a Labour vote in the 4 July general election. Labour is still the party linked to the labour movement. We continue the battle to transform the labour movement even in its adverse times, of which this is surely one.

Even Labour's wretched offer means some improvements, and there is a base in the unions and the Labour Party to push a Labour government to concessions.

We also fight for a workers' government.

That doesn't mean that we think Keir Starmer could, if pressed, run a workers' government. It doesn't mean that we have an alternative government ready on a shelf, and hope to swap it in for Starmer if he wins the election.

It means that we work to transform the labour movement, to make it stronger, livelier, more democratic, and more confident about aims, so the movement can be the base for a government accountable to the labour movement. That is, a government that serves the working class as loyally as for 14 years the Tories have served the capitalist class.

Since 2021 Keir Starmer has insisted Labour must be "pro-business", and



"the party of working people" only so far as that fits in. On 28 May Rachel Reeves said she wants the "most pro-growth, pro-business Treasury in our country has ever seen".

That she added "with a laser focus on making working people better off" only tells us she doesn't understand lasers. Profits are made by squeezing wages. Public services decay for lack of taxes on the rich to pay for them.

The Tax Justice Foundation finds that a small wealth tax, taxing capital gains as much as wage income, and a few other measures, could raise £50 bn a year – easily enough for the immediate needs of green conversion and reviving the NHS and public services.

The Tories are and have for centuries been unequivocally "pro-business", whatever about Boris Johnson's blunders and his reported mutter of

options.

We endorse the demands [Labour Left Internationalists](#) is pressing for in the Labour Party.

Solidarity supporters, even those of us whom Labour has expelled for our socialist views, will be out on the doorsteps, doing the electoral work, while also having the conversations which will be necessary to push for working-class policies against a Starmer-run Labour government.

We will also distribute leaflets like those promised by the National Education Union to demand reversal of [school cuts](#).

A Labour government is not certain. Labour has a big opinion-poll lead. The Tories' "rabbit from hat" of restarting National Service has been described as "bonkers" even by former Navy chief Alan West, and makes it hard for La-

[exasperation](#) in 2018 when pressed by capitalists bothered by his loose talk of "hard Brexit". We are short of proper public services, trade union rights, civil liberties, but we've never had a shortage of "pro-business"

bour to lose that lead in the few weeks remaining.

But if anyone can lose it, Keir Starmer can. He remains distrusted and dislinked, much more than Tony Blair was before the 1997 election. He has stifled and demoralised the union and local activist base Labour needs to win elections (and to do anything positive after winning), and promises to stifle and demoralise more.

For Labour, against Starmer! □

UK Friends of Standing Together

Standing Together, Israel's fastest-growing grassroots movement over recent years, unites Jews and Palestinians within Israel to fight for an equal and just society, for peace, and against the occupation.

UKFoST promotes their work in the UK: for peace, justice, and equality for Israelis and Palestinians – Jews and Arabs – including an equal right to self-determination, and for the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

UKFoST promotes the benefits of joint struggle by Jews and Palestinians to this end. • ukfost.co.uk

• [@omdimbeyachaduk](https://twitter.com/omdimbeyachaduk)

Why we say vote Labour everywhere

By Rhodri Evans

Outrageously, Labour still refuses to reinstate Hackney North MP Diane Abbott, suspended in April 2023 for an off-beam letter to a newspaper for which she immediately apologised.

Labour says it is still "investigating" (what? both letter and apology are well-known and available). The BBC reports those "investigations" were [completed](#) in December 2023.

It looks like Labour wants to string it out to the last minute, then ban Abbott from the general election when it thinks it too late for complaint to gather momentum.

It is also outrageous that Islington North Labour was not allowed to continue with Jeremy Corbyn as its candidate. Corbyn was suspended from the Labour whip and from the Party altogether for an off-beam remark in [October 2020](#).

Then he was reinstated as a party member, but his MP status was left hanging. And then Labour's National Executive declared (with no reference to the October 2020 remark and no clear other reason) that he would not be allowed to stand.

Corbyn is now running in the election as an "independent", not as "independent Labour", or as a candidate selected by and accountable to Islington North Labour Party.

That local Labour Party has limited its comment to deploring the undemocratic procedure, with no suggestion that it will back Corbyn, but no positive backing for officially-imposed candidate Praful Nargund, either.

We guess many Islington North Labour people will campaign for Corbyn "in real life", but seek to minimise exclusions by avoiding online statements. One Labour coun-

cillor from Islington South has backed Corbyn and got suspended, but he is in poor health and has said he won't stand in the next council elections anyway.

Solidarity criticised Jeremy Corbyn before he became Labour leader for his links to the *Morning Star* (he wrote a weekly column). We took him to task while he was Labour leader for his ditherings on Brexit and antisemitism, and his deference to a "Leader's Office" which he staffed with Stalinists like Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray.

Corbyn remains a left-winger, with a good record of backing working-class battles in Islington. We do not let our disputations stop us seeing the good side a Corbyn victory in Islington North would have in rebuking Starmer.

But for us, politics is about building a movement, not

about pushing this or that good person into parliament. We think Jeremy Corbyn would have done better to avoid his October 2020 statement, or to follow Tony Benn's move at the same age (mid-70s) to quit parliament "to do more in politics" (labour-movement politics).

Corbyn has pointedly steered clear of the loose network of "independents" revolving around Andrew Feinstein in Holborn and St Pancras and George Galloway in Rochdale, though his wife Laura Alvarez, who works closely with him in politics, has boosted it.

If Corbyn's campaign does anything to build a "movement", it can only be either that network or the Communist Party of Britain (the party behind the *Morning Star*). Although the Feinstein network includes people with a genuine Labour left past, we

believe both that and the CPB are political dead ends.

Galloway, and Akhmed Yakoob in Birmingham Ladywood, the two figures in the network most likely to win in their constituencies, are in our view demagogues and de facto right-wingers.

Satya Pine writes more on this in our centre pages this week. □

More online

Acknowledge the past
Israel, Palestine, and May 1948: bit.ly/may-48

Why vote Labour?
As we were saying in 1997: bit.ly/why-lab

FE strikes in Scotland
On pay and other issues: bit.ly/fe-scot

Ukraine is hard-pressed but defiant

By Dan Katz

Massive military aid from the US, delayed for months by far-right Republicans blocking support in Congress, is finally arriving in Ukraine.

European aid is also arriving.

However, overall, Ukraine is suffering and its tired, stretched army is being pushed, slowly, back.

Ukraine's energy infrastructure is on its knees. Weeks of Russian strikes on power-grid facilities have led to rolling blackouts across the country. A strike in April destroyed Kyiv's largest thermal power plant. A massive attack on 8 May took out transmission infrastructure in several regions.

Ukraine is now looking to source parts from long-decommissioned East German plants. Russia aims to demoralise Ukrainian civilians, especially as temperatures drop later in the year.

Ukraine is hard-pressed from a lack of troops, artillery shells, air defence missiles and is impeded by the free-market ideology of its political leadership, endemic corruption and its underlying economic weakness.

On 10 May Russia, having massed 50,000 troops on the border, attacked through Kharkiv oblast in the direction of Vovchansk. Russia has so far succeeded in occupying two border areas, each about 10km wide and 5km deep. Vovchansk is still being contested as *Solidarity* goes to press.

Russia lost (killed, wounded, missing, captured) over 1,000 troops each



day in May, along with vast amounts of equipment. Ukraine's military estimates that eight out of ten of the worst days for Russian military losses in Ukraine took place this month, in May 2024. On 13 May they calculate 1,740 Russian troops were either killing or wounded.

French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné said on 3 May that, "We estimate Russian military losses at 500,000 including 150,000 deaths." That's roughly in line with Ukrainian estimates. Those figures are enormous. By comparison the US had 58,220 killed during the entire war in Vietnam. The UK had 750,000 casualties during the six years of WW2.

Bloomberg estimates that Russian compensation payments to injured soldiers or the families of those killed amount to the equivalent of \$12bn per year. The *Financial Times*, having talked to Russian sources, reckons that Russia

may have to launch a new, potentially highly unpopular and destabilising, recruitment drive at the end of 2024.

The UK's MoD states that Russian recruitment is steady at 30 to 40,000 per month. Regional recruitment offices are offering one million rubles (the equivalent of \$11,000) to enlist, and wages of around \$2,500 per month which is about three times the average wage.

As Russia began its attack in the Kharkiv direction, Ukrainian military bloggers immediately began to denounce incompetent military leadership and the badly prepared defence lines, complaining that shell companies had been given the equivalent of millions of dollars to build defences, but the money had been stolen rather than spent effectively.

Belatedly Ukraine's parliament has agreed a new conscription act which reduces the age that men can be called-up to 25, from 27. The first draft of the law accepted that troops would be able to leave the service after 36 months, and that frontline soldiers would be rotated after six months. However, after appeals from the army leadership which is concerned about losing large numbers of experienced troops, these clauses were removed. That has caused dismay and demoralisation amongst many on Ukraine's front lines.

The new mobilisation law came into force on 18 May.

In addition, Ukraine is allowing cer-

tain categories of prisoner (which excludes, for example, those with convictions for corruption, sexual offences, collaboration) to apply to fight in the armed forces, under strict restrictions, in special units, and under the threat of an additional ten years in prison if rules are broken. About 3,000 prisoners have applied to join the Ukrainian armed forces, and last week some men convicted of theft were released into the military.

Prior to Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022 Ukraine had about 250,000 in its military. This number is now about 880,000, or around one million when National Guard and other units are included. These numbers include 60,000 women.

Also hampering Ukraine's war effort is the chaotic planlessness of Ukraine's free-market capitalism. So, for example, there has been a rapid expansion and development of drone production through 200 private, often newly-created companies. Drones are often bought by private fund-raisers, local councils, or individual brigades. Occasionally donors turn up near the front with drones packed in the back of a van.

As Ukraine stumbles in the face of Russian power European states, especially the Baltic states, have become more alarmed about a possible Russian victory. They are right to worry.

But Ukraine remains defiant. □

• Abridged. More: bit.ly/0527ukr

After defeating Rwanda plan, win free movement

By Ben Tausz

Sunak has declared that deportations of refugees to Rwanda will only begin after the election. Since Labour will likely win and has pledged to stop the plan, that means the scheme is all but dead. We must remain vigilant in case either Sunak or Starmer break their word. Nonetheless, we are close to a victory worth celebrating!

We must build on that and turn to a fight to roll back broader anti-migrant policies. We need to combine direct resistance with grassroots pressure on the coming Labour government: via both protest and the party's democratic channels.

Positively, the election campaign's first weekend, 25-26 May, saw solidarity protests at detention centres, and a demo led by refugee groups at Downing Street (pictured).



tary John Moloney and LCFM were there alongside the refugee groups.

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement has launched the [open letter](#) below. Use it to help you agitate, educate and organise: sign it, share it, and bring it to your workplace, union meetings and election campaigning.

The text of the open letter, "Labour must stand for migrants' rights":

Fourteen years of Tory rule have compounded decades of hostile policy to give the

UK a cruel, racist and nonsensical border regime. Ending free movement with Europe was the biggest expansion of border controls in decades. The Hostile Environment and "no recourse to public funds" policies have driven many migrants into destitution. We now have a de-facto ban on seeking asylum.

This agenda is an attack on everyone. The Tories want to scapegoat migrants for their own failings – falling wages, the housing crisis and crumbling public services. And by

stripping migrants' rights, they leave migrant workers vulnerable to exploitation. The truth is, our society has enough wealth to create decent jobs, homes and services for everyone – if we tax the rich and big business.

Labour must reverse this legacy. We call on the next Labour government to:

- Cancel any scheduled Rwanda flights and bring back anyone already deported there
 - Close all immigration detention centres and halt deportations
 - Guarantee safe and legal routes for asylum seekers
 - Scrap "no recourse to public funds" and give everyone day-one equal access to work, social security, housing and public services
 - Abolish the Hostile Environment
 - Bring back and extend free movement
- We will put forward clear

policies for migrants' rights and equality at Labour's annual conference [in September], and we will organise our Constituency Labour Parties and trade unions to protest and to defend ourselves, our neighbours and co-workers. We invite everyone in our movement to join us. □



The pachyderm in the room



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

A sure sign of the *Morning Star* having no coherent political “line” (or sometimes that the “line” is too embarrassing to spell out plainly) is that its editorials descend into waffle, often dressed up in obscurantist language.

Do you know what a pachyderm is? No, neither did I until I looked it up, but for the *Morning Star* it’s a much better word than “elephant”. The paper’s editorial of 27 May (“The contours of the 2024 election are now beginning to take shape”) is a master-class in evasive waffle – notably avoiding the question of who to vote for – but it does include one memorable statement of the bleeding obvious: “How the working class can exert its influence in this election is the political pachyderm in the room.”

One thing the MS is clear about, however, is that Jeremy Corbyn’s candidacy in Islington North is absolutely brilliant – in fact (to quote the editorial of

25-26 May) it’s “a stand for socialism – and democracy itself.”

Strange, then, that in the page of the same edition in which Jeremy himself outlines his platform the word “socialism” doesn’t appear once. In fairness, the word “democracy” does, but only in the context of the last Labour manifesto including the “right of workers to have elected representatives on the boards of companies” – something that falls considerably short of any sort of workers’ control.

In fact, Jeremy’s lengthy statement (“What I stand for in the general election”) rarely goes beyond soft-left moralistic reformism, most of which could easily come from the Lib Dems. He is running simply as an “Independent”, not “Independent Labour” or “Independent Socialist.”

So Jeremy’s approach is entirely in line with what the paper advocated on 2 April when frequent MS contributor (almost certainly a CPB member or supporter) John Green called for a new political formation based upon a revival of Corbynism. According to Green, Jeremy’s main appeal was that he “eschewed jargon and sloganis-

ing.” So any new “left-wing formation or party” must jettison that sort of stuff: “we need to recognise that even terms like ‘socialism’ and certainly clichéd rhetoric like ‘smash the Tories’ or ‘down with capitalism,’ so beloved of the far left, can frighten and alienate just the people any new left-wing party will need to bring on board.”

Nevertheless, the MS assures its readers that (in the words of Andrew Murray on the front page of the 25-26 April edition, “Peace and socialism will be on the ballot paper in Islington North.”

The editorial claiming that “Corbyn’s candidacy is a stand for socialism – and democracy itself” is strangely coy about what the unions should do (or not do) about Islington North: instead of a clarion call for the unions to rally round this socialist hero, we get this:

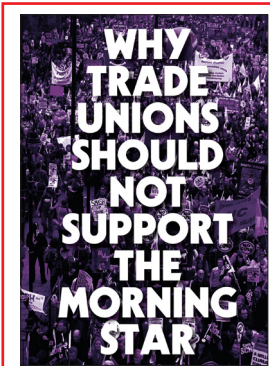
“Unions whose concerns [about Corbyn being blocked] have been brusquely dismissed need not feel under any obligation to campaign for the official Labour candidate against Corbyn.

“Two once-affiliated unions, the transport sector’s RMT and the food sector’s BFAWU, have voiced support for Cor-

byn already.

“Those which remain affiliated are understandably unlikely to do so, but that does not mean they have to lift a finger to back anyone else against him.”

Surely, if Jeremy’s candidacy so well puts “peace and socialism on the ballot paper” then all unions, including those affiliated to the Labour Party, should support him? Why does the *Morning Star* not call for this? Is it fear of antagonising affiliated unions by placing a simple demand upon them? Does the paper not have the courage of its own professed convictions? That question really is a pachyderm in the room. □



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The Zinoviev Letter after 100 years



Eric Lee

With only weeks to go before a general election, and with a Labour victory expected, I am reminded of events of a century ago. In 1924, the minority Labour government headed by Ramsay MacDonald was forced out of power following a snap general election. One of the factors that led to Labour’s defeat was the notorious “Zinoviev Letter.”

Whether the Letter was decisive in bringing an end to Labour’s short-lived first government is contested by historians. But the story of the Letter remains of interest and may have some relevance to this year’s general election, and Labour’s effort to return to government after 14 long years of Tory rule.

Ramsay MacDonald was in some ways the Tony Blair of his time. The first Labour leader to become prime minister, he was later branded a traitor by his own party. He was no friend of the Soviet Union and had



visited independent Georgia in 1920, returning to Britain more convinced than ever that the Bolsheviks were a disaster for Russia.

But during his short term as Prime Minister, MacDonald took steps toward recognising the Soviet state and opening trade relations with it. He did this not because he had suddenly become a Bolshevik sympathiser, but purely for pragmatic reasons. That pragmatism – one might call it lack of principle – was revealed just weeks before the general election. When the Red Army and Cheka bloodily suppressed a Georgian uprising in August 1924, MacDonald’s government initially showed some sympathy for the Georgians – but swiftly embraced a more

practical approach, eventually denying that the Soviets had massacred the Georgians (which they had).

And yet the Tories saw him as pro-Bolshevik and his Labour Party needed to be ousted from office. If the usual methods of electoral politics were not enough, the Conservatives didn’t hesitate to employ dirty tricks against a leader they saw as dangerously left-wing.

Just days before the election, the *Daily Mail* published an extraordinary document. It was a letter from Grigory Zinoviev, leader of the Communist International, to the British Communist Party. The letter called on the comrades in Britain to prepare for armed insurrection, including creating cells of a future Red Army

inside the ranks of the British military. According to the Letter, the Labour government’s decision to open trade with the Soviet Union created the conditions for a successful proletarian revolution in Britain and elsewhere.

Zinoviev publicly denounced the document as a fake. He pointed out a number of flaws, among them the fact that the letterhead referred to the “Third Communist International” which was, of course, not the name of the organisation he headed.

But the British intelligence services came down on the side of the *Daily Mail*, insisting that the letter was genuine. Labour, which had been on course to lose the election, then lost it decisively.

Decades later, historians and archivists came to the conclusion that the document was forged by White Russians. Other forgeries were to follow, including the “Eremin Letter” published in 1956, which offered “proof” that Stalin had once been a Tsarist police spy.

A century on and Zinoviev is long forgotten. But some things remain – disinforma-

tion, including forgery, is still a factor in politics. Indeed, social media has given new life to “fake news” in a way that White Russian forgers in 1924 could only have dreamed of. And there is still a Russian angle to the story.

According to some analysts, Labour’s greatest weakness today, as in 1924, is its perceived lack of willingness to counter a growing Russian threat. For today’s Tories, plans to spend billions more on defence, including a military draft, is really all they have to offer after 14 years in power. It is unlikely to help them much on election day.

Tories with a sense of history must look back 100 years ago to the days when a mediocre forgery could help win them an election. Alas, Keir Starmer, who is as pragmatic as Ramsay MacDonald, seems on course to deliver a Labour government, with no 21st century version of the Zinoviev Letter likely to emerge. □

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

Keep abortion rights on the agenda!



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

The General Election means Sunak's reprehensible Criminal Justice Bill has been pulled, and with it proposed changes to abortion law.

Several MPs had tabled amendments which would change abortion law in England and Wales. Two amendments sought to extend abortion rights. The other sought to restrict access by reducing time limits in different ways.

Amendment NC1 (tabled by Diana Johnson MP, Labour) sought decriminalisation of abortion – so no-one would face prosecution or jail for ending their own pregnancy – without changing any other aspect of abortion law or regulation, including the legal time limits for provision. It would level the law in England and Wales with the law in Northern Ireland since 2019.

Amendment NC40 (tabled by Stella Creasy MP, Labour) was even more moderate. It would have made abortion access unconditional up to 24



weeks but would be unlikely to solve the problem of women facing investigations when suspected of ending their pregnancy over the legal limit.

Creasy has announced she will not let abortion decriminalisation fall off the agenda, and sources in Johnson's office say she too will continue the campaign to decriminalise.

Every September Abortion Rights call a counter demonstration to the anti-choice March for Life (7 September this year). In 2024 this will be an opportunity to force abortion rights onto the

agenda of the expected Labour government.

Labour's final National Policy Forum [report](#) suggested decriminalisation without using the word. "Labour believes that abortion is an essential part of health care which is highly regulated and should not be subjected to custodial sanctions". We have yet to see whether even that meek wording gets into the manifesto.

Policy barriers to safe abortion include criminalisation, mandatory waiting times, the requirement that approval must be given by other people or institutions, financial charges (e.g. for some migrants), insufficient levels of provision and limits on when during pregnancy an abortion can take place. Such barriers can lead to critical delays in accessing treatment and increase risk of unsafe abortion, stigmatisation, and health complications.

Some barriers are used by anti-choice

individuals and organisations to push women past legal term limits to prevent legal abortion. Workers' Liberty is for the removal of all these barriers and the decriminalisation of abortion, which would lead to it being regulated in the same way as other healthcare procedures. □

Georgia resists ban on "foreign influence"

By Sacha Ismail

Enormous youth-led protests against the Georgian government's "foreign influence" law – modelled on the law introduced in Russia in 2012 – have continued to convulse the country.

The final version, passed by Georgia's parliament since our last issue, was substantially worse even than the draft. Georgian trade unionist and socialist Lika Mebagishvili told us:

"According to the final version, an authorised person in the Ministry of Justice will have the right to search for personal data of individuals, including "special category data" – information about sex life, political opinions, membership of unions...

"In other words this law will apply not only to organisations, but to any person who in some way receives income from abroad, such as family members of migrants, employee of foreign companies and others. If a member of your family or any other person from any country sends you money from abroad you will have to register, you will be given the status of an agent, they will have a right to search your apartment, and you will be asked to submit personal information, correspondence, photos and the like.

"Everyone should understand what an unheard-of nightmare this is for



Georgia's people."

As expected, Georgia's pro-Western liberal president Salome Zourabichvili has vetoed the law. The parliament, dominated by the increasingly authoritarian and pro-Russian Georgian Dream party, is expected to override the veto.

The internationalist left must raise awareness of Georgian democrats', trade unionists' and socialists' struggle, and make solidarity. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Thursdays 30 May and 6 June: 8pm. Zoom study group on *Theses on Feuerbach*: bit.ly/feuer-t

Sun 2 June: 2.30pm. Remember Tiananmen, Central London

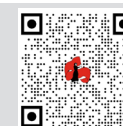
Tue 4 June: 8pm. Protest at Chinese Embassy, London

Sun 16 June: 8pm. Environment reading group online: *The Tragedy of the Commodity*

Wed 19 June: 7pm. London Workers' Liberty forum on Tiananmen Square. Marchmont Community Centre. More details and more events at workersliberty.org/events, or scan QR code.

At work or on campus

We organise: among health and local government, school and education workers, on the railway and London Underground, in the civil service, on uni campuses, and more. See workersliberty.org/work-unions,



Scan the QR code to see our events & meetings page.

Insta [@workerslibertystudents](https://www.instagram.com/workerslibertystudents), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

Texts: to adapt for union branches and Labour Parties: bit.ly/mo-pe

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs
3 June Sheffield, 9 June London

Campaigns

For: UK Friends of Standing Together, Labour Left Internationalists, Workers Against the CCP, Free Our Unions, Solidarity With Iranian Workers, Neurodivergent Labour, India Labour Solidarity, Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, Labour Campaign for Free Movement – contact details, activities, template motions, etc. – see workersliberty.org/agenda.

For environmental campaigning, including mobilisation for Reclaim the Power at Drax in August, email awl@workersliberty.org. □

Yes to 22 June, but turn to workers

By Owen Flood

On 22 June in London Extinction Rebellion, along with a coalition of other climate action groups and charities including the National Trust, has called a [demonstration](#) under the banner of “Restore Nature”.

- An increase in government budgets for nature and climate-friendly farming
- More regulation, fines, and means by which to make “polluters” pay
- Expand and improve protected wildlife areas
- An Environmental Rights Bill to improve public health and access to nature
- Increased investment to tackle the climate crisis and half UK emissions by 2030.

All good so far. But the tone and demands of the demonstration are meek on the scale of the change and overhaul needed to tackle the climate crisis.

At the beginning of May the *Guardian* surveyed lead authors of the IPCC reports. Only 6% thought the internationally agreed 1.5°C (2.7°F) limit on global heating; almost half thought a 3°C rise is likely by the end of the century.



That would mean increased frequency and intensity of heatwaves and floods, rising sea levels, and many millions and potentially billions of people dead or displaced from previously inhabitable areas of the planet.

Yet 22 June has only a vague demand about ending fossil fuel projects and infrastructure. Last year XR demanded “an end to all new licences, approvals, and funding for fossil fuel projects”. Halve UK emissions by 2030? In 2018 XR called for making the UK carbon-neutral by 2025.

It is good to see that XR has moved away from failed tactics based on max-

imising the number of arrests to building big demonstrations. But it looks like the coalitions, along with XR’s lack of democracy, mean that the demands and urgency are being watered down.

Overall, climate activism has decreased and splintered in recent years. Elements of

Extinction Rebellion have broken off into groups such as Just Stop Oil and Insulate Britain, based on similar tactics to old-style XR – direct-action based on sacrificial heroism or maximising arrests – but under different banners, with similar poor levels of democracy, and different demands.

Yet an orientation to working-class politics has not been seriously attempted. Rather than “quitting your job” and dedicating your life to climate activism, we need to see climate activists getting jobs in key industries, including polluting industries, becoming socialist activists and active union reps

who can transform their unions and the labour movement, and campaign for a just transition under workers’ control.

If we are serious about tackling climate change, adapting to irreversible aspects of it, and hoping to reverse some of its effects, then an orientation to workers and the working class is key.

We live in a world with astounding levels of technological and scientific innovation, with a myriad of possibilities to tackle climate change, but without the political will and control to direct available resources and human ingenuity for socially responsible ends.

To gain that will mean confrontation with the owners of polluting industries, investors and supporters and with a capitalist economic system that puts profit above people and the climate. The organised working-class is the only social force who can put up this fight.

Workers Liberty will take part in the Restore Nature march, calling for workers’ action to tackle climate change. Join us and be part of a socialist movement serious about climate change and doing the patient but necessary work to tackle it. □

Behind the blood scandal: profit, hierarchy, prejudice

By Alice Hazel

Many of the patterns underlying the catastrophic neglect in the use of infected blood within the NHS show the inequalities of power that continue to play out within healthcare.

The [Report](#) of the Inquiry into Infected Blood published on 20 May documents that from the 1970s into the mid 1980s patients, who received blood transfusions and plasma products were knowingly exposed to the risks of infections of HIV and Hepatitis B and C. This directly resulted in over 3,000 deaths and thousands more damaged lives.

Strategies recommended from the 1950s to mitigate the risks, for example, building sustainable national supplies, limiting the donor pool in products, were disregarded. The longer-term safety of patients was not considered in treatment practices. Research tantamount to collective abuse was conducted specifically on children with haemophilia, without consent.

A combination of commercial organisations, healthcare providers and governments minimised research and expert warnings that did not suit their

agenda, marginalised voices of those directly affected, created false narratives to deflect criticism, destroyed evidence of relevant decision making, refused to admit responsibility and fabricated reasons for delay.

Blood plasma was described as “the world’s most precious liquid,” and the 1970s saw rapid development of commercial production. Plasma was “sourced” as cheaply as possible, initially exploitatively from Haiti and Nicaragua, and then from the most vulnerable in US society. Bodies set up to regulate supply were made up of representatives from the corporate sector.

The commercial products were relentlessly promoted, including “lavish hospitality” from pharmaceutical companies, “the very best restaurants, the river cruises...” Clinical decisions were being taken that maximised the need for and use of commercial products. Some clinicians may have been influenced by loyalty to companies who had given them financial backing.

Patterns of corruption and abuse are all too familiar in a healthcare system designed around profit making. Think PPE purchasing during the

Covid high times, the inclusion of US healthcare companies at the heart of NHS reorganisation, the promotion of oxycodone as standard pain relief by multi-billion dollar pharmaceutical companies.

Key consultants, in the relatively small clinical specialism of haemophilia, were regarded as all powerful.

Vulnerable patients and their carers looked to these experts to protect their interests. Issues of patient consent and safety were set aside. Without proactive measures to ensure power for independent patient voices there will always be a tendency for this at an interpersonal and at an organisational level.

The Haemophilia Society, far from being a patient-led body, was dominated by clinical specialists, and lobbied against restrictions on the import of commercial blood products from the US. As the scandal unfolded and those affected did get organised, their voices were ignored and undermined.

Since the Francis report into Mid Staffordshire hospital in 2014 patient safety is promoted as central to the NHS, but in fact patient representatives are often closely connected and subservient to

healthcare providers.

Prejudice also played its part. People with haemophilia appear to have been regarded as disposable. The reality of, and ignorance about, life for vulnerable communities, lack of rights for imprisoned and military donors, the homophobia and racism that surrounded the discovery and research into Hep C and HIV, and even the lack of clinical protocols for women (women were given higher quantities of blood than they needed at transfusion) all contributed to

harm. Despite rainbow flags appearing all over our NHS, discrimination is still rarely understood deeply or taken seriously.

Proactive organisation – of trade unions, patient organisations, independent academics and clinical experts – state regulation and well-funded public provision can limit the savagery of profit making in healthcare. Despite all the official expressions of horror over the infected blood scandal, the situation on those fronts is getting worse. □



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Open up debate in student camps!

By Caro Ambrose

My first visit to the Bristol student pro-Palestinian encampment was a friendly one. There were only half a dozen tents and a couple of gazebos back then in early May, and a handful of serious, committed students eager to talk. I was impressed. We discussed settler states, their definition, differences and similarities between them, varieties of colonialism and so on.

I did notice that the young adults I talked to knew a lot about the Balfour declaration and the Nakba, but didn't seem to know much about what happened in-between. The Holocaust, the post-war pogroms in Eastern Europe, the massive displacement of people, the cruel restrictions on Jewish refugees, including to Palestine – none of this figured.

Two weeks later I visited again, laden with doughnuts, brownies and satsumas. The camp was much bigger and more organised, although still restricted to a green pocket of University land – nothing like Columbia. I had brought leaflets advertising Standing Together's public meeting in Bristol, at which its Palestinian and Jewish Israeli leaders are going to speak over Zoom.

The young man who gratefully accepted my food offerings was sheepish about the leaflets. "I'll take a couple," he said, "but I'm afraid you can't distribute them around the camp. We've decided..." It wasn't easy to make out just what they had decided. I said "Shall we sit down over there and talk about it?" We perched on a shaky improvised bench and a couple of other young men squatted near us to join the conversation.

"So doesn't your camp include people with different views? I thought your demand was that the university divest from arms companies, including those with links to Israel, and from research which could benefit them? I'm fully behind you on that."

"Oh, we don't all agree on everything, but we have a bottom line. We will only talk to people who accept that Israel is an imperialist, settler-colonial state", said one of the students. I agreed that Israel is playing an imperialist role in terms of its relationship with the US. Standing Together emphatically does not support that, so why should its leaf-



lets be forbidden? As before, I wanted a few more definitions and a better argument.

"Standing Together supports a two-state solution, and the camp is opposed to that. We support a single state."

I said I could see arguments for a one state solution, but it would depend on the detail. What did they want to do with Jewish Israelis? "Oh, they needn't leave. It would be a secular state, they'd be free to stay." At this point a young Muslim woman joined us, who refused to sit down. "Standing Together are trying to normalise the situation. They are liberal Zionists. We cannot engage with liberal Zionism in any guise". She was obviously a leader, because the young men went quiet and looked to her.

"Wait a minute," I said, "how can opposing the occupation, opposing apartheid and demanding an end to the wholesale destruction of Gaza's infrastructure and killing of its civilians be called 'normalising the situation'? How can people who stand up to the right-wing settlers and put their bodies on the line to defend the aid going to Gaza be so dismissed?"

I showed her the statement by the Palestinian leaders of Standing Together, rebutting the charge of normalisation levelled at them by PACBI and by the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign. She read the first sentence: "As Palestinian citizens of Israel..." The statement goes on to describe the oppression of Palestinians in Israel and the reasons for allying with Israeli Jewish peace activists to find a just and peaceful solution for both peoples.

"I cannot read this," the young woman said, with contempt. "The very framing is Zionist. I will not engage with any form of Zionism."

"So what are they supposed to say? It's simply the truth. Legally they are Israeli citizens, whatever they feel and think about that."

"That they are Palestinians living on

land occupied by the Zionist entity. Please leave the camp."

"Your friends say they want a secular state. Does Hamas want a secular state?"

"I will not discuss Hamas with you."

At this point I began to get annoyed. I raised my voice a little – not much but enough to worry the three young men. "I am not a Zionist. I'm not even a Jew. I have no skin in the game. I am just a human being who wants peace and justice for other human beings."

I was chucked out.

I am now 78 years old. I can remember times in my life as a young activist when I scorned to talk to people who



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disagreed with me on matters of principle. It's a poor way to do politics, since it means you talk only to people who know nothing or those who already agree with you. It's no way to win people over or build alliances. I hope my experience was not representative of the camp. I shall be trying again. □

Student camps are still on

By Michael Baker

Oxford saw a worrying development on 23 May, as a peaceful pro-Palestinian sit-in at the university administration led to the police being called. Videos quickly spread of students being dragged out of the way by cops in order to arrest 16 peaceful protestors.

The university has not commented, but Somerville College (where a subsequent rally was held immediately after) put out a statement apologising for allowing the police onto their campus during the protest, and upholding students' right to demonstrate and exercise their free speech.

Palestinian solidarity camps have continued as the academic year winds down. With exams now largely out of the way, some students are headed home, but others are happy to stay in camps.

A "unite the camps" march in London on 23 May took a small but spirited crowd from UCL to SOAS, LSE and KCL, all of which have active camps

set up. Action linking the camps is important, and where the camps have allowed for democratic discussion of tactics and demands, work to link local groups will expand that discussion and allow for the movement to spread.

In Manchester, students have occupied Whitworth Hall and dropped a 10-metre banner with their demands: cut ties with BAE Systems, cut ties with Tel Aviv and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, end "unethical research", and guarantee no disciplinary action against demonstrators. As with the majority of encampments, the university has not engaged with the demands.

It is unclear how much longer the camps will last. Workers' Liberty activists continue to engage with the camps where we have activists, and argue for "two states", against a cultural and academic boycott, and for support to Israeli and Palestinian workers who are fighting for an end to the war. □



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Yakoob, Galloway, and the “independents”

By Satya Pine

Akhmed Yakoob, who got 20% of the vote across Birmingham as an “independent” in the West Midlands mayoral election, says he will stand against Shabana Mahmood in the Birmingham Ladywood constituency in the general election.

Yakoob came third overall in the mayoral poll, with 12%. Analysis published in the *Birmingham Dispatch* suggests he won four out of ten constituencies in Birmingham.

Yakoob, unlike Jamie Driscoll, who ran as an independent in the North East mayor election but isn’t standing for parliament, had not even the most perfunctory left wing credentials, let alone a group of Labour defectors or a democratic campaign around him.

His main political plank was a commitment “for Gaza”, and that seems to be the main thing that drove his good polling.

But even his views on Gaza are unclear. He is “for Gaza”, but doesn’t say much about a ceasefire. (Labour is for “two states” and now, too late, too apologetically, for a ceasefire, for pausing military exports to Israel). Yakoob says it is a slur to describe him as pro-Hamas, but hasn’t condemned 7 October or called for anything positive more specific than “freeing Palestine”.

Yakoob is a maverick – a lawyer whose primary popularity is from TikTok, who finds himself in the lower circles of the Manosphere, going on podcasts to joke about physically assaulting his wife if she does OnlyFans, and how much he supports Andrew Tate.

After the election, he put up a video with the name and workplace of a local schoolteacher – editing a candid doorbell cam video to make it seem like she used a racial slur whilst she was out door-knocking for the first time. She is now receiving death threats to her school and is experiencing serious distress as a result.

But Yakoob, and some of Birmingham’s left, are counting on his vote holding up. George Galloway’s Workers Party endorsed Yakoob’s mayoral bid, and looks like backing him for Ladywood. This is a mostly working class area with a strong Muslim community, located in the city centre and currently facing an unpopular “regeneration” plan being pushed by the Labour city council. All of that could make fertile ground for lightning to strike twice.

More independents are trying to get in on this, too. Preliminary talks for a new coalition in Birmingham took place



on the weekend of the 11-12 May. This initiative is called [Reliance](#). It presents itself as equidistant from all parties, but involves a mix of ex-Labour people and other campaigners, and has at least one other local candidate, Birmingham University’s Professor Kamel Hawwash, ex-Labour and former chair of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Hawwash is standing against Steve McCabe in Selly Oak.

Mohammed Akunjee (Shamima Begum’s lawyer) and Leanne Mohammed are part of the same loose network and have declared their intentions to run in the London constituencies of Bethnal Green and Bow, and Ilford North. Ex-Labour lefts Pam Fitzpatrick, Sam Gorst, and Emma Dent Coad are standing as “independents” in Harrow West, Garston and Halewood, and Kensington respectively. Further meetings are planned in London (with Andrew Feinstein, standing as an independent in Holborn and St Pancras, and Roger Hallam), Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, and Bristol. They promise a “new model of democracy”, “people’s assemblies” and that “your voice will be heard”.

We shall see. More or less the defining characteristic of an “independent” candidate is that they are accountable only to themselves, and not to any party organisation, however poor and bureaucratised.

In the West Midlands mayoral election, Tory Andy Street was bolstered by a few factors, his incumbent status, being relatively popular personally,

and distancing himself from the government somewhat on issues like HS2 cancellation. He lost narrowly, though with Yakoob’s intervention Labour experienced a 1.8% swing against it, and the right-wing vote didn’t see a dramatic collapse when you factor in Reform UK.

Turnout was surprisingly good, especially once word got out that the result was going to be so close. Unlike previous WMM Mayoral elections, this used First Past the Post, and not a runoff system.

Alum Rock Friends of Palestine set up

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its own no-contest agreement meeting of “pro-Palestine candidates” on Wednesday 22 May – asking for delegates from “groups such as TUSC/ Socialist Party, Workers Party, Reliance Party and supporters of Akhmed Yakoob”, with the endorsement of Stuart Richardson, chair of Stop the War Coalition. More information on that if it comes, but this is clearly not a left wing move, given the inclusion of Galloway’s Workers Party and Yakoob.

These initiatives, along with the various others that have cropped up recently in opposition to Starmer’s leadership (No Ceasefire, No Vote; [Collective](#); [Transform](#); [We Deserve Better](#), etc.) are devoid of a major trade union link. Some of the candidates, like Hawwash, Fitzpatrick, Gorst, and Dent Coad have a reasonable Labour-left background, and all of them project themselves, at least among themselves, as wooing a left-wing electorate, but many lack any real semblance of left – let alone socialist – politics, and there is certainly no collective left or socialist profile. Some of the highest-profile people, like Galloway and Yakoob, push ideas to the right of the Tories.

On some level the candidacies show an appetite for left-of-Labour electoral options, but they cannot really be ranked above the Green Party, which at least is a party and is broadly leftish.

Given the absence of any credible socialist electoral vehicle, we say the most productive move is “vote Labour, but fight for a workers’ government”. □

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The working class as basis for socialism



Socialism vs Capitalism

By Martin Thomas



able degrees, each recognised without question, each with its own pride but also its native respect for its 'betters' and 'superiors', is so old and firmly established that the bourgeois still find it pretty easy to get their bait accepted... Even Tom Mann, whom I regard as the finest of them, is fond of mentioning that he will be lunching with the Lord Mayor...."

Engels was confident that the movement would overcome those divisions. If they have recurred, which of course they do in times of working-class defeat, then the movement can overcome then again. And even now, with the movement in a relatively low period, "respect for its 'betters' and 'superiors'" is surely weaker in the working class than it was in 1889.

In Marx's early writings, the working class is sometimes depicted as revolutionary because it is sunk in pauperism. It "is the complete loss of humanity and hence can win itself only through the complete re-winning of humanity". He soon moved on from such flourishes.

In the Communist Manifesto of 1848, though he still repeated the then-conventional view that wages would not rise above physical subsistence level, he rebuked earlier socialists because "only from the point of view of being the *most suffering* class does the proletariat exist for them". For Marx and his comrades, the working class was important because it is a *creative and competent* class.

Not paupers

In Russia in the run-up to the workers' revolution of 1917, the working class was not the most suffering class at all. The city workers, especially the skilled workers in big factories who were the mainstays of the labour movement, were exploited but markedly better off than the peasants.

There were great mass strikes in Russia in 1905. Even right-wingers in the German socialist movement applauded them. But, they said, German workers should not take the mass strikes as a model. It was understandable that pauperised workers like in Russia should be so fiery. German workers were better-off, so would be more cautious.

Rosa Luxemburg replied: "The layer of the workers in large industries in the great towns... are, as regards the material conditions of life, on a scarcely lower plane than the corresponding layer of the German proletariat... here and there, [on] even higher wages... With paupers no revolution of this political maturity and cleverness of thought can be made, and the industrial workers of St Petersburg and Warsaw, Moscow and Odessa, who stand

in the forefront of the struggle, are culturally and mentally much nearer to the west European type than is imagined..."

Marx later corrected his views in the Communist Manifesto on wages. In *Capital* he showed that more advanced capitalist countries (he then had Britain in mind) generally had higher wages than less-advanced (Germany, then), and simultaneously higher rates of exploitation. He showed that as industrial capitalism had advanced, workers had been able to shorten the working day, a more fundamental gain than most wage rises. In *Wages, Price, and Profit*, written about the same time, he denounced the so-called "iron law of wages" (which said that under capitalism wages could not rise above poverty level) and argued that the "laws" of wages were elastic and dependent on worker organisation and action. In *Theories of Surplus Value* (a draft for the fourth volume of *Capital*, written before volume one was published), Marx wrote: "the workers themselves, although they cannot prevent reductions in (real) wages, will not permit them to be reduced to the absolute minimum; on the contrary, they achieve a certain quantitative participation in the general growth of wealth".

The draft was never finalised, so contains a puzzling apparent contradiction. The obvious explanation is that Marx meant "reduction in wages" in the sense he saw as fundamental, wages as measured by the number of hours of labour-time to produce the equivalent value-added.

Wages have declined as measured by hours, but increased as measured by goods and services, along with "the general growth of wealth".

In 1881, Engels wrote: "The great merit of trade unions, in their struggle to keep up the rate of wages and to reduce working hours, is that they tend to keep up and to raise the standard of life..."

"The law of wages... is not inexorable within certain limits. There is at every time (great depression excepted) for every trade a certain latitude within which the rate of wages may be modified by the results of the struggle between the two contending parties..."

"If the isolated worker tries to drive his bargain with the capitalist they are easily beaten... but if a whole trade of workers form a powerful organisation... and thus become enabled to treat with these employers as a power, then, and only then, have they a chance..."

In 1891, presented with a draft German socialist programme which said: "The number and misery of the proletarians becomes ever larger", Engels objected that there was no iron law of increasing working-class misery even under capitalism. "The organisation of the workers, their continually growing resistance possibly serves to set up a

certain barrier against the growth of poverty".

And that organisation and resistance does more. It generates solidarity and respect for the worst-off and specially oppressed sections of the working class, and self-esteem among them. It generates the human basis for making a new society.

Asking Chinese comrades for a translation of the back-page headline of our paper this week – "solidarity with Chinese workers" – we found that no exact equivalent of the word "solidarity" exists in Chinese.

The word and the concept do not fall from the sky. They come from capitalist society and the working-class and socialist resistance to it. Spun out of an old legal term signifying "in it together", the French word *solidarité* first appeared in the dictionary of the Académie Française in 1798, after the great French revolution of 1789-94 and the sprouting of early socialistic movements within it. The word was translated into English as "solidarity" from about 1829, and joined wide usage from the mid and late 19th century as worker movements solidified.

It reached other languages – solidarietà, Solidarität, solidaridad, solidarność – too. In the USA, from 1909 to 1917, it was the name of the paper of the Industrial Workers of the World, a revolutionary union organising workers from many migrant backgrounds.

China had a tremendous workers' movement in the 1920s, but evidently suppression by the Guomindang and then by the Stalinists came too soon for the word to reach comparable currency there. It will in time. □

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Trump as a rebel



Debate

By Claireen Ryan

Contempt is one of the nasty, self-fooling emotions, a mix of self-love and aggression. It is a feeling to reject, or at least suspect, in yourself. Few human beings are really contemptible.

But Donald Trump, former president of the USA is one of them.

We knew that this very rich man, who inherited his wealth, did not win the popular vote in 2016. Hillary Clinton, his opponent, won by three million votes. Trump became president because he won the Electoral College majority.

Now we have learned, in Trump's criminal case in New York, that to attain even that victory he cheated, using his advantage in money. He was, so to speak, doubly not elected president in 2016.

After a recording got out which showed Trump boasting of and seemingly advocating sexual assault on women, his campaign might have been wrecked entirely by the revelation of his brief affair with a porn actress, Stephanie Clifford, at a time when his wife Melania had recently had their son.

So Trump paid Clifford \$130,000 and became a minority-vote president, thanks to the Electoral College.

What has been revealed by his trials – or rather, emphasised and proved, for it was not unknown to those paying attention – is that Trump has always been a rich confidence trickster, a creation of the media and his father's money.

In 2023 alone his legal bills came to \$51 million. Every year they are enormous.

A combination of money, lawyers, and aggression has allowed Trump to do as he likes, whether legal or illegal, most of his life. He has lawyers working for him full-time. Virtually anything can be delayed and delayed and delayed, if you are rich enough. It is a rich (very rich!) man's strategy, but it works. 90% of the cases never come to court. The US legal system is doing for Trump

what bribery did in the Stephanie Clifford case in 2016.

That single NY case is likely to be the only one of the many criminal trials the facts where the results will be known before the presidential election of 2024, in which he will stand as the candidate of the Republican party.

In 2016 Trump conspired to withhold relevant information from the electorate. Trump lost the democratic election; the Electoral College gave him the presidency.

In 2020, when he lost both the popular vote and the Electoral College, Trump tried to do "illegally" what was done automatically for him in 2016, culminating in what his enemies (and rightly) called an insurrection at the centre of US official politics, the Capitol in Washington DC.

In office and afterwards, Trump acted like a petulant and wilful delinquent determined to have his own way. Some of the things he did made no other sense. Unless he was planning to sell them, taking away secret official documents simply made no sense other than a wayward desire to hang on to the empty symbols of the power he had lost in the election.

He was compelled to call a new presidential election in 2020, and he had lost the popular vote in 2016, but he seems to have thought of himself in power as entitled to be absolute monarch or an absolute dictator. He could not lose the election, and if he did it was proof positive that the election had been rigged.

What he did to the structure and credibility of America's institutions and way of doing things has been clichéd as the bull in the china shop, but it was the fascist (or would-be absolute monarch) who had been accidentally elected to office trying to break everything and anything that stood in his way.

He was motivated, it seems, by sheer egotism, the egotism of the man born to riches who had become accustomed to doing what he liked and had the money for lawyers to keep him from consequences and legal retaliation. Some have given this the psychiatric name of "malignant narcissism".

In office as president, Trump declared the institutions of the USA fraudulent



and "fake". The 2020 election was fake unless he won.

Some 50 local court cases established that there was no electoral fraud in 2020. Trump and his political friends insisted, and still assert, that the courts were dishonest and have been "weaponised".

All news inimical to Trump is "fake news". Honest journalists are "the enemies of the people". The federal government? The FBI? Instruments of the elite against the always hard-done-by poor Donald Trump.

Is Trump guilty of raping – that's what it was – E Jean Carroll, as the hearing in civil court established? Lies! Is he fined in court for illegal business practices? Weaponisation of the law!

The entire Establishment is mobilised against the poor victim, Donald J Trump.

There is a devastating combination of lies and candour. Trump lies all the time, in everything and anything. Always. His lawyers dare not let him give evidence in court because he would lie, as he always does, and thereby make himself liable to charges of perjury. But he lies freely out of court. Lies and lies.

Someone kept score, and in office he lied over 30,000 times.

Candour? He has candidly said that he will, if elected, be a dictator. He is campaigning for office as a man who will in office be a dictator. The Republican Party will be fielding a candidate for president who says that if he is elected he will end American bourgeois democracy, and he will not accept defeat.

He has threatened and promised to deport eleven million people. He has promised to model himself on Vladimir Putin or Viktor Orban.

It is astonishing that Trump is again standing for president. By law he shouldn't. A law was passed after the Civil War (1861-5) to stop former rebels standing for election. Plainly it applies to Trump. But when Colorado attempted to use it to disqualify Trump from the Republican primary ballot in the state, the Supreme Court ruled for letting Trump stand.

Even more astonishing, though, is the fact that, apart from the civil action of E Jean Carroll, Trump has so far avoided a hearing and completion of all of the

many criminal cases against him, except one.

Delay, delay, delay, that very rich man's option, has so far worked for the rich ex-president.

Trump has been out of power for three and a half years. But Trumpites across the USA have been in power and active. They have passed state laws aimed to stop Black people voting. They responded to Fani Willis's "gangster" indictment against Trump in Georgia by a personal attack on Willis that has all but engulfed her and so far stopped the trial. And they control the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court is co-equal with the presidency and Congress. More: it has the last word. Three of its judges for life were appointed by Trump, three by the two Bushes. The court has already abolished Roe v Wade, the federal abortion-rights ruling. It has been responsive to Trump's wishes and slowed things down.

The court has also been shown to be vastly venal and corrupt. Clarence Thomas has received a great amount of money and equivalents from a multi-millionaire. There is no obligation on him to disclose that publicly, and no obligation on him to cease and desist.

His wife is a militant Trumpite, who was one of those at the Capitol on 6 January 2021.

Samuel Alito flew flags for the insurgent Trumpites. Neither recused themselves from the court when the insurrection or Trump were being discussed.

The Supreme Court is an element of absolute monarchy in the USA, and maybe it is appropriate that it sides with the monarchy-delusional ex-president Donald Trump.

But the whole thing is a mess, and it is anything but democracy, even on the level of the pluto-democracy that the US claims.

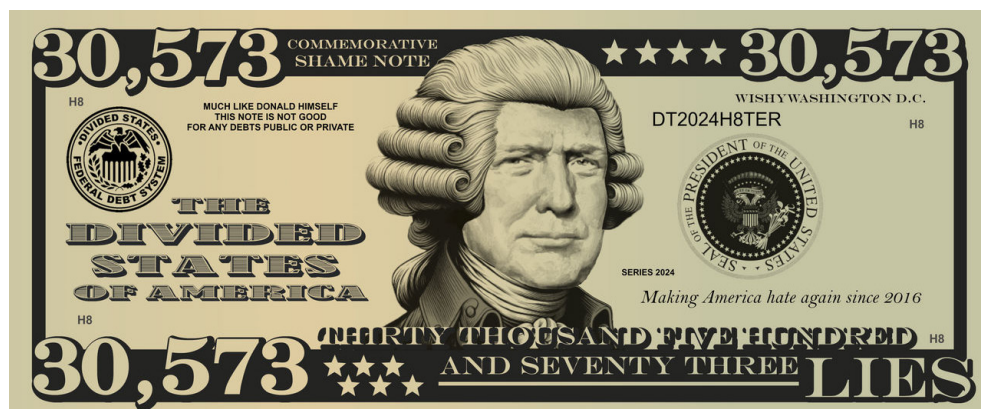
The Trumpite Republicans have been on the offensive for the last four, or eight, years. The Democrats have been, in many areas, in retreat. The prosecutions have been ridiculously late, and almost all of them will not be heard before the election. That is, the electorate will not before the 2024 election be given the information to which they are entitled before they vote.

Donald Trump has been given immense privilege. Astonishing privilege, considering what he tried to do.

Trump takes as his legal model the late Roy Cohn, a lawyer colleague of Joe McCarthy – the Joe McCarthy, anti-red witch-hunter and accomplished liar. Do anything. Say anything. Be as aggressive as money can be.

Nothing that the law can be bent to

continued on page 11 →



Ulyanov and Russian Marxists' "second generation"

The road to Bolshevism

Thirteenth in a series of articles around the 100th anniversary of the death of Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin).

By Sean Matgamna

It is the year 1887, and Russia is in the grip of the police terror that has quelled all political life since 1881. In that year the revolutionary populist movement Narodnaya Volya (People's Will) killed Alexander II, the "Tsar-Liberator", the Tsar who abolished serfdom in 1861.

The silence of the graveyard at midnight reigns over Russian life and Russian politics. Narodnaya Volya itself has been more or less destroyed by the royalist terror.

But still there are stirrings, and there is a tradition of Narodism (revolutionary populism) and of terrorism, whose deeds can be done by a small group of

people, or one person alone.

Alexander Ulyanov is the eldest son of an inspector of schools, a man of the petty nobility. He is hanged by the Russian government for plotting with others to kill Tsar Alexander III, the son of the Tsar NV had killed in 1881.

Five NV militants were publicly hanged in St Petersburg for the killing of the Tsar in 1881.

In 1887, Alexander Ulyanov is 21. His brother Vladimir Ilyich is 17. [1]

The older brother had, for safety, not talked politics with Vladimir. Vladimir knew nothing of the plot to kill the Tsar.

Nevertheless, Vladimir, as the brother of the would-be regicide, is now a marked man to the authorities. In December 1887 they expel him from Kazan University after a small student protest.

He will be one of two men – the other is Yakov Sverdlov – who, 31 years in the future, will order the killing of Tsar Nicholas II, his wife, and all his living children. The Royal Family must not be a rallying point for those in arms against the workers' government set up in 1917.

The Tsar and his family fell victim to the laws of dynastic succession. But it was also revenge of a sort for Alexander Ulyanov.

The heavy Tsarist repression lay over Russian society all through the 1880s, while capitalism grew and expanded, and with it the working class. Then nature intervened in Russian society. In 1891 famine struck in parts of Russia, and many people starved.

The Tsarist state could not handle it. It appealed to the people of the towns to go and help rural Russia, and the peasants desperately wanted the food and medical care that the townspeople brought them. There was a powerful mass movement to go from the towns to the countryside to help. It was like the mass movement of young Narodniks to the peasants and the countryside in the 1870s, except that it was on a much bigger scale.

Russian society loosened. People began to think about society again, made comparisons, began to think about politics again. With the famine, Russian society began to move and think about itself again.

The "natural" opposition politics, the traditional politics, were Narodnik (populist). NV had been smashed by the decade of terrible repression and reaction that had followed their killing



Alexander Ulyanov

of the Tsar in 1881.

In the Tsar, they had killing the leading official, and the result was not at all what they had intended. That brought them some discredit.

But their slogans – "constitutional government", "a constituent assembly" – were still the political lowest common denominator, the "natural" opposition politics of Russia's situation and condition. They had much passive support.

Politically, the most important thing that had happened since 1881 was the development of the working class and of Russian Marxism counterposed to both socialist and liberal versions of the Narodnik perspectives for the betterment of the Russian people,

In June 1879 Georgi Plekhanov had founded Chornyi Peredel (Black Redistribution) from the minority at the Voronezh congress of the old populist movement Zemlya i Volya. The majority formed NV. Black Redistribution supported NV in its campaign against Tsarism. The pioneer of terrorism (which for Russian revolutionaries then meant killing of top officials to disrupt the state, not as now killing of civilians), Vera Zasulich, was a member of Black

Redistribution and was in contact with Karl Marx (who died in March 1883).

So were Pavel Axelrod and Lev Deutsch, also members of Plekhanov's group. But Plekhanov was the thinker and the political powerhouse.

Beginning in 1879 as Bakuninist Narodniks whose main objection to NV was not its terrorism but its turn to politics by raising the call for a Constituent Assembly, Plekhanov and the others travelled across politics to consistent Marxism.

Black Redistribution was stillborn. Its successor, the Emancipation of Labour Group (1883), laid the political foundations of Russia's labour movement.

The Emancipation of Labour group, which had been isolated in exile in Switzerland, was also roused to new life by the famine and the response to it. Plekhanov wrote a manifesto on *The Tasks of the Social Democrats in the Famine*. It was the beginning and the basis of a Marxist movement in Russia.

Utopian socialism, wrote Plekhanov, was about a "brilliant teacher" discovering "a whole series of truths, whose existence mankind had not previously suspected. On the basis of these discoveries he worked out a detailed plan of the new social order which alone can save man from his countless moral and material misfortunes".

But now "socialists with [a] new outlook [saw in the future] above all class struggle, the struggle of the exploited with the exploiters, the proletariat with the bourgeoisie..."

So "for the followers of [Marxist] scientific socialism the whole future history of bourgeois society resolves itself in the struggle of the proletariat with the bourgeoisie, all their practical tasks are prompted by precisely this class struggle.

"Standing resolutely on the side of the proletariat, the new Socialists do everything in their power to facilitate

continued on page 12 →

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is ruled out.

The Republicans have shown themselves eager to exercise minority control and to back Trump. Trump's rule in the Republican party is rule by physical force and the credible threat to use it.

The Republicans are on the offensive. The Democrats at best resort to selective defence, as with Black Lives Matter and abortion rights.

Trump and his friends criticise by their words and antics and attitudes the institutions of the American plutocracy. They criticise American foreign policy.

So does the left. The different is that the left usually offers constructive positive alternatives. What Trump and his friends do, and want to do, is replace what exists with worse.

When people prefer "democracy", mostly it is in fact liberty that they think of – the absence, much of the time, of tyranny. The Trumpists advocate tyranny – theirs.

When we point out (and use Trump as an example), that in the rules of bourgeois law often money determines what happens, we want the rule of better law and no advantage for money. The Trumpist core want their own arbitrary rule, where money is everything. They want rule that discriminates against Black people and women. They are revolutionaries of the right. They are fascists. □

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and hasten its victory. But what exactly can they do in this case?

"A necessary condition for the victory of the proletariat is its recognition of its own position, its relations with its exploiters, its historic role and its socio-political tasks.

"For this reason the new Socialists consider it their principal, perhaps even their only, duty to promote the growth of this consciousness among the proletariat, which for short they call its class consciousness.

"The whole success of the socialist movement is measured for them in terms of the growth in the class consciousness of the proletariat. Everything that helps this growth they see as useful to their cause: everything that slows it down as harmful...

"Without workers who are conscious of their class interests there can be no socialism..."

"Agitation is also propaganda, but propaganda that takes place in particular circumstances, that is in circumstances in which even those who would not normally pay any attention are forced to listen to the propagandist's words. Propaganda is agitation that is conducted in the normal everyday course of the life of a particular country.

"Agitation is propaganda occasioned by events that are not entirely ordinary and that provoke a certain upsurge in the public mood. Socialists would be very bad politicians if they were not to use such notable events for their own ends".

In the years after 1891, capitalism and the working class continued to grow. Social Democratic groups and leagues, fully Marxist, spread across Russia's cities. They issued leaflets and bulletins to workers in their workplaces.

In 1895 Vladimir Ulyanov was one of the founders of the St Petersburg St. Petersburg League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class. Julius Martov was also a member. Here is an excerpt from a leaflet which Ulyanov wrote.

"The weavers, by their solid resistance to the employer's pressure, have proved that at a difficult moment there are still people in our midst who can



The 1st Congress of the RSDLP was held in this house in Minsk

uphold our common interests as workers, that our worthy employers have not yet succeeded in turning us for all time into the miserable slaves of their bottomless purses.

"Let us, then, comrades, stand firm and steadfast and carry on to the very end, let us remember that we can improve our conditions only by our common and concerted efforts..."

"The employers, who are so full of concern for the workers' well-being, want to quietly and steadily impose on the workers of all departments what they have already imposed on the weavers.

"That is why, if we all remain indifferent to the fate of the weaving sheds, we shall dig with our own hands a pit into which we, too, shall soon be thrown..."

"Let us put forward our common demands, and on every suitable occasion let us wrest better conditions from our oppressors...."

"Comrades, don't be blind, don't swallow the employers' bait, stand up for one another more firmly. Otherwise it will go badly for all of us this winter..."

That was typical of the many Marxist leaflets issued locally all over the Russian Empire, which then included Poland, Ukraine, Finland, and the Baltic states.

The work of the Marxist circles was broadened considerably, reaching new layers of workers with simplified Marxist explanations, following an 1894 pamphlet *On Agitation* by Arkadi Kremer, with a foreword by Julius Martov.

Everything the circles did was, of course, illegal. Jewish people, Marxist or not, could generally live legally only in the "Jewish Pale of Settlement" (an area covering modern-day Belarus and Moldova, much of Lithuania, Ukraine and east-central Poland). Jews responded disproportionately to the Social Democrats.

A wave of pogroms had begun in 1881, and since then a lot of Jews had moved to the countries to the west of Russia, and all the way to America.

The "Old Believers", a Russian Ortho-

dox religious sect, were also responsive to Social Democratic agitation. But the Russian working class in general was greatly responsive by the 1890s.

Martov and Ulyanov were arrested and sent to jail and exile for their part in the St Petersburg League. That was the pattern: militants were active for a few months, then in jail, and then exiled to the remoter parts of the Empire for years, sometimes for many years.

Then a strange thing happened.

To the Tsarist authorities, whose drive for police rule was limited only by the technical resources of the authorities, the Narodniks were far worse than the Marxists. They believed on principle on killing top officials, and it only needed a small group to conspire and act, as Alexander Ulyanov and his comrades had in 1887, in the depths of the repression.

Although Marxist anti-capitalist literature had nourished socialist ideas among the Narodniks, the Marxists did not think that the way forward was through the killing of the Tsar or other top officials. The Marxists emphasised the evolution of a workers' movement, nourished by capitalism, and revolution in the future. The Marxists were political opponents of the Narodniks, the Tsar-killers.

For a while a Marxist literature advocating, or seeming to advocate, capitalist development was allowed by the authorities. Great tomes like Tugan-Baranovsky's *The Russian Factory in Past and Present* were legal. So was *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* (1899), written by Ulyanov in exile and published under the name "Ilyin".

As Trotsky put it, the "Legal Marxists" cut the "umbilical cord" binding a large part of the Russian intelligentsia to revolutionary Narodism and socialism. They became liberals; they came to love capitalism and its progressive role for Russia.

In Russia there were Marxist circles and groups, but no Marxist party. To the west of Russia, in Germany, the Marxist party had survived over 11 years of illegality (1878-90). It was thriving, grow-

ing by leaps and bounds electorally and in membership. It was the model party of the Socialist International.

A first Russian Marxist conference was held in Minsk on 13-15 March 1898. Peter Struve was the main mover, and a manifesto declared:

"The further east one goes in Europe, the meaner, more cowardly and politically weak the bourgeoisie becomes, and the great are the cultural and political tasks that fall to the proletariat. On its own sturdy shoulders the Russian working class must, and will, carry the cause of the achievement of political liberty..."

"Social Democracy is pursuing the goal clearly proclaimed by the still glorious activists of the old Narodnaya Volya. But the methods and the paths chosen by Social Democracy are different. The choice is determined by the fact that it consciously desires to be, and to remain, the class movement of the organised working class. It is firmly convinced that 'the emancipation of the working class can proceed only from its own efforts'..."

That party congress was badly attended, not much more than a token. In terms of organising a party, not much more than a declaration. Above all, it was inside the autocratic Russian state. Most of those who attended were arrested soon after. The leaders of the congress soon drifted away from Marxism. None of them were prominent subsequently. Peter Struve became a liberal; by his death in 1944, he thought Nazism better than Stalinism, which he identified with Ulyanov.

Trotsky later summed it up: "The first generation of the Russian Social Democracy, headed by Plekhanov, started its critical and propagandistic activity at the beginning of the 1880s. The pioneers were counted singly; later, by tens. The second generation, which Lenin led – he was 14 years younger than Plekhanov – entered the political arena at the beginning of the 90s. The third generation, composed of people some ten years younger than Lenin... which was already numbered by thousands [included] Stalin, Rykov, Zinoviev, Kamenev [and Trotsky]".

After the nominal start of the first Congress in 1898, a Russian Social Democratic party had to be built. How? By whom?

When Ulyanov's term in exile had ended, and in 1900 he and his partner Nadezhda Krupskaya moved to Western Europe. A new chapter began. □

[1] "Lenin" is primarily now a cult name. In his lifetime Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov used N Lenin or Nikolai Lenin as pen-names, and the two names were later blended sometimes to produce Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. In the early 1920s he was still sometimes called Ulyanov – in the paper of the US Communist Party, for example, and in the British Communist Party magazine *Labour Monthly*, edited by R Palme Dutt. To me it seems desirable to separate Ulyanov from "Lenin".

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Left gains at PCS conference



By a PCS member

The Coalition for Change followed up on its sweeping gains in the PCS civil service union's National Executive (NEC elections) by repeatedly defeating the outgoing Left Unity (LU) NEC at PCS's annual conference (21-23 May) and setting the agenda on key issues.

In the NEC vote, the Coalition for Change secured 19 seats and reduced the long-ruling LU from 31 to 16 seats.

Confidence in the LU leadership has been draining since they sabotaged the 2022/23 civil service pay dispute in June 2023. It was further damaged shortly before conference by the 2024/25 disaggregated strike ballot results.

PCS met the anti-union legal requirement for a 50% membership ballot turnout in 62 civil service "bargaining units" (BU), covering 19,160 members, but failed to do so in 109 other BU, covering 127,800 members. These results have seriously undermined LU's aim of "influencing" the Tories' pay policy but reflect its gross mishandling of our pay demands.

Conference rejected the outgoing LU NEC's pay "strategy", a recipe for inertia, and instead instructed the incoming NEC to develop a plan for sustained targeted action in those BU that met the 50% legal threshold and to reballot those that did not.

The pay situation facing the incoming NEC is very challenging indeed. But the need for the NEC to try to apply effective leverage to the Government remains pressing given 16 years of collapsing pay.

In another major defeat for LU, Conference threw out the LU NEC's or-

ganising strategy, which offered its perennial, unambitious, approach to recruitment despite PCS's declining, historically low, membership density (proportion of members to non members). The Independent Left's (IL) motion to radically reorientate PCS to an "organising culture" was not debated, but it should be immediately acted upon by the incoming NEC.

PCS adopted no political position for the general election. The LU NEC's motion was not debated but it essentially said that there was not much to choose between the Tories and Labour, and that PCS should not advocate for any political party or individual candidates.

In this policy vacuum, the range of views amongst incoming NEC members might render difficult an agreement on PCS's approach to the election. But PCS must be an active participant in the debates about the big political and campaigning choices confronting workers and the labour movement.

On the initiative of IL, Conference instructed the incoming NEC to demand the Labour Party act on its commitments to enhanced worker and union rights and to seek their agreed application to the civil service. Although PCS should have placed such demands on the Labour leadership long before now, they remain timely: HMRC has recently, disgracefully, sacked representatives at Benton Park View and may sack more. PCS should demand that a Labour Government reinstates them.

The challenges and obstacles facing activists who want to transform PCS are substantial. For example, LU supporters hold the posts of national president and General Secretary and control the union's departmental executive in the large Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). But LU's stranglehold has been broken. The mood for change within PCS is real. The Coalition for Change conference meeting was excellently attended and buoyant. □



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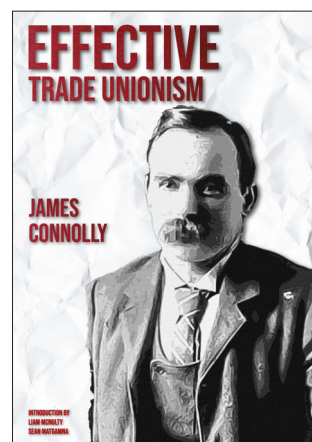
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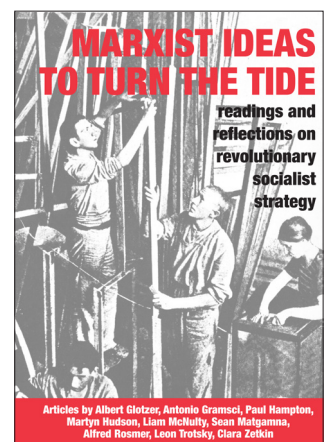
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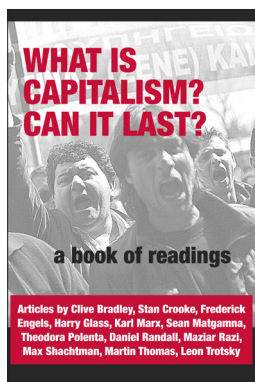
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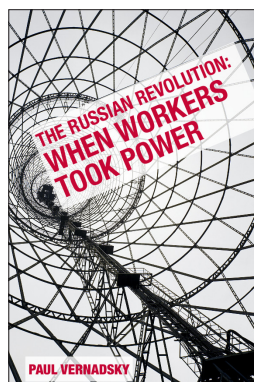
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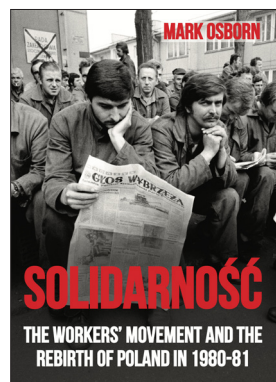
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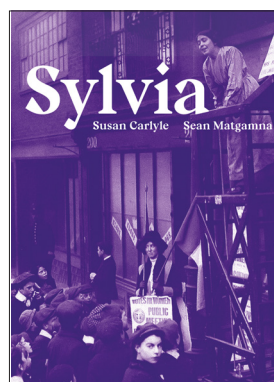
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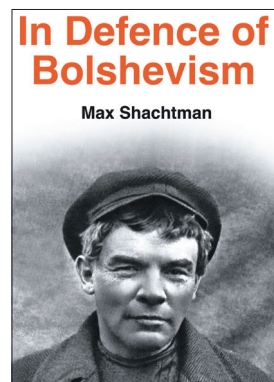
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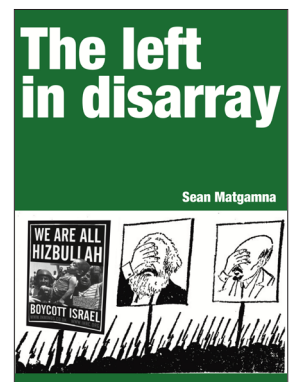
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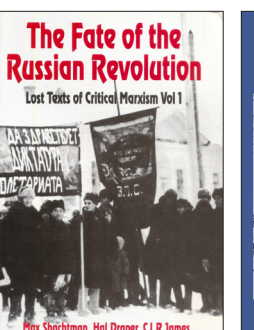
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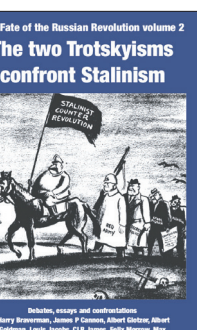
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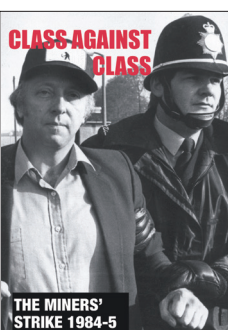
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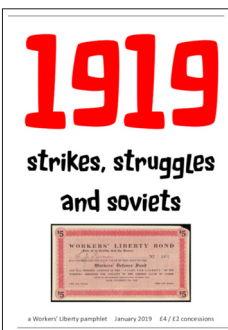
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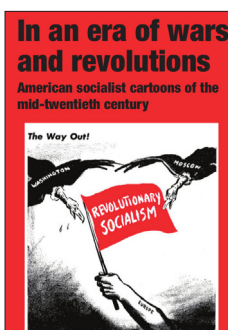
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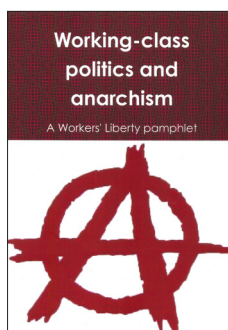
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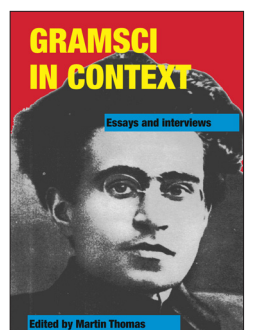
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Review, bulletins, and boycotts



Diary of a railworker

By Steve Allan

It's time for my annual performance review. My line manager sits me down to discuss my hopes and dreams for the next twelve months. They don't involve hitting "mystery shopper" targets, but I just go with the flow.

At the end I'm asked if I have any personal objectives. Feeling cheeky I suggest starting a workplace bulletin. "Great idea!" she says, although I imagine my concept is quite different to hers. So I now have management approval to spread propaganda through

the workplace. I'd better get some articles together.

I'm having a chat with K in the control room. I wonder if he's seen the new Taylor Swift concert film. "Urgh, I'm not giving any money to Disney, not while they keep supporting Israel." I challenge him on this. How is boycotting a western company going to help the Palestinians? It turns out this is a common view across the station. Both Coca Cola and M&S are also being avoided.

The war in Gaza is quite a sensitive topic at work, especially with the large proportion of Muslim staff. I'll question anything that slips into conspiracy theories, but there is genuine disgust at the treatment of innocent civilians. □

• Steve Allan works on the Elizabeth Line in London

Aslef backs Standing Together



By an Aslef member

The conference, on 20-24 May, of the train drivers' union Aslef voted to back the Palestinian-Jewish social and anti-war movement Standing Together.

The union will "invite a speaker from Standing Together to address a future conference... seek to amplify other socialist, working-class and labour-movement voices in Israel/Palestine promoting a politics of equal rights and coexistence".

The decision came after some debate. Palestine Solidarity Campaign director Ben Jamal had got much applause as an invited speaker at the conference, and when asked about Standing Together he advised the union not to "engage with" it because (he claimed) it advocates coexistence without addressing the root issues. (In fact, Standing Together campaigns for equal rights, including to self-determination.) He referred to the [call](#) from the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel to shun Standing Together.

The move to back Standing Together was at first "noted" (as per standard Aslef conference procedure for doubtful proposals) then, after debate, "adopted" into a motion which the conference passed without demur.

Another big political debate at the conference was about the Labour Party. The majority of the Executive wants Aslef to disaffiliate from the Labour

Party. The lead speaker for that view was Andy Hudd, Aslef vice-president and deputy leader of George Gallo-way's "Workers Party". Others backing it include people previously active in Labour but who left following the removal of the whip from Jeremy Corbyn.

After debate, the delegates voted 74 to six (with five abstentions) for a motion to reject a proposed rule change that would disaffiliate the union from Labour. We previously voted by a similar margin in favour of a motion dealing with other agenda items on the Labour Party, including rejection of an item instructing the Executive to conduct a referendum of members on whether to remain affiliated.

The union's ultra-long-running on-off dispute with the Train Operating Companies over 2022-3 pay rumbles on in the background, but there was no decisive debate on it. §

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The worst "McCarthyite film" ever?



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

The title of Robert Stephens' 1949 film *I Married a Communist* was changed to *The Woman on Pier 13* after poor box office figures in its first weeks after release. Hardly surprising. Even the most ardent McCarthyites found it difficult to stomach.

Robert Ryan plays Brad Collins, an up-and-coming executive with a shipping company in San Francisco. While living in New Jersey he was, for a time, a member of the American Communist Party. He left, went west and quickly asserted himself as "Mr Goody-Two-Shoes" by marrying the boss's daughter. But his past catches up with him.

He is blackmailed by the local Party, in the person of Vanning, head of the Longshoreman's union (ILWU), suggesting the real ILWU leader Harry Bridges, who forces him to co-operate with the Party's plan to "introduce unrest" on the San Francisco waterfront.

Unsurprisingly, it all ends badly: the Party's plans fail, and Collins dies at the end of the film. Tom Milne, writing in the *Time Out Film Guide* for 2009, derided the film for its "cartoon characters, a fatuous script that defies belief and an enveloping sense of hysteria". Utter dross – but good for a laugh. □

• To watch online: vimeo.com/358123327



Reinstate Nigerian students in Teesside!

By Sam Myerson

Since the devaluations of the Nigerian currency, the naira, in the last year, and the rampant inflation there, currently sitting at around 30%, Nigerian international students have been facing acute financial difficulty.

Teesside University has withdrawn visa sponsorship from Nigerian students who had fallen behind on their tuition fee payments, and the students have then been told they will have to leave the UK. The Home Office has told the students that they have no right of appeal, and that the decision to withdraw support was entirely the university's.

Some students have since made up the default in fees. However, that does not resolve the status issue, and they are unable to re-enrol, though some were on the cusp of finishing their studies.

So far there has been no public response from the National Union of Students (either the outgoing or the incoming elected officers), from Teesside University Student Union, or from the recently elected Labour Students leadership.

Universities in the UK rely heavily on exorbitant fees for international students. Fees average £22k, and can be anything between £11k and £38k a year. International students are ineligible for any financial support, exempt from hardship funds and are prevented from working more than 16 hours per week. This creates a situation where they are not only exploited by the institutions, but are also at risk of exploitation by unscrupulous employers too.

Education should be free for all. International student fees in Europe are much lower than in Britain except at some private universities. There should be parity. When fees are abolished for home students, then they should be for international students too. □



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Tata: delay is dangerous

By Matt Dunn

The Unite and Community unions have both announced successful ballots for action to save thousands of jobs at Tata's Port Talbot and Llanwern plants. The GMB, who represent a much smaller group of workers at Tata, have had their ballot challenged by Tata and have not been able to announce a result.

Tata have used the anti-union laws to attack all unions' ballots. This is in line with their general approach, which is bullishly anti-worker – shut down the blast furnaces, scrap jobs, turn their South Wales operation into a relatively small-scale recycling facility, and demand a huge public subsidy for doing so. This is at the same time as they are investing in capacity in the Netherlands and India.

But Tata can also play smart. Management have upped their redundancy offer. As long as you don't strike, they'll



wave a big cheque at you.

Union reps and officials have been trying to coordinate action, but this is turning into a dangerous delay. As management offer bigger carrots with

one hand and wave a bigger stick with the other, and as some officials plea for waiting for a Labour general election victory, militancy drains.

Labour has promised significant money to save steel in Wales but it is not enough to really transition the steel industry to new, green production whilst protecting jobs and communities. Workers' action is needed to make this happen.

For a real, worker-led just transition, we need a massive commitment to public ownership and investment in new technologies, paid for by taxing the rich and curbing the powers of big business. We also need a huge extension of democracy to make the workers' voice central to the process. □

UCU will debate Ukraine and Gaza



By a UCU member

The college lecturers' union UCU meets on 29-31 May against a background of [acute cuts](#) in higher education (HE) and continuing [underfunding](#) of further education (FE).

On 17 May a UCU special HE sector conference discussed job cuts – over sixty unis are affected. At Sheffield Hallam, where the UCU branch has recently voted to take industrial action, 400 job cuts are threatened.

That conference resolved to build up organisational infrastructure, to run political campaigns for free education and the abolition of tuition fees, and to defend creative arts, modern languages, arts and humanities.

Many motions pointed to the need for an industrial strategy, but only Brighton UCU's motion gave a clear programme: a return to UK-wide action next year, and effective linking up of branches in dispute to deliver maximum solidarity.

A motion which would have committed to a multi-year industrial strategy based on union-wide consultation (i.e. the unambitious organising model of the leadership around Jo Grady which derailed effective action in the last two years) was defeated.

Motions to the main conference reprise these themes and more, including encouraging "dual carding" with Unison, EIS and other HE unions – a step towards necessary industrial un-



ionism in the sector?

However, those motions won't be heard, as sector conferences will be stopped by a strike by the UCU's staff union branch of Unite. Unite are striking over race discrimination in internal procedures; in the background is the shameful systemic undermining of collective agreements.

A comprehensive [motion](#) of solidarity with Ukrainian self-determination will be heard. If passed it will clarify the union's policy. Last year, a similar solidarity motion and a contradictory one from Stop the War, which effectively called for the disarming of Ukrainians, was passed.

There are several solidarity motions on Gaza – a mixed bag. A motion arguing for building academic links with Palestinian universities and academics is better than a blanket academic boycott line. Others, rightly, defend freedom of speech for Palestinian-solidarity activism.

But another from Tower Hamlets College is both proscriptive and bad, if at least more honest. It recommit UCU to both BDS ("boycott, divestment, and sanctions") and a one-state solution to the conflict in Israel-Palestine. □

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Let Gaza live! Two states! Equal rights!

• Free hostages • End war

By Ira Berkovic

On 22 May, Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant repealed a military order banning Jewish Israelis from entering an area of the northern West Bank, part of the occupied Palestinian territories, they had been prevented from accessing since 2005.

The area was evacuated, with several Jewish settlements being demolished, at the same time as Israel dismantled its settlements in Gaza, and a law forbidding settlement construction there was passed. The Knesset, the Israeli parliament, repealed that law last year, but the military order preventing access remained in place until Gallant's announcement.

The measure is part of a tightening of Israeli control over the West Bank, its occupation of which is perhaps the most classically "colonial" element of its national oppression of the Palestinian people. Settler violence, already rising before 7 October, has spiked since, with armed settler gangs often ignored or directly protected by Israeli security forces. Military raids have also increased.

In a further act of colonial bullying, far-right Israeli finance minister Bezalel Smotrich has said he will not renew a waiver required for Israeli banks to maintain financial links with their Palestinian counterparts. The waiver, which is due to expire on 1 July, is economically vital for the West Bank, as the West Bank's economy formally runs on Israeli shekels, and links with Israeli banks are needed to ensure the availability of public funds. If the waiver was cancelled, and Israeli banks legally prohibited from interacting with Palestinian financial institutions, services such as water and electricity, food imports, and salaries for Palestinian public employees would all be affected. Smotrich has also indicated he plans to freeze the transfer of tax revenues Israel collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority, the governmental institution which exercises some semi-autonomy in limited areas of the West Bank.

The political statement published on the inauguration of the current Israeli government asserted an exclusive Jewish right to sovereignty over the entire territory between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. Where some previous Israeli leaders might publicly profess

acceptance in principle of the right of Palestinians to a state, whilst lamenting that the lack of any "partner for peace" meant that, sadly, Israel would have to maintain its occupation for now, Netanyahu states publicly that preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state is a key political goal. The actions of his government, including both its subjugation of the West Bank and its devastating assault on Gaza, must be seen in the context of this openly-declared project to permanently suppress the Palestinians' right to national self-determination.

Against this backdrop, the decision of three more states – Ireland, Norway, and Spain – to formally recognise the State of Palestine is an important symbolic step. Ending the current war on Gaza is, of course, necessary to halt the immediate slaughter. But pressure on Israel, both internal and external, will be most effective if it is pressure around a postwar settlement too – that is, in support of a cohesive political programme for levelling up rights between Israelis and Palestinians, starting with the establishment of a genuinely independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Socialist activists in any country whose government has not formally recognised the State of Palestine must make that demand prominent in their domestic agitation. Labour-affiliated trade unions, which have vocally opposed Israel's war, must use their links with Labour to demand that a prospective Labour government recognises the State of Palestine.

The radical left and the mainstream Palestine solidarity movement has largely welcomed widening diplomatic recognition of a Palestinian state, even though it jars with much of its dominant political narratives. Realising Palestinian self-determination within a two-states framework is seen by many on the left as an unacceptable compromise with Israel, which is viewed as a wholly illegitimate implantation of western imperialism. But the State of Palestine as a diplomatic entity is hegemonised by the Fatah-led Palestine Liberation Organisation which, informally since the late 1980s and formally since the early 1990s, has pursued a "two-states" policy. The Palestinian state now recognised by 143 other states globally is a state based on the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem – that is, a Palestinian state alongside



Standing Together's Humanitarian Guard

an Israel in 1967 borders.

The establishment of such a state would not represent the realisation of full equality between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. For that, the character of Israeli society would need to change too, to ensure full civil equality for its Palestinian minority. And a system of aid would need to be established to ensure any Palestinian state was viable, and had equal rights to resource access with Israel. A settlement, including both repatriation for some and reparations for others, would need to be reached to ensure redress for descendants of Palestinian refugees from the Nakba. But ending Israel's suppression of the Palestinian people's right to national self-determination, the basic injustice at the heart of the Israel-Palestine conflict, by establishing a genuinely independent Palestinian state is a necessary first step in any move towards equality.

Israel's war on Gaza has now killed over 35,000 people, and injured at least 80,000. Over 14,000 of the dead are children. Much of Gaza has been reduced to an uninhabitable wasteland. Basic necessities are scarce, health and sanitation systems have collapsed. Many thousands more could still die as a result of famine and health crises. Whenever the war does end, its survivors, many of whom also lived through one or several previous Israeli assaults, will be left with severe mental trauma. The levels of aid provision reaching Gaza are still radically below the quantities required to avert famine and other mounting crises. An immediate ceasefire is required not only to halt the slaughter, but to provide some respite in which safe supplies of aid can be dramatically increased.

The question of aid provision has become a political flashpoint inside Israeli society, with far-right settlers mobilising to attack aid convoys and destroy their supplies. A recent report in the *Guardian* newspaper showed clear evidence that the settlers were being tipped off about when aid convoys would be travelling through particular checkpoints by contacts inside the military and the police.

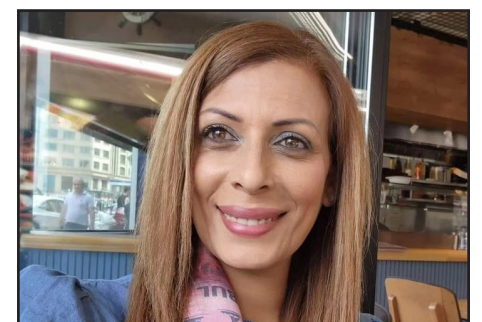
In response, Standing Together, the left-wing Arab-Jewish social movement, has mounted a "Humanitarian Guard", mobilising Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel to travel to checkpoints and confront settlers. In its first week of operation, the Humanitarian Guard succeeded both in driving off settlers and in shaming the police into confronting others. Where settlers were successful in attacking trucks, Humanitarian Guard volunteers were able to salvage some of the supplies and load them back onto subsequent convoys.

Nasser Odat, a Palestinian activist in Standing Together, told the BBC: "I feel very empowered. All these seven, eight months of war, and killing of Gazans, now finally I have something to do to help these people that are starving." Standing Together is appealing for donations to support the Humanitarian Guard: bit.ly/st-hum □

• More online: after ICC and ICJ moves, and "free Marwan Barghouti": bit.ly/m-barg

Defend Sabreen Msarwi!

Sabreen Msarwi is a Palestinian secondary-school teacher and a leader of Standing Together. She is currently being victimised and threatened with dismissal from her job after she attended a march commemorating Nakba Day on 15 May. Education workers active in UK Friends of Standing Together have launched an "Education Workers for Standing Together" network, initially to coordinate solidarity campaigning in defence of Sabreen. More: bit.ly/msarwi □





Solidarity

For a workers' government

SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS IN CHINA 与中国工人团结 一起反抗中共

By Sara Lee

In the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels described overproduction under capitalism as a prevailing cause of misery. This is true for China today.

The housing market in China is massive, compared to other countries and in proportion to its own GDP. But property sales are plummeting, and according to Bloomberg, "China's real estate developers have debt worth 12% of the nation's GDP at risk of default".

Overproduction is a problem under capitalism because of an inability to accurately predict demand. Why then is it a problem in a state where there is supposedly central planning?

The central planning in China isn't completely "central". There is tension between the bureaucracy at the centre and the bureaucracies in the provinces. Local governments have accumulated enormous debt from grandiose public projects.

Writer Au Loong Yu describes a cycle where a lack of resources in local areas pushes the central government to devolve power, investment at the



local level leads to over investment on the whole, which in turn compels the central government to retake control.

Au writes that the capitalist impulse to accumulate is made worse in China by the impulse of government bureaucrats to enrich themselves. Local governments receive revenue from the sale of land. Officials receive commission and/or a cut of the profits from developers. And they too want to buy houses.

In the meantime there are ghost towns. Simultaneously people are losing their homes due to land being sold to developers. Such land grabs were the cause of demonstrations in Wukan in 2016.

Youth unemployment was more than 20% last year. There is no doubt that dimming economic prospects emboldened young people to take to the streets in the A4 movement

in 2022, a movement that coincided with big uprisings by workers. The A4 Movement was arguably bigger and more generalised than Tiananmen Square in 1989. Most importantly, it was a movement that won against the central government.

It isn't a question of if there will be an economic crisis in China, it is a question of when. The same is true of workers fighting back. The job of socialists is to support workers in China against the self-enriching CCP bureaucracy, against the capitalist real estate developers, and against the big international investment banks that finance them.

We want the young people who led the A4 movement to merge their struggle with the workers, and continue to build a collective memory of when workers and students fought back against the CCP. □