



For social ownership of the banks and industry

ORGANISING CAN BEAT CUTS



Form union-Labour committees

Two conferences of the left

"Summit of Resistance"
and "Arise: Socialism or
Barbarism"

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Reform threat for 1 May elections

Farage promises to
emulate Musk, and
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Needed as Trump
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of politics can thrive
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Beating the benefit cuts



Opposition within the Labour Party over the disabled benefit cuts has been the biggest since Starmer took office last year. Over 25 MPs, and not just the usual “Labour left”, have [declared](#) that they would vote against the legislation in the Commons. Nine Labour councillors have [resigned](#) from the party; more usefully, many local Labour Parties have expressed strong, sometimes unanimous, opposition.

This can give us a starting point to build active local union-Labour-disabled campaign committees. Not just WhatsApp groups, or sporadic protests, but active committees: with representation from many organisations; meeting in-person; doing regular activity on the streets; constantly reaching out to new union branches, Labour Parties, or community groups; putting urgent pressure on MPs.

Time is short. Unions and the Labour Party usually move slowly, on a tempo of months rather than days. We need to move faster than that.

The cuts in access to PIP could come to Parliament as early as May. Left MP Richard Burgon said at a meeting on 29 March that he hopes the anger in the movement will make the government delay and eventually abandon the plan. That won’t happen without rapid campaigning.

Trade union leaders have criticised the cuts. Unison’s Christine McAnea [said](#) “ministers should think again”.

Steve Wright of the Fire Brigades Union called the cuts a “Thatcherite attack on the welfare state” and demanded a “U-turn” from the government. PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote declared that “Civil servants, and the public, deserve better than a return to austerity”.

TUC general secretary Paul Nowak said: “There is a real danger that these cuts will hit some of the most vulnerable people in the country”; “we are calling on the government to think again”. GMB London secretary Warren Kenny has written to MPs saying the cuts in benefits are “not only immoral but cruel”, though GMB general secretary Gary Smith has so far gone no further than to call for “proper investment in key industries” as the answer to economic difficulties.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: “Instead of snatching crumbs from workers, pensioners and the disabled, Labour should target the massive concentration of wealth built up by the richest one per cent. A wealth tax, as well as fairer taxes on corporate profiteers and the highest earners...”

But none of them have openly called on their sponsored MPs to vote against the cuts. Labour’s National Executive, on which the unions have 13 representatives, met on 25 March. Left representatives elected from the local Labour Parties kicked off about the benefit cuts, but their [report](#) gives no indication of the union delegates supporting them vocally. And the union leaders are not yet making a drive to mobilise their branches and members on this.

32% of households in Britain include



at least one disabled person. 70% of those who receive the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are in the poorer half of the population. This is an issue which directly involves a vast swathe of working-class households, and involves all of us through our duty of solidarity to the whole working class, including, and especially, the worse-off sections of our class.

Gesture

PCS sent its National President to give a speech at the Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) demonstration in Westminster on 26 March, but that gesture would have more meaning if GS Fran Heathcote hadn’t told her members “not to worry” about civil service [job cuts](#), and had instead agreed to fight against government cuts from day one.

Meanwhile, the Office for Budget Responsibility declared that Reeves’ proposed cuts to benefits would only raise £3.4bn of the £4.8bn Reeves predicted (by 2030). The cuts are cruel – thousands of people stand to lose over 60% of their income – but also ineffectual in their own terms. Any one of a range of

tiny extra taxes on the rich would do more to balance the books.

The Department of Work and Pensions reports (27 March) that in 2023-4 31% of children in the UK lived in poverty, up from 27% in 2010. The Child Poverty Action Group predicts that by the end of this parliament, that figure could rise from 4.45mn to 4.8mn, even before the current proposed cuts are factored in.

The line the government have taken is absurd in its cruelty: first Reeves, then Treasury Chief Secretary Darren Jones, argued that it was misleading to say that they were impoverishing hundreds of thousands, because that failed to take into account all of the new income people would get from being forced into work.

Disabled people are not out of work because they are lazy, and just need a push to get down to it. PIP is designed to cover the extra costs of living with a disability – which often include getting to work with a disability! Disabled people who are unable to work will not magically become productive labourers if you remove their benefits: they will be left with no safety net, and for many, they will be left in poverty.

So far the Labour leaders are getting too easy a ride, while impoverishing the working class in the name of the market. For now, they worry more about gambits to conciliate Reform voters than about the immense anger in the working class about these benefit cuts. It is our job to help that anger find organised and effective expression, to make the Labour leaders’ lives hell, and to make the rich pay! □

Threat from Reform on 1 May

By Colin Foster

There has been one opinion [poll](#) so far for the 1 May local elections, for 23 councils and six mayors. It shows Reform as likely to win 697 councillors out of around 2,000 seats being contested.

The elections are mostly in Tory-controlled county councils, and the Reform gains are predicted to come mostly at the expense of the Tories, losing them half their seats.

The poll reckons that Labour will lose a little, the Greens may also do so, and the Lib Dems will gain a little.

Polls also show Reform likely to win in the Runcorn parliamentary by-election, on the

same day. The Labour candidate there, Karen Shore, has responded shamefully.

After the *Daily Telegraph* slammed her for, as a councillor, “warmly welcoming” asylum-seekers to the area, she wrote on Facebook:

“I’ll campaign to close the local asylum hotel. Sign my petition here”.

Left-wingers protested at the Labour Party’s National Executive last week (25 March), and were given weasel-words about asylum-seekers doing better if not shut up in hotels.

I’ve been unable to find information on left-of-Labour candidates on 1 May. So voting against Reform then really

means voting Labour. But that has to be coupled with a left-wing fight inside Labour.

The Broxtowe Alliance borough councillors near Nottingham, who quit Labour with sort-of-left words, are running for county council seats, but as “local”, “against Westminster parties”, rather than left.

Reform launched its campaign at a rally in Birmingham on 28 March. The hall was only half-full, but still, that was 7,000 people.

According to reports from *Searchlight* and *Socialist Worker*, Nigel Farage’s line “everyone who comes illegally will be deported” got the biggest standing ovation.

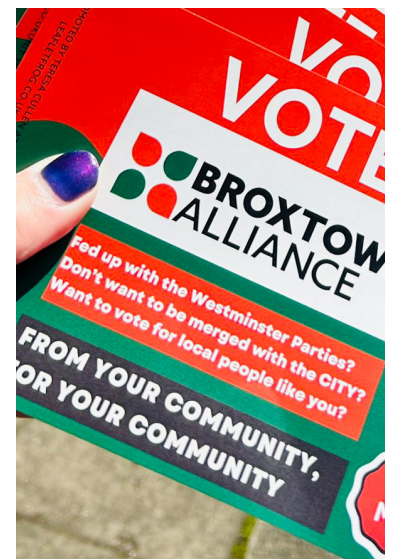
The second biggest was for: “We will abolish inheritance tax”.

Farage has pointedly kept his distance from Tommy Robinson, and earned hostility from Elon Musk over purging Rupert Lowe.

But he said: “We need a British form of Doge [Department of Government Efficiency], as Elon Musk has got in America. Let’s have a British Doge”.

Reform is dangerous.

Unless the left can generate a strong and visible fightback within the labour movement against Starmer and Reeves, it will thrive as Trump has done in the USA, Milei in Argentina, the AfD in Germany, and the



Rassemblement National in France. □

Will Trump become king? Resistance must be built

By Tom Harrison

The Windtalkers were Native Americans from the Navajo nation who, by using their own language, difficult for others to learn, as code, prevented imperial Japan learning US military information during World War Two. Now the Trump administration has deleted web pages telling the story from Department of Defense websites. It's all so very DEI!

But war plans instead are casually relayed in chat rooms by a gang of incompetents who make up for their lack of diversity with a large dose of entitled stupidity. Anyone can join in, including Putin's espionage agents! They too are fans of imperial conquest, after all!

You couldn't make it up! It's a cabinet of clowns, but without the fun of the circus. Drunk in charge of the Pentagon is an obvious one to be levied against Pete Hegseth, because he actually is a drunk in charge of the Pentagon! A weekend co-host of Fox News, the sole qualification for the job of commanding the most powerful military position in the world was his ability to make fawning remarks about the orange one.

Despite their obvious lack of ability Hegseth and the others are safe in the knowledge that they'll face no consequences for their actions as long as they stay loyal to Trump.

Yet this dangerous and diabolical crew are inflicting massive damage. Start with the measles outbreak affecting several states, made worse by vaccine scepticism. Worm brain Robert F Kennedy Jr thinks injecting kids with vitamin A is the answer instead of vaccinations, but the kids are getting liver damage instead! The Food and Drug Administration's top vaccine official has been forced to resign. Helping to make America healthy again, 20,000 employees of the federal health agencies are being sacked.

Meanwhile attacks on free speech and foreign residents – Mahmoud Khalil, Yunseo Chung, others – have continued with the kidnapping of international graduate student Rumeysa Ozturk outside her home in Somerville Massachusetts. She was surrounded by six plainclothes ICE agents wearing masks, handcuffed, and bundled into a vehicle with tinted windows.

Ozturk was put on a plane to a deportation holding pen in southern Louisiana. No charge, no trial, but her US visa has been cancelled.

The State Department claimed Rumeysa Ozturk had "engaged in activi-



ties in support of Hamas". No evidence, other than a pro-Palestinian opinion piece a year ago in her university's student newspaper. The Trump administration equates all student protests against US policy on Gaza with support for Hamas, to be dealt with by arbitrary deportation.

On 25 March a Massachusetts judge ordered her not to be moved out of state, but the government said she was already gone.

Clearing

All this, and more, is clearing the way for Trump's promised mass deportations. Those will come with economic consequences, however – a fact that has not escaped the attention of Republican politicians concerned about a shortage of low paid workers in the labour market. Their "solution"? To gut the child labour laws.

Florida has taken the lead on this, with Governor Ron DeSantis advancing a bill to allow teenagers as young as 14 to work overnight shifts, including on school nights. Child labour laws are under attack in around 30 US states. What do these kids need an education for anyway, if they are born to do menial jobs? Trump is abolishing the federal Department of Education, one of whose tasks is monitoring civil-rights laws across US education.

Even before these laws are changed there have been numerous violations of existing ones, probably only the tip of the iceberg. A number of teens have been killed this year working in hazardous industries, and numerous others subject to injuries and health damage from toxic chemicals.

There aren't enough federal and state officials around to see current laws properly enforced. The situation will get even worse thanks to Musk's "efficiency" operation. Unfettered capitalist exploitation is of course what oligarchic rule in the USA nowadays is all about.

Trade unions in America, as elsewhere, are essential for protecting young people from these abuses. They are also firmly in the sights of the Trump/Musk wrecking gang.

Agenda

Yet another Executive Order from Trump advancing his authoritarian agenda has [decreed an end](#) to collective bargaining rights for over a million federal workers. This Executive Order may bar the unions from trying to use the courts against the mass sackings of federal employees, because legally it makes those unions no longer "representatives" of the employees.

The move has been denounced as "deplorable" by UAW President Shawn Fain. Yet he has also applauded Trump and said he will work with Trump on tariffs on car imports, in the mistaken belief that this will increase the number of jobs for US auto workers. In fact the foreseeable impact of the tariffs is a disruption in supply chains, an increase in prices, and a decline in car production.

Fain's stance is a total folly when the MAGA gang are out to destroy trade unions. The National Labor Relations

Board has already been semi-paralysed. A move to abolish it and the USA's basic worker-rights law, from 1935, as "unconstitutional", is due to come to the Supreme Court this year. Vice-President J D Vance has proposed legislation to replace unions by joint worker-boss committees. Other Trump people aspire to have all public-sector unions ruled unconstitutional.

A proper coordinated fight back against the Trump-Musk gang attacks on civil society and the American working class is urgently needed.

Who is the most unpopular politician in America today? No it isn't Trump, but Chuck Schumer, the Democrats' leader in the Senate. His low ratings are down to a belief that he has just rolled over in the face of the Trump onslaught and is putting up no effective resistance.

In contrast, the "Fight the Oligarchy" rallies headed by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have galvanised tens of thousands across the country. On 5 April there are "Hands Off" protests against Trump-Musk across the country, and a rally in Washington for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and a halt to US arms supplies for Netanyahu.

Much more, and much more coordinated, resistance is needed, with further actions in workplaces and communities to roll back the Trump attacks on democratic rights. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

7 Apr: Russia's occupation of Ukraine. 7pm, Leeds University Union, Lifton Place Woodhouse LS2 9JZ

At work or on campus

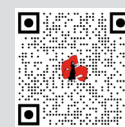
We organise: among health and local government, school and education workers, on the railway and London Underground, in the civil service, on uni campuses, and more. See workersliberty.org/work-unions, Insta [@workerslibertystudents](https://www.instagram.com/workerslibertystudents), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs



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

6 Apr: The Longest Revolution. 3pm, Gallery Café, 81 Princess St M2 3JL

7 Apr: Caliban and the Witch. 6pm, University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

8 Apr: Cannibal Capitalism. 6:30pm, The Ventoux, 2 Brougham Street EH3 9JH

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 awl@workersliberty.org. □

A useful idiot for the Morning Star



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Ian Sinclair is a frequent contributor to the *Morning Star* and clearly not a member of the Communist Party of Britain. He has had letters published protesting about the paper's uncritical support for China and Assad's Syria. He seems to be a semi-pacifist.

In an article entitled "How the media distorts reality over the Ukraine war – the deluge of dishonesty pushed by the pro-war camp ... to confuse audiences and suppress opposition to the proxy war in the east" (MS 29-30 Mar) Sinclair outlines four ways he claims the "mainstream media" sows "Ignorance and confusion" in order to "limit opposition" to "Trump's political manoeuvres that seem to be aimed at ending the fighting."

The first way Sinclair identifies is "constant repetition of deeply ideological statements presented as unquestionable truths." This might seem a bit rich, coming in an article whose sub-heading uses the term "proxy war", an ideological statement repeatedly presented as an unquestionable truth by the *Morning Star* and other opponents of Ukraine's right to defend itself. The sub-heading also describes supporters of Ukraine as "the pro-war camp".

Strangely, Sinclair takes issue with

claims that Trump has "seemingly up-ended the rules-based international order." He even takes issue with Bernie Sanders' statement that "Trump is turning his back on Ukraine and democracy, all to the benefit of a brutal dictator in Moscow."

Apparently, this cannot be true because of what the US has done in other countries since 1945.

Second: "Simplistic framing". As an example of this, Sinclair cites the *Guardian* columnist George Monbiot arguing (on BBC Question Time) that "a peace settlement that favours Vladimir Putin will end up with Russia looking to invade Romania or Poland next." Sinclair dismisses this proposition on the grounds that "a Russian invasion of Romania would entail going through... Ukraine." To which a lot of Ukrainians and Romanians might respond: "precisely!"

Conspiracy

Bizarrely, for an article supposedly demonstrating that there is a mainstream media conspiracy to suppress dissenting voices on Ukraine, Sinclair quotes journalist Patrick Cockburn, who broadly agrees with the "realist" position that Sinclair espouses, is widely published internationally, and has a regular column in *The i Paper*.

Third: "Using language that obfuscates rather than helps understanding". As evidence of this, Sinclair cites various *Guardian* writers using different terminology to describe the British government's still undetermined plan to deploy troops to Ukraine to deter breaches of a peace deal once struck. He calls this language "confused" and "arguably assist[ing] the British government in selling its plans to the British public." Sinclair reckons that "it's worth noting that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko has stated Russia would be open to 'the presence of unarmed observers and a civilian mission to Ukraine'."

Third: "Omission of information that

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for Peace and Socialism

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STOP DRIVING US INTO JAWS OF WAR

Plea to defence chief as he ratchets up aggression on several fronts

by Andrew Murray
Political reporter

"He must tell the British public if this means we are now at war with a nuclear power, what risk this poses to people in Britain, and why this action was taken without approval from Parliament," Mr Corbyn said.

"I have consistently condemned Russia for its invasion of Ukraine and called for a diplomatic solution to stop the endless bloodshed.

"As we edge closer and closer to catastrophe, we should be doing everything in our power to bring about de-escalation and peace.

"Instead, our political leaders have added fuel to the fire and gambled with people's lives for political gain. Presidents and prime ministers must know and British governments were made without debate or decision by the US Congress and UK Parliament. It is clear there can be no winners in this war which has been at a stalemate for many months.

"Hundreds of thousands of people, mainly Ukrainians, have already been killed or injured, often in trench warfare echoing the horrors of World War I. Not surprisingly, polls are now showing that the majority of Ukrainians want to see a negotiated peace rather than continue to fight.

"The current terrifying face-off between Russia and Nato proves that the huge amounts of Western military aid to Ukraine has turned it into a negotiated end to the war," the statement concluded.

Hex contrast with stoking tension in Europe, Mr Healey also defended Labour's decision to send an aircraft carrier strike group to the Far East for the continuing Anglo-American confrontation with China.

MPs on the Commons defence committee suggested that the group, which includes one of Britain's two aircraft carriers, escort ships and aircraft, would be better deployed to the Baltic instead.

But Mr Healey backed his multi-front militarism, saying: "There is a value otherwise I would not be sending it."



is key to understanding events". Inevitably, Sinclair brings up the story of the peace deal that never was: "While the *Morning Star* has repeatedly highlighted how Britain and the US blocked a possible peace deal in Spring 2022, you'd be hard-pressed to find significant coverage of this important story in the rest of the media."

The source for this story is an article the Ukrainian online newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda*. The researchers Voldymir Artiukh and Taras Fedirko, noting that this article is routinely cited as "proof of nefarious western interference", spoke to its author, the journalist Roman Romaniuk. Their interview can be read in full at [Novara Media](https://www.novaramedia.com/en/ukraine/2022/10/17/romaniuk-interview) (17 October 2022), but the crucial point is that the author himself denies that "Britain and the US" (in the form of Boris Johnson) played a crucial role in blocking negotiations: Johnson didn't "order" termination of the peace deal: this was "advice at best,

and... his scepticism wasn't unique. There were already "strong concerns within Zelenskyy's closest entourage that the Kremlin wouldn't stick to an agreement for any longer than it suited its interests."

Sinclair concludes that while readers shouldn't completely abandon the mainstream media, they should "read/watch alternative non-corporate media"... like the *Morning Star*.

Sinclair is not a Stalinist: just a useful idiot for the Stalinists ... and therefore also for Putin and Trump. □

Eric Lee

Eric Lee is taking a break from his column for some weeks in order to work on his forthcoming book on Stalin and the Okhrana. □

WHY TRADE UNIONS SHOULD NOT SUPPORT THE MORNING STAR

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Don't let Trump keep us off-kilter

By Rhodri Evans

On 30 March Donald Trump said he was "not joking" about a third term as president (2029-2033). There are "ways" round the constitutional ban, he claimed.

An ally commented: "Trump excels by keeping people off kilter and uncomfortable".

And the Maga gang has not yet started on its mass deportations, or its promise of "one very violent day" to "end

crime".

Trump has asserted sole executive power – long live the king, as he puts it – where in his first presidency his own appointees blocked or deflected him.

Defied

He has been able to get Congress to do what he needs, and otherwise sideline it. He has repeatedly defied the courts, usually with a show of formal compliance. His own

appointees on the Supreme Court may yet brake him, but it doesn't look good.

2,000 scientists have protested (31 March) against Trump's shutdown on funding for research. The director of Harvard University's Centre for Middle Eastern Studies and his deputy have been forced out (28 March). Universities are under relentless pressure to conform to Trump.

On 28 March, he started in on museums, with moves

against the Smithsonian.

He has cancelled union representation for hundreds of thousands of federal employees, and semi-paralysed the National Labour Relations Board. Further moves against unions remain pending. The resistance has often been blindsided, left protesting against one aspect of the Trump-Musk offensive while they push ahead on others.

US socialist Eric Blanc [comments](https://www.commonstheory.com/en/2023/03/28/eric-blanc-on-the-recent-speaking-tour-by-bernie-sanders-and-alexandria-ocasio-cortez) on the recent speaking

tour by Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (bit.ly/s-oc-c).

"Bernie and AOC could take an additional step: ask all rally attendees to become organisers. The fate of our country depends in part on channeling the excitement of these events into an escalating, mass-based campaign...

"General appeals to get involved locally aren't enough. People need specifics and next steps". □

Benefit cuts will hit women worst



Women's Fightback

By Natalia Cassidy

Labour's proposed changes to the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit will greatly reduce the number of people who qualify for the daily living component. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, it represents the greatest reduction in welfare since 2015.

Most disabled people in the UK are women. The 2021 census found that 18.7% of females and 16.5% of males reported having a disability. Even apart from that, women are impacted by these cuts in ways that men generally are not.

Women are more likely to be caring for disabled people than men are. Disabled men are more likely to be in paid employment than disabled women, though that gap has been closing in recent years. Women reliant on disability benefits are at a particular risk of abuse by their partners. Disabled women who have experienced domestic abuse are twice as likely to experience economic abuse by their partners as non-disabled women, and around four times more likely to have a partner try and stop them accessing benefits that they or their children are entitled to.

Women who are in a vulnerable and precarious position with regard to accessing financial support to sustain a dignified standard of living need fewer barriers to that support, rather than more.

Research carried out by the Women's Budget Group (WBG) found that already, with cuts in services and with high rates of inflation, disabled women in the UK have seen living standards fall by 11% since 2010. The household poverty rates has risen to 27% for households with no disability, but to 34% for households where one or more of the occupants is disabled.

PIP also acts as a gateway benefit for unpaid carers (the vast majority of whom are women) to receive carer's allowance, so PIP restrictions on the daily component will impact not only disabled people but the ability of their carers to claim carer's allowance. That will further jeopardise an already precarious and poorly compensated service and could make acting as a full-time carer unviable for many.

This will further diminish the standard of living of disabled people and take us further from a situation where disabled people are afforded a dignified life, regardless of their ability to operate in paid labour, and get the help they need to do paid labour when they can. □



Women's Fightback. 28 pages, £3.00 □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Discussing Europe-wide Ukraine solidarity

By Cathy Nugent

Discussions at the international "Solidarity with Ukraine" conference held in Brussels on 26-27 March took place against the backdrop of US deal-making with Putin – the threats of permanent partition of Ukraine, continued military aggression from Putin and Trump's drive to economically plunder Ukraine.

The conference was organised by the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine and the two Ukrainian Solidarity Campaigns organising in the UK. It was called to coincide with a meeting on Ukrainian reconstruction organised by The Left group in the European Parliament which some delegates attended.

The main conference heard from Finnish and Swedish

MEPs who raised the broader geopolitical issues around Europe's future – the possibility of a NATO without the US, Ukraine joining the EU and a peace-keeping force provided by the "coalition of the willing". They took for granted that pushing for these things to be as good as they can be is the best that can be hoped for.

In our leaflet for the conference we argued, "We understand why Ukraine would look for protection under a peace agreement... [but] Western troops in Ukraine are not our policy. Our policy is international workers' solidarity and adequate, timely aid to Ukraine so that it is able to defend itself. Ukrainians should not trust Merz and Macron, nor Starmer. They are not reliable allies."

For the most part this was the view of most other delegates at the conference, left wing activists who have been plugging away for three years to get labour movement and broader solidarity for Ukrainian self-determination.

We heard how, as in the UK, this has been difficult, because labour movements are politically dominated by left activists with "campist" politics. This is where the world is simplistically divided into, on one side, (bad) imperialist blocs dominated by the US, and on the other the opposition of Russia, China etc which is seen to be "anti-imperialist" and therefore



Yuliya Yurchenko, Li Andersson MEP (Finland), Jonas Sjöstedt MEP (Sweden)

good. Ergo, Russian imperialism in Ukraine and elsewhere is not recognised. The conference was a welcome opportunity for people who oppose campism to swap notes.

Sanctions

Most delegates will have taken for granted that sanctions on Russia are a necessary part of the fight against Putin. Indeed that was the view taken by the statement launched at the end of the conference: bit.ly/ukr-eusol. However there was some comradely debate here.

Workers' Liberty argues sanctions have not forced an end to the war (a fact noted by some speakers), that it is not our business to propose policies which only serve to reconfigure global capitalism towards sharpened rivalries (which is what has happened

with sanctions on Russia). Rather we fight for workers' solidarity, arms and aid to Ukraine.

Ukrainian speakers – representing Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), People's Power (Narodovladdia) Labour Party, Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group, the feminist group Bilkis, health workers' group Be Like Us and the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine – reported the situation in Ukraine. There is inevitable war weariness, but also strong opposition to permanent occupation.

While our solidarity in the military fight against Putin continues, increasingly the workers' movement must turn to its fight against the Ukrainian ruling class. This is a country where income tax is a flat

rate, there are no wealth taxes, and the oligarchs are getting richer. That situation has to be reversed. Membership of the EU could help Ukraine's workers' movement by providing points of leverage for social levelling-up.

A diverse range of workshops included feminist organising, labour organising, resistance in the occupied territories and a discussion on the opposition in Russia. That workshop reported on continuing underground activity which includes support for political prisoners.

It was heartening to meet other like minded left activists at such a dangerous moment for Ukraine, and for Europe. All involved need to build on our connections in the months and years ahead. □

THE STOP THE WAR COALITION AND UKRAINE:

a decade of political and factual illiteracy

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Events and campaigns: workersliberty.org/events



youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK



workersliberty.org/audio

Fifteen JSO people still in jail



Environment

By Owen Flood

Just Stop Oil have announced that they will be “hanging up the hi-vis” and will stop organising protests and actions for the foreseeable future after one last demonstration (designed, this time, to minimise arrests) on 26 April.

JSO came onto the scene in 2022 as one of the splinters from Extinction Rebellion. Their overarching demand was for an end to the burning and extraction of fossil fuels and an emergency international plan to eliminate fossil fuel use. Specifically they called for an end to all new oil and gas licenses. and more recently they have called on the

UK government to sign an international treaty to “stop extracting and burning oil, gas and coal by 2030 as well as supporting and financing poorer countries to make a fast, fair, and just transition”.

Their tactics and strategy were largely identical to Extinction Rebellion – headline-grabbing actions and maximum disruption – but via smaller stunts and actions rather than XR’s big demonstrations designed to overwhelm the state’s capacity for mass arrests. JSO actions included small groups spray-painting Stonehenge or throwing soup at paintings in galleries, as well as somewhat larger actions such as demonstrations and slow marches.

JSO became one of the main victims of state repression directed at climate activists and the Tory government’s Police Act 2022 and Public Order Act 2023. JSO activists were arrested and

jailed for as long as five years for participating in Zoom call discussing protest action to disrupt the M25.

Many who participated in the racist riots in August 2024 received nowhere near that kind of sentence, despite active participation in (not just Zoom chats about) racist attacks and assaults.

JSO say they will shift their focus to supporting their activists in jail or awaiting trial. Currently 15 of their activists are in jail. JSO say they are also taking time to create “a new strategy, to face the reality of runaway global heating, mass death, economic collapse, and rising fascism and to carry our responsibilities at this time”.

In many ways, this announcement from JSO echoes the XR “We Quit” statement in January 2023. The focus solely on disruptive action and arrest-maximisation has never really

made sense. It seems to fall apart once you exhaust the number of people willing to face arrest and jail-time.

Like XR, JSO never made a serious shift towards involving and supporting workers in polluting or other industries. As we said in 2023 “there are now sophisticated technical plans for how key industrial sectors should be organised so we might avoid escalating ecocide and civilisational collapse. What is lacking is a form of social and political organisation able to enact these plans.”

A mass workers’ movement is the only serious social force that has the power and interest to lead a worker-led just transition and end fossil-fuel dependency.

Workers’ Liberty conference on 26-27 April will discuss steeping activity to win unions to ecological policies. □

An engine that isn’t driving

By Matt Cooper

Most readers, I guess, will not have heard of Collective. Yet its website declaims “Collective is the engine that will drive the formation of a new, mass-membership political party of the left in the UK.”

Collective originated in late 2023 in a group around the former general secretary of Unite, Len McCluskey, one of the most prominent trade-union backers of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader. Its founders were Karie Murphy, who was the director of Corbyn’s office when he was Leader of the Opposition; Pam Fitzgerald, a director of Corbyn’s Peace and Justice Project (PJP); and the academic Justin Schlosberg. Its goal was to create a party

to unite leftish independents in the then-upcoming general election with Corbyn as the glue to hold them together. Collective even adopted the demands of Corbyn’s Peace and Justice Project as its own.

The scheme was derailed by the early calling of the general election and, more so, by Corbyn’s unwillingness to be such a figurehead. Although he attended some Collective meetings, he always maintained his [distance](#) from the “party project”.

So Collective has little profile, and entirely failed to achieve its founders’ aims. Its lightweight [website](#), launched in February 2024, did little more than repeat the demands of Corbyn’s PJP. While inviting people to join as members, it offered them no more than an occasional newsletter which left readers none the wiser as to what the self-appointed leadership of Collective were doing behind doors closed to these “members”.

Its minimal activity in the 2024 election appears to have been a “proof of concept” based on producing memes for a [selection](#) of candidates (presumably with those candidates’ assent). The selection included the obvious (Corbyn and Andrew Feinstein, the former South African ANC MP who stood against Starmer). Collective also supported Dave Nellist (Socialist Party/

TUSC). the Mersey Community Independents, Southport Community Independents and similar groups and individuals. Interestingly, it supported Fiona Lali of the RCP, though there were at least two other “Gaza” candidates in her constituency. The RCP has attended Collective meetings. The Muslim Vote (TMV) is also involved in Collective. Collective backed one candidate who had been promoted by TMV, Leanne Mohamad, who stood as an (ex-Labour) independent in Ilford West.

Greens

It backed a Green candidate. Jo Bird in Birkenhead, showing their support for left wing Greens in the Greens Assembly faction. In other words, Collective was willing to support left-wingers within the Greens but not within Labour. It did not back George Gallo-way’s Workers’ Party GB, or the SWP’s “independent socialist for Palestine” candidate in Sheffield. [Reportedly](#), the SWP asked to join Collective, but was rebuffed. The SWP is campaigning via Stand Up To Racism for the 1 May 2025 local elections, against Reform, but implicitly for Labour (there are no SWP and we know of no Collective candidates).

Since the election Collective has failed, if it ever tried, to corral the disparate group of candidates whom it backed in

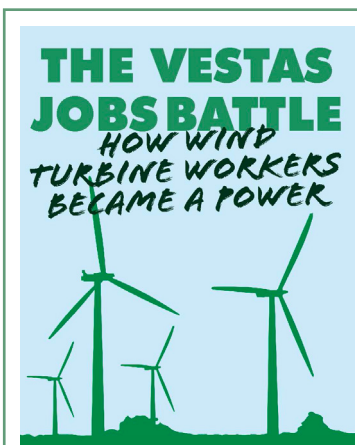
July 2024 into a party. Instead, from its first post-election meeting in September 2024, Collective has fractured.

Even before the meeting Schlosberg [resigned](#). He later [explained](#) that he believed that the other leaders of Collective were too timid about declaring a new party and too bureaucratic in not calling an open conference to decide the way forward.

Many of those who Collective sought to unite did not want a “party” approach. Corbyn and Feinstein have favoured local citizens’ assemblies. Former Labour mayor of North of Tyne Jamie Driscoll launched his own party, “Majority”, shortly after the September meeting.

It only organises in the North East, again with a citizens’ assembly model. It intended to build towards the 2025 local government elections on 1 May, but its [social media](#) is quiet about how successful this has been.

Prior to the next meeting in November 2024 the Murphy-Fitzgerald leadership formulated a [plan](#) for launching Collective as a party but, knowing it would be rejected, did not put it to the meeting. A further meeting in January this year seems to have not found any greater purpose for Collective. Its diminishing social media feeds seem to suggest that Collective is fizzling out. □



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Lively conference, unclear plans



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

The SWP-organised Summit of Resistance (“We Demand Change”) on 29 March in East London was an impressive size. The organisers claimed 2,000 on site, which seems accurate, plus another 1,000 online. The crowd was not as uniformly old as at some events put on by the left.

Some of that was down to the involvement of groups from a broader level of campaigning. There seemed to be a good few people brought in by a sense of betrayal by the Labour government over disability benefit cuts and impending austerity. The average age was certainly brought down by the involvement of the cluster of environmental groups, Just Stop Oil, Assemble,

and Youth Demand, which supported the event and spoke from the platform. Perhaps there was a slightly older layer of people who came into socialist activity when young in the Corbyn years present too.

There was a sizeable contingent of Greens, including platform speakers. They were drawn from the left of the Greens (the Greens Assemble group, their leading figure, Zoe Garbett, being one speaker).

Structure

Missing from the day was an overall structure and clearly delineated purpose to the event. The SWP had a purpose discussed in advance, but they did not want to make it the subject of debate. Many of the workshops (most of which were very large) had no sense of direction. The “Party time?” session, which discussed the prospects of a new political party, was unfocused, without clear proposals.

A gap to fill on Labour left

By Martin Thomas

At the same time as the Summit of Resistance on 19 March, a rival event was held in London, the “Socialism or Barbarism” day sponsored by “Arise”. Despite being supported and promoted by MPs John McDonnell, Richard Burgon, and Ian Byrne, the event was thin.

I found the event worthwhile for selling literature and catching up with the MPs and some older comrades, but it was a more flat and dispirited affair than its official description: “a festival”. There were 350 there, spread over three or four different

sessions in each time-slot and three different (nearby) sites. There was no plenary, and little space for debate in the sessions. I had useful conversations with several people about plans to organise against benefit cuts, but there was no place in the agenda for sorting out such action.

The *Morning Star* was distributed free, and the Socialist Action group, better known for securing posts as MPs’ aides and the like than for activity on the streets, played a big part.

“Arise” has been going, according to its social media, since 2018, but has never at-

tempted campaigning, or anything beyond sporadic Zoom or day-school-type events. It is loosely Labour-oriented, but has never had an active profile at Labour conference (template motions, leafleting, stalls, etc.)

None of the main movers from Momentum were there, as far as I can see, but Momentum itself is a faded force these days.

There is scope for at least a temporary revival of Labour grassroots activism in combat against the benefit cuts. But it looks like falling to groups like Labour Left Internationalists to get that going. □

What the SWP intend emerged piecemeal from the floor. It is to run election candidacies in 2026, as “propaganda candidates” based on their campaigning priorities (Stand up to Racism, anti-war, anti-cuts). Andrew Feinstein pushed the view that candidates should be based on and accountable to local people’s assemblies. The left-wing Greens view argued that all of the above can be achieved by joining the Greens.

The implication was of running first in local elections (in 2026 rather than 2025), which means the lack of discussion about what to do if candidates should win was unfortunate. There was a great deal of criticism of the Greens for managing cuts where they control councils, but no-one discussed an alternative strategy. The unaffiliated speaker from the floor who stated that this whole discussion needed a congress with proper motions and votes made a good point.

Corbyn

Jeremy Corbyn spoke at the event. He offered no support for the various electoral ambitions of the SWP, Feinstein, and the Greens. Rather, he projected the gathering as a meeting of campaigns offering mutual solidarity (which is what the publicity for the event promised). Artin Giles, speaking for Corbyn’s Peace and Justice project, insisted that the “We Demand Change” groups promised around the country should be to “build campaigns”, not to launch a new electoral bloc.

Andrew Feinstein spoke from the platform twice, and his involvement here was one signal of what is intended. Previously he has been in lockstep with Corbyn in that electoral activity should be based on groups built locally rather than as part of an overarching national project and, in the St. Pancras and Holborn constituency where he ran against Starmer in 2024, has been using *Assemble’s* model of people’s assemblies. That sounds plausibly democratic, but they are unlikely to be a month-in-month-out panacea without being linked to working-class

struggle. In normal times the “assemblies” are likely to be populated by a narrow layer of activists. Feinstein may have moved away from Corbyn. He has been in talks with the SWP about what comes after this event, and may have reached an agreement on We Demand Change being an umbrella for a move towards common electoral work.

The lack of clearly-announced plans and debate meant that, as with the Owl of Minerva spreading her wings and bringing knowledge only at dusk, it was the last speaker in the final plenary who announced “the” plan.

SWP national secretary Lewis Nielsen took that speech (as a Stand up to Racism office-holder rather than as SWP, although it is unclear when and how SutR agreed the policy he announced). He announced (it had not been discussed during the day) that We Demand Change would be holding more of these summits across the country with a view to setting up campaigning bodies. These will “build the resistance [and] a new politics” with a plan to mount “a socialist challenge to Labour in May 2026”, meaning an electoral challenge in next year’s local government elections. What this means for SutR’s “don’t vote for racists” policy (which generally implies voting Labour to defeat Reform), or for their declared united front with all labour movement bodies, who knows.

Workers’ Liberty will be discussing these plans for local “We Demand Change” campaigns. I’d guess we’ll agree that socialists, labour movement activists and all those opposing cuts should go along to local “We Demand Change” meetings and argue for a democratic and activist approach: an initial focus on building united fronts to defeat the benefit cuts; policies decided democratically; local representative committees. We should argue for them to work with those who oppose the Labour government cuts and austerity within the Labour Party and in co-operation with, not counterposition to, existing campaigning and trade union structures. □

French far right is not finished

From the NPA-R

“The weapon of ineligibility will have to be used much more rigorously”, wrote Marine Le Pen in 2012... She has been taken at her word, with a sentence of four years in prison, two of which are to be served, and five years of ineligibility. And the leaders of the RN cry out loud in defence of their boss...

Marine Le Pen has been found guilty of embezzling four million euros of

public money to run her party and to line the pockets of her followers, family and friends. Her sister, her sister-in-law, her ex, her assistant, all were paid between 5,000 and 9,000 euros for tasks they did not perform...

The RN presents itself as a victim, a martyr of a “system” that wants to get rid of it. But it’s quite the opposite! Over the years, the reactionary and racist ideas and lies of the RN have been taken up to varying degrees by the parties of institutional power...

It is not impossible that Le Pen and her associates will try to capitalise on their conviction, in terms of the popularity that would be transferred to the intended successor, Jordan Bardella. Other far-right leaders, Trump first and foremost, have been able to play on this to gain power. It doesn’t matter that they promise integrity, that they say, as Bardella did last November, that having a criminal record is incompatible with standing for election: once convicted, they cry conspiracy!

We are obviously not finished with the far right. This judgement has the merit of revealing that the RN is a party like any other (getting caught for embezzling public funds is almost an initiation rite in this political milieu). To push back the far right, we will have to defend our ideas of solidarity and internationalism loud and clear, and bring to life in the class struggle the unity of all workers for their working and living conditions... □

• bit.ly/lep-5

Myanmar: a crisis within a crisis

By Hein Htet Kyaw

Myanmar faces a severe humanitarian crisis following a magnitude 7.7 earthquake near Mandalay on 28 March 2025. This disaster compounds the existing challenges stemming from the ongoing civil conflict initiated by the military junta's 2021 coup against the democratically elected government.

Even neighbouring nations like China, Thailand, and Vietnam experienced severe damage as a result of the earthquake's magnitude and destructive power. An incomplete high-rise skyscraper in Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, was destroyed by Friday's earthquake despite being more than 1,000 kilometres (621 miles) away from the epicentre.

Myanmar suffered greatly. As of 30 March, there have been at least 1,600 reported deaths and around 3,400 confirmed injuries. The United States Geological Service (USGS) estimates that 10,000 people may have died.

Following the earthquake, communication among rescue crews is severely disrupted due to Myanmar's heavily controlled internet and the fact that social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and others can be accessed only via a virtual private network (VPN). Additionally, for a considerable amount of time, the military regime in Myanmar has restricted the public's access to electricity for eight hours every day; and the re-

gime in Myanmar cut access further, to four hours a day, after the earthquake, citing the devastation caused as justification.

Even those with VPN access, mobile phone usage is limited by battery capacities are limited, making it harder to pinpoint victims who are being buried by the collapsed buildings.

The opposition National Unity Government (NUG) proposed a short-term truce with the Myanmar military junta one day after the earthquake. However, as pro-democracy resistance groups currently control a sizable portion of the Sagaing region, the epicentre of the earthquake, the Myanmar military junta rejected the offer and attacked the Chang-U township in the north-west Sagaing region by airstrike.

Therefore, the people of Myanmar are taking care of one another by solidarity and mutual aid.

The governments of Thailand, China, and Vietnam are actively aiding the earthquake victims in their nations, but Myanmar is essentially in limbo, with the government not only failing to assist but also persecuting citizens. When the Myanmar military junta requested foreign assistance, several ASEAN nations as well as Russia chose to send rescue teams. However, the rescue squads dispatched by neighbouring nations are mostly located in the capital city of Naypyidaw, where the majority of public officials and military people reside. The Myanmar military regime

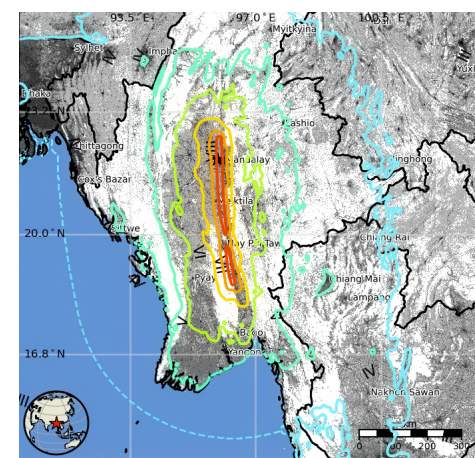
does not prioritise relief in Mandalay and Sagaing, where it is desperately needed.

In Myanmar, people are searching for one another and using their bare hands, without the necessary tools, to recover people who have been buried by the collapsed structure. Some of those victims may be politically neutral, pro-military, or pro-resistance. All people, however, are entitled to human rights, including the rights to life and health care.

People in Myanmar desperately need international solidarity given the long-term effects of resource scarcity, currency inflation, and economic stagnation. In Myanmar, one US dollar is sufficient for the cost of a meal. Food, beverages, and other necessities are currently needed for both individuals actively volunteering in rescue operations and those victims who are alive but buried under the collapsed buildings.

People in the region require power banks to communicate with others as a lot of the deaths are related to the fact of some people not being rescued. Since so many buildings have collapsed, leaving even those who are not physically harmed without a place, having to sleep on the street and unable to charge their phones.

It is time for people everywhere to show their solidarity with the people in Myanmar out of compassion, love, and moral principles they uphold, regard-



less of their political, religious, or other identities.

The Myanmar military junta recently also decided to fully implement forced conscription. As a result, a significant amount of the population, especially young people, have fled to nearby countries as international students, migrant workers, or asylum seekers. Economic conditions have been terrible due to the lack of human resources, the civil war, and the inefficiencies of the military SAC administration. □

• Hein, who is from Myanmar but lives in Australia, has asked us to publicise the relief fund he is organising. "Anyone who wants to lend a hand to express their solidarity to the victims of the earthquakes and the rescue volunteers on the ground, please donate via bit.ly/m-donate".

From Myanmar to Ukraine



By Hein Htet Kyaw

The people of Myanmar, who have been resisting the Myanmar military junta to establish a federal democratic union, have expressed solidarity with Ukrainians since the onset of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Myanmar has been under military dictatorship since 1962, with [pro-China](#) and [pro-Russia](#) policies intensifying after 1988, driven by "anti-Western-imperialist" values. Consequently, the Communist Party of China and the Russian government are perceived by the public as strategic allies of Myanmar's military junta, given their shared authoritarian characteristics and history of oppression against the eth-

nic minorities. As a result, the people of Myanmar advocate for western style democracy and self-determination.

In February 2022, displaced individuals from Kachin State, despite fleeing conflict themselves, demonstrated solidarity with Ukraine, displaying messages like "Stop War Russia, Save Ukraine." Around the same time, student unions across Myanmar and pro-National Unity Government (NUG) fundraising initiatives joined global pro-Ukraine and anti-Russia protests. By 2023, Shan State saw slogans such as "Murderer Putin" and "We Stand with Ukraine" during protests.

Myanmar's resistance movement opposes both Russia and China, as these nations continue to supply military weapons to Myanmar, with China even providing aircraft used to bomb civilians in contested areas. In March 2025, villagers

from [Yinmabin](#) Township in Sagaing State protested, urging the International Labour Organization (ILO) to implement [Article 33](#), while displaying Ukrainian flags to show solidarity amidst reports of Donald Trump pressuring Volodymyr Zelenskyy into agreements favouring Russia.

Myanmar's people empathize with the struggles of those in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Tibet, Ukraine, and other regions exploited by the sub-imperialist BRICS group. The recent overthrow of Assad in Syria, despite the shortcomings of the replacement regime, has inspired aspirations for change in Myanmar.

Historically, during the 1940s, [Thakin Soe](#), an influential communist theorist, authored the [Insein Manifesto](#), which identified Imperial Japan as sub-imperialist fascism and called for the local communists and socialists to



form temporary cooperation with British colonial establishment to combat fascism.

A similar approach is deemed necessary in the 21st century. While addressing Western imperialism and neoliberalism remains important, the BRICS alliance, with its left-conservative cultural values and Trumpian alt-right political ties, poses a greater threat for us. The red-brown alliance of the "Trumpist paleo-libertarian right" and the "neo-Stalinist left", which supports Russia in the Ukraine conflict, is a major adversary to civil liberties worldwide. Tem-

porary collaboration between liberals, "woke" imperialist elite left, the genuine intersectional left and the Third-World pro-democracy resistance forces is to be considered as an option to safeguard civil liberties of the immigrants, working class, the ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ+, even though woke imperialism of the professional managerial class and their Keynesian state capitalism will have to be challenged once the task is done. □

• See also from Hein: Myanmar and the ILO, bit.ly/iilo-33

A “frontlash” from neoliberalism



Book review

By Martin Thomas

Quinn Slobodian, in his new book *Hayek's Bastards: the neoliberal roots of the populist right*, argues that the far-right ideologues of today “are not barbarians at the gates of neoliberal globalism, but the bastard offspring of that line of thought”. They are “agents less of a backlash against global capitalism than a frontlash within it”.

Whatever their complaints against “globalism”, they are driven not by anger against the neoliberal configurations being too “marketist”, but by rage against them not being “marketist” enough.

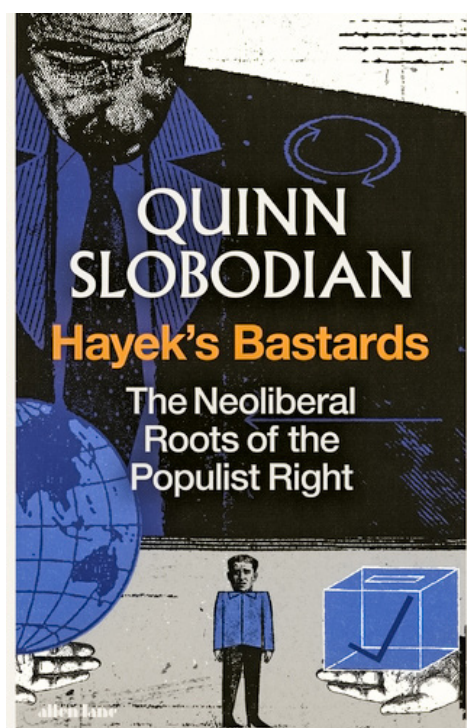
Margaret Thatcher, in 1979, vowed to cull “quangos”, semi-autonomous agencies doing public tasks of regulation but not part of government. Indeed, Tony Blair pledged the same in 1997. In fact, according to a survey by the Institute for Government, they increased those “administrative state” entities so hated by Elon Musk.

Neoliberalism was much more re-regulation than outright deregulation. The Thatcher-era privatisations, for example, generated a slew of quangos to regulate what were previously publicly-run utilities – Ofwat, Ofgem, Ofcom, ORR, etc.

In my view, as I wrote in *Workers' Liberty* 3/58: “As German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated it at the end of 2011, the priority [has become] to show that the territory is a ‘safe place to invest’... Neoliberalism has been not just, or primarily, an ideology. It is a world economic regime, something which politicians in every country have faced as an external fact beyond their control. Neoliberal ideologies are internalisations of the constraints of the regime, not theories dependent for life on successful confrontation with evidence and debate...”

Having waded through many, many far-right screeds, mostly US and German, Slobodian concludes that a “new fusionism” developed from the 1990s, as ideologues sought an antidote to “public spending continu[ing] to expand” (because neoliberal governments needed social infrastructure and market-management to attract capital) and the fact that “social movements of the 1960s and 1970s had injected the poison of civil rights, feminism, affirmative action, and ecological consciousness into the veins of the body politic”.

The new far-right doctrines, as far as I understand, mostly do not seek laws to put down women and racialised groups; rather, they may say that the healthy interaction of markets and nature will yield more White males at the



top, but that is a “feature” (of nature), not a “bug”.

To make their case that marketism was not being pushed far enough, that “diversity, equity, and inclusion” and the new neoliberal regulatory apparatus were destructive meddling, the far right pulled together different threads of their thought.

Markets wouldn't work without social oversight? Homogenous national or ethnic cultures can establish a moral basis (for many of them, “Judeo-Christian”) which can make them work. Markets produce unequal results despite clearing-away of old structures of formal discrimination? That's because individuals are unequal. For some of them, because “races” are unequal. (For some, too, though Slobodian mentions this little, because genders are unequal).

Overstates

I think that Slobodian overstates the homogeneity of far-right doctrine. He mentions Murray Rothbard, who was for no legal obligation on parents to look after their children, and for a workaround “market solution” via parents selling unwanted children. In contrast, Maga think-tanks make a cult of the nuclear family (though they stop short of openly prescribing that women should “go back to the home”). Slobodian works in the USA, but his book says little about the Maga world, and more about Milei in Argentina and the AfD in Germany.

He surely tells us a lot about the noxious swirl from which Trump and his gang draw.

Regular readers of *Solidarity* will have noticed that some of us have, for now, shelved the debate about whether the Trump movement can be described as incipiently or tendentially fascist. If we can agree that it is a far-right authoritarian movement threatening the fabric

of even bourgeois democracy, that will do.

Hein Htet Kyaw, however, has argued that “paleo-libertarian” (Hein's term for today's far-right, and also Slobodian's) means non-fascist. Whatever other arguments there may be about fascism and non-fascism, this one is misleading.

Socialist politicians have to be ideologues, people who work out, argue, and stick to coherent ideas. Bourgeois politicians aren't like that. Their policies are always a series of improvisations, drawing on a mixture of ideas.

Trotsky wrote: “Essentially, Mussolini never advanced any sort of ideology”. Anti-capitalist then pro-capitalist, anti-clerical then pro-clerical, anti-monarchist then monarchist, in the years 1919-22, his single constant was that he personally was the saviour-leader who would bring Italy out of chaos.

In power, he adapted ideas piecemeal from Luigi Federzoni's Nationalists and individuals like Giovanni Gentile. He sponsored Alberto De' Stefani as Finance Minister until 1925 to pursue privatisations, free trade, balanced budgets. From 1926 Mussolini proclaimed “corporatism”, but at first it meant little beyond suppressing trade unions. He introduced IRI, his main agency of “statist” economics, only in 1933.

In all this he paralleled the bourgeois common stock of the time – in the 1920s, keen to unwind wartime economic controls; in the 1930s, keen on state intervention. His special twist was that the policies were to be carried out with him as Leader, with popular assent organised round his personality rather than any traditional hierarchy.

From about the mid-1930s, “fascism” became a template-ideology which could be copied from the “successes” of Italy or Germany. Since 1945, that sort of nostalgic “ideological” fascism has been marginalised. Yet new forms of far-right politics have emerged, and can be a real threat.

Trump and Milei draw not on “template-fascism”, but on a swirl of elements from the “new fusionism”. They create policy which, as I put it in *Workers' Liberty* 3/58, “explodes [neoliberalism] from within” and creates something distinctively different.

As with far-rightists in previous epochs, in many ways they parallel or parody wider bourgeois shifts in policy. (I wrote about this in *Solidarity* 6/49). Biden, too, went for “industrial policy” – national measures to promote selected industries – condemned by “high neoliberalism” as foolish second-guessing of world markets. Biden, too, skirted the supposed “rules-based order” of the world market, leaving the WTO paralysed, deploying tactical tariffs against China. A different “version” from Trump or Milei becomes a whole different politics by its integration into

autocracy cultivating a personalised popular base, and that integration in turn gives a twist to the “purely economic” policies.

That all this is not so much a backlash against neoliberalism, as an exploding of it from within, tells us something about how to combat it.

The strength of Trump, or Milei, or Farage, is not in their supposed remedies for the plight of the working class. Almost no-one now thinks Brexit can bring economic improvement, and yet Farage, the archpriest of Brexit, is on a roll.

In 2019 almost all Labour's policies were popular. Yet many voters thought that Corbyn's shilly-shallying over Brexit and antisemitism showed them that Labour would never carry out those policies.

Believe

They didn't believe that the labour movement would do any of the good things it promised. They didn't believe that we, the far left, could push the larger labour movement into doing at least some of it; let alone that we could push further. No wonder, because so many of us had lapsed into “negativism” (just being “against”), meaning at best something like “no cuts”, at worst promotion of whatever seems “anti-imperialist” because “anti-West”.

When some of the far left talked about positive aims, it was often in vapid generalities: “One solution, revolution”, or “System change”.

The far right makes little promise of improvement for the working class. If it promises anything beyond “strong leadership”, it is regeneration of “the nation” (“make America great again”). It will be regeneration with all the built-in inequalities; but many people think that maybe in the regenerated nation they can get further up the ladder, pushing aside obstacles of “diversity, equity, and inclusion”, or find a more reassuring culture.

Racism, sexism, transphobia, economic “survival of the fittest” ideas, can all feed into this far-right surge, and be fed by it.

Our task is to revive, in the working class, the idea that we can “rise with our class”, with all of the class, and create a new world of joy and solidarity. As we pursue that, we will need to unite with all sorts of half-allies to defend democracy, union rights, civil rights, under attack from the new autocrats; but nothing less than a comprehensive positive vision will disperse them. □

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Lenin and Joe Colombo

6699 As we were saying

By Sean Matgamna

The story of Joe Colombo, the Mafia boss who briefly turned ethnic politician, is one of the most frightening stories I've come across. An instructive story, too. It says a lot about the "rebel" element in Trumpism.

Perhaps significantly, the year is 1970. In the USA there is a huge anti-Vietnam-war movement. The USA has also experienced the black civil rights movement and the black ghetto uprisings. It is a highly political period in American history.

When the gangster Joe Colombo, boss of one of the Mafia "families", feels the pursuing FBI breathing down his neck, he reacts "politically". He starts the "Italian-American Civil Rights League" (IACRL) to campaign against the FBI's "harassment" of Italian-Americans!

IACRL's message is simple and clear-cut, the lie big and direct. The Mafia does not exist. There is no such thing as the Mafia. There never was. The Mafia is a myth invented by a racist police force less concerned with justice or with fighting real criminals than with self-publicity. The FBI has invented the Mafia and thus stigmatised and smeared the entire Italian-American community.

The Mafia myth is a burden and an affliction for every Italian-American, and it is time to fight back, says the mafioso Joe Colombo. The Italian-American Civil Rights League exists, with Joe Colombo as its leading personality, to fight for justice, truth, and the Ital-

ian-American way. It slots easily into the American system of ethnic politics, and it mushrooms into a powerful movement able to get tens of thousands to demonstrate on the streets.

They boldly picket the FBI, demanding that it should stop victimising and persecuting good Italian-Americans like Joe Colombo. They demand such things as more public recognition that it was an Italian who first discovered America for Europe, Christopher Columbus. The image of the Italian-American has to be changed.

Politicians, judges, entertainers, flock to get a piece of Colombo's action. At \$10 per member, the Italian American Civil Rights League becomes a nice little earner for Joe Colombo and his Mafia friends.

The IACRL is a political force for about a year, and then one day in 1971, just as Joe Colombo is starting to speak to a big audience of thousands of demonstrating Italian-Americans, to tell them once again that the mafia does not exist, a mafia gunman shoots him in the head, blowing part of his brain away. The gunman is immediately killed by Colombo's Mafioso bodyguards.

You see, the other Mafiosi hadn't had Joe Colombo's faith in the power of the big bold lie to protect them. Colombo had broken their traditional modus operandi of anonymous, background manipulation, and as little publicity as possible. They thought Colombo's political operation would only get the FBI to intensify the heat on them. So they had him shot.

Survived

They didn't quite kill Joe Colombo outright: he survived for seven years, incapacitated. What they did kill was the Italian American Civil Rights League.

One irony of this strange all-American tale is that what Colombo said – the mafia is a myth – was what FBI Chief J Edgar Hoover had said for decades, until the late 50s. Hoover hadn't wanted to admit that there were criminals and a criminal network too big for the FBI to bring down.

Joe Colombo would be the basis of one of the characters in Francis Ford Coppola's *Godfather Part 3* (1990) He had, it seems, paid a visit to the producer of the first of the three *Godfather* films, to threaten him out of too-close an identification of the film's characters with their Italian background.

The story of Joe Colombo and his Italian-American Civil Rights League illustrates the ease with which politics can be faked and vast numbers of people fooled and led by their noses – the power of pseudo-political demagoguery to drum up unreasoning movements around real grievances.



Pic: Seton Hall University eRepository

Marx said truly that ideas become a material force when they grip the masses. A big problem for socialists and people concerned to promote rational politics in general is that all sorts of ideas can grip the masses.

There are no political or ideological vacuums: it has to be either the ideas of the ruling class, even if in some "wild" variant like Colombo's, or the ideas of Marxism, that prevail.

More than that: the emotion of resentment and rebellion can be hooked to many different ideas about the world in general – about what's wrong with it and what needs to be done about that.

Democratic political processes are routinely corrupted and perverted not only by ruling-class political machines, but also by radical and pseudo-radical demagogues. Isn't that what fascism – with its pretend anti-capitalism and its vicious scapegoating of Jews, black people, Muslims (in Britain now) and others – is all about: focusing the resentment of poor and ignorant people on nationalist and racist and cultural myths, and in binding them to the status quo by way of political mysticism and irrational leader cults?

Isn't that what Stalinism was, with its reduction of the Marxist critique of bourgeois society to mere negativism, to "absolute anti-capitalism", and its substitution for the democratic socialist Marxist alternative to the capitalism it criticised of advocacy for the totalitarian Russian Stalinist system?

Isn't that what we see now in the bizarre combination by the SWP kitsch-left of Marxist critique of bourgeois society with – to put it at its mildest – softness towards Islamist clerical-fascism?

One thing the Joe Colombo episode shows is the way that the expansion of democracy has separated the techniques of mass agitation and organisation from any necessary connection with serious politics or sincerely held ideas.

This deadly decadence of politics is nowhere more plain than in America, where politics is to a serious extent a branch of show business. In the years of Tony Blair's "presidential" premiership, Britain took giant strides in the wake of

the USA.

When he was accused back in 1900 of exaggerating the power of socialist ideas to shape events, Lenin replied that the difference between the then Catholic trade unions of Italy and the class-conscious trade union movement of Germany was that in Italy the workers' instinctive drive to combine together and fight for better wages and conditions had been corrupted and taken over by priests, who, naturally, brought to that workers' movement, not the consciousness of socialists, but "the consciousness of priests".

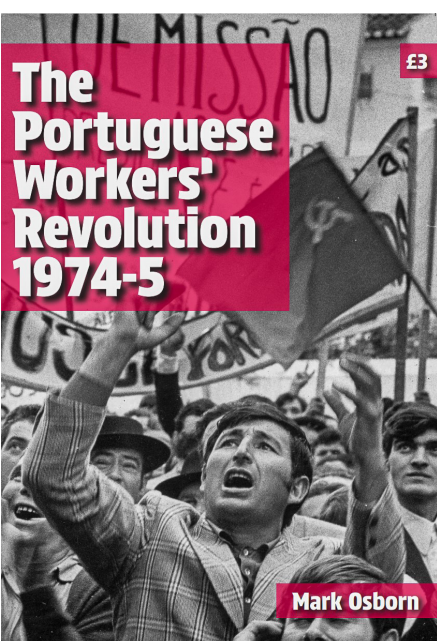
One and the same instinctive drive could produce either a fighting socialist working-class movement, given "the consciousness of Marxists", or, given the consciousness of priests, a sectarian, class-collaborationist working-class-based movement. The decisive thing is the battle to make "the consciousness of Marxists" central to the labour movement and to movements of those – like many of the Italian-Americans who rallied to Colombo's fake League – who feel themselves to be oppressed.

Examples of Lenin's principle are very numerous. One is the emergence of the "revolutionary" Irish Republican movement, the Provisional IRA, which is now sinking into its natural place as part of the spectrum of Irish bourgeois nationalist politics.

If there had been a sizeable Marxist movement in Ireland in the late 60s, when the Provisional IRA began to emerge, the consciousness of traditional physical-force Republicans, which permeated the Northern Irish Catholic community, kept alive in legend, reminiscences, songs and popular verse, would not have dominated and shaped the Catholic revolt; and that revolt would not have entered the blind alley of the Provo-war on the Northern Irish Protestants and on Britain.

The existence and activity of a socialist group can make all the difference. The creation, education in authentic Marxism, and maintenance of such a force is the decisive immediate, practical question for serious socialists. □

• Adapted from *Solidarity* 100, 20 October 2006



The story from the 25 April 1974 overturn to the 25 Nov 1975 restabilising coup. £3 □

workersliberty.org/publications

Workers need party politics



Socialism vs Capitalism

Parliament can yield political results, but only if a principled and coherent workers' party is strong. The democratic opportunities offered by an elected assembly are determined not only by its formal procedures but also by whether the working-class has its own political organisation. So Karl Kautsky argued in this [text](#) of 1892, translated into Russian by Vladimir Ulyanov (Lenin) in 1894. In other words, defending electoral democracy is important in Britain, the USA, Turkey, and elsewhere, but will be effective only if it goes together with workers' political organisation. For Kautsky at that time, these arguments went together with advocacy of breaking up the bourgeois standing army and top civil-service hierarchy, and replacing them with a militia and officials on workers' wages, in line with the Paris Commune of 1871. At that time Kautsky did not think attention to parliament meant socialism through bit-by-bit reform, or lack of interest in strikes and demonstrations. Lenin later saw [great gaps](#) in Kautsky's theorising, but never disdained party-election democracy.

Great capitalists can influence rulers and legislators directly, but the workers can do so only through parliamentary activity... The struggle of all the classes which depend upon legislative action for political influence is directed, in the modern state, on the one hand toward an increase in the power of the parliament (or congress) [i.e. over the unelected state machine], and on the other toward an increase in their own influence within the parliament. The power of parliament depends on

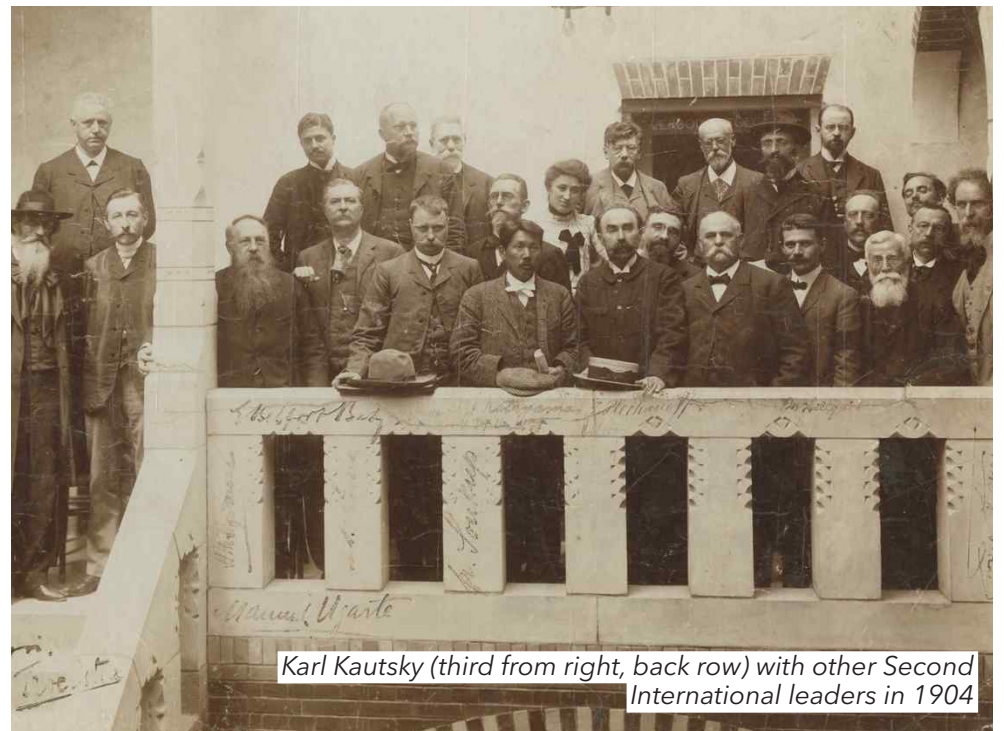
the energy and courage of the classes behind it and on the energy and courage of the classes on which its will is to be imposed. The influence of a class within a parliament depends, in the first place, on the nature of the electoral law in force. It is dependent, further, upon the influence of the class in question among the voters, and, lastly, upon its aptitude for parliamentary work.

A word must be added on this last point. The bourgeoisie, with all sorts of talent at its command, has hitherto been able to manipulate parliaments to its own purpose. Therefore, small capitalists and farmers have in large numbers lost all faith in legislative action. Some of these have declared in favour of the substitution of direct legislation for legislation by representatives; others have denounced all forms of political activity. This may sound very revolutionary, but in reality it indicates nothing but the political bankruptcy of the classes involved.

Attitude

The proletariat is, however, more favourably situated in regard to parliamentary activity... So far as their attitude toward politics is concerned, they are raised far above the farmers and small capitalists. It is easier for them to grasp party principles and act on them uninfluenced by personal and local motives. Their conditions of life, moreover, make it possible for them to act together in great numbers for a common end. Their regular forms of activity accustom them to rigid discipline. Their unions are to them an excellent parliamentary school; they afford opportunities for training in parliamentary law and public speaking.

The proletariat is, therefore, in a position to form an independent party. It knows how to control its representa-



Karl Kautsky (third from right, back row) with other Second International leaders in 1904

tives. Moreover, it finds in its own ranks an increasing number of persons well fitted to represent it in legislative halls.

Whenever the proletariat engages in parliamentary activity as a self-conscious class, parliamentarism begins to change its character. It ceases to be a mere tool in the hands of the bourgeoisie. This very participation of the proletariat proves to be the most effective means of shaking up the hitherto indifferent divisions of the proletariat and giving them hope and confidence. It is the most powerful lever that can be utilised to raise the proletariat out of its economic, social and moral degradation.

The proletariat has, therefore, no reason to distrust parliamentary action; on the other hand, it has every reason to exert all its energy to increase the power of parliaments in their relation

to other departments of government and to swell to the utmost its own parliamentary representation. Besides freedom of the press and the right to organise, the universal ballot is to be regarded as one of the conditions prerequisite to a sound development of the proletariat. □



Correction

Mick Lynch, former general secretary of the RMT rail union, has written to us about the current Nasuwt general secretary contest. "I did not apply and would not have done so on principle". We apologise for the error in *Solidarity* 738. □

How Reeves painted Labour into a corner

By Colin Foster

We predicted long before the July 2024 general election that Rachel Reeves was painting Labour into an economic corner, and advocated increased taxes on top wealth as the immediate way out.

Reeves promised "iron-clad" fiscal rules, no increase in taxes (or not much, anyway), yet somehow to stimulate enough economic growth to improve public services. And she ruled out reversing Brexit, which was the major quick-fix non-tax opening for improved trade.

The Tories would leave a gap between their spending plans and their tax decisions? Of course! They had "fiscal rules", too, but met them by projecting implausible spending cuts in future years when they knew they would not be in office.

World economic growth would be slow in 2024-5? Predictable! Trump would win and generate further economic troubles? A known risk!

Plans for public investment going no further than a bit of greenery – and that whittled down bit by bit, now to almost nothing? Obviously insufficient to give any "Keynesian" boost.

It is not our business to propose a better "Keynesian" policy – any such at best would be very vulnerable to world conditions – but Reeves scarcely even attempted a policy.

"Fiscal rules" in anything like their current form are bullshit. Reeves is aiming for a balanced budget in 2030. In other words, to match a future figure for income from taxes which she can't possibly predict (it'll be more if there's a boom, less if recession) and a figure for spending which, equally, she can't predict (it will rise if unemployment rises).

"Fiscal rules" function only as

a generic signal to financiers: "we won't go wild like Liz Truss and cut taxes without even asking for an estimate of the inflationary effect". However, once having made so much of a fuss about "fiscal rules", Reeves can't ease them again (after doing so in October 2024) without giving another generic signal that her bullshit is worthless.

A workers' government would have very different rules. But for Reeves, within her existing framework, to seek a way out by easing her rules would only increase the interest rate the government

has to pay on its IOUs (bonds) and thus worsen the Budget plight.

Instead, Reeves is cutting benefits for the disabled, and not even as a serious budget-balancing measure, rather, as a frantic "signal" to the financiers.

Even a small increase in taxes on the rich and big business would improve budget-balance projections much better than the cruelty against the worst-off.

The labour movement must demand an immediate and urgent about-turn. □

Listening to my friends argue about politics



How I became a socialist

By Will Roberts

I grew up in a staunch Blairite household. On the one hand, as a child I thought “Tory” was just a generic slur for people you didn’t like. On the other, taking those political principles and putting them into practice wasn’t really a priority. As long as you voted in elections and kept up with the news, you’d done your civic duty. I was one year too young to vote in the Brexit referendum, and had to watch the polling booth from my classroom window.

I wish I could say that as soon as I heard of the Russian revolution in A-level history, I dedicated my life to the cause. But for whatever reason, it didn’t stick. Nice idea, shame about the authoritarianism. My conservative

grandmother fled Hungary in 1956, leaving the family with perhaps a more deeply-rooted hatred of Stalinism than most. It would take a while to learn that it was not an inevitable result of the October revolution.

My first experience of in-person politics came early on at university. Coming out as queer led me to the activists on campus, and my first protests followed: I can remember protesting Peter Hitchens (a long way from his days in the IS, forerunner of SWP!), and a protest outside some-or-other transphobic meeting.

Picket line

A national UCU dispute also started in my first term at university. Stood on that picket line, I can’t say I picked up too many details. But I got a sense that something was happening, and I wanted to be part of it.

For a while, these ideas just percolated in my head. I moved from generally describing myself as a liberal to

generally describing myself as a socialist, but not much else changed. Student politics schooled me in some basics: what motions are, what kind of arguments lose a debate, what it looks like when the chair loses control of a room.

My literature course introduced me to some Marxist writers. They were interesting, but I can’t say that this academic Marxism immediately caught my attention, either.

Arguments

In my second year I met a new group of friends. One was from a group called the AWL. All I knew is that they started arguments in the Labour Club, and agitated for student occupations in support of striking workers.

Spending much of that year listening to my friends argue about wars and trade unions and lord-knows-what else, vague notions of Marxism as a way of addressing the real world started to crystallise. I’d interject (“why does it matter if we call him a fascist or not?”,

“shouldn’t you just put these squabbles aside and fight the real enemy?”, etc.), and by being argued with, I learned a lot about what applying your politics to the real world actually looks like.

I went off and read Marx – not just literary criticism this time. *The Critique of the Gotha Programme*, *The Communist Manifesto*... it turned out the bearded German had a point.

Pandemics, living abroad, and studying intervened, but eventually, the day after my final exam, I started a *Capital* reading group with some friends. Shortly after finishing that, I went to an AWL dayschool, and started the process of joining. I had read myself into a corner: Marx was right, and Marx thought that socialists can’t just sit on the sidelines, talking about how clever they are. If you want to take the ideas seriously, get organised. □



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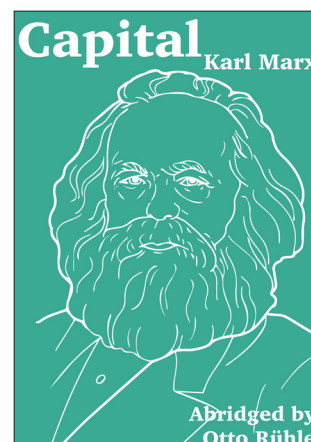
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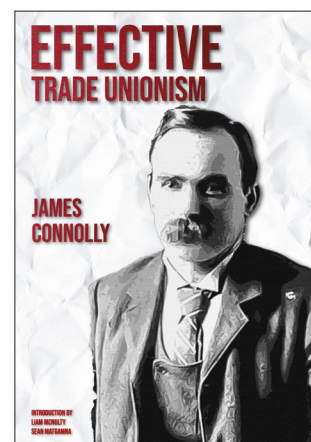
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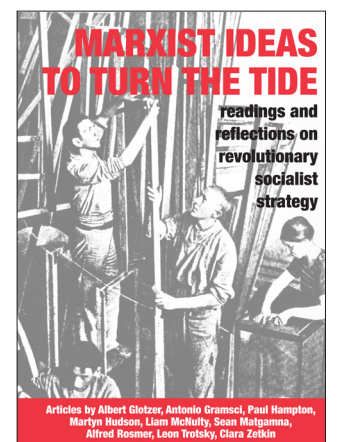
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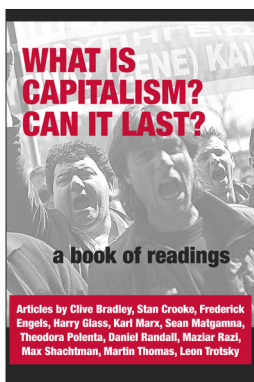
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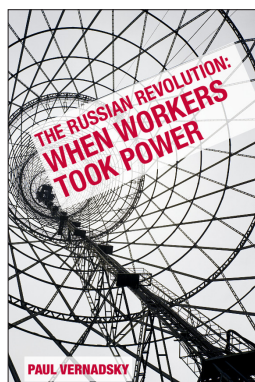
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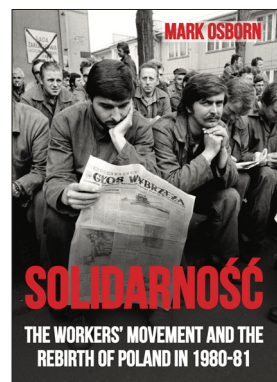
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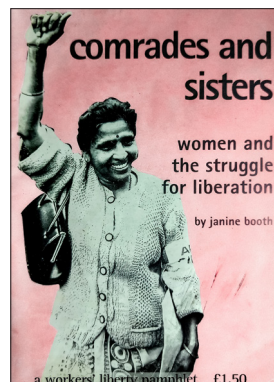
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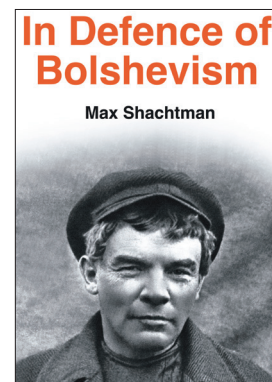
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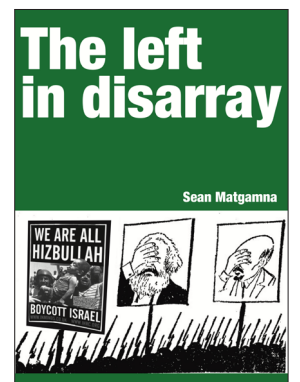
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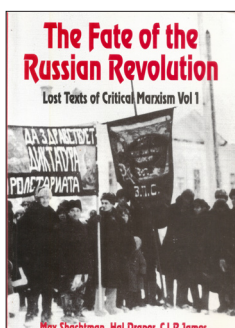
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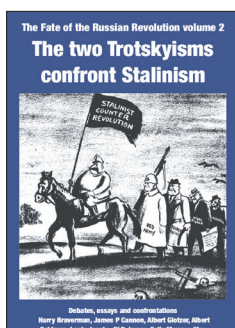
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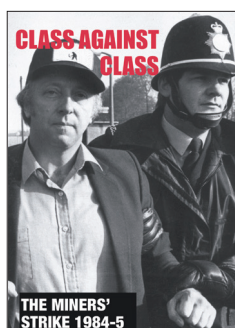
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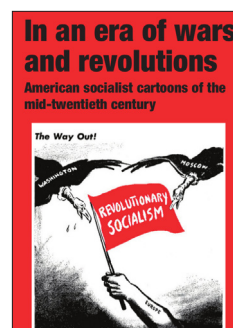
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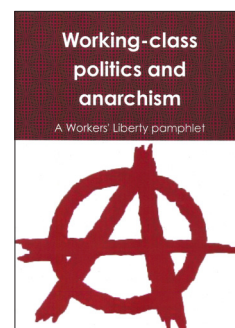
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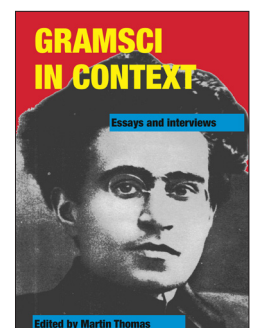
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The world inside Facebook



Book review

By Simon Nelson

Sarah Wynn-Williams, a former senior Facebook employee has written a book, *Careless People: A Story of Where I Used to Work*, about her experience working for Facebook. She saw potential in Facebook to connect people, break down barriers, and be a force for good. Forcing herself into the company, she created her own job. She set out to use her background in diplomacy for New Zealand to help the Facebook leadership connect and engage with government officials and policymakers.

She leaves, or rather is forced out, having faced sexual harassment and ill-health and formed the view that Facebook has been used too frequently to do bad things and is willing to do more of them.

Readers of *Solidarity* will not be shocked to find out that senior leader-

ship in a corporate entity like Facebook were capable of misogyny, sexual harassment, and a lack of care towards less senior or even just slightly less senior workers. Wynn-Williams mostly indicts Joel Kaplan, former Bush Jr. aide, Brooks Brothers rioter (on 22 November 2000, to stop a presidential ballot recount in Florida) and now Facebook's head of Global Affairs.

Former Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg is also accused of inappropriate behaviour with female staff members. Wynn-Williams was coerced into working through her maternity leave, and indeed right up until the literal moment she gave birth. Meta's internal investigations into Kaplan's behaviour – insisting on weekly video conferences even when she was on maternity leave, sexist comments, and giving a performance review of her maternity leave – cleared him but accused Wynn-Williams of poor performance and toxic behaviour.

This book goes less into how Facebook's algorithm leads people to specific content and helps to influence our decisions and more into Facebook's

more significant picture policy decisions. Still, finding that teenagers would be targeted by beauty products and fitness routines if they posted a selfie that was then deleted is troubling reading.

Mark Zuckerberg's lack of interest in how the Myanmar junta and extremist Buddhists used Facebook to rile up real-world ethnic cleansing, at a time when he had only one contractor, based in Dublin, who could speak Burmese and monitor content – is a damning example of the real-world harm the social media giant has been able to have.

Denials

His denials, acceptance, and positive attitude to the influence Facebook could have had in the election of Trump even briefly fuelled Zuckerberg to think he could run for president. Earlier, his project internet.org was a way of connecting people to the internet in places with low access through Facebook. It is, in his eye, something to be embraced and championed by world leaders. He bristles at complaints and questions about regulation and precisely who will

benefit from it.

First and foremost, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and Meta are profit-making companies, and this governs their interest in privacy protection and content moderation.

Wynn-Williams accuses Zuckerberg of lying to Congress about Meta's attitude toward China. Meta's leadership is obsessed with breaking into China – "Project Aldrin". The potential growth there is enormous, but the CCP allows no non-Chinese social network to operate there. Meta is willing to give China data that they won't give to any other government if China will consider letting Meta operate in China. Facebook was willing to hand over the data of Hong Kong users to the Hong Kong government in 2019 if it got them a foot in the door with China.

Although Meta has stopped Wynn-Williams from promoting the book, it has become a best-seller. Arguably, it does not tell us much that is that new. It remains a reminder that the increasing power of social media giants has yet to be fully considered. □

FM workers out again from 7 April

By a PCS member

The PCS civil service union has called further strikes in the long running Facility Management (FM) dispute. Workers in ISS, OCS and G4S will take action from 7 April. With mandates due to run out shortly for some areas,

the union will start reballots in April. If successful that would mean the union being able to run months of further action.

The stumbling block to a settlement does not appear to be the companies refusing to make an adequate offer, but who will pay for it. The companies say it must be the gov-

ernment, and no doubt they in turn will say the companies must share some of the costs. After all ISS, OCS and G4S are in profit and have the money to settle.

Of course this squabble over money shows the true nature of outsourcing. Companies build in no leeway for extra

wages. Both the companies and the government just assume that workers will not ask for more, or if they do, they won't get it. Fundamentally they assume that workers have no self-agency and are inert. Robots who accept their lot in life.

The strikes have shown oth-

erwise. PCS's job is, of course, to win the current dispute but then work out how to have a bigger dispute next time, one that involves as many of our FM members as possible. Robots no longer. □

Sheffield and Cardiff UCU vote for strikes

By Sam Myerson

The ballot by the University and College Union (UCU) at the University of Sheffield for strikes against compulsory redundancies was successful. It closed on 31 March. 74% were in favour of strikes and 82% in favour of action short of strike. Turnout was 54%. There will be strike action at the university this term if management do not back down.

At Cardiff the UCU also voted (25 March) in favour of industrial action against compulsory redundancies, with 83%

in favour of strikes and 86% in favour of action short of strike.

Students at the Sheffield University have voted in a referendum (17-20 March) to support staff taking industrial action. The first meeting of students since that vote took place has been a strike educational with student and staff speakers.

It is important that the tempo is kept up. The Anti Cuts Coalition will soon organise another planning meeting. Turning the student union into an organising hub to fight the cuts, and speaking to and con-

vincing as many students as possible of directly supporting action, are key.

Demos, rallies, banner drops, and occupations, alongside other direct action, can aid in putting pressure on management. Getting as many students as possible involved in in-person activity is vital.

A handful of committed students in symbolic action can disrupt, but ultimately management can ignore or target them. Where mass action takes place, it is harder for management to pick off individual students. □

Capita out again to 22 April

By Dale Street

Unite members employed by Capita in Glasgow and Manchester are striking again from 26 March to 22 April. The strike follows on from earlier strikes in January-February (five days) and February-March (eight days).

The two workforces, who work on Capita's contract with Royal London (covering pensions, bonds and life insurance), are in dispute about the 2024 pay rise.

Capita claimed initially that it could not afford a pay rise. According to the performance report of Capita Life and Pensions for 2024, published at the beginning of March, pre-tax profits amounted to £116 million. On an adjusted basis, pre-tax profits improved by 22% compared with 2023. Capita share prices increased by 8% on publication of the report.

8% is a lot more than the pay offer which Capita eventually made after the second strike in Glasgow and Manchester. Put out to ballot, the offer was overwhelmingly rejected by Unite members in mid-March.

Ballot

Having already served the legally required fortnight's notice of a further strike on Capita, the close of the ballot on 24 March was immediately followed by the commencement of the current four-week strike.

Picket lines: 7.00am to 11.00am; Skypark, 8 Elliot Place, Glasgow; Broadhurst House, 56 Oxford Street, Manchester. Strike fund: NW/12401 Capita Manchester Branch; Sort Code 60-83-01, Account 20360636. Solidarity messages to: Michelle.Smith@unitetheunion.org □

“What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

A good donation but we need more than one!

While Elon Musk's fortune has tumbled by \$126bn in 2025, he remains the richest person in the world.

Our fortunes have increased very slightly since we started the fundraiser, but we are not close to meeting Musk on the way down, as we creep up, even if his fortunes continue to decline at the rate they have.

Fortunately, thanks to Bob this week, we can add £500 to our total, but we are still short with that being the only dona-

tion. With expenses paid to our comrades who traveled to the European solidarity with Ukraine conference (see page 5), we need to increase the number of donations over the coming weeks.

We want to hit our £20,000 target by the time of our Summer Camp in August.

Our total now stands at £7,425.

• Donate: workersliberty.org/fund

Solidarity means learning fast



Diary of a Steel Worker

By Theodore Kovalevsky

This week's "worker's diary" is excerpted from the diary written in the US Trotskyist paper The Militant in 1944-8 by Theodore Kovalesky.

I had been waiting for Tom to speak to me. All during the shift I could see him eyeing me a little quizzically, as though there was something on his mind. Finally after cast he came up to me and said, "I been wondering about something. How come you get along so good with the coloured fellows? Jimmy told me it's all the same to you what colour a man is. But how come you feel that way when all the rest of the white folks are all filled up with hatred?"...

[After some discussion, Kovalesky replies:] "Tom, people lose their prejudices in a hurry when they have to. Look at the big strike. Pete Rossi had a hell of a lot of prejudice, but he got his arm broken when a cop tried to club one of the coloured fellows. He put his arm up

and caught the club. All of us marched on the picket line and fought the scabs together, coloured and white. We had real solidarity. See, people learn fast when they have to..."

"The company treats the white fellows just a little better than the coloured, but they don't like us any better. They just want us to think we're better than our coloured brothers. And if they think they can use the coloured workers against the whites, they'll start giving them breaks. Only, any wedge that the company can drive between us will hurt both of us, not just one."

Tom was still cynical. "Sure, they were all together in the strike, but look what happened after the strike. They got all that hatred back again."

"Tom," I said, "they'll be together again. But there's another thing. After the strike, the workers didn't control the government and the industries. The kids still picked up their prejudices in school. We went home, and Amos and Andy or maybe Rochester were on the radio. Stepin Fetchit was in the movies. There were jokes and cartoons about Negroes cutting each other with razors, and all that. Negroes were portrayed as lazy clowns and petty chisellers. Nat-

urally a lot of white workers drifted back to the old ways, but not all. Pete Rossi and Teddy Wiewnosky, for instance – they both learned for keeps."

"What about the government? What was that you said about the workers?" Tom was suddenly very interested.

"Well", I answered, "we haven't got enough time to go into all that now, but under a workers' government we'd do away with all that racial prejudice. We'd have to have unity. We wouldn't want the people split apart like the capitalists do. We'd want everybody working together for the benefit of all the people."

"The movies and the radio and all kinds of advertising as well as the schools would prove and keep proving that race hatred hurts us all. Our laws would really forbid segregation and discrimination until all the white people learned this. Why we'd grow up together and live close at hand – no more Jim Crow housing projects."

"And most important, we wouldn't have to worry about having enough jobs for everyone. Worry over unemployment, wanting a job for yourself in tough times and fearing that somebody else might get it is another thing that keeps people apart. Any racial or national difference is noticed. A man might think, 'I've got no job, and I can't pay my rent, but that coloured guy keeps working'."

But just as I was getting warmed up, a blow-pipe burned up and we had to run out and grab the water hoses. □

• From *The Militant*, 3 February 1945

When the Post exposed Nixon



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Although *The Post* smacks of Steven Spielberg's rather nauseating version of American liberalism, it is based on real events and an important film.

In 1966 Daniel Ellsberg is sent to Vietnam by the *Washington Post*, but he realises the war is futile. Returning to the USA he informs the Secretary of Defence, Robert McNamara, of his views. Although apparently agreeing, McNamara continues the war and US involvement increases. Later, Ellsberg who has access to classified material, photocopies documents which demonstrate covert US involvement in Vietnam, going back to the 1940s

when Vietnam was part of French Indochina.

The documents are passed on to the *Washington Post*, but there are legal conflicts, government pressure (Nixon is in the White House) and internal arguments involving Katherine Graham (Meryl Streep), the publisher of the *Post*, and Ben Bradlee (Tom Hanks), executive editor. Eventually in 1971, they publish the Pentagon Papers, exposing the mendacity of successive US governments who have known all along that the war is unwinnable.

Meanwhile, casualties mount and ultimately there are 58,220 US and an estimated 1.1m North Vietnamese dead. At the film's premiere, 25 Jan 2018, Tom Hanks famously compared Donald Trump (then in his first term of office) to Richard Nixon. □

• Watch online at bit.ly/the-p

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Strike vote in Rayner's department

By a PCS member

Members of the PCS civil service union working in six "regional" offices of the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) which are slated for closure, Exeter, Warrington, Newcastle, Truro, Sheffield, and Birmingham, have voted for industrial action.

Approximately two-thirds of members working in these offices voted in the ballot, with 90% voting for action short of dismissal and 80% for strike action. Following the successful ballot, MHCLG union representatives are now focused on delivering successful outcomes in related, but legally separate, ballots of members in the other "regional" offices and in the London office. Those ballots end on 9 April, with the results expected on the same day.

Apart from the closures, the issues at stake in the MHCLG dispute also involve the requirement that all MHCLG staff must attend their offices for 60% of their contracted hours, except those



whose offices are being closed, some of whom will perform work from home! There is substantial evidence that departmental roles can be undertaken from home without work impact, and that staff are the best judges of where and when to undertake their roles consistent with their wellbeing and de-

pendent care responsibilities. For some will include their office.

The dispute is also about the proposed abandonment of the department's location-neutral recruitment policy, a policy which allows existing staff to apply for and take up any departmental role from their current lo-

cations, thus greatly expanding job opportunities.

Angela Rayner, Secretary of State for MHCLG and Deputy Prime Minister, should now step in and address the staff's concerns. It is not sufficient for her to proclaim her trade unionism while failing to meet MHCLG representatives or to deal with detrimental management attacks on her own staff – in fact, permitting those attacks.

PCS has now written formally to management, with a copy sent to Rayner, setting out interim demands, including the pausing of all closures and seeking commitment to negotiating a mutually agreed location strategy, and inviting them to resolution talks prior to taking action. Local reps have provided a deadline of 4 April for MHCLG to respond. □

Birmingham bins on indefinite strike

By Jim Denham

Some 350 Birmingham bin workers have been on indefinite strike over pay and safety since 12 March, following sporadic action since January.

The immediate issue behind the strike is the Labour Council's decision to axe the role of Waste Recycling and Collection Officer (WRCO), which will jeopardise safety and cost the workers affected thousands of pounds per year.

But behind the dispute over the WRCO role is more general rank and file anger over low pay amongst all bin workers. Most Birmingham bin workers are paid between £24,027 and £25,992 per year (the minimum wage is £23,795).

The proposed cuts, being pushed by the bankrupt council's unelected commissioners, would mean about 50 grade 3 workers losing up to £8,000 per year and about 20 grade 2 workers losing nearly £2,000.

Unite official Onay Kasab says: "We want the council to reinstate the (WRCO) loader grade 3 role that has been deleted. All we are asking for is for low paid frontline workers not to lose money.

Minimum

"We are not asking for more money. The impact of the council's cuts will be that most of the workforce will be paid only just above the minimum wage."

The workers have been picketing depots, often

using the "slow walking" tactic in front of exits to stop or delay scab lorries leaving. They have also had remarkable success in winning over agency workers brought in to break the strike, three of whom have been sacked for talking to the strikers and have now joined Unite. Unite have questioned whether the council's ability to reach a settlement is being hobbled by the unelected commissioners. The commissioners were handed control of the council by the Tory government and remain in place, overseeing massively damaging cuts across the City.

Negotiations broke down last week and the council is now threatening compulsory redundancies. Unite has issued this statement

in response: "Workers who are losing up to £8,000 (in annual wages) signed a letter of protest – it is disgraceful, but (as a result) the workers who signed a letter of protest have been threatened with redundancy. The council are not explicitly saying 'stop striking or you are sacked'. They are saying 'because people signed a protest letter, they face redundancy'."

The council is claiming that retention of the WRCO role would leave it open to further equal pay claims of the kind that contributed to its bankruptcy last year, but Onay Kasab says "They have still given no explanation around why there is a so-called equal pay issue, and that's fundamental to this." □

Lambeth Unison sets red lines

By Katy Dollar

Following its decision to ballot libraries staff over cuts, Lambeth Unison held an all members' meeting on 27 March to discuss further cuts expected at the council.

There is little detail in the budget papers on the cuts for either staffing or services, so most workers do not

know the future for their job or service. Unison members at the meeting set red lines for the union in future negotiations and consultation following the budget meetings.

1. No compulsory redundancies
2. Safe and adequate staffing levels
3. No reduction in working conditions for any staff (no two-tier workforce)
4. No increase in workloads

5. Full consultation with staff and unions on any introduction of AI with staffing implications.

Unison has written to the new Chief Executive asking for a guarantee on these points.

It is also organising an anti-cuts community conference at St Matthew's Tenants' Hall in Brixton on 12 April. □

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solidarity@workersliberty.org



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



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



Ceasefire! IDF out of West Bank and Gaza!

By Ira Berkovic

On 25 March, large numbers of people protested in Gaza, opposing both the ongoing Israeli bombardment and Hamas rule. Protests took place in Beit Lahia, in the north, Deir al Balah, in central Gaza, and Khan Younis, in the south.

Slogans and chants demanded an end to the war, and the exit of Hamas from power. Protester Mohammed Diab, [quoted](#) by the BBC, said: "We refuse to die for anyone, for any party's agenda or the interests of foreign states. Hamas must step down and listen to the voice of the grieving, the voice that rises from beneath the rubble – it is the most truthful voice."

A protester [filmed](#) on a march in Beit Lahia said: "We demand peace and safety for this town. No to rule with iron and fire in this town. We will decide who rules this town. Now, we live in very difficult conditions that no man can afford. Everyone must stand together, to counter anyone who plays with the fate of this people through killing and destruction. We all say yes to peace, no to tyrannical rule which threatens the fate of this people."

The conditions of life imposed on Gazans by Israel's bombardment and blockade, as well as Hamas repression, make it extremely difficult for the current protests to develop into an ongoing political movement. On 31 March, the IDF issued new evacuation orders to the residents of Rafah and surrounding areas, presaging a new incursion by ground troops. The Gazan Red Crescent said it recovered the bodies of 14 emergency service workers from a site in Rafah struck by Israeli bombs on Thursday 27 March.

The renewal of the ceasefire and the end of the blockade are vital first steps for creating the conditions in which a democratic opposition to both Israeli military onslaught and Hamas can grow.

In the days following the protests, there have been reports of violent reprisals from Hamas fighters, including beatings and executions. Those killed [include](#) 22-year-old Odai Al-Rubai.

Some on the left applaud Hamas, arguing they

represent a progressive anti-colonial force. Their murderous violence against Palestinians protesting for peace and freedom reveals their true character as brutal authoritarian revanchists. Support for Hamas is incompatible with any consistent support for peace, freedom, and equality.

Writing on 26 March, Standing Together, the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement based in Israel, said: "Thousands of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip went out yesterday to demonstrate against the war, for peace, and against Hamas' rule in the Gaza Strip, and this isn't the first time this has happened. Doing this takes a lot of courage – not only are they going out to protest amid Israeli bombardment, but they are also standing up against Hamas's regime that suppresses all protests. We admire their bravery and stand in solidarity from inside Israel."

Assault

"Israel's relentless assault on Gaza must end. The bombs must stop, the siege on Gaza must stop, and the collective punishment and weaponisation of starvation must stop. The people of Gaza deserve to live safely, without fear for their lives under constant Israeli bombardment and siege, and without Hamas' authoritarian rule."

Israel continues to block the passage of humanitarian aid into Gaza, and continues bombing and renewed incursions by ground troops. An estimated 900 people have been killed since the renewal of the war in January. Negotiations over a new ceasefire and hostage-release agreement are ongoing. According to media reports, Hamas has offered to release five living hostages over 50 days, in exchange for a resumption of the ceasefire and the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.

On 28 March, armed settlers carried out a violent attack on Palestinians in Jinba in Masafer Yatta in the occupied West Bank. Four Palestinians were hospitalised, including a 15-year-old in intensive care. Not only did Israeli security forces not intervene, they later raised the village, arresting over 20 people.

The incident illustrates yet again how settler violence is now indistinguishable from state violence in the West Bank. Standing Together's Alon-Lee Green [wrote](#): "Another pogrom in Masafer Yatta [...] Not a single settler was arrested. What do you call a regime in which Jews have all the rights and Palestinians have not a single right?"

Since October 2023, Israel has erected at least 119 new iron gates across the West Bank. There are now nearly 900 checkpoints and barriers. Standing Together [writes](#): "Checkpoints no longer just split the West Bank into north, central, and south. They now reach into the heart of every community and village. They restrict access to essential services, block major roads, separate farmers from their land, children from their schools, patients from their doctors, families from each other, people from their livelihood."

Standing Together has continued street protests throughout Israel, calling for an end to the bombing and an end to the occupation. Two aides of Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu have been arrested as part of an investigation into allegations of taking bribes from Qatar to promote Qatari interests in Israeli political and security circles. Netanyahu has been summoned to testify as part of the investigation. Netanyahu has also appointed a new head of Israeli security service Shin Bet, despite the High Court having frozen the dismissal of previous head Ronen Bar. Bar's dismissal was widely seen

as a political move by Netanyahu against a sometime critic.

Civil disobedience, including refusal to serve in the military, must increase within Israel in order to disrupt the functioning of the war machine. Workers' Liberty members are active within UK Friends of Standing Together, a UK-based support network for Standing Together, which aims to build support for Standing Together's efforts. Find out more at ukfost.co.uk. □





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5 APRIL ACTION AGAINST TRUMP COUP



By Martin Thomas

On 5 April there will be protest against Trump's coup across the USA. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have drawn tens of thousands on a speaking tour: read what they've said at bit.ly/s-oc-c. But the resistance in the USA is still too diffuse to match the speed of the Trump-Musk drive for autocracy. Some of the latest:

On Wednesday 2 April Trump will announce sweeping new tariffs. In the next few days, Trump's allies in Congress will attempt to authorise making

Trump's 2017 tax cuts for the rich permanent, while also giving him scope to borrow to spend.

Trump has ended union rights of representation for hundreds or thousands of federal employees (also 28 March). The administration is asking the Supreme Court to confirm for its legal pretext for deporting 20 Venezuelans without charge or trial and against a court order.

Deal

Another big law firm, Skadden Arps, has cut a deal (28 March) to conciliate Trump. Some law

firms are resisting, at least for now.

The top vaccine official at the Food and Drug Administration has been forced out (28 March). 20,000 workers have been laid off in federal health agencies (27 March).

Trump has decreed (25 March) that no-one can vote in federal elections without showing proof of citizenship. (Only 48% of US citizens have passports; 21.3 million have no documentary proof to hand).

US workers need a resistance which moves as fast.

More: pages 3, 4, 9, 10. □