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AGAINST TRUMP



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Hurtling towards authoritarianism

By Bernie Sanders

Following the first part of his *Fighting Oligarchy* tour with Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, which drew crowds of up to 34,000, Bernie Sanders summed up:

Tonight we're going to do a bad news, good news routine. We start off with the bad news, which is pretty bad, but we are going to get to a happier ending.

Let me begin by just telling you what you already know, and that is that under Donald Trump this country is hurtling rapidly toward oligarchy, toward authoritarianism, toward kleptocracy, and toward more and more income and wealth inequality.

You'll all remember that Abraham Lincoln talked about a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. I think it is very clear that today we have a government of the billionaire class, by the billionaire class, and for the billionaire class.

Elon Musk contributed \$277 million to get Donald Trump elected president and he was rewarded with the most important position in government. In other words he put out the money and he got what he paid for. Trump also nominated 13 other billionaires to head various government agencies.

So almost all the guys who are running the government are billionaires.

For many years as I think you know I have been talking about how a country is moving toward an oligarchic form of society. And I know that people had their doubts. What is Bernie talking about? Well, not any more. People now see what's going on right in front of them. No secrets about it. They're seeing the billionaire class running our government right now.

But it's not just oligarchy and a government of the very rich that I'm concerned about. It is a very rapid movement toward authoritarianism.

Virtually every day Trump is usurping the powers of Congress. He is ending programs that Congress appropriated and he's getting rid of agencies that he has no power to get rid of. Further, he has sued major media outlets like ABC, CBS, Meta, and the *Des Moines Register* for stories and actions that he didn't like. And now his FCC is investigating PBS and NPR, and he's threatening to

withhold federal funding for these vitally important media outlets.

This is clearly a massive attack on the First Amendment and freedom of expression. He doesn't like what some media are saying and he is intimidating them. The message is clear: Hey, I'm the boss. Don't you dare criticise me.

But it's not just Congress and the media that he's going after. He's also waging a massive attack against the judicial system. Unbelievably he is actually trying to impeach judges who render decisions that he doesn't like. Think about it. Very few people who are watching this discussion tonight thought that the Supreme Court's decisions on *Citizens United* or *Roe v Wade* were good decisions. In fact in my view they were disastrous decisions.

But we're kind of old-fashioned. We believe in the rule of law. That's what happened. Presidents appointed those people to the Supreme Court. We didn't go around saying "Hey, you got to impeach Chief Justice Roberts and the other members."

Judiciary

But it's not just Congress or the media or the judiciary that Trump is going after. He's now waging a vitriolic attack against major universities that are teaching courses or allowing activities he doesn't like.

For years we have heard conservatives talk about decentralised government getting the government off the backs of the people. We've heard about education being a local issue. And now we have a president who is telling Harvard, Columbia, Princeton, and others what they can or cannot do. And in an absolutely unconstitutional and frightening way federal agents have grabbed foreign students, thrown them into unmarked cars, and taken them to detention facilities.

And what is their crime that deserves that kind of treatment? Well, in at least one case a woman wrote an article critical of Israel. In another case somebody attended a demonstration. Do you really grab people off of the street, throw them in unmarked cars, take them to detention centres, because they expressed a political point of view?

Unbelievably, he is now going after law firms that oppose them, giant law

firms. Can you imagine a president threatening a law firm because they represented a client or did something that you don't like?

Trump has also decided that he needs to lead the culture war in America. He has made himself chairman of the board of the Kennedy Centre. So if you add all of these activities up, and I'm just talking about a small part of what he has done, it makes one thing very very clear: Trump has very little respect for the Constitution of the United States and for the rule of law.

He wants more and more power for himself and his fellow billionaires. He wants to lead an authoritarian nation.

And to make a bad situation even worse, Trump and Musk are rapidly trying to dismember and destroy federal agencies that serve working families and the poor. Musk has laid off thousands of workers at the Social Security Administration, which will make it harder for the elderly and the disabled to get the benefits that they paid for. It's a massive attack against Social Security.

Trump and Musk have also decided to lay off some 83,000 employees at the Veterans Administration, which will mean that the men and women who put their lives on the line to defend our country, our veterans, will see a deterioration in the health care they receive at the VA and the timeliness of the benefits that they earned.

And then on top of all of that Trump and his Republican colleagues are now working on a huge reconciliation bill which will make massive cuts to Medicaid, education, nutrition, etc.

Why are they making these cuts? In order to give over a trillion dollars in tax breaks to the 1%.

So that's where we are. That is the bad news, and all in all it is a pretty dismal situation. Now let me give you some good news. Over the last month I and my House colleague Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have been travelling the country in what I've called a *Fighting Oligarchy* tour.

I've been to Nebraska, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona. The turnouts have been extraordinary. In Denver we had more than 34,000 people turn out, the largest rally I have ever been a part of.

What I have learned from all of these



rallies and meeting thousands and thousands of people is that the people of our country are sick and tired of Trumpism. They are tired of oligarchy.

I'm going to be in out west in a week and a half or so. We're going to California and other western states and we are going to continue to rally the American people to stand up to Trumpism and his contempt for American democracy.

Where do we go from here? We have got to educate. We've got to organise. We've got to fight back effectively with discipline and intelligence.

And if we do that, in my view, we're going to win this thing.

We are not only doing rallies around the country. We are also hiring organisers at the grassroots level to help us build the kind of grassroots infrastructure that we need if we're going to be successful.

Let me be very honest with you. The oligarchs are enormously powerful, no ifs and buts and maybes. They have endless amounts of money. They control our economy. They own much of the media. And they have enormous influence over our political system.

But from the bottom of my heart I am convinced that if we are smart and if we're well organised they can be defeated. If we stand together and not let them divide us up by the colour of our skin or where we were born or our religion or our sexual orientation; if we bring our people together around an agenda that works for the many and not just the few, there is nothing in the world that can stop us. We can win, we will win.

So let us go forward together. Let's build that movement that we desperately need. Let's defeat Trumpism. □

Full-spectrum response needed

By Martin Thomas

Between two million and 600,000 turned out for over 1,000 local rallies against Trump on 5 April, coordinated by the campaigning NGO *In-divisible*. There is a smaller

day of action on 8 April, and the next big street protests are 1 May. Yet the resistance remains diffuse. Unions publicised 5 April, but did not mobilise much. Too much of the protest focuses on hope for the 2026 mid-term elections,

while Trump is moving fast.

Shawn Fain, leader of the United Auto Workers, has praised Trump on tariffs. Bernie Sanders, when asked (23 March) if Trump has done anything right, cited "making sure our borders are stronger"

(Sanders has never been for open borders).

Sanders denounced Trump's plan for mass deportations, which could be activated soon; but that plan didn't feature much in 5 April protests.

Trump's full-spectrum assault

on democracy and the working class needs a full-spectrum response.

The US left and labour movement are faced with a task of remaking themselves under fire. □

The most drastic shift ever in capitalist world economics



Punching someone, said Mussolini, is “an exquisitely fascist means of self-expression”.

Trump’s 2 April tariffs were “punch-in-the-face” economics, an exercise in narrow, brutal, great-power politics, to force other governments to defer to Trump. Already, the EU talks of buying more military equipment from the USA. Vietnam talks of scrapping its (few and low) tariffs on US imports. Rachel Reeves talks of reducing or scrapping the Digital Services Tax, a small tax on the UK revenues of search engines, social media services, and online marketplaces, which irritates US giants like X, Meta, Google, and Amazon.

Whether fascist or not, Trump is a great-power-bully authoritarian. The tariffs are of a piece with Trump’s talk of annexing Greenland, Canada, and Panama, expelling the people from Gaza, and ordering Ukraine to submit to whatever deal Trump can make with Putin over the heads of Ukrainians.

There are divergences within the Trump gang around the tariffs. Elon Musk and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent signal they want them to be gambits, scaled back where obsequious governments do “deals”. Trade Counsellor Peter Navarro and chief economic adviser Stephen Miran are less flexible. Many pro-Trump billionaires outside the Administration dislike the tariffs. Such conflicts do not look enough to force a collapse or retreat. Trump already talks of further tariffs on China.

Something like the trade-war world of the 1930s, a world where shrinking trade drove slumps, is on the cards. Trump believes the USA is strong enough to win out in such a world.

The tariffs will increase prices in the USA, and maybe worldwide. Trump plans to rely on tariffs (an extra added to prices) so he can continue and extend cuts in taxes on the incomes of the the well-off and the rich.

The USA’s Smoot-Hawley tariff of 1930, which worsened the post-1929 slump, was voted through Congress. Trump has introduced these tariffs, the most drastic shift ever in the capitalist world economic regime (outside world war), by personal decree.

Some free-trade Republicans in the Senate are restive, but for now Congress is sidelined. In his own words, Trump seeks to be king. He has shut down federal agencies voted for by

Congress, even when a court has declared the shutdown “probably unconstitutional”. He has installed loyalists to run the FBI and the armed forces. He is extorting obedience from law firms (some smaller ones still defy), museums, and universities (a few are kicking back). He has swerved or de facto defied courts. He has a good chance to get the Supreme Court he stacked with his appointees to uphold him, as it has already given him legal exemption for all acts done as president.

He has, by decree, cancelled bargaining rights for federal workers’ unions. He has semi-paralysed the National Labor Relations Board. Trump allies have a case going to the Supreme Court later this year to cancel the USA’s worker-rights law of 1935 as unconstitutional. They also have schemes to declare all public-sector unions unconstitutional, and replace unions by joint worker-boss committees.

The labour movement must support democratic and working-class resistance in the USA. We also have to understand the economics of the tariffs.

Trump has calculated imaginary “tariffs” supposedly charged by other countries from the excesses of goods imported from them to the USA over exports to the USA. (The actual tariffs charged are small and few). He has arbitrarily described countries which import less from the USA than they export to it as charging 10% tariffs. (They don’t). He has used those made-up figures to decree “reciprocal” goods tariffs ranging from 54% for China and 49% for Cambodia to 20% for the EU and 10% for the UK. (There are extras on steel and aluminium, and some exemptions, e.g. for pharmaceuticals).

His stated aim is to reduce the deficit (excess of exports to over imports from) for every country to zero. It is crazy economics. Cambodia and Lesotho, two of the countries worst hit by these tariffs, export clothing and (mainly) import fuels and fabrics. How can they export clothing only to those countries where they get fabrics and fuels? A drive to reduce all deficits is a drive to shrink trade.

After 1945 the US ruling class engineered an expansive economic order in the non-Stalinist world, breaking down the trade barriers of the 1930s. It did not try to stop countries such as South Korea having “nursery tariffs” to help new industries’ initial build-up to world standards. The USA had had nursery tariffs in the 19th century, though according to Frederick Engels (in the 1880s) and academic economists (now) they continued too long.

By the late 1960s countries like Germany and Japan, with higher rates of investment and, increasingly, better infrastructure than the high-military-spending USA, rivalled US industry in many sectors. Since the early 1980s, the USA has imported more manufactured goods than it exports.

The US ruling class fumbled and improvised, but from the early 1980s, especially from 1991, developed a new world regime where trade was even more free and US dominance went more via finance and IT than manufacturing.

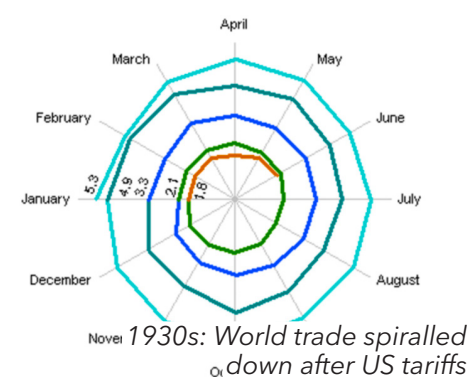
Deficits

Since the early 1980s US governments have run huge budget deficits, financed by non-US capitalists buying more and more US government IOUs (bonds) and other financial assets. That inflow of money from the rest of the world enables US capitalists and workers to buy cheap imports, “on credit” as it were. The dollar’s centrality to world trade and finance allows the USA to do this as no other country can. The US government pays interest on its IOUs – about \$1,000 billion a year now – but that is capitalism, not cheating.

Unemployment in the USA, around 4%, is lower than its average of 6 or 7% for post-1945 (except the late 1960s), and workforce participation is much higher than it was from the 1950s to the 70s. There are more jobs, not fewer. They are worse because unions have been weakening in the USA since the 1950s. There are as many car workers as in the 1970s, but more of them now in non-union factories in the Southern states; many new areas of employment, but with scant union organisation.

The US ruling class has prospered. The US working class has suffered. It will suffer more from Trump’s dictatorial rule and from his nationalist economics.

There is resistance to Trump, but diffuse; and, within it, democratic and socialist alternatives are weak. The US working class needs to tax and expropriate the billionaires, to restore union strength, to rebuild the country’s economic and social infrastructure, to win Medicare for all and other social provision, to demilitarise the police and disband the special squads which Trump will probably soon be using wholesale, and to win a functioning electoral democracy, not a plebiscitary system dominated by big money. In 1930 the US Trotskyists responded to the Smoot-Hawley tariff by declaring: “European economy cries out for the abolition of tariff barriers, the whole world for the international division of labour,



and the free movement of goods”.

Then, quick socialist revolution was nearer to hand than quick European capitalist cooperation. Today a more-or-less unified European capitalist economy exists. Britain has opted out of it, to the detriment especially of the working class.

Attempting a “British-only” deal with Trump – whether by cutting taxes, by threatening the USA with British tariffs, or contrariwise by adjusting environmental and safety regulations in the UK to US rather than European standards – is foolish. It would raise UK-EU barriers, with destructive effects in Ireland. Workers across Europe, including in the UK, will be better served by reversing Brexit, rejoining the EU, with free movement, free trade, and a fight for social levelling-up across the bloc.

Will Trump’s tariffs lead to general trade war? Capitalists outside the USA remember the 1930s. They surely remember 2008-9, when their agreed bottom line in response to the slump was to avoid 1930s-type escalating trade curbs. The EU, for example, talks of speeding a trade deal with the South American common market Mercosur, as well as of retaliatory tariffs.

But there will be pressures for each country to try for a special deal with Trump at the expense of others. Countries which can no longer export to the USA will try to sell their surplus elsewhere at cut prices, which can lead to escalating tariffs in the name of “anti-dumping”. Once tariffs start escalating, it is hard to stop them.

As the Trotskyists wrote in 1930: “The basic tendencies of world economy are for international unification... But imperialist monopolies, based on the exploitation of labour and motivated by the realisation of capital, can only increase the antagonisms, the misery of the workers, and bring greater military conflicts. Only the revolutionary action of the proletariat for the socialisation of production can cut the Gordian knot and free the forces of production for a unified world economy and socialist freedom of trade”. □

The “traitor” and the Stalinist



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

I doubt that Andrew Murray ever risked his life for his beliefs. But in a recent *Morning Star* column Murray takes the opportunity to smear someone who did.

Oleg Gordievsky, who died on March 4th, was a KGB colonel turned secret agent for Britain. Like many others who grew disillusioned with “Communist” (we’d say Stalinist) regimes, his revulsion at the lack of democracy and human rights he experienced led him to embrace Western capitalism and the capitalist ruling class.

Genuine socialists have no brief for the politics Gordievsky embraced, but we can have sympathy for what drove him. And respect for the personal courage he showed.

Murray writes that he met Gordievsky after the 1983 general election (which led to Labour leader Michael Foot standing down), when a mutual acquaintance invited them both to lunch. Murray writes that he regarded Gordievsky at that time as “a senior Soviet comrade”: he was in fact a KGB

officer based in London and passing on information to British intelligence. He wanted Murray to help the Russian embassy arrange a presentation to Michael Foot “to thank him for his services to world peace”. According to Murray, “the whole thing [was] preposterous. It would have been unthinkable for Foot to consent to any such evidently compromising proposal.” What Murray doesn’t explain is that the reason it would have been “unthinkable” was because Foot had a long record of opposing Stalinism (although Gordievsky had claimed that Michael Foot was a paid informant for the KGB in the late 1950s and early 1960s codenamed “Boot” who used money taken from the KGB to continue the publication of *Tribune*).

Murray goes on to call Gordievsky “a liar and an extreme snob” whose “victims included his wife... an innocent victim of his treachery... she was inside the USSR when he made his personal escape without her... The next few years did not go well for her, which her husband must have anticipated.”

Gordievsky may have been a snob and I suppose being a “liar” is part of the job description for spies – just as it was for Kim Philby who defected in the opposite direction and has always been given a good write-up in the MS.

What Murray writes about Gordievsky’s treatment of his wife is definitely untrue. He’d deliberately kept her in the dark about his spying and his plan to defect, in order to protect her. Escaping from Russia as he did – in the boot of a car – would have been impossible if he’d taken her and, in any case, was incredibly risky and would have resulted in certain death if he’d been discovered. On his arrival in Britain, Gordievsky set about working for the release of his wife and daughters from Moscow.

Defected

Murray also fails to mention that in 1985 Gordievsky, who by then knew he was under suspicion, was recalled to Moscow and agreed to go, rather than immediately defecting. On arrival he was drugged and urged to confess, but he refused and was eventually released by the KGB in the hope he’d unknowingly lead them to his British handlers. That was why he had to escape when he did.

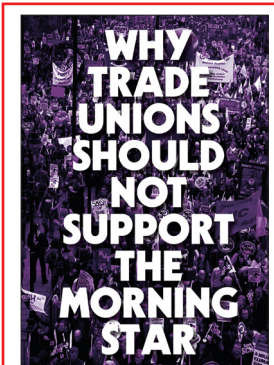
But the most important facts that Murray omits are the two events that sowed the seeds of Gordievsky’s disillusionment with Stalinism: in 1961 as a young KGB intern in East Berlin he’d witnessed the building of the Berlin Wall to prevent East Germans fleeing to the West; then in 1968 Warsaw Pact troops crushed the “Prague Spring” re-

forms in Czechoslovakia. “That dreadful event ... determined irrevocably the course of my own life,” he later wrote.

His biographer Ben Macintyre wrote: “There is an acronym [for the] various motivations of the spy: Mice, which stands for money, ideology, coercion and ego. Gordievsky had no interest in money. Indeed in the early part of his career as a double agent, he refused all payment... Nor was coercion part of his story... [Ego might have had a little to do with it, but] Gordievsky was motivated, overwhelmingly, by ideology.”

He came to despise Putin at least as much as he’d done the USSR. And he remained under the Russian death sentence right to the end.

For Mr Murray he was a traitor “who left socialism in the boot of a car.” □



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Lever, or “alternative labour movement”?



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

Socialist Worker of 2 April trumpeted the We Demand Change (WDC) “Summit” of 29 March as a springboard to “build resistance and solidarity in every town and city”. Local “summits” are suggested to unite a variety of campaigns, pro-Palestinian, anti-racist, opposing disability cuts, and supporting striking workers.

Resulting action “could” include “lobbying the council for divestment” and “angry protests” against cuts. SW asked us to “imagine” a mass movement, and then to “imagine” “independent socialist candidates who champion struggle in the streets and workplaces”.

The politics is thus of ever-increasing poly-protest, building up to a critical mass (with the subtext that the SWP will thus grow into a mass revolu-

tionary party). A meeting has been called in Manchester; and a demonstration has been called in Sheffield under the WDC banner, with the slogan “Welfare not Warfare” (which from the SWP is code for: don’t back Ukraine).

However, no open organising committees have been announced yet. Rather, the SWP is trying to pull people on board in a process of bilateral negotiation. Thus, Andrew Feinstein (the former South African ANC MP who stood against Starmer at the 2024 general election, a key Corbyn ally) reported at the 29 March Summit on a conversation with the National Secretary of the SWP in his office.

So far, the organisations which were cajoled into backing 29 March have little on their websites or social media feeds about it other than plugs for their own speakers. Corbyn’s Peace and Justice Project has nothing on its website about WDC although its X/Twitter feed has a link to WDC’s “What next?” sign-up sheet.

Roger Hallam’s Assemble, which may come more to the fore as Just Stop Oil winds down, is still on board and fundraising for WDC. Maybe Assemble will be organising WDC local launch meetings with their citizens’ assembly model. They have done that for other groups in the last year, including Jamie Driscoll’s Majority in the North East and Merseyside and Southport Independents.

Signalled

It might have appeared the summit signalled a rapprochement between the SWP and Counterfire (big in the leaderships of both Stop the War and People’s Assembly). But, for the time being at least, Counterfire are concentrating on relaunching the People’s Assembly, building its 7 June demo. A report on the Counterfire website of a Manchester PA meeting which lists thirteen organisations present revealingly puts WDC last.

PA is considerably more rooted in the labour move-

ment than WDC, pulling trade union branches and left Labour councillors into its meetings. SW poses WDC’s base as something else, seeing it as leading “the resistance” with the power to build “protests up and down [the country] making Britain ungovernable.” Or, in the terms of the SWP’s post-conference document, they seek to “hegemonise the radical left” by “giv[ing] a lead to the growing anger and disillusionment with Labour among the working class... A central task is to try and channel this into more resistance in the form of protests, strikes and campaigns.”

Here, WDC is positioning itself as an “alternative movement”, rather than an organised lever to transform the existing labour movement.

Trotsky commented in 1935: “Bolshevik intransigence is indissolubly bound to an understanding of the real process in the workers’ organisations, to the ability to influence this process, to a flexibility in manoeuvring with regard to groupings

and even individuals. Contrariwise, each sectarian wants to have his own labour movement. By the repetition of magic formulas, he thinks to force an entire class to group itself around him.”

Workers’ Liberty activists will go to local WDC meetings which give space for discussion. Our first proposal will be local WDC people build or initiate local union-Labour-disabled campaign committees to stop the benefit cuts. We will also argue for them to help create broad local union-Labour-based anti-racist committees. In discussion on socialist candidates in the May 2026 council elections, we will advocate the model of the Socialist Alliance of 1999-2001 – democratic organisation promoting socialism and working-class political representation – rather than catch-all expression of “anger”. □

• Last week’s Eye referred to “Greens Assemble”. It’s “Greens Organise”. Sorry.

Trump backs UK anti-abortionists



Women's Fightback

By Jill Mountford

It seems for now, at least, that having God on your side, for his legal advocates on earth, the "Alliance Defending Freedom" (ADF) and US VP J D Vance, just isn't enough. Anti-abortionist Livia Tossici-Bolt was, last week, found guilty of breaching a public spaces protection order while intimidating women seeking healthcare at an abortion clinic in Bournemouth in 2023.

Tossici-Bolt is an activist in the 40 Days for Life campaign who, during Lent 5 Mar to 17 Apr, are gathering all over the country to intimidate women as near as they can to abortion clinics (by law, now, they must be at least 150 metres from the clinic). Counter protesters have been gathering support for a woman's right to choose.

Tossici-Bolt was given a two-year conditional discharge and ordered to pay £20,000 costs. She won't be worrying about the money; the tab will be picked up by the ultra-conservative

Christian ADF.

ADF UK has an income of £1.3 million, of which £1.2 million comes from the ADF in the US. It has nine paid staff, three on salaries of over £90k. Among other things, ADF UK lobbies MPs on abortion, assisted dying, and LGBTQ rights.

The ADF has been pumping tens of millions of dollars into Europe since 2018. The Trump-led US government's contribution to Tossici-Bolt's cause was to send a delegation from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), an office within the US State Department, to meet with her last month. Tossici-Bolt said after her trial: "I'm grateful to the US administration for prioritising the preservation and promotion of freedom of expression and for engaging in robust diplomacy to that end".

Such "robust diplomacy" provoked the very right-wing Lord Sumption, a former member of the UK's Supreme Court, to accuse the Trump administration of "completely unjustifiable interference in the internal affairs of another country. I do not think that the United States has jurisdiction over the world's laws".

This is a matter of a woman's right to choose when and if she has a child, it's a matter of healthcare, and it's about the need to build a mass movement in defence of women's rights, gender rights and LGBTQ rights in the face of a wide-spread reactionary movement the likes of which we have not seen in decades.

We cannot rely on Lord Sumption, nor on Keir Starmer and his Labour Government, to defend us from attacks from the far-right. We can only rely on ourselves and the movement we can build.

At the Abortion Rights AGM on 29 March, Workers' Liberty women proposed that the campaign produce a motion for Labour Party Women's conference for full decriminalisation of abortion and the removal of all the barriers to abortion access; campaign in CLPs to progress the motion to Labour conference; and produce a motion for abortions to go to trade union affiliates, calling on union affiliates and members to support the motions at both Labour Party conferences. We agreed to lobby LP conference to raise the profile and persuade delegates of the need for full decriminalisation.



Sheffield pro choice campaigners including Workers' Liberty have continued to oppose 40 Days for Life anti abortionists, countering their weekly prayer vigils which they hold as close to the local hospital as legally allowed under safe zone legislation. The pro-choice protests have drawn new people attending each week and we plan to co-ordinate a decriminalisation campaign once these counter protests finish. □

The motion was passed unanimously after the Exec was persuaded that we could get funding for such a campaign from trade union affiliates. Labour has reintroduced the rule that conference motions must be "contemporary" (i.e. refer to events after a certain date, usually in July), so the wording of motions will have to be set then. □

Unite to stop benefit cuts!

By Cathy Nugent

Since Reeves's Spring Statement on 26 March, from Portsmouth to Newcastle, there have been many lively and valuable protests against the cuts in disability benefits, organised by [Crips Against Cuts](#), Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC) and other groups.

More local protests will take place in the run-up to a probable parliamentary vote on the PIP access cuts (May or June) and other Green Paper items (consultation closes 30 June).

Sheffield Crips Against Cuts action will demonstrate outside West Street job centre on 11 April.

New networks are being formed such as [Universities Against Disability Cuts](#). In many cases protests have drawn in other local organisations. In Manchester the 26 March action had DPAC, Unite, Unison, Trafford Trades Council, Friends of the Earth, People's Assembly, and left activists.

Following the Summit of Resistance (29 March) the SWP-driven We Demand Change coalition plans protests out-

side town halls – in Sheffield and Islington on 12 April – and a rally in Manchester on the same day. The more established Peoples' Assembly has called a national London demonstration on 7 June against austerity generally.

Workers' Liberty members are mobilising, and arguing to bring together ongoing local campaign committees based on trade union branches, Labour Party members and disability rights groups. These campaigns need to be more democratically-constituted than SWP-driven We Demand Change or People's Assembly one-off meetings or events with "sponsorship" of other groups.

They should be able to plan and decide upon actions in well-advertised in-person (plus online, i.e. hybrid) meetings. Slogans and demands should be debated and voted on before being attached to publicity.

What can we do?

Putting pressure on MPs to vote against the cuts is essential. Time to beat these cuts is very short. None of the unions have openly called on their

sponsored MPs, or MPs in their parliamentary groups, to vote against these or future cuts. There should be emergency motions going to the union conferences in May and June.

We also want the unions to call a national demo focused on benefit cuts, and before 7 June. Union branches and activists should be pressing for that. Many people in work and many union members will be affected by cuts to PiP and the health component of Universal Credit.

Labour

Crips Against Cuts has a letter writing [campaign](#) aimed at MPs.

Labour Parties should pass motions mandating MPs to vote against. This is already happening in many constituencies (template motion: [bit.ly/lii-pip](#)).

Sheffield Labour Against Benefit Cuts is monitoring the push in Labour Parties across their city. There is a lot of anger, but the most hardened Starmer-loyalists are pushing back. The campaign will meet regularly, and plans a public meeting on 24 April which

can draw in other parts of the labour movement, especially groups of workers already in struggle against cuts. There is an ongoing dispute at the University of Sheffield.

Calder Valley Labour Party has not only voted against benefit cuts, but also publicised its decision.

Where local Labour Parties are not meeting because of May local elections, activists should talk among themselves about what they can do. Labour activists in Colchester have put together an open letter to the MP. Lobbies of Labour MPs are another good form of action.

Some Labour councillors are opposing these cuts. In Wakefield the Labour Group has made a public [call](#) on the government to "rethink the proposed cuts" and go for a wealth tax.

In other areas local trade unions can take the lead, reach out to disability groups, and build up campaigns. In Leicester the NEU branch plans a meeting with Liz Kendall!

Trades councils, which bring together delegates from different unions, can be useful

bodies to start local committees and spread the word. For example, Birmingham Trades Council invited a speaker from Crips Against Cuts. Nottingham Trades Council has organised a protest. Many Trades Councils organise events on or around May Day. They should be inviting local disability groups or union disability officers to speak.

In some areas trade union disability groups could take the lead.

It is important that this campaign is led by the people affected by the cuts, but also that the labour movement shows its full solidarity. In Leeds, at a DPAC-sponsored meeting on 3 April the idea of a labour movement committee was well received. DPAC and Unite Community discussed calling a demonstration in Rachel Reeves's constituency in April.

Finally, we know more cuts are planned. The 11 June government Spending Review is when that becomes clearer. DPAC plans an action on that day. Beating the cut in access to PIP, and building up open democratic campaigns now, is important. □

Environment: a triple crisis



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

We have a triple crisis: environmental damage escalating faster than predicted, capitalist governments retreating from even weak emissions-reduction aims, eco-activism on the back foot.

Last year was the hottest year on record and the first to breach 1.5°C warming. The last ten years were the ten hottest since records began 200 years ago. We have exceeded 420ppm CO₂ and are adding to that at ever increasing rate.

The UN's World Meteorological Organisation observed a record 150 "unprecedented" climate impacts from floods and wildfires to supercharged hurricanes: crops destroyed, built infrastructure in ruins, 800,000 people displaced. Climate related disasters in the US alone have, since the start of 2024, have cost nearly \$500 billion (over half attributable to the Los Angeles wildfires).

Climate records are being broken faster than scientists predicted. In 2022 they thought that the world might

breach 1.5°C warming by 2026. That record was broken last year. Until recently scientists thought that irreversible tipping points were a problem for the distant future. A new 2023 assessment, involving the collaboration of over 200 scientists, found eight tipping points could be triggered within the next decade and five of them could happen "right now".

We are entering a new phase of sudden lurches in the climate regime.

At the very same time, capitalist governments are regressing towards the absolute denialism of the 1980s. The Trump administration has made production of cheap oil and gas a central plank, hoping that will counterbalance the inflationary effects of Trump's tariffs. Despite lack of evidence that this strategy will work even on its own terms, Trump's support for fossil capital has boosted expansion and deregulation around the world.

The dominant capitalist approach to climate change for the past three decades has been energy transition and a goal of net zero by 2050. Governments around the world are now ditching those commitments.

The energy transition and all mention of fossil fuels were missing from the final statement from the 2024 COP29 climate talks. Around the world, gov-

ernments are licensing expanded fossil-fuel production, where they used to talk of reducing CO₂ emissions by 45% by 2030.

In fact, the four decades of net zero rhetoric have failed to address the climate crisis. As the UK representative of the "ditch net zero" lobby, Kemi Badenoch has argued that government has "fallen between two stools – too high cost, too little progress". Her claim that net zero is "impossible without a serious drop in our living standards or by bankrupting us" is true as long as we understand that by "us" she is referring to the capitalist class. As Naomi Klein argued many years ago, effective action to address the climate crisis is incompatible with unceasing capitalist growth.

Trump's enormous cuts to US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, one of the world's leading weather and climate monitoring institutions, will put out the world's eyes as the crisis escalates. The NOAA operates 13 weather satellites and over 200 deep water buoys, and gathers information from 10,600 governmental and scientific institutions. It has recorded and processed climate data from these sources for decades.

And yet the climate movement has been very muted since the international

school strikes collapsed in the Covid-19 lockdowns. More people must be alarmed by the climate crisis than they were in August 2018 when Greta Thunberg started her protest outside the Swedish parliament, but action is less.

The climate movement has tried street protests, it has tried blocking roads and mines and heavy polluters, it has tried spray painting Stonehenge and chucking soup on the glass security screens of expensive artworks. With each failed political strategy, promising movements collapse like XR and JSO back in despair.

There is a political strategy that has not been tried: a strategy based on international workers' solidarity and revolutionary socialism. Organised labour is the only social force that has power for and interest in seizing capitalist property, placing it under common ownership and democratic control, halting its reckless ecocide.

The climate crisis has already repeatedly shown mass international movements developing quickly from initiatives from small activist groups. The task now is to build a force so that the next big wave of climate activism has its sights firmly set on abolishing capitalist property and developing the working-class organisation that can make that happen. □

Wait for a Moses? No, organise!

By Daniel Randall

What the left needs, according to Owen Jones' recent [Guardian article](#), is for Mick Lynch, the recently retired general secretary of the RMT union, to somehow become its "leader".

A left led by Lynch would, Jones says, be able to "shift the debate from 'culture wars' to economic justice", because of Lynch's "ability to make political arguments accessible to the average punter."

Quite how the disparate, and frequently internecine, eco-system of organisations that might be said to comprise the left could collectively confer the title of "leader" on a single individual is not clear. In his previous role, Lynch was the elected general secretary of a trade union. The two other leaders Jones mentions, Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders, are elected politicians. What body does Jones propose elects Lynch now? Jones seems to be calling for a model of individual-leader-

ship-by-acclaim, outside of any mechanisms of democratic accountability. That is a recipe for building a cult of personality where media celebrities are applauded at rallies, not a democratic movement of working-class self-assertion.

If left journalism of the type from which Jones has made a career is to be of any use, it must surely include inspiring those who read it to some kind of action, in our workplaces and communities. The only action to which Jones's article might conceivably inspire its readers is to lobby Mick Lynch to declare himself "the leader of the left", something that, to his credit and as Jones himself is forced to note, he has no interest in doing.

The weakness of the left, in Britain and globally, is multi-causal. It certainly cannot be reduced to lack of acclamation for leaders. Individual leaders have an important role in any movement, at all levels. But the fundamental attitude to individual leadership we should

seek to inculcate is the one expressed by Eugene Debs, a rail worker trade unionist and socialist organiser active in the US in the late-19th and early-20th century: "Too long have the workers of the world waited for some Moses to lead them out of bondage. He has not come; he never will come. I would not lead you out if I could; for if you could be led out, you could be led back in again."

Jones is looking at the wrong end of the equation. His insistence that the left's marginalisation is the result of "failing to resolve this question of leadership" might have us believe that thousands of rail workers went on strike in 2022-3 because Mick Lynch went on Good Morning Britain and delivered pithy putdowns to Richard Madeley. In fact, Lynch was on Good Morning Britain because of the strikes. That is where the left's focus must be; how to rebuild working-class organisation and persuade workers to look to our own

self-activity as the mechanism for achieving change. Effective and inspirational leaders, many more of whom will emerge from our ranks when struggle revives, have a role to play, but they are more an effect than a cause.

Jones's description of the left's target audience as "the average punter" is revealing. This suggests a conception of politics as literally a process of transactional consumption, via which the left sells our product to the "punters" of the electorate. That is undoubtedly the model of politics that capitalist ideology, which wants to make the dynamics of the marketplace hegemonic in all spheres of life, encourages. But it is one the left should seek to disrupt, not triangulate with.

As resistance to Labour's planned welfare cuts hopelessly burgeons, there is an opportunity for some left revival. The existing organised left can contribute to that revival by helping organise genuinely

democratic, participatory local committees, through which those motivated to oppose the cuts can take steps into sustained political organisation and activity. We must also argue for a consistent orientation to the labour movement and workplace organisation, for a view of workers' action as the fundamental motor of social change. And, threaded through it all, we must advocate for a vision of an alternative form of society, based on common ownership, democracy, and equality, which means refusing to duck or sideline so-called "culture war" issues such as immigration or trans rights.

If we can catalyse a revival on that basis, we will produce many, many "leaders" whose authority and mandates are conferred democratically. They can then force themselves into the national media. Far better, then, to focus on the work of that revival, than to impotently cry out for some Moses, or Mick Lynch, to lead us. □

Workers Party? To right of Reform

By Lewis Ward

In the Runcorn and Helsby by-election (1 May 2025) the candidate for George Galloway's Workers Party is Peter Ford, the former ambassador to Syria from 2003 to 2006. After leaving office he became a reliable defender of the Assad regime, serving as a director for the Syrian government lobbying group the British Syrian Society and casting doubt on the government's responsibility for the Khan Shaykhun chemical attack. After the fall of the Assad government, he went on GB News to call for Syrian refugees to leave the UK, calling them

either "sympathisers with the jihadis" or "chancers" and "economic refugees".

The Facebook page for Ford's campaign is a feeble attempt to ape the rhetoric of Donald Trump. He has called David Lammy a "diversity hire", condemned wind and solar subsidies as "deliberate self-harm on the altar of NetZero", and called Ed Miliband a plant for Just Stop Oil who is "slaughtering industry".

There are many reasonable criticisms of Ed Miliband and David Lammy, but these don't include being too pro-environment or being Black. Ford's attacks

on the Reform candidate Sarah Pochin are largely from the right. Whilst she was the mayor for Cheshire East, Pochin attended an event welcoming Syrian and Afghan refugees to Macclesfield, and opened a Pride event in Crewe headlined by drag queens. Ford has criticised her repeatedly for this, nicknaming her "Sarah (Refugees Welcome) Pochin", and saying "we don't reckon much to drag queens in Runcorn and Helsby".

Labour's candidate Karen Shore has also been agitating against migrants after a hit-piece from the *Telegraph*

attacking her for defending Cheshire West and Chester Council's lauding Labour's "[removal of] 19,000 people who shouldn't be here".

Reform has been able to define this by-election, prompting Labour leaders to present themselves as the true anti-immigrant option. These attempts to stem the bleeding just give legitimacy to far-right talking points. Labour cannot be a convincing Reform-lite, no matter how much it attacks migrants. □

• Sources online: bit.ly/wp-ford

Raid on Youth Demand meeting

By Will Roberts

On Thursday 27 March, over 20 police, some armed with tasers, broke into a meeting of six Youth Demand activists at the Quaker House on St Martin's Lane in London, arresting all attendees under suspicion of "conspiracy to cause a public nuisance". The meeting was publicly advertised, and the "public nuisance" in question was Youth Demand's month of publicised actions to "shut down London", largely involving ten-minute protests, blocking roads around the centre of the city, over arms sales to Israel and redressing fossil-fuel harm.

Youth Demand report no arrests on the actual protests.

Over the next day, those arrested had their homes searched, and others connected to Youth Demand had police raids. Joe Booth, a young activist who lives in supported accommodation, was not at the meeting in question. At 9am the next morning, he had seven police arrest him, confiscate his possessions, and drive him two hours across London for questioning before releasing him on police bail, with conditions preventing him from entering the City of Westminster and protesting off the pavement.

Joe's union, the RMT, have

said that they will support him if charges are brought against him.

The Quakers have condemned the arrests, citing it as the first time in living memory that the police have raided a Quaker house. Youth Demand has reported a large increase in support and members in response to the arrests.

Police

The police say: "While we absolutely recognise the importance of the right to protest, we have a responsibility to intervene to prevent activity that crosses the line from protest into serious disruption and other criminality."

How 10-minute street protests constitute "serious disruption" beyond average rush-hour roadworks was not explained. Nor was any evidence given for the "other criminality" that this peaceful meeting was meant to be "plotting".

Since the 2022 Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and the 2023 Public Order Act (both partially drafted by conservative thinktank Policy Exchange, funded by fossil fuel companies), the state's repression of activists taking action (or even just discussing it) around the climate and the war in Gaza have been increasingly harsh.

Reclaim the Power, a group planning a climate camp near the Drax power plant, had 15 activists pre-emptively arrested and [charged](#) in September last year for owning zip ties and leaflets. Just Stop Oil (who have announced an end to their actions) and Palestine Action have dozens of activists still serving sentences or awaiting court dates for disruptive protests.

Now the Labour government continues the Tories' authoritarian clampdown on the right to protest. We call for all activists facing charges for protesting to be released. □

Germany seeks to deport protesters

By Will Roberts

The German state has issued deportation orders for three EU citizens and one American who have attended pro-Palestinian protests.

Berlin immigration authorities issued the orders on 31 March, demanding that the four individuals leave Germany within one month or else face deportation. Their orders cite a protest in October 2024 in which masked individuals caused "significant property damage, including graffiti", as well as resisting arrest and calling a police officer a "fascist".

Unusually, three of the four orders also invoke the German principle of *Staatsräson*, ("state-reason"). This term originates from a speech Angela Merkel gave to the Israeli Knesset in 2008, asserting that Israeli security was fundamental to the purpose of the German state.

Staatsräson is not an officially defined term or codified anywhere in the German constitution or by German courts. At least two of the protestors are appealing the decision, with their lawyer telling *Al-Monitor* that it is a "political concept, not a legal concept, and therefore unlawful".

In any case, the deportation of activists for protesting should be opposed.

Khalil

The activists' lawyer has drawn parallels to the case of [Mahmoud Khalil](#) in the US. "I see similarities... It is weaponization of immigration law as a tool to silence political dissent". Khalil's case may also lead to a debate on interpretations of the US constitution's First Amendment.

Back in February, Berlin police broke up a [protest](#), citing a ban on "Arabic chanting", the playing of Arabic music, or giving a speech in Arabic. In Octo-

ber 2024, police [raided](#) the homes of five men, four of whom were being investigated over "authorship of antisemitic social media posts".

Clapping

And after the joint Israeli-Palestinian documentary *No Other Land* won an Academy Award, German culture minister Claudia Roth insisted that she was only clapping for Israeli director Yuval Abraham, not Palestinian director Basel Adra. Several politicians, including the mayor of Berlin, called for her resignation. A torrent of public criticism was aimed at Yuval Abraham for his acceptance speech, to which he responded: "To stand on German soil as the son of Holocaust survivors and call for a ceasefire – and to then be labelled as antisemitic is not only outrageous, it is also literally putting Jewish lives in danger."

Israeli politicians cited German poli-

ticians when attacking the filmmakers themselves, and only weeks later, co-director Hamdan Ballal was attacked by Israeli settlers in the West Bank, and [removed](#) from an ambulance by IDF soldiers.

German *Staatsräson* is less about assuring Israel's right to exist, and more about giving a free hand to the repressive policies of the Israeli right. □

Solidarity 741 23 April

Solidarity 741 will be out 23 April, not 16 April, because Good Friday being a holiday makes good distribution difficult for a 16 April publication. □

Decades of national revolt

6699 As we were saying

By Maxine Landis

Ukraine's national struggle is no recent or "proxy" concoction. Previous articles in *Solidarity* have covered the Holodomor, the Stalin-made famine that killed millions in 1932-3. Ukrainian national and socialist revolt surged in the 1970s. From *Workers' Fight* (a forerunner of *Solidarity*), 6 July 1974.

In 1946, a lyrical poem about the beauties of nature was condemned by Stalin's literary censors as "bourgeois nationalism" and forbidden publication. If the poem had been set in Russia, it would no doubt have received approval and official accolades for being cheerful and positive. But the poet happened to be Ukrainian.

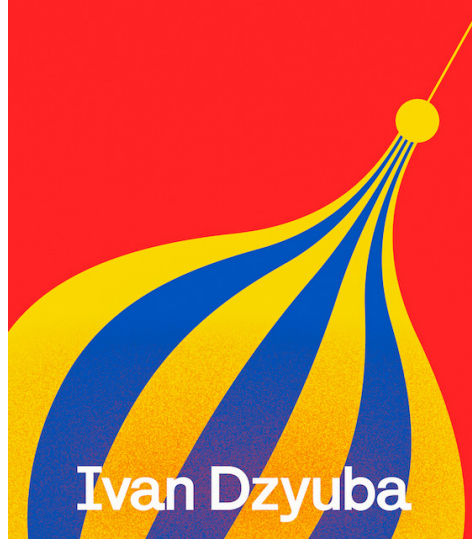
The incident is typical of thousands that can be related from the time of Stalin. But, while the literary censorship is now not so crude as in the 1940s, the oppression of Ukraine is, if anything, worse.

Ukraine is a pretty big place – five times the size of England, and with a population of some 50 million. But for only 15 years of its recent history has it been able to foster its own national and cultural heritage. Between domination by the Tsarist "prison house of nations" and the Russian Stalinist bureaucracy, Ukraine enjoyed a brief flowering between 1917 and 1932. During that time, as a result of the Bolshevik nationalities policy, the number of people speaking and reading Ukrainian rose sharply, as did the number of books and newspapers published in Ukrainian.

Today, however, Ukrainians are in danger of losing their language completely. Following Khrushchev's educational reforms of 1958-9, the teaching of the Ukrainian language is no longer obligatory in Ukrainian schools. In the universities, the majority of lectures are given in Russian, and examinations are conducted in Russian.

Some of these facts were outlined by Terry Liddle, speaking at a *Workers' Fight* public meeting on Sunday 23 June [1974]. Terry Liddle was speaking on behalf of the Committee for the De-

Internationalism or Russification?



fence of Ukrainian Dissidents. And in a pamphlet produced by this committee (*Ukraine: Unrest and Repression*, by Andrea Martin) a detailed account is given of the systematic denial of Ukraine's national rights since the Russian bureaucracy's proclamation of the need for a total amalgamation of all national republics into a single "Soviet nation".

In effect this simply means the deliberate Russification of the various nationalities within the USSR. Comrade Martin comments that this policy of complete assimilation of non-Russian nationalities "is being referred to as 'the entrance of the USSR into a much higher stage of historical development'."

On a vast scale not greatly different from South Africa [Bantustan policy], Russian populations are settled in Ukraine whilst Ukrainians are virtually deported to work in various parts of Russia. A rural Ukrainian seeking a permit to move to an industrial area will be given a permit to move to the Urals, Voronezh, Siberia or the Far East – but not a Ukrainian city. According to the 1959 census, over five million Ukrainians live outside Ukraine (but within the "Soviet Union"). The emigrants are given very little opportunity to retain their own identity: outside of Ukraine there is not a single Ukrainian language paper published, nor is there a single Ukrainian cultural or educational institution to serve these five million people.

For the Russians who are encouraged and helped to settle in Ukraine, every facility and amenity is provided. Many start out as members of the privileged bureaucratic caste. In addition to this they have the advantage of speaking the language favoured by the authorities. Thus they slot into the better jobs and professions, while the disadvantaged Ukrainians are increasingly pushed into lower paid and less influential positions. Thus the Russification

process becomes self-perpetuating and takes on its own momentum, as the caste differentiation between Russians and Ukrainians within Ukraine hardens.

One example, of personnel working on the construction of the Kyiv Hydro-Electric Power Station during 1963, shows this process at work. Russians, constituting only 20% of the workforce, held all the top positions in management and technical work.

Over the last 15 years, the Russification of Ukraine has been very much stepped up. From 1959 to 1970 in the Donetsk-Dnipro region of Ukraine the native population fell from 56% to 53%, while the Russian population rose from 38% to 41%. In this period the growing desperation about the (eventually irreversible) attempt to liquidate the Ukrainian culture and identity has led to the growth of a courageous and widespread opposition.

Bureaucratic

In 1959 a small grouping was formed which called itself the Ukrainian Workers' and Peasants' Union. This group attacked bureaucratic planning in industry and agriculture, the gradual abolition of the Ukrainian language, oppression of the peasantry and curtailment of the rights of genuine trade unionism. It started out, as have many opposition groupings, by taking seriously aspects of the Soviet constitution and setting out to get them legally implemented. One of these is Article 17, which provides for the right of secession of any of the member states of the Soviet Union. But when this group was brought to trial, they were bluntly told that Article 17 was not for practical application but "for the delusion of the outside world."

Very early on, the aims were re-defined: Lev Lukyanenko, central figure of the Workers' and Peasants' Union, wrote that he "began to think that it was not the independence of the Ukrainian SSR that was essential for an improvement in the life of the people but the liquidation of bureaucratism. And it seemed to me that bureaucratism could be liquidated only by giving greater scope to socialist democracy." Lukyanenko is now serving a 15 year jail sentence for his views (commuted from an original death sentence). The other members of this group were also imprisoned.

In 1965 widespread arrests of opponents of the Russification policy were carried out, and the victims tried in secret. Over 150 workers, students and writers signed a petition in protest. "The political trials held in recent years are becoming a form of suppression of those who do not conform in their thinking... They bear witness to the intensified restoration of Stalinism. In Ukraine, where violations of democracy are magnified and aggravated by

distortions in the field of the nationality question, the symptoms of Stalinism are manifested even more overtly and grossly."

In 1970, paralleling the Russian samizdat (self-published) journal *Chronicle of Current Events*, Ukrainian Socialist oppositionists began to publish a type-written journal called the Ukrainian Herald, reporting on political prisoners and repression and also containing poetry, philosophical and political discussion and unofficial fiction and essays.

Vyacheslav Chornovil (whose earlier account of the 1965-66 political trials earned him a year and a half in prison) spoke for many of these oppositionists when he wrote: "I categorically state... that I have always firmly adhered to the principles of socialism and continue to do so. But not of that socialism which tries to regiment not merely the actions but also the thoughts of the individual. I cannot imagine true socialism without guaranteed democratic freedoms, without the widest political and economic self government of all the cells of the state organism down to and including the smallest, without a real guarantee – and not merely a paper one – of the rights of all nations within a multinational state".

Arrests

In the first four months of 1972 in a series of massive sweeps, over 200 Ukrainian opposition activists were arrested, including Chornovil and Ivan Dzyuba, author of an important work exposing the treatment of Ukraine (*Internationalism or Russification?*). Dzyuba, though because of an advanced tubercular condition he had been told by doctors that he had only about a year to live, was sentenced to five years in prison and five years' exile. A member of the Ukrainian Writers' Union who offered to serve Dzyuba's sentence himself was simply carted off to a psychiatric hospital, in company with a number of other Ukrainian dissidents. Chornovil is now serving a seven-year sentence in a Russian prison at Vladimir.

But this group's conclusions point to the possibility of a very much more powerful wave of opposition to come. They feel that, because of the social implications of the national oppression of Ukraine, there is a much stronger likelihood of the working class being drawn into a significant struggle against the parasitic bureaucracy.

As Ivan Dzyuba wrote in *Internationalism or Russification?*: "We see that in city life the Ukrainian language is in a certain sense opposed as the language of the 'lower' strata of the population ... to the Russian language as the language of the 'higher', 'more educated' strata of society... And it is not possible to 'brush aside' this social rift. The language barrier aggravates and exacer-

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bates social divisions."

Certainly, the scale and vehemence of working class action in Ukraine, although it generally takes the form of action over wages and conditions, indicates that the bureaucratic oppression of workers throughout the Soviet Union is deepened and made doubly intolerable by callous and calculated national oppression. This could well make of Ukraine the weak link in the bureaucratic chains. □

Workers in 1960s-70s

1961: 20 workers from factories in Lviv form the Ukrainian National Committee, an underground organisation aiming for the secession of Ukraine. All its members arrested. Two sentenced to death and shot, others imprisoned.

May 1969: Workers at the Kyiv Hydro-electric Station marched in the streets of Vyshgorod. They had lived for years in prefabricated huts and railway coaches, which had never been repaired. Defying the local Party organisation, they elected their own housing committee and sent a delegation to Moscow. Its leader was arrested and has never been heard of since.

June 1972: 10,000 "rioters" took to the streets for two whole days in the engineering city of Dnieprodzerzhinsk. They attacked and partially destroyed a KGB building, and offices of the Interior Ministry, and destroyed files in the Komsomol (Young Communists) building and that of the Party itself. The KGB and militia opened fire, killing about a dozen people and wounding 100.

September 1972: An unknown number of workers killed and wounded during strikes for improvement in living standards at Dniepropetrovsk, a major centre of heavy industry.

October 1972: Further strikes at both Dniepropetrovsk and Dnieprodzerzhinsk, with demands for better distribution of provisions, better living conditions and the right to freely choose a job and not be bureaucratically assigned. Again, some workers killed, and many arrests. These actions took place at the same period as the last big wave of arrests and trials of Ukrainian nationalist oppositionists.

May 1973: Strike of 30,000 car workers at Kyiv against wage cuts.

August 1973: Rumoured major strike at "a Black Sea port", with half the port's workers laid off, and the rest striking in solidarity. □

Ukraine: not a proxy war

By Dan La Botz and Stephen R Shalom

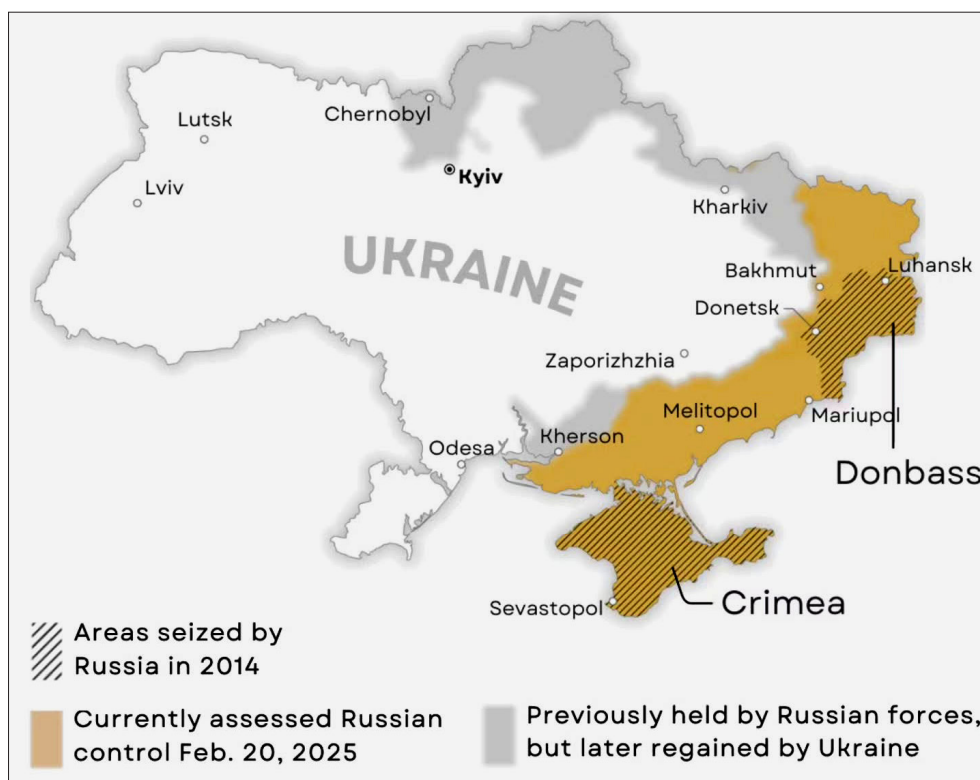
The Ukrainian people are currently fighting against Russia's brutal invasion and the occupation of about twenty percent of Ukraine's territory. The war remains today what it has been from the beginning: A war of national self-defence and self-determination against Russian imperialism as Vladimir Putin attempts to reduce Ukraine to its former colonial status under both the Tsarist and Soviet empires. From the start of the war Ukraine, like any nation in such a position, has had the right to obtain arms wherever it can get them, despite the fact that the US provision of arms and intelligence could influence and pressure Ukraine. And the right to self-defence remains despite the fact that the Ukrainian people are simultaneously challenging the neoliberal policies of the Zelensky government.

Now, thanks to a *New York Times* analysis by Adam Entous, "The Partnership: The Secret History of the War in Ukraine," published on 29 March, we have new information about the extent of US military assistance. The Russian press and pro-Putin media have been crowing about the article, claiming it somehow invalidates Ukraine's war of self-defence.

But while the article provides us with the story of the US-Ukrainian military relationship in the Biden years in remarkable detail, significantly it provides no evidence of US political control of the war, let alone that Washington pressed Ukraine to fight on when Kyiv preferred to throw in the towel. The article recounts the continual disagreements and tensions between US and Ukrainian generals, as well as among Ukrainian political and military leaders. Most of those tensions arose from Ukraine's legitimate and understandable desire to drive the Russian invader from its territory and, importantly, to free Ukrainians in the occupied territories from the oppression they have been enduring, on the one hand, and the US concern about the dangers of a wider, even a nuclear, war, on the other.

At the centre of the article is a long discussion of the attempted Ukrainian counteroffensive of 2023 that ended in "stillborn failure." Entous shows that Zelensky chose to follow the advice of his ground forces commander to deploy forces to the unsuccessful effort to defend Bakhmut, rather than concentrate forces for a push to the south as urged by both his own supreme commander and the Americans, effectively scuttling the counter-offensive.

There followed more tensions and rifts among the Ukrainians. Never in the course of reading this article does one have the sense that the Americans were dictating to the Ukrainians. And that, of



course, is the key issue.

Early on in the article, Entous writes, "In some ways, Ukraine was, on a wider canvas, a rematch in a long history of US-Russia proxy wars – Vietnam in the 1960s, Afghanistan in the 1980s, Syria three decades later." But his article does not substantiate that claim.

Shots

What is a proxy war? One in which the parties doing the fighting are not the ones calling the shots. So the Soviet Union and China provided arms to North Vietnam – as they should have – but the decision to resist the American aggression was made in Hanoi and among the South Vietnamese, not Moscow or Beijing. Likewise, Ukrainians are fighting not because any foreign power compelled them to do so, but because they value their own national survival. In the Biden years, the United States supported Ukraine for its own motives – to weaken and prevent the expansion of Russia and to strengthen its relationship with its NATO allies and with the European Union and its economy. Washington and its generals proved incapable of forcing the Ukrainians to do what they thought was best strategically for American goals and never was able to take control of the war politically.

Today, the situation is quite different. At the moment, President Donald Trump is attempting precisely to take control, forcing a solution that essentially splits the spoils of Ukraine between the United States and Russia, with Washington getting mineral rights of the sort that great powers have often demanded of their colonies and Russia getting big chunks of Ukrainian territory, including its population and resources. Putin would also strip Ukraine of its autonomy, denying it the right to

join NATO or the European Union. It is Trump's support for Putin's position that forms the basis for a broader US-Russian partnership that would threaten other European nations. So Ukraine's fight for its sovereignty is as important as ever.

But as important as Ukraine's struggle is for the long-term security of other European countries, the latter could not induce Kyiv to soldier on if Ukrainians themselves didn't see the value of resisting Russian subjugation. Unfortunately, given the military imbalance between Russia and Ukraine, Ukraine cannot carry on their war of self-defence if other nations don't contribute arms. We will have to organise to insist that the arms keep flowing until Ukraine can attain the just peace that the majority of the Ukrainian people so desperately desire. □

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Unite: stop law cases, sort out scandal

By Ann Field

According to a statement issued by a majority of the Unite the Union Executive Council (EC) on 10 March: "Unite's internal democracy is being extinguished."

The statement related to a vote at the EC meeting held the same day to remove Andy Green from the post of EC chair (31 for, 28 against, one abstention).

When Green refused to vacate the chair – according to the union's Legal Director, a two-thirds majority is needed to remove the EC chair – the "EC majority" walked out of the meeting. Or, less dramatically, switched off their computers. (It was a hybrid meeting.) This made the meeting inquorate. It was able to receive reports, but not make decisions or formally approve the reports.

Those reports included an update on the union's investigation into the explosion in the construction costs of the union's hotel and conference centre in Birmingham, built during Len McCluskey's period in office as General Secretary. Initially estimated to cost £59 million to build, it ended up costing £112 million. But it is currently valued at just £29 million. £14 million is also reported to have gone missing from the project's final accounts. At an EC meeting held in January 2021 the then Finance Director, Howard Beckett, had presented a report valuing the hotel and conference centre at £89 million. This figure had been achieved by magically equating land values in Birmingham with land values in Mayfair.

Accounts

A third statement from the "EC majority", issued in mid-March, went beyond the issue of the vote to remove Green and voiced "serious concerns about the governance and accountability within our union, as well as about the basic financial stability of our organisation."

Had the "EC majority" not exited the meeting of 10 March, they would have received the information which addressed the bulk of their "serious concerns". They would have known, for example, that "the failure to provide annual accounts for the past three years" of which they complained is due to the fact that annual accounts dating as far back as 2021 need to be adjusted ("written down") because of the inaccurate figures previously provided about the Birmingham project.

And the "serious concern" of the "EC majority" about "how money is being allocated to support Unite strikes" is a very odd "serious concern". Spending union funds to support union members on strike is surely a pretty basic reason why unions exist.

While the "EC majority" churned out its succession of statements – fairly described by the Real Unite [website](#)

as "stamping feet, waving arms, pointing fingers! Throwing shit at the wall. Schoolyard politics. And game-playing at Executive Council meetings" – former Unite General Secretary Len McCluskey issued a statement of his own.

McCluskey criticised a communication sent to Unite employees by the union's Head of Operations, Sarah Carpenter, on behalf of the union's General Secretary (Sharon Graham).

The communication had referred to a dozen individuals in Liverpool being charged with bribery and corruption, including the founders of the Flanagan Group, which had worked on the construction of the Birmingham hotel and conference centre. The Flanagans, her statement said, "had links with the previous leadership [of Unite]".

McCluskey objected that this was "quite despicable and the worst form of 'guilt by association'." The police investigation in Liverpool had nothing to do with the Birmingham centre, and "conflating the two in this manner is despicable". "The snide attacks and innuendos about previous leadership," McCluskey's statement concluded, "involves not only me but others, and it needs to stop." But his appeal was to no avail. On 18 March a statement from Green, signed off as EC chair, was circulated as an official Unite communication. It accused "EC members linked to the old leadership" of "deliberate attempts to undermine" the union in order to "frustrate the independent investigations into potential corruption surrounding our Birmingham Hotel and affiliated services and to divert attention from the findings."

The Birmingham hotel and conference centre had been "built by friends of the previous General Secretary, Len McCluskey – people who have now been arrested by the police on a separate matter."

The imminent publication of the internal investigation into the Birmingham project and the union's affiliated services was the reason why "a group that is apparently called the United Left (UL) supporters group on the EC has chosen this time to do everything possible to disrupt the business of our union."

In late March yet another statement was circulated, this time from EC vice-chair Michelle Smith, accusing the union's Legal Director of "obstructive and disproportionately accusatory behaviour ... deliberately trying to distort the facts ... [and] making spurious allegations that certain individual EC members have spread lies and doctored financial documents."

Last Friday (4 April) the "EC majority" announced that it had initiated legal proceedings "in the union's name" against Green (for refusing to vacate the position of EC chair), in the form of an application for injunctive relief in the High Court.

A letter from the "EC majority" to Graham also instructed her to stop spending union money on solicitors' fees and/or legal proceedings in support of Green. Spending union money for that purpose was ultra vires – it did not have the approval of the EC, and it was in pursuit of overturning an EC decision.

This flurry of statements, counter-statements and, now, legal proceedings is not the only manifestation of Unite's descent into civil war.

Former Legal and Finance Director Howard Beckett was suspended in August 2022 and resigned in January 2023. In October of last year an Employment Tribunal threw out his claim for constructive unfair dismissal. Beckett has lodged an appeal to an Employment Appeal Tribunal, and is also suing Unite and Sharon Graham for breach of privacy.

In December of last year eight members of the union's National Bargaining and Disputes Support Unit – members of the GMB trade union – went on strike in protest at what they called "the toxic bullying culture" in the union.

GMB

Unite responded by accusing the GMB of "factional warfare", denying the claims of bullying, accusing two of the strikers of potential bullying and sexual harassment, and accusing the other six of contributing to "a hostile working environment". The GMB rejected all such claims as "smears".

The Unite the Union Officers National Committee (ONC) backed the strike. It condemned staff being forced by senior management to cross picket lines and threatened a strike ballot in the event of victimisations.

In January of this year the Certification Officer rejected a complaint by Unite EC member Eddie Cassidy that Unite had breached its Rulebook by failing to get approval from the EC for the appointment of a new Head of Operations and other senior posts.

(Such appointments should be approved by the EC, even if this is not required by the Rulebook. But the lack of EC approval was never a "serious concern" of the "EC majority" when the same practice was followed by Graham's predecessors.)

The as yet unexplained explosion in the construction costs of the Birmingham project is central to the current conflicts.

So too is the issue of Unite's affiliated services. The Tribunal which heard Beckett's claim for unfair dismissal was presented with evidence that Beckett had allocated contracts without authority and without a tendering process, thereby creating contracts which were disadvantageous to Unite.

Plus the not insignificant matter of "the police having found payments of £1.1 million from a company owned by Frank Harold (who ran some of the affil-

iated services) to the Claimant (Howard Beckett) from 2012-2015."

Clearly, there are EC members – and other individuals not on the EC – who seem desperate to prevent presentation of the final report on the Birmingham project and the union's affiliated services to a quorate EC meeting.

But the overarching picture is the conflict between the United Left (UL) faction within Unite and General Secretary Sharon Graham.

The UL used to be a fairly efficient election machine which also conducted some low-level campaigning. On broader political issues, especially international ones, it took its lead from the *Morning Star*. It claimed, and still claims, to promote a lay-membership-led union. But its history has generally been one of being bag-carriers for the Unite bureaucracy.

In the 2021 General Secretary election the UL unsuccessfully backed Steve Turner. He lost to Graham, who had used her position as head of the union's Organising Department to lay the groundwork for her election campaign.

There is plenty for which Graham should be criticised: her apolitical concept of trade unionism; her brand of bureaucratic pseudo-anarcho-syndicalism; the role of the ever-expanding Organising Department; the union's support for a third runway at Heathrow, for Gatwick Airport expansion, and for increased military spending; and the union's "No ban without a plan" North Sea oil campaign (which is really just a "no ban" campaign).

Rather than open up a debate about such issues, the UL uses its EC majority as a base from which to conduct ongoing trench warfare against Graham – motivated in the main by its belief that the General Secretary's post should be in the gift of the UL.

The initiating of legal proceedings by the "EC majority" – and any legal proceedings by Green or Graham, should it come to that – is worse than wrong.

Court

Nothing could be more hypocritical than a body which claims to be in favour of a lay-membership-led union running to the High Court for a ruling on union-internal issues. This gambit may well backfire very badly on the UL "EC majority". And hopefully it will.

Unite members should be demanding: the abandonment of all legal proceedings; the return of the "EC majority" to attending EC meetings (which is what they were elected to do); immediate publication of the report on the Birmingham project and affiliated services; accountability of any member or official identified in the report as culpable of misdemeanours; accountability of any member or official who has sought to cover up those misdemeanours. □

Poverty kills, austerity kills



Book review

By Dale Street

David Walsh and Gerry McCartney's book *Social Murder? Austerity and Life Expectancy in the UK* takes its title from Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England*.

Engels contrasted society's readiness to recognise "ordinary" criminal murder with its failure to recognise that working conditions which result in people suffering "a too early and an unnatural death" likewise constitute murder:

"No man sees the murderer, because the death of the victim seems a natural one, since the offence is more one of omission than of commission. But murder it remains... social murder."

Until around 2012 UK life expectancy had been increasing (and, correspondingly, mortality rates decreasing) more or less continuously for over a century, except in the two wars and the Spanish Flu pandemic.

But then the pattern of improvement stopped, or even went into reverse. Life expectancy suddenly ceased to

SOCIAL MURDER?

Austerity and Life Expectancy in the UK



David Walsh and
Gerry McCartney



increase. In the poorest 20% of UK regions it began to decline. In some regions – again, the poorest ones – death rates increased to where they had been two decades earlier.

In the decade or so after 2012 – the period under view by the book – people died younger and in greater numbers than had been the case previously: "Compared to what we expected to happen (based on the previous trends), an estimated additional 335,000 deaths occurred in Scotland, England and Wales between 2012 and 2019".

How long people lived in good health ("healthy life expectancy") also went into decline, falling by two years in the country as a whole, and by even more in the poorest regions. By 2019 people in those regions lived an average of just 47 years in good health.

What caused these sudden and negative changes to life expectancy and mortality rates? The answer, as the book explains, lies in: "The economic policies introduced by the UK government since 2010. Or, to be more succinct: it's about austerity."

By 2019 annual public spending was down by about £91 billion compared with pre-austerity levels. The biggest share of the cuts fell on local government funding and social security.

As a consequence, social services provided by local authorities went into decline, and welfare benefits were variously reduced, scrapped completely, or subject to more stringent criteria ("conditionality").

Poverty inevitably increased, and, equally inevitably, so too did death rates:

"Better income equates to better health, and within that income-and-health spectrum, poverty is very bad for you. Put more bluntly, poverty kills. And austerity has increased poverty levels in the UK."



The book compiles and analyses the evidence demonstrating the causal links between austerity, poverty, falling life expectancy and higher mortality rates. But, as the latter part of the book describes, (some) politicians, civil servants and think-tanks were averse to accepting the abundance of evidence.

Standards

By the end of 2016 at least 22 research reports and books linked declining life expectancy standards to austerity. By the end of 2018 over 40 studies and books had made that connection. By 2022 over 59 publications had done so.

But Tory Ministers prevaricated ("premature to draw too many conclusions at this stage about the causes"), as too did public health agencies ("not possible to attribute the recent slowdown to any single cause") and think-tanks ("reasons for the post-2011 slowdown in life expectancy improvements are unclear").

This refusal to accept the evidence at face value meant that no measures were taken, or even suggested, to reverse the pattern of falling life expectancy and increasing mortality rates.

By contrast, the book's authors argue for policies such as a fairer taxation system, a social security system which lives up to its name, improvements to working life, ending fuel and food poverty, and properly funded public services.

Social Murder was written in 2023 but not published until early 2025. That is a long delay, but not untypical of the publishing industry.

Ironically, had the delay been just a couple of months longer, the authors could have used it as an opportunity to add an appendix explaining how Labour's proposed disability benefit cuts will have the same impact, even if on a lesser scale, as Tory austerity: social murder. □

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Activist Agenda

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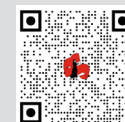
16 Apr: Socialists and military spending. Birmingham AWL. The Wellington, 37 Bennetts Hill, B2 5SN

Template motions

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

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 @work-



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erslibertystudents, and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

13 Apr: Uses of the Erotic. 2pm. Effra Social 89 Effra Road SW2 1DF

Campaigns

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

A strike before I was born shaped me



How I became a socialist

By Sam Myerson

When I think about when I became a socialist, I can't really say. I think I have been one for my entire conscious life. For as long as I can remember, and was capable of describing it, that's what I would have said.

I was brought up in a working-class family. My Dad had been a coal miner, on strike for the year in 1984-85, proudly displaying mementos from the dispute in the house. My mam had worked a few different jobs when I was younger, was at the school doing many different things, and did a degree while working full time.

Tories were bastards, as were scabs. My dad would often tell a story from during the strike, going to the ice

cream van with my oldest brother when he was small. Not enough money for a big ice cream. The ice-cream man knew he was on strike, gave him the biggest cone with all the toppings, and extra money back in change. That has always stuck with me.

You are kind, you look after each other, and you don't cross a picket line.

Organised

I read the *Communist Manifesto* when I was in college, I even read Trotsky's *History of the Russian Revolution*, but never got organised, I wouldn't have dreamed of joining even the Labour Party at that time, never mind looking out for a socialist group. I wasn't ready to commit myself to organising, but I would still refer to myself as a socialist.

I spent the next decade, more or less, going through periods of quite serious illness and hospitalisation. I worked at a bank. I'd started just before the 2008 crash. The run on Northern Rock had happened weeks before I started. I can



remember starting work. A colleague introduced herself as the Unite Rep. I joined the union. I can also remem-

ber customers calling us scum, that it was all our fault. Greedy bankers! They weren't completely wrong. That same resentment was what we felt about the banks, too.

By the time Jeremy Corbyn was running for the Labour leadership I'd started to get into a better place health-wise. It took until 2016 for me to join the Labour Party. It was in the Labour Party that I met Workers' Liberty. Arguing independently, but against the same people. I'd found the socialists that made sense, or they had found me.

Demolished

It was the long, long strike, before I was born, that made me a socialist. The practical, real human solidarity. Then watching grown men cry, something I'd never seen, when they demolished the pit heads to make way for developments. And reading about how our class had taken on the government. Don't let the bastards grind you down. □



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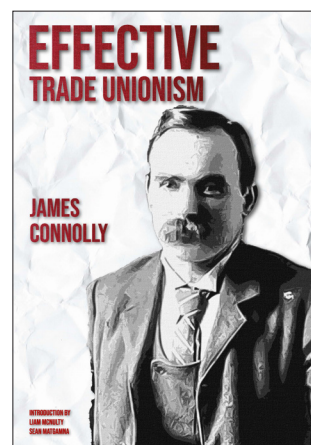
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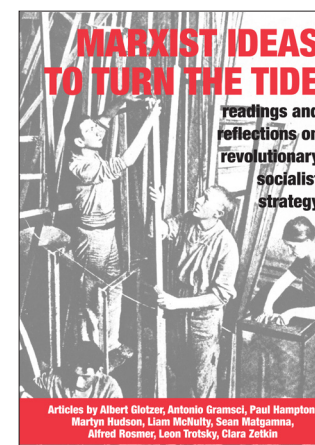
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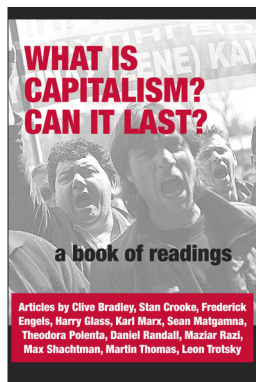
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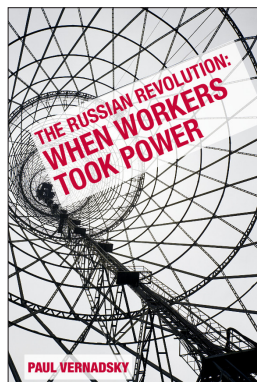
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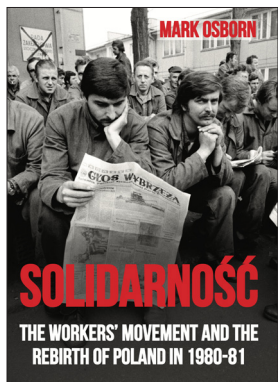
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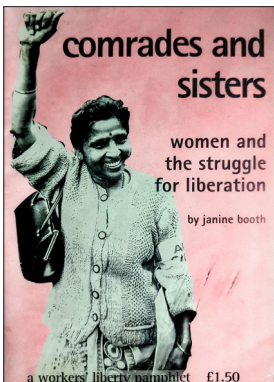
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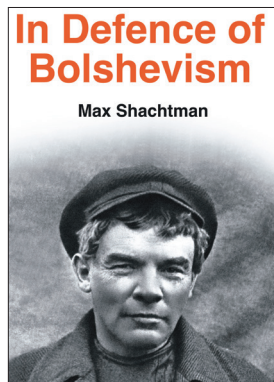
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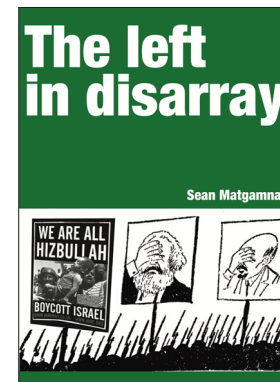
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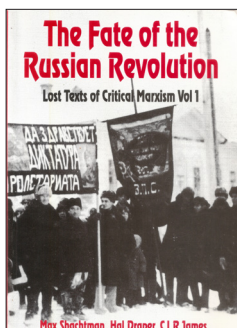
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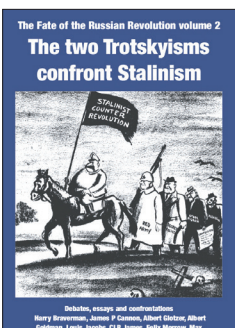
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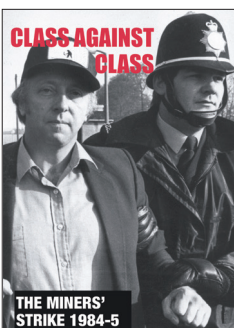
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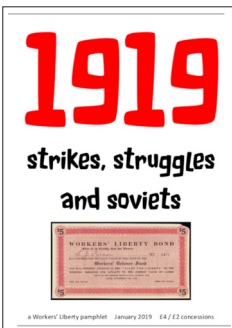
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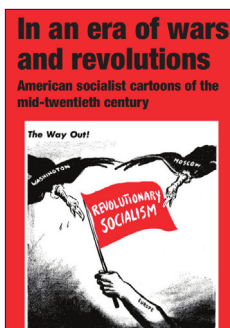
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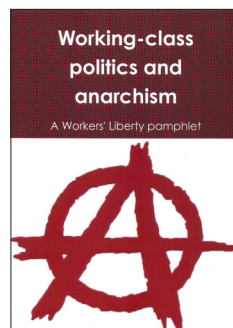
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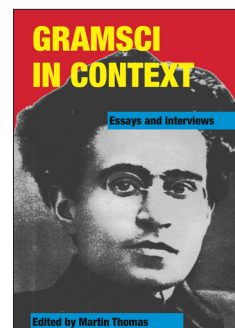
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A week with Standing Together

By Carrie Supple

This report by a member of London UK Friends of Standing Together is taken with thanks from ukfost.co.uk

"Peace is not something we wait for, we make it. Out of despair, we're building a new solidarity."

Each time I see members of Standing Together (ST) talk about their work, at rallies, collecting aid for Gaza, training, I want to be with them. So, after 17 months of feeling that way, I went to meet and march with them in what was a momentous week, with yet more bloody hell in Gaza and the West Bank, increasing authoritarianism from the Netanyahu government, and growing opposition.

I try to avoid hyperbole, but the ST activists I met are truly astounding. They have stayed with me, in my head and heart, making the reductive binary polarisation here in the UK even more insufferable. To quote Angela Mattar, a Palestinian member of ST's national leadership:

"We are resistance! Standing Together is nothing like normalisation. We live in the fire! We're building (sometimes fragile) partnerships for change from within in hard circumstances. Those who accuse us of 'normalisation' are on the outside. We are the internal resistance!"

I visited ST's "Purple Houses" in Tel Aviv, Haifa and Jerusalem, all busy, planning actions, campaigns and events. The offices serve as the organisations' local HQs, resource store, and as venues for arts and other public events. 130 people were booked for

a screening of No Other Land in Jerusalem, and the Haifa chapter held a packed evening focused on local crime and the government's lack of response.

In Tel Aviv, I met Amoon Shany Gilon (local organiser); Rula Daood (national co-director); Nadav Shofet (director of resource development and international relations); Itamar Avneri (head of training) and Galit Mass-Ader (local leader). They were reeling from the police violence against protesters in Jerusalem on 19 March, authorised by far-right minister Itamar Ben Gvir. National organiser Oded Rotem was hit by a taxi and needed surgery on his broken leg. But morale remains high and ST has that mix of professionalism, persistence, warmth, and humanity which attracts and retains supporters.

Sarah Goldberg (Local organiser, Haifa and members community manager) emphasised the centrality of training to develop leadership skills for the future and how important having a presence on the streets is, in order to increase their reach. Aya Khatib (local organiser, Jerusalem) came back from a positive meeting with students at the Hebrew University; she was encouraged by having met the former principal of the university, who said he was very pleased ST is organising there.

Backlash

Yael Agmon (local chapter manager, Jerusalem) told me they were worried there would be a backlash against ST's Refuse War campaign, but it has been well received. She has been invited to talk to groups and media outlets ST sees as mainstream, and has been pleased with the response. Their message is not only calling on people to refuse to serve, but to entirely oppose a war which fought in order to keep Netanyahu in power with Palestinian and Israeli blood. On 28 March, Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* reported a 50% drop-off rate in reservists reporting for duty.

I joined the ST group, including Alon-Lee Green (national co-director) at a massive protest in Tel Aviv. Thousands upon thousands marched, with speakers, banners and music. There were protests every night. This one brought together protesters with distinct priorities; freeing the hostages, ending the slaughter in Gaza and the West Bank, or preventing the government attempts to crush any challenge by state bodies; plus groups like ST and Combatants for Peace, who were there for all of the above. Every ST chapter has a "wagon" full of megaphones to use on the protests, as well as merchandise to give away. I saw ST posters everywhere.

As for the overall mood within Israel's wider protest movement, my observations are only anecdotal because I was



Pic: @standing.together.movement

there such a short time. A gay couple I know in Jerusalem who attend nightly protests are planning to leave the country because they can see no way of the situation improving and they fear for their own safety. I went to Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, which was overwhelming. I met friends I had not seen since 1978, all viscerally against Netanyahu's government and quite hopeless about the possibility of change. I think it needs millions to march and refuse to serve and a general strike.

ST's motto is, "Where there is struggle there is hope". The spirit of Maoz Inon's affirmation that "Hope is an action" is at the heart of their work.

ST activists love UKFoST and how well organised we are! We need to keep spreading awareness and winning people over to ST's Theory of Change and sending donations. It was helpful to see the scale of their organisation, and what they need fundraising for: rent, staff, events, publicity, etc. They are planning to launch more chapters. Galit (everyone said how tireless she is) in the Tel Aviv office gave me merchandise for FoST, saying Yes Peace and Standing Together in Hebrew and Arabic.

Standing Together has 6,000 members in Israel and 3,500 Friends of ST internationally, whose donations provide half their income. Private funders make up the rest. They take no funding from any government.

On 23 March, there was a FoST Zoom event with Nadav Shofet, who joined ST when he was at Tel Aviv University, and Angela Mattar, who is a Hebrew University Student as well as part of the national leadership.

Angela is a Christian Palestinian from I'llillin in the Galilee, named by Aziz Abu Sarah as a potential future leader in Israel-Palestine. She described how, during the 2006 Lebanon war, her family was in a bomb shelter with a religious Jewish family who shared their food. "It was my first meaningful encounter with Jewish people and I learned that solidarity is possible and there is always a choice."

As a school student, she asked, "Why don't we learn about the Nakba? Why are our villages restricted? Why do I

feel like a guest in my own country?" She saw Jews and Palestinians side by side trying to stop evictions in the West Bank but didn't join ST until 7 October "turned our world upside down." She and her friends were called "terrorist sympathisers" and harassed for wearing keffiyehs.

ST asked her to start a student group at the Technion University. Faculty ignored their emails and they were kicked out of rooms and had to meet under trees. "We stood, Jewish and Palestinian students, holding pictures of children killed in Gaza and I thought, 'this is real solidarity'. I found a political home with ST. My fears had to be channelled into making the world a better place."

"When a settler's dog bit me, I thought, 'Is it fucking worth it?!' Yes, because I want Palestinian girls like me to know we deserve dignity and more than survival, more than silence or surrender."

"ST is a space where I can be Palestinian and free, without apology. Where Jews and Palestinians can organise through our differences not despite them. Division and despair are easy. I love people and I believe in justice. Antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism must be fought at the same time."

"It's a struggle for everyone who lives here. We are one people, with Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank. Deep pain and fear are felt by Israelis and Palestinians. ST holds a space for both. We need patience, truth, honesty, love and bravery. We must show what solidarity looks like and demand an end to war and occupation. I find hope in those who show up and say: not in my name!"

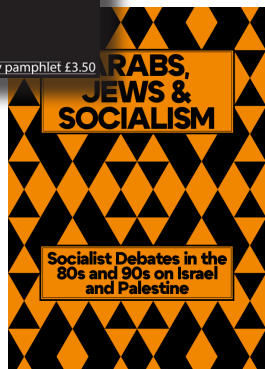
Being able to travel to, and around, Israel with relative freedom is a reflection of the structural inequalities that exist there. A member of the Palestinian diaspora living in the UK who wanted to make the same trip would encounter far greater obstacles. But if you are in a position to make the trip, the best way you can spend your time there is in supporting a movement at the forefront of the struggle to dismantle those inequalities. □



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13

“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! □

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Steady but slow progress

With thanks to Reuben, Daniel and some smaller donations, our total raised now stands at £8,100.

Continuing our occasional fundraising feature of which Trump-supporting billionaire has lost the most money this week, after Elon Musk, who still tops the charts, Mark Zuckerberg, Meta CEO and Xi Jinping sycophant, has reportedly lost

\$27bn as a result of the tariffs. But anyone concerned about Mark's loss can be reassured that while we scrape by with only a meagre few thousand in the bank each month, he has an estimated net worth of \$179bn.

• Donate: workersliberty.org/fund

Hoping his own side will curb Trump



Diary of a Tube worker

By Jay Dawkey

"I've got no time for him [Trump] anyway, but this is very stupid. The pension is a long-term investment, so you don't have to worry too much. The FTSE 100 will recover; it always does. And soon enough he'll have pissed off too many billionaires, all the Mr Burns types will go after him. They won't let him just get away with wrecking their fortunes."

"Have you looked at your AVCs (Additional Voluntary Contributions) over the weekend? £24k mine have dropped

since the tariffs were announced. At least I suppose more units are going to be bought up so when it recovers it'll get better. But it's crazy."

"At some point, others will have to turn around and tell him or make him stop acting like this. I don't think he [Trump] is behaving like a well man. His own side will have to look at him and make the call that it's better to find someone else, restore some order".

Distance

Those are three views of the Trump tariffs expressed at work this week. No-one thinks the situation can last, but hope is more reliant on those on Trump's side turning against him than anything like working-class or even popular action against him. Perhaps that reflects the

distance we can still feel from Trump and the Maga movement, or it's a hope that a quick round-table with the wealthy donors and backers can force a change back to a free market where our pensions can be deemed safe.

When it comes to the pensions and plans for the future, many of us are arm-chair investment experts, doling out supposedly top-level advice for managing our money. But in one fell swoop, the political situation has overturned the received wisdom, and now people just hope to return to something like March.

Hopefully, our horizons can be made a bit more ambitious and somewhat less dependent on the trials and tribulations of our pension pots. □

The most popular cartoon character you've never seen



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

The Czech Zdeněk Miler's creation Krtek (aka the Little Mole) became enormously popular around the world but, for some reason, not in the UK. First shown at the Venice Film Festival in 1957, Krtek cartoons ran till 2002 as children – and many adults – followed the adventures of Mole and his two pals Rabbit and Hedgehog. One of the best Krtek cartoons, and very pertinent today, is *The Mole in Town*

(Krtek ve městě, 1982). Mole and Hedgehog are relaxing in the forest when they hear unaccustomed noises. Rabbit runs past them, terrified, and they follow him. The three watch in horror and tears run down their faces as their forest is cut down and flattened by earth movers and chainsaws. Their beloved home has been utterly destroyed. They wander into the city, invited by the very people who have just made them homeless. However, they hate the city and find respite from the noise and smog on the roof of a skyscraper. Three passing swans pick them up and the last we see of the trio



they are being winged away to a new destination and, we hope, a better life. Was this the first green cartoon for children? (Thanks to Aniko

Imre). □

• Some Krtek cartoons are available on YouTube: bit.ly/k3695



Now for a real 4-day week



Tubeworker

Tube drivers in the RMT union have voted by a 91% majority to reject LUL's "four-day week" proposal. The union's e-referendum saw an 80% turnout, with 1,345 drivers voting to reject, with 126 voting to accept.

It's heartening to see so many drivers have seen through the company's offer, which requires us to sell hard-won terms and conditions in exchange for an extra day off. The referendum vote was the result of effective campaigning by RMT reps and activists in their depots.

Both RMT and the driver-only union Aslef should use the opportunity of a membership that has been energised by discussions about a four-day week to launch a proactive fight, as part of the 2025-6 pay round, to demand a four-day week on our terms – one that is based on a real reduction in the contractual week, not a compression of existing hours that sacrifices existing agreements. □

Join Workers' Liberty!

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

Nottingham HCAs strike for pay

By Robert Hudd

Hundreds of Nottingham health care workers strike on 10-11, 17, 22, and 28 April.

Nottingham University Hospitals Unison represents 890 health care assistants, mainly at the two big hospitals, and 94% voted to strike.

I started as a health care assistant (HCA) at the biggest (Queens Medical Centre) at the beginning of Covid in early 2020 and already many of the HCAs were already doing complicated work like electrocardiogram tests, putting in cannulas etc, which are Grade 3, when their contracts were mostly for "personal care" and some of the lowest pay in the 17,000 workforce. As the pressure grew during the pandemic and deaths went as high as 70 a week, the majority had to do the level 3 work while getting the level 2 pay.

After long negotiations the Trust finally admitted they had made an error. They talked about backdating to August 2021. Many HCAs had done the work since 2018 and been clapped by the whole country for their sacrifice (many staff fell ill, and some died).

Many HCAs had supported other disputes like nurses and junior doctors,



but lacked the confidence to do the same for ourselves. That has changed.

But most have never gone on strike before. We've seen picket lines where it's a token demonstration and little or no attempt is made to stop workers coming to work. Doctors know it can cost thousands of pounds to replace them on strike days with agency doctors whereas management think they can persuade other low paid workers to cover our work and that we are so poor we can't afford to lose even a few days' pay.

Unison will pay up to £50 strike pay so we may lose as little as £20 per shift. It is important not to tell management

in advance that we are not turning up (so they will be less able to defeat the strike) and to persuade workers not to cover and to join the picket line, not cross it.

There will be picket lines at the QMC main entrance and City Hospital gates 2 and 3 on Hucknall Road from 6.30am until 2.30pm. We want cars to honk and visitors to show their support but victory will rely on our solidarity and effectiveness not on just public goodwill.

The solidarity is not just for ourselves but for the patients, for whom we want this to be as short as possible. □

Act now on Network Rail pay

By a Network Rail worker

The start of April has seen the cost of living rise sharply for many. Council tax, water bills, gas bills and electricity bills have all been hiked upwards. Many workers at Network Rail, however, are still awaiting their pay increase due back in January.

In February, a paltry 2.6% base rate of pay increase was offered for all General Grades, Bands 5-8 (and equivalents) and Controllers at Network Rail. That represented a real terms pay cut. Now the offer has been raised to 3.6%.

Escalated

But we are now three months into the year, and RMT has still not really mobilised for a better pay offer. Without an effective industrial dispute soon, there is the very real danger that members will grow increasingly despondent and frustrated, and the carrot of accepting whatever back-pay has built up will become more attractive to an increasing number. The union should stop the delay and prepare for a ballot for



strikes, and begin preparations for an effective campaign of industrial action.

Public sector

Elsewhere in the public sector, NHS workers and teachers have all been offered 2.8%. School workers' union NEU is balloting its members in an indicative ballot on whether to strike over their proposed pay "increase".

Ultimately, the body calling the shots for Network Rail, the NHS, and schools is one and the same: the Labour government. RMT must unite our struggle with other public sector workers' unions, and fight the Labour government for a real terms pay increase. □

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Fight back against uni cuts

By Sam Myerson

I write these updates about cuts in higher education for *Solidarity* every week, and it is crushing. In the last two weeks there have been announcements about planned cuts at universities totalling over 1,000 jobs, hundreds of millions in funding, with courses and entire departments to close. All that is on top of the already committed thousands of job losses, courses closed, departments shut or shuttered.

In some places there is some fightback. Two notable student-backed campaigns are at Cardiff and Sheffield.

Cardiff Students Against the Cuts are [organising](#), and have a [petition](#) for the university to pause the planned cuts. They have organised demos on campus and rallies in support of the University and College Union (UCU) branch, which is taking industrial action.

They have also organised to bring solidarity to anti-cuts campaigning at the University of South Wales.

In Sheffield the anti-cuts coalition was successful in winning the Student Union referendums for no confidence in management and solidarity with striking staff. The Student Union is becoming an organising space for fighting back against the cuts, which also hit the union block grant.

On Tuesday 8 April students met to plan further. The UCU will announce strike dates. We hope for more than tokenistic action. For that, confidence will need to be raised, and students can play an important part in that.

At Queen Mary University London, whose UCU branch keeps a [tally](#) on the cuts, management have announced that they are planning to reduce the professional services budget by [25%](#), without any information as to who is affected. At Nottingham, 500 fixed term contracts are set to expire, alongside a hiring freeze and direct budget cuts.

There is still no movement from the Department for Education, which seems quite happy to sit back and watch while the sector is gutted. Once we had the Blairite drive for everyone to go to university. Now these hollow suits seem to be willing to watch the wrecking ball slam the system.

It is clear that the current funding model is broken. In its “good” years it opened the doors to reckless and incompetent management practices, exorbitant senior management and vice chancellor salaries, and vanity building projects.

Education can and should be funded properly, by taxing the rich and big business. It also requires a reckoning with the grifters and incompetents that line the corridors of power in the institutions. □

Lambeth Unison against zero-hours

By Katy Dollar

The London Borough of Lambeth, a Labour council, publicly argues against any businesses using exploitative zero-hour contracts. But it is continuing them in its own leisure centres.

Workers in Active Lambeth, the Council’s leisure department, were TUPE-d in from Greenwich Leisure Limited. GLL is a “social enterprise” which employs people on zero hours contracts and has staff in contracted-out local government services on lower conditions than in-house.

When the staff were TUPE-d into the council, the council union Unison called for it to harmonise all workers onto secure contracts on Green Book

terms and conditions.

Instead the council intends to keep the majority of leisure staff on zero-hour contracts, and permanent staff are offered worse terms than in other departments. Lambeth Unison will campaign against these proposals.

“Zero-hour contracts are bad for workers, and we will not have any Lambeth council worker refused national conditions. We will not stand for a two-tier workforce in Lambeth. It is a disgrace that the Council is proposing it.”

The Labour council’s decision to reverse a standing policy against zero-hour contracts is oddly timed given the Labour Government has announced it intends to give workers a right

to a contract that reflects the number of hours they regularly work, based on a 12-week reference period; and a right to reasonable notice of any change in shifts or working time, with compensation proportionate to the notice given for any cancelled shift.

That is a watering down of the Labour manifesto promise to ban zero-hour contracts, but Lambeth’s proposal would still fall foul of it.

Lambeth libraries staff are waiting for the union to give a timetable for a ballot on industrial action against library cuts (the council plans a huge £50 million total cuts this year). And Lambeth Unison is organising a borough anti-cuts conference on 12 April. □



Starvation and murder in Gaza

By Ira Berkovic

After reports emerged from Gaza of Israeli troops opening fire on ambulances (23 March) and killing 15 emergency service workers, the Israeli military initially claimed the vehicles had “advanced suspiciously” towards their position. The IDF’s account also claimed the vehicles’ emergency lights were not illuminated, and that they had been transporting Hamas and Islamic Jihad fighters.

Video footage from the phone of one of the murdered paramedics has contravened the IDF’s claims, which they have since been forced to drop. The IDF now says it will hold an investigation into the incident.

The incident is just one of dozens throughout the war that have involved targeting of ambulances, hospitals, and other healthcare infrastructure.

Because Hamas ran the semi-state that existed in Gaza prior to the war, Israel’s position is, in effect, to conflate anyone involved in the provision of public services with Hamas fighters, thereby rendering them legitimate targets. This is remarkably similar to those who defend the indiscriminate killings of 7 October by arguing that all Israelis are “occupiers”. The Israeli military and Hamas pursue a shared logic of dehumanisation.

Israel’s ongoing blockade is plunging Gaza further into famine conditions. Standing Together, the binational (Palestinian-Jewish) left-wing social movement based in Israel [wrote](#): “Nearly two million Gazans are facing crisis-level hunger, or

worse. Humanitarian food stocks have all but disappeared. The borders remain tightly shut [...] The number of people facing full famine could nearly triple in the coming weeks. In Rafah and the north, where the devastation is most severe, starvation is spreading fastest.

“Israel has restricted the entry of aid to Gaza for more than four weeks. Israel’s closure of all border crossings has blocked not only humanitarian aid, but every commercial truck, every shipment of grain, every chance at survival. The World Food Programme and its partners are being turned away, while an entire people is being starved, deliberately.”

In the West Bank, three Palestinians were injured by army fire on Sunday 6 April. The total killed in the West Bank since 7 October 2023 is now 944. Over 7,000 people have been injured, with 15,800 arrested.

On 5 April, two Labour MPs, Yuan Yang and Abtisam Mohamed, were denied entry into Israel. They were visiting Israel-Palestine on a trip organised by the Council for Arab-British Understanding and Medical Aid for Palestinians. Israeli officials and the Israeli Embassy in the UK cited their support for sanctions against far-right ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir as one of the reasons for the refusal of entry.

In the UK, UK Friends of Standing Together will host Standing Together leaders Amin Amara and Uri Weltmann for a speaking tour from 14-20 May. More: [ukfost.co.uk](#). □

• A week with Standing Together: page 13



Solidarity

For a workers' government

UNITE TO STOP BENEFIT CUTS

By Rhodri Evans

Part of Donald Trump's method is to try to keep us always off-balance by launching a new outrage before we've got plans straight to resist the last one.

Rachel Reeves could soon be dealing out a diluted version, as the Trump tariff shock hits. The labour movement must keep our eyes on the prize:

- Escalate action to stop the disabled benefit cuts. They could come up for a vote in Parliament in May or June

- Insist on taxing top wealth and expanding public investment in green conversion and NHS rebuilding

- Make the case for public ownership and democratic control of utilities and high finance.

Some protest plans, though welcome, are dissolving the benefit cuts issue into cuts-in-general. But these benefit cuts are vulnerable to defeat, by a pushback within Labour, in a way that other already-locked-in cuts aren't. Victory in the coming weeks against those benefit cuts can make the locked-in cuts more vulnerable, where general protest, designed mostly to advertise the organisers as "the resistance", won't.



Pic: Ben D. Wilson

Stop the Benefit Cuts, Tax the Rich (used by Crips against Cuts) is a better slogan than Welfare not Warfare.

Welfare not Warfare is often code for: abandon Ukraine. We oppose increased military spending. But UK military aid to Ukraine is minuscule as a part of public spending and small as part of military spending. Taxing top wealth will yield the bigger amounts which are needed.

To suggest that the problem is not the rich grabbing wealth, but Ukraine's calls for help against Russian imperialism, is to evade the truth.

The disabled benefit cuts will hit the worst-off hard, yet "save" little: the OBR calculates £3.4 billion in 2030, 0.3% of pub-

lic spending, a figure much smaller than inevitable error in predicting the economics of 2030.

Ultra-Blairite Meg Hillier, chair of the Commons Treasury Select Committee, is now asking Reeves to change the "fiscal rules". The rules are bullshit. But there is no easy way there, either, to mend poverty and inequality without hitting the rich.

Treasury Secretary Darren Jones says he will consider raising taxes. That's the semi-demi-open door against which to push. But to push in order to get on the path to radical and pro-working-class policies. □

- Beating benefit cuts: see page 5