

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

SOCIALISE ENERGY

» **Green conversion**
» **Green jobs**

Labour's green plan is weak. Demand more.

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For Labour, against Starmer

We analyse the
Labour manifesto.

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Pay the junior doctors

Back the strike from
27 June to 2 July

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Insist on Orgreave inquiry

40 years since the in-
famous police attack

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Lenin on "Where to Begin"

What he saw as basic
in building a party

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Socialise energy! Green conversion!

6699 Editorial

Labour's manifesto for 4 July (see page 7) promises to double onshore wind, triple solar power, and quadruple offshore wind, by 2030, and to upgrade the electricity grid. It will ban fracking and new coal licences.

That is better than the Tories, whose David Cameron decided back in 2013 to "cut the green crap". There is nothing left-wing about walking away from the battle to keep Labour to its promises.

But they are weak. Far too weak. And the means to achieve them are



even weaker – a "Great British Energy" company with £8.3 billion capital over

five years. £8.3 billion over five years sounds a lot, but it is 0.3% of the gov-

ernment budget – a rounding error.

The privatisation of the energy industry under Thatcher has created a huge web of brokers, traders, and intermediaries, many of which made huge profits when gas prices soared and the Tories offered subsidies.

Solidarity campaigns for public ownership of the energy industry, including the grid, to enable social control and democratic planning. For a social plan to insulate buildings, and replace fossil-fuel heating by electric-power heat pumps.

That will generate many jobs, and enable a real contribution to saving the world from environmental tragedies. □

The resources are there

Tesla boss Elon Musk has won shareholder approval for a pay packet of \$56 billion. Not million: billion. \$56 or £45 billion for one year.

Other bosses are increasing their pay-outs: the boss of Stellantis to €37 million this year (£31 million), of Boeing to £33 million (£26 million), of AstraZeneca to £19 million, and Tesco to £10 million.

We demand increased capital-gains tax, wealth tax, and higher-level in-

come tax, to draw from those riches to build public services and public sector pay.

With the very richest, taxation will not suffice. They know how to stash their cash in tax havens. We demand public ownership and democratic control of their real assets – the factories, shops, offices, and equipment – and of the financial resources concentrated in high finance. □

Fighting for a workers' government

Labour's manifesto is written as if the only job in politics is to convince business bosses and former Tory voters that Labour is a safe "pro-business" choice.

But the reality is a shredded NHS and local public services, growing inequality, growing poverty, lack of affordable housing, and environmental trauma.

"Tiny, going on trivial" tweaks, as the Institute for Fiscal Studies sums up

Labour's fiscal plans, will not reverse those trends. We say Labour must tax the rich to fund the NHS, local government, public sector pay, green conversion.

Solidarity is in the campaign for a Labour vote in order to pursue our long-run aim: revitalising and transforming the labour movement, both to insist Labour keeps its meagre commitments, and to push for much more. □

Vote Labour everywhere

Solidarity opposes George Gallo-Sway's "Workers Party of Britain" and independents like Akhmed Yakoob, who push right-wing attitudes – against "rush" for green conversion, against LGBT rights, pro-police demagoguery, misogyny, and sometimes antisemitism – under cover of claiming to be champions of Gaza. We have more

respect for ex-Labour "independent" candidates like Jeremy Corbyn in Islington North. But we think effective socialist politics has to be about building and transforming a movement, not about getting this or that congenial but non-accountable individual into Parliament. So we say: vote Labour everywhere. □



Electrify transport and industry

Matt Huber's book *Climate Change as Class War* advocates "electrify everything" as the keystone of linking worker mobilisation with environmental rescue. The electricity must be generated by renewables or by nuclear, not from fossil-fuels.

His argument is too neat and summary. But it highlights a central issue. Transport is the most carbon-spewing sector in the UK economy, ahead of electricity generation and emissions from buildings. And, except in 2020-1 with the Covid lockdowns, transport emissions have if anything increased since 1990. Other sectors apart from aviation, even manufacturing and waste management, have reduced

emissions, if inadequately, but transport has not.

The remedies are known:

- Expanded free or cheap public transport, and public support for cycling and walking
- Electrification of railways. Only 38% of the UK's rail network is electrified, while the EU average is 55%, and Italy is at 72%.
- Shifting freight from road to rail. Labour's promise to renationalise rail (bit-by-bit) can help here, but only if social and democratic control overrides profit-priorities.
- Expanded charging facilities for electric vehicles, and a quicker phase-out of fossil-fuel engines. □

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)

LABOUR LEFT INTERNATIONALISTS
momentuminternationalists.org

Join with Labour Left Internationalists to get the Tories out, crush Labour, and revitalize the labour movement so that we can win a government which really serves the working class. This booklet tells you about the campaign which Labour Left Internationalists supports in the labour movement, and about some of the campaigns LLI works with or supports. □

VOTE LABOUR, BUT ORGANISE THE LEFT: MAKE THE LABOUR MOVEMENT ABLE TO WIN A GOVERNMENT WHICH REALLY SERVES THE WORKING CLASS

Labour Left Internationalists: formerly Momentum Internationalists, is a network of Labour Party members founded in 2020 by supporters of left anti-direct campaign Labour for a Socialist Europe. We are campaigning for Labour in the 4 July election. Even securing the minimal promises that the Labour leadership has reduced policy to will be important: repealing the Minimum Service Law and the 2016 Trade Union Act, curbing zero-hours contract worker rights from day one, collective bargaining for social care workers.

We push also for Labour to implement the many better policies passed by Labour conferences. We work with other campaigns within the Labour Party on these policies. Our rights are set higher. We reject the line of Keir Starmer since 2021 that Labour must be "pro-business" and pro-worker only in so far as that circle can be ignored.

We aim to be a lever to transform and revitalise the whole labour movement so that it can generate a different sort of labour government: a government based on, and accountable to a lively and democratic labour movement, and challenging capitalist power on that basis. A government which serves the working class as well as the Tories have long served the proleariat.

We work to transform the Labour Party, including campaigning for thoroughgoing structural changes including open selection. Party conference should determine party policy and manifesto.

In the trade unions, we push for bottom-up decision-making and minimal leadership. Union members should decide how the union

intervenes in the Labour Party. We push for a democratisation of the British state, with decentralised power and a fair voting system.

We want to turn the labour movement so it can actively participate in a struggle, rather than seeing politics as a series of parliamentary manoeuvres and internal elections, or waiting until the next election.

We want a Socialist Green New Deal including the full Labour Party conference policy, expanded to include public ownership of banking and finance and opposition to airport expansion.

We believe that taking a strong stand against racism, sexism, transphobia, and all other bigotry

and oppression is not an optional extra in class struggle but a core part of it.

We call on Labour councils to join their workforces and communities in fighting cuts, and advocate tackling social problems with structural social reform rather than repressive "law and order" policies.

We challenge, not accommodate, right wing ideas about nation, race and immigration. The working class is all of us, everywhere, and we must fight against attempts to reduce it to a parochial, cultural or ethnic monolith.

We stand in solidarity with workers and oppressed minorities across the globe. □

CEASEFIRE, AID TO GAZA, PEACE, TWO STATES

Since October 2023 Labour Left Internationalists supporters have pushed resolutions through many local Labour Parties demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, peace, freeing the hostages, and "two states", and supporting the "Standing Together" anti-war movement in Israel.

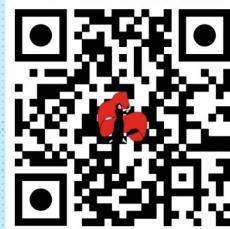
We have also joined the ceasefire demonstrations. We support UK Friends of Standing Together.

That's been part of the pressure which has turned the Labour leadership into backing a ceasefire and suspension of military shipments from Britain to Israel. But we continue to argue for Labour to have a forthright and campaigning profile, for example for Labour to reverse its policy of recognising a state of Palestine. □

Labour Left Internationalists has produced this election bulletin. Download at bit.ly/mo-int or email team@momentuminternationalists.org for bulk orders.

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

20-21
JULY
2024



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

Peace, two states, solidarity!

By Ira Berkovic

The death toll in Gaza now stands at over 37,000. The war has turned much of the enclave into an uninhabitable wasteland, with mass displacement of the population and enormous damage to basic infrastructure, including sanitation and healthcare. In the occupied West Bank, over 500 Palestinians have been killed since 7 October. A UN-led inquiry into the conduct of the war up to the end of 2023 concluded that both Israel and Hamas are guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. Allegations against Israel include starvation, arbitrary detention, killing and maiming children, and sexual violence and torture. Allegations against Hamas include intentionally attacking civilians, torture, taking hostages including children, and sexual violence.

Some on the left argue that Hamas's status as a movement of oppressed people means it must be unconditionally supported. But even on its own terms, the argument is flawed. The abject and brutal conditions to which Israel subjects the Palestinian people are a fertile soil in which a movement like Hamas can grow. Undoubtedly it draws many recruits, and is drawing new ones now, from the ranks of young Palestinian men who want to kick back at the state that has subjugated them. But the fact that a movement is based in and drawn from an oppressed population does not automatically make the politics of that movement progressive.

Many Hamas leaders, especially those who live in safety and luxury in Qatar and elsewhere, are, in class terms, more oppressors than oppressed. Why should socialists, people who support Palestinian rights because of a universalist commitment to democracy, freedom, and equality for all peoples, accept the hegemony over Palestinian resistance of one of the most reactionary elements in Palestinian political life?

In Israel, mass protests against the government have continued, demanding the government accept the US deal and call elections. The most prominent slogans and messages on the Israeli protests foreground the plight of the hostage, framing support for a ceasefire as a necessary part of a hostage-release agreement, rather than an explicitly anti-war message. But left-wing groups like Standing Together have intervened in the protests with a clearer anti-war, anti-occupation, pro-equality message,



arguing that Israeli Jews can only be secure in their own self-determination as part of a framework that guarantees equal rights to Palestinians.

On 13 June, students at universities and colleges across Israel walked out of classes as part of a student strike called by the National Union of Israeli Students, demanding the government agree to the hostage-release deal.

The risk of an escalation of conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, the Shia Islamist paramilitary group in Lebanon, into a full-blown war remains acute. Both sides have struck civilian targets.

Standing Together's National Co-Director Alon-Lee Green said: "We're one small step from an all-out war in the north. A war with thousands dead, a war that will shut down the country and keep us all living in bomb shelters, a war that will ensure that the war in Gaza never ends. We now have to tell all the small politicians in Israel who threaten us with a war in the north, and call for the occupation of Lebanon: you don't understand the price we're facing. You're lying to us. There is a way to prevent all of this, and to end the war in Gaza. If we accept the deal, release the hostages, and end the killing in Gaza, there won't have to be a war in the north. It's clear to everyone there is a deal on the table, which can stop war in the north and in the south [...] Those who tell us, 'go to war now', they won't be the ones to pay the price."

Reaching a ceasefire agreement in Gaza may well lessen the prospect of an escalation with Hezbollah. However, there is a chance Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu may see the prospect of such a war as a bargaining chip within his own coalition. His far-right partners have threatened to collapse the government, forcing new elections, if Netanyahu concludes a ceasefire and hostage-release agreement with Hamas. But he may hope to "sell" the agreement to Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich on the basis that it will

allow Israel to ramp up military action against Hezbollah.

Hezbollah is a stronger and better-armed enemy than Hamas, with more direct political and military patronage from Iran, Israel's primary imperial rival in the region. A wider Israel-Hezbollah war would have inevitably devastating consequences for Lebanese and Israeli civilians, whilst pushing the region closer to a wider conflagration that reignites direct military conflict between Israel and Iran.

Standing Together's "Humanitarian Guard" has pushed back the far-rightists seeking to stop aid trucks from Israel, although Israel's Police Commissioner – in a letter sent to the Attorney General – has now officially admitted that the Minister of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir was instructing police officers to refrain from stopping the people attacking the aid trucks. Now the US has decided to impose sanctions on one of the groups blocking the aid.

Standing Together has called an anti-war rally in Tel Aviv for 1 July. The anti-war movement in Israel also needs to mobilise directly against the threat of a war with Hezbollah, especially if the warmongers seek to use a potential pause in fighting in Gaza to redirect energies to the northern border.

Long term, peace, security, and freedom for both peoples, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, are only possible on the basis of a political settlement guaranteeing equal rights, in the first instance the Palestinians' right to a state. The latest polling from the Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research shows that 47% of all Palestinians, across the West Bank and Gaza, believe that the "most vital Palestinian goal should be to end Israeli occupation in the areas occupied in 1967 and build a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital."

Support for "the two-state solution", named as such, is low, at around one-third of all Palestinians. Few Palestinians, according to the polling, see the establishment of an independent Palestine as likely in the near future. But when the question is posed as abandoning the demand for a Palestinian state alongside Israel in favour of demanding a one-state solution, only 22% are for that.

The growth of movements like Standing Together, especially amongst Israel's 20% Palestinian minority, which has more freedom to politically self-assert than Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, is vital to build popular pressure for peace and equality. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

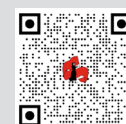
Sun 22 June: Demonstrate for Ukraine, noon, Robin Hood Statue, Castle Rd, Nottingham NG1 6AA

Sun 22 June: Workers' Liberty will be at the Restore Nature Now demonstration, noon, Park Lane, London W1K. 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,

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



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

Template motions

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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs
1 July Sheffield, London 4 August

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. □

Brexit and “repetition compulsion”



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

According to the Simply Psychology website, “Repetition compulsion is a psychological phenomenon in which an individual repeatedly re-enacts a traumatic event or its circumstances, seemingly in an attempt to master, heal, or understand the event, even though it may result in harm. It’s a concept rooted in Freudian psychoanalysis, suggesting people are ‘compelled’ to repeat past behaviours or events.”

Something similar seems to afflict the Communist Party of Britain and its mouthpiece the *Morning Star* when it comes to Brexit.

It’s now eight years after the referendum and nearly five years after Johnson’s Withdrawal Act. A clear majority recognises Brexit as a disaster. Yet the CPB/MS still bangs on about “the [wasted] opportunities Brexit provided” (editorial 24 May), refusing to account for their own role in promoting what was always going to be a mess.

The MS repeatedly states that Labour’s failure to unequivocally back Brexit cost it the 2019 election (a claim



that at best is simplistic) and explains away the self-evident failure of Brexit with the excuse that it was a “Tory Brexit” and not the fantasy “Lexit” that the paper claims was possible (conveniently forgetting that both the CPB and the MS welcomed Johnson’s Brexit deal as “the actual existing Brexit” in October 2019).

Such self-delusion and rewriting of history can perhaps be excused as a human refusal to face up to painful reality. What cannot be excused is the claim that Brexit is a “working-class” cause backed by the majority of workers in the 2016 referendum and since.

The Marxist definition of “working class” is (in the words of the Communist Manifesto) “those who must sell themselves piecemeal” for a wage or salary

under the control of capital. This has never been only manual workers.

Strange, then, that in a lengthy letter to the MS (far exceeding the usual 300-word limit), CPB General Secretary Rob Griffiths’ definition of “working class” refers to socio-economic categories developed by the marketing industry in the 1960s and now maintained by the Market Research Society. According to that system society is divided into “higher” (A) and “intermediate” (B) “managerial, administrative and professional”, “supervisory, clerical and junior managerial” (C1), “skilled manual workers” (C2), “semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers” (D) and “state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only” (E).

Griffiths’ letter is an attack upon the anti-Brexit academic Danny Dorling, who also uses these categories. But to the best of my knowledge Dorling does not claim to be a Marxist.

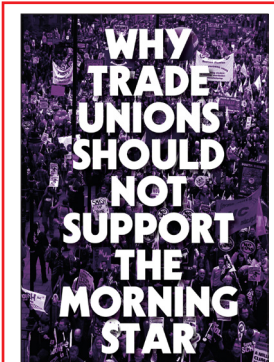
Basing himself upon the Lord Ashcroft [poll](#) taken after the referendum, Griffiths states: “In every one of the C1, C2 and DE categories, Leave voters outnumbered Remain voters; in the unambiguously working-class C2 and DE categories, by almost two to one.

“Only in the AB category occupations ... was there a majority for Remain.”

Note Griffiths’ sleight of hand in his use of the “managerial, administrative and professional” categories, eliding A (“higher”) with B (“intermediate”). Could this possibly be because teachers, social workers, local government employees, health workers and many civil servants are Bs and, together with C1s make up the core of the organised working class in Britain today?

Griffiths also ignores the fact that the Ashcroft poll showed that “a majority of those working full-time or part-time voted to remain in the EU.”

Comrade Griffiths and the MS will, no doubt, continue to bang on about the supposed “wasted opportunities” of Brexit (just as the Reform Party does): but we can at least ask them to use the Marxist understanding of class and not an outdated one from marketing. □



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France: a new Popular Front is born



Eric Lee

It is exactly ninety years since the French Socialist and Communist parties began to create the Popular Front, which dominated French politics in the mid-1930s. The danger then was the threat of the far Right – a threat which turned into a reality when the German army invaded France in 1940. Some of the same right-wingers whom the Popular Front had kept out of power returned to rule as minions of the Nazi invaders.

Though an invasion of France by its NATO ally Germany seems rather unlikely at this point, the threat of the far Right has not diminished. As a result, The main parties of the French Left – Socialists, Communists, Greens, and Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s “La France Insoumise” (LFI) – have come together in a New Popular Front (Nouveau Front Populaire, NFP) aimed at denying power to the National Rally of Marine

Le Pen. Some polls show that the New Popular Front may win as many votes in the legislative elections at the end of this month as Le Pen’s party. If that happens, a government of the centre-left becomes not only possible, but likely.

But what kind of Left?

Mélenchon is as unpopular as Le Pen among many French voters. He has been accused of being pro-Putin, which he denies, and of supporting Hamas. As Politico reported last October, Mélenchon’s “reluctance to condemn Hamas despite the scale of the attack against Israel, and the brutality of the violence inflicted on civilians, is seen as crossing a red line for many in France.”

Until recently his LFI was the largest party on the French Left, but the recent European elections have changed all that. A resurgent democratic Left led by the charismatic Raphaël Glucksmann, is now at the centre of the NFP – and it’s having an effect on what the new bloc stands for.

At the end of negotiations to draft the party program,



Glucksmann summed up what had happened with these words: “It’s been hard, but what we’ve obtained is a very clear commitment on support for Ukraine ... and that the attacks of October 7 be described as ‘terrorist.’”

Mélenchon had taken a step away from the limelight, and the new platform reflects that. Nevertheless, his LFI is being given the largest number of candidates for the legislative elections, though it is not clear how many of them will be elected.

The NFP position on Hamas sounds surprisingly reasonable. If elected, they are committed to “act for the release of hostages held since the terrorist massacres of Hamas, whose

theocratic project we reject” -- in other words, Hamas are in fact terrorists and theocrats.

On Ukraine the platform calls the Russian invasion an act of aggression and demands that Putin answer for his crimes. The NFP calls upon France and the West do more to support Ukraine, with specific measures including ramping up weapons deliveries, cancellation of Ukraine’s foreign debt, and seizure of assets of Russian oligarchs who support Putin and his war.

The NFP has also identified the rise of antisemitism in France as a specific problem that needs to be addressed by the incoming government. “All those who spread hatred of Jews must be fought,” they say. “We will propose an interministerial plan to analyze, prevent and fight against anti-Semitism in France.”

Glucksmann was himself the victim of antisemitic attacks – as was Léon Blum, the Jewish leader of the original Popular Front, decades ago. Mélenchon had insisted “that French antisemitism was merely ‘re-

sidual,’” according to Art Goldhammer, who writes about French politics. Glucksmann’s view prevailed on this too.

The NFP, thanks to Glucksmann and his allies, sounds a lot more like Keir Starmer than Jean-Luc Mélenchon, or Jeremy Corbyn, and that is a very good thing. The further Mélenchon and his toxic ideas fade in the background, the better for the French Left and for France.

In adopting a clear position supporting Ukraine and rejecting Hamas, the NFP has passed a litmus test for political decency that many parties and leaders on the Left have failed in recent years. The success of the NFP – and its creation is already a success story – may lead other Lefts in other countries to rethink their own views. □

• Eric Lee writes here in a personal opinion column. He is the founder editor of Labour Start.

• For another view on the NFP, see inside-outside pages.

New mood at Unison conference



By Katy Dollar

The public services Unison held its Local Government Conference on 16-17 June, with the whole-union National Delegate conference to follow on 18-12 June.

The conference was opened by Glen Williams, Service Group Chair and an activist in the Time for Real Change (TFRC) left caucus, demanding no dilution of Labour policies on workers rights and calling on branches to reject the local government employers' pay offer.

Glen referred to the victimisation of [Justine Canady](#), Lewisham Unison branch secretary, stating the whole union would be behind her defence campaign (bit.ly/letter-jc).

Motions on the victimisation had been ruled out of order and the conference was told not to mention her



name, branch or employer; but several delegates challenged the decision, demanding the right to discuss this case and other victimised reps.

Unsurprisingly after years of cuts and with a Labour government likely on the way, the conference spent much of its time discussing more money for local government. Councils are facing a funding deficit of £6.2bn over the next two years, with an increasing number filing for section 114 (unable to make a balanced budget). One in five council leaders think they will be in section 114 within 15 months.

On 15 June, Unison released new research showing that huge cuts to youth services could create a "lost generation" of young people unable to access vital services at a critical time in their lives. Funding cuts have led to the closure of more than two thirds of council-run youth centres in England and Wales since 2010 – with the loss of so many facilities, and the specialist workers who run them, putting teenagers at risk.

More than a third (38%) of council-run children's centres have been closed across England since 2010, with the sit-

uation only due to get worse as town halls struggle to avoid bankruptcy.

As always in Unison, several motions on pay and cuts had been ruled out of order with Standing Orders claiming they would bring the union into legal jeopardy. Despite a general election being called since the motions deadline, no emergency motions made it to the conference floor.

A Service Group Executive (SGE) motion on the [Foundation Living Wage](#) (£12 per hour, and £13.15 in London) being a key part of the local government National Joint Council pay campaign was defeated after delegates from Knowsley branch argued the SGE were setting the bar far too low on pay. Even the current employers' offer would raise lowest paid workers in local government above the Foundation Living Wage.

The conference discussed organising migrant workers. and migrant worker exploitation whereby visas linked to jobs are used to scare workers off organising at work. An amendment moved by Camden committed the union to fight the "No Recourse to Public Funds" (NRPF) rule and produce

recruitment and organising resources in more languages. Shockingly, up until now Unison joining forms and leaflets have been produced only in English and Welsh.

Local government workers in Unison, though demoralised by years of cuts, seem ready for a fight. It was a pleasure for older activists to hear some of the most left wing and militant speeches come from young members. □



Demand an Orgreave inquiry

On Tuesday 18 June the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) will present to the Labour Party its report on the events at Orgreave coking depot just outside Sheffield. The "Battle of Orgreave", 40 years ago, resulted in the arrests of 95 striking miners, all of whom were charged with unlawful assembly or riot. They were subsequently acquitted at a later trial when the police "evidence" was shown to be fabricated from start to finish.

The OTJC report, which contains new evidence, will call for a full enquiry into the events leading up to Orgreave and what happened on the day. The Labour leaders, in their manifesto, have pledged its commitment to support an "investigation or enquiry". Hold them to it! More: otjc.org.uk □

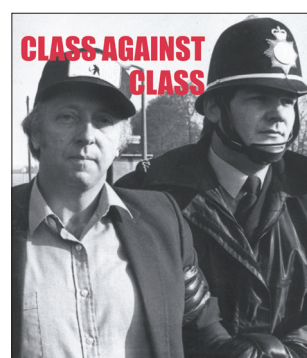
• More on Orgreave: bit.ly/orgrb and bit.ly/orgre

Uni bosses move against Gaza camps

By Sam Myerson

University managements have taken new steps to remove student Gaza protest camps. Evictions are often coupled with the threat of academic sanctions and disciplinary processes.

Some of the camps have made some progress on their demands. In Aberdeen the university Principal has called for a ceasefire in Gaza. Swansea has agreed to a process of "divestment"



CLASS AGAINST CLASS

The Miners' Strike 1984-5. £9 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

from Barclays bank, moving to a wholly "ethical" investment strategy, and opening their scholarship scheme to Palestinian students. What exactly ethical investment means is yet to be seen.

The London School of Economics (LSE) went to court and got a possession order against a tent-camp in the Marshall Building atrium. Students were given hours to leave or face eviction. On the final day LSE students held a large rally.

We expected that such evictions will be repeated at many camps around the country. As with student occupations, instead of negotiating and engaging with students, universities seek to shut down dissent.

In Manchester a demonstration held



Palestine camp Oxford

after the camp decided to close for the summer was met with violent suppression from the police. In Lancaster a student was suspended from university and the completion of their degree put at risk over Palestine activity. □

When it's too hot to work



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

The recently launched Heat Strike campaign is bringing together trade unionists and climate activists in protest over rising temperatures at work.

Organiser Nuala Lam told the 12 June launch rally: "Heat Strike is a plan to mobilise large numbers of people

in their workplaces and at home in response to extreme heat in the UK. It is a plan to raise a collective voice as citizens and as workers to make ourselves heard in Westminster and the board rooms of our employers. No-one can be as productive as they would normally be in the extreme heat. So when heat waves strike we will claim the inevitable drop in productivity and serve it back to the government as a protest at their failure to act on climate breakdown." The campaign is demanding a maximum working temperature, a heat

wave furlough payment and an effective plan to halt climate change. These demands build on already existing struggles in the workers' movement in the UK and elsewhere as our movement has begun to reckon with the realities of climate change.

The Heat Strike launch rally heard from some of these campaigns with representatives of the FBU, Bakers Union, CWU and Unite's hospitality sector explaining how extreme heat affects their industries and the campaigns and successes this has generated around

workplace safety. There were further contributions from Sebastiano Calleri, national health and safety officer for the Italian union confederation CGIL, and Manju Goel from the Amazon India Workers Association (AIWA) representing Indian Amazon warehouse workers who are running campaigns around workplace temperature.

The rally was recorded and remains available online. Further resources on how to build the heat strike at work by becoming a union safety rep are available at heatstrike.uk □

Lack of foresight and imagination



Letters

Matt Shaw (*Solidarity* 711) suggests that "Mick Lynch has proved something of a disappointment after a relatively good start". This is a fair first reading of the situation. But underneath this, there is something more profound to be grasped. This is that the "power to (disrupt)" is not synonymous with the "power over (the bargaining opponent)", even though rail strikes by the likes of signallers seem

on the days of strike action to suggest the opposite. Lynch has not been able to devise a strategy to resolve this conundrum. Some of this comes down to strike tactics and the absence of strike pay but much of it comes down to not understanding the contours of political power prior to the calling of the general election.

For example, the RMT has stock and shares worth in excess of £25m and Lynch often called the two national rail disputes of 2022 onwards "the fight of our lives". Yet, in a cost-of-living crisis where the amounts of strike sacrificed wages were significant, he was not

willing to use this resource to fund prolonged and escalated action through strike pay. These RMT disputes were clearly political – and not economic – ones given the strike indemnification of both Network Rail and the train operating companies. Here, Lynch could not identify a way to force Starmer and Labour into making the disputes political "hot potatoes" for the Tory government. This was the seemingly obvious way to create some political leverage. But Lynch would not recognise that with Labour so far ahead in the polls since late 2022, there was no way that rhetorical appeals to Starmer

would make Starmer genuflect to the left. The short-lived attempt to create "Enough is Enough!" after the disputes began, only for it to be wound down a few months later, testifies to a lack of foresight and imagination here.

These issues are explored at length in my book *Mick Lynch: The making of a working-class hero* (Manchester University Press, 2024). It looks at the rise of a union leader who many saw as said hero as well as the fallout when this characterisation seemed to be based upon little more than a few TV interviews and speeches at rallies. □

Gregor Gall, Glasgow

Sanders and rightward drift

I'm somewhat flummoxed by how to respond to "Bernie Sanders on Gaza, Biden, and Trump" (*Solidarity* 711). The article appears opposite my critique of the AWL majority's tendency to underplay the unpalatable truth about Biden, the Democrats and the normal bourgeois politics of America. In the article Sanders calls to elect "progressives to the House and occasionally to the Senate". This line was tweeted without comment from our Twitter account on 9 June.

The excerpts from Sanders are reprinted without any comment or critique. I do not support calling for a vote for Biden, so to an extent it is not for me to tell the comrades how to present their views, but the decision to express it through the words of Bernie Sanders should give them pause for thought. Sanders in the last few years has called for votes for Democrats as the norm. He calls himself a socialist, but this is not the so-



cialism of collective ownership of industry and services and workers' control, he explains this is best represented by Nordic social democracy and Roosevelt's New Deal. This is the policy Roosevelt explained was to "save capitalist system". He is not for the end of capitalism only of "uber-capitalism" or "unfettered capitalism".

If the comrades think their politics on the US elections can be expressed by Bernie Sanders, the drift rightward has been greater than we warned. □

Katy Dollar, London



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A small factual error

Eric Lee's column in *Solidarity* 712 says: "In France we saw the revival of the Socialist Party, which had nearly disappeared from the French political scene following disastrous election results. It did much better under the new leadership of 44-year-old Raphaël Glucksmann."

Glucksmann is not a leader or member of the PS. He leads the Place Publique and headed the joint PS-PP list. And he is not a new leader in this role: Glucksmann also headed the PS-PP list at the 2019 European election (when they got only 6.2%). □

Ben Tausz, London



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Vote Labour but fight for a workers' government

By Rhodri Evans

Years ago, a French comrade explained to me why the Communist Party (CP) then had the bulk of the working-class vote in a country where the claims of the great mass strike of May-June 1968 were still live among workers. "Workers hear the tune, not the words", they said about the staid CP manifesto.

Labour manifestos in Britain used to be a bit like that. Both 1974 manifestos had a tune of "a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families", while the words were meagre.

The 2024 Labour manifesto, by contrast, is the written equivalent of someone mouthing a few social promises under cover of an orchestra playing Land of Hope and Glory.

"Good bits" exist in the manifesto, and to dismiss them is political passivity, abdication, indifference – abstention from the labour-movement battle to secure implementation. Instead of putting such promises upfront, the manifesto tucks them away, and attempts a "tune" attractive to wavering Tory voters.

In the manifesto text, much is buried within a portmanteau promise to "implement in full" the (watered-down) New Deal for Working People [published](#) on 24 May: repealing the Minimum Service Law, the Trade Union Act 2016 (the turnout limits on union ballots), and the Tory measure which allows agency workers to be used for strike-breaking; allowing union ballots to be electronic or workplace, instead of postal; reducing zero-hours contracts; worker "rights from day one"; mandatory collective bargaining in the care sector.

Oddly, one of few of those points mentioned explicitly is the "end fire-and-rehire" promise (which Unite general secretary Sharon Graham had singled out for complaint about final manifesto wording), and it appears without the softenings in the 24 May

document which Unite approved.

The word "business" appears 60 times, "growth" 49 times; "inequality" once, "class" once (as in "class ceiling"), "poverty" 14 times, "working people" 21 times. ("Socialism" or "socialist" not at all; but then those words were not in the 2019 manifesto either, except in a reference to the NHS as already "socialist").

The "vox pop" testimonials dotted through the manifesto are from top bosses or cops (often retired), none from "working people".

The people who designed the manifesto don't get out much from their posh offices. They are unaware that Keir Starmer is widely distrusted and disliked even by Labour voters.

The cover is just the word "Change" with a picture of Starmer. There are 32 other images of Starmer in the short pamphlet, several of Rachel Reeves, and one each of Angela Rayner, David Lammy, Anas Sarwar, Vaughan Gething, and (don't ask us why) Justin Trudeau.

"Change" is a bland message. And then it is mixed with repeated assurances of "stability" (*not much change*).

According to the sober [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#), "the public service spending increases [NHS, schools, etc.] promised... are tiny, going on trivial. The tax rises, beyond the inevitable reduced tax avoidance, even more trivial". Around £9 billion, or less than 0.8% of a government budget of £1.2 tn.

Papers like the *Financial Times* speculate that Labour's commitments not to raise income tax, VAT, or corporation tax mean it will raise capital gains tax or a new wealth tax: not because Labour's leaders are anti-capitalist, because otherwise the arithmetic is impossible.

Labour's green promises have suffered badly. There is talk of more renewables and nuclear, but little public money to get them going, let alone the public ownership and democratic control of the whole energy industry we need.

The manifesto promises "clean en-



ergy by 2030". But not all electricity from renewables and nuclear, because it also promises to keep some gas power stations.

It criticises planning hold-ups which stop electricity grid expansion and housebuilding (in other words, Nimbyism), but promises little.

Talk of repealing the "Right to Buy" which subsidises council tenants to take houses or flats out of the social stock at cut price has been pared down to "reviewing the increased right to buy discounts introduced in 2012".

The 2017 and 2019 promises to scrap university tuition fees has been replaced by: "Labour will act to create a secure future for higher education...", with no detail.

There is no promise to restore local government funding. There are warm words about trans rights, but reformed gender recognition law will "retain the need for a diagnosis of gender dysphoria".

None of the National Policy Forum report's words hinting at decriminalisation of abortion are in the manifesto.

Unite union general secretary Sharon Graham has stated "reservations" about the Labour manifesto over the ban on new oil and sea gas licences in the North Sea (long-standing policy, and in fact ineffectual, since Labour has promised not to revoke the dozens of licences

granted by the Tories in their last days). In late May Unite started a poster campaign in Scottish constituencies on that, boosting the SNP, which has now dropped its support for a ban.

Now Unite says: "Workers need Labour to win... As we vote Labour – we also need them to be bold."

Fire Brigades Union general secretary and TUC president Matt Wrack has been stronger. The union is promoting a "firefighters' [manifesto](#)". Wrack has also pushed the Labour Campaign for Council Housing's [challenge](#) to Labour parliamentary

candidates.

And he states: "It will be our duty to ensure that a new Labour government makes good on [the union and worker rights] promises within the first 100 days of taking power. We will hold Labour's feet to the fire".

Critical for that will be pushing unions and local Labour Parties to demand an account at Labour's annual conference in September, which Starmer will want to turn into a no-questions-please victory rally.

Solidarity aims further. We want the broadest front to win on Labour's better promises or half-promises. We also work to revitalise and transform the whole labour movement, to make it capable of generating what we need: a workers' government, as ruthless for the working class as the Tories have been for the capitalists. □



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Fascist attack in Budapest

By Ferenc Fejes

Five masked fascists recently attacked a public event of Fáklya, the Hungarian branch of the "Revolutionary Communist International" (RCI, formerly known as International Marxist Tendency) in Budapest. The attackers assaulted people, broke the projector, and then fled the scene. One of their victims had to be held in the hospital for observation.

The police apprehended two of them two days later.



A far-right Telegram channel shared the event in a since-deleted post – clearly baiting their readers to do something about it. This channel is also known for sharing the announcements of the fascist group Légió Hungária.

Unlike the time when foreign anti-fascists assaulted some neo-Nazis last year, there was no media attention around this story, and the police did not put out a statement either. The little attention it got in the right-wing press trivialized the incident. According to a member of the RCI, when the cops questioned them after the assault, they were asking about the RCI and their activities.

Fáklya deserves our solidarity after this violent attack. □

Labour conference 22-25 Sep 2024

"There are strong rumours in party circles that the next conference – likely the first with Labour in government – will be a moment of maximum strength to deliver some even more dramatic and controversial rule changes. A key ambition of some is to give MPs the sole power to choose the next Labour leader if the change takes place while the party is in government" – *The Observer*, [16 June](#) 2024. There

are other issues about the conference. The deadline for local Labour Parties to name delegates is 28 June, but most local Parties will now not meet in June, so will it be a conference with very few local Labour delegates? Motions now again have to be "contemporary", which must mean referring to events after some given date, but unlike previous years there is no indication what that date is. *Solidarity* is investigating. □

The Russian Marxists: where t

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

By Sean Matgamna

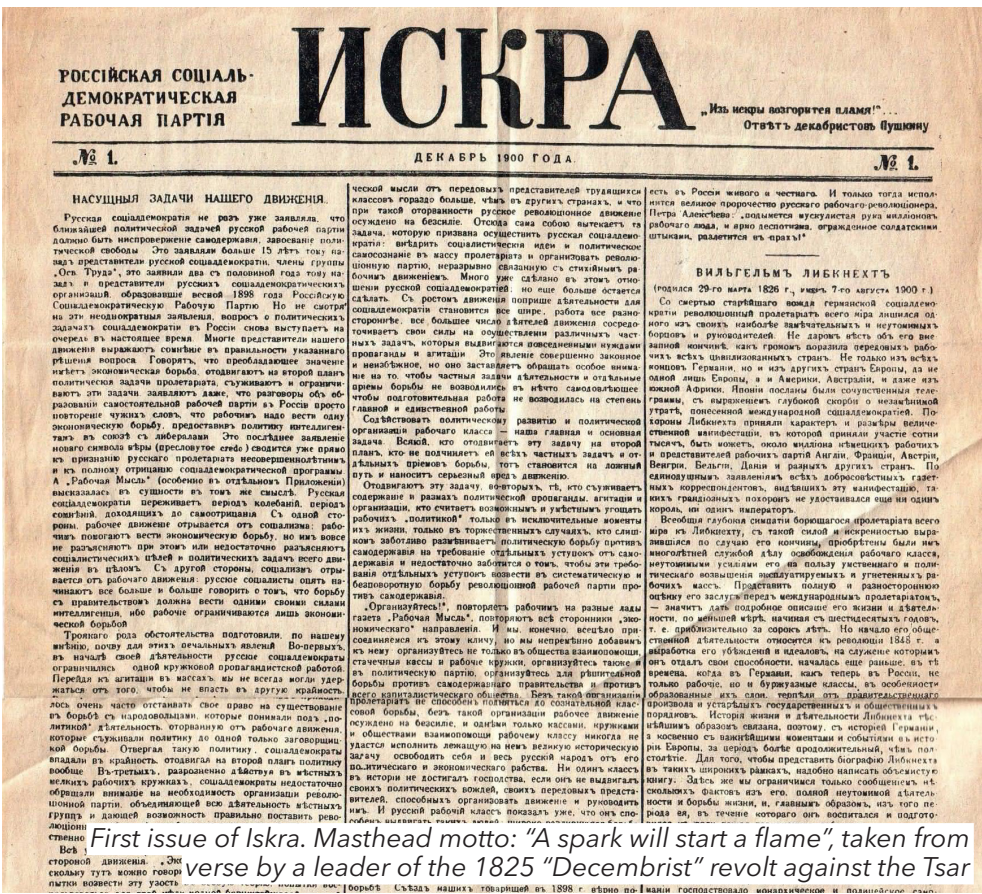
What happened to Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov (Lenin) after his brother was hanged by the Tsarists in 1887 is a part of the story that is shrouded in mystery laid down by the Russian state in the long era of left-wing Lenin-deification that succeeded his death in January 1924.

How did Ulyanov-Lenin come to break with the populist past and his brother's short present? Trotsky summed up the official account as follows: "By his genius". Ulyanov became Lenin because he was Lenin, and Lenin was a genius.

"There has to be a better way" is said to have been his response when the royalists hanged Alexander, to whom he was close then, though they did not talk politics. Alexander was writing an academic thesis on aspects of biology, and spent much time studying worms under a microscope. Vladimir, about four years younger, who had hero-worshipped his brother, had taken to mocking and dismissing his brother and was, it seems, aesthetically repelled by the worms.

Trotsky, who was himself, at 18, briefly a Narodnik, rejected the pious "better way" story as nonsense. Ulyanov was in a political world dominated still by Narodism (revolutionary populism), by terror (the only way to action the Narodniks saw was killing top Tsarist officials), and counter-terror. Repression had been heavy since 1881.

Vladimir's working through that to consistent Marxism was easier for his



generation than for the previous one, but still, Trotsky maintained that there had to be more to it than an instinctive realisation that Alexander's way (trying to kill the Tsar) was too costly.

Among the consequences for Vladimir of Alexander's death was an acute feeling of guilt that he had so completely misunderstood Alexander's nature. Alexander had reacted heroically. After his arrest he might have saved his own life by hypocritically appealing to the Tsar for clemency. He refused to appeal.

Reading

Vladimir read and re-read what Alexander had read. Alexander had been in the Marxist-leaning wing of Narodism. Vladimir studied the Russian translation of Marx's *Capital*, volume 1. But according to himself (talking to the Bolshevik Nikolai Valentinov in 1914) he especially studied and was captivated by Chernyshevsky's didactic novel *What Is To Be Done?*, published in 1863. Ulyanov would of course choose the same title for his influential 1902 pamphlet.

Chernyshevsky's was an utopian novel that depicted an ideal future world, and preached immediately the creation of a "new woman" and "new man", practising a new self-abnegating morality here and now. It was highly influential among the intelligentsia.

A widespread version of Christianity preached that people were predestined for heaven or hell even before they were born, and yet, far from breeding fatalism, it bred great energy and great striving. Status and achievement in this world could hope to show you if you were among the damned or the

saved. So too with Chernyshevsky's *What Is To Be Done?* Its confident depiction of an ideal future coming soon led people not to acceptance of what they were, but to striving here and now to be among the elite, the "new women" and "new men".

Building on Narodism, it produced "here and now" highly-moral and revolutionary people, like Alexander Ulyanov. Narodism preached self-sacrifice – that the intelligentsia should "give back" to society what it had given them.

People could read what they wanted to into Chernyshevsky's utopian vision. By the 1890s, and the revival of activity with the authorities' enforced call for help in the famine in 1891, what they had come to want had begun to tilt heavily towards western-style Marxism, then called "Social Democracy".

Confluence

There came into existence a Russian labour movement – a self-renewing labour movement that did not depend on outside stimulation to subsist.

For Bolshevism, the confluence of two things was necessary: the existence of a powerful, strong, credible, rebellious working class, and, with it, as part of it, a Marxist movement that had consciously rejected Bernstein's reduction of Marxism to a sort of liberalism – "the movement is everything, the socialist goal is nothing".

Both existed for a time in Russia, and in Russia as in no other place.

From 1881 to 1886 there were 40 strikes, in which 80,000 workers too part. In 1886-1890 450,000 workers struck, a six or seven-fold increase in

the number of workers involved. One strike in St Petersburg involved 30,000 workers.

These articles deal mainly with the Marxists, with Menshevism and Bolshevism. But what the workers did was what gave the Marxists' ideas and activities their significance.

In St Petersburg, in 1895, the League for the Emancipation of the Working Class was founded, involving no fewer than three future editorial board members of *Iskra*, Martov, Potresov, and Lenin.

In 1896 such a League was founded in Moscow; then in other cities.

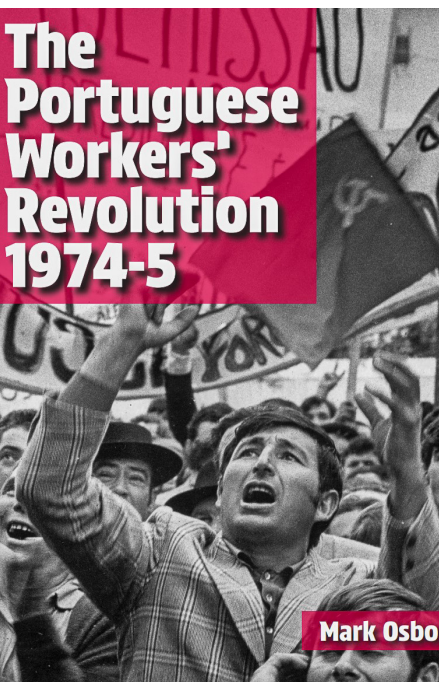
Each of those Leagues was an attempt to found a Marxist party in one area.

The Bund, formed in the Jewish Pale of Settlement in 1897 (Martov was one of its founders), was the first successful attempt to found a broader Marxist party, and for some years was the strongest organisation in the movement. The Jewish workers were in the vanguard and would play a central role as the working-class and Marxist movement spread and developed. The pamphlet *On Agitation*, by Kremer and Martov (1894), was produced in the Jewish Pale of Settlement. The first congress of the all-Russian Social Democratic Party, in 1898, was held in one of the cities of the Pale, Minsk, and the Bund was its main organiser.

The reactionary press tried to prove that the Marxist movement and the labour movement were Jewish conspiracies. The Tsarist secret police developed a finesse in forging documents to "prove" that "the Jews" were "behind it all". They forged a document that has had many, many editions in many languages, including German, the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903). It has justly been described as a "warrant for genocide".

Exile

At the first Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party in 1898, there were only eight representatives



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they began in building a party

from existing Leagues of Struggle, and some extra individuals. They were all eventually arrested. Vladimir Ulyanov was arrested in December 1895, sent to jailed, and then exiled, with Nadezhda Krupskaya, from then his wife.

In exile they translated *Industrial Democracy* by the Fabian reform socialists Sydney and Beatrice Webb, who would end their lives as the Labour couple Lord and Lady Passfield. But the experience of fighting police repression in St Petersburg and losing pointed imperiously to attempt to organise a nationwide Marxist movement not from Russia, where the police could again and again pick off the organisers.

Free again in 1900, Ulyanov went to Plekhanov and the prestigious Emancipation of Labour Group, in exile in Switzerland, and negotiated steps to set up a Marxist party abroad whose centre would be beyond the reach of the Tsar's policy.

He wrote an article, *Where To Begin*, in May 1901, which expounded in a small space the idea which he would deal with in his famous book of 1902, *What Is To Be Done?* Here it is, abridged.

Where to Begin

In recent years the question of "what is to be done" has confronted Russian Social-Democrats with particular insistence. It is not a question of what path we must choose (as was the case in the late eighties and early nineties), but of what practical steps we must take upon the known path and how they shall be taken...

On the one hand, the "Economist" trend [which "overdid" the turn to economic agitation, downgrading broader political advocacy], far from being dead, is endeavouring to clip and narrow the work of political organisation and agitation. On the other, unprincipled eclecticism is again rearing its head, aping every new "trend", and is incapable of distinguishing immediate demands from the main tasks and permanent needs of the movement as a whole. This trend... has ensconced itself in *Rabocheye Dyelo* [a journal published in exile in Switzerland, 1899-1902. The Bernstein-leaning "right wing" of the Marxists were influential in it]...

[Wilhelm] Liebknecht's words are being quoted: "If the circumstances change within twenty-four hours, then tactics must be changed within twenty-four hours"...

In "drab" times

Rabocheye Dyelo, of course, mentions Liebknecht's name in vain. The tactics of agitation in relation to some special question, or the tactics with regard to some detail of party organisation, may be changed in twenty-four hours; but only people devoid of all principle are



capable of changing, in twenty-four hours, or, for that matter, in twenty-four months, their view on the necessity – in general, constantly, and absolutely – of an organisation of struggle and of political agitation...

It is ridiculous to plead different circumstances and a change of periods: the building of a fighting organisation and the conduct of political agitation are essential under any "drab, peaceful" circumstances, in any period, no matter how marked by a "declining revolutionary spirit"; moreover, it is precisely in such periods and under such circumstances that work of this kind is particularly necessary, since it is too late to form the organisation in times of explosion and outbursts; the party must be in a state of readiness to launch activity at a moment's notice.

"Change the tactics within twenty-four hours"! But in order to change tactics it is first necessary to have tactics; without a strong organisation skilled in waging political struggle under all circumstances and at all times, there can be no question of that systematic plan of action, illumined by firm principles and steadfastly carried out, which alone is worthy of the name of tactics...

The question of terror [which in the Russian revolutionary tradition meant: killing top Tsarist officials] is not a new question at all; it will suffice to recall briefly the established views of Russian Social-Democracy on the subject.

In principle we have never rejected, and cannot reject, terror. Terror is one of the forms of military action that may be perfectly suitable and even essential at a definite juncture in the battle... The important point is that terror, at the present time, is [not] suggested as an operation for the army in the field, an operation closely connected with and integrated into the entire system of

struggle, but as an independent form of occasional attack... This, in fact, is all that terror can be [now].

We, therefore, declare emphatically that under the present conditions such a means of struggle is inopportune and unsuitable; that it diverts the most active fighters from their real task, the task which is most important from the standpoint of the interests of the movement as a whole; and that it disorganises the forces, not of the government, but of the revolution...

Far be it from us to deny the significance of heroic individual blows, but it is our duty to sound a vigorous warning against becoming infatuated with terror, against taking it to be the chief and basic means of struggle...

Rabocheye Dyelo... exclaims: "Form assault columns!" But this is more zeal than reason...

The immediate task of our Party is... to call for the formation of a revolutionary organisation capable of uniting all forces and guiding the movement in actual practice and not in name alone, that is, an organisation ready at any time to support every protest and every outbreak and use it to build up and consolidate the fighting forces suitable for the decisive struggle...

We take the liberty of submitting to the comrades a skeleton plan to be developed in greater detail in a pamphlet now in preparation for print. [i.e. *What Is To Be Done?*]

Newspaper

In our opinion, the starting-point of our activities, the first step towards creating the desired organisation, or, let us say, the main thread which, if followed, would enable us steadily to develop, deepen, and extend that organisation, should be the founding of an All-Russian political newspaper...

Without [a newspaper] we cannot conduct that systematic, all-round propaganda and agitation, consistent in principle, which is the chief and permanent task of Social-Democracy in general and, in particular, the pressing task of the moment, when interest in politics and in questions of socialism has been aroused among the broadest strata of the population. Never has the need been felt so acutely as today for reinforcing dispersed agitation in the form of individual action, local leaflets, pamphlets, etc., by means of generalised and systematic agitation that can only be conducted with the aid of the periodical press.

The frequency and regularity with which a newspaper is printed (and distributed) can serve as a precise criterion of how well this cardinal and most essential sector of our militant activities is built up. Our newspaper must be All-Russian... Our movement suffers in the first place, ideologically, as well as in practical and organisational respects, from its state of fragmentation, from the almost complete immersion of the overwhelming majority of Social-Democrats in local work, which narrows their outlook, the scope of their activities... It is precisely in this state of fragmentation that one must look for the deepest roots of the instability and the waverings noted above. The first step towards eliminating this shortcoming, towards transforming divers local movements into a single, All-Russian movement, must be the founding of an All-Russian newspaper...

continued on page 10 →

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Political tribune

What we need is definitely a *political* newspaper. Without a political organ, a political movement deserving that name is inconceivable... Without such a newspaper we cannot possibly fulfill our task – that of concentrating all the elements of political discontent and protest, of vitalising thereby the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

We have taken the first step, we have aroused in the working class a passion for “economic”, factory exposures; we must now take the next step, that of arousing in every section of the population that is at all politically conscious a passion for political exposure.

We must not be discouraged by the fact that the voice of political exposure is today so feeble, timid, and infrequent.

This is not because of a wholesale submission to police despotism, but because those who are able and ready to make exposures have no tribune from which to speak, no eager and encouraging audience, they do not see anywhere among the people that force to which it would be worth while directing their complaint against the “omnipotent” Russian Government.

But today all this is rapidly changing. There is such a force – it is the revolutionary proletariat, which has demonstrated its readiness, not only to listen to and support the summons to political struggle, but boldly to engage in battle.

We are now in a position to provide a tribune for the nationwide exposure of the tsarist government, and it is our duty to do this.

That tribune must be a Social-Democratic [i.e. Marxist] newspaper. The Russian working class, as distinct from the other classes and strata of Russian society, displays a constant interest in political knowledge and manifests a constant and extensive demand (not only in periods of intensive unrest) for illegal literature...

Collective organiser

The role of a newspaper, however, is not limited solely to the dissemination of ideas, to political education, and to the enlistment of political allies. A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator, it is also a collective organiser.

In this last respect it may be likened to the scaffolding round a building under construction, which marks the contours of the structure and facilitates commu-

nication between the builders, enabling them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour.

With the aid of the newspaper, and through it, a permanent organisation will naturally take shape that will engage, not only in local activities, but in regular general work, and will train its members to follow political events carefully, appraise their significance and their effect on the various strata of the population, and develop effective means for the revolutionary party to influence these events.

The mere technical task of regularly supplying the newspaper with copy and of promoting regular distribution will necessitate a network of local agents of the united party, who will maintain constant contact with one another, know the general state of affairs, get accustomed to performing regularly their detailed functions in the All-Russian work, and test their strength in the organisation of various revolutionary actions.

Steady yet flexible

This network of agents will form the skeleton of precisely the kind of organisation we need – one that is sufficiently large to embrace the whole country; sufficiently broad and many-sided to effect a strict and detailed division of labour; sufficiently well tempered to be able to conduct steadily its own work under any circumstances, at all “sudden turns”, and in face of all contingencies; sufficiently flexible to be able, on the one hand, to avoid an open battle against an overwhelming enemy, when the enemy has concentrated all his forces at one spot, and yet, on the other, to take advantage of his unwieldiness and to attack him when and where he least expects it.

Today we are faced with the relatively easy task of supporting student demonstrations in the streets of big cities; tomorrow we may, perhaps, have the more difficult task of supporting, for example, the unemployed movement in some particular area, and the day after to be at our posts in order to play a revolutionary part in a peasant uprising...

If we join forces to produce a common newspaper, this work will train and bring into the foreground, not only the most skilful propagandists, but the most capable organisers, the most talented political party leaders capable, at the right moment, of releasing the slogan for the decisive struggle and of taking the lead in that struggle.

No political party that wishes to avoid adventurous gambles can base its activities on the anticipation of... outbursts and complications.

We must go our own way, and we must steadfastly carry on our regular work, and the less our reliance on the unexpected, the less the chance of our being caught unawares by any “historic turns”. □

Fight the Tru



Debate

By Claureen Ryan

A few points in response to Katy Dolan's polemic (*Solidarity* 711).

1. We don't have to call Donald Trump a fascist, though I think that's what he is. We could be simply descriptive. He is a man who wanted and now explicitly wants to be an absolute monarch above the law which commoners must adhere to, and, according to the US constitution, presidents too.

He now explicitly wants to use the elected presidency to establish an authoritarian presidential dictatorship, folding all the power that is now divided with, for example, the Department of Justice, into an authoritarian presidency. If elected – he is now 78 – he intends to use his powers, and the extra powers he intends to take, as weapons against his perceived personal enemies.

This would now be a very large group, including media people who offended him and will now offend him further by opposing his attempt to win a dictatorial presidency. He says that he will be a dictator.

2. The question arises: why believe Trump on him acting as a “dictator”, when the man told over 30,000 lies as president?

Because Trump second time round will be surrounded only by people who share his dictatorial view. They are and will be his “enablers”. The entire leadership of the Republican party are now Trump's “enablers”, even those who condemned him after 6 January 2021.

There is another hope, though. How long can Trump last? He is visibly in the earlyish stage of some form of senile dementia. On the platform he ram-

bles and gets simple names and dates wrong. His enablers respond to that by focusing on Biden's age – he is four years older than Trump, but not visibly or audibly demented.

How quickly will his condition make Trump more incapable than he now is? One reason why all the top ranks of Republicans bow down to Trump is that they want the legacy he will leave, of mass support.

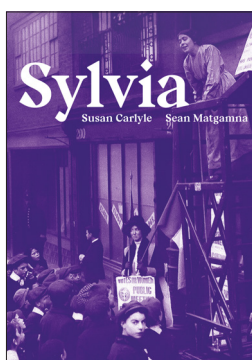
3. He has had immense privileges out of office. Nearly four years ago, on 6 January 2021, he mobilised a right-wing mob to physically attack the Capitol, the seat of the Senate and the House of Representatives, and stop Joe Biden, who had won seven million more votes than he had, being duly declared president.

It is called an insurrection, and that is what it was. If Vice-President Mike Pence had done what the Trumpites wanted him to do, they would, or anyway might, have kept Biden out and Trump as president.

Pence had been noticeably docile as vice-president, and he is a man of the deeply stupid Right. Rejecting evolution, he thinks God created the world about 7,000 years ago. The idea that he might have gone along with a coup was proved wrong, but it was not ridiculous.

Yet Trump has not been tried for any of his crimes in time for possible conviction in court to influence the 2024 electorate – with one exception, in which the jury found him guilty of 34 felonies: he was recently convicted in a New York state court of having paid money to stop information of his involvement with Stephanie Clifford reaching the electorate.

But he is not being tried for the attempt at an armed coup to stay in office against the will of the majority who voted for Biden. That he can now stand



The story of Sylvia Pankhurst including her working-class organising in the East End of London. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Despite counterrevolution



for office is outrageous. It is forbidden by the constitution that an insurrectionist should so stand, but the Supreme Court has said that he can.

Large numbers of the Trumpites have guns. The Supreme Court has just legalised the sale of machine guns over the counter. Among core "Maga Republicans" (15% of the electorate) in 2022, 30% expected a civil war in the USA "in the next few years". 55% believed that "having a strong leader is more important than having a democracy", 83% that they "may have to use force" to save their "American way of life", 19% that they personally would likely be "armed with a gun" in such conditions.

4. Trump has never won a popular election. He got three million votes fewer than Hillary Clinton in 2016, though he won the Electoral College, and of course he lost to Joe Biden in 2020. (And the winner-takes-all prize from such contests is different from a slight advantage in parliamentary seats from 200,000-odd fewer votes, as in the UK in 1951 and 1974).

But US democracy has been shown to be only a ramshackle approximation even to working bourgeois democracy, and an approximation in which the rich run riot. Right now, Trump has not been held to account because he has money to buy lawyers.

The calls is to "defend democracy", meaning mainly just the absence of tyranny. But the US needs a positive campaign for democracy, to get rid of the rule of the Supreme Court and the Electoral College for a start.

That Trump is standing for election and may win – and if he loses, will say he that won – after having tried to sub-

orn Congress in 2021 – that is the reductio ad absurdum of the American system of pluto-democracy.

5. What Trump says he will do is thoroughly alarming, and if he does it, it will be a fascist presidency, or an attempt to create one. But we don't have to wait for Trump to be president again. The counter-revolution is going on now.

The Republican Party, where it has local power, is changing voting laws to make it more difficult for Black people to vote – that is, to cheat the Democratic Party. The Supreme Court, acting as a sovereign executive, has crossed out 50 years of advance for women by abolishing the right to abortion.

The Trump counter-revolution has been sweeping across the USA for the last four years, in which Biden has been in office. If Trump wins the election, that will only be the start.

The Republican Party has been thoroughly hegemonised by the Trumpites. There was a time when even in bourgeois politics there was such a thing as objective truth. No more. At all levels, the leading people in the Republican Party, those in place and those Trump has put in place, repeat Trump's lies.

Those lies tend to sap belief in the institutions of the bourgeois democratic republic. Elections? Elections, the Trumpites say, are rigged. It is still denied that Biden won and Trump lost the 2020 election. The courts that ruled for Biden after the election are said to be corrupt.

The FBI chief in 2016, James Comey, gave the election of 2016 to Trump, but the FBI too is denounced as corrupt.

Trump, the man of privilege and big money, is said to be a martyr for the

people. In power, says Trump, he will avenge all the people's wrongs. It is ridiculous, but Trump is accepted by vast numbers of those who feel hard done by.

6. Trump has drawn criticism from liberal commentators, who rightly fear the return of the man who calls them "the enemy of the people". But nowhere is it pointed out that Trump has had tremendous help by having access to money, as all America's 800 billionaires and 7.4 million millionaires have.

He is a fraud, a legatee of big money rather than the maker of big money he claims to be. His previous public standing was largely from the TV show *The Apprentice*, but even that is now revealed as

fraudulent. What Trump said on the show was pre-scripted.

Con-man he is, but by ordinary standards he is very rich. Last year alone he spent over \$50 million on lawyers, and it has worked for him largely to avoid, so far, all court cases outstanding against him.

7. The Supreme Court is an independent part of a three-tier government (the two houses of Congress are the legislative, the president the executive branch). Its nine members are appointed for life like kings and queens. There is no supervision, no code of conduct.

When a vacancy occurs, the sitting president fills it. Donald Trump appointed three of the nine, the two presidents Bush three more.

Two of its members, Thomas and Alito, have been shown to be corrupt in the straightforward sense: they have taken big sums from right-wing billionaires. Their wives are militant Trumpites.

In 2000 the Supreme Court decided on the presidential election between George W Bush and Al Gore, and put Bush in power. If vice-president Mike Pence had refused to certify the 2020 presidential election and it had gone to the Supreme Court, they would probably have given the election to Trump and not to Biden.

8. I don't think Trump can win the presidency on 4 November. It is however possible that he will. That would have enormous implications all across the world.

It is in our interest that Trump be defeated. Biden joining the picket line mounted by car workers on strike has no parallel: no sitting president has ever done that before. To ignore it is for us to ignore what is going on in real American politics. We know and say that Biden is a bourgeois politician, but we should advocate a vote for Biden.

We can take one of two approaches, the sectarian and the class. The sectarian is to respond to the 4 November choice by sitting on our hands and repeating the same generalities as we repeat at all times. The class is to see what the workers are doing and get in on it, while making our own propaganda and doing our own organising. □

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Parliaments, wealth, and workers' councils

These words about workers' council (soviet) democracy – with right of recall, all posts at worker's wages, and the executive as a function of the legislative rather than standing above it – are taken from a pamphlet by Vladimir Lenin [Ulyanov] in 1918, disputing Karl Kautsky's condemnation of the workers' and peasants' government in Russia. Even as Lenin-Ulyanov wrote, the revolutionary government's civil war, amidst crushing poverty, against Russian reactionaries and 14 foreign armies was sapping the workers' democracy. After that civil war, Stalinist counter-revolution would bit-by-bit turn "soviet" forms into tyranny. But the model of a more genuine and flexible democracy remains valid.

Take freedom of assembly, freedom of the press, or "equality of all citizens before the law," and you will see at every turn evidence of the hypocrisy of bourgeois democracy with which every honest and class-conscious worker is familiar...

Kautsky shamelessly embellishes

bourgeois democracy and omits to mention, for instance, how the most democratic and republican bourgeoisie in America or Switzerland deal with workers on strike...

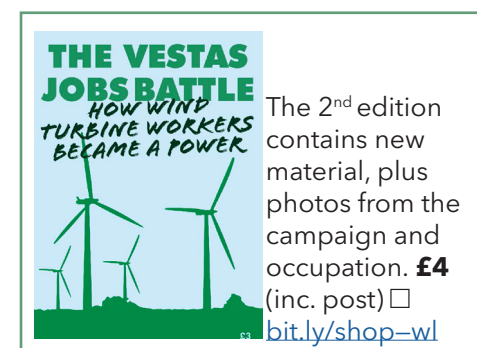
[Or] the learned Mr. Kautsky could have studied [the] "law" of bourgeois democracy in connection with the Dreyfus case in republican France, with the lynching of Negroes and internationalists in the democratic republic of America, with the case of Ireland and Ulster in democratic Britain....

Can it be that the learned Kautsky has never heard that the more highly democracy is developed, the more the bourgeois parliaments are subjected by the stock exchange and the bankers? This does not mean that we must not make use of bourgeois parliaments... But it does mean that only a liberal can forget the historical limitations and conventional nature of the bourgeois parliamentary system as Kautsky does...

The Soviet government is the first in the world (or strictly speaking, the

second, because the Paris Commune began to do the same thing) to enlist the people, specifically the exploited people, in the work of administration. The working people are barred from participation in bourgeois parliaments (they never decide important questions under bourgeois democracy, which are decided by the stock exchange and the banks) by thousands of obstacles, and the workers know and feel, see and realise perfectly well that the bourgeois parliaments are institutions alien to them, instruments for the oppression of the workers by the bourgeoisie, institutions of a hostile class, of the exploiting minority.

The Soviets are the direct organisation of the working and exploited people themselves, which help them to organise and administer their own state in every possible way... Freedom of the press ceases to be hypocrisy, because the printing-plants and stocks of paper are taken away from the bourgeoisie. The same thing applies to the best buildings, the palaces, the man-



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sions and manor houses. Soviet power took thousands upon thousands of these best buildings from the exploiters at one stroke, and in this way made the right of assembly – without which democracy is a fraud – a million times more democratic for the people...

The entire apparatus less costly, more flexible, more accessible to the workers and peasants [who are] able very quickly to recall [their] local deputy or to delegate him to a general congress of Soviets.

Proletarian democracy is a million times more democratic than any bourgeois democracy;

Soviet power is a million times more democratic than the most democratic bourgeois republic... ☐



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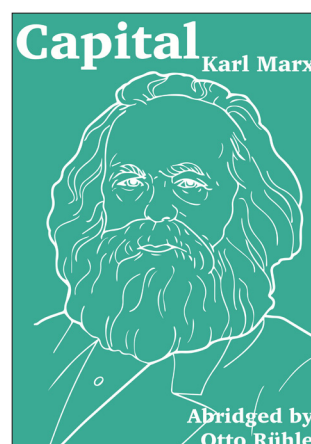
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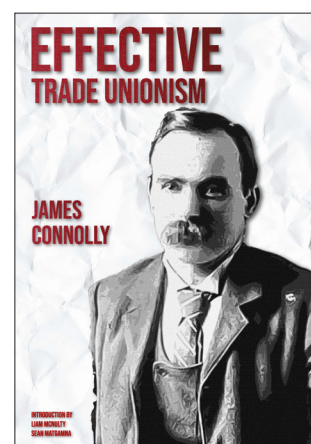
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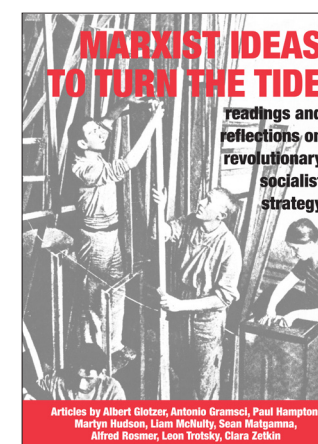
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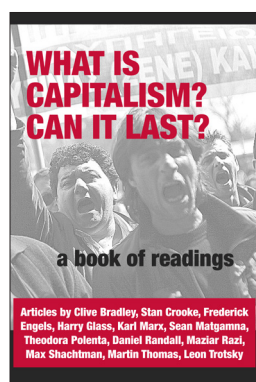
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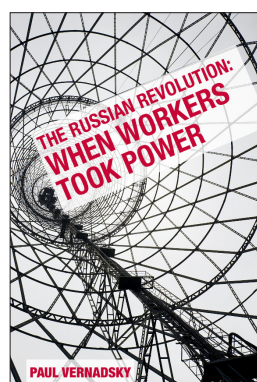
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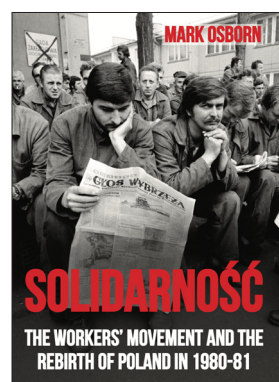
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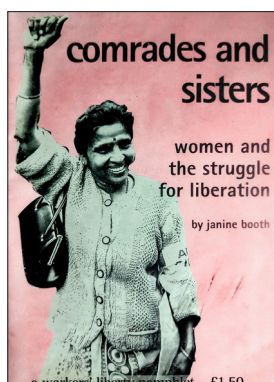
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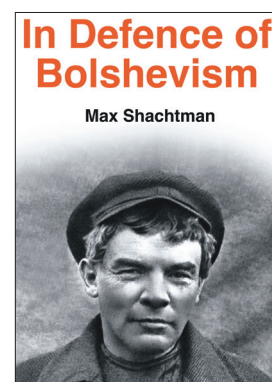
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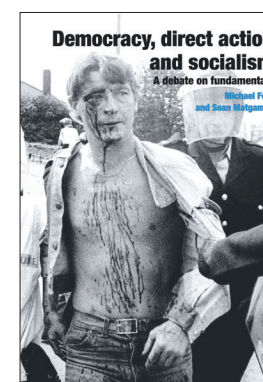
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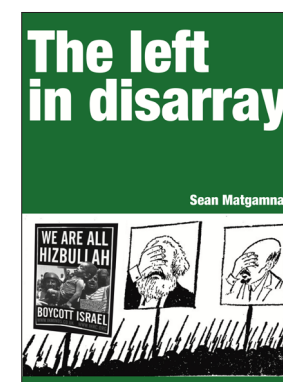
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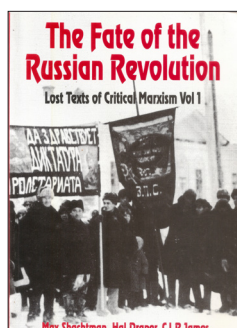
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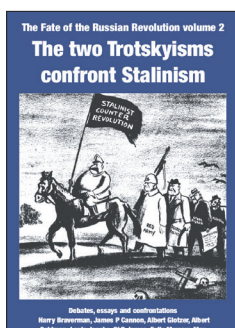
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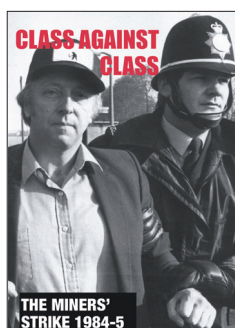
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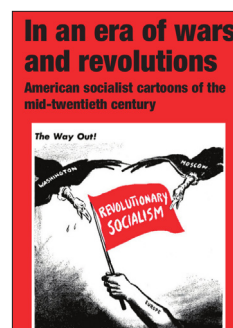
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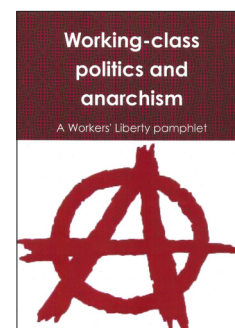
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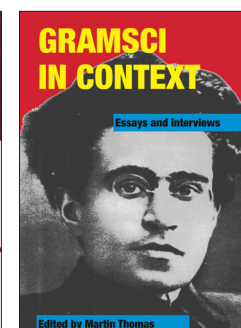
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What was in the coffin at the funeral of socialism?



Socialism vs Capitalism

By Sean Matgamna

This article was written in March 1990, as systems that claimed to be "socialist" had collapsed across Eastern Europe. The old USSR would collapse in its turn in 1991, and the Chinese government (while it still calls itself "communist") would make a dramatic turn "from above" to private ownership and market economics.

Bourgeois propagandists and ex-Stalinists alike tell us that we are witnessing the end of socialism. Socialism is dying of shame, failure and self disgust before our eyes in Eastern Europe. Socialism has been tried and is now deservedly rejected as an all-round social and historical failure.

It is rejected most explicitly by the working class who, for example, gave the right the bulk of its vote in last month's East German election.

The workers want capitalism, and socialism, "history's great dream" – so bourgeois and ex-socialist propagandists alike say – goes the way of other ignorant yearnings and strivings, taking its place in the museum of quackery alongside such relics of barbarism as alchemy.

For sixty and more years, "socialism", in common discourse, has been what existed in the USSR. The ideas conveyed by the words socialism and communism before Stalin established his system sixty years ago faded into the mists of pre-history, and "socialism" came to be the theory and practice of Stalinism – what became known in the 1970s as "actually existing socialism".

That was "socialism". There has been no other socialism (unless some fool wants to cite Western "democratic socialism", Sweden for example).

And yes, it is this "actually existing

socialism" that is ceasing to exist, melting like islands of ice in the warm seas of international capitalism. And yes, its enemies are the very working class in whose name the "socialist" states claimed their historic legitimacy

So much for "socialism", "actually existing socialism". But for the socialism of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Luxemburg and Gramsci, it is a good thing that millions of people in Eastern Europe and in the Soviet Union have risen in revolt against "socialism" and "communism". In fact it is, paradoxically, the best thing that has happened for socialists in fully half a century.

The fact that those millions hate and despise "socialism" is the best pledge we could have that socialism has a future, that socialism is indeed the "wave of the future."

This becomes clear when you ask yourself the question: what have the workers revolted against when they revolted against "socialism"? What has been proved or disproved by the indisputable failure of the Stalinist system?

The workers and others have revolted against:

- National oppression by the USSR and within the USSR.
- Subordination of individuals, social groups, and nations to an all-powerful regulating state through which a bureaucratic ruling class exercised its dictatorship
- The denial of free speech, free press, free assembly, free organisations.
- Exploitation and poverty, combined with outrageous privilege for the ruling class.

They want instead:

- National and individual freedom.
- Democracy.
- Prosperity and equality – an end, at least, to the peculiarly glaring sort of inequality imposed on the Eastern Bloc by bureaucratic privilege.

That the workers think they can get these things, or get more of them, under a market system, is very impor-

tant, and determines what happens now, but it is not the whole story. It is not even the gist of the story. And it is not the end but the beginning of the chapter that opened in the East in the autumn of 1989.

And what has the failure of Stalinist "socialism" proved?

- That rigidly bureaucratic systems, where all power, decision, initiative and resources are concentrated in the hands of the state, cannot plan their economies effectively. No true Marxist ever believed they could.

- That the workers become alienated when a supposed "workers' state" actually means rule over them by privileged bureaucrats.

- That socialism is impossible without freedom and democracy, without free initiative and comprehensive self-rule.

- That socialism is impossible when the socialists set out to develop backward national economies, rather than the working class seizing power on the basis of the technology created by advanced capitalism and beginning with equality and freedom.

Eastern Europe proves all these things. But then its evidence vindicates, rather than disproves, the ideas of Karl Marx.

Marx argued that:

- Socialism would grow out of advanced capitalism, which had developed the means of production far enough that want could be abolished almost immediately;
- Socialism would be the creation of the mass of the people, led by the working class, and, by definition, therefore, democratic;
- Socialism would immediately destroy the bureaucratic state machine, substituting an accountable system of working-class administration.

What came to be known as "socialism", and in fact was "actually existing socialism", was never socialism. Lenin and Trotsky and the Bolsheviks did not believe that socialism was possible in the backward Tsarist empire. What they

believed was that the workers could take power there, and make the first in a chain of revolutions that would reach the advanced countries where socialism was possible.

The revolutions in Western Europe were betrayed and defeated. In isolation, the Stalinist mutation, a new form of class society with collective property, emerged by way of a bloody one-sided civil war against the workers of the USSR, led by the genuine Marxists, Trotsky and his comrades. After World War 2 it spread.

Stalinism was never socialism. But the revolt against it is socialism in embryo – the mass self-assertion and revolt of millions of people is the raw material of socialism.

It would be a true miracle if the workers in the Stalinist countries had political clarity after years in darkness. It would be remarkable if they were not confused by the official "socialism" which meant tyranny and poverty, and by the capitalism of Western Europe which means comparative liberty and prosperity.

What they are gaining now is the freedom to think, to organise, the freedom to struggle and to learn from their struggle. Out of this, the first steps towards socialism – independent workers' organisations, parties and trade unions – will emerge again in countries in which History did indeed seem to have ended in hell forty or more years ago. In the East, working-class history has begun again.

Working classes which fail to shape their own history sometimes get a second chance – in the first place the chance to learn from and not repeat that history.

"Socialism" is dead. Long live socialism! □

Industrial action on steel jobs

By Matt Dunn

Members of the Unite union at Tata at Port Talbot and Llanwern steelworks started their industrial action on Tuesday 18 June.

Unite rep Jason Wyatt told a rally in Port Talbot on the eve of the action that they are "fighting for our communities".

"This fight is big", he told the crowd, "and Tata's proposals are damaging to our work, to our livelihood. We see it necessary to fight and fight all the way."

What the fight looks like is unclear. The current limited industrial action, just an overtime ban and work to rule, seems unlikely to win. An escalation is necessary.



Also of concern is the action of the other two unions, Community and the GMB.

Community, the majority union, called

off their action to discuss an "improved offer" of slightly better redundancy terms. Officialdom in the GMB (much smaller in the works) then overturned the membership's overwhelming vote in favour of action in order to sit with Tata management and Community officials rather than stand with Unite members taking industrial action.

Steel is a critical industry. South Wales relies on these jobs and the income they provide. This is a test for the transition that is to come – either the workers' voice will be at the centre of that transition, or it will be ignored and jobs and communities sacrificed on the altar of profit. Victory to the steel workers! §

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

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

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

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

- Independent working-class representation in politics
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement
- A workers' charter of trade union rights – to organise, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

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The time I got sacked

By Matt Shaw

Once in my time on the railway, over 30 years ago, I managed to get sacked, usually only achieved by hitting a boss or cheating with your travel concessions.

Back then the general rule was job and knock (go home when you've finished the job). On one particular weekend I was in charge, i.e. getting the higher grade money for that shift. We had got a lot of the work done in the previous week, and so were expecting an early finish.

The job, literally opposite the depot and down an incline towards Sheffield Midland Station, was to reclaim some concrete cable troughing and bring it back up the slope for later use. We cleared it all by lunchtime.

After about an hour I said: let's go. Everyone else disappeared pretty quick and I put my tea gear away in my locker and set off. "New works", which I was in, and "maintenance" shared the depot, so there were two lots of supervisors, usually neither interfering with the other.

Except... I had been in maintenance and got on the wrong side of one of the most stupid men I have ever met. He had been promoted to keep him out of the way. On that particular Sunday he came rolling back into the depot from the pub just as I was walking away from it.

Monday morning we filled in our

timesheets and went out to start work. About an hour later I was called in and asked what time we left the depot on Sunday. Being not that stupid, I said about half four.

I was told that I had been seen leaving at 12.45. A supervisor had waited to see if I returned, and I hadn't done. I told him that we had completed our given work so did what we normally did.

The supervisor from maintenance stood just behind my supervisor, leaned over when he spotted my time sheet, and said that I shouldn't be paid till 17.00 as he had seen me leaving about 12.45 and he had waited to see if I returned. The commonly held opinion was that our supervisor should have told him to keep his nose out, and then docked my and the other four guys' timesheets to reflect our actual hours worked.

But our supervisor was fairly new to the job and instead asked his engineer what to do. The engineer was feeling particularly bitter as his son had just been sacked for claiming time that he had not worked.

He instructed our supervisor to invoke the disciplinary section of our rule book.

After quite a long delay we had our "day in court". It was me, Rob my rep, the engineer I'd mentioned previously and a clerical officer who acted as a minute taker.

Our defence was that what I'd done

what was the common practice of job and knock. The engineer refused to acknowledge that job and knock even existed and constantly kept bringing up his son's sacking for fraud.

Then the other four guys were brought in one by one and each had their hearing.

Then we were summoned back in reverse order. The first guy came back out and held up one finger which I took to mean suspended for one day. No, he meant one week, which was incredibly harsh. I knew I was in serious trouble as I'd been "in charge".

Sure enough, the engineer pronounced that I had been defrauding the company and encouraged the others to do the same. "We have decided to terminate your employment subject to any appeal you may want to make".

Summoning up my voice, I pointed out that my actions were not unusual in our depot and he had not taken into account my previous record which included some written thanks. Rob intervened to state that we would appeal and we left.

Nobody had ever before been sacked for doing what I'd done. One thing I didn't use in my defence was that all the other gangs, three on overtime duty that day, had already gone before me. In fact I was the last worker on duty to leave. More next week. □

A story of early-20th C Vienna



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Adapted from a Stefan Zweig novella, *Letter from an Unknown Woman* (1948) is one of the best from Max Ophuls, nowadays a sadly neglected director. Set mainly in early twentieth century Vienna, it is a story of doomed romance and an exposé of the shallowness of Viennese life underneath its glittering surface and aristocratic frippery – in particular, of its truncated life opportunities for women.

Joan Fontaine plays Lisa, a young woman who becomes obsessed with a pianist, Stefan Brand, who briefly moves into her apartment block. Although he soon disappears from her life, she cannot forget him. In a complicated plot Lisa then refuses an arranged marriage to a foppish army officer. She eventu-



ally marries an older man, Johann, but she is unhappy. By chance she meets Stefan again but he can't remember her.

There is a brief affair from which Lisa becomes pregnant, although Stefan still can't recall her and Lisa realises he never loved her. An enraged Johann then challenges Stefan to a duel. Lisa's son dies of typhus and she becomes fatally ill. From her deathbed she writes her "unknown woman" letter to Stefan, explaining everything to him. Shocked, Stefan now has to decide whether to accept the duel or flee Vienna. □

• Watch online: bit.ly/unk-w

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Labour: pay the junior doctors!

By Sacha Ismail

Junior doctors in the British Medical Association (BMA) should be congratulated for deciding to go on strike just before the election (27 June-2 July). If only more workers were making use of this opportunity to publicise their cause and press their demands.

Shadow health secretary Wes Streeting has called for the BMA to call off the strike, promising that "they will be one of my first phone calls on July 5".

Streeting has simultaneously reiterated that the junior doctors' call for a 35% increase is "unaffordable".

Actually speedy implementation of this demand would be easily affordable if Labour was willing to meaningfully increase taxes on the rich and corporations.

The problem is the wider one of the Labour leadership refusing to commit



to restored or even meaningfully increased funding for public services. The Nuffield Trust charity has just released analysis showing that the annual NHS funding increases the party is proposing, up to 2028-9, will be substantially lower than during post-2010 austerity.

The labour movement must shove the Labour leadership into abandoning its regressive stance and turning on the

spending taps.

What makes Labour's attitude to the junior doctors' campaign even worse is that what the BMA is demanding is not 35% overnight, but a substantial real-terms pay rise this year as part of a "road map" for "pay restoration" (restoration of pay to the real-terms level of 2008).

Streeting and co. are promising es-

entially nothing, implying that the junior doctors should be satisfied simply with the prospect of "negotiations".

As part of rallying in support of the strike, the labour movement must exert pressure on Labour to make the BMA a serious offer.

The first step is to maximise the presence of trade unionists, Labour members, student activists, etc, joining the junior doctors on their picket lines.

- Join a picket line or rally on at your local hospital (the BMA says details "available soon")

- Invite a junior doctor to speak at your union or other meeting

- Donate to the BMA's strike fund: bit.ly/bma-s

- Merseyside Fire Brigades Union has initiated a solidarity statement in support of the junior doctors' strike. Add your name and get your organisation to endorse: bit.ly/fbu-m

Belated but welcome unity

By Phil Grimm

Security guards working in buildings will strike again for seven days starting 17 June. The strike, involving members of both GMB and PCS, has been called in response to the refusal by the contractor, G4S, to offer a decent pay rise.

As it stands, these workers' pay is now scarcely above minimum wage, in return for often difficult and dangerous work. Guards routinely work long hours, six days a week, in an effort to make ends meet.

This time round, PCS, which has around 200 members on the G4S DWP contract, will be formally participating in the strike. In the last round of strikes, PCS was caught napping, having failed to ballot or seriously organise its members for action until GMB had already named dates. It's good that both unions are now coordinating action, if belatedly.

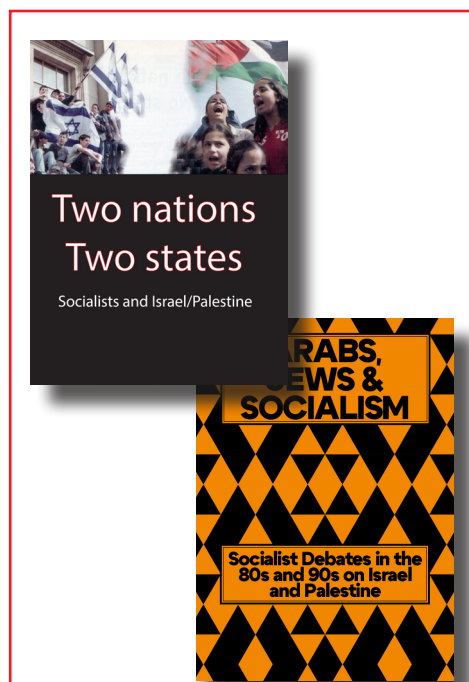
In the past year, PCS leaders had been reluctant to ballot G4S guards despite sustained pressure from grassroots reps. Multiple approaches to the National Dispute Committee were made, but nothing came of it. We were instead offered an endless series of consultative meetings with no obvious route to action. It was only when GMB took the initiative (with the potential to recruit PCS members) that PCS hastily swung into action.

There's an important political lesson here: members can be won to taking action, but doing so needs active persuasion and dynamism from the union – not just waiting around for the mood to develop by itself.

There are challenges ahead. Union membership is very uneven across the



country, and information seems to be seeping through slowly to some guards about their rights. But this strike is a real step forward for some of the lowest paid workers in civil service buildings. □



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• workersliberty.org/2-i-p

Goldsmiths on two-week strike

By Cathy Nugent

On Monday 17 June members of the University and College Union at Goldsmiths College, University of London, began a two week strike. The strike is the latest in a series of actions. Including a Marking and Assessment Boycott and an international academic boycott. Aimed at fighting off threatened job cuts of over 130 full-time equivalent posts (affecting up to 25% of all academic staff).

Earlier this month students occupied the council chamber of Deptford Town Hall, now part of the college's estate. The occupation (and a Gaza solidarity occupation) continue despite threats from management to evict the students.

The Town Hall occupation began after the college published their response to the first stage of the redundancy consultation: "full steam ahead" with the job cuts.

According to data compiled by Wonkhe Goldsmiths had a healthy cash reserve in the last financial year and a significant rise in the number of taught post-graduates (MA students).

No wonder that staff have argued



strongly that the college has a lot of room to expand its unique arts, humanities and social science courses, countering the message of (badly) managed decline communicated by college bosses.

Support the strike by visiting the picket line and donating to the strike fund!

More: linktr.ee/gucu2024 □

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Far-right danger in France

By Martin Thomas

According to the unions, 250,000 marched in Paris on 15 June, and nearly 400,000 in other cities across France, against Marine Le Pen's far-right Rassemblement National in the run-up to France's snap elections on 30 June and 4 July.

The protests were backed by the mainstream left parties, the far left, and all the main union confederations bar Force Ouvrière, which has a rigid "anti-politics" stance.

The RN got 31% in the 9 June Euro-poll and could win a majority or near-majority in the elections. In 2022 the RN got 23% in the first round, and 41% in the second, for the presidency. It got 89 seats, from 19% of the vote, in the legislative elections following. Previous: 8 seats in 2017, from 13%; two seats in 2012, also from 13%.

The Socialist Party, the Communist Party, Jean-Luc Mélenchon's La France Insoumise, and the Greens have formed an alliance for 30 June as they did in 2022, so that the spectrum stands only one candidate in each of the 577 constituencies on 30 June, with a better chance of the 12.5% required to enter the 7 July second round.

This time they have called it New Popular Front (NPF), trading on references to the 1930s. However, the Popular Front majority in the Assembly elected in 1936 broke up in 1938, and by 1940 that same Assembly voted full powers to Pétain, who set up the fascist Vichy regime during World War Two.

The French Trotskyists opposed the Popular Front alliance in 1936 because it meant the Socialist Party, where they were then active, and which was then much more left-wing, trimming its politics to bring the Radicals (then the biggest bourgeois party) into the alliance.

It's not quite the same now. None of the parties in the NPF is so left-wing that joining the NPF trims its message that much. A deal which can allow at least some minimal left alternative to the RN in run-offs is better than dispersion. Still, the NPF is no answer.

Lutte Ouvrière will stand candidates in 550 (of 577) constituencies on 30 June and the NPA(R) in 29. Those will give a chance to flag up support for a working-class alternative. Given LO's and NPA(R)'s poor scores on 9 June, probably the only choice on 7 July will be the NPF candidates where they have got through.



The NPF has shared out seats for 30 June by giving allocations to the SP, CP, France Insoumise, and Greens. The Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (A) – the other side of the December 2022 split in the previous NPA – has rallied to the NPF and been rewarded with a seat from Insoumise's allocation, an already-RN seat in a non-industrial small-town area on the Spanish border.

France Insoumise is in some turmoil because its leader Jean-Luc Mélenchon (it has no ordinary party structure) has excluded some prominent Insoumise members of the Assembly (at odds with him since late 2022) from standing.

Some Macron ministers from backgrounds with the mainstream-right Les Républicains (LR) have called for a "centre" coalition for 30 June, but with little effect. Eric Ciotti, president of LR, proposed a deal with the RN. He has since been expelled by LR's committee, then reinstated by a court. He has announced 62 "Friends of Eric Ciotti" candidates, agreed with the RN.

The RN has fascist origins – in the street-fighting group Occident, before 1972 – and for decades the French left (and *Solidarity* too) have usually called it "fascist". It got 31% of the vote in the Euro-election of 9 June, and polls now suggest it will win enough on 7 July to block alternative majorities, or even a full majority.

The Assembly has no power to remove a president. What will happen?

Ugo Palheta, an academic writer on fascism who is with the NPA (A), calls the RN now "proto-fascist" or "neo-fascist", but also writes that we should worry about the RN's possible "fascist future" more than its "fascist past". His analysis suggests a RN prime minister "cohabiting" with Macron as president until 2027 (and probably recruiting LR ministers) would produce something like a government in Britain run by Suella Braver-

man and Nigel Farage – harsh against migrants and civil liberties (with some "social" pay-off for the supposed "French French"), damaging democratic spaces but not yet irreparably. The *Financial Times* (18 June) reports that the RN has been reassuring big business that it will respect fiscal rules, and that some big business is now "rooting for" the RN, having given up on Macron.

The RN has softened its image. Since 1972 it has been strictly electoralist, abjuring street-fighting. Its steward-squad, DPS, used to carry out "punitive actions". That has faded since the late 1990s. The RN relies for "security" now on smaller more street-oriented far-right groups, like that of [Axel Loustau](#).

It has seen off several exclusions of or splits by former leaders (Marine Le Pen's father Jean-Marie; Bruno Mégret; Florian Philippot; Marion Maréchal). It has accepted the EU and the euro and even (mostly) Schengen. It has given more space to social and economic demands. It has deliberately dropped antisemitism, and recently distanced itself from the German AfD on that count. Over decades it has broadened its stable electorate to include many big-city dwellers and young people, and as many women as men.

It is a small party. It claims 83,000 members, but sceptical journalists reckon more like 20,000. Comparison: the SP and the CP both have about 40,000; the SP had 280,000 as recently as 2006, and the CP 710,000 in 1981. The Croix de Feu/PSF, the biggest of many interwar fascist groups in France, had 700,000 in 1940.

There are still relatively few RN local councillors – 827 elected last time round, out of 223,000 in other-than-tiny municipalities.

With its small membership, the RN is probably too weak for the most drastic measures.

The RN is [hostile to unions](#), saying the big confederations in France are "too political". And the strength of unions in France depends heavily on favourable laws. But that strength exists, and the RN may decide for now that it is too risky to change laws embedded in the constitution.

In 2018 Palheta reckoned it "not out of the question that [the RN] could evolve... into a right-wing conservative party" through a process of "notabilisation" (its leaders valuing the perks of managing the status quo).

Palheta warns, though, that RN leaders are still on the old message of a war against "two globalisms" ("financial" and "jihadist"). And its base is a personal following of the leaders, capable of being led where the leaders wish: no equivalent of the millions in Britain who vote Labour but detest Starmer. The RN's three leading slogans are: To support purchasing power; To get France back in order; To stop the flood of immigrants. The RN has a nucleus which could harshen its politics rapidly in a favourable crisis.

In short, there is still time – time for street mobilisations and strikes, like 15 June, to rouse people against the RN and to stall an RN government if elected. But not all the time in the world. A mass working-class political force in France is also needed. As Yvan Lemaître of the DR current in NPA(R) [puts it](#): "there is no other answer to the threat of the far right than a workers' government to end the domination of big business".

There is also a lesson for us in Britain. If a Starmer Labour government operates like the abjectly neoliberal Socialist Party administration in France in 2012-7, and there is no left political intervention of sufficient quality, that can bring a collapse in the labour movement base and a rise in the far right here. □





Solidarity

For a workers' government



By Ira Berkovic

An immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza is an urgent necessity to halt the slaughter, provide a respite for a battered and traumatised Gazan population, and free the remaining surviving hostages. A massive increase in the level of aid is also required, whether or not a ceasefire agreement is reached, to stem a humanitarian crisis that could kill as many as the war itself. More than 8,000 children under five have been diagnosed and treated for malnutrition, according to the director of the World Health Organisation. But a pause in the fighting will also mean better conditions for the transportation and distribution of aid.

US government officials say Hamas's reticence to accept the latest proposal for a ceasefire and hostage-release agree-

ment is what is holding it up. Hamas has countered by insisting they responded "positively" to the proposal, and pointing out that Israel's support for it is also ambiguous. US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, who has led the American party in the indirect, multilateral negotiations between Israel and Hamas, says Hamas has requested "amendments" to the proposal, some of which are "unworkable".

Hamas's position thus far has been that any agreement which does not include a permanent ceasefire is unacceptable. Whatever about Hamas's own perspective, which is determined by its own political and social project, ordinary Gazans would be justified in being wary about an agreement that Israel will take as license to resume its bombardment as soon as the remaining hostages are freed and the ceasefire expires. An

indefinite ceasefire would be better.

But a temporary ceasefire is better than an indefinite continuation of slaughter. Accepting the US-backed proposal, and using the pause in fighting to continue negotiations towards a permanent ceasefire, aid provision, and a reconstruction plan is the best immediately-available option for stemming the tide of destruction and death.

The left-wing Israeli social movement Standing Together said: "We know by now that without all parties agreeing to a deal, there will be no end to this war. We also know that there is no way to protect the lives of Palestinians in Gaza and bring the remaining Israeli hostages home without an end to the war. There is no military solution. This must end. We need a deal now." □