

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

In Haifa, Israel, police arrested 12 during a solidarity protest with press workers in Gaza, on 14 August. Pic: [@oren_ziv](#)



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Back anti-war revolt inside Israel!



Sunday 17 August saw the most significant protests in Israel against the war since it began. An estimated 2.5 million people, around 25% of the entire population of the country, took part in demonstrations, strikes, and other forms of direct action. Protesters blocked highways and shut down major city centres. Some groups of workers walked out or took the day off work. A call for a general strike had been endorsed by some employers in the tech sector, and the professional association representing lawyers, but not by Histadrut, the country's major union federation.

The left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement Standing Together said: "We cannot continue our daily lives while Gaza is being annihilated and the hostages are abandoned!"

"That's why we're striking and disturbing routine today across the country. We're blocking roads and highways and businesses have shut down. This government does not have our interests in mind. While the majority of the public wants an end to this madness, our politicians are pushing their horrific messianic fantasies – ethnic cleansing, more and more settler terror, and occupation of Gaza – at our expense. We refuse to be silent and give this government a free pass to drag us to the abyss. We need a deal now!"

After the day of action, the movement wrote: "On Sunday our society came out in masses for a day of striking and major disruptions across the country. Standing Together activists took to the streets, spearheading the blocking of highways and intersections and protesting with hundreds of thousands of people throughout the day, leading the call for a ceasefire deal to stop the horrors in Gaza and bring the hostages home. Right now our government is storming ahead with their plan to occupy Gaza, and the public is coming out to say NO to this catastrophe."

"We came out, students, elderly people, parents, children – from Jerusalem to Haifa, Be'er Sheva to Tel Aviv – to raise a voice for Palestinians in Gaza and for the Israeli hostages. It was truly a historic day and it left no question as to where the public stands. We demand an end to the horror, the starvation, and the destruction and death. The message to our government couldn't be clearer."

Standing Together built up to the 17 August protest with a series of disruptive direct actions. On 10 August, Standing Together activists disrupted the live filming of an episode of the

Israeli version of Big Brother. On 13 August, activists glued themselves to the floor in Ben Gurion Airport. Standing Together also organised "Flour Marches", both in Tel Aviv and at the Gaza border, to highlight the government's policy of forced starvation.

Many on the international left and within the Palestine solidarity movement dismiss the potential of social struggle within Israel itself, calling for total boycotts of all things Israeli, even Israeli peace activists. Interviewed on Channel 4 News on 17 August, a UK-based representative of a Palestinian think-tank insisted the protests were only about "how Netanyahu is conducting the war, not if the war should be happening in the first place." But even a cursory glance at placards and banners carried by protesters shows this is not true. The message and tone of anti-government protests in Israel has shifted dramatically, and explicit calls to end the war are now widespread.

It is true that calls to end the war still mostly foreground the issue of the hostages, rather than solidarity with Palestinians. But this is hardly unique. Domestic opposition to war is often posed in nationalist terms. Much opposition to the USA's war in Vietnam was of a "bring our boys home" type, rather than emphasising anti-imperialist solidarity with the Vietnamese people. Socialists work within such movements to argue for internationalist politics, but to dismiss the strategic significance of mass domestic opposition to war because its perspectives are imperfect is wrong.

Shift

Here, too, there has been a shift. Thousands attend explicitly anti-war, anti-occupation rallies called by Standing Together, with bilingual (Hebrew-Arabic) materials, Palestinian speakers, and placards showing images of murdered Palestinian children. These placards and materials are also carried on the wider anti-government demonstrations. They are not yet mainstream or the majority, but are less marginal than previously.

With the IDF planning to call up tens of thousands of reservists to bolster new operations, a renewed wave of refusal to serve could undermine Netanyahu's plans. A previous wave of refusal saw around 100,000 reservists across all branches of the military sign letters stating that they would refuse to report for duty. Some reports suggested there was a drop-off of up to 50% in the rates of reservists returning to their units.

17 August offers a glimpse of how Israel's genocidal war could be halted. Sustained strikes in industries central to the functioning of the Israeli economy, such as transport, education, health-care, and tech, would make it extremely difficult for the war machine to grind



Dozens of Standing Together activists glued themselves to the floor of Israel's biggest airport on 13 August to protest their government's war of annihilation. The flour symbolises the deliberate starvation of Gaza.

on. An international left which refuses to recognise class differentiation within Israel, and writes off any possibility that Israeli workers might be won to internationalist politics, will play no useful role in helping to bring this about. Conversely, socialists who acknowledge that Israeli workers' consciousness, like the consciousness of all workers, is mutable, can help our Palestinian and Jewish comrades within Israel to catalyse and accelerate struggles within their own society.

The 17 August protests follow a period of increasing political self-assertion by Palestinian citizens of Israel. In Sakhnin, a demonstration on 25 July saw up to 10,000 people take to the streets. Despite attempted police repression, protests also took place in Jaffa, Tayibe, and elsewhere. On 4 August in Jaffa, around 20 businesses shut for two hours, supported by activists from Standing Together.

The 2.1 million Palestinian citizens of Israel make up around 20% of the country's population. They face racism and discrimination, and since 7 October have been subject to a clampdown on their freedom of expression which has had a chilling effect on political self-assertion within Palestinian communities. Recent events suggest this is now thawing.

Despite the oppression they face, they have a relatively greater degree of freedom to self-assert than the Palestinians of Gaza, living under bombardment and blockade, or the West Bank, living under military occupation. Concerted action, including strikes, by the Palestinian population of Israel against war and occupation could have a significant impact.

Recent weeks have also seen negotiations between the Palestinian parties in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), with a view to reuniting in a single electoral list for next year's general elections. The four parties involved are the secular-nationalist parties Balad and Ta'al, the United Arab List, an Islamist party which is the political wing of the Islamic Movement, and Hadash, the electoral front of the Israeli Communist Party, which is majority-Arab. A Joint List of

majority-Arab parties last stood in the 2015 Knesset elections, winning 10.6% of the total vote and 13 seats. There are currently nine Palestinian MKs.

Famine

On 22 August, a report published by the UN body responsible for assessing food security concluded famine is underway in Gaza City, with other areas of Gaza at risk of imminent famine. Israel's blockade, which has severely restricted the amount of aid able to enter Gaza, has placed 1.5 million people, over half of Gaza's population, at risk of malnutrition and starvation.

Military bombardments have also continued. A leaked report by Israeli military intelligence estimated that over 80% of those killed in Gaza so far have been civilians.

On 18 August, Hamas accepted a ceasefire proposal advanced by Egyptian and Qatari mediators, based on an earlier proposal announced by US envoy Steve Witkoff. The proposal is for a 60-day ceasefire, and the release of ten of the living Israeli hostages held by Hamas. Although Israel has not formally rejected the proposal, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has stated Israeli negotiators will only discuss deals that release all the hostages at once, rather than in waves. Netanyahu maintains that the current bombardment of Gaza City is a prelude to an intensification of Israeli incursions, which will lead to the military occupation of the entirety of Gaza.

Continued international protest and demands for arms embargoes, targeted sanctions, and recognition of the state of Palestine, must combine with renewed efforts of solidarity with the internal opposition within Israel, especially that of Palestinian citizens and binational movements such as Standing Together. □

Solidarity 751

We are on our summer schedule: 751 will be 10 Sep, 725, 24 Sep. □

How war became Israel's new normal, and how to change that

By Asaf Yakir

It is a mistake to think that Benjamin Netanyahu is solely responsible for Israel's genocide or that removing him would bring it to an end. To win support for war, he has mobilised large swathes of Israeli society, from liberals to the far right.

How has Israel been able to conduct a campaign of genocide in Gaza that has lasted almost two years? In Israel, two distinct but complementary narratives offer answers to this question. One denies the genocide altogether, urging the world to ignore Israel's criminal conduct in Gaza. The "war" is one of "self-defence" against "terrorists." The other concedes that crimes against humanity are being committed, or that the war "has gone too far," but places the blame squarely on Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist right-wing coalition partners.

It is almost banal to state that both narratives are false; Israel is committing war crimes that meet the definition of genocide, and its military campaign is supported by a coalition much broader than Netanyahu's relatively narrow parliamentary majority. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) continues to rely heavily on reservists from across the political spectrum to carry out its onslaught. And while polls consistently show that most Israelis support ending the war in exchange for the release of hostages, they also con-



Pic: Yair Palti/@AllHostages

Around 500,000 protested in Tel Aviv, Israel, on 17 August, to demand an end to the war: about 5% of Israel's population, equivalent to 3.5 million protesting in London.

sistently reveal a society gripped by genocidal mania – willingly ignoring Palestinian death and sufferings and openly endorsing, at the very least, ethnic cleansing.

This profound detachment from reality within Israel has fostered – though not caused – the emergence of an alternative explanation: "This is simply what Israel is." Accepting this premise implies that Israel's exclusionary politics, its existence as an apartheid ethno-state, led inevitably to genocide. According to this view, Israelis support the genocide because they are racist and because doing so advances the interests of nationalists whose sole aim is eradicating Palestinians, making the genocide the true aim of the war. The October 7 Hamas attack, according to this perspective, merely exposed Israel's "true face," shaped by its unchangeable colonial origins. Here, I believe, Israel's critics conflate condemnation – or even an accurate description – of the outcomes of a political process with an actual explanation of its causes.

First, it does not explain what changed after October 7 – why was there no political majority for such a campaign in Gaza beforehand? Second, it assumes that the genocide aligns with the interests of the majority in Israeli society. This assumption is both empirically and morally flawed: there is no evidence that the genocide will make Israelis safer or more prosperous.

But most importantly, such argu-

ments are essentialist and apolitical. They leave little room for political agency and pay little attention to the material interest of actors within Israel. This leaves these explanations incapable of grappling with the political actions sustaining the genocide – but also with those that could end it.

Any alternative interpretation must address the deterministic view that Israel's reaction to the October 7 attack was path-dependent thanks to its colonial and racist nature. Hamas's invasion of Israel not only claimed the lives of hundreds of civilians but also threatened the legitimacy of some of the most powerful political actors and institutions in the Israeli state. Netanyahu's long reign rested heavily on his ability to convince the Israeli public that the occupation was not an urgent issue. Under his "conflict management" doctrine, he assured both supporters and critics that security could be maintained in a state of permanent indecision, with ongoing Palestinian repression.

Framework

The IDF, too, has adapted itself to this framework, concentrating its forces on supporting settlers in their slow-motion ethnic cleansing of the West Bank and occasionally murdering Palestinians in Gaza, primarily through air strikes. What it had ceased doing altogether was fulfilling its perceived original mission – defending Israelis – leaving the border dangerously exposed to what

proved to be a very real threat from Gaza.

For both the Israeli military and intelligence apparatus and the political establishment, October 7 could have been a catastrophe. Netanyahu, the self-proclaimed "protector of Israel," had failed spectacularly; his promise that Israelis could enjoy safety and prosperity alongside a permanently besieged, militarily-assaulted, and politically repressed Palestinian territory had collapsed. IDF generals were proven unprepared for their most basic responsibilities. Moreover, the institution itself had failed and could have faced major reforms. October 7 could have triggered a collapse in legitimacy and the removal of both Netanyahu and IDF leadership. It did not. Instead, it solidified their positions in the new configuration of the Israeli regime that has since emerged.

I propose that this political and institutional preservation was – and remains – the primary goal of

the Israeli state and political system in its war on Gaza. The fact that pursuing genocide was even a viable political option, let alone the path ultimately chosen, is undoubtedly rooted in Israel's colonial legacies. Still, the decision itself was made by political actors who believed – often for contradictory reasons – that continuing the war and the destruction of Gaza could preserve their political power.

They did so by sustaining and consolidating a governing coalition, elevating the IDF to the centre of political decision-making and resource distribution, and building an early-stage consensus in support of the war, thereby making it far harder for opposition forces to mount resistance to a genocide that they had themselves aided and abetted in bringing about.

While fighting was still underway in southern Israel following Hamas's attack – with most of Israeli society in shock or in various states of genuine self-defence – Netanyahu and the IDF had not only found time to name the war ("Operation Iron Swords") but also to define its official goals. The first was "the elimination of Hamas and its military capabilities"; and the second, "the return of all hostages taken during the attack." These goals were inherently contradictory. Hamas would not release the hostages without an acknowledgment of Israeli defeat or, at a minimum, assurances of its own survival.

continued on page 4 →

UK Friends of Standing Together

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

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

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

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This contradiction is only problematic if we take Netanyahu and his generals at their word that they genuinely sought either to eliminate Hamas or to free the hostages. Their real objective, at that point, was to transform what could have been an internal legitimacy and power crisis into an external one. The war goals were aimed only at building public consent for the war itself.

The “elimination of Hamas” played to the existential fear most Israelis felt in the immediate aftermath of the attack, which the Right correctly understood as providing license for the campaign of annihilation against Gaza – a reading confirmed by a series of explicitly genocidal statements made by Netanyahu and his allies in the war’s opening weeks. “Release of the hostages,” however, was aimed at centre-left elements of Israeli politics, to whom Netanyahu promised that the war’s goal was to bring back the hostages. Crucially, this political camp – which had led mass protests against the prime minister’s populist judicial reform – has historically aligned itself with the IDF, which it sees as an apolitical, liberal embodiment of Zionism – a counterweight to Netanyahu’s right-wing nationalism.

In this worldview, retrieving civilian hostages was understood much like the Israeli commitment to return captive soldiers – as a pre-political, immutable truth about the imagined liberal Israel. This belief was always misguided, but it now made them far more susceptible to the illusion that the army could serve as a mitigating factor within Netanyahu’s war effort. The rhetorical and political formula that tied the two goals together was that somehow “military pressure” would lead Hamas to release the hostages.

This formula successfully united a deeply divided Israeli society into a

broad coalition supporting the war. The clearest example was the inclusion of Netanyahu’s rival, Benny Gantz, and his National Unity party (HaMahane HaMamlakhti) in a unity government to carry out the Gaza campaign. Gantz’s inclusion, as a former head of the IDF, cemented new stabilizing alliances between rival factions of the Israeli elite – alliances that gained the imprimatur of virtually all Zionist forces in Israeli society and the Knesset.

This success rested on two key elements: first, the swift and decisive decisions by Netanyahu and the IDF, and their ability not only to rally the public around the flag but also to leave the meaning of that flag vague or contradictory enough for each group to project its own vision onto it; and second, the relative weakness of the Israeli opposition, which either bought into government and IDF propaganda, clung to liberal delusions, or was too disorganised to mount an effective antiwar campaign in the war’s early stages. However, this inability can be attributed, at least in part, to the government’s brutal political repression, particularly targeting the Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Repression

Once the war was underway, it became even easier to justify such repression of political dissent. Yet in truth, there was not much dissent to suppress in the first place. The military campaign in Gaza allowed Netanyahu to gradually recover his political standing. It also drew his coalition partners – the settler leadership and the ultra-Orthodox – into deeper alliance with his Likud party. For the settlers, the war delivered the genocidal policies they had demanded, along with the opportunity to rebuild settlements in Gaza atop the ruins of Palestinian cities.

The war also heightened pressure on the IDF personnel, sparking renewed calls to draft ultra-Orthodox youth into military service. Ultra-Orthodox elites, whose influence depends in part on preserving their community’s exemption from service, were categorically opposed to such measures. Somewhat ironically, the IDF’s push for conscription was backed by liberal parties, historically critical of ultra-Orthodox “draft dodging,” and unwilling to leverage this internal right-wing tension. Netanyahu, however, proved himself a staunch ally of ultra-Orthodox leaders by refusing to advance harsher draft policies – deepening their reliance on him and, in turn, their support for the war.

The war has also destabilised much of the Israeli workforce, making workers – especially reservists – more dependent on state resources and war-time stipends. Many of these reservists, particularly in field units, come from the lower middle class, a core Netanyahu constituency. For some, the war has provided greater income and financial security as semiprofessional soldiers than in their previous, often precarious,

civilian jobs. This economic dependence has further stabilised Netanyahu’s coalition, allowing him to navigate relations with other right-wing elites from a comfortable position while extending material benefits to workers participating in the war effort, even amid the broader economic downturn the war has caused.

A similar dynamic has unfolded within the IDF leadership. No senior officers were dismissed (though some resigned later), and the IDF as an institution has become central to nearly every aspect of the Israeli governance. It now manages the distribution of war-related benefits, commands an expanding budget while other public services face cuts, and holds unprecedented political clout. The military also played a pivotal role in drawing liberal elites into the genocidal coalition. Branches such as the Air Force and intelligence services retained credibility through successes against the “Axis of Resistance” in confrontations with Lebanon and Iran – victories that, in turn, boosted demand for Israeli’s defense industries, now poised to expand both their share of the global arms trade and their role in the national economy.

As with the contradiction in the war’s stated goals, the press has often portrayed the IDF and the right-wing government as rival power centres. There is some truth to this – they do diverge on certain strategic issues – but the tension between these two poles has produced a stabilizing force. It allows different factions within Israel’s political system to argue over war goals and tactics while maintaining broad support for the campaign, since “their side” appears to have a seat at the table.

This is a fantasy. In reality, there is no “war” in the conventional sense – only a campaign of annihilation that has already inflicted more damage on Gaza and on Israeli society than can be repaired in our lifetime. The genocide may not have been the war’s initial driving force, but it has always been its logical end point.

Against this backdrop, a relatively small but steadily growing antiwar movement operates in Israel. It is anchored by Palestinian political parties, the “Standing Together” movement, and smaller but persistent civil society and leftist organizations – such as those organizing protests displaying the names and faces of murdered Palestinian children. A notable addition from the political mainstream is “Soldiers for the Hostages,” a group of just under four hundred IDF reservists who have refused to continue serving in the war. These forces, myself included, are calling for a complete cessation of war.

We also believe it is the only path to securing a hostage deal. This entails urging reservists to refuse service, mobilizing unions and associations to strike, and undertaking actions aimed at disrupting the machinery of genocide – whether by breaking its daily routine or intervening against specific acts of settler or IDF vandalism and vi-

olence. The demand to end the war in exchange for hostage release extends far beyond these groups. It includes the families of hostages, most of the parliamentary opposition, trade unions, and large parts of Israeli civil society.

Yet neither the government nor the military has ever intended to reach such a deal. Hence, their opposition remains confined within the narrow boundaries of political debate set by Netanyahu himself on October 8, 2023. Many of these actors endorsed the genocide in its early stages, during which the IDF killed more than 20,000 Palestinian children. Opposing the war outright – not merely taking a position within the limited field of debate permitted by the political and military establishment – requires reckoning with that reality.

Reckoning

For now, such a reckoning appears beyond their reach. Without a coherent reassessment of their past complicity or a new strategy, this coalition has grown weaker, as seen in its leaders’ refusal to call on reservists to refuse to serve in Gaza. Another telling example is the Israeli labour federation, the Histadrut, which briefly led a strike against Netanyahu’s government, has refused to heed the hostage families’ call for another strike. Still, it is worth noting that some of these liberal groups joined the “Standing Together”-led August protest against the starvation of Gaza, suggesting that elements within the camp are shifting toward a more principled and effective opposition.

This analysis suggests that the stability of the pro-war coalition rests less on Israel’s overtly ethno-nationalist currents than on its pseudo-democratic ones. Legitimacy and public support for the war – and, subsequently, for the genocide – were generated through relatively free public debate and limited pluralism within state institutions, especially between the government and the IDF. This allowed controlled dissent to function as a mechanism of legitimization. Once initial support for the war was secured, the internal dynamics of the campaign made it increasingly difficult for groups – now implicated in crimes and in some cases financially dependent – to withdraw.

From this perspective, it is more useful – especially for both Israelis and Palestinians, but also for the broader international left – to assume that political processes and coalitions can be influenced, rather than treating them as predetermined products of colonial history. This means recognising that the present reality in Israel-Palestine is our responsibility and within our capacity to change. □

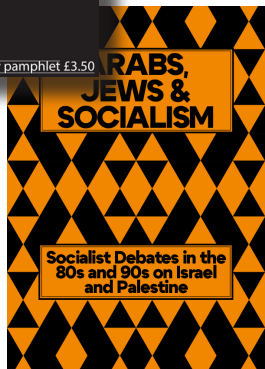
• Asaf Yakir is a researcher, a member of the “Standing Together” movement, and the host of the (Hebrew-Arabic) Wake Up Call podcast on Israeli politics at Rosa Media. Reprinted with thanks from [Jacobin](#).



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An idea, a promise... a cult?



Women's Fightback

By Jill Mountford

Emily Callaci's book, *Wages For Housework, the story of a movement, an idea, a promise*, was published in February this year. It is an enthusiastic history of a small, doggedly single-minded, campaign, based mainly in Italy, the US and the UK, that started in the early 1970s and went through to the 1980s. Overall, it is a celebration of the Wages For Housework (WFH) groups and the charismatic, even cultish, women who led them in those countries.

The book mainly consists of five profiles, five impressive activist biographies, set against many of the big radical movements of those decades. Callaci pieces together the history by wading through much archive material, and conducting in-depth interviews with four of the five leading women of this international campaign.

It's not a history with any serious critical analysis of WFH. However, Callaci has seized a probably never-again opportunity to carry out interviews with Selma James, who turned 95 years old this month, and Silvia Federici, Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Margaret Prescod,

all in their late 70s and early 80s. Despite Wilmette Brown evading interview, having moved on to become a practising Hindu and Yogi, Callaci does justice to her political energy.

Seemingly forever active in the broad labour movement, liberation struggles and campaigns, these women's political activity is rich and spans decades, and for that, respect is due. Callaci makes no secret of her admiration for these women and the inspiration she gets from the WFH campaign.

"WFH" groups took WFH as their single demand, their "answer" for the whole world. For some it was a literal, immediate demand, and for others, a semi-metaphorical rallying-cry to rid humanity of capitalism with all its injustices and inequalities. And the demand came to stretch the definition of housework from washing and cooking, to having sex, loving, feeding and nurturing babies and young children, to voluntary work in the community and taking part in political meetings!

From the get-go Callaci asks some big questions about the nuclear family, production and consumption, and what women of the world might do if they had more free time.

It's a pity Callaci does not take a more critical approach to the demand or take the time to examine what others in the second-wave women's movement and in the revolutionary left were arguing in

opposition to WFH. That said, Callaci does not shy away from highlighting the disputes and splits.

Early on she shares with us the attitude of the second wave women's liberation movement to WFH, noting the "collective groan" when a WFH speaker intervened into a big public meeting. She references a 1975 *Guardian* article that compared WFH to Jehovah's Witnesses, and yet in the very next sentence concludes "people didn't know what to make of them". Well, clearly many did! They thought them cultish, mechanical, quasi-religious proponents of an ill-thought-out demand and ideas, loud but on the fringes of the movement.

When it comes to the chapters that cover WFH in the UK, names crop up of women some of us have worked with from time to time over the years. By the 1990s WFH in the UK was even smaller, a troupe of saucepan-banging activists with their single demand turning up to anti-cuts and feminist actions, swooningly following their leader, Selma James.

Wilmette Brown was active in the US, a Black Panther, before going off to do political work in Africa. On returning to work in the US and Europe as "Black Women for WFH", Brown eventually settled in the UK. Brown's anti-racist work intersects and is central to her WFH work. Callaci writes of Brown's cri-

tique of a classically limp campaign to tackle racism launched by Ken Livingstone, the then leader of GLC (Greater London Council). He had a clunky, politically-wrong slogan that blames and alienates white people rather than gets to the core of what propagates racism and how to challenge it: "One million Londoners are getting a raw deal because the other six million Londoners are letting it happen." Callaci then informs us, without a hint of questioning or that she might be holding back an enormous belly laugh, WFH's alternative anti-fascist slogan: "Share the Housework, Sweep Out the Nazis."

I could go on, but the rancid smell from the rubbish and dirty dishes piling up in my kitchen due to me being on strike for a wage for housework is starting to get to me. □



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

"Hotel" panic: solidarity with refugees!

By Dan Katz

On Tuesday 19 August the High Court granted an injunction to Conservative-run Epping Forest District council to prevent refugees from being housed in the Bell Hotel, Epping.

Currently the 80-room hotel is home to 140 men applying for asylum. These men live in cramped conditions, have little money, are banned from working, and have nothing to do. Many are scared about being returned to countries where they have been persecuted and are living in fear of the future.

The wretched Tory opportunist Robert Jenrick turned up at the Bell Hotel complaining about "illegal immigrants". However, in 2022, as a Tory minister, he expanded the use of hotels for migrants saying, "I would never demonise people coming to this country pursuing a better life. I understand

and appreciate our obligation to refugees."

It is a scandal that refugees are not treated with dignity and respect, but instead are targeted and scapegoated by right-wing politicians.

Councils

The court ruling mandates that these asylum seekers are moved to alternative accommodation by 12 September. The hotel's management and the Labour government both intend to appeal against the ruling which was granted on a technicality of planning law.

Ten Reform-led metropolitan borough councils and a Tory district council state that they intend to take similar legal action. Other councils are expected to follow.

According to the BBC 131 local authorities in the UK currently house asylum seekers. The majority are Labour-led.

These hotels are now big, easy targets for an increasingly

confident far-right. The court's ruling has inevitably given new impetus to anti-immigrant protests, and many took place across the UK over the weekend of 23-24 August fuelled by racist agitation by Nigel Farage who declared Reform would organise mass deportation of refugees.

In the background are fascist groups such as Homeland, who feed off more mainstream Tory-Reform bigotry.

Protests

The weekend protests clearly revealed themselves as racist although some were dressed up as concerns about child safeguarding. Racists paraded with union flags and "Send them back" placards.

Clearly some of the agitation against immigrants would be undercut if we had a government which was helping workers and the poor to live better lives. Part of the answer to the right's mobilisations is for the

Stamer government to rebuild public services, the NHS, and council housing. Instead the government has attacked benefit claimants and does little to help people living in poverty.

Figures

The latest figures (from March) suggest that about 200 hotels are currently housing around 30,000 asylum seekers. 30,000 refugees is a small number, representing around 0.05% of the UK's population.

And why shouldn't refugees seek sanctuary in the UK? The majority of asylum seekers are from Afghanistan, Sudan, Syria, Eritrea and Iran. Afghanistan, Eritrea and Iran are run by tyrannical dictatorships; Syria has been locked in civil war since 2011 and although the homicidal Assad regime has recently been overthrown, the new Islamist regime targets national minorities; Sudan is in the grip of a terrible internal war. And why do people cross

"illegally" in "small boats"? Because legal routes have been closed off.

And why do people not stay in France? Because many migrants' second language is English and so the UK is a rational choice. Many Afghans, for example, will have relatives in big English cities.

Faced with an insurgent, anti-immigrant street movement, and right-wing Labour government which stupidly believes that its displays of patriotism will undercut the right rather than boost it, the unions need to step in and put their members on the streets. We can no longer leave anti-racist activity to the Socialist Worker front Stand Up To Racism (SUTR).

SUTR is utterly outpaced by the right-wing demonstrations.

The unions must take a stand for refugee rights! □

Putin, Trump, and World War 2 nostalgia



By Jim Denham

Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which the *Morning Star* repeatedly denied would happen, that paper has carried dozens of articles blaming Nato and the "West" (not Putin), arguing against sending arms to Ukraine so it can defend itself, and (when the mask slips) using evasive but unmistakable language to advocate a victory for Russia.

The paper now openly supports Trump's moves to sideline Ukraine in bilateral talks with Putin, based upon Trump's suggestion of a "land swap" – i.e. that Ukraine must cede territory to Russia, rewarding Russian imperialism for its invasion. Its editorial of 12 August 2025 denounced European calls for "peace terms that amount to a Russian defeat, when there is no plausible route to that militarily", adding sagely: "In an era of competing great powers, this is a recipe for world war: realism and compromise are necessary." Not that Russia is being asked for "realism and compromise", of course.

Bizarrely, for a paper that is controlled

by the Communist Party of Britain and therefore, in theory, supports Lenin's position on the right of nations (under capitalism and imperialism) to self-determination, the editorial argues that "self-determination and national sovereignty are illusory in the context of imperialism": however, this only seems to apply to Ukraine, and not (for instance) the Palestinians and their struggle for independence.

Swivel

Two days later, when Trump momentarily seemed to swivel, verbally, towards a slightly more sympathetic stance towards Ukraine, the MS's editorial (18 August) warned that the "very good start" (when Trump rolled out the red carpet for Putin in Anchorage, and Putin conceded nothing) was threatened by "powerful forces in the West that would oppose any settlement." These sinister forces are not named, but we are warned that "counterforces are gathering around Volodymyr Zelensky. The next week is therefore fraught with danger."

If anyone was now in any doubt that the MS supports a Putin-Trump carve up of Ukraine, the editorial of 19 August should have put those doubts to rest.

Headed "Trump understands Putin's

position better than European leaders", the piece begins by noting (with obvious approval) that "It is clear that... Putin is not minded to surrender in negotiations anything that has been won on the battlefield... that includes almost all the territory, originally Russian, that the post-revolutionary regimes of Lenin and Stalin gifted the Soviet Socialist Ukraine, as well as Crimea, which was similarly gifted (over some local opposition) by the USSR in the 1950s."

Some revealing use of language there: on no other national question would any self-respecting socialist describe a great power as "gifting" its territory to a smaller state. Lenin did not "gift" territory to Ukraine. He advocated and recognised its right to self-determination.

Murray

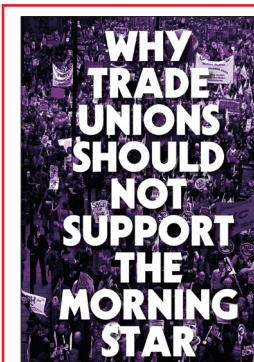
The editorial's author (rumoured to be Andrew Murray) praises Trump for "his recognition of this unassailable fact."

But the real thinking behind the editorial (and much of the MS's stance towards the Ukraine war since the start) is nostalgia for the USSR and its role in World War Two. Ukraine's temporary incursion into the Russia's Kursk region is compared (ridiculously) with the events of 5-15 July 1943 on the southern flank of the Kursk Bulge, with Putin's invaders

playing the role of the Russian "Red" Army and the Ukrainians the role of the SS Panzer Corps. According to the editorial, this battle remains "of enormous political and cultural significance to Russians who have maintained a clear view of contemporary Ukraine's reincarnated fascist militias long after the Western media found it convenient to forget."

So the mask has slipped once again: the *Morning Star* backs Putin and Trump, two leaders who can fairly be described as "fascist-connected", and chooses to compare Ukraine, under a (right-wing) bourgeois democratic government and a Jewish president, to the Nazis.

Whenever the *Morning Star*'s people come to trade unions asking for money, they should be reminded of this shameful slander. □



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Welcome to Europe: the far right in UK



Eric Lee

For many years, people in the UK could comfortably boast that unlike continental European countries, we didn't have Nazis. We had a far Right, of course, but even that struggled to win seats in Parliament. The Nazi grouplets that existed here were just that – tiny, isolated bands of losers who had absolutely zero influence on the country.

Unlike France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands and Austria, we didn't have overtly racist, sometimes even Nazi, parties that managed to win significant numbers of seats in national parliaments. In some cases, those extreme right parties joined ruling coalitions with other right-wing parties.

All of that has now changed. Protests taking place at hotels across Britain where asylum seekers have been given temporary housing show that we are now well and truly part

of Europe. The Europe of Le Pen, Meloni and the AfD. All of those parties are linked historically to the mass fascist and Nazi parties that once dominated European politics. And in Britain today, we have several parties aspiring to the same roles.

The largest of our far right grouplets is "Patriotic Alternative" and a recent splinter known as the "Homeland party" has recently been in the news. Its small band of activists, together with the much larger Reform UK, has played a prominent role in organising racist protests outside of the hotels.

Scurrying

Those protests that are now leading to the Labour government and Labour-dominated councils scurrying to find "solutions" to the problem of temporary housing for migrants.

One of those Homeland activists is Tom King, a leader of "Nuneaton Says No" and a member of the Homeland

party. And King recently went on holiday during which he posted photographs of himself having a great time. King is seen standing on a mountain top and behind him is a stunning view of snow-capped peaks.

Those peaks are the Bavarian Alps. And King is proudly standing in a place called the Kehlsteinhaus (Eagle's Nest) part of the complex built by the Nazi party as a mountain retreat for its leader, Adolf Hitler. In the nearby town of Berchtesgaden, locals have been complaining about increasing numbers of neo-Nazis showing up to pay tribute to the former Führer. This is where Tom King spent a recent holiday. After a recent *Guardian* report, King removed the photos from his Facebook page.

We have learned – or should have learned by now – not to label our opponents as "Nazis" when we simply disagree with them

But when they *actually are Nazis*, as at least some of the leading figures on Britain's

growing far right clearly are, there are a few things we need to do.

First of all, we must deny platforms to the Nazis – confront them in the streets when they demonstrate and make it increasingly difficult for them to get their toxic message out.

Compromise

Second, we must not compromise on our values – when they say "migrants out" we cannot reply with weasel words. We must be steadfast and firm in our commitment to being a country that welcomes migrants and rejects all forms of racism and xenophobia. Labour – in particular some of its local councils – is making an enormous mistake by acknowledging that there are genuine reasons why people might want to demonstrate outside hotels that are temporarily hosting migrants.

And finally, all the parties which are not Nazi – and this includes the Tories – must be forced to commit, as their sister parties in some European

countries have done – to not forming coalitions with these parties. Not in Parliament and not in local government either. We need something like France's "Republican Front" to ensure that the Homeland party, Patriotic Alternative and their ilk are kept far away from political power. To borrow one more phrase from the French, Britain needs a cordon sanitaire to keep the Nazis at bay.

Britain may have voted to leave Europe – and the far right played a key role in that – but as the rise of a native Nazi movement is showing, we remain very much part of the European political scene. Like our neighbours on the continent, we are prisoners of a shared history. And like them, we must find ways to ensure that small, isolated bands of Nazis do not grow into large political movements before it is too late to stop them. □

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

Trade unions discuss challenge from EHRC

By Simon Nelson

At the TUC Congress in Brighton on 7 September, a fringe meeting supported by the TUC Trade Union Alliance for Trans and Non-Binary Rights and Brighton Trans Pride will discuss how the trade union movement, grass roots organisations and allies can work together to secure rights for trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people, and how to challenge the increasingly hostile narratives, particularly by the emboldened far right.

It will have its work cut out. On 7 August, *The Times* trailed that the forthcoming guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) will ban trans women (and trans men) from single-sex spaces. Unfortunately, *The Times* has a good track record of accurate information regarding the EHRC and trans rights. And despite a denial letter from the EHRC Chief Executive, that the final EHRC Code of Practice will just reinforce the flawed guidance seems likely.

This letter also addresses concerns that the EHRC was unable to consider

the over 50,000 responses to a consultation that was initially open for only two weeks, but was extended under pressure to six weeks.

"Far from dragging our feet as alleged in your editorial piece on Wednesday, we are doing that at pace... Our use of supervised AI technology alongside expert legal analysis is a responsible and widely-used approach that ensures we can give proper consideration to all responses whilst delivering the guidance that public bodies urgently need".

The government looks likely to use a "statutory instrument" procedure to create legislation that makes the Code of Practice statutory, with little debate or opportunity for challenge.

Transactual's report [Trans Segregation in Practice](#) details some of the results of the current "vigilante" interpretation of the EHRC "interim update" and the Supreme Court decision by the general public, businesses and employers. They indicate an increased suspicion of trans and gender non-conforming cis people in public settings, particularly as regards access to toilets.

Others report workplace environ-

ments where they have, in effect, had to come out, or been dealt with in such a way as to force them to come out as trans. For some workers, this is after many years in a workplace.

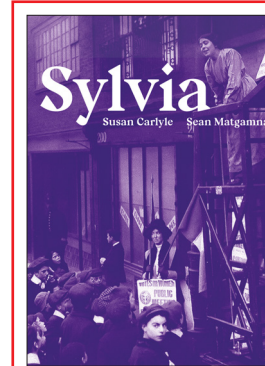
Large organisations like Virgin Gyms have confirmed that their changing rooms are now based on "biological sex". The result of this will likely be less that trans women and trans men are forced to use changing rooms they don't identify with (and where, appearing as women in men's rooms and as men in women's, they are likely to face kickback), more that they are driven away from the gym.

An effective UK-wide "bathroom ban" would go much further than even Trump's USA, which has no federal ban, or current plans to introduce one. (Trump has focused instead against trans participation in sport). The bans that do exist, mostly in Republican "red states", cover perhaps one in four of the US population, and are less stringent, usually much less stringent, than we may now see a Labour government ushering in here.

The Trans Solidarity Alliance has rec-

ognised this and has an [open letter](#) to the Business Secretary and the Women and Equalities Minister which details how difficult such a ban will be for businesses and organisations to operate. Again, the real impact of such a ban will not be to force people to use bathrooms with the sex they were assigned at birth, but to block trans people playing an active role in public life and severely hinder cis people of gender non-conforming appearance. □

• "Defeating the Narratives of Division – Securing rights for trans, non-binary and gender diverse people", 7pm, Friends Meeting House.



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

Lessons of the Thistle anti-racist protest

By Will Roberts

On 2 August, a far-right demonstration outside the Barbican Thistle hotel in Islington, which houses asylum seekers, was outnumbered (about 800 to 200 at peak) by a counter-demonstration.

The demonstration was not called solely by Stand Up To Racism, as many other counter-demonstrations against the far right have been in recent years. SUTR was, however, one of the main organisers, along with local councillors from Labour, the Greens, and the ex-Labour Islington Community Independents, the local NEU branch (SWP-controlled) and Unison branch, and a range of socialist groups and campaigns. Workers' Liberty sponsored the event and helped to build for it.

David Renton, one of the main activists behind the effort, has now written a [Substack post](#) detailing his experience of organising with SUTR. Renton was a long-time member of the SWP (and on the SUTR leading committee), before leaving in the wake of the 2011-3 "Comrade Delta" scandal to help form the group rs21.

Much of his article is entirely accurate about the day-to-day

frustrations of working with SUTR. Their leading members were often gratuitously two-faced and their attitude to other groups and activists was condescending. Sending 15,000 leaflets to print early in order to win an argument over what the leaflet should say is poor. Arriving half an hour earlier than everyone else in order to set up their own stage, and then run a series of their own speakers that they'd kept secret when the agenda was being put together, is poor. But SUTR's major political issues amount to much more.

SUTR exists to fill a gap in the labour movement. For decades now, trade unions have "outsourced" their anti-fascist work to SUTR and thought the job then well done. For union leaders, the hard work of mobilising for these demonstrations, stewarding them, making sure they win, is all now "SUTR's job". With some exceptions (the NEU does, on occasion, attempt to genuinely mobilise for the larger counter-demos), SUTR takes the unions' money and affiliations and lets them feel like someone is taking care of building the demos.

As a result, the demos are weak. Lacking a real base and working from outside the un-

ions, SUTR is often at a loss when it comes to building for demonstrations at any size, especially in areas where the left is less of an obvious presence, and particularly in areas where there is not an active SWP branch. A couple of hours into the Islington demo, almost all those in the official counter-demo were SWP members, and only a handful were local. This is much worse outside London, where SUTR counter-demos are often "shipped in", leaving almost no lasting impact on the local area beyond annoying some local racists (and maybe semi-racists who could have been convinced with more substantial activity).

Banners

In Islington, there were a number of union banners lining either side of the cordoned-off road that we'd been given to protest in (Renton is right about the SWP's subservient negotiations with the police). In almost every case, the banner had been brought by one or two members of the branch, and then left by the side after a quick photo was taken. While some trade unionists were stewarding, they were doing so under SUTR's instruction.

Workers' Liberty believes that the labour movement

needs to do this work itself, not outsource it to campaigns like SUTR. This is the harder route: it has been a long time since the trade unions have mobilised masses of members for anti-fascist and anti-racist activity, and to steward demos like this properly, you need to be willing to be combative with both the police and the far right. SUTR have shown they are not up to this task – in a recent counter-demo in [Epping](#), they hired private security, and then SWP stewards prevented other demonstrators from trying to stop an anti-fascist comrade from getting arrested.

Any movement to fight the far right must also do so with positive political demands. SUTR are obsessed with labelling enemies: all opponents are "Nazis", all leaflets say "oppose" or "fight" the fascists, or the racists, or Tommy Robinson, or Nigel Farage. None mention wages, jobs, or housing. None are designed to convince conservative-minded working-class people who have anti-immigrant prejudices but are far from hardened fascists.

Being against the enemy is not enough. Socialists must put forward a positive programme of political change,

addressing the root causes of the social malaise that feeds the growth of Reform and anti-migrant scapegoating. More people will join the movement to defend migrants, and more people will peel away from the far-right anti-migrant stunts, if they can see a shared goal in it.

The hard racists were not scared off by being outnumbered on 2 August. [Patriots of Britain](#) appear to have started weekly demonstrations outside the Thistle hotel, and the surrounding area (mostly council blocks with a great diversity of residents) is being slowly littered with large Union Jack flags. With an ascendant Reform party and Tommy Robinson's profile only growing, this is going to remain a problem for some time.

It is a dangerous stop-gap to rely on the police to protect the working class and migrants.

Stand up to Racism are not up to the job. The goal has to be a labour movement which builds genuine roots in the local working class, willing to put forward a positive political vision of socialist policies and fight for that vision against the right. □

The SWP and the Corbyn–Sultana party



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

The Socialist Workers Party has published a new pamphlet, *Seize the Time*, setting out its attitude to the new Corbyn–Sultana party. Building on the widespread anger with the Starmer government, the SWP welcomes moves towards a new formation to the left of Labour. Yet it does not tell us much about what to do, other than hope the formation provides space for the SWP to recruit.

The document rests on a series of contradictions. It insists that this is *the time* to act since Starmer's government now rules in the interests of capitalism, supports war, and makes workers pay for the crises of the system. Yet it also argues that the same has *always* been true of Labour.

Both claims are partial truths. Since the first Labour ministers entered government during the First World War, Labour in office has always acted as a pro-capitalist party, including support for militarism. Attlee's 1945–51 government sent troops to Greece, Malaya, Korea. At the same time, it has remained a party based on the organised working class. The shifting modalities of this combination, Labour as both a capitalist party in government and a workers' party in its base, are complications the SWP appears unable to analyse.

The pamphlet therefore ignores the reality that recent partial defeats of disability benefit cuts owed something to revolt by local Labour Parties and Labour backbenchers who, however tenuously, still reflect links to the labour movement and working-class voters. It says nothing about united-front activity with Labour people, nor about how to avoid the Sultana–Corbyn party taking enough from Labour to give Reform victories but not enough to win.

Two contradictory pictures of the new party run through the text. On the one hand, it insists that candidates should "see their role as extending struggle, not substituting for it", and that the party "has to launch housing campaign, back strikes, initiate local fightbacks, support anti-racist resistance and stand up for the oppressed". Yet all that is only in generalities.

Aiming to stand in local elections due in May 2026, candidates should offer a policy to mobilise movements to defeat council cuts due to defunding by central government. That is more complicated than in the 1980s, since the law now mandates unelected council officials to enforce an alternative to an "unbalanced budget". Where Corbyn–Sultana councillors already run

councils, as in Pendle, they have continued "business as usual", including coalition with the Lib-Dems. The SWP pamphlet does not even acknowledge the issue.

When approaching what is, in effect, a split in the political wing of the labour movement, the obvious starting point is the united front: unity in action around demands that advance the working class, allowing both joint advances and scope for revolutionaries to demonstrate reformism's limits in practice. The SWP has never properly grasped this idea.

In March they launched their We Demand Change initiative with the declared aim to "hegemonise the left." In practice this meant organisational dominance in coalitions which would allow space for SWP candidates under a popular umbrella, rather than hegemony in Gramsci's sense, which was all about the united front.

Pattern

The same pattern recurs here. The SWP want the new party to impose "filters" on candidates. They don't insist on their full demand for the end of the Israeli state, but do insist on the deliberately-ambiguous slogan "free Palestine." This is no working-class united front. When the SWP actually did dominate a left electoral force, the Socialist Alliance of 2000–3, they specifically voted down the call for Israel to withdraw troops from the West Bank (because that call implied that Israel itself would continue). A genuine working-class programme would instead focus on "two states", equal rights, Arab-Jewish workers' unity, while in Britain demanding an end to arms sales to Israel, aid to Gaza, and a ceasefire.

Candidates should oppose austerity, says the SWP. However, during the successful battle to push back cuts to PIP access, the SWP stood aside and instead went for general protests for "welfare not warfare", de facto for opposition to arming Ukraine rather than for "tax the rich". Beyond such slogans, they provide no proposals for joint working-class action. This is not a programme of struggle but an electoral checklist.

In practice, the SWP want the new party to be a loose "umbrella" so that SWP candidates can run and (they hope) build the SWP in some areas, with credibility derived from their links to Sultana and Corbyn. Against Sultana's call for a full party structure (of some sort), they favour Corbyn's preference for a federal link-up based on the existing Gaza Independent MPs, figures such as Andrew Feinstein and Leanne Mohammad, and the "Community Independent" groups of ex-Labour councillors.

This directly contradicts the pam-



Pic: [flickr, alisdare1]

phlet's call for "robust grassroots democracy." Yet the SWP seem content to lean into such a dis-united front – as a recent Manchester meeting showed, even ex-Tory councillors can be welcomed on the platform.

The pamphlet is silent on the SWP's own history with left-of-Labour projects. There is nothing on the Socialist Alliance (2000–2003), their discreditable and damaging alliance with George Galloway in Respect (2004–7), the short-lived Left List, or their brief tryst with the Socialist Party's TUSC. Nor is there mention of Scargill's Socialist Labour Party (1996). Instead, the pamphlet reaches back to 1932 to praise the ILP's split from Labour after Labour lost 235 of its 287 parliamentary seats in October 1931. In fact ILP, previously a major political force within Labour, went from 17,000 members in 1932 to 2,400 in 1939, then only 2,600 in 1945 despite Labour's wartime coalition with the Tories; it declined further after 1947 and did little until it wound up in 1975.

The SWP attribute the ILP's failure to its supposed over-focus on parliament. Actually the ILP was more street-activist than the Sultana–Corbyn project, which focuses above all else on the May 2026 council elections and the next general election, probably 2029. The ILP's decline was due to its notional "united front" with the Stalinist Communist Party in the 1930s and its subsequent political decline into moralism and pacifism. The parallels with today are clearer than the SWP can see.

Seize the Time reveals an organisation that neither understands the united front nor offers a programme

for working-class politics. The SWP want the new party to mirror a diluted version of their politics while giving it licence and "credibility" to run their own candidates. The reader comes away with the impression that they expect the new venture to collapse, but they want the collapse not to damage them as Galloway's break with them in Respect in 2007 did. (Some prominent SWPers went with Galloway, and other SWPers who had been big in Respect such as John Rees and Lindsey German became outliers within the SWP and quit in 2010 to form Counterfire). The SWP want to be in position to recruit those disappointed if the Sultana–Corbyn party collapses or declines, rather than having members sucked away from themselves then.

The final paragraph makes the real aim plain, urging readers to "join the SWP" not only to shape the new party but above all to "build revolutionary socialist forces." In short, the SWP have no confidence in, and no real constructive proposals for, the new Corbyn–Sultana party. They just want to be able to take away some of those who sign up for it. □



For socialists to understand and confront left antisemitism from primitive or Stalinist roots to the "anti-imperialism of fools". 265 pages, £9.99 □ bit.ly/shop-wl

Sultana-Corbyn: where is the project going?

By Simon Nelson

During the Corbyn leadership campaigns in 2015 and 2016, regional organisers had the role of coordinating supporters. It was particularly vital to secure CLP nominations and encourage Corbyn supporters to speak with other Labour members, persuading them to attend their local nomination meetings.

Later, some of those organisers helped get the first local Momentum or "For Corbyn" groups set up.

Corbyn's leadership election was an intervention into an established political party, with pre-existing local organisation, and many people who had some access to membership data and some idea of the make-up of their local parties. Although limited, there was a political programme that Corbyn stood for, and a long record you could point to.

The new Sultana-Corbyn project, "Your Party", in starting from scratch, has none of that launch-scaffolding. But its bureaucracy is also much more closed off. No regional organisers have been appointed, and those who have signed up to "keep informed" have yet to receive direction on what that leads to. We can give some money to the unknown officials running the show, and we've been reassured that a founding conference, or at least a national event, will be called before the end of the year. Beyond that, we have very little.

And what we do have is contradictory. Corbyn has reiterated his desire for a federal organisation, which somehow latches together the Independent Alliance of MPs (which comprises himself, Sultana, and all of the "Gaza Independents" who are not particularly left-wing), various independent councillor networks, and other campaigning groups. That is also the favoured position of the SWP, who seem mostly concerned for access to mobilise "Your Party" supporters to back Stand Up to Racism actions and other activities convened by the SWP.

Zarah Sultana has called for "Your Party" to use One Member One Vote (OMOV) to make decisions at a founding conference with a large hybrid (online as well as in-person) element. In an interview on the *New Left Review* Sidecar blog, she says "we should be striving for mass participation, as opposed to a narrow delegate structure which could be unrepresentative of our base. And finally, we should have a genuine forum for debate and discussion, not a situation where decisions are made by an executive team and rubber-stamped by everyone else".

Without any guidance about local groups, it is entirely in the hands of those who want to set something up to take the initiative. There are absolutely no rules, as yet, as to who has the fran-

chise to set up these groups or what role local organisations being set up now, or already in existence, will play when it comes to the conference. An email on 26 August suggests that local groups that have set up meetings can now get Your Party administrators to advertise them.

Sheffield is so far the only local meeting to have secured a high-profile key figure, in the shape of Andrew Feinstein. But no clarity was given on the relationship between local groups and the national party.

Data

The data, now over 800,000 email addresses and postcodes from people who want to "keep informed", is still being held centrally, and who will get control or access to it remains unclear. Control of that data will help determine whether local groups can reach the people who signed up. A spread of 800,000 people goes well beyond the reach of the entire organised activist left. Meetings that are being called now are largely advertised only so far as existing groups can reach.

Multiple groups are overlapping in some areas. A lot of these groups are just on social media or on WhatsApp. Both the SWP and Socialist Party have advertised meetings about "Your Party" to favour their particular intervention into it. They currently have as much legitimacy to do so as any group of activists who wish to operate now as Your Party.

Reports of meetings in Sheffield, Leeds, Croydon, and the Isle of Wight suggest that the majority of people brought to actual meetings so far are existing members of left groups and reactivated Corbynites. Reports from the Isle of Wight meeting are the most positive, with more young people in attendance than in other reports.

The new organisation will probably

fight, and soon, about the role of the existing organised left. Workers' Liberty will argue that there should be no exclusion of existing political organisations. Every strand of opinion should be able to argue for its politics and organise as a faction if and when necessary. At the same time, we'll be arguing for "Your Party" to be more than an electoral initiative. We want people organised to advocate for socialism, for working-class political representation, and for a genuine fight against cuts and austerity, week in week out, on the streets, on picket lines, in workplaces. "Your Party" should, where it exists, work with Labour members on joint campaigning against welfare cuts, for trans rights, and for peace in Israel-Palestine.

In some places, "Your Party" is now an extension of an existing or about-to-exist group with a focus on the local elections in 2026. Islington and Ealing have Community Independent groups of councillors, as does Liverpool. In Harrow "Aspire", whose launch meeting will be addressed by both Pamela Fitzpatrick and Jeremy Corbyn, will want to affiliate, if such a thing is allowed, to the national "Your Party". Jamie Driscoll's "Majority" semi-party in the north-east has a conference of its own early in September, although without votes on policy.

Those groups, who may have pre-existing policy and platforms, will then relate to national policy, how? Presumably, such groups, along with Corbyn and Fitzpatrick, will favour some sort of federal model.

If the question of organisation remains unclear, so also does the political basis of the group. The only clear statement from Andrew Feinstein in the Sheffield meeting on politics is that the new party should be ideologically broad.

Rather than learn from the problems of Corbynism and its failure to tackle

antisemitism, there seems to be a risk that "Your Party" will instead embrace the political lines of the more anti-Israel "hardline" of the Corbynite movement, the politics of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Gaza Independents.

Zarah Sultana has criticised Corbyn for (as she sees it) equivocating on the question of antisemitism, notably in that, with ostentatious reluctance, his Labour leadership endorsed the IHRA definition of antisemitism. (The most-disputed passage there says "claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavour" "could" be antisemitic. That clause is said to outlaw criticism of racist policies by Israel, but it doesn't: it says that to condemn the very existence of any version of an Israeli state can be antisemitic).

Sultana is also unclear on Brexit, saying that Corbyn's Labour "triangulated on Brexit, which alienated huge numbers of voters". It did, but is her alternative that Corbyn should have been pro-Brexit all along, or anti-Brexit all along? She herself was not visible in the anti-Brexit movement. The left now should fight to rejoin the EU and for the reintroduction of free movement across Europe, rather than accept Brexit as a "done deal".

The rest of Sultana's Sidecar piece seems mostly a shot across the bows at the rival camps, most likely the previous Corbyn staffers like Karie Murphy. The organisers will soon need clarity on the next steps to keep a fragile coalition together. We can't advise them on that, but we can take part in the meetings that are being called now, and argue the need for working-class socialist politics, for more-than-electoral activity, and for a democracy based on accountable structures, delegates, meetings, motions, votes, rather than "plebiscitary" snap votes and e-consultations. □



How not to build: lessons from France

By Olivier Delbeke

The Sultana-Corbyn project has been hailed by Jean-Luc Mélenchon as a British version of his own La France Insoumise. Let's hope he is wrong about that, as regards both the nationalistic politics of LFI and its structure. A new book published in France, *La Meute*, covers the internal workings of LFI. LFI boasts that "We are not a vanguard party that charts the political course for the masses. We help them to organise themselves. The emancipation of the people will be the work of the people themselves"; but formally speaking it has only three members, all the rest of its 500,000 or so supporters having little status beyond electronic communications. The article translated here, by Olivier Delbeke of *Arguments pour la Lutte Sociale*, dissects Mélenchon's trajectory and methods.

The authors of *La Meute* aim to provide a journalistic and sociological account of the phenomenon that is the inner circle of La France Insoumise, the Imperium, which revolves around its leader, an aspiring Bonaparte. From this point of view, it is quite successful: the revelations obtained from various participants, both former and current members of LFI, are nauseating. The picture that emerges there is of an atmosphere and a set of customs that are completely foreign to any emancipatory project in which those "below" consciously take matters into their own hands and move forward in a collective, coherent, thoughtful and rational manner, in a context where discussing differences is a matter of course and not a crime of lèse-majesté, and where the final decision is informed by prior debate.

Even though it provides elements in this direction, this book really didn't aim at that sort of political reflection.

Yet the existence today of the political and social phenomenon that is LFI poses a problem for the entire left, because Jean-Luc Mélenchon's political career spanning more than fifty years reveals the failure of the entire left, from the Socialist Party [PS: Mélenchon was a PS minister 2000-2]... to the NPA!

If we can summarise JLM's political life in two acts, Act 1, the PS, Act 2, after the PS, there remains an essential element of continuity: the defence of the established order, and notably of the



Fifth Republic [the "presidential-rule" constitution introduced by De Gaulle after he took power with a "soft" military coup in 1958], while presenting himself as a radical critic of the system.

From this perspective, it is important to take stock of Mélenchon, the PS's leading oppositionist for 33 years (1975-2008). Although initially trained within the OCI [the Lambertist "Orthodox Trotskyist" group, today split into POI and PT], Mélenchon was not one of the undercover agents of Lambert [who had a habit of sending such undercover agents into the PS and other organisations]; he joined the PS on his own initiative with his own projects, which appeared to be aimed at building a left wing based on a secular, republican tradition rooted in the real labour movement, trade unions and associations, with a dose of Jaurèsism, proclaiming the need to break with capitalism through combative reformism, with at least some real reforms...

In 2008, Mélenchon suddenly bailed out of the PS. Without consulting the other forces of the socialist opposition, JLM laid the foundations for the Left Party, which was born in 2009 with some attractive attributes proper to an aggressive left-wing party finally breaking with social liberalism. Unfortunately, the early hopes were quickly stifled: the new party could be nothing more than a faction centred around its leader, centralised and tightly controlled. The PG would not be a new PSU amalgamating currents from different traditions. Admittedly, there were still congress debates and motions debated late into the night. But all that was quickly discarded with the launch of LFI in 2016. This launch also followed the scuttling of the Front de Gauche, Mélenchon's electoral alliance with the Communist Party, which was prevented from becoming a real, effective and unifying mass opposition to Hollande's social liberalism.

2016 embodies the break with the

classic party form (paying members, established structures, congresses, debates, motions, elections of leaders, public votes on policy) through the choice of a gaseous movement where only the true organising centre, never elected, never accountable for its actions, knows everything, controls everything, decides everything, even the details.

The interest of *La Meute* is that it illustrates how JLM's entire strategy since leaving the PS has been based on the centrality of the presidential election, with the promise of a Sixth Republic as a lure for the gullible. Those who really want to pave the way for a genuine constituent assembly that will sweep away the Fifth Republic are kindly requested to wait for the election of the last president of the Fifth Republic!

Occasional

In this gaseous magma including local action groups, with occasional contributions à la carte via the electronic platform, Telegram groups all over the place, and various structures more or less known only to the militant inner circle, the only voice that counts is that of the central core, aptly named *La Meute* (The Pack), centred around the old leader.

The position taken by an intriguer named Sophia Chikirou illustrates the principle that "where there are kings, there are queens". Except that in this case, Marie-Antoinette with her whims pales in comparison to the reincarnation of Jiang Qing, cloned with a touch of Helena Ceaucescu.

The more weight the presidential strategy gains, with the passing of time and the burden of advancing age weighing on Jean-Luc like everyone else, despite the deification of his person by his followers, the more glaring becomes the clan-like, pack-like, gang-like aspect surrounding the aspiring Bonaparte.

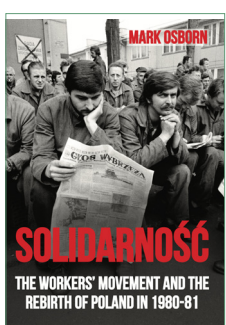
In the history of LFI, there have been

many individual departures and accumulated disappointments, many sidelining and exclusions, but never a purge like the one that led to the non-renomination of six outgoing MPs in the 2024 legislative elections. This crisis, which began with the sidelining of Clémentine Autain, François Ruffin, Alexis Corbière, Danielle Simonnet and Rachel Garrido from the inner circle at the end of 2022, culminated in the crisis of May-June 2024. It is to be hoped that this will mark a turning point towards the final crisis of LFI. But for that to happen, the principles of democracy in all forms of organisation and action, and of unity against the common enemy while respecting differences and divergences, must prevail where "sound and fury" have taken their place.

It is not insignificant that at the origins of this crisis was the Quatennens affair, named after the MP [and official LFI "national coordinator" 2019-22] who slapped his wife [and was eventually convicted in court of domestic violence, but was initially defended by JLM]. All those who, like Pascale Martin, Clémentine Autain, and Danielle Simonnet, put their finger on that sore point, made it possible for a new cycle to begin. The struggle for emancipation cannot tolerate retrograde and abusive practices, whether physical or psychological, in the private or public sphere. Machismo and male domination are at the root of the need for the women's liberation movement; they are also linked to the mechanisms that protect and perpetuate the established order, including the Fifth Republic. This is yet another reason why supporters of full democracy, and therefore of the expropriation of capital, must fight them without compromise.

Neither Caesar, nor tribune, nor president: constituent assembly! □

• Abridged. Full text bit.ly/h-lfi



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Ukraine: Trump shifts back to Putin

By Michael Baker

July 2025 saw the highest number of civilian deaths in Ukraine of any month since May 2022. As Trump and Putin flew to Alaska to hold a summit without any Ukrainian participation, a missile was fired at Dnipropetrovsk, killing one. You could be forgiven for thinking that all this talk of “peace” is just a PR stunt for Putin’s war.

Trump, equipped with no Russia experts and no skilled negotiators, has emerged with positions indistinguishable from Putin’s own. Trump’s foreign negotiations utility man, Steve Witkoff, has entered meetings with Russia without his own interpreter and taken no notes. The president went into a chess game armed with checkers pieces.

The contents of the summit, held on Friday 15 August, have been kept secret. In the brief press statement afterwards, almost nothing substantive was revealed, though we were assured it was good. The only concrete fact was from Trump: “we didn’t get it done”.

Trump told Fox News later that “it’s really up to President Zelenskyy to get it done.” This, presumably, means that the US and Russia agreed to pressure the Ukrainian government into agreeing to give up territory in Eastern Ukraine, something Zelenskyy would have to change the Ukrainian constitution to do.

It was revealed the following day that Trump has now shifted away from getting a ceasefire, and has moved to Putin’s preferred route of an immediate peace deal with “land swaps” (code for Ukraine ceding territory).

The meeting on Monday 18 August between Trump, Zelenskyy and European leaders showed Trump reaping what he had sown: nothing. A call between Putin, Trump and Zelenskyy included Putin suggesting that the two presidents meet in Moscow (bourgeois



outlets have speculated that was an attempt at mockery). Kremlin spokespeople have spent the intervening period backtracking and being noncommittal about a meeting, and the differences seem no closer to being resolved.

Sanctions

Whatever Alaska agreed, it would likely have been about sanctions and business deals. Putin reportedly raised the topic of sanctions repeatedly in advance of the summit, likely trying to gain some economic relief amid dropping oil prices, which have exacerbated problems in Russia’s already struggling economy.

Before setting off on Friday morning, Putin signed a [decree](#) allowing foreign investors – in particular US oil company Exxon Mobil – to regain shares in Russia’s Sakhalin-1 oil and gas project. He

was joined at the summit by a number of Russian business leaders.

Sanctions have been put back without much further thought – no deal has been reached, and Putin is doing the bare minimum to seem willing, but Trump continues to acquiesce.

Given the lack of information about what else was actually discussed, analysis in the bourgeois press has focused on the good this summit has done Putin’s image. Even that is significant. Putin is wanted for war crimes, and the President of America quite literally laid out the red carpet for him. His offer of “next time in Moscow” was not just cloying Russian hospitality, but a message to the rest of the West, and Ukraine in particular: if Trump comes to Moscow, the US bourgeoisie will follow, and then Europe will have to come too.

Starmer, Macron and Merz have all given bold statements about standing with Ukraine and upping their support, but their concrete commitments remain little more than they were months ago – and the question of arming Ukraine to win the war is being avoided like the plague.

It is impossible to predict any timeline for an end, or even ceasefire, to the war in Ukraine when the process is this opaque and Putin this disingenuous. But for now, nothing discussed in a backroom in Anchorage or the White House changes the facts on the ground: a struggle against an old colonial power for national liberation, with Western governments mostly keen to avoid an easy and total victory for Putin, but unwilling to let Ukraine have enough weapons to win. □

What kickback at Labour conference?

By Colin Foster

This year the Labour soft-left groups Open Labour and Compass are cooperating with Momentum to push template motions for Labour Party conference, both of them on a motion to scrap the two-child benefit cap, Open Labour on trans rights, and Compass on public ownership of water.

The motions are all cautiously worded, but there’s some tactical case for that. To get a topic prioritised for debate and a good composite, and to win union votes for it, on barebones wording, will

have more political impact than a fierce motion which gets nowhere near conference floor.

The three groups have all sagged in recent years, and so has the long-lived Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. CLPD, Momentum, and Labour Campaign for Council Housing have however come together this year on a motion about housing.

Labour Left Internationalists is pushing a text on green conversion, ecology having dropped off the agenda at recent conferences despite backtracking on the issue by

Starmer. Labour Campaign for Free Movement has a text on asylum (Momentum and CLPD have another, very weak). Momentum and CLPD also have a text on Palestine. UK Friends of Standing Together has another one, better in our view.

Local Labour Parties must submit motions by 11 September, and most local Labour Parties sending motions will decide in early September. The unions can prioritise an equal number of topics for debate, but their choices are usually revealed only shortly before conference.

Labour conferences 2022,

2023, and 2024 were dominated by the right, but not entirely so. These conferences are large events, 20,000 people in 2024 including observers, stallholders, etc., so “dominated by the right” does not mean “no left”.

This year is difficult to call. Labour membership is still sagging – latest count 309,000 – and attendance at meetings probably more so. But the resistance to the government’s plans to cut access to Personal Independence Payments for disabled people should encourage some to think that kicking back can

make a difference. In a recent poll for Labour List, 59% of Labour members said the party should move to the left, and a further 35% that it should move “further and faster” on its vague pledges to restore public services.

The conference is from 27 September to 1 October in Liverpool. Labour Left Internationalists (LLI) tell us they are appealing for activists to come to help leaflet and run fringe meetings, and can organise cheap accommodation. □

• LLI website labourleftint.uk has more info.

Maoism: the Stalin

By Martin Thomas

Maoism may, sadly, not be as dead as we thought. It is sometimes equated only with the “high Maoism” of the early Cultural Revolution, 1966-8. Yet the Chinese government still has a giant portrait of Mao at Tiananmen Square. It still proclaims “Mao Zedong Thought” and its universities teach that.

Beijing stopped distribution of Mao’s Little Red Book in 1979 and pulped the stocks. It says little about the Cultural Revolution and less about the Great Leap Forward, beyond that they were bad times. Yet it remains “Maoist” in a broader sense. Meanwhile, some within China regard their “Maoism” as a critique of “capitalist-road-ism” by the current Chinese government.

As Julia Lovell puts it in her 2019 book *Maoism: A Global History*, Mao “possessed a genius for devising political theories – veneered with Marxism – that defined chaotic inconsistency as dynamism”. Maoism is and was a plastic, diffuse, multiform ideology.

Even in the Cultural Revolution years, it was Mao who made the opening to the USA in 1972, and Mao, in 1973, who restored the “capitalist-roader” Deng Xiaoping to high office from disgrace as a mechanic in a tractor factory (though Deng was briefly sidelined again in 1976).

Maoism is the “Stalinism of our epoch” for active politics. Stalin’s Stalinism left little durable legacy of catchphrases and mottos (beyond “popular front”). Maoism established a welter of catchphrases and mottos which can be adapted to a vast variety of politics. Sometimes modern liberal, left-postmodernist, and postcolonialist concerns gain a revolutionary allure because they mesh with trickled-down Maoist discourse.

Today the CPB/Morning Star, Progressive International (whose official James Schneider is a main mover in the Corbyn camp), France Insoumise, and (in the USA) many within the DSA are friendly to the Chinese government.

All Maoist variants tend to detour from working-class socialism, or make it seem we’ve got there when we haven’t.

In this article I’ll summarise some of the narrative, including what Lovell omits, and dissect some Maoist mottos (which Lovell doesn’t do).

China had gone through a civil war in 1850-64 (the “Taiping Rebellion”, a peasant revolt with a leader claiming to be the brother of Jesus Christ) which more people than the whole First World War, and another smaller uprising, defeated by foreign intervention,



Paper of the big “hard” Italian Maoist group, UIC(M-L), 1969

in 1899-1901. It was in turmoil more or less continuously from the overthrow of the empire in 1911-2. In 1820 China had accounted for 33% of the world’s economic output. By 1949 it would be only 5%. It is now back up to 17%.

In 1921 Chen Duxiu and others formed the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Chen would later become a Trotskyist, but the party was pushed by Stalin into subordinating itself to Chiang Kai-shek’s bourgeois-nationalist Guomindang. In April-May 1927, Chiang turned on the CCP, massacring thousands.

Many fled to the countryside and linked up with peasant rebellion. Bit by bit the CCP rebuilt itself as an apparatus of middle-class radicals who had fled the cities, leading an army of peasants drawn in by CCP land reform and combat against the 1931-45 Japanese attempt to conquer China. Lovell shows that “Western Maoism” was a factor even then. In 1936 a gee-whiz American liberal, Edgar Snow, visited the CCP-run area to interview Mao, and wrote up Maoism as “the Chinese incarnation of the American Dream” in the book *Red Star Over China*. The book was central in winning young, educated, urban Chinese recruits.

Between 1937 and 1945 the CCP controlled populations between 50 million and 160 million. It won support and recruited through land reform, providing schools, and opposing foot-binding and forced marriages for women.

The CCP purged its rural statelet in 1942-3. Wang Shiwei had protested mildly against the CCP’s twenty-four ranks of “cadres”. “To divide clothing into three and food into five different grades is definitely neither necessary nor rational... (I myself am graded as ‘cadres’ clothes and private kitchen’, so this is not just a case of sour grapes.)”

He was bludgeoned into condemning himself as a “Trotskyite”, excluded from political life, then murdered. Thousands of others were suppressed.

1949 was the conquest of China by an already-established military machine. It largely took over the administrators and industrialists who did not flee. Although most people probably welcomed new rulers who might bring stability, it was not a rising from below.

The new regime had the slogan “The Soviet Union’s today is our tomorrow”. But it was more complicated.

The GMD had already nationalised most industry or brought it under the control of cronies. Some CCP economic direction was tighter than in the USSR, with varying sections of the population at different times being put on state rations instead of wages, and workers in big, urban industry being essentially allocated to jobs. Some was looser, if only because transport and communications were poorer than in the USSR. Independent worker organisation has been banned, but strikes, never effectively. Between 1966 and 1978 even the state-run All China Federation of Trade Unions was disbanded.

From the early 1950s to his death in 1976 Mao successively purged and reshaped state and industrial management, without yet developing an organically self-reproducing CCP machine. The Great Leap Forward of 1958-62, an attempt to outdo Stalin’s forced-march economic development of the 1930s with a thinner basis, killed 30 million in a famine not forced by war or nature. The Cultural Revolution, at its height in 1966-8 and continuing to 1976, shut down universities and most schools for two years, and had hundreds of thousands, maybe millions, beaten to death, jailed, or exiled to rural hard labour. It ended, after Mao’s death, with the sur-

vivors among the “capitalist-roader” CCP leaders against whom it had been directed back in control.

After 1978 Deng Xiaoping and his group gained confidence that the CCP apparatus could now keep control of society and the bulk of the economic surplus product while re-licensing private agriculture and private industry.

China, reunified and independent, developed heavy industry, transport and communications, literacy (from only about 20% in 1949), and some basic health care, though slower and with greater costs than Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan. Since the 1980s it has boomed as a for-profit world-market economy. When Bukharin and then Stalin first proclaimed “Socialism in One Country” in 1924, it was fantasy, but their readers would generally see “socialism” as like what “Social-Democrats” had advocated for decades: social equality, abundance for all, democracy.

By 1949 that “socialism” had been re-defined by the “in one country” limits to mean national industrial development to the benefit of a bureaucratic ruling class.

That also meant that it was not quite “in one country”: the economic successes, or claimed successes, could be replicated even (or especially) in poor countries where a sufficient collective force assembled from the old middle classes could take power.

Stalinism became (as the Algerian writer Tahar Benhouria put it) “the religion of the manager”. And when from about 1960 Mao clashed with Moscow, partly for ordinary reasons of conflict between neighbouring predatory ruling classes, Mao became the god of that religion. As usual with gods, his



Pic: Raimond Spekking / CC BY-SA 4.0 (via Wikimedia Commons)

nism of our epoch

ways were mysterious.

Moscow was searching for deals with other big powers and more market regulation in its own economy. Mao counterposed grand schemes in China and for world revolution, but his enthusiasms always also allowed for diplomatic and cautious variants.

The large, and mostly cautious, Communist Party of Indonesia sided with Mao in the "Sino-Soviet split", but was crushed by a military coup in 1965. Elsewhere CPs divided. In some Latin American countries and probably in India, the Maoists had a majority; in richer countries, usually a small minority. They mostly called themselves "Marxist-Leninists" ("M-Ls") and "anti-revisionists".

In 1966-8 the Cultural Revolution coincided with mass radicalisation in many countries. The horrors of the Great Leap Forward were still little-known. The Cultural Revolution's demagoguery was taken as good coin by professors and journalists, and as inspiration by new young radicals.

Maoism was always small on the British activist left. But it was dominant for a while in Germany, the USA, Italy, big in France. Lovell reckons the various Maoist groups in West Germany in the early 1970s had 100,000 to 150,000, and that Maoism was strongest, relative to population, in Norway.

Lovell suggests that some Cultural Revolution rhetoric ("to rebel is justified", "bombard the headquarters") helped form libertarian variants in post-1968 radicalism. She does not mention the "soft Maoists", who might make the best case for that view. In fact even with them the Maoist phrases diverted libertarian and revolutionary impulses in ultra-left, militaristic, and often nationalist ways.

In Italy, the Union of Italian Communists (their main chant "Stalin, Mao, Brandirali", after their leader Aldo Brandirali) dominated the far-left in 1969, but quickly declined, to be eclipsed by various "soft Maoist" groups: Lotta Continua, Avanguardia Operaia (AO), Pdup, and Autonomia Operaia. They did not chant Mao slogans or celebrate Stalin, but they valorised demagoguery from the Cultural Revolution. These were large and active groups, mostly of students but also of young workers. AO had 10,000 members in Milan alone. But they collapsed by the end of the 1970s, largely even before the crushing state repression after 1979. Disillusion with events in China and Cambodia and impasse of their own tactics (which became in-



creasingly centred on violent street confrontations with the police) brought them down.

The PRP in Portugal in 1974-5 became an outrider for the left wing of the military (with "no to bourgeois elections" as a slogan). The OCT, the soft-Maoist group in France which came from a 1971 split from the Mandeliste LCR, had dwindled by 1979-80, when its remnants rejoined the LCR.

Most Maoist groups had dispersed, or adapted, by then. Aldo Brandirali, the leader of the UIC in Italy, converted to Catholicism then became a big political ally of Silvio Berlusconi. José Manuel Barroso, a leader of the MRPP in Portugal in the revolutionary years of 1974-5, became president of the European Commission in 2004-14. In France, the hard-Maoist leader Alain Geismar became a Socialist Party minister.

A few "Marxist-Leninist" groups switched allegiance to Enver Hoxha in Albania, and some then became further disillusioned. In Germany in 1986, the ex-Hoxhaite KPD-ML merged into a "United Socialist Party" where Mandelites had the majority; in New Zealand in 1994, the whole of the small Communist Party of New Zealand, which in its majority had gone with China then Albania, was taken into the SWP-UK's international network, over the heads of the SWP's previous NZ allies.

"Orthodox Trotskyists" such as Ernest Mandel had praised the Great Leap

Forward and the Cultural Revolution, with some criticisms; Isaac Deutscher, their mentor, denounced the Cultural Revolution as "negative only", while denying that China had any weighty privileged bureaucracy. The "Healyite" Socialist Labour League acclaimed the Cultural Revolution. Italy's Avanguardia Operaia was led by Massimo Gorla, an ex-Mandelite. In 1974-5 it influenced the SWP-UK (then called IS), pushing it towards rhetorically-ultra-left and populist politics and building a purged "party" machine. This "Maoised Trotskyism" turned out poorly, like the "Trotsky-ising" of ex-Maoists in Germany and NZ.

Maoism had always had a "realpolitik" strand too. The Chinese government distributed countless copies of the "Little Red Book" of quotations from Mao, in three dozen languages, but never took as much care of the world network of small-ish Maoist parties as it did of its "realpolitik Maoism" with Julius Nyerere and Robert Mugabe in Africa, both of whom were also devout Catholics, or indeed with the murderous Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, yet also with its sometime-ally-sometime-opponent, king Sihanouk.

Lovell describes modern semi-syntheses of Maoism and Islamism.

Maoist-like memes can be adapted by the far right too. Lotta di Popolo operated as a fascist-Maoist group in Italy, 1969-73. Trump's nationalism, rebel demagoguery, brazen lying, and admira-

tion for violence all parallel Maoism, as does his way of ideologising by social-media posts parallels the Cultural Revolution rule of a new motto each day from Mao on the masthead of the *People's Daily*.

Lovell describes two major Maoist movements flourishing after the late 1970s, with no real help from the Chinese government. In Nepal, factions of a Maoist movement which fought a guerrilla war in 1996-2006 (while the Chinese government backed the monarchy) have dominated government since 2008. In Peru, Abimael Guzmán built a base as a professor in a rural university from 1962 to 1980, meanwhile visiting China during the Cultural Revolution. In 1976, the end of the Cultural Revolution and the jailing of the "Gang of Four" ultra-Maoist leaders after Mao's death convinced him he must launch armed struggle in Peru.

From 1980 to 1992, when Guzmán was captured, his group, Sendero Luminoso, went to war with the Peruvian army. Both sides were murderous for the peasants of the remote region where the war was centred (but, for example, Sendero was praised in the staid *Labour Briefing* magazine by Ronan Bennett, former anarchist, future Corbynista).

The Communist Party of the Netherlands M-L continues to this day, renamed Socialist Party Netherlands. In 2006 it won 17% of the vote in par-

continued on page 14 →

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liamentary elections. It is social-democratic and critical of the Chinese government, with its Maoist heritage mainly expressed in anti-immigration, nationalism, and net-zero scepticism.

In the academic and literary world, Mao has been discredited repeatedly since the 1970s, by a series of books on the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution.

Most of the young Maoists of after 1968 will have lapsed into everyday bourgeois careers, but some in influential academic posts. Many in Germany and some in France segued into the Greens, and in the USA into left-Democrat and NGO politics.

Although no-one waves the Little Red Book now, Maoist ideas have trickled through here and there over decades.

Maoist ideology celebrates the “mass line” and “serving the people”. Yet the “mass line”, or what “the people” want, is to be constructed by “cadres”. “The outstanding thing about China’s 600 million people is that they are ‘poor and blank’... Poverty gives rise to the desire for changes... On a blank sheet of paper... the most beautiful characters can be written”. “We Communists are like seeds and the people are like the soil. Wherever we go, we must unite with the people, take root, and blossom among them”.

Maoism diffused the term “cadre” widely in left-wing politics.

It did not quite originate it. The term comes from a French word meaning frame, then adapted to be a collective noun for military staff, then adapted to mean organisers and leaders more generally. It can be found as such in Lenin, Trotsky, and Gramsci, but only casually. Mao, following Stalin, scaled it up: “Cadres are a decisive factor”.

And in Maoism the term “cadre” melds the idea of “political organiser” with “official” (in modern French, “cadres” is the word for “managers” or “executives”). Thus the 24 ranks of “cadre”. Thus, in the Cultural Revolution, the “best” “class background” to escape censure was “revolutionary cadres”.

In Maoism the “blank paper” on which “cadres” write is “the people” or “the

masses”. Only on exceptional and ceremonial occasions is the wage-working class referred to as distinct from “the masses”. Thus “mass line” demagoguery can feed bureaucratic, manipulative politics.

The Weathermen, a group which nearly hegemonised the US student left in 1969, described themselves as “akin to the Red Guard in China, based on the full participation and involvement of masses of people in the practice of making revolution”. In fact the Red Guards were whipped-up gangs of teenagers used to terrorise Mao’s factional targets; the Weathermen went underground to “declare war on the US government” and bomb government buildings and banks. Bland praise of “participation” and “involvement” (yes, greater numbers active in agitation, education, deliberation, and organisation make more democracy than just voting every few years and passively observing the outcome) had acquired revolutionary allure and been turned to minority disruption as substitute for working-class struggle.

Some of those in those years who refuted schemes of immediate revolution through minority ultra-militancy equally drew from Maoist imagery. Thus the West German left student leader Rudi Dutschke, not a full-on Maoist, in a debate in November 1967, called for a “long march through the institutions”. He was evoking Mao’s Long March of 1934-5, a retreat under GMD fire from one CCP rural base to a more remote area where the CCP could sustain itself longer. What the phrase could mean in Germany, or anywhere else, in 1967 was never clear, but the Maoist association gave it revolutionary allure. It was later adapted by “Eurocommunists” into a new version of the Fabian line of socialist “permeation”, one by one, of bourgeois institutions.

Lin Biao described Mao’s strategy as “to build rural base areas and use the countryside to encircle and finally capture the cities”. Other Maoists have likewise sought to turn (mostly) urban middle-class leftists to base themselves on those whom liberals (from the 1980s or 90s) would call “the marginalised” (peasants in the poorest areas in Peru, the poorest remote forest-dwellers in India). However great the exploitation, the working class is central rather than marginalised in capitalist society. Here, Maoist associations license seeing important liberal concerns as core revolutionary choices, or seguing them into minority militarism.

Lovell reports an interview with Kiran, a diehard Nepali Maoist still in revolutionary opposition to the Maoists who now run Nepal’s government. If things had gone his way, he says: “We would have ended bureaucratic capitalism. Everyone would have been empowered... a powerful party, but with no bad ideas in it”. Kiran probably got the concept of “empowerment” from American psychology of the 1970s and 1980s (with Julian Rappaport, where it was an important liberal idea about



Wang Shiwei: removed from political life in Maoist-controlled Yan’an as a “Trotskyite” in 1942, murdered in 1947

methods of care for people with disabilities, of social work with pauperised communities, etc.). The correlation with Maoist rhetoric about the “mass line” and revolution moving from periphery to centre gave it radical allure for him.

“Consciousness-raising”, another important liberal idea in the 1960s and 70s Maoist-imbued US left, “translated” Chinese usage of the same term (and of “thought reform” and “criticism/self-criticism”).

Mao denounced “commandism”, but as a “style of work” adopted by lower cadres in pushing CCP policy. The remedy? “To serve the people wholeheartedly... and to identify our responsibility to the people with our responsibility to the leading organs of the party”.

In the Cultural Revolution and in other purges, CCP officials were “commandist” even by Mao’s standards. “Criticism and self-criticism” meant subjecting victims to “struggle sessions” in which they had to condemn themselves. The circle was squared by making support for the CCP leadership, i.e. Mao himself, the start and end point of all criticism. “Starting from the desire for unity, resolving contradictions through criticism or struggle, and arriving at a new unity... [is] the correct method of resolving contradictions among the people”.

“All our literature and art are for the masses of the people”, and thus anything not endorsed as the “mass line” was subject to suppression.

Mao coined a distinction between “the principal contradiction” (to be resolved by force) and secondary or “non-antagonistic” contradictions. That rationalised both coalitions with bourgeois forces, and the “discovery” that seriously-indicted dissenters were not just wrong but “bourgeois elements”, “capitalist roaders”, “bad elements and monsters”, or, equivalently, “revisionists”.

Mao valorised militancy: “He who is not afraid of death by a thousand cuts dares to unhorse the emperor”; “dare to struggle and dare to win”. It was al-

ways given a militarist inflection. “A single spark can start a prairie fire”. “A revolution is not a dinner party”. “Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”. “Without a people’s army, the people have nothing”. “Our principle is that the party commands the gun”.

Even for the mass Indonesian Communist Party, says Lovell, at a certain point, that meant “nationalism and audacity became the answer to any problem”. Other Maoist groups pivoted to minority military initiative. More broadly, the remark attributed to Mao, “there is great chaos under heaven; the situation is excellent”, helped many to think that determined disruption was almost revolution.

Maoism’s days of debauch and huge destruction may be behind it, but even trickles of its plastic, diffuse, multiform ideology can give anything from economic nationalism, through variants of liberalism, to “substitutionist” ultra-leftism, revolutionary socialistic allure. It is not yet harmless. □

• More online: bit.ly/mao-i-c “Maoism with Italian Characteristics”.



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Trans rights and political polarisation

By Riki Lane

Workers' Liberty supports trans and gender-diverse (TGD) people's rights. Some left feminists see those as threatening women's "sex-based" rights. This is part of a series of articles attempting to thread a path within this hostility. How can left-wing activists reach more agreement here?

A [previous article](#) outlined the history and origins of gender variance. This article examines political polarisation around TGD people. Following articles will look at debates around: biological and social materiality; toilets and change rooms; sport; prisons. A summary about socialist attitudes to these debates will follow.

I use "assigned sex at birth" for biological sex characteristics, and "gender identity" for how people identify psychologically and socially. I am a researcher at a university and a gender-affirming health clinic, with an academic background in sociology of science around TGD people. I identify as a gender-non-conforming man, using he or they pronouns. I write on my own behalf and nothing here represents my employers' stance.

Contestation of TGD people's rights has increased greatly recently. The first modern campaigning for those rights was by left-wingers in Berlin before 1933. After a huge setback in the 1930s, there were slow changes over decades in social and medical attitudes from the 1950s. In recent years those have reached a critical mass, with TGD people demanding the right to live with respect and without harassment in their deeply-felt identities. This goes beyond the tacit acceptance of TGD people as a special subculture found in many past societies.

Some countries have seen significant changes: Japan's top court in 2023 ruled as unconstitutional a law requiring people to undergo sterilisation to legally change gender. However, right wingers like Hungary's Orban, Russia's Putin, and US conservatives, are targeting TGD people within a broader anti women and anti-LGBTIQ+ agenda.

Putin and Orban removed any way to change legal sex markers, even after gender-affirming genital surgery; and restricted "LGBT propaganda". Russian right wingers mobilised fears about "LGBT Nazis" in propaganda against Ukraine, and say that pro LGBTIQ "gender ideology" threatens their reactionary "traditional religious values" (i.e. what feminists previously called gender ideology). At the Trumpite CPAC in 2023, Michael Knowles said: "transgenderism must be eradicated from public life entirely".

The same people want to limit abortion rights. In conservative US states,



often the same clinics provided abortions, gender affirming hormones (GAH) to adults and teenagers, and puberty blockers to adolescents. Now the clinics are barred from providing abortions and gender-affirming services to anyone under 18, and GAH and abortion access for adults is increasingly difficult. In Australia, right-wing religious forces have increasingly focused on TGD people. In the UK, all provision of puberty blockers and GAH for young people has been blocked, and EHRC guidelines due soon may block TGD people's access to public toilets.

Historically, feminist and TGD activists have often worked together against patriarchal ideology. The successful campaign to legalise abortion in Argentina in 2020 had strong involvement by TGD activists for decades.

But in some countries now, especially Britain, some of the most vocal pushback comes from left-wingers and feminists who say TGD demands, especially trans women's demands, threaten "women's sex-based rights". They often describe themselves as Gender Critical Feminists (GCF). Other feminists reject that, arguing that all feminists criticise gendered stereotypes. Equally, GCFs reject the term "trans exclusionary radical feminists" as derogatory. To avoid seeming to prejudge all the arguments just by initial choice of terms, I'll use "sex-based rights activists" (SBRA).

The space for discussion has become limited, with hostility on social media and elsewhere. Many SBRA use language that is hurtful to TGD people, e.g. calling trans women "men in skirts", refusing to use chosen names and pronouns, campaigning against trans women being in "women's spaces", and citing fear of assault. Some seem willing to criticise TGD people gratuitously in ways that are certain to cause offence, though some SBRA insist that they never misgender, and Ruth Serwotka has denounced groups like the US Women's Liberation Front (WoLF) and their alliances with the right, instead demanding "protections for transgender people in the US against the Trumpian right". Some TGD people respond intemperately, with calls to cancel talks by SBRA on grounds they will increase hostility towards TGD people.

Many SBRA oppose access to puberty blockers and GAH for people under 18, arguing they lack ability to make these decisions, even if their parents agree. Yet no-one seems to dispute the use of puberty blockers for non-TGD girls going through early puberty, though early puberty is not life-threatening. SBRA often point to potential effects on later fertility. Yet most strongly support the right of young adolescents to access contraception and abortion, without parental knowledge – I agree.

There is a large contradiction: do these young people have agency and the right to control their sexed bodies in general, or only within the confines of the SBRA onlooker's viewpoint? Both decisions have a life-long effect: giving birth means you are already a parent as a teenager, while puberty blockers plus hormones may lead to loss of fertility later in life (sometimes avoidable by preserving embryos or sperm).

WoLF

WoLF in a 2020 court case supported the sacking of a trans woman funeral worker for wearing women's clothing. But it is no threat to anyone if workers can wear clothing socially coded as male or female, regardless of their sex assigned at birth or gender identity. That is what left activists need to support.

When US states have blocked access to both abortion medications and puberty blockers, some SBRA have accepted that as a lesser evil. Despite talk of trans women threatening "sex-based rights", I know of no case of trans women being a force against abortion rights, maternity leave and maternity pay, equal pay, or equal access to jobs.

UK activist Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull (aka Posie Parker) has toured the world organising "let women speak" rallies to oppose access to "women's spaces" by trans women. She regularly worked

with right wing forces, illustrated by open Nazis "gate-crashing" in support of her 2023 Melbourne rally, with SBRA speakers like Melbourne's Holly Lawson-Smith. Subsequent rallies in Melbourne have had far-right activists advertising them and supplying sound systems.

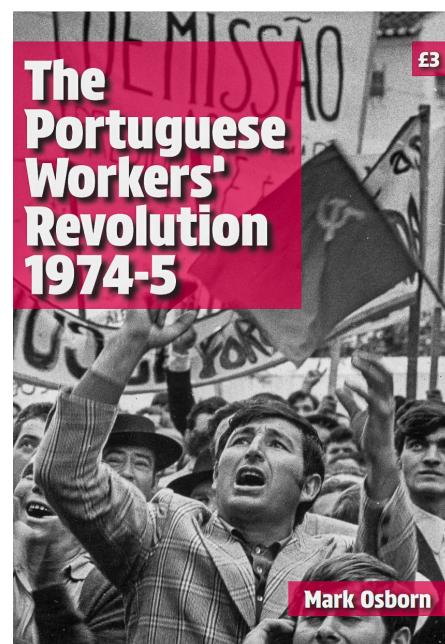
Pink-washing

Some SBRA argue that support for TGD rights involves "pink-washing" by large corporations; and that Big Pharma sees GAH as a lucrative market. Clearly pink-washing is real – multinational behemoths try to shroud their super-exploitation of Third World workers and anti-union attacks by parading progressive policies for TGD people, LGB people and women. I ask SBRA – would you rather they had anti-discrimination policies than not?

Big Pharma hormone sales to TGD people are miniscule compared to sales to non-TGD people. The Australian government a few years back required GPs prescribing testosterone to refer to an endocrinologist. But that requirement was not about trans men. Rather, it was about testosterone being pushed to middle-aged non-TGD men, supposedly to renew vitality and sex drive. TGD people often face shortages for preferred hormone preparations.

There often seems to be a disconnect in these debates. TGD people (like non-TGD women) are not warriors for the ruling class, or sycophants for woke professors. They are an oppressed group that needs support from the working class, in line with Lenin's idea that the working class needs to be a tribune for all the oppressed. That principle will inform future articles. □

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Debate: demonising trans people



Debate

By Simon Nelson

Dale Street's article in *Solidarity* 749 is disappointing. Seven years after Workers' Liberty adopted an explicitly pro-trans policy, we have supporters who would insist on referring to a trans woman with "he" pronouns and as "a trans", as that would suggest Dale gives little thought to the consequences of deliberately misgendering someone. Dehumanising language that tells someone they are not who they are, against a minority under a concerted attack by right-wing forces across the world, doesn't have a place in the socialist press. Even Kathleen Stock has said that she never intentionally misgendered any of her students.

Dale's whole tone implies some kind of predatory or dishonest intent on the part of Dr Beth Upton. She went to use

the same changing rooms in her workplace and got into an argument with another worker, a worker who happens to be a bigot, and opposed Dr Upton using the women's changing rooms. Why? Because Sandie Peggie, the co-worker in question, believed that Upton was LGBTQ+; specifically trans.

For Dale, Sandie Peggie has a right to privacy, which the very presence of Dr Upton had violated.

What is missing from Dale's article is any acknowledgement that we all have the right to some level of privacy. That is privacy for all of us, cis or trans. There is no special right to privacy based on gender. If Sandie Peggie had asked Dr Upton for just a few minutes, that may well have been fine, but we don't know what was said. We do know that Dr Upton was extremely upset and considered reporting the incident to the Police as a hate crime after speaking to her manager. On some accounts, in confronting Upton for using the woman's changing room, Peggie compared

her to a rapist. This follows a long and ignoble tradition of accusing LGBTIQ+ people in changing rooms or toilets of being sexual predators: a trope loudly used against trans people in recent anti-trans moral panics.

Should the hospital make provision for some private cubicles in the changing areas? That would be better than the discrimination that would result from excluding Dr Upton from the changing rooms.

Abandoned

Street says that Dr Upton abandoned their right to privacy after entering "a changing room". Any changing room? And that Peggie's rights were violated. How can this be so? What is the right to privacy in an open changing room? Where does Street propose that Dr Upton, a trans woman, gets changed? Do her male colleagues have a right to object to her using men's changing rooms, or does Dale just not accept Dr Upton is a woman? There are other conflicting accounts of the situation. I

don't know how we can be sure exactly what occurred, possibly not until the Employment Tribunal concludes at the end of this year.

In the earliest reports, Peggie complained that Upton was undressing in front of her, rather than the new line that Peggie had to undress in front of Upton, because of a menstrual flood. "Sex Matters", obviously on the side of Peggie, do not mention the menstrual flood in their briefing.

Peggie's reason for believing Upton to be trans, and for confronting her in the women's changing room, seems to have been that Upton had a visible Adam's apple and a receding hairline. Yet some cis women, as well as many trans women, have visible Adam's apples and receding hairlines. Should they, and other women with non-stereotypical body types (or indeed gender expressions), also be excluded from changing rooms?

NHS Fife's policy did allow Dr Upton access to the changing rooms of the gender she identifies as. If Dale is under the belief that only a fully medically transitioned trans woman would have such a right, then he is mistaken. Where does that leave people living socially in their chosen gender? The implication from Dale is that no one can do that, certainly not adequately.

Dale appeals to "common sense" to back up a trans-exclusionary perspective which he fails to justify with reasoned argument or a serious treatment of the topic matter. That bigoted views are widespread is not a justification of them.

Sandie Peggie may have been treated unfairly by their suspension, and it is possible that an account by a doctor was seen as more credible than that of a nurse. But an employer behaving poorly cannot justify Peggie's attacks on Dr Upton. Nor can it justify the supporters of Peggie who want to exclude trans people from public life, or to vilify Upton. I find it hard to believe that even Dale believes his analogy of a rape victim being questioned about their sexual past, with the evidence of a former friend of Peggie's that she expressed racist and potentially transphobic views. The tone of Dale's letter paints Dr Upton as a predator setting out to harm women. This is part of a demonisation of trans people and trans women in particular as an extension of male violence against women – an approach Workers' Liberty has rejected and campaigns against. Dale would do well to remember that. □

- Our policy is generally to allow broad debate, especially of points of view we disagree with. Dale Street's article in 749 contained a paragraph misgendering someone, which we oppose. We apologise that it wasn't corrected before being printed.

Workers' Liberty policy on trans rights

This is the policy adopted by Workers' Liberty conference 2018.

1. We support transgender rights and express our solidarity with trans people. We oppose prejudice, hostility and discrimination against trans people, and advocate support and compassion towards them.

2. We accept people in the gender they identify as (including non-binary identities).

3. We reject the assertion that individuals' genders are defined by or are bound to the genders to which they were assigned at birth, or to their past or current biological characteristics. We recognise that gender is generally initially assigned based on perceived sexual characteristics associated with binary biological sex. Later too, gender is often presumed on the basis of or associated with perceived or assumed sexual characteristics, often coupled with suppositions about the history of that individual's sexual characteristics. Genders are, currently, strongly socially associated not just with divergent sexual characteristics, but with different practices and behaviours, clothing and presentations,

social and erotic relations, and categorisations of people and identities. These varied and intertwined social phenomena are for many people tied up with their sense of self, their sense of how they relate to other people, and their desires for how they would like to be socially understood. We assert that how institutions and society recognise and categorise an individual's gender should be solely on the basis of that individual's declaration of how they self-identify.

4. We recognise and oppose the currently existing social construction of gender, and work to eliminate the inequalities associated with it.

Self-declaration

5. We recognise the flaws in current gender recognition law and support proposed changes to it, including self-declaration of gender. We have considered, but are not convinced by, arguments that these changes threaten women's spaces or legal protection from sex discrimination.

6. We support the established labour movement practice of including trans women in women's structures and on all-women

shortlists, on the basis of self-identification.

7. We advocate that these issues be discussed in a rational and empathetic way and are addressed through such debate rather than through bureaucratic moves, censorship, no-platforming and violence related to this issue. There are a number of terms which are sometimes used unhelpfully, either to shut down debate or used inaccurately, simply for rhetorical force. That words are used in this way or are perceived by some as inflammatory does not in itself mean they should be abandoned. We seek to properly define words and use them accurately, and encourage others to do likewise.

8. We analyse women's oppression as taking advantage of women's biological sex rather than being rooted in it. We believe women's oppression to be linked to the biology of women in general rather than of each individual woman.

9. We criticise and will further examine the role that identity politics and privilege theory are playing in these discussions.

10. We assert that trans rights and women's rights are not in conflict, and that

movements for trans rights and women's rights need not be in conflict. We contend that there has been a failure of solidarity on this issue, in particular by a proportion of feminists who oppose trans rights, and that centring class politics will enable us to unite against women's, gender and all oppression.

11. We recognise that the oppressions of women and of trans, non-binary, intersex and gender-nonconforming people are rooted in restrictive and oppressive gender relations which are perpetuated by capitalism. This also leads to many commonalities between the ways in which people in these different groups are oppressed, although there are differences and particularities. These factors – as well as the fact that many trans people are trans women and oppressed as women – provides a basis for common struggle on many specific issues, as well as in the struggle to replace class society with a socialist alternative.

We agree on these key points but continue to discuss them and also to debate differences on various issues and nuances in a comradely way. □

Myanmar military junta targets trade-unionists

By Hein Htet Kyaw

Even though the “Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar (STUM)” is a legally registered trade union, on the night of 25 July 2025 the military junta arrested Daw Myo Myo Aye, the founder of STUM. Following her arrest, the military raided the STUM office on the night of July 28, and arrested her daughter, seven other members, and staff. Additionally, another male member of STUM was arrested on the night of July 29 at the zero-mile gate of the expressway. However, it’s now known that they have returned the key.

Similarly, another labour union leader from GY Sen (Myanmar) Apparel Co. Ltd (a garment factory), Phyo Lwin, was arrested for military service on the night of July 27 at around 10:30 pm. So far, nothing has been heard about him or his condition. Daw Myo Myo Aye and others were charged by Zaw Thiha Naing from the Wanxinda (Myanmar) Travel Good Co., Ltd.

A police source said that Military Security Affairs Corps officials and the junta-appointed local director from the Ministry of Labour for suburb “Shwe

Pyi Thar” planned with the GY Sen (Myanmar) Apparel Co. Ltd to file the charges. Two other STUM members were arrested in another township and were brought to court on August 14.

The belongings of the arrested labour activists have not been returned, and there are growing concerns about corruption and collusion between military personnel and industrial zone factories. Allegations have surfaced that Military Security Affairs Corps officials, along with labour ministry authorities, are accepting bribes by the factory owners, who are mostly China-based capitalists, to suppress union activity.

These efforts appear to be aimed at dismantling the labour advocacy group STUM. Daw Myo Myo Aye and the others have been charged under sections 40 and 41 of the Associations Law, with additional charges under section 5(1)(c)(g). They are currently being held in remand across three township courts, and two of the accused recently appeared in court in North Okkalapa and Insein.

There is growing suspicion that these legal actions are strategically timed to weaken the trade union movement

during a period of heightened vulnerability for workers. The situation has escalated further, with reports that family visits to the detainees are now prohibited. Only rice can be sent to them, and even that may not be reaching its destination.

The local officials from the Ministry of Labour have reportedly continued to interfere, including pressuring executive committee members at the GY Sen (Myanmar) Apparel Co. Ltd to remove two individuals, Phyo Lwin and Zaw Maung Maung, from their roles. The committee refused, demanding formal documentation before taking any action. Legal access has also been restricted, with lawyers. It’s also reported that local station chiefs are intimidated by Military Security Affairs Corps officers, who are allegedly pushing for charges based on minor infractions and applying undue pressure. Despite the seriousness of the situation, the military has yet to issue any public explanation for the arrests, and the crackdown on STUM members appears to be ongoing.

Evidence continues to mount that government departments and factory

owners are colluding to exploit workers and suppress labour rights. Owners of five Chinese-owned factories – including the Wanxinda Travel Goods Co. – are said to have bribed Military Security Affairs Corps officers, and the local officers from the Ministry of Labour to orchestrate the arrests of Daw Myo Myo Aye and her colleagues.

If the current pattern of foreign capitalist exploitation – particularly by Chinese-owned factories in collaboration with the Myanmar military junta – continues unchecked, it risks pushing the already oppressed working class toward framing their struggle in terms of racial tension or adopting anti-China sentiment as a form of resistance.

The Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar urgently requires support from trade unionists around the world, with particular importance placed on solidarity from within China. There are reasons for concern that the Myanmar military is attempting to deflect local trade unionists by stoking racial divisions or invoking anti-imperialist narratives, rather than addressing the legitimate demands of the country’s labour movement. □

Green parties across the world



Environment

By Colin Foster

Simon Nelson and Owen Flood have written recently in *Solidarity* on Green Parties as vehicles for left activism.

The last 40-odd years show many cases of substantial bodies of left activists going into various Green Parties. I know no case of a stronger left group coming out of work in the Greens. By contrast, when small groups of left activists have worked within “traditional” left parties, Social Democrats, Labour, etc., the results have been mixed, but sometimes of augmented strength and influence.

The world’s first Green party was the United Tasmania Group in 1972, mostly concerned with protecting green and biodiverse spaces. The Tasmanians for a while advocated importing coal-generated electricity in place of a renewable-energy dam project. Opposition to nuclear power (in our view, misguided) later became central, especially in Germany. Then climate

change came to the fore.

Early Australian Green leaders like Bob Brown were activists, but “neither left nor right”. State-level Green parties grew, generally soft-left, then an Australia-wide party from 1992. Nick Origglass, the veteran of Australian Trotskyism, and his group, joined the Greens; Origglass’s sidekick Hall Greenland became a leading figure in the New South Wales Greens. The Castroites tried to get a foothold. Lee Rhiannon, from a Stalinist background, won influence in NSW. In Queensland, Drew Hutton, an anarchist active and often arrested at demonstrations, founded the Greens.

The dominant trend has been for the Greens to consolidate as quietly soft-left, and more electoralist-only. The Australians are still more street-active than other Green parties, but, according to my daughter, recently a Greens activist, that’s mostly elected Green politicians showing their faces, not collective action. Hutton, now old and not-very-involved, was expelled from the Australian Greens in July 2025 for backing a (small) group which denounces Labor and Green electoral candidates who support trans

rights. (Britain has more anti-trans-rights agitation from the left rather than the traditionalist right than other countries; Australia has a bit too).

The German Green Party’s founder in 1980, Petra Kelly, took the term “green” from Australia’s “green bans” (industrial boycotts by building workers). Kelly too talked of “neither left nor right”, but the early German Greens were left-leaning and relatively street-active. As the big Maoist groups from the 1970s declined, many of their members joined the Greens. For maybe 20 years disputes between so-called “realos” and “fundis” dominated the Greens. In the last 20 years or so the “fundis” have faded.

Consolidated

Former soft-Maoist leaders such as the famous economist Alain Lipietz also figured in France’s Green party, consolidated in 1982 after a number of previous Green electoral efforts. Lipietz too has been expelled, over a local government alliance with the mainstream right. The Green Party has a prehistory in Britain going back to 1972, but was formed as such in 1985. Its big advance in membership

and votes was in 2015. There are now over 100 Green parties worldwide. Plus the Green Party USA, excluded from the Global Greens for its pro-Russian stand on Ukraine. European Green parties wrote to it in 2024 asking it to withdraw from the US presidential election and back Harris against Trump.

According to the Global Greens report, the biggest is the Green Party in Rwanda, with over 200,000 supporters, but maybe read “most optimistic” there for “biggest”.

Central

The Australians and the Germans are still central. Generally Green parties’ voters are a fraction of the younger, formally-educated, city, middle class or upper working class. They have often gained solid electoral anchorage but at the same time become more parties seeking junior positions in government than protest movements.

In Germany, the Greens have been in coalitions in state governments repeatedly since 1985, in federal government twice since 1998. Because of Australia’s electoral system, the Greens there have had less ministerial success, but for

over 20 years they have been clearly Australia’s third-biggest party, and have had sizeable numbers (between 9 and 12 out of 76) in the federal Senate (elected by STV) and thus often power to block or amend legislation. In 2010-3 they made a formal agreement to support the Gillard Labor government. In England, in December 2009, the Green Party mobilised sizeable numbers to a climate protest in London. Since then they have grown electorally, but become marginal to climate street action, which XR and such groups organise. That seems a general trend. □

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Trump's police clampdown spreads from LA to DC

By Paul D'Amato and Sharon Smith

Trump was just testing the waters in Los Angeles. Since he got away with sending federal troops there, his next move has been to deploy the National Guard to Washington, DC – while threatening to do the same in other localities, like New York, Chicago, Baltimore and Oakland, all of them with Black Democratic mayors.

On August 11, as noted above, Trump deployed the National Guard, this time to Washington, DC, again feigning a non-existent "emergency". Trump claimed that "our capital city has been overtaken by violent gangs and bloodthirsty criminals, roving mobs of wild youth, drugged-out maniacs, and homeless people." DC, like other large US cities, is experiencing a record-low violent crime rate – its lowest in 30 years – so Trump's "emergency" claim is transparently false.

Nevertheless, that was the Trump administration's excuse for a federal takeover of the city's police department, installing the head of the Drug Enforcement Administration, Terry Cole, as "emergency police commissioner" with all the powers of the police chief. Trump has, for all intents and purposes, put the city of Washington, DC into federal receivership.

On August 12, the Washington Post reported that the Trump administration is evaluating "plans that would establish a 'Domestic Civil Disturbance Quick Reaction Force' composed of hundreds of National Guard troops tasked with rapidly deploying into American cities facing protests or other unrest, according to internal Pentagon documents... The plan calls for 600 troops to be on standby at all times so they can deploy in as little as one hour."

These latest developments demonstrate that Trump and his closest advisers are working to push the limits of authoritarian rule, to establish precedents that can be used as stepping stones to further curtail and crush genuine expressions of democracy and dissent as they fulfil their vision of the US as a white man's country.

If it weren't obvious already, it is now: All of us, whatever our immigration status, will suffer if the Trump administration continues to advance its authoritarian agenda – because it was never just about immigration.

Already, heavily armed and masked federal goons dressed in military fatigues roam immigrant neighbourhoods in unmarked vehicles across the country, ready to descend on un-

suspecting parents dropping their kids off at school, workers on their way to their jobs, attending an immigration hearing – seemingly anytime at any place.

In its obsession with mass deportations, the Trump administration is utilising personnel from the FBI, U.S. Marshals, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons. So those who witness anonymous federal agents beating and hoisting migrants into unmarked vehicles are not only prevented from identifying the name or badge number of the kidnappers, but don't even know which agency to contact to try and locate where those captured have been taken.

Arrest rate

In the months immediately following Trump's second inauguration, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) more than doubled its daily arrest rate, with an average of 666 immigration arrests per day, compared to less than 300 per day in 2024. But in May, Miller demanded that ICE make 3,000 arrests a day, up from 650. The results were immediate. In Los Angeles alone, between June 6 and June 22, immigration agents arrested more than 1,600 people. June's total for Homeland Security immigration arrests in the Los Angeles area reached nearly 3,000, compared to 850 in May.

Trump's "big, beautiful bill" that sailed through congress in early July promises to massively expand the immigration enforcement machinery. The National Immigration Justice Center called the bill a "slush fund" for immigration enforcement agencies because it "shells out over \$170 billion to balloon the immigration enforcement industrial complex led by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) agencies – to the benefit of private prison executives and government contractors. The impact on communities across the country will be dire and will signal historic rollbacks of immigrants' rights and access to justice."

ICE is currently on a hiring spree to expand its already enormous staff of agents, and it has lifted all age requirements, is offering signing bonuses as

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high as \$50,000 and student loan repayments up to \$60,000 in order to attract as many applicants as quickly as possible.

In reality, ICE's call for "patriotic" Americans to join up is most likely to attract those who seek to earn a living from beating and kidnapping immigrants.

ICE has designated some jails where immigrants languish for days or more than a week as "holding" rather than "detention" centres – claiming that, as in the case of 26 Federal Plaza in New York City, they are "housing [immigrants] until they can be detained." This new designation takes away the right of elected Congress members from inspecting the facilities.

And these so-called holding facilities do not have provisions for longer term detentions. 26 Federal Plaza, for example – which is intended for hours, not days, of detention – does not have a provision for meals, beds or bathing.

Federal detention centres with names like "Alligator Alcatraz" (in Florida) and "Speedway Slammer" (in Indiana) demonstrate how officials delight in mocking the violence awaiting migrant detainees on their premises. A new report by the office of Democratic Senator Jon Ossoff of Georgia, found 510 credible reports of human rights abuses since Trump's inauguration in

January.

The Trump regime has struck deals with at least 19 countries, including El Salvador, Sudan, Libya, and Rwanda and is seeking deals with dozens more, to take in deportees from the United States – a plan that the U.S. Supreme Court also approved in late June in its shadow docket. This deliberately cruel and inhumane policy was defended by Miller in a chillingly telling way: "ICE is sending planes all over the world all the time. Anyone who came here illegally, we're finding them and we're getting them out." Americans have grown markedly more positive toward immigration over the past year, with the share wanting immigration reduced dropping from 55% in 2024 to 30% today. At the same time, a record-high 79% of U.S. adults say immigration is a good thing for the country.

These shifts reverse a four-year trend that began in 2021 and reflect changes among all major party groups. □

• Adapted with thanks from the [ISP website](#), abridged and with the order of paragraphs changed.

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Tariffs and world-market regime-change

By Martin Thomas

Where are Trump's tariffs taking us? The mainstream economist Adam Posen writes: "As the song goes, you don't know what you've got till it's gone. The Trump administration has paved paradise and put up a casino, with what will soon be an empty parking lot".

The dollar-centred capitalist world market of 1945-2025 was a good time for capitalists overall. It was a frame for great capitalist growth, and for less costly recovery from crises than in the 1930s. Where labour movements were strong enough, the growth gave us leeway to win serious social improvements. And now we are heading into "the breakdown of the economic regime that prevailed for 80 years", and the capitalists will try to make workers pay the costs, as they made us pay costs in those 80 years of growth.

Karl Marx in his day thought that world money had to be gold, tied to world-market labour-time by production facts. To operate in the world market, paper money had to have a reliable link to gold.

Reconstructed

The US government thought the same when it reconstructed the capitalist world market after 1945. It tied the dollar to gold at \$35 per ounce, and held over half the world's gold reserves.

In 1971 the French government tried to cash in the promise of an ounce of gold for every \$35. The US, fiscally afflicted by the Vietnam war, withdrew the guarantee.

There was a decade of great economic turmoil, but the world market did not collapse. Beyond the gold guarantee, the foundation for bits of paper printed in green by the US government being world-money was that the US could supply (for dollars) almost everything at a "world class" technical level. And between 1945 and 1971 things had happened which enabled the dollar to serve as world money without the gold guarantee.

The US had drastically reduced tariffs and trade barriers, so that capitalists elsewhere could export to the US. If your dollars could not buy something directly from the US, they could buy it from a non-US source which produced it for sale in dollars.

By 1971, lots of capitalists outside the US held dollar stashes. With greatly-reduced shipping costs (containerisation, air freight) and tariffs, many could easily get more dollars by selling to the US. Industrial capacity and infrastructure had grown fast in many countries in Europe, in Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, even in some countries in Latin America, and they could compete in US markets.

From about 1980 a new version of

the post-1945 regime evolved, using a dollar "suspended in mid-air". The US was still the centre of the capitalist world economy, without a gold guarantee. The US still 35% of world economic output. (Even today it is 26%). And it became the world's clearing-house for financial markets which grew enormously and for economic rules (World Bank, IMF, WTO). The framework was robust enough to integrate the ex-US and Eastern Europe effectively after 1989-91, and China too, in a different way.

Capitalists across a wide range of countries boomed. And US capitalists too. Posen summarises: "The United States received dirt-cheap long-term loans to the US government; disproportionately massive foreign investment in American corporations and the US workforce; a near-global adherence to US technical and legal standards that advantaged US-based producers; reliance on the US financial system for the vast majority of global transactions and reserves; compliance with US initiatives on sanctions; payments for garrisoning American troops; widespread dependence on the US defence industry".

It was never all win-win, far from it. And from the early 1980s, the US systematically imported a lot more manufactured goods than it exported and paid for the imports and its budget deficits via dollars which non-US capitalists transferred back to the US to buy US Treasury bonds and other assets. The ever-increasing US government debt would hit limits at some point, and meanwhile cost a lot in interest payments. Trump's policies are, in their crackpot way, a response to this impasse.

Deteriorating

Today, the dollar is deteriorating as world money because it is becoming harder to get more dollars by exporting to the US; because it is becoming more uncertain that stashes held in US Treasury bonds and other US assets are safe and "liquid" (can be converted easily and cheaply); and because it is less certain that dollars will buy anything you want at world standards.

The "post-American world economy", as Posen calls it, will continue to operate with the dollar for some time yet. Non-US governments are not following the US down the retaliatory-tariffs road. They are speeding partial trade deals among themselves. A drastic fragmentation of the world economy into trading blocs supplemented by ad hoc deals, if it comes, will come not directly and gradually, but through the repercussions of a world financial crash. But Trump's tariffs, and also his new cryptocurrency enthusiasm, make crashes more likely. Posen again: "alternative assets – non-dollar currencies... gold... and newer cryptocurrency prod-



ucts – will surge. Because these assets are less liquid [less easily and cheaply swapped], these upswings will almost certainly lead to periodic financial crashes".

The detail of what is happening now with the tariffs is murky, let alone what will happen in the next year or so. Chinese figures show Chinese exports to the US decreasing 25% this year, US figures show them decreasing 50%. In May 2025, reading off the US tariff schedules, the average tariff charged on US imports was 17.5%, but the average actually collected was 8.7%.

Nevertheless, serious mainstream economists largely agree that:

- Trump's "trade deals" to make other countries more US-import-friendly are largely failing
- The tariffs will not rebuild the US's industrial base. A high-tech modern factory takes many years to build, requires much infrastructure already in place, and some assurance about being able to import its inputs cheaply and reliably. The tariffs may make many US producers less competitive, since they will have to pay higher prices for their inputs
- The tariff income will not mend the US budget deficit. However it will be big enough to create barriers to a post-Trump government unwinding the tariffs quickly
- The tariffs will drive price inflation in the US and a general slowing of world trade
- China has huge economic problems, but the Trump tariffs are not the worst. Chinese capitalists can deal with them.

Posen goes further: "Trump's approach will do the greatest damage to the economies that are most closely tied to the US economy and took the previous rules of the game most for granted: Canada, Japan, Mexico, South Korea, and the United Kingdom". Add in, probably, some weaker capitalist economies highly dependent on exports of cheap clothing and electronics to the USA: Vietnam, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Lesotho...

Brexit

Starmer's "hold on to Trump, for fear of bump" policy will work poorly even in its own terms. Reversing Brexit would be a much better response to a world where free movement of people, and economic flows too, are increasingly gummed up.

In the USA, the United Auto Workers is now "deeply angered by the Trump administration's announced trade deal with Japan". It still says "well-crafted tariffs" would be good, as if we could imagine Trump "crafting" them "well" for us, but it is beginning to wake up. Labour movements elsewhere should stand against retaliatory tariffs.

The answer to the new casino-and-parking-lot economy is an old one: workers of the world, unite! Workers' links and solidarity across borders, and between workers of different backgrounds, migrant statuses, religions, and genders within each country. The old world is crumbling. We have a new world to win. □

A choice every day to organise



How I became a socialist

By Cecelia Hyde

It's tempting to say that I have "always" been a socialist. I certainly can't remember a time before socialism felt "right" to me. But my childhood wasn't overtly political.

While my parents are somewhat left-leaning, and generally had quite socially progressive outlooks, it was rare for them to talk politics. And growing up in a middle-class family in Guernsey, an island closely linked to the UK but with a separate and partyless political system, kept me mostly isolated from political organisations and -isms.

Growing up, most of my family were public servants of some description, so it was maybe inevitable that, regardless of any direct political education,

I came to recognise the value of work that benefited society – and how that often fails to correlate with how much that work is valued financially.

My family has also historically been quite mobile. Most of my family, particularly on my dad's side, were immigrants at some point in their lives. I had moved countries three times before the age of three, and I then grew up in a place that, while separate from the UK, still felt much like a part of it. As a result, nationalism always failed to make any sort of sense to me.

It's also not unreasonable to think that being queer, even if it was something I failed to realise for quite some time, shaped the way that I saw people from marginalised communities from a young age.

One thing that I have "always" done is prioritise logic over tradition, and socialism is very much the logical conclusion of my beliefs. I could see that the values of capital often do not align

with the values of people, that discriminating against people based on which side of a border they were born on does not serve to help society, that people marginalised by society are not "lesser" – and how could I see those things without seeing the necessity of socialism, international solidarity, and intersectionality?

Workforce

That said, there was a final piece of the puzzle that I do remember having to learn explicitly – how the system could (or rather couldn't) be changed. I grew up in a society that championed democracy, but a democracy that boiled down to "vote in elections". Once I was old enough to vote, and I returned to the UK, I finally got the chance to do that – and learnt how, even with elections, the voices of voters were often readily ignored.

Beyond that, entering the workforce, where even the pretence of democracy is totally absent, made it even clearer

how limited electoral democracy actually is. It was only after this that I truly came to appreciate that votes are not the beginnings of progress, but the end result of people coming together and organising to fight for change until their demands can no longer be ignored. That power is not found in the choices offered to you by those who rule, but is instead found when you find solidarity with the people around you, to speak and act together as one.

To me, socialism is recognising the ways in which most people are failed by the system we live under, and seeking to create something better that is truly controlled by us all. To be a socialist is to organise with others to make that happen. You don't just wake up one day as socialist. You wake up every day and make a choice to either accept the status quo or try and build something better – it's a muscle I'm still learning to use, but I know the right choice. □



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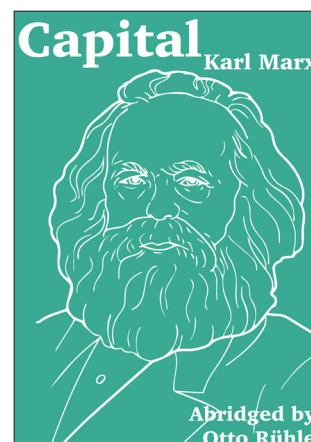
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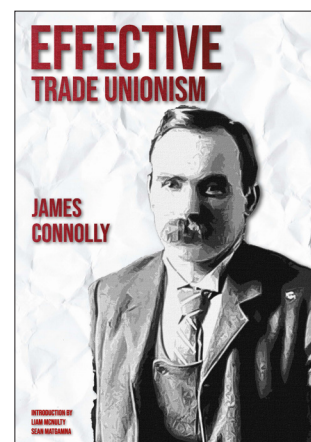
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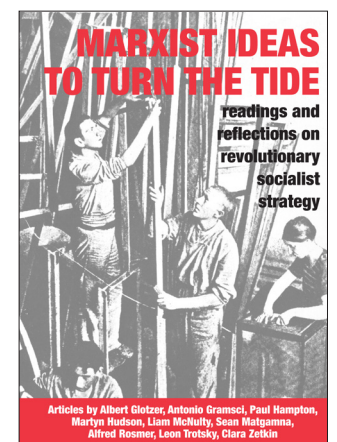
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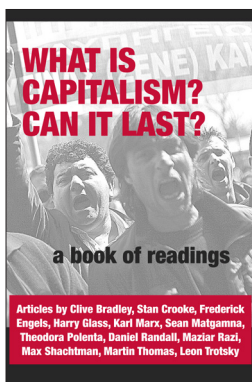
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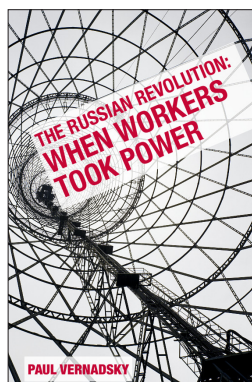
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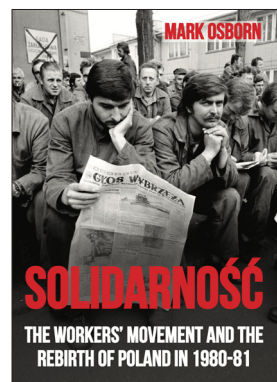
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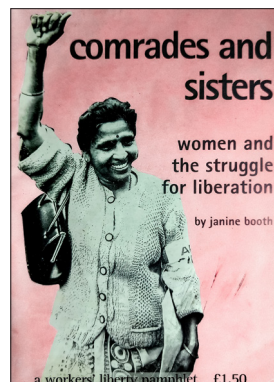
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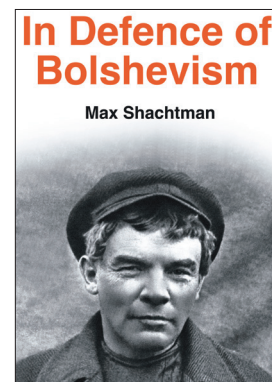
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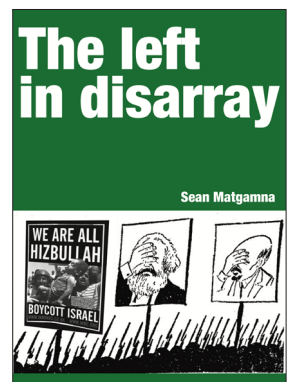
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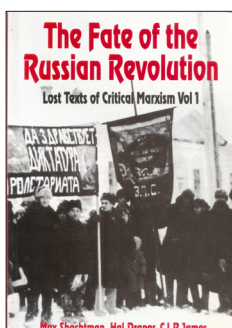
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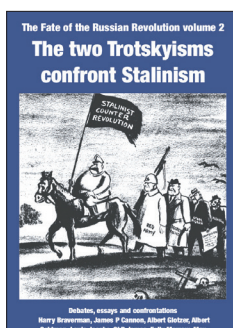
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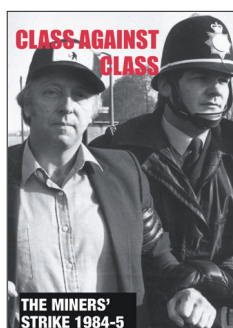
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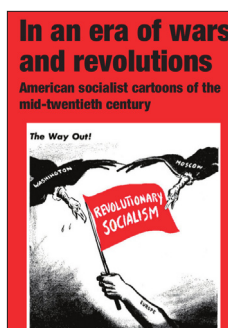
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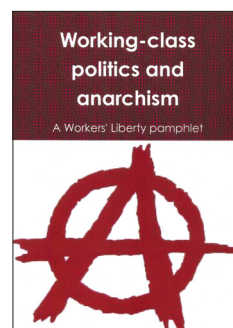
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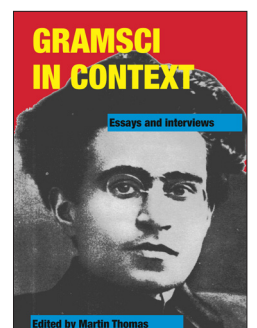
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PCS demands Rayner meet with union

By a PCS member

The national branch of the PCS union representing civil service workers within the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is continuing its campaign over office closures, rigid office attendance policies, and abandonment of the location-neutral policy that enables staff to take up any departmental role from their current locations.

The union has announced an all-out strike on 1 September, to be followed by targetted action in key areas including in Finance, Planning, and Resilience and Emergency. Many members have been pressing for further action.

PCS announced the action following the refusal of Ministers and senior officials to respond meaningfully to the national branch's written proposals, submitted on a non-prejudicial basis to restart negotiations and to explore potential resolution. MHCLG is, of course, a department led by Secretary of State Angela Rayner, who in her political speeches presents herself as a champion of workers' rights.

Rayner and other departmental ministers have refused to meet with PCS National Branch representatives, claiming not want to interfere in relationships between departmental officials and employees. It is a damning position, showing the disconnect between

Labour politicians' statements on the need for improved workers rights and "working people taking their voice back", and their deafening silence about civil service workers' struggles, in MHCLG and elsewhere, to defend their jobs, terms and conditions.

Rayner's senior management team has shown precisely what it thinks about MHCLG workers taking their voice back – they have told the media that PCS's strike decision is not an "appropriate response to the issues raised" and have repeatedly sought to challenge strike votes under the Tories anti union laws.

Rayner should be embarrassed that her senior management think it appropriate for them to proclaim as "in-

appropriate" workers expressing their strength of feeling through strike action, on issues critical to their employment and working lives. She should meet with PCS National Representatives and instruct her management team to engage meaningfully with them.

More broadly, national PCS should now be joining up the various discontents and disputes throughout the civil service and should be publicly demanding, along with the TUC, that Labour insist on a massive change of attitude towards unions at the top levels of the civil service. □

Sharifeh Mohammadi faces death

From Shahrokh Zamani Action Campaign

According to Sharifeh Mohammadi's lawyer, Amir Raisian, Branch 39 of the Iranian regime's Supreme Court has now upheld her death sentence, despite "all the remaining ambiguities and objections". The Supreme Court had previously overturned this ruling.

Mr Raisian said: "None of the problems [with Sharifeh's case] have been resolved. We will pursue a retrial and try to overturn the death sentence in other ways."

The latest setback on 16 August follows the reinstatement of Sharifeh's death sentence on 13 February 2025.

Sharifeh Mohammadi is a well-known labour activist. Her trumped-up charges include "armed rebellion" – based on her previous membership of the Co-ordination Committee for Establishing Labour Organisations! Examples of Sharifeh Mohammadi's "rebellion" charge include "possession of posters calling for no executions, membership of a Tele-



gram group, and publication of several articles."

The Shahrokh Zamani Action Campaign strongly condemns the arrest, continuing detention and baseless death sentence of Sharifeh Mohammadi and calls for her immediate and unconditional release. We urge all trade unionists, socialists and other political activists to help us in defending the rights of all workers, political prisoners and social rights activists in Iran.

Free all political prisoners in Iran! □



Workers' Liberty Summer Camp took place over the August bank holiday weekend

Birmingham bins dispute must be revitalised

By Jim Denham

Birmingham bin workers in the Unite union have been on all out strike against wage cuts since 11 March.

Their employer, Birmingham's Labour council, is seeking to impose a plan that would mean workers losing up to £8,000 per year.

The council has tried (or threatened) every kind of anti-union tactic to break the strike: bringing in scabs from other authorities, obtaining an injunction against picketing, threatening what amounts to

fire and rehire, and even consulting military planners about the possible use of the army.

But now the council seems to have decided upon a new tactic: doing nothing and waiting for the strikers to become demoralised and drift back to work. In mid-July the council (in its own words) "walked away" from negotiations and threatened possible compulsory redundancies.

Unite claims that the council's position in negotiations has been dictated all along by the unelected commissioners

sent in by the Tories when the council was declared unable to balance its budget in 2023, and kept on by the Labour government since then.

There is now a sense that Unite is letting matters drift, with no effective strategy for achieving victory or even an acceptable compromise. An elected strike committee would provide a forum for the discussion of tactics and what the "red lines" should be in any settlement. Regular mass meetings would involve the rank and file in decision mak-

ing and keep the workforce united.

Meanwhile, left wingers in the Labour Party are demanding that the council reopens negotiations with Unite, with no preconditions and without the involvement of the commissioners. □

- Donate to the strike fund – Unite WM/7186 Branch, account: 20308397, sort code: 608301. Title donation: BCC Strike Donation. Tweet support to @UniteWestMids. Sign petition at tinyurl.com/bhambins.

More online

Six lessons from Greece

Ten years after Syriza's political collapse
bit.ly/6-greece

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“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:

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

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tion there as we seek to continue and expand the work we are doing.

Any last minute donations are of course always welcome. □

• workersliberty.org/donate

All out on LU and DLR!

RMT has called strikes for early September, involving directly-employed staff on LU and the DLR.

On LU, there'll be a week of rolling strikes, with workers in different functions striking on different days. Monday 8 and Wednesday 10 September will see the largest number of workers on strike, with drivers, station staff, and fleet and engineering workers all walking out.

DLR workers will strike on Tuesday 9

and Thursday 11 September.

Both strikes aim to secure an improved settlement on pay and conditions for 2025-6. LUL has offered a 3.4% increase. Whilst this matches the RPI rate of inflation from February 2025, usually taken as the snapshot for pay deals, it's below-inflation relative to the current rate, which is 3.8%. On DLR, the offer is just 2.6%, with strings attached including changes to rostering arrangements.

RMT's demand is for an above-inflation increase, with a flat-rate minimum for the lowest paid, to ensure those at the bottom of the pay scale benefit most. We're also fighting for a reduced working week – not the compressed working week offer that LUL and Aslef want to foist on drivers (more on this elsewhere on our blog), but a real reduction in the contractual week, with no detrimental changes to terms and conditions. □

Fine words butter no vegetables



Diary of a Tube worker

By Jay Dawkey

It is no secret that shift workers' diets may leave much to be desired. Fortunately, various depots have canteens where reasonably priced hot food is available. But often, the content of that food leaves much to be desired.

Posters around the canteen will tell you about the exciting "world food bowls" and plant-based alternatives offered by Sodexo, the contractor that provides the food. Yet the food is usually a burger and chips, a full English breakfast, or fish and chips. Maybe a baked potato or omelette is available in some places. Vegetarian meals? A bean burger and chips.

The canteens are always just a single member of staff, so if we wanted a better option, there would need to be

more staff available to make the food. Sodexo pay just £13.85 per hour, the London Living Wage. RMT demands an increase to £15 p/h, but it is being stonewalled.

The company preaches a balanced diet and healthy snacking to combat fatigue. But our depots are filled with the standard chocolate and crisps vending machines you'd expect in many workplaces.

It is yet another example of fine words that butter no parsnips. □

Animal Farm on film



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

It is the 80th anniversary of *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's famous allegory of the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union. There have been at least three screen

adaptations since: the first was the animation by John Halas and Joy Batchelor in 1954.

The story is well-known: The animals of Manor Farm rise up against Jones the cruel and oppressive farmer, throw him out and establish a socialist democratic regime, which they call Animal Farm. All are equal. However, the revolution is hijacked by the pig

Napoleon (Stalin) and degenerates.

Orwell died in 1950 and the film rights were acquired by RD-DR (Readers' Digest – de Rochement), a company with links to the CIA. It is a complex story. It appears that Halas and Batchelor were unaware of these connections, but this is a complex web, impossible to summarise in such a short space. A number

of changes were made to the original, particularly the ending and the pig Snowball (a parallel to Trotsky) was made less sympathetic.

Batchelor was against the changes but it seems that Halas later defended them. *Animal Farm* was the first British full length animation film. □

• Background notes online: bit.ly/ani-farm



Sheffield megapicket draws 150

By Harold Storey

The second "Sheffield Mega-Picket" to back the indefinite strike of bin workers at the Lumley Street depot in Sheffield demanding the recognition of Unite the union was on 19 August, the one-year anniversary of the strike.

Endorsed by various union branches and organisations including the Sheffield Trades Union Council, the Mega-Picket drew around 150 trade unionists, activists, strikers and Unite officials. Supporters also used the opportunity to leaflet and talk with workers crossing the picket line.

A High Court injunction has been won to ban the blocking of bin wagons at the site, after activists slow walked in front of the depot and disrupted service. Nonetheless, standing in solidarity with striking workers cannot be made an offence, and nor can discussions with workers crossing picket lines.

Supporters had a brief chat with the crew of the first wagon seeking to leave the depot, who shortly thereafter decided not to proceed with work at all and left their wagon parked at the depot gates. All bin wagons were delayed at the site for over two hours as strikers and supporters from various groups and trade unions gave and heard speeches, some of which were listened to by scabbing workers themselves.

The resolve of the strikers at Lumley Street is commendable. However, the employer, Veolia is equally as stubborn. Unite, other trade unions, and Labour members in Sheffield and beyond must start putting more pressure only on Veolia, and on Sheffield's Labour led council over their contract with a strike-breaking employer. □

Win for Nottingham HCSWs

By Rob Hudd

Healthcare Support Workers at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust have had 28 days of strikes since April and now are celebrating an important victory, a permanent pay rise and back pay of up to £2,000.

Over 900 workers will now be regraded to Band 3 of the NHS Agenda for Pay scale after years that the mostly Band 2 workers were routinely doing work way beyond personal care. Instead they have been taking blood samples, fitting cannulas and carrying out electrocardiograms, which even doctors sometimes struggle with.

Minimum wage rates in the UK are £12.21ph and staff were being paid £12.93ph – even lower than retail assistants in supermarkets on £15ph.

Hospitals are the biggest employer in Nottingham, with 17,000 workers. Chief Executive Anthony May was determined to send out a warning to others like doctors that strikes don't work, but a vote for a full month of strikes in August finally won the day after a previous measly offer of one day's holiday.

The deal was approved by 70% of staff. They had been helped by the support of a left-led branch but also by the machinery of the union being fully behind them and paying £50 a day strike pay. Even with that, the workers were losing hundreds of pounds by the strikes, and they knew their support from other staff and patients was under pressure. They also knew that every day, even without strikes, staff



were stretched to breaking point, and they drew a line.

The strike has been won in the same month that branches are nominating for General Secretary of Unison. Christine McAnea has been in post since 2021 following the 20 years of Dave Prentis. Both McAnea and Prentis have been favourites of the sprawling union bureaucracy under whose control Unison has been a timid and loyal supporter of the Blair and Starmer governments and put up little opposition up to the 14 years of Tory neglect and private-capital exploitation of the NHS and public services.

McAnea has ensured she is seen as associated with the victory. The half-million health workers in Unison have been frustrated at the continuing fall in real wages at a time when more militant action by doctors, nurses and ambulance workers has made at least limited gains.

The left wing Time for Real Change briefly held a majority of the ruling National Executive Committee, but lost it this year, perhaps because members saw "left control" making little difference on pay and conditions. McAnea

reckons that saying Labour needs to do more and getting photo opportunities with strikers could win her five more years in charge. TFRC and its candidate Andrea Egan will need to argue all the issues in every branch, and do more than saying (rightly) that Egan will if elected take only the wage of a social worker, not the current £118,454 salary plus £47,658 benefits. □

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BMA calls new ballot

By Wade Ferguson

The British Medical Association (BMA) is holding a fresh ballot for industrial action, after announcing that it was bringing the issue of insufficient training places and jobs into its existing pay dispute with the government.

The ballot will be for this year's cohort of newly qualified doctors, known as FY1 or foundation year one doctors, who were not included in the previous ballot on pay earlier in the year.

Final-year medical students are asked before they graduate to rank the regions of the UK in terms of where they would prefer to work. For the past three years, they have then been assigned hospitals based on a lottery system, with the few hundred students with the lowest scores often only finding out at short notice where exactly they will be living and working for the next two years.

The BMA argues that FY1 doctors will now also bear the brunt of the unemployment crisis that has unfolded over recent years, as it has become increas-

ingly difficult for doctors to progress in their training. After completing their two-year foundation programme, doctors are able to enter specialist training, yet over 30,000 applications were made for only 10,000 training places this year.

Some of those without training places find stand-alone non-training posts, usually for six months to one year, or work filling rota gaps on an ad hoc basis. However, this is also becoming more precarious, and a BMA recent survey found that a third of resident doctor respondents had no secure source of work at all this month. Those that do have work find their pay has been significantly eroded since 2008.

The BMA is therefore calling for both full pay restoration to 2008 levels and an increase in training places. After meeting with Health Secretary Wes Streeting on 5 August, the BMA's Resident Doctors Committee agreed to a period of negotiations without strikes. The new ballot opens on 8 September. □

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Palestine Action: lift the ban!

By Will Roberts

The final tally for those arrested at the 9 August Parliament Square action in support of Palestine Action was around 520. That more than doubled the number of people arrested under the ban, but arrests continue.

Shami Chakrabarti has warned that the decision by the government to proscribe Palestine Action and then to double down on that decision could be a mistake "of Poll Tax proportions."

The 9 August demonstration was far from a pitched battle between protestors and police. As the numbers carted away climbed higher, it became more like of a farcical ceremony.

The vast majority of protestors held identical signs saying "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action". Many were elderly; some well-known, such as the poet Alice Oswald.

It would be hard to imagine an easier boost for

Palestine Action. It would be hard to imagine a worse piece of publicity for the Labour government than front-page pictures of 60 and 70-year-olds being dragged away by police.

Irish novelist Sally Rooney wrote a piece for the Irish Times announcing her intention to donate royalties from all books and TV adaptations to Palestine Action. Home Secretary Yvette Cooper told Rooney that expressing such views in the UK would be illegal (Rooney lives in Ireland), and it would be illegal for the BBC to pay her royalties for the series they have broadcast based on her novels.

The decision to proscribe an organisation because some supporters threw paint on a plane is absurd. That the government is choosing to make this proscription its focus amid horror in Gaza is adding insult to injury. Workers' Liberty demands that the Labour government back down. □

Trade unionists and trans rights

A TUC fringe meeting on 7 September will discuss how trade-unionists can safeguard trans workers' rights to keep their jobs without having to "out" themselves and to use public toilets, swimming pools, gyms, cinemas, etc. But things look bad for the "Code of Practice" due to come from the EHRC. More inside: page 7. □



Trump has extended his police clampdown from Los Angeles to Washington DC, and now threatens to extend it to Chicago and other cities. In the first few days of the federal takeover of policing in DC, 300 out of 719 arrested were migrants without legal status. Trump and his allies in many states are [moving](#), though with difficulty, to curb voting rights before the November 2026 "mid-terms". He has reintroduced tariffs designed to disrupt the world-market flows of the last 80 years, and this time, unlike April, without a big bond-market kickback. He is trying to sack a member of the Federal Reserve (central bank) Board in a continuing effort to win control there, too. Bernie Sanders has restarted his Fighting Oligarchy speaking tour, with stops including Chicago on 24 August (above) and Portland, Maine, on 1 September. The next big round of protests against Trump in the USA is 1 September. See pages 18-19 □

Intervening in the new party plans

Local meetings are now being held in some areas by those interested in "Your Party", due to be launched by Jeremy Corbyn, Zarah Sultana, and the four "Gaza Independent" MPs.

Workers' Liberty activists are attending to argue for working-class socialist politics, for day-to-day class-struggle



activity beyond election-eering, for unity in action with the Labour left, and a democratic structure with delegates, elections, motions, votes.

We still don't know the form and date of the promised launch conference. More inside: pages 8-10. □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

TAX THE RICH, END CHILD POVERTY

By Rhodri Evans

Rachel Reeves is almost certain to raise taxes in the Budget, late October or early November. *Solidarity* campaigns for the tax rise to be levied on top wealth, and to be big enough to start winding back cuts and ending the two-child benefit cap.

Tax Justice UK has set out [plans](#), including a wealth tax, that would raise £60 billion a year.

The immediate reason for taxes rising for many workers in recent years (through threshold drift), and yet the NHS sagging and cuts continuing, is the £100

billion or so a year paid in debt interest on the borrowing the government did so heavily in the Covid lockdowns.

Really to change direction, we need a government willing and competent for public ownership and democratic control of high finance, to redirect those

huge flows for social purposes.

We can start making the labour movement fit to win such a workers' government by insisting on immediate taxes on the ultra-wealthy to pay for restoring the NHS, welfare benefits, and council services. □



Cartoon: @gewman