

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

STOP TRUMP'S COUP IN USA



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Against the Trump-Putin carve up of Ukraine!

6699 Editorial

"It is a dry white season brother... indeed, it is a dry white season but seasons come to pass."

Mongane Wally Serote, South African poet, anti-Apartheid activist

We are living through a period of increasingly intense world-wide reaction, now led by the wretched, demagogic, lying, far-right Donald Trump administration in the US. And matters may well get worse. The populist, xenophobic far-right is rising.

Trump is ripping up the long-established alliances between the US and the Western European powers, while he trashes the rule of law, equality legislation, workers' rights, at home.

If any on the left are tempted to be pleased when Trump and his allies humiliate mainstream European politicians, they have missed the point: Trump represents something worse, much worse, than the existing European capitalist order.

What to do? We, the internationalist left, must stand our ground and push back. Don't concede a centimetre of political ground.

Ukraine finds itself in a desperate position: attacked remorselessly by Russian imperialism, now apparently in amicable embrace with Trump, who is looking for an accommodation with the far-right dictatorship in Russia.

On the night of 22-23 February Russia launched its largest drone attack yet on Ukraine. 267 drones entered Ukrainian airspace. Explosions were heard across the country. Ukraine says that it is running short of US anti-rocket, Patriot missiles.

Russia continues to destroy Ukraine. Ukraine's pre-war GDP per person was only \$3,700, one third the amount of the EU's poorest state, Bulgaria. Since the full-scale Russian invasion GDP has fallen by 25%, driving an additional 7mn into poverty.

The cost of re-building Ukraine may run to over \$1tn.

Ukraine is simultaneously running an



unemployment rate of 15-20% alongside a shortage of skilled workers. Many have left Ukraine for Europe, others are fighting in Ukraine's armed forces.

Perhaps 80,000 Ukrainian troops have been killed and 400,000 injured (*Wall Street Journal*).

Ukraine has paid a high price.

Nevertheless, Ukraine is right to fight to defend its independence from the threat of brutal foreign dictatorship. It has the right to demand weapons from the EU and US. We fight here for the UK to arm Ukraine.

Peace

The anti-war "left" in the UK, which has effectively sided with Putin to demand peace while not being clear what a stable, democratic peace must look like, is now arguing that the UK government must not try to hinder the Trump-Putin peace deal that is being shaped without Ukraine and against Ukraine.

Labour Prime Minister Keir Starmer is right to pledge continued support for Ukraine. He must be held to that.

If the US abandons Ukraine, Europe must not.

The anti-war "left" argues "we" cannot afford to give aid and weapons to Ukraine and also fund the welfare state here. This is wretched. Since when have real socialists argued that the working class must choose between the NHS and the education system, between disability benefits and international aid?

The money is there: the capitalists and the rich should pay for what we need. And what we need includes arms for Ukraine.

This is not a demand to boost UK arms spending, it is a very specific demand that the UK, US and European states should give Ukraine what it

needs to defend itself against Russia.

This anti-war left – the Stop the War Coalition and SWP – must now be very confused. They have been hoping for a defeat of NATO powers by Russia in Ukraine. Now the leading NATO power, the US, led by ultra-reactionary Donald Trump, appears to be helping Putin to a victory in Ukraine. The Brexit backing, Hamas-supporting SWP have found themselves lined up behind the far right, again.

What motivates Trump to align with Vladimir Putin? We can't tell, exactly. Quite probably he genuinely admires the Russian president. Putin is a man who has crushed Russian democracy, killed his prominent opponents, and stamped on Chechnya. Or perhaps Putin really does – as is sometimes alleged – have "kompromat," or compromising material, on Trump.

We can't tell. And politically it is not central. What is important is what Trump's administration does, and how it justifies itself.

Trump is signalling he will have a peace deal within a few days. This is unlikely and begs the question: peace on whose terms?

Rejection

Following Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's rejection of the Trump administration's diktat to sign a deal that would allow the US to exploit Ukraine's untapped mineral wealth, a \$500bn deal, Trump's government is openly and crudely attempting to intimidate Ukraine.

Zelenskyy, reasonably, wants Ukraine to have guarantees of Western support against future Russian attacks, and says he will not sign until he gets those pledges.

The US is threatening Ukraine, coerc-

ing its government, and could freeze arms shipments, including missile systems used to defend Ukrainian cities.

The Trump administration is also saying if Zelenskyy refuses to sign, they will stop Ukraine's access to Starlink, a major element of Ukraine's military self-defence from Russian attacks. Starlink is controlled by Elon Musk, the Trump ally, loudmouth, and richest man on the planet.

Trump states that he is attempting to recoup money the US has donated or lent to Ukraine. Trump says, "We gave them \$350bn". Obsessed with cash, Trump castigated the European states for not paying more to defend Ukraine.

This is old-style, and shamelessly unabashed, imperial arm-twisting. It is a throw-back to the past, a regression. It is also a big lie.

Trump seems to have vastly and deliberately overstated US allocations to Ukraine. According to the Kiel Institute Europe has contributed €132bn in aid to Ukraine, to the US's €114bn. Of the military aid, the US has given slightly more, €64bn, to Europe's €62bn.

How will this end?

Zelenskyy might calculate he has to sign away Ukraine's mineral resources to avoid an immediate catastrophe. Finally, he might have to cede land and political rights, too, in a political settlement forced on Ukraine by big-power bullying.

In that case the internationalist left will blame the Russian imperialists and their right-wing friends in the West. We remain committed to defending Ukraine against Putin's state and Ukraine's working class against all the threats it faces, from Russia, from Trump, and from Ukrainian capitalists.

Victory to Ukraine! □

Solidarity 736

Solidarity 736 will be out 12 March, not 5 March, to give a week free for the distribution of our sister publication *Women's Fightback*. □

Israel out of the West Bank!

By Ira Berkovic

Israel's ongoing military incursions in the occupied Palestinian West Bank have seen 40,000 people displaced from their homes. Israel says they will be indefinitely barred from returning home.

The Israeli military has also deployed tanks in the West Bank for the first time since 2002. Water and power supplies to the Jenin refugee camp have been cut off. Israeli forces also raided a number of facilities in occupied East Jerusalem run by Unrwa, the UN agency responsible for providing aid to Palestinian refugees, which Israel has effectively outlawed. Three schools were closed as part of the raids.

Israel has said its troops will remain in occupied Syrian territory, south of Damascus, "indefinitely", and that they will prevent the armed forces of the new Syrian administration from entering the area. Israel also flew warplanes over Lebanon on Sunday 23 February, as the funeral of assassinated Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah took place. Air strikes were also carried out against

targets in southern Lebanon.

Humanitarian crises in Gaza are ongoing, with 60,000 cases of acute malnutrition amongst children under five, according to Human Rights Watch, with a further 60,000 cases of moderate or severe malnutrition.

On Thursday 20 February, three empty buses exploded in parking lots in suburbs of Tel Aviv. Israeli security forces have since reportedly arrested three people in connection with the attacks, one Palestinian and two Jewish Israelis apparently accused of transporting the attackers. Israel deployed more ground troops to the West Bank following the bombings. Although there were no casualties, the images of burnt-out buses evoke memories of the Second Intifada, which took place between 2000-2005 and saw 138 suicide bombings. In total around 1,000 Israelis, mostly civilians, and over 3,000 Palestinians, were killed in that period.

The British government, and other governments internationally, could do more to pressure Israel to pull back. Governments can increase their own funding to Unrwa, and use diplomatic pressure to demand Israel reverses its restrictions on Unrwa. International recognition of the state of Palestine, a diplomatic entity covering the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, is also of major symbolic importance, as it represents international acknowledgement of Palestinian sovereignty, and the illegitimacy of Israel's occupation of those territories.

Ultimately, however, the effects of external pressure will be limited without internal political upheaval. There is widespread hostility to the government within Israel, and recent polling published by the Israeli newspaper *Maariv* shows that, if elections were held, the government bloc would lose. However, the official "opposition" often varies only in tone, if at all, in terms of its policy towards the Palestinians. The efforts of movements like Standing Together, to intervene in anti-government mobilisation to promote a politics of equal rights, are vital.

Amongst Palestinians, polling by the Institute for Social and Economic Progress has shown that, whilst immediate support for a two-state settlement (i.e., an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel) remains a minority, many more ([over 70%](#) according to one poll from March 2024) would support it in the context of "serious negotiations".

Reconstruction

On Friday 21 February, the leaders of seven Arab states met in Saudi Arabia to discuss a plan for the reconstruction of Gaza, which they intend to present at a 4 March meeting of the Arab League. The only leader present who was not a monarch was el-Sisi, the president of Egypt, most recently "re-elected" in December 2023 with 89.6% of the vote, after having suppressed all political opposition.

US president Donald Trump has continued to promote his own plan for

Gaza, based on displacing the entire population while reconstruction takes place under US "ownership", although slightly less stridently than in the days immediately following its launch. Strong opposition from Egypt and Jordan, the countries whose collaboration would be required to make such a plan viable, made the plan an impossibility in practical terms. Nevertheless, it has given a significant confidence boost to those elements within the Israeli right who favour mass displacement and ethnic cleansing.

Long-term political progress in the region requires the development of an independent political force opposed to both regional and global imperialist powers, which aims for a democratic settlement guaranteeing equal rights to all peoples in the region, including Arabs, Jews, Kurds, and others. □

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



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Sat 8 Mar: Free women political prisoners! 3pm, Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Place W1B 1JL

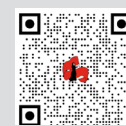
Wed 12 Mar: Homeworkers, barmaids, acrobats, and jam-makers: working class women who organised, fought and won! 7pm, New Cross Learning, 283-285 New Cross Road SE14 6AS

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.

Template motions

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



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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

2 Mar: Manchester. Caliban and the Witch, Gallery Café, 81 Princess St M2 3JL

3 Mar: Sheffield. Feminist Theory. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

9 Mar: London. Socialist Feminism, a New Approach. 2pm, Effra Social, 89 Effra Rd SW2 1DF

Campaigns

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

“Only peace will bring security”

From Standing Together (in Israel)

[On Friday 21 February], two Palestinian children lost their lives at the hands of a brutal occupation – simply because they are Palestinian. Simply because they were born and raised under Israeli military rule. Twelve year old

Ayman Nassar Taysir Al-He-mouni was killed by Israeli forces in Al-Kasara, south of Hebron, and thirteen year old Rimas Omar Mohammad Ammouri was killed by Israeli forces in Jenin.

Horrific

This tragic news has come out amid a horrific week, where

Ariel, Kfir and Shiri Bibas and Oded Lifshitz were returned to Israel after being killed in captivity.

The return of these hostages has sparked new calls for revenge in Israeli society, with our leaders vowing to intensify fighting in the West Bank and to continue fighting in Gaza, particularly after explo-

sives were found on buses in Tel Aviv.

It is not a coincidence that all of these tragic and terrifying events happen at the same time, and keep happening day after day.

It is a direct result of the decisions that are made by extremist leaders across the land who insist on violence and force

and refuse to choose a different path. This cycle of violence, grief and loss will continue as long as we stay on this path, and both Palestinians and Israelis will pay heavy prices.

Only peace will bring security to both peoples. Only peace will enable all of us to live with safety, freedom and equality. □

Having a laugh about Ukraine



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

One Victor Grossman contributes articles to the *Morning Star* from Germany. In a piece published on 21 February he confesses to allowing himself “a laugh” at Trump’s betrayal of Ukraine and J D Vance’s denunciation of the EU:

“The reason for an all too rare happy moment for some like me was strangely due to the words of two men I have absolutely no love for, J D Vance and ... Pate Hegseth ... How could one [not] stop grinding teeth – and laugh?”

Grossman is a former Stasi informer but on this occasion, he gave an honest account of how Stalinists really feel about Trump’s betrayal of Ukraine.

The *Morning Star*, like the rest of the Stalinist “left” that backs Putin’s invasion, has been proved wrong about Ukraine time and again.

Remember, these people assured us in the weeks prior to 24 February 2022 that no invasion would happen. Then they opposed the provision of arms, arguing that Ukrainian resistance was futile. Then they argued that “negotiations” would bring a quick end to the war, as though Putin was open to genu-

ine negotiations.

Most frustrating for the Putin-appeasers in the UK has been the refusal of most of the labour and trade union movement to listen to them. Resolutions and statements from trade unions supporting Ukraine have been either completely ignored or scolded as right wing by the *Morning Star*.

Finally, Trump has come to the rescue and offered Putin everything he wants while denouncing Zelenskyy as a corrupt dictator who started the war. The MS’s immediate reaction was to gloat that “It is an indictment of three years of Western policy that it should take a Fox News host and extreme white nationalist (Trump’s defence secretary Pete Hegseth) to spell out the truths about the war in Ukraine ... Indeed the peace plan as outlined echoes the calls made by some on the left ever since the outset of the war” (editorial 14 February).

(By “some on the left” the MS clearly means the Putin-appeasing “left” like itself, the Communist Party of Britain and the Stop the War Coalition).

But the paper does think one of Trump’s claims is unfair: “to imply Ukraine tricked the United States into this war is to reverse manipulator and



Cartoon by 9mm Ballpoint/
Red 'n' Black Salamander: bit.ly/9mm-store

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manipulated. US and EU policy pushed Ukraine into a position which many US experts, from former CIA director William Burns to former secretary of state Henry Kissinger had said for decades would lead to war. It did so including through regime change (backing the Maidan uprising in 2014 and derailing peace initiatives like the Minsk agreements)” (editorial 22-23 February).

It’s worth unpacking that particular set of words posing as an “argument”. Note, for a start the complete denial of Ukrainian agency. They didn’t choose to fight for their national self-determination against an imperialist invasion

the War et al, it’s worth quoting the Chatham House analyst Duncan Allan’s assessment:

“The German and French leaders seem to have been so keen for a ceasefire that they assented to political provisions at odds with Ukraine’s existence as a sovereign entity and, probably, its EU integration. This explains why the Kremlin used military power so demonstrably as talks were in session: to intimidate Western interlocutors who, it judged, lacked the stomach for confrontation – and who might be induced to get Ukraine to the fold.” □

Chemicals that pollute forever



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

A new report into chemical pollution in Europe has found that our environment is now awash with microscopic carcinogenic “forever chemicals” which would cost a staggering €2 trillion to clean up over the next 20 years if emissions continue. The cost of inaction will be counted in human lives and an estimated €52-€84 billion a year burden on Europe’s health system in what has been described as “the worst pollution crisis humanity has ever faced”.

Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS, were first synthesised 80 years ago and are used in a vast array of products from pesticides to firefighting foam, cosmetics to raincoats.

There are now over 10,000 compounds which are heat-, water- and stain-resistant and because of these useful properties they do not break down in the environment or in conventional incinerators. Almost every PFAS molecule ever produced is still out there in our soil, in raindrops, in our food and in our blood. They are dispersed from our smoke stacks, leach from landfill and disseminate from factories and specific sites of high contamination.

Although they exist in trace amounts, novel chemicals like PFAs accumulate in the bodies of living organisms, especially large mammals. Bioaccumulation of PFAS in humans causes cancers, hormone and immune disruption, pre-eclampsia in pregnant women, male fertility problems, liver damage and more.

Certain occupational groups are more at risk. The Fire Brigades Union has been

proactive in campaigning. Firefighters face multiple risks of PFAS exposure from firefighting foam, in fires, fire sites and fire stations and PFAS both in and on their own PPE. A US study linked PFAS to four of the top eight cancers found more commonly in firefighters.

European regulation of long-chain PFAS led to a transition from long-chain PFAS to short-chain PFAS from 2010-2020. However, the short-chain PFAS may actually be more harmful as they pass more readily through cell membranes and they are more difficult to filter from the environment. Scientists euphemistically refer to this transition as “regrettable substitution”.

In February 2023 five European countries proposed a universal restriction on PFAS production (“uPFAS”). This proposal has been met with an aggressive lobbying campaign by the chemicals industry who deny the harmful effects of

short-chain PFAS. The Forever Lobbying Project has brought together journalists and scientists has found that their arguments designed to halt uPFAS are “false, misleading and potentially dishonest”. Analysing 1,000 arguments in 8,000 different papers, they drew similarities between the chemicals industries multimillion pound lobbying campaign and the “merchants of doubt” campaigns run by Big Tobacco and Fossil Fuel giants.

As part of their greenwashing lobbying strategy, the industry claims that there are no alternatives to PFAS and that they are needed for green technologies like wind turbines and hydrogen fuel cells. But such arguments are “pure statements without evidence”. Researchers at Stockholm University have already found alternatives to two thirds of PFAS. The chemical industry has had plenty of time to develop alternatives but instead

spends money on denialist campaigning and slowing down the transition.

Post-Brexit, the UK has less regulation than exists in the EU and USA. There is no statutory requirement for the UK’s privatised water companies to remove PFAS from drinking water. A recent study found tap water provided by Thames Water in west London was 11 times the safe limit defined by EU regulation.

The EU’s uPFAS restrictions are being debated with a decision due in 2026-27. Liberal Democrat MP Munira Wilson has proposed a parliamentary bill on stricter regulation of drinking water. Trade union health and safety campaigns could help strengthen these efforts, by raising awareness of workplace PFAS exposure and winning safer drinking water at work. More and a detailed map of PFAS contamination sites: foreverpollution.eu □

Trump, Queensland, and apathy



Women's Fightback

By Natalia Cassidy

On 28 January, the new conservative government in Queensland, Australia, which ousted Labor in October 2024, announced a ban on the public health system providing puberty blockers and gender-affirming care for young transgender people. The ban stops any new patients being able to receive medications at the state's only gender clinic in Brisbane. Existing patients and private provision can continue (unlike under the ban in Britain).

Tim Nicholls, the health minister for Queensland, cited the UK's own Cass Review as a factor in the decision to restrict healthcare access.

Medical professionals have condemned the ban and launched an [appeal](#) to raise funds for access to private care (not banned). Puberty-blockers

continue to be prescribed for other kids (e.g. to stop precocious puberty), as they have been since the 1980s, and evidence from decades of use for transgender kids is that they are safe, reversible, and beneficial.

But the Australian Labor Party has responded weakly. Labor federal health minister Mark Butler has failed to condemn the state ban and instead kicked the can down the road by announcing a federal review into trans healthcare.

Trump

This is as part of a broader wave of attacks on transgender people. Donald Trump in the US announced an executive order almost immediately after taking office to affirm that intersex and transgender people do not exist, and has declared war against so-called "gender ideology". He is pushing to exclude trans kids from school sport, though for now making no move at federal level to ban puberty-blockers. (Some US states have imposed restrictions).



Across the world, a fight for the dignity, safety and freedoms of transgender people of all ages had been making progress for decades. This is

now threatened by a wave of far-right politics that is emboldened to use trans people and gender "ideology" as a bogeyman alongside migrants at the forefront of most "culture wars".

The far-right are not alone in banging the drum against trans rights. In Britain, especially, some on the left and in the labour-movement have been some of the loudest cheerleaders against trans rights.

Apathy

Largely, the fight for trans rights must overcome apathy among those that are natural allies. Transgender people transgress social norms and are therefore often ridiculed and derided as odd and at the fringes of society. LGB groups and individuals have attempted to distance themselves from trans people, seeing association with them as difficult.

Apathy must be opposed if we are to fight for a better world. Solidarity with trans people across the world! □

Marx and Engels on the German elections



Eric Lee

At the start of the Cold War, in 1952, a book came out in the USA and Britain entitled *The Russian Menace to Europe*. The authors were listed as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It was a collection of articles, speeches and letters by the two founding fathers of the modern socialist movement. The book's editors argued that Marxism and Stalinism had nothing in common.

But there is more to the book than that. Because during the

decades-long political careers of Marx and Engels, there were periods when there were no good options politically. There were few labour parties and those that existed – the exception being in Germany – were usually quite weak. This did not deter Marx and Engels from writing about current politics. And taking sides.

In the United States, for example, they fully supported the Republican Party and its leader, Abraham Lincoln, in their fight against the slave-owning rebels of the Confederacy.

In Europe, they took a particular interest in Russia, writing about it at length until the 1890s. They argued that Russia was the "gendarme of Europe". The tsar intervened in neighbouring countries to put down democratic revolutions. And he also maintained an extensive diplomatic service that engaged in subversion across the continent.

The point of the 1952 book was to show that the Soviet Union under Stalin, just like the Russian empire under the tsars, had as its goal world domination – starting with Europe.

I found myself drawn to this remarkable book yet again this week as I read the results of the German elections. Those

elections cannot be understood outside the context of Putin's wars of aggression, most importantly the invasion of Ukraine.

Many analysts have struggled to explain German politics, continuing to think of political parties there as being on a left/right spectrum. And traditionally, when the Christian Democrats (CDU) and Social Democrats (SPD) dominated German politics, that may have made some sense. But in the twenty-first century, all European politics happen in the shadow of the Kremlin.

Let me give one example. A former leader of Die Linke, the far Left party with roots in East Germany's ruling Stalinist party, Sahra Wagenknecht, launched her own party which journalists have struggled to define. It sometimes seems left-wing, but it is at the same time strongly opposed to migrants. Is it a party of the Left?

Even the far-Right AfD, which did spectacularly well this week, claims that it is not – all evidence to the contrary notwithstanding – a fascist party. Some people point to its leader, Alice Weidel, a gay woman whose partner is a woman of colour. Does this sound like a party of the Right?

What unites the parties of

Sahra Wagenknecht and Alice Weidel is that they both hate immigrants and want to deport them all. Their parties are racist parties, weaponising the issue of migration. They also support the Kremlin in its aggressive war against Ukraine. This is not coincidental. Putin is also something of a "Christian nationalist" and is keen to use migration to weaken and divide the West. The two anti-immigrant, pro-Putin parties together won more than a quarter of the total number of votes cast. Among young people, they did exceptionally well.

The divide in German politics – and indeed, European politics – is between those parties which lend support to Russian aggression and those which oppose it. This is true in the UK as well, where Nigel Farage's Reform UK is both racist and pro-Putin.

It's a world that Marx and Engels would be familiar with.

As the editors of *The Russian Menace to Europe* wrote seven decades ago, Marx and Engels reached the conclusion that Russia "had already become the severest and most intransigent opponent of any revolutionary or national change in Central and Western Europe." Russia, in their view, "was the

main menace to European democracy and European freedom." That was true in the 19th century, true again during the Cold War and true now.

Many bad things happened in the German elections this week. Neo-nazi and racist ideas have been legitimised for the first time since 1945, regardless of who forms the coalition government. The CDU has already demonstrated its willingness to work with the AfD, even if not going to far as to welcome them into the government. What is acceptable in German politics today is several degrees to the right of where it was a week ago.

The worst thing about what happened in this week's German elections is not that the enfeebled SPD continued its decline, or that the next German chancellor will be yet another business-friendly conservative. No, the worst outcome is the gigantic increase in support for the anti-immigrant, racist, pro-Russian parties – particularly among the young. That is where the next great political battle must be fought. □

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

THE VESTAS JOBS BATTLE



The 2nd edition contains new material, plus photos from the campaign and occupation. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

The resurgence of “Blue Labour”

By Pete Radcliff

Labour Party supporters were shocked and angered at revelations in the *Guardian* of 6 February that bodies had been set up with the support of Labour Party organisations in the North of England to brag about the Labour government’s intensified deportations of migrants.

A Facebook group called [UK Migration Updates](#) claims it is run by Yorkshire and Humber Labour Party but is using Reform colours and linking to right-wing content from GB News and the *Telegraph*.

As well as articles reporting favourably on more deportations by the Labour government, the GB News website includes, for example, videos of former Tory minister Gavin Williamson demanding the closures of asylum hotels whilst his GB News interviewer says “some say they shouldn’t be in the country anyway.”

The attacks last August, particularly in Yorkshire where one asylum hotel was set alight by a racist mob, showed where such incitement can lead.

Possibly the alleged “Yorkshire and Humberside Labour” project is a freak activity of individuals, but as yet there has been no condemnation of it from the Party. And there are hints that if MP Mike Amesbury’s [jail](#) sentence leads to a by-election in Runcorn, the campaign there may get the same “Reform-lite” coloration.

In Erewash, East Midlands, Labour

MP Adam Thompson posted on Facebook a *Sun* article headlined “watch illegal migrants get marched onto planes as Labour hails hundreds of rapists and murderers”, feeding racist lies about asylum seekers. (The balance of [evidence](#) is that asylum-seekers have lower crime rates than local people).

Before the July 2024 election, the fascist Patriotic Alternative had tried to organise a racist attack on an asylum hotel as well as a demo in Long Eaton, in Thompson’s constituency. Both were stopped by larger anti-fascist mobilisations with significant Labour Party and union backing. Thompson said he would “reflect on” criticisms of his post from many in Erewash CLP, and asylum workers in his constituency, but for now it remains on Facebook.

A petition from the Labour Campaign for Free Movement (LCFM) and Momentum, “Oppose Reform on immigration, don’t mimic them”, gathered 1,100 Labour supporter signatures within three days, including 18 parliamentarians.

On the other side, we have new pressure from Lord Maurice Glasman’s “Blue Labour”. Glasman accepted a personal invite from Donald Trump for Trump’s inauguration, and was the only Labour figure there. In an [interview](#) with currently-out-of-favour Trumpist Steve Bannon Glasman hailed the inauguration as “an incredibly important day”, called “progressive” thinking “woke capitalism, and denounced it as a cancer in the Labour Party.



Maurice Glasman and Steve Bannon on the War Room podcast

“Progressives”, he told Bannon, are “the enemy... because they actually despise faith, they despise family, they despise love.” In wanting to cut migration, Glasman said, he is “just standing up for the people of his country”. Glasman made not a single criticism of Trump and his racism, misogyny and brutality.

He [says](#) that “the only place to build a house now is on the left side of MAGA square”.

Glasman and others in his Blue Labour group have started a “Future of the Left” project at the Tory-linked [Policy Exchange](#).

Glasman is not in Starmer’s inner circle – he [denounces](#) Rachel Reeves – but he claims that Starmer’s Chief of Staff Morgan McSweeney “is one of ours, we love him”.

Dan Carden, a formerly Corbynite Labour MP who resigned from the front bench to back a ceasefire in Gaza, has

started a Blue Labour [group](#) of MPs.

In 2019, Glasman was active in the Full Brexit campaign, in which speakers such as Eddie Dempsey, set to become the next RMT union general secretary, also [proclaimed](#) “hatred of the liberal left”.

Glasman started Blue Labour in 2009, but retreated after outcry over his 2011 [call](#) for the Labour Party to draw in English Defence League people.

Only through inactivity by the “progressive” majority can screwball racists take hold of sections of the Labour Party.

We need to campaign for democracy in the labour movement. For the removal of the Labour whip from Glasman (he sits in the House of Lords). And for unions to campaign on the policies of supporting refugees which most of them have. □

An “existential threat” from Trump

By Lewis Joyes

With each passing week, Musk and Trump continue to run the federal government as their personal tech company. “Don’t want to be ‘extremely hardcore’? Leave. Don’t want aggressive micro-management of your day-to-day tasks? You’re fired! Think this is illegal? Unconstitutional? We’ll see you in court.”

Musk’s buyout of social media platform Twitter started with similarly aggressive tactics. There, he sacked 6,000 of its 7,500 employees, altered content moderation rules, and enacted widespread changes to its leadership. Two years later, he runs the hellscape echo-chamber “X”, valued around 70% less than the \$44 billion paid for it, with a falling user base.

The operations of the US government are more

far-reaching and critical than Twitter, but the approach of Musk in altering its operations has been near-identical. The federal government by comparison employs around two million people, over one percent of the whole US workforce. They’ve been employed in jobs related to life-saving medical care, public health and social work, critical engineering works and scientific research, and urgent aid or relief work worldwide.

The largest block is amongst public health and medical or health professionals, at around 300,000 people. Outside of Washington DC, the three largest employee bases are in California, and the Republican states of Texas and Florida.

According to ABC News, about 200,000 federal staff have already lost their jobs in the first weeks of Musk-Trump. Around 75,000 others have

accepted “buyouts”. Whether those will see any form of recompense remains to be seen. If the comparison to Twitter holds, they are likely to receive nothing.

Grants and contracts at the National Institute of Health (NIH), the National Science Foundation and others have been stalled or suspended with no timeline for reviews. Those in need of stipends or wages from those sources are still in the dark as to when they’ll get paid. Clinical trials are being suspended or cancelled for research into life-threatening disease. All of this, in the name of government “efficiency” and “canceling DEI”.

With government agency staff levels cut by 10% already, essential functions within the US will begin to buckle in the short term. With grants for urgent research on hold, and

subject to termination, longer-term impacts could be devastating.

Trump and Musk represent an existential threat to workers in the US, and the health and

welfare of humanity globally. Action to halt their plans needs stepping up immediately before they remodel the world into their dystopian tech-billionaire, far-right dream. □

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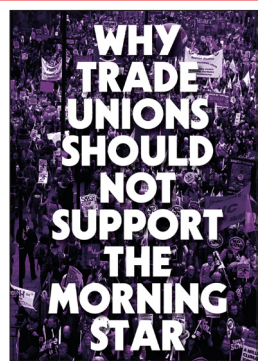
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“Contracted-out” campaigns will not beat Reform

By Cathy Nugent

According to the TUC’s own polling, reported on in their *A Trade Union Strategy to Tackle the Far Right, 2025-28*, 10% of trade union members who voted in the 2024 general election voted Reform. So did 18% of ex-union-members. These figures back up recent polls which put Reform neck and neck with, or even marginally ahead of, Labour in the whole electorate.

Growing support for Reform is part of a global shift to the right. But the Labour government’s political trajectory, by continuing with welfare and other cuts, and encouraging anti-migrant hostility, is helping the disappointment and demoralisation off which Reform feeds to grow.



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The labour movement and the activist left is also doing badly on countering Reform and the further-right forces which became more visible in the racist riots last summer.

The TUC report demonstrates part of the problem. Its research is useful, and points to an important counter-strategy of “...confronting the economic inequality and material conditions which drive workers to support populist far right parties”, but the authors have little to say about on-the-ground organising to stop the far right.

One strategy is: “social listening to design an organising, communications and political education intervention to counter the growth of far-right narratives in the workplace.” I think this means developing talking points (for who?) based on countering views on the social media used by our workmates. The authors recommend collaboration with other groups. But that’s business as usual for British trade unions – contracting-out organising work to Stand up to Racism (SUTR). It is time for a rethink.

Contracting-out removes responsibility from unions and union leaders to do more in workplaces and unions to mobilise members who want to fight the

right. Crucially SUTR, or even SUTR and other NGO-type groups combined, do not have the forces on the ground to build a comprehensive fightback.

Only the unions themselves have anything like that strength, at least potentially.

SUTR-only counter-protests would not win any physical confrontation with Robinson supporters on the streets. Anyway, set-piece demonstrations are not enough. We also need to be organising labour movement self-defence and support for the self-defence of Muslim, Jewish, migrant and other marginalised communities against far-right attacks. We also need open, democratic anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigns in every area rooted in the trade unions, Labour Parties and community groups.

Most importantly, beating back the far right has to be linked to building a stronger, more militant and more democratic labour movement.

We need a campaign for socialist policies in the labour movement to confront the Labour government over its policies. Policies such as jobs with genuine living wages and decent homes for all. We need the trade unions to bang the drum for taxing the rich and the capitalist corporations, for nation-



alising the banks and financial institutions. Cut arms spending.

Without putting demands on the unions to mobilise members, and to fight for socialist policies, we will not beat the far right. ☐

Far-right and left gains in German poll

By Dale Street

The Alternative for Germany (AfD) came second in Germany’s parliamentary election on 23 February, with 21% of the vote and 152 seats. The AfD is a viciously far-right populist party. It polemicalises about the supposed “creeping Islamisation of society” and “culturally alien mass immigration”. Compared with the last Bundestag election (2021), the AfD doubled its share of the vote. In particular, it won support from many traditional non-voters. Turnout in this election was 83% – the highest since German reunification in 1990.

The most likely outcome for government is a CDU/CSU-SPD coalition government, possibly including the Greens as well.

Die Linke (The Left) was the main beneficiary of the mass protests against racism and the far right which have swept

through Germany since the beginning of 2025. In a welcome change from the 2024 European Parliament elections, Die Linke, not the AfD, was the pole of attraction for young first-time voters. It won six constituencies and nearly 9% of the vote, 64 seats in total.

Die Linke is best described as a left-social-democratic party though still with a residue of ageing Stalinists. It was polling just 3% in January, but since then has gained new members as well as votes. Much depends on what it can do to stimulate and lead working-class opposition to the new government.

The SPD (roughly, the German Labour Party) had its worst result since 1887: 16.5% of the vote, and 120 seats. In 2021 it won 26% of the vote. The SPD lost votes in all directions, but mainly to the CDU/CSU. Going into a coalition with the CDU is

likely to accelerate decay, even more so since the CDU has moved markedly to the right.

The CDU (German Tories) and CSU (CDU sister-party in Bavaria) topped the poll with 28.5% of the vote, giving them 208 seats in the Bundestag (German Parliament). But the CDU/CSU vote share was its second-lowest ever.

The Greens, who had been part of the pre-election coalition government, won 11.5% of the vote, equating to 85 seats. This was less than in 2021 (14.5%) but, still, the Greens’ second-best result in Bundestag elections.

The FDP (German Liberal-Democrats) had also been part of the coalition. But its 4.3% of the vote – compared with 11.5% in 2021 – fell well short of the 5% “hurdle” for Bundestag seats.

In January the FDP had voted with the CDU and AfD for even more savage attacks

on migration. Its voters took this to its logical conclusion and deserted the party for the CDU/CSU and the AfD.

The BSW (Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance) fell just short of the 5% hurdle (4.972% – 13,453 votes short of 5%). The BSW is a breakaway from Die Linke, with generally left-of-centre economic policies but demagogically right-wing on asylum, migration and crime.

Wagenknecht has launched a legal challenge to the election result, arguing that the BSW did not receive its fair share of media coverage and that many postal voters were unable to return their votes in time. The challenge is unlikely to succeed.

Overall, the election result was a vote of “no confidence” in the economic policies of the outgoing coalition, expressed above all in the collapse of the SPD vote; but with much of the “no confidence” expressed in

far-right nationalism. Although the AfD is anti-Ukraine and favours Putin, the political shift towards it was not really pro-Russia vs anti-Russia, but rather anti-migrant vs anti-racist.

With the exception of The Left (up) and the BSW (down), opinion polls showed virtually no change throughout the election campaign. Racist scaremongering about asylum-seeker crime and the last-minute abandonment of Ukraine (and Europe) by Trump did not result in voting shifts.

The CDU/CSU do not have enough seats to form a government. Given the unlikelihood of a minority government or a coalition government with the AfD, the CDU’s only option is a coalition with the SPD. Ever anxious to keep their snouts in the trough, the Greens may end up in the coalition as well. ☐

Ukraine's unions need our support

By Leonard Nazareth

The mood in Kyiv, when I visited with a PCS union delegation on 11-14 February, was anxious over the election of Trump and the consequential end of the financial and military aid that Ukraine is completely dependent on for survival.

While the delegation was in the city, multiple Russian attacks were conducted, including drone assaults on multiple districts, and a pre-dawn strike by ballistic missiles which forced the delegation into underground bomb shelters – an experience grimly familiar to all Ukrainians. Since the delegation's departure, the Russian regime has launched a record number of drone attacks on Kyiv, clearly attempting to deplete the stocks of the multiple air defence batteries which shield the city from the worst of the onslaught, and aiming to force a stronger hand in ne-

gotiations – talks between Trump and Putin which are deliberately excluding Ukraine (and other European countries).

In the context of that uncertainty and betrayal, Ukraine's labour movement needs our solidarity more than ever.

Our solidarity delegation from the British civil service union PCS and the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) visited Kyiv and met with a variety of trade unionists, socialists, and public sector workers, as well as representatives of Ukrainian government departments and the UN International Labour Organisation.

The delegation consisted of PCS Assistant General Secretary John Moloney, Deputy President Bev Laidlaw, Vijay Menezes-Jackson (National Executive and Scottish Executive), and Chris Marks (National Executive), alongside EPSU General Secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan.

Ukrainian trade unions are fighting on multiple fronts – to assist the war effort against the invasion, occupation and annexation of Russian imperialism; to provide aid to union members and their families to help them get through wartime conditions; to oppose the neoliberal reforms and privatisations being pushed through by the Ukrainian government, and against pervasive government corruption and the influence of oligarchs; and of course to win better pay, conditions and safety for members in spite of martial law restrictions on industrial action.

Ukraine has two main trade union confederations. The larger Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU)



traces its roots to the state-run USSR union structures, as do its affiliate unions. The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) was a post-USSR attempt to create a labour movement with more democratic structures and rank-and-file organising, although neither appear to have structures or internal democracy meeting even the low bar of UK unions. These confederations are distrustful of each other; a fuller report will come in a future issue of *Solidarity*.

However, all trade unionists were completely united not only in their resolve to keep fighting the war for Ukraine's self-determination, but to also defeat the long-running attempts to scrap the USSR-era Labour Code of Ukraine, which enshrines many protections like the right to strike (outside of

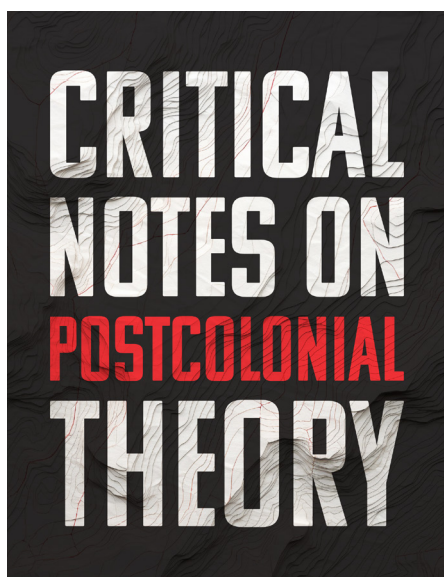
martial law). In some respects it is better than equivalent UK and EU legislation, although enforcement was obviously notional in the USSR era and not guaranteed even after Ukrainian independence before the war.

There are other disputes with the government too, like the court cases over the seizure of property that trade unions inherited after the fall of the Soviet Union – the government argues these were state assets, while the unions say that the seizures were attempts at intimidation and to frustrate organising, and call for the return of their funds and premises.

Alongside meeting both confederations and several constituent unions (such as the Free Trade Union of Medical Workers of Ukraine, and the civil-service State Employees' Union of Ukraine), the delegation also visited the Okhmatdyt National Children's Specialized Hospital (targeted and hit by a missile strike 8 July 2024), Trypill'ska coal power station in Ukrainka (hit by drones and cruise missiles 11 April 2024), and the Center for Comprehensive Rehabilitation and Social Services in Borodianka.

In addition the delegation met with the Ministry of Economy, the Ministry of Energy, the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Social Policy and Veterans' Rights, the National Agency of Ukraine for Civil Service, and the socialist group Sotsialnyi Rukh (SR – Social Movement) with whom Workers' Liberty supporters have met on many previous occasions.

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Make Ukraine pay for “left” posturing?



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

In response to Trump’s rehabilitation of Putin, *Socialist Worker* (#2943) could think of nothing better to put on their front page than “Starmer wants us to pay for more war.” In other words, they reject the right of Ukraine to seek arms to defend itself against Russia’s imperialist war of conquest and subjugation.

In fact, SW also opposes spending money on peace. Elsewhere in that edition, Thomas Tengely-Evans opposes the idea (and cost) of a peacekeeping force in Ukraine to deter Russia from re-commencing its invasion (although it is unlikely that Putin will agree to such a peace deal). The idea is that the money could instead fund welfare, without the inconvenience of increasing taxes for the rich or corporations, let alone expropriating the wealthy. In fact a “trash Ukraine to save the NHS” policy would not work even in its own terms. Total UK military aid to Ukraine over three years has been £7.8 billion, about 0.2% of public spending, and much of it will have been already-to-hand stuff, rather than new spending.

Behind this facile and nationalist opportunism is something more substantial. It has been SW’s view since 2022, as Tengely-Evans continues, that this “was

never a war for freedom and self-determination.” This might be news to the people of Ukraine, fighting against being forcibly incorporated into their larger, authoritarian neighbour from which they voted to be free ten-to-one in a referendum in 1991. Rather, this is a “proxy war between the West and Russia” and one that has been “brewing since the 1990s [when] the US, Nato and the European Union and Russia jockeyed for influence in Ukraine.”

That is a strange description of the break-up of the USSR and its domination. When that stable door opened, the horses bolted towards the EU, and unsurprisingly given their military history at the hands of Russia, into the arms of Nato (which were not always open or welcoming).

Tangled

Ukraine’s movement away from its long, tangled, but never equal, relationship with Russia was slower than that of states occupied at the end of the Second World War, but by the time of the Maidan protests of 2014 it was clear that popular opinion was looking West. The Russian response was invasion, grabbing Crimea and eastern Ukraine in 2014, followed by the second invasion of 2022. To see the invasion, as SW does, as no more predatory than weaker nations formerly dominated by Russia choosing to join the EU and Nato is nonsensical. Those nations believed that they would be freer and more independent. The evidence is, overwhelmingly, that they were not wrong.

In Britain SW campaigns for ending Western arms supplies to Ukraine. Although they don’t spell this out, the inevitable consequences of this would be conquest of Ukraine by Russia. Their claim that this is balanced by calls for Russia to withdraw is specious. They do not attend demonstrations in the UK calling for Russian withdrawal.

As far as one can judge by the ink on the paper, they would much rather have Russia win out over Ukraine (which they see as no more than the US’s “proxy”). SW gives great credence to Russian claims of being threatened by having Nato members near its borders (although no-one seriously believes that Nato powers would invade Russia). Tengely-Evans believes that Biden saw “Ukraine as an opportunity to overcome US imperialism’s defeats in the Middle East weaken Russia and, more importantly, send a signal to



Cartoon by 9mm Ballpoint/
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the US’s main competitor China.”

Unlikely, and, besides, why is a signal to China not to invade Taiwan bad? But Tengely-Evans thinks the argument strong enough to nullify Ukraine’s right to self-determination. The degree to which success in grabbing parts of Ukraine might strengthen Russian imperialism is not an issue he considers.

Strangely, all of this argument still stands for SW in a world transformed by Trump. At no point does SW demand that Ukraine be a party to the peace talks (Alex Callinicos calls its exclusion “relatively rational”). Again Tengely-Evans reports, without further comment, that “the imperialist rivals want to carve it up and call it ‘peace.’”

Those of us who have campaigned for Ukraine’s self-determination have also sought to aid its workers’ movement in opposition to its potential subjugation to neo-liberal market strictures, and even more so against the seizure of mineral rights by Trump’s neo-mercantilist hand. For SW, on the other hand, Ukraine figures only as a token at the expense of which to display their supposed anti-imperialist virtue. It is a strange sort of anti-imperialism that can express itself only by throwing weaker

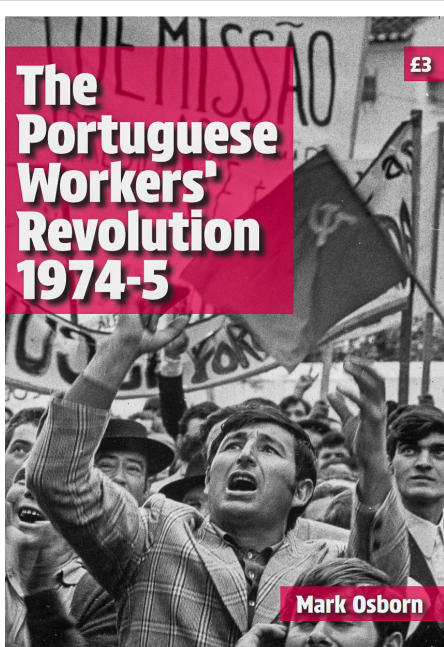
nations under the bus. □

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Debating Ukraine and Isra

In Solidarity [732](#) we explained our differences with the international *Socialismo o Barbarie* [Socialism or Barbarism] current concerning Stalinism. This excerpt from our letter to SoB discusses Ukraine and Israel-Palestine.

By Martin Thomas

Trotsky had supported an independent Ukraine in 1939. In the 1960s and 70s, Orthodox Trotskyists spoke out for Ukrainian self-determination. You also support Ukrainian self-determination. We agree. But you also write that “the element of national self-determination of the Ukrainians is... eclipsed by the element of proxy war and inter-imperialist conflict”. “Behind the obvious conflict for national self-determination, [there] is fundamentally a conflict between imperialist and imperial powers”. You describe Zelenskyy as the “useful idiot of NATO”. Consequently you oppose the sending of arms to Ukraine.

NATO is not at war with Russia. Some NATO states, such as Hungary and Turkey, and, it seems, the USA now, are more on the Russian side. There is no risk that Ukrainian victory against Putin’s invasion could mean control of Russia by NATO or the USA.

The USA and most NATO powers have sent arms to Ukraine because they want to limit the advance of Putin’s drive to remake the Russian empire. They have let Putin take Chechnya, Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria, but they want to limit him. They have no realistic ambition to dominate Russia. Their military support may be enough to help Ukraine limit Putin’s conquests. It is deliberately not enough to reverse them. They do not allow Ukraine to join NATO.

Zelenskyy is right-wing. We must support Ukraine’s left and labour movement against him. But Ukraine’s national self-determination is the defining issue in the war.

You refer to Lenin’s debate with Rosa Luxemburg. Luxemburg argued that a national revolt against an imperialist power would get support from that power’s imperialist rivals. The imperialist rivalry would eclipse the issues of national rights. National wars were therefore impossible. (She probably meant: national wars in Europe were impossible). Lenin replied that “a war for national liberation in which imperialist rivalry is a contributory element of no great importance” was possible. “Whether such a war will be transformed into an imperialist war among the present imperialist Powers will depend on a great many concrete circumstances, and it would be ridiculous to

guarantee that these circumstances will arise... National wars must not be regarded as impossible in the epoch of imperialism even in Europe”.

Then, the world was tightly divided up into rival colonial empires and spheres of semi-colonial influence. Few weak nations had real political independence.

Lenin was right even in that epoch. All the more so in our epoch. You are right that rivalries between blocs of big powers are increasing after the period in 1991 to 2008 when the USA was by far the dominant power. But we are far from a full return to the world of colonial imperialism.

In the world of colonial imperialism there were small local imperialist powers like Serbia in 1913, Czechoslovakia after World War One, and others, as well as the big world imperialist powers. There are small local imperialist powers today, too. They are more likely to resort to conquest than the big powers, because they have less chance of getting what they want through economic strength alone.

Iran

Iran is a local imperialist power. It oppresses the Kurds and other nationalities within its own borders. It is in retreat at present. But it has sought domination in Iraq and Syria. It promises to wipe out Israel.

Therefore we do not agree with you that in conflict between Iran and Israel we should back Iran. Both sides in that conflict are local-imperialist.

We denounce Israel’s destruction and killing in Gaza and the West Bank and Lebanon. We support the Palestinian-Jewish movement within Israel which campaigns against the Israeli government and for the equal rights for the Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab nations. We are for Arab-Jewish workers’ unity and for consistent democracy.

We do not agree with your support for the 7 October 2023 atrocity by Hamas. Hamas is not a national libera-

tion movement with imperfect politics. It is part of an alliance with Iran and Hezbollah whose aim is to suppress or drive out the Israeli Jewish nation. Hamas leaders said that the 7 October 2023 attack did not aim to win relief or concessions for the people of Gaza. The aim was to start a prolonged regional war in which Israel could be destroyed. That aim was unrealistic. It was also reactionary.

War is the continuation of politics by other means, and the politics which Hamas’s war continued are reactionary.

On Israel-Palestine you have moved away from some of the ideas which Nahuel Moreno used to advocate. [Socialismo o Barbarie originates from the Trotskyist trend in Argentina once led by Nahuel Moreno, but now considers itself no longer “Morenist”]. We welcome that. We hope you will move further.

Some Chilean comrades asked Moreno to consider the slogan of a constituent assembly for Palestine. We do not consider that slogan helpful. But we disagree even more with Moreno’s objections to it.

He objected to the constituent assembly slogan because it would give the “current inhabitants” of Israel a vote. Instead, the slogan should be “Zionists out of Israel”. He advocated “the removal of [Israel’s] current inhabitants”. 20% of the current inhabitants are Palestinian or Druze. We do not know whether he meant they should be removed too. He certainly meant all Jews should be removed. “Non-Zionist Jewish settlers? These imaginary inhabitants do not exist”.

He advocated the slogan of a “secular, democratic, and non-racist Palestine”. He included the term “non-racist” to cover his advocacy of removing all Jews.

The Israeli Jews are a nation. The origins of most nations are unpleasant. As you know, modern Argentina was shaped by mass European settlement in the 19th and early 20th centuries,

and Roca’s war against the indigenous peoples, the “Conquest of the Desert”. We are sure you advocate for rights for the surviving indigenous peoples. No-one advocates the removal of all Argentinians with European or Arab settler backgrounds. To advocate the removal of the whole Israeli Jewish nation is antisemitic, not anti-racist.

We are glad that you have dropped those ideas from Moreno. However, we still see traces in your comments of ideas from Moreno.

You agree that Israeli Jews should have individual rights to remain in the territory. But the Israeli Jews are also a national collective. They are an oppressor nation at present. But oppressor nations become oppressed if heavy revenge is taken against them. A democratic programme for workers’ unity must recognise all national rights.

Minority

Suppose somehow the Israeli Jews are made into a minority in a larger state. As a compact national collective they would want to secede. Nothing could stop them except fierce repression. That repression would also deny their individual rights.

Recognising individual rights for Israeli Jews but not national rights is unworkable. As a programme now it means only support for the conquest of Israel. That could happen only through an unforeseeable change in the military balance of forces enabling Iran, for example, to win a war to conquer Israel. All that promises the Palestinians is helpless waiting. And it is reactionary as well as unrealistic.

Moreno called Israel a “Nazi enclave”. You describe it as “the colonial enclave known as Israel”.

Moreno claimed that any Jewish settlement in Palestine was “genocide”. “Genocide is a constant of Zionism, from the early years”. In those early years, from the 1880s, Jewish settlement was weak. Jews did not and could not persecute Arabs.

Sixty-odd years later, after Hitler, the closing of borders to Jewish refugees, the Holocaust, and the Palestinian Jews’ war against Britain of 1945-7, there were the wars of 1947-9. Many Arabs fled. Jews expelled many. Arab forces expelled or killed Jews in the smaller areas they conquered then. Israel expelled Arabs from areas like Latrun in 1967. Israel is expelling Palestinians from their homes in West Bank Area C now. We must condemn those expulsions. We must reject a conspiracy theory that they were all programmed in from the 1880s.

You make a similar claim that “genocide” is a constant of Jewish settle-

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el-Palestine

ment in Palestine. For you, it seems to be from 1948, not from the 1880s. Your statement written straight after 7 October 2023, before the big Israeli retaliation, described Israel already as “a genocide state... Every response is nothing but self-defence... Israel was constituted from the start as a racist state and its policy has been one of a genocide of the Palestinian people”.

Moreno praised the “permanent war of the Arab movement against the State of Israel” since 1948. In fact war has not been permanent. To demand a ceasefire and peace is not to demand the impossible. Also, in 1947-9 Trotskyists did not side with the Arab forces. They condemned atrocities by the Jewish forces. They did not side with the Arab states which sponsored the volunteer Arab Liberation Army and then sent their own armies in May 1948. Those were corrupt landlord-dominated states. Most were semi-colonies of Britain. Their strongest armed force was commanded by British officers.

NPA-R congress

Five members of Workers’ Liberty attended the congress of the French revolutionary socialist organisation [NPA-R](#), on 31 January and 1-2 February, in which Socialismo o Barbarie participated as a minority. SoB have since parted ways with the NPA-R, saying they were excluded.

We carried a report in *Solidarity* [733](#). Aside from the issues covered in that report, we had discussions with NPA-R people about Ukraine and Israel-Palestine.

Israel-Palestine was not a subject of debate within the conference, though the Socialisme ou Barbarie [subgroup](#) within NPA-R had differences with the majority.

The conference halls were decked out with “Palestine solidarity” posters, and NPA-R has taken part in the Gaza protests in France (much smaller than in Britain). However, the conference texts asserted nothing more than general solidarity with the Palestinians and the need to criticise Hamas. (Others on the French far left consequently berate the NPA-R for being so critical).

Comrades told us that they see a need for a programme to reach the Israeli working class. For our part, we go by the Marxist fundamentals: the right to self-rule for all nations, specifically, both the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Jews; full democratic rights for minorities; workers’ unity. Consequently we seek solidarity and links with Standing Together in Israel, the main force on the ground active along those lines.

The Arab League, which coordinated the Arab war, was sponsored by Britain. The Palestinian Trotskyists wrote: “By its racial war against the Jews of Palestine, the Arab League wants to limit the zone of activity of the Jewish industries and to prove to imperialism that it is a factor that can serve it even better than Zionism. At the same time, it favours imperialism in its large scale plans in the Middle East... It sees the Zionist bogeyman and the Palestinian problem in general as a good opportunity to divert the attention of the oppressed masses of the Arab countries from their social problems”.

This is another case where Marxist political continuity has been lost. Marxists today should build on the approach of the Marxists of 1948. We advocate a socialist federation of the Middle East with self-determination for minority nations such as the Israeli Jews and the Kurds. We also advocate a real independent Palestinian state alongside a secure Israel. □

We asked whether NPA-R comrades agreed. No, but we got varying alternatives. Maybe “a socialist federation of the Middle East” (though without the codicil usual when that was the commonplace Trotskyist slogan: with national rights for the Israeli Jews and the Kurds).

Maybe social revolution across the whole region, which, they said, will put all existing borders into question. Maybe that could include Israeli-Jewish self-determination, but only after the existing “Zionist state” has been destroyed (by whom?).

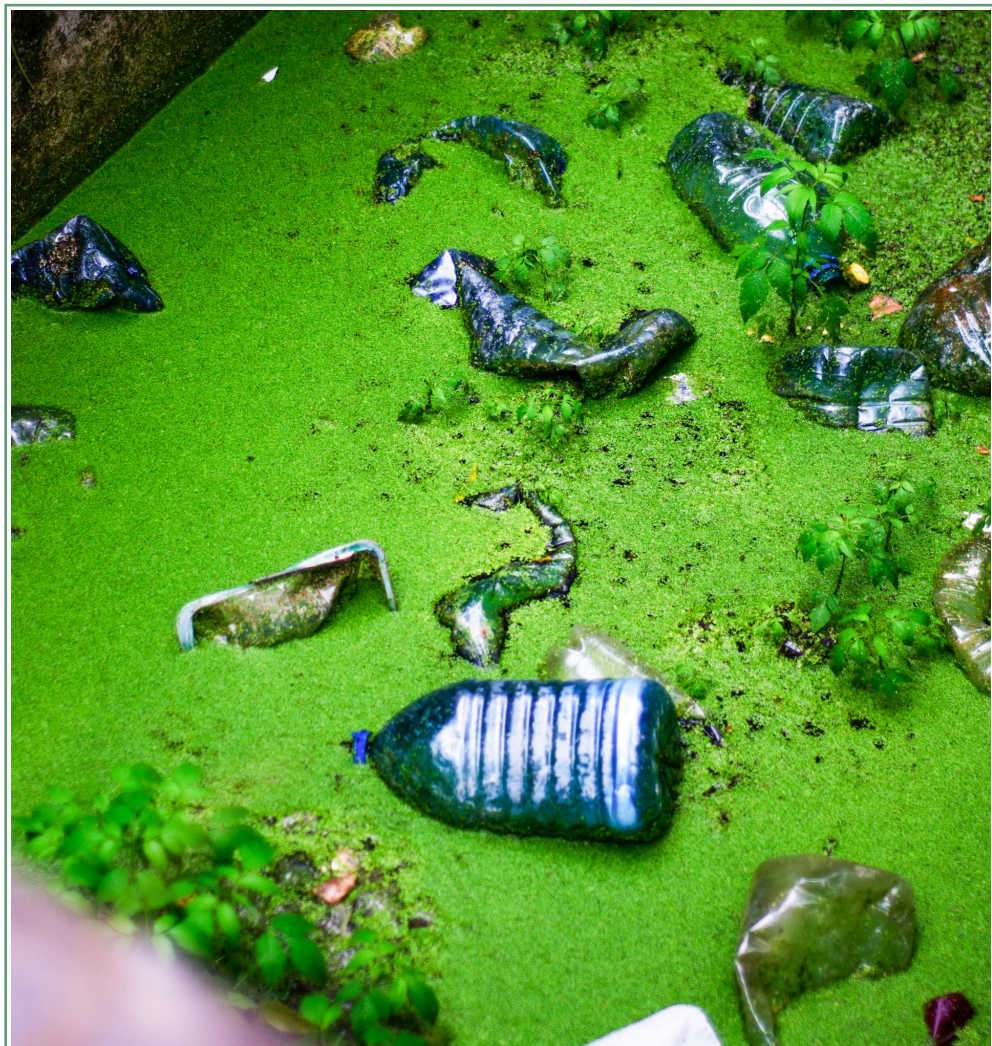
Proxy

On Ukraine, a minority in NPA-R (the *Démocratie Révolutionnaire* [group](#)) regard the conflict as a “proxy war” and oppose the Ukrainian side because it is, in their view, really the NATO side.

The NPA-R majority are for Ukraine’s self-determination and Russian troops out of Ukraine. Good. But they oppose arms supplies to Ukraine (saying, nonsensically in our view, that those supplies benefit only French military industry profits, not Ukraine’s defence – as if we should oppose Tesco selling food to workers, because that “only” helps Tesco’s profits).

And they felt they had to couple “Russian troops out” with a call for “NATO troops out of Europe”. (Huh? French troops out of France? Polish troops out of Poland? To where?)

We will be continuing those debates. □



Privatised water is an organised rip-off

By Colin Foster

Thames Water should be put into “administration” and renationalised. So should all the other water companies.

Although that could be done cheaply, the Starmer government still refuses, claiming that Thames Water is managing ok.

Looking back in 2017, the *Financial Times* [described](#) the Thatcher government’s privatisation of water as “an organised rip off”. The average gain for those that bought shares was 40% on the first day, as the public companies

had been radically undervalued.

Then the Tories wrote off £5bn in industry debt and handed the new companies £1.5bn in public money.

And then the water companies, now mainly owned by private equity firms, paid out £72bn in dividends (up to 2023). They found the cash by skimping on maintenance and borrowing heavily: £61bn by March 2022; Thames Water now has £19 billion debt, and is paying 9.75% interest on the new borrowing of £3 billion to stagger on a few more months.

They increased bills. Thames Water is pressing the regulator, Ofwat, to raise bills by 53% over the next five years. A 35% rise is already licensed.

No new reservoirs have been built since privatisation. Land owned by the water companies has been sold off for housing. Thames Water has closed 47 of the 398 sewage treatment plants it had in 1990. Of the remaining 351, fewer than 50 report adequate capacity to deal with flows. At least 40 regularly discharge untreated sewage into rivers more than 38 hours a week.

Thames Water bosses drew £770,000 in bonuses from the rotting hulk of the company in 2024. CEO Chris Weston got a £195,000 bonus just for his first three months.

It’s a story of privatised gain and socialised losses. Renationalise water! □

THE EASTER RISING AND IRISH HISTORY



An attempt at a Marxist account. £4 (inc. post) □ bit.ly/shop-wl

When Dylan blew the CP fuse

By Wes Harding

You wait years for an article on Dylan and then like buses several come along at once in *Solidarity's* recent issues.

When Eric Lee [writes](#) about Bob Dylan and the Stalinists, I hope younger readers aren't led to believe it was the name of Dylan's backing band. Eric is keen to highlight the role of the Communist Party in Britain and America in denouncing Dylan's decision to "go electric" as "a sell out".

In Britain one of Dylan's most vociferous critics was Ewan MacColl, a long standing member of the CPGB and leading figure in the traditional folk music scene and married to Peggy Seeger, whose brother Pete wanted to cut the cables to the electric equipment at Newport.

MacColl dismissed Dylan's "non-political" songs variously as "doggerel"

and "tenth-rate drivel" fit only for "a noncritical audience", so it's safe to assume he didn't go to any of the concerts on Dylan's 1966 UK tour. However, other CP members did go as organised groups to barrack the electric part of Dylan's set.

A couple of people have come forward claiming they made the notorious Judas! shout at Manchester's Free Trade Hall. Maybe they are after some notoriety themselves, who knows? They might or might not have been in the CP at the time, but I know one leading North-West party member who confessed to participating in the organised booing and slow hand clapping.

The idea that electric instruments have no place in folk music is of course complete nonsense. Five years before Dylan played there, Muddy Waters was doing so at the very same Newport venue. Chuck Berry ditto a couple of years earlier. True, there was a riot when

Muddy played, but that was because the cops had tear-gassed an over enthusiastic audience!

What's missing in both Eric and [James Rink's](#) articles though is some kind of political evaluation of Dylan. He certainly made significant input as a folk artist into the civil rights movement, but not much after that. Subsequently there were songs in support of George Jackson and Rubin Carter. *Workingman's Blues* from 2006 could also be considered a pretty good anthem for the American working class.

There again we have all the religious stuff from the 1980s and the ultra-Zionist *Neighbourhood Bully*. Well, yeah, that is precisely what Israel has become under Netanyahu!

Yet all this really misses the point. Dylan is not and never was a card carrying member of a political party. He has artistic license even though he might stretch that license in ways we don't

sometimes like! Charges of misogyny have been levelled against him, but Nina Simone's rendering of *Just Like A Woman* should dispel some at least.

Being a poor school kid in the sixties, I never had the money to go to concerts. Last November though, my son wanted to see Dylan as a birthday present, so I got us both tickets for Dylan's Liverpool gig. He's 83 now, so I didn't expect anything but a laid-back performance. It didn't help with the acoustics either that the concert was in an auditorium which could accommodate several jumbo jets.

Afterwards I met someone who'd seen Dylan in concert in 1966 at the Liverpool Odeon. The only song recorded there that's available is a version of *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues*. Unlike the booing in Manchester this was received with rapturous applause. But then Liverpool has always been open to innovations in music. □



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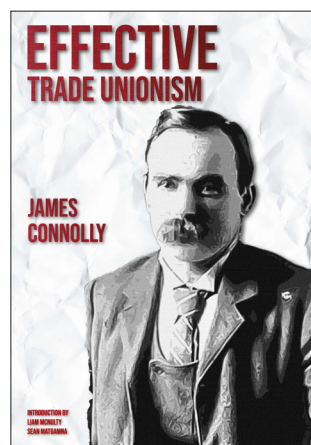
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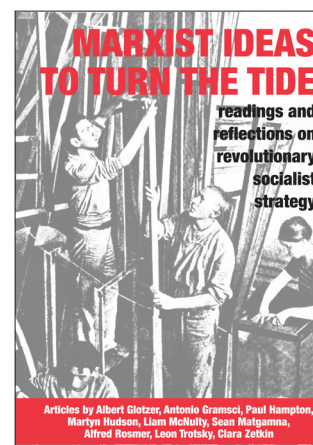
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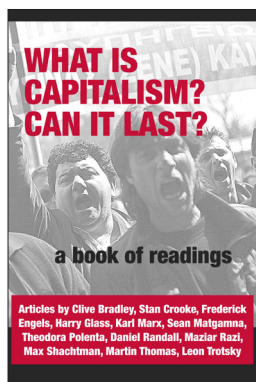
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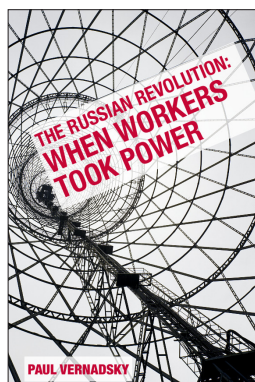
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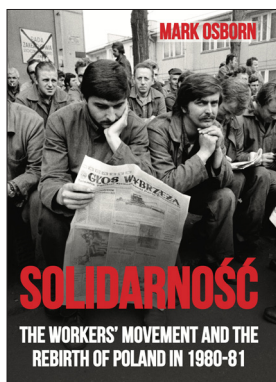
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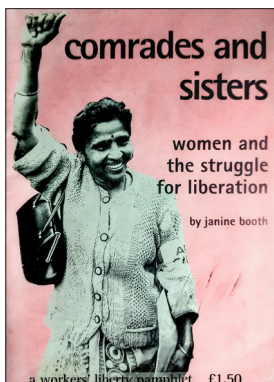
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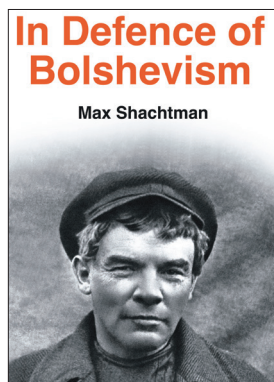
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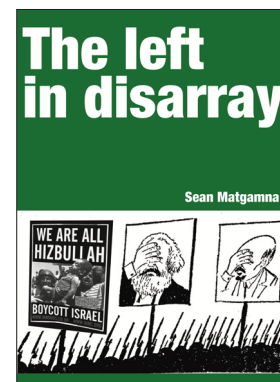
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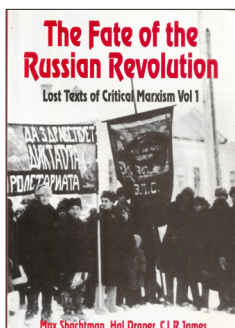
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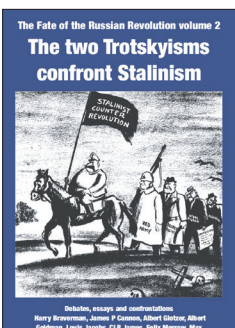
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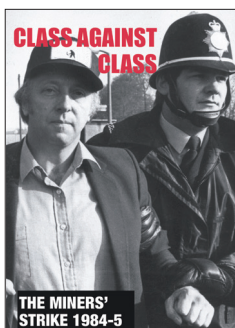
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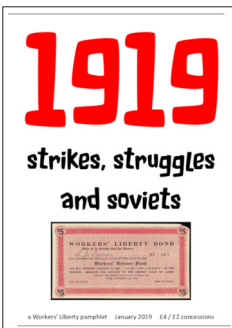
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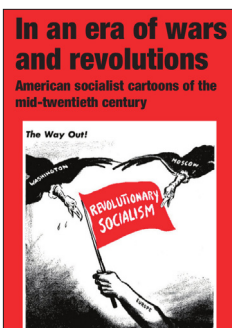
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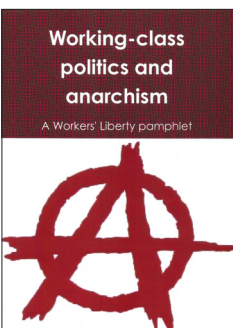
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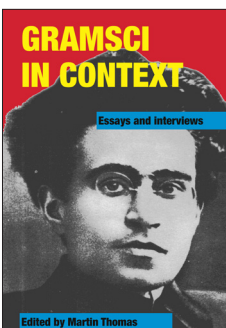
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Fund transport by taxing the wealthy



Tubeworker

Transport for London (TfL) faces a new funding shortfall of £23 million, due to increases in employer National Insurance contributions.

This creates a risk that bosses will attempt to plug the gap by making cuts, possibly to staffing levels. With unions about to submit our 2025-6 pay claims, bosses will undoubtedly use the announcement as justification for why they can't make a decent offer. We shouldn't accept this. In the first place, we should demand the company opens the books so we can fully scrutinise their budgetary arguments.

We also need to fight for improved funding arrangements.

Before 2015, TfL was funded primarily through a central government operating grant. The Tory government of 2015 promised to abolish the grant,

reducing it incrementally before slashing it entirely in 2018. TfL was then expected to be "self-financing", with 75% of its revenue coming from fares. When fare revenue collapsed during the Covid-19 pandemic, TfL was plunged into financial crisis. Bailout packages from the Tories tied emergency funding to demands for cuts, including reform of the staff pension scheme.

A combination of union resistance during 2022-3, and booting the Tories out of office in 2024, has staved off the worst of those cuts, with TfL now saying plans for pension reform have been dropped. But the additional funding the new Labour government has given to TfL is still, according to Mayor Khan's chief of staff, "not as much as we would have hoped for". There's also no indication Labour plans to restore the pre-2015 annual operating subsidy.

Having a quality, accessible metropolitan transport system in the nation's capital is a social and ecological good. It should be publicly funded. Our unions could do more to campaign for



increased funding. In answer to the inevitable "where will the money come from?" question, we can point to the hundreds of millions of pounds of profit, especially in the financial sector in the City of London and Canary Wharf, that could not be generated without a functioning transport system.

The way we should fund TfL is the same way we should fund other es-

sential services such as education and healthcare, via progressive taxation in which the rich and big business pay more. How about a joint union demonstration outside the Department of Transport, and coordinated pressure within the Labour Party by Unite, Aslef, and TSSA (the three major TfL unions which are affiliated to Labour) to demand it? □

A compromise on refresher training



Diary of a Tube driver

By Jay Dawkey

Most of our work as Tube drivers is on our own, so constant monitoring by managers is impossible. A few different methods are employed to track what we are doing.

The line controllers and signallers can see where your train is, and they need that

ability to check why a train might have stopped for an extended period and for the signalling to work effectively. It should mean they can be proactive in dealing with any issues, although it feels almost entirely reactive, much to our frustration.

Sometimes, the Skills and Development team will send someone to come and ride in the cab with you for a few stations and assess your "competence". In theory, they can ask you a load of questions to test your knowledge of

line route, rules, procedures, and how to handle defects on the train. Most of the time, they jump on your train for a few stops, and as long as you make announcements when you should, stop at stations, and depart safely, they will do their report, and that will be it.

And now, roughly once a year, we'll be taken off the trains for three days to do a refresher course, more in-depth and including some time on an actual train reminding us how to use various equipment in an emergency or if a train fails.

It used to be a whole week, giving us more time to go in-depth about any areas we are unsure about, improve our knowledge, and become more confident drivers. Then it was switched to just a single day, with a maximum of two of us, almost entirely in a classroom, sometimes for maybe two or three hours of going through various questions, and then we'd be signed off till the next time.

The newer three-day course is a compromise between unions and management. Not

everyone has done it yet to get feedback on how it fares compared to the older "competence verification". It has at least guaranteed time back on a train to look at handling defects, which some drivers will have only done once and early in their training.

Three days is also three days of not doing shifts and driving a train, so if you know your stuff, then it has the potential to be a nice short week. A lot of drivers will be happy with that! □

Dimensions of the gender gaps



Letter

Jill Mountford's articles on domestic labour were useful and insightful ([Solidarity 733](#) and [734](#)). Two additions.

The change from the 1970s when "domestic drudgery... often took as much time and effort as a full-time paid job" is significant, but has not gone as far as we'd like.

A decade ago the

UK's ONS [found](#) "that total unpaid work had a value of £1.01tn, equivalent to approximately 56% of GDP". Women averaged 60% more unpaid work (in the home, plus volunteering) than men: 26 and 16 hours per week respectively. Mothers on maternity leave averaged 60 hours against 12 for full-time students.

In 2023 women [averaged](#) 25 hours against 19 for men (though this didn't include "secondary or passive activities", which may have grown significantly and dispro-

portionately with working from home).

Men still have a higher [employment rate](#) than women (78% of 16-64 year olds vs 72%), but a considerably bigger difference is found in the higher proportion of women who work [part time](#), or women's lower amount of time at work [away from home](#).

Pay gap

This is reinforced by the considerable gender [pay gap](#). Among [full-time](#) employees men earn 7% more per hour (excluding over-

time). The gap is larger among older and higher-paid workers. Full-time workers earn over a third more *per hour* than part-time. The gender pay gap across all employees is around 14%.

As well as the crucial "socialisation of domestic labour" (including through technology) a shorter working-week for all with no loss of pay is important for tackling the disproportionate burden of domestic labour. Even with socialisation, many workers would still want

to spend some (unpaid) time with their children, and on cooking and other bits of domestic labour. Levelling up to close the gender and part-time pay gaps, to shorten the working week for all, to increase paternity leave will help. Men should not wait on such changes before taking on more housework; and equalisation would not inevitably follow from shorter working weeks, but we need them. □

Zack Muddle,
Bristol



More online

Unfair to David Miller?

Did we fail to answer Miller's arguments?
bit.ly/dav-mi

Is Trump a fascist?

Hein Htet Kyaw joins the debate
bit.ly/trum-fa

“What we stand for

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

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

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

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

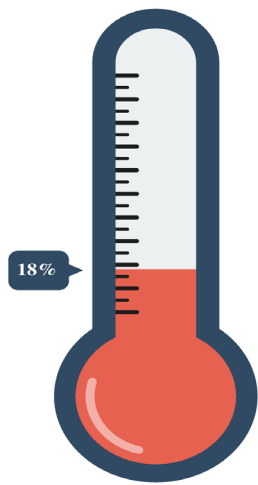
We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses, to militantly assert working-class interests.

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl



Cannot afford to fall behind!

A slow week, we have to hope it is a blip, means a very meagre amount of £100 has been added to our fund, changing our total only to £3,380. The main reason even for the £100 is a successful push with *Solidarity* at the 22 February Ukraine demonstrations.

August

But that leaves us over £500 behind where we need to be to get to £20,000 by August.

Each week we fall behind will mean a bigger

push the following week to reach that goal.

Solidarity takes another break next week to allow for the next issue of *Women's Fightback* to be distributed.

This break in the production schedule will mean we have another opportunity for our staff to push for reaching our goal. We need a greater speed to have a chance of doing that.

• Donate: workersliberty.org/fund

The Scopes trial: issues then and now

By John Cunningham

There are a number of interesting facets to the 1925 "Monkey Trial", or "Scopes Trial" as it was also called, which the film *Inherit the Wind* (this week's Kino Eye, below) depicts.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) welcomed the opportunity to bring the controversy around teaching evolution to court. They wanted to publicise the issue and use it as a test case. For the ACLU it was a win-win situation: if they lost, the issue would still come under the glare of public scrutiny, and if they won then the law could be removed. The law in question was the Butler Act, which applied solely in Tennessee. It was introduced in 1925, during a conservative era in US politics.

John T Scopes, the teacher at the centre of the trial, actually volunteered to be the defendant. The real-life defence lawyer, Clarence Darrow, was a formidable advocate who had defended labour movement activists and socialists such as Big Bill Haywood and Eugene V Debs. His reputation was later dented by allegations of bribery (but they were, as far as I am aware, unproven). He would go on to defend the Scottsboro

boys in the notorious trial of 1931.

His opponent for the prosecution, William Jennings Bryan, was a devout Presbyterian and career politician who ran for president, unsuccessfully, on three occasions. He may have been motivated by the chance to grab a piece of the limelight at a time when his career was in decline. Oddly, he offered to pay any fine imposed on Scopes should he be found guilty. We will never know if he would have done this, as he died five days after the trial concluded.

The court refused to allow any scientific witnesses, so Darrow opted to cross-examine Bryan. That soon turned in an angry duel between the two men who had known each other for years and, apparently, were good friends.

One of the more bizarre aspects of the trial was that Darwin's theory of evolution was already taught in many schools across the USA, including those in Tennessee. One standard biology textbook (*Civic Biology Presented in Problems* by G W Hunter), used in the school where Scopes taught, had a whole chapter devoted to this topic (and a section on eugenics!)

In the end Scopes was found guilty and the judge, whose bias was evident

throughout the trial, imposed a \$100 fine. Then the case was then dismissed on a technicality as judges could only impose fines of up to \$50. Anything higher had to be set by the jury.

Whether the trial brought any great change in American society regarding attitudes to evolution or creationism is difficult to gauge. There was a slow decline in creationist thinking, but nothing spectacular. In the 1950s the growing interest in space exploration, the development of computers etc. contributed to a more noticeable decline in creationism. The Butler Act was repealed in 1967.

Then the 1970s saw a reversal of the trend. Now, according to a Gallup Poll in 2019, 40% of Americans still believe in a strictly creationist view of the origins of human beings. The phrase "Inherit the Wind" comes from the Proverbs (11:29) section of the Bible: "He that troubleth his own house shall inherit the wind".

The trial evoked huge interest across the USA and elsewhere. The London *Times* sent two reporters and it was the first trial ever to be broadcast on American radio. □

1925-1960-2025 and Trumpism



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Although *Inherit the Wind* (1960), about the famous "Monkey Trial", ostensibly portrays the events in a Tennessee court room in 1925, the makers of the film stressed that its subject was really the anti-intellectual climate of McCarthyism in the 1950s.

Directed by Stanley Kramer and based on a 1954 play by Jerome Lawrence and Robert Edwin Lee, the film is a fictionalised account of the trial of John T Scopes for teaching Darwin's theory of evolution contrary to Tennessee law. Scopes is repre-



sented by Henry Drummond (Spencer Tracy), based on the famous civil rights lawyer Clarence Darrow, and is opposed by Matthew Harrison Brady (Frederic March, based on William Jennings Bryan). In the sweltering heat of a packed courtroom the battle commences and, denied the right to call scientific witnesses, Drummond cross-examines Brady. Drummond demolishes Brady but Scopes is ulti-

mately found guilty.

What the filmmakers couldn't possibly have foreseen is how *Inherit the Wind* foretells, after some sixty years evolution (excuse the pun), the current state of affairs in Donald Trump's USA. According to Lawrence, "We used the teaching of evolution as a parable, a metaphor for any kind of mind control... It's about the right to think". □

• To watch online: bit.ly/i-the-w

Stop the cuts, use reserves

By Liam Conway

Nottingham's Labour City Council is going ahead with further cuts for 2025-6, on top of those implemented in 2024-5 after the council went into "Section 114" and had "commissioners" brought in to instruct it.

Rather than closing them outright, the council now plans to hand over three of Nottingham's libraries to unknown voluntary or private organisations. Despite a big local protest in the Sherwood area of the city on 25 January, the council is withdrawing grant funding from community centres, the result of which is likely to be closures.

There is now a threat to the well-known Marcus Garvey centre, which has been a centre of Afro-Caribbean community events and activities for



Protest at Lambeth Council cabinet meeting on 24 February

many years. The Nottingham Save Our Services campaign hopes to work with those fighting to save Marcus Garvey to ensure a united front.

Significant cuts are proposed to Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) and Framework Housing Association. This will put some of our most vulnerable citizens at risk of being forced to live on the streets. One Framework manager said she felt like she had been "punched in the stomach" and that "once again it's the vulnerable in society who are being left behind."

17 Labour councillors walked out of a Labour Group meeting in January over the way cuts were being imposed, but since then a climate of fear in the Labour Party has brought silence.

The Save Our Services campaign, in collaboration with councillor Shugftah Quddoos, who now sits as an independent, is planning to present an amendment to the budget meeting of

the full council on 3 March. We are demanding the reversal of the grant cuts to community centres, the removal of charges for the only public toilets in the city centre, and no closures or handovers of local libraries. We believe the council could avoid the cuts by using reserves to buy time in which to seek more funding from the Labour Government.

Stripped

There have been some funding increases for local government compared to life under the Tories, but there is a long way to go to get back to anywhere near before 2010. Continued cuts will boost Reform.

And, as Louise, a Trustee of Sherwood Community Centre, told the *Nottingham Post*, "Services everywhere have been stripped away coming out of the pandemic. People will die because of these decisions. If their support mechanisms are stripped away and stripped

away and stripped away. Those people who are already on the edge of vulnerability, that's what breaks my heart." □

Capita strike from 26 Feb

By Dale Street

Unite union members employed by Capita in Glasgow and Manchester on the Royal London contract (covering pensions, bonds and life insurance) strike again from 26 February to 7 March.

This, and a five-day strike in late January and early February, are in response to Capita's failure to offer a decent pay rise (or any pay rise at all) for 2024. In February, April, August and October of 2024 Capita either cancelled meetings with Unite or simply announced at meetings that there was not going to be a pay rise.

Over 90% of the Unite membership participated in a consultative ballot and then the legally-required ballot. In Manchester there was a 100% vote in favour of a strike, and a 96% vote in Glasgow.

Capita is a business outsourcing company. It picks up contracts by putting in the lowest bids and then makes a profit by paying its employees rock-bottom wages. Capita Life and Pensions (which includes the Royal London contract) makes a profit and can easily afford a pay rise.

The last strike saw a high turnout for the picket lines – over 30 in Glasgow (out of a workforce of a hundred plus) and over 60 in Manchester (out of a workforce of a hundred plus). At least the same level of support is likely in this strike as well.

Picket lines are 7am to 9am; Sky-park, 8 Elliot Place, Glasgow; Broadhurst House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester. Strike fund: NW/12401 Capita Manchester Branch; Sort Code: 60-83-01; Account Number: 20360636 □

Lambeth Unison moves against cuts

By Ruth Cashman

The budget for Lambeth council, in South London – long the flagship Blairite-Labour council, alma mater of such as Steve Reed and Morgan McSweeney – went to the Cabinet on 24 February.

As with councils across the country, the budget includes lots of cuts, though little exact detail on what they mean. The slight increase in central government funding for councils from October's Budget has largely been nullified by increased costs, beyond councils' control, for temporary housing.

The main local government union, Unison, held a protest at the last Cabinet meeting in January, called a lobby on 24 February, and is building towards a demonstration at full Council (Wed 5 March, 7pm) and a "save libraries" protest on 6 March.

Other items under discussion for activities for families to join at the 5 March protest, and seeking authorisation from the union for targeted strikes.

The union will call a demonstration,

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 Production team: Martin Thomas (editor), Kayden Jones, Dan Katz, Simon Nelson, Will Roberts, Zack Muddle □



Stop Trump's coup in USA

By Tom Harrison

The horror! The horror! That oft-quoted line from Joseph Conrad's novel *The Heart of Darkness* is pretty apt regarding the dismal prospects American workers and their families face as Trump and Musk press forward.

What is unfolding in Trump's America is unbridled oligarchic rule. Domestic policy dictated by one of the two richest men in the world, Elon Musk, with foreign policy laid down by the other, killer in the Kremlin V Putin.

On 22 February Trump told the Governor of Maine "[we are the federal law](#)". On 19 February he had the White House post a [graphic](#) of himself wearing a crown, with the caption: "Long live the king".

All his way-out nominees for top jobs (other than Matt Gaetz, who withdrew early because of personal scandals) have now been confirmed by the Senate: Kash Patel, Robert F Kennedy Jr, Pete Hegseth, and all.

Trump's "executive orders" are a drive to make himself, as he says, king: the supreme power, with (for now, anyway) Musk as chief minister. "This is a [coup](#), plain and simple", as Arizona attorney-general Kris Mayes says.

At a gathering of sociopaths on 20 February, aka the Conservative Political Action Conference, his henchman in chief Elon Musk wielded a [chainsaw](#) given him by the "libertarian" President of Argentina, Javier Milei, blurting out that it was a chainsaw against bureaucracy.

On Saturday evening 22 February, Musk, the Doge of Menace, sent an [email](#) to 2.3 million federal workers to summarise (by Monday evening, 24th) their work over the previous week. Musk posted on X. "Failure to

respond will be taken as a resignation." American workers have a poorer work-life balance than their European counterparts, largely due to the lack of strong trade unions and a working class-based political party, but even Trump's FBI boss, Kash Patel, has demurred at this.

Musk's attitude towards unions is well known. He farcically maintains that unionisation of the workforce "creates lords and peasants". In reality he wants to reduce working people in America to the status of serfs with no rights whatsoever, who can be hired and fired at will. In addition they'll be deprived of social and health care in the name of "efficiency".

Musk, who bought his way into the present government, has certainly cut the legs from under tens of thousands of US workers with mass sackings. Those fired so far according to Trump were "unnecessary, incompetent and corrupt. The worst people."

Evidence suggests the contrary, but since when does that matter in the world of "alternative facts"? In normal circumstances federal employees can only be fired if there are legitimate reasons for dismissal. A multitude of testimonies from sacked workers shows that they had excellent performance reviews. Musk's "nerd army" sacked them regardless. It was simply a matter of getting rid of people from the sections of the federal government Trump and Musk don't like.

Around 30% of federal employees, at least until late February, were military veterans, half of them disabled. Their sackings aren't just bad news for them, but for numerous veterans with physical and mental health conditions they were employed to help.



From the White House X account

Voters ought to have been aware of President Bone-Spur's view that those who served in the military, particularly when maimed in conflict, are "losers". Sadly many voted for him because they didn't believe his intention to "gut the government" would apply to them.

With those famous egg prices now reaching \$10 a dozen, the cull of people in Agriculture Department dealing with avian flu has been reversed. And those in charge of guarding the nuclear stockpiles have been re-employed too. But the drive to cut out regulatory agencies, many of which oversee Musk's private businesses, is still in full force.

This is conflict of interest on steroids. The cuts in government spending aren't going to be applied to the subsidies Musk enjoys from the US government. Numerous government agencies are now posting public an-

nouncements on Musk's X platform and nowhere else.

Trump 2 is so corrupt as to dissolve the Teapot Dome Scandal into a teacup. As *Private Eye* summarises: "he has suspended the work of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; paused the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977, which prohibits US companies from handing out kickbacks

abroad; and ordered the Justice Department to stop investigating bribery allegations against New York mayor Eric Adams."

The Adams case is an effort to get co-operation for immigration cops (ICE) into New York to round up people for deportation, in exchange for dropping corruption charges against the Mayor. Other preparations include readying military premises to use as detention camps, and Trump suing the city of Chicago over its policy of local police not cooperating with ICE.

The American people are starting to wake up to the attacks, and protests are mounting across the country, even in some Republican areas where cuts in government spending will cause the most damage.

Trade unionists and socialists must be at the forefront of the necessary fightback. □

Day of action, but fightback needs more

By Lewis Joyes

The Federal Unionists Network (FUN) called a national day of action across the US on 19 February. The actions were called in response to the barrage of attacks on federal workers and contracts or budgets for federally-funded research and projects by the Trump-Musk administration.

The demands of the day of action were: "No cuts to vital services, no mass layoffs: respect union workers' contracts, and end the funding freeze".

Lively

The Boston demo was lively and, given only a week's notice, sizeable, with around a few hundred in person. Speeches were wide-ranging, and included local public health workers, medical researchers, teachers' union leaders, PhD and undergraduate students. Many present came from the UAW, which organises researchers and students/teaching assistants on university campuses. Other local unions and campaign groups organised for the demo in solidarity too.

The energy of the speeches, however, has yet to be matched by energy in response to layoffs, cuts, and grant suspensions. Discussions are being had amongst FUN activists, and a public campaign is to be launched soon. However with so much damage having already been done, more urgent campaigning is needed now to



avoid longer-term, more catastrophic impacts.

Slim

Many federal staff live in states with slim Republican congressional majorities: targeted campaigning could stop draconian cuts being finalised through Congress later this year. Many workplaces have dangerously low union density, with some organisations largely inactive: recruitment and activity in union branches could force back dismissals, and end the suspension of grants and contracts.

In cities with large federal workforces, mass public lobbying efforts of representatives and agency leaders could break conservative leaders' nerves to push through Musk/Trump's orders.

With so much on the line, we need more than one-off demos. We need a united effort to build leverage in workplaces, on the streets, and where they exist, to utilise the powers of better-minded political leaders. □

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Solidarity

For a workers' government

SAVE AND COMPLETE THE CEASEFIRE

By Ira Berkovic

The ceasefire in Gaza is again in jeopardy, after Israel indefinitely delayed the release of 600 Palestinian prisoners.

Israel says the move was a response to the events Hamas has organised around its release of Israeli hostages, involving gatherings of armed fighters and the parading of hostages in front of crowds. Israel also accused Hamas of violating the ceasefire agreement after it was revealed that the body claimed to be that of the hostage Shiri Bibas, kidnapped along with her two small children, who were also killed, was not, in fact, hers. Bibas' body was later released.

The first phase of the ceasefire is due to end on 1 March. The terms of the agreement state the ceasefire will continue as long as negotiations over the implementation of the second phase are ongoing. These were due to begin earlier in February, but have yet to commence.

Hamas's treatment of the hostages, including parading them in front of banners reading "We Are The Flood", a reference to the 7 October "Al-Aqsa Flood" attacks in which they were kidnapped, and over 1,000 were killed, is an attempt to reassert power. The stage-managed ceremonies show Israel has failed in its aim of "destroying Hamas".

But as well as inflicting indignity on the hostages, they encourage those in Israel who want to resume the war as soon as possible. Meanwhile, pictures have been released of handcuffed Palestinian prisoners wearing sweatshirts with Stars of David printed on them, with the words "We Will Not Forgive, We Will Not Forget".

Hamas and the Israeli far right are political mirror images. Both forces view the other people as an enemy presence that must be destroyed.

Standing Together, the left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement, has continued protests de-

manding the upholding and extension of the ceasefire. The movement writes: "We won't stop until a complete ceasefire is reached that returns every hostage to their loved ones and allows Palestinians in Gaza to finally rebuild their lives, homes, and communities [...]"

"We won't stop protesting until our government abandons its Kahanist dream of ethnic cleansing in Gaza and the West Bank.

"We won't stop protesting until our government ends the deadly operation in the West Bank, which has already driven 40,000 people from their homes. We won't stop while violent settlers carry out pogroms against Palestinians.

"We won't stop until we see an end to the occupation and a just and sustainable peace that guarantees freedom, equality, and justice for everyone on this land." □

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