

# Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



**For social ownership of the banks and industry**

# FOR FREE MOVEMENT



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# For free movement and workers' solidarity! Tax the rich to bring services, jobs, and homes for all



On Monday 9 June a race riot broke out in central Ballymena, a Protestant-majority town 40km north of Belfast, in Northern Ireland.

Two 14-year-old boys, members of migrant families, had appeared in court charged with attempted rape of a teenage girl. As a vigil for the girl broke up a large mob began to attack homes and cars belonging to immigrant workers in the area around Clonavon Road in central Ballymena.

Local media estimated the number on the streets at 2,500, from a population of 31,000.

The main target was the Roma community, although Filipino-owned cars and property were torched as were the homes of Eastern European workers. Migrant workers had been drawn to Ballymena by the possibility of work in local factories, retail and in care homes.

Some migrant families fled the violence, others attempted to protect themselves by putting union flags in their windows.

As hundreds of masked rioters broke windows and set fires, screaming that they would "get the scum out!", others stood by and watched with approval. In the background, apparently, were Protestant paramilitaries.

Local resident Danielle O'Neill said, "The riots have a valid point. We're being overpopulated. It's like an invasion... we can terrorise the town. It's a way of getting our voices heard."

Her husband, Ryan O'Neill, who was happy to pose for a photo, added unapologetically, "If the government won't put them out, we'll put them out."

## Population

In fact the ethnic minority population of Northern Ireland is tiny, at 3.4%, or 65,600 people. In the area around Clonavon Terrace the proportion of Roma was only 14% and the ethnic minority population of Ballymena is less than 5%. In England the comparative figure is a still-small 18%, and in Scotland 11%.

Over the following two weeks racist, anti-migrant rioting spread to other Northern Irish towns.

The net result was 56 arrests, 107 police injured. Of the 1,200 Roma in Ballymena around 800 have now left the town, effectively "ethnically cleansed" by other workers who had turned on them, punching down at people even more vulnerable than themselves.

Local Loyalist politicians have largely remained silent, while the leader of the Traditional Unionist Voice party, Jim

Allister, says, "[The riots] have transformed the area. There's no longer people standing round our street corners."

Indeed, the area has also been transformed by newly boarded-up, abandoned and burnt-out homes.

Demi Laverty, a Ballymena community worker, blames a lack of public services and deprivation for the anger and racist violence: "People... blame [immigrants] they have been made to feel fearful of." However, the Roma people did not run down the NHS, cut council-run services to the bone or privatise water, electricity or the rail industry. Filipino and African nurses did not make food and rents unaffordable. The people who did that were from the ruling capitalist class and right-wing politicians.

Laverty continues: "Young men, people in our country, have become disillusioned about political representation, their voices haven't been [heard]... [so] fear and anger will spill over."

Complaints about "over-population" are nonsense. Northern Ireland is not "full up", whatever that means. Yes, workers of all backgrounds have difficulty finding jobs and affordable, decent housing. The answer is that all workers should have a public guarantee of a well-paid job and be able to afford to live and bring up kids in a decent environment.

## Riots

And who should pay for that? The rich, through taxation. Race riots solve nothing for our people, the workers of all countries. When workers turn on each other we make conditions worse for everyone, not better. In the first instance the migrant workers suffer. And what's their crime? Wanting a job?

And how about the recurring theme that these riots – which in other parts of the UK currently focus on hotels housing asylum seekers – are about protecting women and girls from sexual violence perpetrated by refugees and immigrants? Elaine Crory, from a Northern Ireland women's group, says that of the 28 women murdered in Northern Ireland in the last five years, "if there were no immigrants in the country, that number would be 27." The point, of course, is not that immigrants never commit crimes, or that no immigrant is ever responsible for sexual violence, but that they do so in roughly the same proportion as every other community.

"Look at individuals, not groups," Crory adds.

The point about the events of Ballymena is they are an extreme example of the rioting we faced last summer aimed at asylum hotels, and quite possibly a more widespread phenomenon

in the future.

Nigel Farage, the rich racist gobshite presenting himself as a political outsider and modelling himself and his Reform party on US President Donald Trump and his MAGA movement, have found a hearing amongst many white British workers. Having previously rejected the idea of mass deportations of immigrants, Farage, opportunistically, sensing the political situation would allow him to do so and that he could gain from it, suggested that a Reform government would deport 600,000 migrants over five years.

## Workmates

He's talking about our workmates, the people who work in our schools and teach our kids, the doctors and nurses and support workers in the NHS, the people who build new houses. Does anyone really believe that deporting tens of thousands of medics will fix the National Health Service?

Such a plan, if he is actually willing and able to attempt it, would be hugely divisive, vastly expensive and involve enormous repression which would radically change life in the UK for the worse, for everyone.

Farage must take a lot of responsibility for the disaster which is Brexit. Many workers voted for Brexit believing hitting out at foreign workers might make their lives better. It was a stupid dead-end which led to a serious hit on the UK economy, making jobs less secure and ending the free movement to and from the EU. Politically Brexit gave a significant boost to the "populist" far right, gifted us the Johnson and Truss governments and a new, Farage-styled Tory Party.

Losing free movement across Europe was a serious setback for the UK labour movement and working class. Free movement was in the process of reducing friction between the various European nationalities, reducing suspicions, making links between workers, across borders, easier and so aiding international working-class solidarity and cooperation.

Workers' Liberty does not wave the flag of St George, the Saltire, or the union flag. Our flag is red. We are not patriots or nationalists of any type, we are internationalists and "our people" are the workers of the world.

Farage is shifting politics. Labour, supposedly our party, panicking, has recently made numerous changes to asylum and immigration policy which pander to Farage's racism and which will make it easier for Reform and the Tories to win the next election by making right wing populism appear to be a national consensus. Labour leader Starmer has solved none of the eco-



nomic problems that face all workers in the UK, has ostentatiously made benefit cuts, and workers are right to think he is not listening to them. He isn't.

A few weeks after the Ballymena riots Labour introduced proposals to restrict immigration by changing visa rules.

Labour might think this will win votes from the right from such a move, but following Starmer's notorious "Island of Strangers" speech, polls showed no-one on the right switched to Labour. What that speech did do was further disillusion and demoralise core voters who became less likely to vote for Labour.

On 22 July skills and salary thresholds were increased, the end of the overseas recruitment of care workers was signalled, and scores of occupations were removed from the list of groups eligible to immigrate. The immediate effect was to threaten the livelihoods of two hundred workers on London Underground, now facing deportation.

Then-Labour Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced that workers in occupations on the temporary shortage list will no longer be able to bring dependents into the UK and will no longer get salary and visa fee discounts. Cooper is making key foreign workers' lives more miserable – something which is morally repugnant – while running down public services.

Labour should reverse these rule changes. For a start. And do much more.

Workers Liberty advocates free movement, the reduction of barriers and abolition of borders which divide workers. And we demand a government which undercuts the far-right by solving the social crisis in the interests of the working class:

- Tax the rich to rebuild public service and the NHS
- Free education and health care for all
- Affordable, high-quality public housing
- Nationalisation of the banks and key industries □

# Israel out of Gaza and West Bank!

By Ira Berkovic

Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his regime have no interest in ending the slaughter in Gaza.

For Netanyahu himself, continuation of the war means a perpetuation of his power. For the genocidaires in his cabinet, an intensification of military action is part of a plan to depopulate Gaza to facilitate Jewish re-settlement.

According to Unicef, over 7,000 children under five in Gaza are currently receiving treatment for malnutrition. The overall total for August is expected to reach five times the level seen in February.

Meanwhile, the government has authorised construction plans for 3,400 new housing units in occupied territory to the east of Jerusalem. The settler movement and the state effectively operate as a single political entity, with the goal of establishing Jewish supremacy



over the entire territory between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. Pogroms by armed settlers have continued; a recent attack in Masafer

Yatta injured 13 people, including a three-month-old baby.

Israeli Jews understandably and rightly oppose the political agendas of Islamist paramilitary groups such as Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, which deny the legitimacy of Israeli Jewish self-determination and aim for an Islamic state in the entire territory. On Monday 8 September, six people were shot in Jerusalem, with Palestinian terrorist groups suspected. The Israeli regime now mirrors the policy of those groups, and actively pushes for its own "one state solution", a Jewish state with Palestinians either driven out or violently subjugated.

The force that can break the deadlock is increased class and social struggle by Palestinians and Israelis, especially the Palestinian minority within Israel, for peace and equality. □

## Smotrich moves to "bury" Palestinian hopes

By Ira Berkovic

On 23 July, the Knesset (Israeli parliament) passed a resolution affirming Jewish sovereignty over the West Bank, effectively a call for annexation. The resolution was largely symbolic, but a month later, Israel's fascist minister of finance, Bezalel Smotrich, announced plans for new settlements in E1, an area of the occupied territories to the east of Jerusalem.

Whilst successive Israeli administrations have either encouraged or passively allowed settlement building in general, settlement construction in E1 specifically has been frozen for decades. The development of large Jewish settlements there would effectively bisect Palestinian-majority areas. Under a preexisting Israeli government policy, Palestinians would have to travel around E1 using a specially-constructed bypass, referred to by Israeli anti-occupation campaigners as an "apartheid road".

Smotrich and other leading Israeli politicians are clear about the purpose of the E1 settlement plan. They say it is aimed at "erasing" or "burying" a Palestinian state, by carving up Palestinian-majority territories to such a degree that statehood in contiguous territory is impossible even with a connecting corridor between the West Bank and Gaza such

as "peace plans" have often proposed.

Some currents on the international left take an almost "accelerationist" attitude to Israel-Palestine, seemingly believing that things getting worse will somehow lead to progress, by taking the compromise solution of a negotiated peace agreement based on two independent states off the table. The disappearance from the historical page of the possibility of independent Palestinian statehood would not be any kind of step forward, but rather a historic defeat for the Palestinian people and a decisive victory for Israeli colonialism.

The hegemony of forces which want to "bury" a Palestinian state also makes any other democratic solution – such as a single binational state – even more unlikely.

Whilst the organised far left is a marginal element in global politics in general, it is a major factor in determining the perspectives of international movements against the genocide in Gaza and in solidarity with the Palestinians. Unfortunately, far-left influence in these movements has largely meant tying them to apologetics for forces such as Hamas, and to an attitude of dismissing any progressive potential for struggles from within Israeli society.

Lessons from the struggle

against apartheid South Africa are relevant here. Campaigns of cultural, sporting, and economic boycotts were carried on against South Africa for years, with significant symbolic impact but less material effect. What shook, and finally toppled, the apartheid regime was a tremendous uprising of black workers in key industries. The lesson is that external forms of pressure are at best limited unless there is an agency that can exercise leverage within a society.

### Composition

The social composition of Israel is radically different to apartheid South Africa. There, a 13% white minority existed by exploiting the labour of a black majority. The Israeli economy relies substantially on the exploitation of the labour of a majority-Jewish working class. Most Israeli Jewish workers are currently tied to their own regime, seeing their own safety and security as requiring the subjugation of the Palestinians. But if even a substantial minority of that working class can be won to a more internationalist perspective, and come to act in alliance with a section of the 20% Palestinian minority within Israel, many of whom work alongside Jews in industries such as healthcare, new possibilities could open up.

Standing Together, the left-

wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement organising against the genocide and occupation, could sow the seeds for those kinds of struggles. It seeks to mobilise inside Israeli society to build joint struggle between Palestinians and Jews. Standing Together wrote recently: "We are on the verge of even more bloodshed and death. As Netanyahu and his extremist coalition push ahead with a terrifying plan for occupying Gaza, Smotrich is again threatening annexation of the West Bank, which can only make official what so many Palestinians already experience on the ground. We know that our job, as Jews and Palestinians who live here, is to refuse to accept this reality and to resist it in every possible way.

"That's why we're leading the public opposition to these horrors, and the anti-war movement is growing stronger every week. We know that we have the collective power – and responsibility – to end this by refusing the starvation, displacement, and bombardment of Palestinians. So we launched a campaign urging everyone in our society – including soldiers – to refuse illegal orders to occupy Gaza. This refusal in Israeli society is essential to grind the war to a halt – if no one accepts this reality, there can be no war."

Whilst much public oppo-

sition to the war in Israel still foregrounds the fate of the hostages, rather than Palestinian suffering, intensified direct action, including strikes, inside Israel will make it harder for new military operations to continue. Standing Together is right to emphasise calls for refusal: ongoing and planned offensives in Gaza City will require the mobilisation of tens of thousands of reservists. The fewer that report for duty, the fewer resources those directing the slaughter will have at their disposal.

The killing of six people in a shooting in Jerusalem on 8 September highlights the cycle of bloodshed in which the Israeli regime's policies have trapped its own people. Such killings cannot only be understood as a "blowback" against Israel's actions: Palestinian paramilitary parties have their own programmes, agendas, and policies which are not merely reactions to what Israel does. But by subjecting Palestinians to an ever more oppressive reality, Israel acts as the best possible recruiting sergeant for groups which, to many, seem to offer the only form of resistance.

Our solidarity is with a different kind of resistance, which seeks to mobilise both Jews and Palestinians in a shared struggle for freedom and equality. □

# Putin remains on the attack

By Michael Baker

Shortly after the wave of protests against government changes to anti-corruption bodies, Ukraine has been rocked by another sudden outburst of public dissent, this time a protest against a new draft law that increased the punishments soldiers would receive for disobedience.

The Ukrainian army has been facing significant changes in policy throughout the war. As Ukrainian socialist organisation Sotsialny Rukh summarised:

"In 2022, Parliament passed Law No. 8271, which deprived the courts of the right to take into account mitigating circumstances and to assign conditional terms for certain categories of war crimes.

"Since then, even minor violations started to entail years of imprisonment. The most common example is SZCH [absence from duty]. Previously, courts had only been able to give conditional sentences. That has now been replaced with at least five years of real imprisonment.

"However, statistics have shown that this approach hasn't improved discipline. In 2023, 16,316 proceedings for absence were registered. By 2024 this was 62,505, and in just the first seven months of 2025, 107,999. Similar trends are observed under other articles [dealing with military indiscipline]."

The new changes would significantly increase the punishment for disobeying orders, among other reforms. Military personnel and human rights organisations immediately expressed concern, and protests sprang up in a number of cities, attended by both members of the public and veterans. The protests were explicitly connected to the (larger) anti-corruption protests earlier this year, also held at short notice after a vote in the Rada.

After gauging the response, the Ukrainian government announced it would hold meetings between the Ministry of Defence and the relevant Rada (parliament) committees, and remove the section about increasing punishments for disobedience. This is an important stepdown and a victory for the protestors, but it leaves much to be desired.

Soldiers in Ukraine are paid extremely poorly, and in particular there are serious discussions in the country about whether or not soldiers should be given defined service limits – many soldiers have been in service continuously since 2022, without more than a holiday period off. The longer the war continues, the more pressing this will become.

## Negotiations

The period of discussions around peace talks and negotiations appears to be [winding down](#) with no result. Putin



appears to have made a sticking point of meeting in Moscow – a deliberately obstinate requirement that he knows Zelenskyy will not agree to. There has been no evidence of any actual agreement between the two sides on any of the fundamental issues required to end the war – namely, that Russia refuses to end its occupation of Eastern Ukraine, and Ukraine, rightly, refuses to disarm and neutralise itself for Russia's benefit with no security guarantees.

A meeting of the "Coalition of the Willing" in Paris on 4 September bolstered, but largely repeated, commitments from Western European powers: support in air, land and sea defences, an insistence on Ukraine's military being grown and strengthened, and the idea of a "Reassurance Force", troops on the ground in some form of defensive "insurance" capacity from "the day after a negotiation is agreed". A Kremlin spokesperson immediately came out to say that the notion of any (non-Russian) foreign troops in Ukraine was null and void. The Russian side seems intent to stick to its draft proposal from Istanbul in 2022, which required a reduction of the Ukrainian army to a token force.

## Prisoners

Amnesty International have released a [report](#) on Russia's treatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war. Among stories of summary executions (encouraged vocally by both Ramzan Kadyrov and former president Dmitry Medvedev) and widespread repression, one key figure stands out:

"The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine (HMMU) reported that 97% of former POWs it interviewed were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment. While the sample size is much smaller, all of those former Ukrainian POWs interviewed by Amnesty International reported the same."

This can be explained in a number of ways, including that Ukrainian prison-

ers are often subjected to "reception beatings" upon arrival in any new institution, and the ritual encouragement of violence against any Ukrainians in the prison system as a matter of principle.

The report ends by stating that "Russia's treatment of Ukrainian military and civilians in its custody violates every form of international law [...] Russia has violated [the Geneva Convention's] most basic tenets, including by refusing to allow correspondence, adequate medical treatment and access for humanitarian organizations."

## War

All of this occurs alongside the continuation of the war itself, with Russia's missiles entirely undeterred by any mention of negotiations or war crimes.

Between 6-7 September, over 800 drones and several missiles were fired at Ukraine, including a large barrage on civilian infrastructure in Kyiv, injuring 44. In Kostiantynivka, an airstrike killed 9 civilians, adding to the 12 killed in August. In Chernihiv, a missile hit civilian sappers (de-mining teams), killing two and injuring three.

The Russian government claims, as it has continuously claimed, that it does not target civilians or civilian buildings. Ample video evidence, military expertise, and the orders and boasts of the Russian military itself, suggest otherwise.

*Solidarity* supports Ukraine's fight for self-determination against Russian imperialism. □



## Activist Agenda

### Meetings

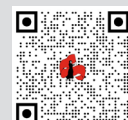
**Tue 16 Sep:** Were the USSR and the Eastern Bloc socialist? N London AWL. 7pm, Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Rd N1 9DY

**Thu 25 Sep:** What will socialism look like? Sheffield AWL. University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

**Wed 1 October:** Feminism, class struggle, and the far right. Sheffield AWL. University Arms, 197 Brook Hill S3 7HG

### At work or on campus

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



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

### Template motions

**Texts:** to adapt for union branches and Labour Parties: [bit.ly/mo-pe](https://bit.ly/mo-pe)

### Socialist-feminist book clubs

[workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs](https://workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs)

**London:** Sun 14 Sep, Disobedient Bodies, 2pm, Effra Social, 89 Effra Rd SW2 1DF

### Campaigns

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

# Sexism persists in medicine



**Women's Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

Women living with polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS) face prolonged delays in diagnosis and limited access to treatment, according to a report by an All Party Parliamentary Group. PCOS is common, affecting one in eight women in the UK. More than a third of people with the condition waited longer than four years for a diagnosis. After diagnosis 38% of those giving evidence to the Parliamentary group were not provided with any resources. Only 3% of patients with the condition felt supported by healthcare providers.

Although women experience more chronic pain conditions than men, there is a "gender pain gap" studies show their reporting of pain is taken less seriously. Studies in the US show men wait an average of 49 minutes before receiving pain medication in instances of acute abdominal pain while women wait an average of 65 minutes in the same situation. Women are half as likely as men to receive painkillers after a coronary bypass surgery. A 2022 government report found women wait longer for diagnoses and have their complaints routinely dismissed and disregarded by medical professionals.



Research has shown that women are prescribed less pain medication than men after identical procedures and are less likely to be admitted to hospital when complaining of the same symptoms. A Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists report in 2019 found that accurate information regarding women's healthcare is often difficult to access, as is care. The BMA's Ending Sexism in Medicine Pledge seeks to end sexism for workers and patients in the health service. A survey of 2,458 doctors by the BMA in 2021 shows that 91% of women doctors in the UK have

experienced sexism at work, with 42% feeling they could not report it.

Much of diagnosis is self-reporting of symptoms and study after study shows that black people, women and trans people are not trusted when reporting pain. Those who experience discrimination in society are not spared it in medical spaces which should be spaces of rational scientific judgment. The NHS needs proper funding to improve diagnosis and treatment waiting times. It also needs healthcare unions to educate their members on stereotypes and how they affect practice. □



Women's Fightback. 28 pages, £3.00 □ [bit.ly/shop-wl](https://bit.ly/shop-wl)

## China turns to help Myanmar military

By Colin Foster

Myanmar's military regime plans to run an election in December this year. It cannot be fair or democratic. But the plan has the approval of Myanmar's giant neighbour, China, and its allies such as Russia.

In early September China welcomed Myanmar military ruler Min Aung Hlaing to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Tianjin, and then to its giant military parade in Beijing.

Min Aung Hlaing also met Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tianjin, and Myanmar state media has announced that India will send observers to the election.

The United Wa State Army (UWSA) is the most powerful armed force in Myanmar in opposition to the regime. It has been linked with China. It controls a region on the border with China, and another region on the Thai border.

Its area had substantial autonomy even before Myanmar's military coup in February 2021 and is highly integrated with China's economy, using Mandarin as its standard language. It is in many ways more prosperous than the regime-controlled areas of Myanmar.

On 20 August, UWSA told other regional resistance forces that it would no longer support them militarily. The indications are that China is pushing for a "settlement" in Myanmar where the resistance forces stop fighting the Myanmar military, de facto borders are established giving the military regime control of core areas but resistance forces some domains of their own, the military regime gains international recognition, and the National Unity Government set up by the parliamentary politicians dispersed by the military coup of February 2021 is sidelined.

The military re-took power in February 2021 with a coup following a few years of semi-civilian, semi-democratic rule. Big strikes and street protests resisted the coup, but over four and a half years since then rebellion in the main cities (Yangon, Mandalay, Naypyidaw) has been stifled. Regional guerrilla warfare, much of it in parts of the country populated by non-Burmese minorities which together make up one-third of Myanmar's total, has become the main form of rebellion.

The Civil Disobedience Movement, in which teachers and other public-service workers refused to serve under the military, continues. But by now it mostly means that those workers have to survive on other, precarious, jobs, or have fled the country, mostly to Thailand. Their existence in Thailand is often precarious, too. Young people from Myanmar living abroad have been

more reluctant to return there since the regime began military conscription in April 2024.

The Solidarity Trade Union of Myanmar still exists legally, and has led some strikes on economic issues. Its main leaders were arrested in August 2025 and the weight of the military is too great for it to organise effective political resistance at present.

The All Burma Federation of Student Unions also still exists, but with no capacity at present for street action.

Myanmar's population is only about one-third urban, while the world average now is 60% urban. But to overthrow the military regime and replace it by a democratic government, let alone a workers' government, the cities will be central. Regional armed forces can hold large areas, and the military is far from being able to defeat them, but their power is often as autocratic in their own spheres as the cen-

tral military is in its. The Arakan Army, which dominates the western coast Arakan area, is as hostile to the Rohingya Muslims there as the central military has been.

The National Unity Government still has wide international recognition as the legitimate government of Myanmar, but it is not really a government. It has some military and territorial base in parts of Myanmar, but a weak one compared to the stronger rebel groups. Many of its ministers are scattered in exile across the world.

China's new shift creates a real risk of the military regime consolidating its power, at least in a curtailed core area, and strengthening its ability to repress workers' unions and student organisations. □

• Based on, and with thanks to, an interview with Hein Htet Kyaw

# Morning Star um's and ah's over Sultana



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Zara Sultana's claim (in a *New Left Review* "Sidecar" interview) that Jeremy Corbyn "capitulated" over the definition of antisemitism while leader of the Labour party, followed by a social media post describing herself as "a proud anti-Zionist", has caused Corbyn some problems.

Some of the shriller individuals around Your Party confronted Corbyn, demanding he too declares himself an "anti-Zionist." Very wisely he did not do so, though his avoidance, which was filmed and posted on x.com, comes over as panic, and the poor chap has to be rescued by a minder, and then by his wife, Laura Alvarez.

This somewhat farcical incident led Jeremy's old friends at the *Morning Star* to leap to his defence. The editorial of 3 September states (accurately) that "no MP in the present House of Commons has done more in solidarity with the

Palestinian people than Jeremy Corbyn" and that "demands that he publicly describe himself as 'anti-Zionist' as if he had anything to prove are sectarian nonsense."

Unfortunately, the MS (which in 2018 had to apologise for publishing an antisemitic article and since then has frequently downplayed or dismissed any suggestion of antisemitism on the left) then goes on to tie itself up in knots. Corbyn was right, it seems, to refuse to call himself an anti-Zionist, but "Zarah Sultana has every right to so describe herself – no socialist should embrace a clearly colonial project."

That last bit about "a clearly colonial project" is, presumably a reference to the creation or even the existence of Israel and, if so, is a grotesque oversimplification. Israel is also a refugee-asylum project. Most Israeli Jews are there because they were born there, or because they fled there.

Jeremy, while not necessarily the sharpest tool in the box when it comes to an understanding of antisemitism, undoubtedly means well and has learned some lessons from his bruising experiences while Labour leader. That's

why in 2018, when accused of antisemitism for a comment he'd made some years before, he said: "I am now more careful with how I might use the term Zionist because a once self-identifying political term has been hijacked by anti-Semites as code for Jews."

In the same edition of the MS, Andrew Murray devotes his Eyes Left column to the same issue, and is all over the place. Murray, remember, was part of Corbyn's inner team from 2018 to 2020.

He has repeatedly blamed the 2019 election flop on Labour's failure to back Brexit (the evidence for that is debatable, to say the least) but unlike many Corbyn supporters (and the MS itself) has sometimes shown some signs of recognising that antisemitism under Corbyn was a real problem and not just a "smear" (the word Sultana now uses) put about by the right wing or so-called "Zionists".

In June 2023 he wrote (in the MS, looking back at the Corbyn years): "When 85 per cent of Jewish people feel there is a problem, there is a problem, no avoiding it."

But now, Murray's column carries the

strap-line "Zarah Sultana's brave criticisms of Labour from 2015 to 2020, including Brexit triangulation, IHRA capitulation and insufficient fighting spirit, have ruffled feathers but started an essential discussion."

On the IHRA definition, Sultana is simply wrong to say (as she did in the NLR interview) that it equates anti-Zionism with antisemitism. It mentions Zionism in neither the main body of the document nor the appended examples. Sultana needs to be called out on this falsehood, but instead Murray engages in what can only be called umming and aching: "one could have denounced the whole [antisemitism] thing as a smear concocted by malicious forces and come out swinging, or one could have tried to address real evidence of anti-semitism in Labour..."

Murray goes on to make it clear that "the latter would have been better." That's the opposite of what Sultana is advocating. But Murray can't bring himself to point that out, concluding oh-so tactfully that "while people can and will disagree with Sultana's specific points, she should be commended for getting the ball rolling." □

## The one person Starmer should have sacked



Eric Lee

In the course of Labour's first year in office, Keir Starmer has been very energetic and effective in one particular area: he's very good at getting rid of people who fall out of favour for a variety of reasons. Angela Rayner is only the latest. Before her, he sacked health minister Andrew Gwynne. Others who have been forced to step down include Rushanara Ali, Vicky Foxcroft, Anneliese Dodds, Tulip Siddiq, and Louise Haigh.

But while most of these Labour politicians may not be household names, there is one very well known Starmer appointee who for reasons I cannot fathom remains in office.

I'm thinking about the British ambassador to Washington, Peter Mandelson.

With Donald Trump's state visit to the UK coming up later this month, Mandelson's remarks in a recent speech have received considerable media attention.

"The president may not follow the traditional rulebook or

conventional practice, but he is a risk-taker in a world where a 'business as usual' approach no longer works," he said

Trump, Mandelson declared, "seems to have an ironclad stomach for political risk, both at home and abroad – convening other nations and intervening in conflicts that other presidents would have thought endlessly about before descending into an analysis paralysis and gradual incrementalism."

I am not making this up. No "analysis paralysis" from this president, whatever that means.

### Astonishing

The reference to "other presidents" is really quite astonishing, considering that all the steps toward peace in the Middle East from the Camp David Accord through the Oslo Accords were achieved by Democratic presidents. Or that NATO, the bedrock of European security that has prevented a third world war for three quarters of a century, was created when Democrats controlled the White House. One wonders which "other presidents" Mandelson had in mind, the ones who "thought

endlessly" unlike Trump, who seems hardly to think at all.

To give a concrete example of Trump's vision, Mandelson said of Ukraine that this was "where the president has brought fresh energy to efforts to end Putin's brutal invasion and bring peace to that region."

By "fresh energy" the Ambassador was probably thinking of Trump's recent failed summit with Putin in Alaska – an event now widely understood to have been a clear win for the Russian President as he unleashes an unprecedented series of drone and missile attacks against civilian targets in Kyiv.

Meanwhile, European countries, including the UK, are scrambling to repair the damage and shore up Ukraine's defences.

Mandelson adores Trump and fawns over him. "He will not always get everything right," he admits, "but with his Sharpie pen and freewheeling Oval Office media sprays he has sounded a deafening wake-up call to the international old guard."

Are these the views of the British government? One hopes that they are not.

The job of a British ambassador in Washington is to represent the views of our elected government here on issues like Ukraine and Gaza to the Trump administration. It is not to act as a spokesman for the administration, defending its record.

Of course diplomats are supposed to act, well, diplomatic. But Mandelson has gone far beyond his remit here. His remarks are foolish, ignorant, deeply offensive, and designed, one imagines, to

drawn attention to himself – as he has very successfully done.

So what is Keir Starmer waiting for? Our ambassador to Washington has gone completely rogue and it is time to add him to growing list of senior Labour figures the Prime Minister has had to sack. And the sooner, the better. □

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



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# Party, or support group for “independent” MPs?



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

Some genuinely open meetings linked to the Sultana-Corbyn “new party” declaration have appeared through local initiative. In my East London constituency, an independent ex-Labour councillor and 2024 election candidate convened a broad group (ex-Labour members, unaffiliated left, trade unionists). We are leafletting because we can’t get an email from “Your Party” HQ to those who have signed up locally to “keep informed”. That pattern is repeated elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Counterfire is running meetings badged as “A meeting for Your Party supporters in...”. The SWP has declared a “Your Party South London” event in Brixton with SWP National Secretary Lewis Nielsen, SWP NEU exec member Jess Edwards and Zarah Sultana, cutting across a meeting in the same area being organised by an ad hoc ex-Labour-left and union activist group. This looks like old-school sect choreography, not the federated, member-led organising that the SWP claims to support.

At national level, the genesis of the new Corbyn-Sultana party remains murky. No clear declarations on how the conference promised for November will run, no minutes of organising committees, no position papers from those now shaping the party.

Outside a closed circle of insiders, we’re left in the darkness, with scattered comments and rumours instead of the daylight of democratic transparency.

The one clear message that has been sent out is that everything will be settled by a fully democratic conference. However, Andrew Feinstein [told](#) a Counterfire meeting in Bristol on 2 September that no organising committee exists yet and the founding conference “optimistically will take place in November, less optimistically maybe a month or two after that”. He sounded frustrated.

A *New Statesman* interview with “Gaza Independent” MP Shockat Adam the following day points the same way: “we’re hoping to have a conference, we’re working towards that.” Pressed on timing: “We’re trying, we’re trying. Whether that...”. He breaks off, then says it’s important to get it right – without a date.

A rally in Blackburn on 30 August hints at the model that Jeremy Corbyn

may have in mind for future organisation, though it is clear that others have different ideas. Unlike other local meetings, it was publicised by a central “Your Party” email, and it drew a reported 1,500. It was a rally, not a forum where members shape structures or policies.

Corbyn’s [vision](#) is that “every local branch has at least one open public meeting and forum where the local community can come together in demands, criticism and support.” But in his own Islington North, since July 2024, there have been no deliberative “party” type meetings – only sporadic “People’s Forum” public meetings, organised by his office employees rather than by elected activists, and geared to consultations and to facilitating search by groups such as Acorn for volunteers to join their campaigns.

Corbyn suggested nothing on building branches, selecting candidates, or constituting a party. It sounded like movement-adjacent “town halls”, not the nuts and bolts of a democratic organisation: membership rolls, elected branch officers, policy motions and amendments and debates and votes, accountability...

## Visible

Blackburn is Independent Alliance MP Adnan Hussain’s seat. His candidacy grew out of 4BwD, the ex-Labour bloc on Blackburn-with-Darwen Council (they resigned in 2023 over Gaza and became the official opposition after winning seats in 2024). But that bloc has no anti-cuts policy. Beyond Gaza, there’s little that distinguishes them from Labour locally, other than that they have no evident grassroots structures even on the level that feeble local Labour Parties have. Hussain has built no visible local organisation since being elected MP.

If Corbyn’s “new politics” is more than rallies topped off by a thin “conference”, he hasn’t said so. The risk is obvious: spectacle without structure, members as consumers of politics, maybe granted the occasional electronic plebiscite, not active campaigners and participants.

Sultana and Feinstein have been willing to speak at these semi-detached events. Feinstein, frustrated by the slow pace, launched Camden People’s Alliance in July, in effect the local branch of the new party. Sultana skipped Blackburn (she was in the USA), and notably did not sign the Independent Alliance’s 4 September letter protesting the Israeli President’s UK visit, which the five

2024 independents did sign.

Add her earlier criticisms of aspects of Corbyn’s leadership team and you can see political tensions. Without structures and accountability, those differences appear as personal friction rather than leading to debate conducted in a democratic forum.

At the end of July, Your Party UK Ltd was incorporated. Echoing Reform UK’s corporate set-up, Corbyn is listed as the person with “significant control”, holding over 75% of voting rights; the other five MPs are directors. But is this group, specifically the four independents elected alongside Corbyn in 2024, a potential backbone for the new party, as it would appear Corbyn hopes?

## Substance

Beyond Gaza, there’s not much public political substance from this group. They opposed disability cuts, backed ending the two-child cap, and supported restoring the Winter Fuel Payment – good lines, widely shared. But there’s an unmistakable socially conservative streak. In June three voted against decriminalising women obtaining abortions (Shockat Adam did not vote, Corbyn voted for decriminalisation). Other than Corbyn, all opposed VAT on private school fees (because of its impact on Islamic schools). Other than Corbyn, none has spoken unequivocally for trans liberation.

Adnan Hussain has tweeted that trans women “are not biologically women” and that “most sane people want to be segregated in a toilet”. He concedes these are socially conservative views.

Two of the four are clearly not on the left. Shockat Adam has close family connections with Friends of Al-Aqsa (headquartered in Leicester), and no labour movement background (he runs an optician business). In a Novara discussion with Pamela Fitzpatrick, he rejected organising tenants to bring private rentals into social ownership, saying it’s wrong to “demonise” private landlords; in the *New Statesman* he avoided attacking the rich or demanding social transformation, suggesting instead that “We just need some brave leadership”.

Ayoub Khan (ex-Lib Dem councillor and three-time Lib Dem parliamentary candidate) notoriously called for troops to break the Birmingham bin strike (before veering to support the bin workers’ mass pickets) and is personally opposed to same-sex marriage.

Those positions matter. They signal a coalition whose centre of gravity may

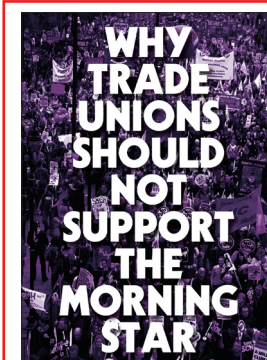


tilt toward cultural conservatism and small-c conservatism on property – the opposite of what many of the 800,000 sign-ups think they were endorsing.

Adnan Hussain is more constructively ambiguous. In an [interview](#) with *The House* magazine, he talks about a party “grounded in class struggle, solidarity and the idea that dignity should not be a luxury but a right” while rejecting “the old binaries of left and right” and appealing to “disillusioned and overlooked communities” united by “shared disillusionment”. Although, unlike Ayoub Khan or Shockat Adam, he was in Labour under Corbyn, he is also a director of two firms building a personal rental portfolio. That mix – left-sounding rhetoric, a “neither left nor right” electoral pitch, and landlord interests – captures the broader ambiguity.

Iqbal Mohamed (Dewsbury and Batley) is the most left-leaning of the four, having quit Labour after Starmer’s 2023 Gaza stance. He has explicitly backed “two states” in Israel-Palestine. He’s been low-profile. Interviews show concern for health and welfare funding, but often couched in overtly religious terms, and not much else.

These MPs cannot be the backbone of a working-class campaigning party. Without transparency, real local structures, and democratic debate, the project risks becoming rallies, branding – and drift. If the new party is to match the hopes invested in it, it needs an immediate pivot from spectacle to openness. Those taking decisions should be open about what they are; those with a vision of what the new party will be should publish it. □



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# France in political crisis

France's prime minister François Bayrou was forced out on 8 September in a vote of confidence on his social cuts which he said would reduce the coun-

try's vast overhang of government debt. Several political possibilities now open up, including forcing through a budget by presidential decree, but none of

them smooth. On 10 September there will be strikes and demonstrations, first called by "Block Everything", a network originating with nationalist right-wing-

ers, but now supported by some unions. We print two responses from the French Marxist left.

## Build towards a general strike

### From the NPA-R

Starting on 10 September, let's strike to put a stop to all policies that serve the interests of employers!

Bayrou's counterattack, calling for a "confidence" vote in the Assembly two days before the union mobilisation on 10 September, did not sway the many who are actively preparing or eagerly looking towards that day "to block everything". On the contrary, it has increased the desire to be part of it, to defy this government that is so servile to the rich and the bosses. On Sunday evening, the Prime Minister made a small concession: he will only steal one day of public holiday from us instead of two, but he remains inflexible on stealing two years of our lives through pension cuts. This angers us, and we must show it!

This "plan" for cuts is a declaration of war on workers and the working classes made in the name of employers and

the bourgeoisie. Under the pretext of making us pay their debt, Macron and Bayrou are trying to pick our pockets to finance the more than 50% increase in the army's budget since 2017 and, above all, the €211 billion in annual subsidies to companies, i.e. to their CEOs and shareholders.

They want to cut 3,000 jobs in the civil service and freeze salaries, reduce the duration of unemployment benefits for workers who have lost their jobs, freeze pensions and abolish the 10% tax allowance for pensioners. And, to top it all off, they want to extend the waiting period for sick leave to seven days, increase deductibles and eliminate or reduce reimbursement for essential medicines, including for some long-term conditions. Not to mention calling into question the fifth week of paid holiday...

While the trade unions spent the summer "petitioning" and dismissed or distanced themselves from the call

for action on 10 September, assemblies were held in many cities to prepare for this date to "block the country". This prompted major realignments of all the political and trade union apparatuses, which feared that this movement, beyond their control, would lead to a strike that would spread and sweep away everything in its path. Very quickly, the RN, Bardella and Le Pen said they had nothing to do with the movement and positioned themselves as an alternative... to hit public services and immigrant workers even harder.

The PS is now shamelessly offering to govern... at the head of a pluralistic left... with Macron! But without La France Insoumise, which is calling for a general strike to bring down Macron... and divert everything towards an early presidential election from which nothing good can come. As for the "united" trade union leaderships, there is no call for the 10th, but a call for the 18th, which makes no mention of the 10th...

As for those who are calling for the 10th, such as the CGT, this comes after a 180-degree turnaround, under pressure when the 10th looked likely to be a success.

Let's step up the mobilisation now: we need to discuss in workplaces to see how far each of us is prepared to go, how to build and extend a real movement "that blocks everything": to defeat Macron and the bosses, and build a strike that spreads until it becomes general. Blocking means striking. Bayrou wants to commit hara-kiri: good riddance. But whatever government emerges from the next parliamentary upheavals, it will be a government that fights against workers. Let's throw out Bayrou's plan and everything like that. Let's impose a generalised increase in wages; no one can live on less than €2,000 a month! Let's impose a ban on redundancies and mass recruitment in the public services. There is money in the bosses' cash-bags! □

## Time for committees of action

### From Arguments pour la Lutte Sociale

The press is saying it: [prime minister] Bayrou is committing hara-kiri, with or without panache (which is hardly important). Let us insist, for our part, on what this shows us: the remarkable weakness of the executive and the great strength of social discontent and its potential. Defeating the anti-social budget that seeks to lower wages, eliminate public holidays, etc., is a social victory. We are moving towards this victory. But we still need to secure it: the Intersyndicale [coalition of France's many "TUCs"] should call for action on 8 September, a protest at the National

Assembly, to make it clear that this is our victory.

The prospect of the government's fall brings back to the forefront what, in fact, has never gone away: the question of power in France. As the open letter from APRÈS [a grouping round leftists pushed out of France Insoumise [LFI] by Mélenchon] says: "One decisive thing is missing and must be found, without preconditions and without delay: the unity of the entire NFP [the left alliance formed for the 2024 legislative election], from the NPA to the PS [Socialist Party], with LFI, EELV [Greens] and the PCF [Communist Party]."

### Unity

Defensive unity, against the RN [Rassemblement National, Marine Le Pen's party], which wants power alone or in a right-wing coalition, against Macron's dirty tricks and petty coups. Offensive unity, for democracy, for an NFP government, because it is the only government that the broadest masses can put demands on to respond to urgent needs and demands.

The fear of social confrontation and

the spectre of "10 September" will bring down Bayrou. The unity of the NFP in this coming confrontation would therefore have the strength to impose its government, thus taking power and, in this way, really beginning to put an end to the Fifth Republic [the "presidential" constitution imposed by the "soft" military coup of 1958]. The other scenarios envisaged – dissolution of the Assembly, holding the presidential election scheduled for 2027 early – aim to save the Fifth Republic by playing into the hands of the RN. Division must be defeated.

The National Confederal Committee of the CGT [the second-biggest "TUC"] has stated that it hopes that 10 September "will be a successful first step, which will require, in particular, strikes in the workplace." Solidaires [a smaller, more left-wing confederation] is calling for "a strike and support for the 'Block everything' movement, which expresses the multifaceted and growing social anger in response to the Bayrou government's budget announcements."

The departmental sections and un-

ions of the FSU [a confederation mostly strong among school teachers] will be involved or will launch action from 1 September, when the new school year begins. The leadership of FO [the third-biggest "TUC"] is now distancing itself from 10 September, but many FO unions have already committed to it. Marylise Léon, leader of the CFDT [biggest "TUC"], after meeting with Bayrou in Essonne, expressed her disappointment and said she did not want to discuss cuts in public holidays and unemployment insurance. It is indeed a push towards a general strike that has shaken Bayrou.

### Assemblies

On the 10th and throughout September, strikes, which are always both for specific demands and really political in the true sense of the word, will be more significant than ever. For us, the time has come for committees of action, workplace assemblies and lists of demands, defining the content of what a democratic government's policy in the service of the majority would look like. Onwards! □

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# Trump or democracy: who dies first?

*Got to get the fascists out*

*Got to clean the White House out*

*Don't want no soldiers on our streets*

*Got big crime in DC at the White House*

- Big Crime by Neil Young

By Tom Harrison

Things have started looking a bit like North Korea in Washington, with cabinet meetings described as "Pyongyang on the Potomac" as tenth-rate nonentities outdo each other as to who is the most obsequious. Steve Witkoff, Trump's witless special envoy, claimed Trump "the single finest candidate" for the Nobel Peace Prize since its inception. Kristi Noem upped the sycophancy stakes by announcing a giant portrait of Trump would be draped over her DHS HQ. Yet for all their desire for total control and absolute power, there's one thing autocrats can never achieve – immortality.

Things went into a bit of a frenzy last month when that despicable piece of human ordure, Infowars' Alex Jones, hyped up media concerns about Trump's health. Jones ticked off a list of possible conditions – notably heart and liver failure – and beseeched his audience to pray Trump's physical decline could be reversed. Doubtless millions more will be praying for the opposite. The 79 year old Trump, according to Jones, won't last more than a year in any fit state to run the country, should he still be with us by then.

Rumours of his imminent demise were somewhat overblown. What would MAGA be like without him, though? The movement he leads is a personality cult, and such cults tend to lose grip when the person dies. Dynastic succession is an ever popular choice for autocrats, but would any of the Trump brood have the same pulling power? J D Vance is first in line according to the constitution, but his approval ratings have a nose dive since January.

A lot of the continuity of Trumpism will depend on the degree to which the authoritarian regime has been embedded when Trump's second term is up. His most significant achievement as far as the Republican Party leadership



is concerned has been to reverse the demographic threat to their vote share. Trump increased support for Republicans in Black and Latino communities, largely because the Democrats took those constituencies for granted and did not significantly address their economic concerns. With him gone that support may well diminish.

The tried and tested way of fixing things to partisan advantage has been gerrymandering. Texas has led the way in this, hoping that redrawing constituency boundaries will give it five extra seats in Congress in the mid-terms next year, preventing the Democrats gaining control of the House of Representatives. Trump has egged on other Republican states to come up with their own variations of a gerrymander. Yet the biggest threat to anything approaching free and fair elections in the USA next year is undoubtedly the role of the military.

The National Guard has so far been deployed in Los Angeles and Washington DC, with Chicago almost certainly next on the list, probably followed by New York and Baltimore. All these cities are Democrat-run with Black mayors. The alleged purpose for these military interventions is a "crackdown" on crime.

In fact, crime rates in those cities have been falling, and the four cities with the highest murder rates in the US – Jackson, Birmingham, St Louis, Memphis – are all in Republican states. Whatever the song says, it's not a good idea to go walking in Memphis. It has long been one of the most dangerous places in the country, with murder rates twice as high as in Washington DC.

Sending National Guard from Republican States into Democrat run cities is obviously being done in the belief that they are partisan loyalists who won't question any unconstitutional orders they are given.

Claims the regime is tackling crime

in the nation's capital were regarded as even more ludicrous thanks to the antics of newly appointed Attorney General for DC, Jeanine Pirro, another one of those tenth-rate Fox TV talk show hosts who got a government job courtesy of slavish devotion to Trump. Pirro has instructed law officers to stop bringing felony charges against anyone carrying assault rifles and shotguns in the city.

Pirro's move was denounced by Kris Brown of anti-gun-violence organisation Brady, saying "now, especially with the announcement that National Guard members will carry firearms, our nation's capital has become nothing short of a tinderbox".

That is of course precisely what Trump wants, to justify a more complete authoritarian takeover. A major instigator of this is Stephen Miller, who recently ranted on Trump propaganda channel Fox News about how Democrats let "crime run rampant" in Chicago. Violent crime has in fact gone down there by over 20% in the last year.

Miller described the Democratic Party as "a domestic extremist organisation."

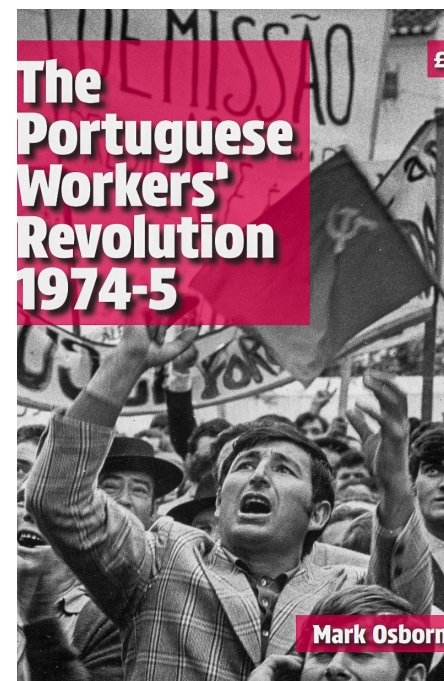
The groundwork for some kind of emergency justifying the invocation of the Insurrection Act seems pretty blatant. Trump's moves to end mail-in ballots will only add to the chaos at next year's mid term elections. The regime could also use the military to seize ballot boxes in areas where the vote isn't going its way.

Effective opposition against impending dictatorship is now a matter of urgency. All praise to Bernie Sanders, AOC, Neil Young and others for their Fighting Oligarchy tour, which has drawn large crowds even in Republican areas. Neil is probably in danger of losing his American citizenship with the release of his anti-Trump single Big Crime. However, the most effective backbone to an anti-Trump movement must be the labour unions.

Trump is a ruthlessly anti union president and is taking away the collective bargaining rights of over a million federal workers. Union leaders have not done much about that, or about the military interventions into cities, or the mass deportation drive, despite public approval of unions being at its highest level since the 1960s.

Labor Day, 1 September, saw union rallies against Trump, but small compared to the 14 June protests. The Teamsters, who boast they are the strongest union in the world, say nothing about Trump. The UAW is organising for a general strike... but in 2028. Meanwhile it semi-supports Trump on tariffs. SEIU, CWA, and UE are more active on issues like deportations, but far from fully mobilised.

Unions need to step up and provide leadership in the struggle against the Trumpian march to dictatorship. Strikes have been a very important one historically against right-wing coups, and placing them, firmly on the political agenda is an important task for the American left. □



'I love the smell of deportations in the morning...'

Chicago about to find out why it's called the Department of WAR 🇺🇸 🇺🇸 🇺🇸



# Fragmenting the world market



## Book review

By Martin Thomas

In his new book *Our Dollar, Your Problem*, the former International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief economist Kenneth Rogoff presents a “timeline of the global safe asset”, in other words of the money-commodities which have underpinned the capitalist world market, from 1509 to 2025.

From 1509 to 1816 it was silver, mostly in the form of Spanish pieces of eight or Dutch florins. From 1816 to World War One, it was gold, mostly via the British pound, reliably exchangeable for 7.32238 g gold. The words “I promise to pay the bearer on demand £x” on Bank of England notes meant literally that you could go to the Bank of England with a note and get gold coins in return. All the Bank will pay you now is another note.

Between 1914 and 1947 there was no reliable “world money”, though gold was still used as a reference. (The pound was tied to gold only from 1925 to 1931. The US dollar was devalued in 1934 from \$20.67 per troy ounce to \$35 per ounce).

Trade did not vanish, but it did badly. Those were decades of wars and crises. Worldwide exports plus imports had been maybe 25% of world output in 1910, but were only 15% in 1929 even before the Great Depression, and around 10% in 1939.

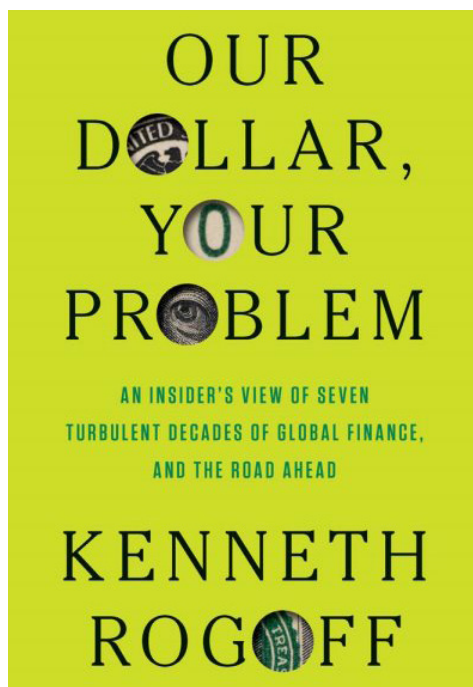
From 1947 to the early 1970s, the “world money” was the US dollar, linked to gold at \$35 an ounce. Then the US abandoned the promise to exchange dollars for fixed amounts of gold. After great turmoil in the 1970s and early 1980s a modified regime took shape, with the dollar as “world money” though without a link to gold. Surprisingly in some ways, that regime survived the 2008-9 financial crash centred in the USA without a surge in interest rates or inflation.

But what after 2025? Rogoff predicts a new era, “a much less dollar-centric world”.

The title of Rogoff’s book refers to US ruling-class attitudes since the early 1970s: the dollar is their currency, they manipulate it in their interests, and how it functions as “world money” is mostly other countries’ problem. He argues the set-up is unstable.

“Over the coming decade, the world will experience higher interest rates and inflation... the dollar’s unique borrowing privilege might be considerably less amid a considerably more fragmented global financial system...”

Within the US, “the odds that the system can reset without having a serious



crisis seem low. [This] can take many forms, but most would involve higher, more unstable inflation and much higher nominal interest rates...”

Worldwide, he expects “a sustained period of global financial volatility marked by higher real interest rates and inflation and more frequent... financial crises”.

All that may be delayed; the crises may be smaller than 2008-9; and even if not, the “dollar epoch” will not vanish overnight. But it will be troubled. And Rogoff quotes his mentor Rudi Dornbusch: “In economics, things take longer to happen than you think they will, and then they happen faster than you thought they could”.

Rogoff finished his book just before the election of Trump 2.0 in 2024. He has written since then that “Trump’s actions could prove devastating to American institutions and the global economic order”. But the book is essentially about the unviability of ever-increasing US government debt as a foundation for world markets. The dollar as “world money” means that capitalists worldwide need stashes of dollars, and a chief form is holdings of US government IOUs (bonds).

Rogoff is a right-winger, and an [article](#) of his in 2010 suggesting that government debt above 90% of a country’s annual output would depress its economic future was part of the Tories’ case for austerity then (although in his book Rogoff claims to favour better social provision. “Austerity” didn’t work in its own terms. UK government debt was 60-odd% of annual output in 2010, rose to over 90% by the time the Tories left office, and remains over 90%).

In the book Rogoff tends to puff himself by suggesting that other economists consider rising debt no problem (for the US, anyway), and believe that the low interest rates on government debt since 2009 will continue indefinitely. Actually, few economists doubt

that debt is a problem. Despite the excesses of Rogoff’s 2010 article, his 2009 book with Carmen Reinhart on government debt, *This Time It’s Different*, is a serious work.

A government with huge and rising levels of debt constantly has to sell new bonds (IOUs) to replace those falling due, and risks finding it has to offer high interest rates to get buyers. As the interest offered rises, so does the share of government revenue siphoned away from social provision into pay-outs to rich bondholders.

The US has been able to run an explosion of government debt since the 1980s with relative ease because governments and capitalists in the rest of the world have been greedy to buy US bonds as a way of making sure their wealth stashes are stable in terms of “world money”, i.e. dollars. There are limits to that appetite.

Rogoff’s book is useful on other counts. It explains why the fixed exchange rates which countries ran before the 1970s (the pound, for example, was fixed at \$2.80 from 1949 to 1967) were more subject to crises (the UK “devalued”, i.e. changed the rate, in 1949 and 1967; France, in 1969, 1958, 1957, etc.) than the floating exchange rates more common since then.

### Holdings

It suggests a plausible reason why “Quantitative Easing” (central banks buying up bonds held by banks and so preventing a crash in prices of those bonds and putting more cash into the system) after 2008-9 failed to lead to high inflation. The central banks paid the commercial banks by crediting the accounts those banks are obliged to hold with the central bank and paying interest on the new holdings. The commercial banks kept the holdings rather than splashing the cash.

Cryptocurrency is more than a scam, Rogoff argues, because it facilitates illegal and tax-evading trade, which may be 20-odd% of all economic activity. In that it partly replaces cash dollars. There is some \$22,000 in \$100 bills out there, somewhere in circulation, per household of four in the USA. Most of it is probably being used by people wanting to minimise records of their deals.

He explains, however, that cryptocurrencies cannot replace the dollar as “world money”. Nor, in the foreseeable future, he further explains, can the euro or the renminbi. The immediate “alternative” is much more fragmented and “sticky” world trade.

He does not comment on the possibility discussed by other economists that the Trump boost to cryptocurrency use may generate a mass of unstable and dodgy debt, and thus a crisis.

Rogoff also does not pursue the im-

pact on world economic dislocation of the US-led sanctions against Russia after Putin’s invasion of Ukraine in 2022. He does note: “the dollar has also become a de facto branch of the US armed services. For over three decades now [in fact for longer] the US has increasingly weaponised financial sanctions as an alternative to military intervention”. (They are “cheaper” politically and financially than “boots on the ground”, but often not effective in their own terms).

An April 2024 IMF [working paper](#) by Gita Gopinath and others supplements Rogoff on the world-market-fragmenting (but not really Putin-war-deterring) effects of US-led sanctions against Russia and others. They find that since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, trade and direct investment flows between rival “geopolitical blocs” (for example, the US-led and the China-led) have shrunk relative to those within blocs. Trump’s new tariffs will sharpen that trend, which they compare to the economic division into blocs created by the Cold War after 1947.

Karl Marx declared in 1847 that in a “revolutionary sense”, he favoured free trade over protectionism. “Do not imagine that in criticising freedom of trade” – as he did – “we have the least intention of defending the system of protection. One may declare oneself an enemy of the constitutional regime [i.e. bourgeois rule of law, some element of democracy] without declaring oneself a friend of the ancient regime [i.e. absolute monarchy]”.

The regressive effects of nationalistic economic policy are much greater now. As Gopinath notes: “In... 1947-52 global goods trade was only 12% of GDP [output]... in 2019-23... 44%. Including services, trade exceeded 60% of global GDP in 2022”. And these days “intermediate goods” (already-processed inputs to production) account for more of trade than either raw materials or consumer goods. Many of those “intermediate goods” require high technology and are produced only in a few countries, so disrupting trade also means disrupting production.

It may become more difficult, but will also become more urgent, to develop and sustain international workers’ unity and solidarity, and opposition to disruptive barriers between countries. □



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# Biological and social materiality

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 article is part of a series which attempts to thread a path for left-wing activists to reach more agreement.*

*Here I examine biological and social materiality. Following articles will look at debates around toilets and change rooms, sport, prisons, and a summary about socialist attitudes.*

*I use "assigned sex at birth" for biological sex, and "gender identity" for psychological and social identification. I am a university and gender-affirming health clinic researcher. I identify as a gender-non-conforming man (he/they). Nothing I write here represents my employers' stance.*

A key argument by many sex-based rights activists (SBRAs) is that biological sex is real and material, but gender identity is "just a social construct", or a construct of individual fantasy. Kathleen Stock calls gender transitions "immersive fictions", though she says others should respect those fictions, for example by using preferred pronouns. This argument, I believe, ignores the materiality of social constructs: essentially everything that oppresses us is a social construct – capitalism, the state, nationalism, colonialism, sexism, racism, ableism, homophobia, transphobia etc. It also underestimates the complexity of biological "materiality".

And all human gains are also through social constructs. Medicines and health systems are social constructs that change human biology. For example, conditions that prevented people from giving birth are now overcome through developments like in-vitro fertilisation. The SBRA position often falls back to biological determinism about women's social position. This provides the philosophical basis for the alliances which many SBRAs make with right wing patriarchal forces.

By contrast, Simone de Beauvoir famously argued that "One is not born, but becomes a woman"; that biological differences are transformed into social norms of what it is to be a woman or a man. Those norms shape what gender identity positions and gendered social behaviours are culturally intelligible in any particular place and time.

Having a gender identity that differs from that assigned at birth is not the same as digressing from gender roles and stereotypes. Despite current anti-trans backlashes, it is more widely accepted than in past decades that girls and women can be "tomboys" or "butch", and boys and men can be "effeminate". It is a distinct fact that

throughout human history a minority of people have a deeply-felt, stable, gender identity which does not "match" sex assigned at birth.

There is great variability in gendering across languages. In French or Russian every noun is gendered. In Germany, children must by law have a gendered first name aligned with their sex assigned at birth. In Finnish, by contrast, there are no male and female pronouns. All pronouns are non-gendered. Refusal to use female pronouns for trans women aligns with gendered rules of language that are a historical product of patriarchy.

The etymology of "woman" is from "wifman" meaning wife of man. From 1975, that led many of the SBRAs' predecessors to reject the term and use "womyn" or "wimmin". In 1991, the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival decided to exclude trans women, accepting only "womyn-born-womyn" – a term which specifically excluded trans women.

There obviously are biological sex differences, but not so neatly that everyone is "obviously" and "immutably" male or female, with no grey areas. From a strictly genetic viewpoint, sex is a matter of small and large gamete producers. However, a significant minority of humans produce no gametes at any time of their lives. Some people with XY chromosomes and intersex conditions will through their whole lives "appear" to themselves and everyone else as unquestionably female but have not ovaries, instead undeveloped testes.

Hormone levels and their effects on secondary sexual characteristics (e.g. body fat distribution, hair growth, muscle mass development, breast size), vary greatly within sexes and between ethnicities and other human variation. For example, birth assigned women from some ethnicities may have more body hair on average than birth assigned men from other ethnicities. Polycystic ovarian syndrome, and many other hormonal variations, give individuals visible biological traits varying from their birth-sex norm.

Capacity, and actuality, of bearing children is the key biological issue within patriarchal attitudes – the basis for prescribing social roles around bearing and raising children, and limiting women's activities. Many people cannot produce viable gametes. Historically, people assigned female at birth who could not, or chose not to, bear children were often excluded from the main category woman – instead being described as "maidens" or "barren women" or other terms.

Some intersex conditions mean people's external genitals differ from those usually aligned with their internal gonads. Until recently it was routine to as-



sign male or female sex to these infants and operate to "correct" their genitals. Surely, operating on intersex children to align their body with a presumed gender identity is inappropriate until they are capable to be fully involved in that decision.

## Parallels

There are some parallels between intersex and TGD people, though intersex activists stress these should not be over-emphasised. Medically-transitioned TGD people have many biological sex "markers" changed. When trans people have gender affirming hormones or surgery, the results are major biological changes to their bodies. Trans women on estrogen have breast growth, redistribution of body fat, loss of muscle mass, reduction of scalp hair loss and other changes that are using seen as feminising. Trans women on testosterone experience redistribution of body fat, muscle growth, facial hair growth, and sometimes increased scalp hair loss. Gender-affirming surgeries (previously called "sex-change" operations) align people's genitals and/or chest/breasts with their gender identity.

Geneticists studying trans and intersex people describe complex interaction between genes, in-utero hormonal conditions, and in-utero and early life social influences. Some children with identical genetic intersex conditions, born by the same mother, end up with differently sexed bodies at birth. In short, there may well be some "biological" component to gender identity for trans and intersex people.

Homozygotic (identical genes) twins are much more likely to both be trans, than are heterozygotic (different genes) twins. A 2013 study on twins at least one of whom was transgender found 13 of 39 (33%) monozygotic pairs of as-

signed males and 8 of 35 (22.8%) pairs of assigned females were both trans. Among dizygotic pairs, only 1 of 38 (2.6%) pairs was both-trans. ([Diamond 2013](#))

One recent review ([Fernandez 2025](#)) concludes: "A growing number of studies support the existence of biological underpinnings to the development and continuous distribution of gender identity, with evidence of genetic, epigenetic, hormonal, neuroanatomical and neurodevelopmental differences between groups of individuals that express different identities. However, these components contribute to, but do not determine, the final variance in gender identity, which is also influenced by multiple nongenetic factors, many of which are still unknown". So it is not biological versus social causation, but a complex interaction.

Gender identity usually settles by around three years old, and many trans people have felt incongruity with ascribed gender since that age. Most people have a clearly male or female gender identity, although with that some will have a consciously atypical gender expression. Others have a less binary gender identity, or may or may not conform to social expectations aligned with their sex assigned at birth.

We do not develop gender identity by being told we are male or female. In many societies (including ones with fierce gender stereotyping for adults) there is little or no gender stereotyping for toddlers. Nor do we do it by observing external physical differences between male and female, which at age three are small and rarely observed. Gender identity is not a fiction or fantasy, but a material part of human development. It usually correlates with sex observed at birth, but for a significant minority, it does not. □

# Against Popular Front

By James Burnham

*This is abridged from a [pamphlet](#) published by the Trotskyists in the USA in 1937. James Burnham, its author, would after May 1940 become notorious as a defector from socialism to the conservative right, but at the time he was one of the most talented writers of the revolutionary socialist movement.*

The slogans of the People's Front [or Popular Front] were first advanced by the Communist International and its sections. They began to appear toward the end of 1933; moved forward slowly for some while; and received official sanction and theoretical expression at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International held during the summer of 1935. From then on they spread out at a headlong pace, and now present themselves as the key question of proletarian strategy throughout the world.

And, one after another, the reformist parties went over to the slogans of the People's Front. In France the People's Front was formally established; soon afterwards, in Spain. Throughout the world it made headway in giant strides. Soon liberals and "progressives" began to come over. In this country [USA], for example, *The Nation* and *The New Republic*, the leading liberal periodicals, became wholehearted People's Fronters. By now, within the labour movement, and among the social groups sympathetic to the labour movement, only one firm opposition to the People's Front remains the opposition, namely, of the revolutionary socialists.

[Its supporters claim that] the People's Front can prevent war (the claims, we see, are by no means modest). Dimitrov [then secretary of Stalin's "Communist International"]: "The extent to which this world-wide front is collaborated and put into action will determine whether the fascist and other imperialist war incendiaries will be able in the near future to kindle a new imperialist war, or whether their fiendish hands will be hacked off by the axe of a powerful anti-war front".

Or Manuilsky: "We now have greater opportunities for waging a successful struggle against imperialist wars than we had on the eve of 1914... Today, relying on the USSR, taking advantage of the antagonism among the capitalist states, the world proletariat has the opportunity of creating a broad people's anti-war front, which should not only include other classes, but also weak nations and peoples whose independence is menaced by war."

[And also that] the People's Front can stop fascism. Dimitrov: "Will the movement of the united proletarian front

and the anti-fascist people's front at the particular stage be in a position only to suppress or overthrow fascism (Note: This is the minimum claim which Dimitrov makes for it – JB), without directly proceeding to abolish the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie?" Or Manuilsky: "By its experience [in setting up the People's Front], the French proletariat enriched the whole of the world working class movement and demonstrated to it that timely action against fascism (unlike what happened in Austria and Spain) can avert heavy sacrifices and the bitterness of defeat."

Or from Earl Browder, in his pamphlet, *The People's Front in America*: "There is a tremendous need for the united front of progressives [i.e., the People's Front] which can awake the country to the danger of fascism, and organise the country to defeat this danger."

[Even that] the People's Front government can provide a transitional step to the proletarian dictatorship [i.e. democratic working-class rule]. Manuilsky sums up what he pretends to be the differences between the "old-fashioned" type of Social-Democratic coalition government and the new-fashioned People's Front government, as follows: "One government [the Social-Democratic coalition] paved the way for the fascist dictatorship; the other government [of the People's Front] must pave the way for the victory of the working class."

## Mistake

It would be a great mistake to imagine that the People's Front is a new policy. It is, it is true, a new slogan; but, in actual content, it is simply an old policy in a new disguise, an old strategy dressed up for the new occasion.

The words of its defenders make entirely clear what the real content of the policy of the People's Front is, and it is, therefore, not necessary to give elaborate external proof. The People's Front is merely a re-wording of the theories and practices of class collaboration and coalition government, as these have been advocated by reformists since the beginning of the modern labour movement. Class collaboration is what the People's Front specifically proposes: the union of organisations and parties representing various classes and sections of classes on the basis of a common program to defend bourgeois democracy. A People's Front government means, as defined by Dimitrov and Manuilsky, the assumption of governmental responsibility in a capitalist state by the coalition of these organisations and parties.

It is not profitable to argue about words. There are many honest support-

ers of the People's Front who will dislike and try to reject the notion that it is identical with class collaboration and coalition government. This is because they have previously been trained in an attitude of hostility toward class collaboration and coalition government as betrayals of Marxism. Indeed, this training is one of the reasons why the Comintern invented the new phrase, "People's Front," thereby hoping to make the policy acceptable to those who would have been suspicious of the old phrases.

However, if we examine the actual content, there can be no dispute. The People's Front proposes, quite openly and explicitly, the collaboration of classes and a coalition form of government. Naturally it does so in the name of the proletariat, on the alleged grounds that this strategy will under present conditions best serve the interests of the proletariat. But reformism has always tried to justify itself on such grounds – otherwise the proletariat would not be influenced by it.

A striking indication of the fundamental identity between the People's Front and the traditional policies of class collaboration and coalition government is provided by the ease with which reformists and liberals in every country (who have always stood for these latter policies and stand for them today) have gone over to the slogans of the People's Front. They have done so because they have recognized that in the People's Front, Stalinism – for its own reasons – has gone over to their own policies, that is, to reformism. And, of course, they welcome this; though they are still shy of the Comintern, fearing that Stalin offers his reformist gifts only for the chance to swallow them up.

It is necessary to make a sharp distinction between the People's Front and the United Front. The Stalinist spokesmen are anxious to lump the two together, and to claim that the People's Front is nothing more than the logical extension of the United Front "to a higher plane." Similarly, they attempt to confuse the workers by trying to make it appear that revolutionary socialists, in their consistent opposition to the People's Front, are attacking the United Front. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Revolutionary socialists have consistently stood for, and fought for, the united front, and continue to do so. Indeed, during the years of Hitler's rise to power, one of the chief criticisms levelled against the Comintern by the revolutionary Marxists was that by failing to adopt a united front tactic in Germany, the Comintern guaranteed the victory of Hitler. For this criticism,

at that time, the Comintern branded the Marxists as capitulators to the Social-Democracy, and as social-fascists. The most elaborate defence ever made of the united front is to be found in the pamphlets written about Germany during that time by Trotsky.

The united front, however, has nothing at all in common with the People's Front. The united front consists in an agreement reached between two or more parties and organisations, which have different programs, for joint action on specific issues. In this agreement there is absolutely no question of a common political program. Each organisation retains intact its entire program; retains the right to put it forward; retains the right to criticise the other organisations in the united front agreement, either in general, or for failure to carry out properly the united front agreement. Thus, in the united front each organisation guards its full independence; while at the same time the widest possible unity can be achieved for carrying through some action accepted as desirable by all of the constituent organisations of the united front.

## Action

The united front is possible because various organisations differing in complete program or in final social aim may nevertheless all be in favour of some specific action or set of actions. For example, united fronts are readily possible on such issues as defence cases, support of a strike, resistance to attack on civil liberties and other democratic rights, breaking of injunctions, holding of demonstrations, etc. At more advanced stages of social crisis, they must be formed on such issues as the building of a workers' militia, defence against fascist gangs, the founding of workers' and peasants' and soldiers' committees.

The united front on such issues is in fact not merely possible but indispensable for successful struggle. Through it the widest possible forces are organised, and at the same time the masses are given a chance to compare in action the worth and dependability of the ideas and methods of the various organisations and parties which strive for their allegiance.

Revolutionary socialists do not merely accept the united front passively. They are the most active and the only consistent advocates of the united front; whereas reformists always resist the united front and must be forced into it – just as the Stalinists now, in basing their policy on the reformist People's Front, resist and fight a united front of action. How could it be otherwise? The ideas and principles of the revolution-



# nts, for United Fronts

ary Marxists represent the historical interests of the proletariat. Consequently, any joint struggle by specific actions to the advantage of the proletariat will be welcomed by the Marxists, and the broader the basis, the better.

At the same the Marxists are anxious to have an ever broader mass arena for the presentation of their own ideas and a demonstration of their own methods, confident that a true understanding of them will turn the masses away from the reformists toward the revolutionists.

The People's Front, on the other hand, is not merely, not even primarily, an agreement for joint action on specific issues. It first and foremost involves the acceptance by all members of the People's Front of a common program. This difference is the key to the gulf which separates the People's Front from the united front.

What program? We have already seen the answer. The program of the People's Front is a program for the defence of bourgeois democracy: that is, for the defence of one form of capitalism.

Whose program is this? It is obviously not the program of the proletariat. The program of the proletariat, accepted by revolutionists since the publication of the Communist Manifesto, can be summed up in two slogans: for workers' power and for socialism. Naturally the immediate tactic of the proletariat is not on all occasions the struggle for state power: that is possible only in a revolutionary crisis. But at all times and on all occasions the fundamental

program remains the same – for the overthrow of capitalism, for workers' power and for socialism. This program expresses the basic class conflict in modern society; records the Marxist understanding that the problems of society can be solved only by socialism, and that socialism can be achieved only through the conquest of power by the proletariat. The duty of the revolutionary party, the conscious vanguard of the proletariat, is to keep this full and fundamental program always to the fore and always uncompromised. In its program, the revolutionary party thus sums up the independence of the proletariat as a class, and asserts its independent historical destiny.

For the proletariat, through its parties, to give up its own independent program means to give up its independent functioning as a class. And this is precisely the meaning of the People's Front. In the People's Front the proletariat renounces its class independence, gives up its class aims – the only aims, as Marxism teaches, which can serve its interests. By accepting the program of the People's Front, it thereby accepts the aims of another section of society; it accepts the aim of the defence of capitalism when all history demonstrates that the interests of the proletariat can be served only by the overthrow of capitalism. It subordinates itself to a middle-class version of how best and most comfortably to preserve the capitalist order. The People's Front is thus thoroughly and irrevocably non-proletarian, anti-proletarian.



Right-wing anti-Stalinist poster from the National Republicans Propaganda Centre depicting Stalin controlling the leaders of the French Popular Front: Édouard Herriot (Radical Party), Léon Blum (SFIO) and Marcel Cachin (PCF)

By its very nature, the People's Front must be so. The establishment of the People's Front, by definition, requires agreement on a common program between the working-class parties and non-working class parties. But the non-proletarian parties cannot agree to the proletarian program – the program of revolutionary socialism – without ceasing to be what they are, without becoming themselves revolutionary workers' parties. But if that should happen, then there would be no basis left for a People's Front: there would be only revolutionary proletarian unity. Consequently, the People's Front must always

be an abandonment of the proletarian program, a subordination of the proletariat to non-proletarian social interests. In the People's Front, it is the proletariat and the proletariat alone that loses.

[The US Stalinist] Earl Browder, in his report to his Central Committee on December 4th, 1936, summed up the whole matter: "We can organise and rouse them [the majority of the people] provided we do not demand of them that they agree with our socialist program, but *unite with them on the basis of their program which we make also our own*". (My italics.- JB). □

## Defending democratic rights

In another section, Burnham argued that the Popular Front was a treacherous policy even if it could be argued that the situation was so adverse that keeping democratic rights was almost all that could be won in the short term. He would be proved right. The Popular Front government in the Spanish Republic not only fought the fascists poorly: it also (primarily because of the weight of the Stalinists in it) suppressed the workers' revolution which started in 1936-7, and the revolutionary socialists (POUM) and anarchists who championed it. The Popular Front parliament in France, elected in June 1936, ended by voting absolute power to the far-right Marshal Pétain in July 1940.

The democratic rights are of inestimable advantage to the proletariat in its struggle for power. Wherever they are threatened in practice this threat

must be resisted, and the revolutionary socialists may take the lead in organising resistance. The resistance must depend first and foremost on mass action: on strong, militant picket lines, great demonstrations and mass meetings, union organisation; in the end, on a workers' militia and workers' councils.

### Pressure

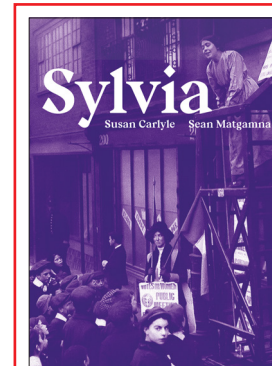
Legalistic means, pressure on the "government", are, of course, not excluded. Campaigns for the "democratisation" of the state apparatus, such as the Supreme Court campaign in this country, or, more particularly, the campaigns for the re-introduction of democratic forms in the fascist nations (as attempted, for example, in Austria), are necessary. These must, however, be always subordinated to more direct forms of mass action, for it is the latter only that can in the long run defend the democratic

rights. When the crisis grows more acute, and the fascist gangs appear on the scene to break up picket lines and workers' meetings, once again the workers must defend their rights first and foremost by independent organisation and mass action: they, with their class forces, must settle directly with the fascists.

The democratic government will not, cannot do so: as history has so conclusively proved to us, the democratic government in the end will only hand over the reins to the fascists; or if, as in Spain, it pretends to fight at all, it will be only because of the overwhelming class pressure of the workers that compels it.

The struggle for the defense of concrete democratic rights is of the utmost importance at the present time. It can rally great sections of the masses, and offers one of the most fruitful of all

fields for the application of the genuine united front tactic. And, behind the leadership of the working class, it can draw middle-class as well as proletarian groups, thereby offering an "approach to the middle classes" which is in no sense capitulation. □



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# Unity is not a cure-all

By Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky wrote this article in summer 1934, when, for a short time between the Stalinist parties' "Third Period" policy (united front "only from below") and the Popular Front, the Stalinists advocated a united front, and in France there was talk of a merger of the Stalinist party and the social-democratic Socialist Party.

The aim of this text is to correct the slogan of organic unity, which is not our slogan. The formula of organic unity – without a program, without concretisation – is hollow. And as physical nature abhors a vacuum, this formula fills itself with an increasingly ambiguous and even reactionary content. All the leaders of the Socialist Party, beginning with [Claude] Just and Marceau Pivert [leftists] and ending with Frossard [on the right], declare themselves partisans of organic unity. The most fervent protagonist of this slogan is Lebas, whose antirevolutionary tendencies are well enough known. The Communist Party leaders are manipulating the same slogan with increasing willingness. Is it our task to help them amuse the workers by an enticing and hollow formula?

The exchange of open letters of the two leaderships on the program of action is the promising beginning of a discussion on the aims and the methods of the workers' party. It is here that we should intervene vigorously. Unity and split are two methods subordinated to program and political tasks. Since the discussion has happily begun, we should tactfully destroy the illusory hopes in organic unity as a panacea. Our thesis is that the unity of the working class can be realized only on a revolutionary basis. This basis is our own program.

If fusion takes place tomorrow between the two parties, we place ourselves on the basis of the united party in order to continue our work. In this case the fusion may have a progressive significance. But if we continue to sow the illusion that organic unity is of value as such – and it is thus that the masses understand this slogan and not as a more ample and more convenient audience for the Leninist agitators – we shall be doing nothing but making it easier for the two conjoined bureaucracies to present us, Bolshevik-Leninists [as the Trotskyists then called themselves], to the masses as the great obstacle on the road of organic unity. In these conditions, unity might well take place on our backs and become a reactionary factor.

We must never play with slogans that are not revolutionary by their own content but that can play a quite different role according to the political conjuncture, the relationship of forces, etc. ...

We are not afraid of organic unity. We state openly that the fusion may play a progressive role. But our own role is to point out to the masses the conditions under which this role would be genuinely progressive. In sum, we do not set ourselves against the current toward organic unity, which the two bureaucracies have already cornered. But while supporting ourselves on this current, which is honest among the masses, we introduce into it the critical note, the criterion of demarcation, programmatic definitions, etc.

"Nothing would be more dangerous," say the theses of Comrades Craipeau-Kamoun, "than to get hypnotised over this single perspective and to consider all work useless so long as unity is not accomplished." This is right, but it is not sufficient. It is necessary to understand clearly that this perspective of organic unity detached from the revolutionary tasks can serve for nothing else than to hypnotise the workers by reconciling them with the passivity of the two parties.

## Sterilising hypnotism

In order to parry the sterilising hypnotism of the slogan of organic unity, the theses propose a "minimum of elementary Marxist principles as the charter of this unity." The formula is almost classic as the beginning of a downsliding on the opportunist incline. One begins by dosing up the Marxist principles for the delicate stomachs of the Social Democrats and the Stalinists. If it is a question only of enlarging the audience and of opening up to oneself an access to the Communist workers, why put conditions in the guise of "elementary principles" (very elementary, alas!)? And if it is a question of something else, that is to say, of the party and the proletariat, how could a minimum of principles and, what is more, of "elementary principles" suffice?

Immediately after this, the theses demand that it be explained to the workers "that there cannot be a genuine revolutionary unity except that which makes out of the Marxist party a coherent and disciplined organism." So? So?

We do not know if the very next stage of development will be an attempt at fusion or, on the contrary, a series of new splits in the two parties. We do not engage ourselves on the road of abstract formulas.

Since February 6 [when fascists marched on the French Parliament], *La Vérité* [the Trotskyist paper] has spent its time repeating the formula of the united front (which was moreover much richer in content at that epoch than the formula of organic unity is today). We criticised Naville [a French Trotskyist leader] for not concretising the revo-

lutionary content of the united front, thus permitting the two bureaucracies to seize upon this slogan without great risk. The same mistake must not be repeated under aggravated circumstances.

And for the youth? The same thing. There are not two policies: one for the youth, the other for the adults. Insofar as the youth carry on politics – and that is their duty – their policy must be adult. There are too many factors that are driving the revolutionary and inexperienced youth towards the Stalinists. The formula of unity facilitates this tendency and augments the dangers. Our weapon, which coincides with the superior interests of the proletarian vanguard, is the content of the unity. While basing ourselves on the currents toward unity, we develop the discussion; we deepen it; we group the best elements of the two camps around the "maximum" of our not-at-all-"elementary" principles; we reinforce our tendency. And then, come what may, the revolutionary vanguard will profit by the fusion as by the split.

Let us look at the theses: "The united youth (Jeunesse Unique) cannot have the Leninist principles as its basis." Who says that? The reformists? The Stalinists? No, it is the Leninists of the generous type themselves. Every worker who reflects and who takes things in their totality will reply: "If your principles are not good for making the revolutionary unity, they are good for nothing." "We will retreat," continue our generous Leninists, "on certain points if the agreement is impossible otherwise." Precisely why do the Leninists need to retreat on certain of their principles, of which they already possess only a minimum? It's absolutely incomprehensible.

We will be told: "But we are only a small minority!" Good. Then the two majorities – or better yet, the two bureaucracies supporting themselves on the two majorities – will make (or will not make) their fusion without our retreat. They have no need of it since they are the majority. The authors of the theses stand up not as propagandists of Leninism but as benefactors of the human race. They want to reconcile the reformists with the Stalinists, even at their own expense. Still worse, they say so in advance, before being compelled to do so by the situation. They capitulate in anticipation. They retreat out of platonic generosity. All this contradictory reasoning, in which the authors feel themselves simultaneously the representatives of a small minority and the inspectors general of history, is the unhappy result of the trap that they set for themselves with the slogan of organic unity detached from all content or charged with a "minimum" content.



Socialist Party leftists launched the TPPS anti-fascist defence squad.

Whence come these artificial and even ambiguous constructions? They proceed from the bad social composition of the Socialist youth. Too many students. Too few workers. The students are occupied too much with themselves, too little with the workers' movement. A worker environment disciplines a young intellectual. The worker wants to learn the fundamental and solid things. He asks for clear-cut replies. He does not like these factitious witticisms.

Salvation for the Seine district [of the Socialist Youth, where the Trotskyists were influential] lies in mobilising the students for the hard labor of recruiting workers. Whoever does not want to occupy himself with that has nothing to look for in the socialist organisation. The proletarian organisation needs intellectuals, but only as aids for the rise of the working masses. On the other hand, the sincerely revolutionary and socialist intellectuals must learn a good deal from the workers. The internal regime of the youth must be adapted to this task; a division of labor must be organised; their exact tasks must be given to the students or groups of students in the workers' quarters, etc. Ideological oscillations will become all the less frequent, the solidier the proletarian base of the organisation will become. □

• Abridged (for space) by removing two paragraphs in which Trotsky upbraids the writers for deploring general pro-USSR sentiment among left-wingers. Although Trotsky continued to describe Stalin's USSR as a degenerated workers' state until his death in 1940, his description of its ruling group became sharper and sharper – totalitarian, oligarchic, etc. – and usually when he revised his description he indicated that the revision was a matter of a delayed catch-up with evolving reality.

# Committees of Action and People's Front

By Leon Trotsky

*Trotsky wrote this article in November 1935, after the Popular Front alliance had been sealed in July 1935. The French Trotskyists were active in the Socialist Party. Trotsky sought to map a way for them to intervene, beyond generally counterposing "united front" to "Popular Front".*

The "People's Front" represents the coalition of the proletariat with the imperialist bourgeoisie, in the shape of the Radical Party [the biggest mainstream party in France, with free-trade, liberal, secularist roots: it declined sharply in the late 1930s, and since 1944 has been tiny] and smaller tripe of the same sort. The coalition extends both to the parliamentary and the extra-parliamentary spheres. In both spheres the Radical Party, preserving for itself complete freedom of action, coarsely imposes restrictions upon the freedom of action of the proletariat.

The Radical Party itself is undergoing decay. Each new election gives added proof of the passage of supporters away from it to the right and to the left. On the other hand, the Socialist and Communist Parties, because of the absence of a genuinely revolutionary party, are growing stronger. The general trend of the toiling masses, including the petty bourgeoisie, is quite clearly to the left. The orientation of the leaders of the workers' parties is no less self evident: to the right. At the time when the masses by their votes and their struggle seek to cast off the party of the Radicals, the leaders of the [SP-CP] United Front, on the contrary, seek to save it. After obtaining the confidence of the masses of workers on the basis of a "socialist" program, the leaders of the workers' parties then proceeded to concede voluntarily a lion's share of this confidence to the Radicals, in whom the masses of workers have absolutely no confidence.

The "People's Front" in its present guise, shamelessly tramples not only upon workers' democracy but also upon formal, i.e. bourgeois democracy. The majority of the Radical voters do not participate in the struggle of the toilers and consequently in the People's Front. Yet the Radical Party occupies in this front not only an equal but a privileged position; the workers' parties are compelled to restrict their activity to the program of the Radical Party. This idea is most outspokenly advanced by the cynics of *l'Humanité* [the CP daily]. The latest elections in the Senate have illuminated with special clarity the privileged position of the Radicals in the People's Front. The leaders of the Communist Party boasted openly of the fact that they renounced in favour of non-proletarian parties several mandates which justly belonged to

the workers. This merely means that the united front re-established in part the property qualification in favour of the bourgeoisie.

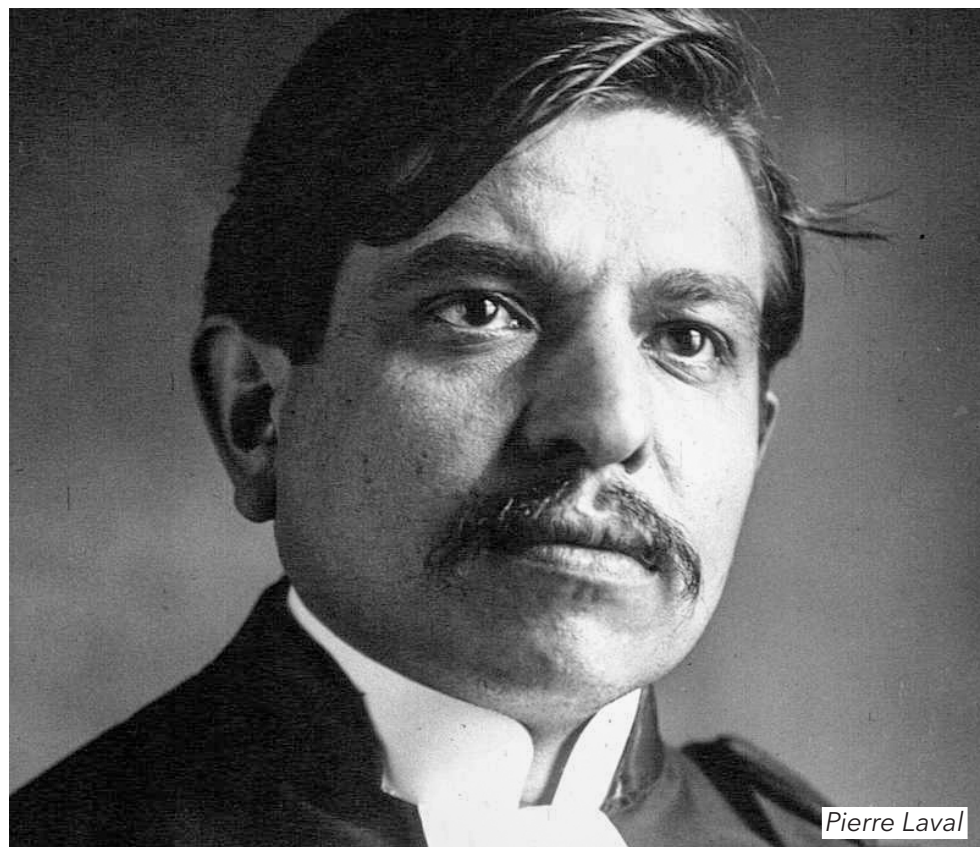
The "Front", as it is conceived, is an organisation for a direct and immediate struggle [i.e. against the danger of fascism]. When struggle is in question, every worker is worth ten bourgeois, even those adhering to the united front. From the standpoint of the revolutionary fighting strength of the Front, the electoral privileges should have been given not to radical bourgeois but to workers. But in essence, privileges are uncalled for here. Is the People's Front intended for defence of "democracy"? Then let it begin by applying it to its own ranks. This means: the leadership of the People's Front must be the direct and immediate reflection of the will of the struggling masses.

How? Very simply: through elections. The proletariat does not deny anyone the right to struggle side by side with it against Fascism, the Bonapartist [semi-dictatorial] régime of Laval [an "independent" ex-SPer, prime minister June 1935 to January 1936], the war plot of the imperialists, and all other forms of oppression and violence. The sole demand that class-conscious workers put to their actual or potential allies is that they struggle in action. Every group of the population really participating in the struggle at a given stage, and ready to submit to common discipline, must have the equal right to exert influence on the leadership of the People's Front.

Each two hundred, five hundred or thousand citizens adhering in a given city, district, factory, barrack and village to the People's Front, in time of fighting actions, elect their representative to the local committee of action. All the participants in the struggle are bound by its discipline.

The last Congress of the Communist International in its resolution on the Dimitrov report expressed itself in favour of elected Committees of Action as the mass support for the People's Front. This is perhaps the only progressive idea in the entire resolution. But precisely for this reason the Stalinists do nothing to realise it. They dare not do so for fear of breaking off collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

To be sure, in the election of Committees not only workers will be able to participate but also civil service employees, functionaries, war veterans, artisans, small merchants, and small peasants. Thus the Committees of Action are in closest harmony with the tasks of the struggle of the proletariat for influence over the petty bourgeoisie. But they complicate to the extreme the collaboration between the workers' bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie. In the meantime the People's Front in



Pierre Laval

its present form is nothing else than the organisation of class collaboration between the political exploiters of the proletariat (the reformists and the Stalinists) and the political exploiters of the petty bourgeoisie (the Radicals). Real mass elections of the Committees of Action would automatically eject the bourgeois middlemen (the Radicals) from the ranks of the People's Front and thus blow to smithereens the criminal policy dictated by Moscow.

However it would be a mistake to think that it is possible at a set day and hour to call the proletarian and petty-bourgeois masses to elect Committees of Action on the basis of a given statute. Such an approach would be purely bureaucratic and consequently barren. The workers will be able to elect a Committee of Action only in those cases when they themselves participate in some sort of action and feel the need for revolutionary leadership. In question here is not the formal democratic representation of all and any masses but the revolutionary representation of the struggling masses. The Committee of Action is an apparatus of struggle. There is no sense in guessing beforehand precisely what strata of the toilers will be attracted to the creation of Committees of Action: the lines of demarcation in the struggling masses will be established during the struggle itself.

The greatest danger in France lies in the fact that the revolutionary energy of the masses will be dissipated in spurts, in isolated explosions like Toulon, Brest and Limoges, and give way to apathy. Only conscious traitors or hopeless muddle-heads are capable of thinking that in the present situation it is possible to hold the masses immobilised

up to the moment when they will be blessed from above by the government of the People's Front. Strikes, protests, street clashes, direct uprisings are absolutely inevitable in the present situation. The task of the proletarian party consists not in checking and paralysing these movements but in unifying them and investing them with the greatest possible force.

The reformists and Stalinists fear, above all, to frighten the Radicals. The apparatus of the united front quite consciously plays the role of disorganiser in relation to sporadic movements of the masses. And the "lefts" of the Marceau Pivert [an SP leftist] type serve to shield this apparatus from the indignation of the masses. The situation can be saved only by aiding the struggling masses to create a new apparatus, in the process of the struggle itself, which meets the requirements of the moment. The Committees of Action are intended for this very purpose. During the struggle in Toulon and Brest, the workers would have created without any hesitation a local fighting organisation had they been called upon to do so. On the very next day after the bloody assault in Limoges, the workers and a considerable section of the petty bourgeoisie would have indubitably revealed their readiness to create an elected committee to investigate the bloody events and to prevent them in the future. During the movement in the barracks, in the summer of this year, against Rabiote (the extension of the term of military service), the soldiers, without much ado, would have elected battalion, regimental and garrison committees of action had such a road been suggested to them. Simi-

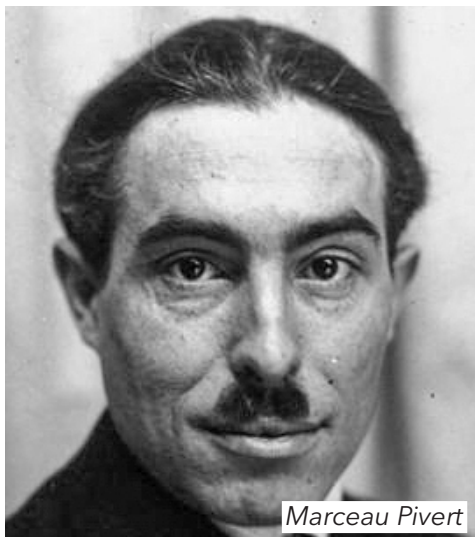
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→ from page 15

lar situations arise and will continue to arise at every step. In most cases on a local but, often, also on a national scale. The task is not to miss a single situation of this kind. The first condition for this is a clear understanding of the import of the Committee of Action as the only means of breaking the anti-revolutionary opposition of party and trade-union apparatus.

Does this mean to say that the Committees of Action are substitutes for party and trade-union organisations? It would be stupid to pose the question in this manner. The masses enter into the struggle with all their ideas, traditions, groupings and organisations. The parties continue to exist and to struggle. During elections to the Committees of Action each party will naturally seek to elect its own adherents. The Committees of Action will arrive at decisions through a majority (given complete freedom of party and factional groupings). In relation to parties, the Committees of Action may be called the revolutionary parliament: the parties are not excluded but on the contrary they are necessarily presupposed; at the same time they are tested in action and the masses learn to free themselves from the influence of rotten parties.

Does this mean, then, that the Committees of Action are simply – soviets? Under certain conditions the Committees of Action can transform themselves into soviets. However, it would be incorrect to call the Committees of Action by this name. Today, in 1935, the popular masses have become accustomed to associate with the word soviets the conception of power already conquered; but France today is still considerably removed from this. The Russian soviets during their initial stages were not at all what they subsequently became and in those days they were often called by the modest name of workers' or strike committees. Committees of Action at their present stage have as their task to unite in a defensive struggle the toiling masses of France and thus imbue these masses with the consciousness of their own power for the coming offensive. Whether matters will reach genuine soviets depends on whether the present critical situation in France will unfold to the ultimate rev-



Marceau Pivert



12 February 1934: the Communist Party and Socialist Party unite at last in a counter-protest to the 6 February 1934 fascist march on Parliament. But the banner's slogan is a limp demand on the Radical government to sort things out. "We solemnly swear to remain united to disarm and dissolve the seditious [fascist] leagues, to defend and develop democratic freedoms, and to ensure peace"

olutionary conclusions. This of course depends not only upon the will of the revolutionary vanguard but also upon a number of objective conditions; in any case the mass movement, that has today run up against the barrier of the People's Front, will be unable to move forward without the Committees of Action.

### Tasks

Such tasks as the creation of workers' militia, the arming of the workers, the preparation of a general strike [which would erupt in June 1936], will remain on paper if the struggling masses themselves, through their authoritative organs, do not occupy themselves with these tasks. Only Committees of Action born in the struggle can assure a real militia numbering fighters not by the thousand but the tens of thousands. Only Committees of Action embracing the most important centres of the country will be able to choose the moment for transition to more decisive methods of struggle, the leadership of which will be rightly theirs.

From the propositions sketched above there flows a number of conclusions for the political activity of the proletarian revolutionists in France. The cardinal conclusion touches upon the so-called "revolutionary (?) left" [Pivert's group in the SP]. This grouping is characterised by a complete lack of understanding of the laws that govern the movement of the revolutionary masses. No matter how much the centrists babble about the "masses" they always orient themselves upon the reformist apparatus. Repeating this or that rev-

olutionary slogan, Marceau Pivert subordinates it to the abstract principle of "organisational unity" which in action turns out to be unity with the patriots against the revolutionists. At the time when it is a life and death question for the masses to smash the opposition of the united social-patriotic apparatuses as an absolute "good" which stands above the interests of revolutionary struggle.

Committees of Action will be built only by those who understand, to the end, the necessity of freeing the masses from the treacherous leadership of the social-patriots. Yet Pivert clutches at Zyromsky [SP leftist close to CP], who clutches at Blum [SP leader], who in turn, together with Thorez [CP leader], clutches at Herriot [Radical leader], who clutches at Laval. Pivert enters into the system of the People's Front (not for nothing did he vote for the shameful resolution of Blum at the last [SP] National Council meeting!) and the People's Front enters as a wing into the Bonapartist régime of Laval. The downfall of the Bonapartist régime is inevitable. Should the leadership of the People's Front (Herriot-Blum-Cachin-Thorez-Zyromsky-Pivert) succeed in remaining on its feet in the course of the entire approaching and decisive period, then the Bonapartist régime will inevitably give way to Fascism. The condition for the victory of the proletariat is the liquidation of the present leadership. The slogan of "unity" becomes under these conditions not only a stupidity but a crime. No unity with the agents of French im-

perialism and of the League of Nations. To their perfidious leadership it is necessary to counterpose revolutionary Committees of Action. It is possible to build these committees only by mercilessly exposing the anti-revolutionary policies of the so-called "revolutionary left" with Marceau Pivert at the head. There is of course no room in our ranks for illusions and doubts on this score. □

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# How to brake CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from aviation



Environment

By Chris Reynolds

Aviation produces 2.5% of global carbon emissions. But those emissions are rising rapidly. In other high-emission sectors there are technical alternatives (electricity generation from renewables or nuclear rather than fossil fuels, e-vehicles, food supply shifted back to plants and low-emissions livestock and forward to farm-free food), whatever the political difficulties of introducing them. In aviation, less so.

"Sustainable Aviation Fuel" is only 0.7% of fuel used, not increasing fast, and often not really sustainable. Incremental improvements such as fewer vacant seats on aircraft reduced CO<sub>2</sub> per passenger-km by 60% between 1990 and 2021, but it's hard to see them going much further, and total emissions doubled in those same 31 years.

Thus issues like a third runway for Heathrow loom larger in eco-debate than 2.5%. Globally, there are about 100 big airport-building or expansion projects every year.

Unlike with fossil-fuel extraction, no one proposes to stop aviation outright, or even to reduce it radically. The debate is about braking the growth.

Several UK unions have produced documents about this. The RMT rail union says high-speed rail should be expanded to replace short-haul flights.

Especially if rail prices were subsidised and flights taxed more, that would help, though China in recent decades has expanded high-speed rail fast yet also increased flights, also fast.

Aviation is lightly taxed. There is no tax on aviation fuel (except for flights within the EU). International flights, and domestic flights inside the UK, are zero-rated for VAT or sales taxes.

The UK has an Air Passenger Duty (APD), and other countries have similar levies. APD is £94 on long-haul cheap seats, £224 on long-haul posh seats; £13 and £28 for short-haul, £84 for private jets.

The Prospect union, which organises air traffic controllers, suggests a higher APD for frequent flyers. Prospect does not say this, but APD could also be increased to punitive rates for private jets (or private jets could be banned).

## Levy

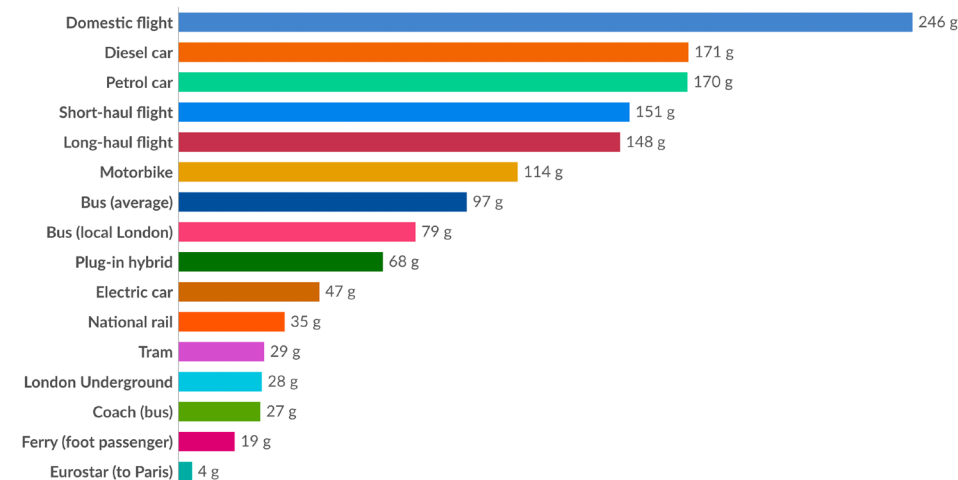
Prospect favours compulsory carbon-offsetting, presumably via a levy on fares and freight rates. It says it is "not convinced" about "managing demand", i.e. measures to reduce the number of flights. It favours airport expansion, focuses on resistance to cost-cutting on air traffic control, and hopes for emission-cuts through smarter controls.

Unison Scotland has opposed plans to cut APD in Scotland which in fact did not go ahead.

Unite and GMB documents focus on state aid to revive aviation after the Covid lockdowns during which many firms laid off workers. In fact, airlines and airports have largely revived since

## Carbon footprint of travel per kilometer, 2022

The carbon footprint of travel is measured in grams of carbon dioxide-equivalents<sup>1</sup> per passenger kilometer. This includes the impact of increased warming from aviation emissions at altitude.



Data source: UK Government, Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2022)

OurWorldinData.org/transport | CC BY

Note: Official conversion factors used in UK reporting. These factors will vary across countries depending on energy mix, transport technologies, and occupancy of public transport. Data for aviation is based on economy class.

then: global airlines return on invested capital was higher in 2023, 2024, and 2025 so far than before the pandemic. One company predicts labour shortages, as aviation firms seek 1.5 million new hires worldwide in the next decade.

## State aid

Unite also favours state aid for "next generation low-emission aerospace and aviation technologies".

Some Workers' Liberty policy documents have proposed rationing of flights. Myself, I'm doubtful. What if your job cannot be done without flying? Or you have a frail parent in Bangladesh and want to visit them more than

once a year before they die? It is hard to see how the rationing could work without exceptions and thus scope for the best-connected to game the rules or bribe their way round them.

Higher taxes, coupled with low rates on rail and other transport, and a general levelling of incomes so that the taxes do not leave the rich still flying lots and the poor earthbound, seem more plausible to me, coupled with public ownership and democratic control of airports and airlines to plan development, and of other big firms to enable rationalisation of "business travel". □

• Links for union reports: [bit.ly/co2av](https://bit.ly/co2av)

# Are France Insoumise and NFP models for us?

By Martin Thomas

Jean-Luc Mélenchon of La France Insoumise (LFI) has hailed the Sultana-Corbyn project as his British equivalent. Hilary Schan, ex-Momentum and a figure in Owen Jones's We Deserve Better project, has called for "an electoral pact between the new party, Independents and the Greens... as the New Popular Front in France has shown".

A closer look tells us LFI and Mélenchon are not a model.

• Mélenchon was a member of a sort-of-Trotskyist group (the OCI) from age 21 to 25, and despite his record in-between as a loyal minister in neoliberal Socialist Party governments, still talks about "revolution" (but now a "people's" revolution, not a workers' revolution). The tone of LFI, as

of French politics generally, is more leftist and street-activist than Sultana-Corbyn.

But its politics are nationalist, anti-Ukraine, pro-Chinese-government. Although Mélenchon himself is still quietly for "two states" in Israel-Palestine, his vocal deputy (and domestic partner) Sophia Chikirou leans pro-Hamas. A 2024 [poll](#) found 20% of FI supporters (as against 12% of the public at large) wanting at least a chunk of Jews to quit France.

## Supporters

• LFI has 500,000 supporters, but that is a total of email lists: legally, LFI only has three members, there is no party structure, and democracy does not go beyond plebiscitary e-consultations (the last one drew some 60,000 votes). In large part it is a personalised

"Mélenchon for president" operation.

• France's New Popular Front (NFP), formed in 2024 to fend off the far-right RN in the legislative elections then, is not really a Popular Front like those of the 1930s. Marxists condemned those as cases of a workers' party fading its politics to defer to a bourgeois party. In the NFP, which was the workers' party fading its politics to defer? LFI has a more left-wing tone than the Socialist Party or Communist Party or Greens, but whether it is really more left-wing is another matter. Besides, it is not a party. And the NFP did not really have an out-and-out bourgeois party in it. (The "Republican Front", not a formal alliance but a habit in France of labour-movement parties withdrawing in elec-

tion second rounds to back mainstream-right candidates against the far right, is more like the 1930s precedent).

• That doesn't mean the NFP is a model to follow. It is an electoral alliance where instead there should be a movement of local committees of action, with maybe some electoral accommodations as consequence.

## Worst

• The new book on LFI, *La Meute*, discussed also in *Solidarity* 750, is by mainstream journalists, but gives some evidence that many of the worst traits of LFI flow from British and US influences. For leftists in Britain to use those LFI traits as confirmation or authorisation for similar traits here would be self-confirmation, not internationalism.

Mélenchon was long a strident secularist, in the French tradition. *La Meute* attributes LFI's warmer tone now on Islamism to the 1994 pamphlet by Chris Harman of the SWP, *The Prophet and the Proletariat*, and the influence of LFI leader Danièle Obono, a former member of the SWP's French co-thinker group.

LFI is surprisingly thin on former Socialist Party or trade-union figures. Its central apparatus, *La Meute* says, is shaped by an "influx of young people, often from Sciences Po [France's posh politics super-university], influenced by an American left very distant from the universalist French tradition [i.e. more into "identity" and "communal" politics] [who have] changed the sociology of the movement". □

# Peggie is a victimised worker



Debate

By Dale Street

If I ever face workplace disciplinary proceedings, then I sincerely hope that I do not end up with [Simon Nelson](#) as my union representative.

Sandie Peggie was cleared by her employer of all four charges against her. But for Simon the jury is still out.

He writes: "We don't know what she said... I don't know how we can be sure exactly what occurred." Just for good measure, he throws in a succession of insinuations about Peggie's story supposedly changing over time and denounces her as a bigot.

Peggie got a better deal from her employer than she would get from Simon. If you're representing someone in a disciplinary, denouncing them as bigot whose version of events has changed over time is not a good idea.

"Upton considered reporting the incident to the police as a hate crime after speaking to her manager," writes Simon. But the e-mail trail revealed in court indicates that it was NHS Fife managers who suggested that the incident could be reported to the police as a hate crime.

"NHS Fife's policy did allow Upton access to the changing rooms of the gender Upton identifies as," writes Simon. Wrong! NHS Fife did not have a policy. Their witnesses admitted that in the Tribunal proceedings.

NHS Fife EDI lead Isla Bumba decided that Upton should use the women's changing room on the basis of a Google search and phoning her counterparts in two other Health Boards. Two phone calls and a Google search do not make a policy.

Even disregarding the after-the-event

Supreme Court ruling, NHS Fife acted illegally in allowing Upton to use the women's changing room. It failed to carry out an Equality Impact Assessment before adopting its (non-)policy.

NHS Fife has even admitted that it acted illegally in failing to do so. Not even Simon will be able to get NHS Fife off the hook on that one.

"Sandie Peggie may have been treated unfairly by their (sic) suspension, and it is possible that an account by a doctor was seen as more credible than that of a nurse," writes Simon. There is no "may" or "possible" about it.

The evidence which came to light in the Tribunal proceedings shows that management set up a private e-mail group to manufacture a case against Peggie, condemned Peggie as guilty even before an investigation had started, and assisted Upton in rewriting witness statements.

## Incident

Immediately after the incident on Christmas Eve 2023 senior consultant Kate Searle sent an e-mail to all twenty Emergency Department consultants, prior to any investigation: "Beth was approached in a very confrontational and aggressive manner (by Peggie). ... We condemn the actions of Sandie."

It's a pity that Simon seems to have one standard for the worker ("bigot") and another for the bosses ("may have unfairly treated..."). When I need a rep in a workplace disciplinary, I want one who is on my side, not one who equivocates about management's motivations and actions.

"Should the hospital make provision for some private cubicles in the changing areas?" asks Simon. Answer: It did. The doctors had private changing cubicles next to their workstation.



Upton chose not to use them. Upton chose to use the women's single-sex changing room.

"What is missing from Dale's article is any acknowledgement that we all have the right to some level of privacy," writes Simon. He should reread the article. The bulk of it

is taken up with an assessment of conflicting Article 8 rights, i.e. the right to privacy.

(I did, however, forget to mention Peggie's ECHR Articles 9 and 10 rights, and her Equality Act 2010 section 10 rights. That sex is a binary and cannot be changed is not just a basic fact of science. It is also a protected belief. See Forstater. That shifts the balance of conflicting rights even further in favour of Peggie. This also explains why Peggie's legal representative refused to use female pronouns for Upton in the Employment Tribunal proceedings. She had the right to do so, and could not represent her client without doing so.)

Simon repeatedly claims that my article implies a predatory or dishonest intent on Upton's part, painting Upton as a predator setting out to harm women – in fact, my short [discussion piece](#) is

supposedly part of the demonisation of trans people!

Simon's contribution is bad enough without the Derridean deconstruction. If I had wanted to portray Upton as a predator, it would have been so crystal-clear that there would be no need to "imply" that into my article.

(When I write something, then I, and I alone, have the right to explain its meaning to the world.)

Simon refers to the policy which the AWL adopted on trans rights seven years ago. So what?

## Think

We used to think that Stalinist Russia was a workers' state. We used to be in favour of the eradication of Israel. We even made the mistake once of thinking that fusing with Workers Power was a big step forwards for Trotskyism.

Seven years on, it might be time for maintaining that general policy but thinking through in more detail what it means in practice.

The policy states, for example: "We have considered, but are not convinced by, arguments that these changes threaten women's spaces or legal protection from sex discrimination."

Perhaps that merits further consideration? □



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# Peggie case could set dangerous precedent



Debate

By Simon Nelson

Dale Street's reply, apart from questioning whether or not I would make a good rep for Sandie Peggie, doesn't add much to his previous argument.

The wider issue in the case is not whether hospital bosses dealt with Peggie bureaucrat-

ically – they may have done – but whether this case will become a precedent to ban trans workers from workplace facilities suitable to their gender (or maybe from all, since trans men will not be welcome in women's changing rooms either). That is the wider issue for me, and, from what he has written about the April Supreme Court decision, for Dale too. I say they should not be banned. Any benefit from such a ban, say for cis workers specially worried about spe-

cific standards of "modesty", will be vastly outweighed by the harms of enforcing it, which, since elaborate sex-check medical facilities outside every changing room are obviously impossible, can only be by "vigilante" action.

Street presumably means the Equality Act section 11 which is about sex as a protected characteristic, rather than section 10 which is about religious belief. But he again fails to explain the relevance in this case. The reality is that,

whatever the merits of Peggie's case in the employment tribunal, including her latest action, the tribunal looks very likely to feed into the ongoing drive to present trans people as posing dangers by their mere presence in spaces aligned with their gender.

Dale concludes by stating we might now examine whether changes, never implemented, to the Gender Recognition Act might threaten women's spaces or legal protections from sex discrimination. But

plenty of other countries have passed such changes, and indeed all previous history has passed without laws banning transgender people from facilities, and without the threatened adverse results. □

• *This debate will continue publicly, but online. Solidarity favours debate, but our editorial policy is for the right of trans people to use facilities suiting their gender: [bit.ly/t-rights](https://bit.ly/t-rights). See also Riki Lane's article on page 11 this week, part of an ongoing series.* □



# The Chartist workers' fight for knowledge

By Colin Waugh

In his 2007 book *Chartism: a new history*, Malcolm Chase described Chartism as "the first (and arguably still the greatest) mass movement in industrialised Britain".

The Chartist movement was started in 1836 by members of the London Working Men's Association and the more left-wing London Democratic Association. In February 1837, these groups jointly organised a meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, at which 3,000 people resolved to petition the government for the "People's Charter", demanding: enfranchisement of adult males; payment of MPs; no property qualification for MPs; secret ballots; equal electoral districts; and annual parliaments. Faced with the 1832 Reform Act and the vicious 1834 Poor Law Reform Act, they were trying to get control over parliamentary decisions.

Most early Chartists were London artisans, but they rapidly linked up with industrial workers in the Midlands, the North, Scotland and Wales. National profile speakers emerged, especially Feargus O'Connor, son and nephew of leading United Irishmen. Most national spokespersons were men, but women textile workers were a central driving force.

Petitions with thousands of signatures went to parliament in 1839, 1842 and 1848, all to be rejected. Chartist activity also included armed uprisings (eg Newport in 1839), an embryonic general strike (1842), armed torchlit demonstrations, "exclusive dealing" (i.e. boycotting anti-Chartist shopkeepers), and many Chartist papers. Adult education too was integral to Chartism.

In 1815 the government had imposed a fourpenny tax on newspapers, marked by a red dot. Papers without this were "unstamped", hence illegal. Struggles over this began in 1830. Activists printed and distributed unstamped papers and were imprisoned. In 1836 the government cut the tax to one penny, ending the struggle. Many who became Chartists were active in the unstamped campaign and in the process formed ideas about what workers needed to know.

Meanwhile, in the 1820s writers like Thomas Hodgskin sought to bring economic ideas focused on a labour theory of value to working-class audiences. Stimulated in 1830 by machine-breaking and rick-burning amongst agricultural workers, the upper-class Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge (SDUK), launched a serial publication aimed at countering ideas like Hodgskin's.

Again, activists resisted. Thus in April 1833, writing in the unstamped *Poor Man's Guardian*, a 'labourer from Poplar' argued that: "Useful knowledge, indeed, would that be to those who



live idly on our skill and industry". The paper's editor supported this, contrasting knowledge "calculated to make you free" with SDUK publications, which were "published expressly to stultify the minds of the working people and make them the spiritless and unresisting victims of... plunder and oppression".

Societies for the Diffusion of Really Useful Knowledge appeared, including one fronted by William Hassell, a foreman in the printshop of unstamped activist Richard Carlile. This campaign was such that in November 1833 the right-wing trade unionist Francis Place noted that: "The unionists will read nothing which the Diffusion Society meddles with".

A conception of adult education developed from these two struggles.

In the August 1833 *Working Man's Friend*, the wood carver James Watson, repeatedly imprisoned in the unstamped struggle, asserted the necessity for the "mental emancipation" of the working classes.

In September 1835, London-based radicals formed the Great Marylebone Radical Association and issued a Declaration of the Rights of Man containing the words: "Instruction is the want of all; society and government ought, therefore, to do all in their power to favour the progress of reason and truth; and to place instruction within the reach of all".

Similarly, when the London Working Men's Association was set up in June 1836, the preamble to its rules asked: "Think you a corrupt Government could perpetuate its exclusive and demoralising influence amid a people... united and instructed?... Could corruption sit in the senate-house – money-getting hypocrisy in the pulpit – and debauchery, fanaticism, poverty, and crime stalk triumphantly through the land – if the millions were educated in a knowledge of their rights?... and concluded: "Be ours the task, then, to unite and instruct them; for... the good that is to be must be begun by ourselves".

In March 1837 the East London Democratic Association stressed that for it too "the political and social education of the people" was a central aim.

In November 1837, O'Connor launched a weekly stamped paper, the Leeds-based *Northern Star*. In its first issue, drawing a link between agitation and education, he wrote: "Behold that little red spot... it is my license to teach".

Ideas about the aims of valid workers' education were already current amongst industrial workers. For example, the September 1830 issue of John Doherty's *United Trades' Co-operative Journal*, published in Manchester, had argued that the "master manufacturers" would be "speedily overwhelmed" by "the might and irresistible power of acquired and accumulating knowledge" [which] "may eventually sweep their cherished order from all but our recollections".

## Education

A January 1836 meeting in Glasgow heard Arthur Wade claim that the unstamped press revealed "the movements of the mass towards that point in the education of the mind when the many will be emancipated from the raciality of the few".

In 1838, the Nottingham Working Men's Association member James Sweet, writing in the *Midland Counties Illuminator*, urged readers to "Prepare your minds... Be ready, upon all occasions, to give a reason for the faith that is within you; and tell those who inquire what you want, that you are seeking after truth..."

In May 1839, a Kettering Radical Association pamphlet announced: "So long as we were kept in ignorance, there was little difficulty in enslaving us: but now... we have acquired the knowledge of our rights, and begun to feel our strength".

In November 1839 in Bath, following John Frost's Newport rising, Charles Bartlett was charged with saying that "if a hair of John Frost's head was hurt, I hope you will be prepared with arms".

Contesting this, he insisted that he: "always recommended the people to educate themselves in political knowledge".

When the National Charter Association (NCA) was set up in Manchester in July 1840, attendees included "The Diffusion of Political Knowledge" under "Some means for the attainment of the great end".

In August 1840, a Manchester Chartist told a banquet marking the release of three imprisoned Chartists: "Our oppressors cannot fetter the human mind, which laughs to scorn their puny efforts to arrest its onward progress".

In 1841 O'Connor claimed that the *Northern Star* had become "the mental link which binds the industrious classes together".

At the 1842 funeral of the Sheffield Chartist Samuel Holberry, George Julian Harney said of "our haughty rulers": "We tell these puny Canutes, that despite their bidding, the ocean of intellect will move on".

In an 1844 statement, Burslem miners said: "We require knowledge of a superior description to any which it has been the fortune of the majority of us to receive, and above all... we should endeavour to obtain and disseminate this knowledge, as it will enable us... to discover the necessity for union of mind and action to relieve us from the difficulties and hardship by which we are surrounded".

Chartist educational methods included travelling "lecturers", collective reading of papers, especially the *Northern Star*, and discussion.

Amongst miners this role of lecturers was well-established. For example, when banned from union work after a defeat in 1832, the Northeast miners' leader Thomas Hepburn: "travelled long distances on many a dreary night, and addressed meetings to advocate the political rights of the people, advising his hearers to get knowledge". The approach expected of lecturers is

continued on page 20 →

→ from page 19

clear also from the 1844 statement put out by a Burslem miners' conference, which instructed them to: "by all legal means endeavour to properly throw open their [own] minds to the pursuit of knowledge, as... that alone... will enable us properly to remove the causes which at present impede our progress". Again, in the March 1844 *Miners' Magazine*, W P Roberts, "the miners' attorney" and a Chartist lecturer, said: "The great thing I want to accomplish is to induce you to think – to talk, to argue – upon those matters which concern you; when once you really do, you are sure to think rightly".

In his *History of the Chartist Movement* (1854) the former coach builder and Chartist lecturer R G Gammage reported that within two years of the NCA being set up: "There were upwards of four hundred localities in connection with that body, and forty thousand names... on the books. County and district organizations existed far and wide, and lecturers were engaged for several months together to agitate the country".

Around the same time (March 1842)

the Halifax Chartist William Thornton argued in the *Northern Star* for forming debating societies and "lecturing classes" (i.e. tutor training) "to place Chartism on a proper basis by making every man his own lecturer..."

Discussion too was central. In 1831, Richard Carlile, writing in the unstamped *Cosmopolite* on "What is education?" had argued that "Discussion cannot be too free; cannot be carried too far; cannot take up an improper subject".

### Collectively

Many Chartists thought likewise. For example, in 1838, the Mossley Working Men's Association acquired a room, where they read the *Northern Star* and other papers collectively, explaining: "We have no secrets; we admit anybody, whether they are members or not; we read the news of the week, and discuss it paragraph by paragraph, as it is read..."

Then in August 1840, at the banquet held in Manchester to celebrate his release from prison, John Collins insisted: "it [is] only by converse between man and man that [his listeners] could hope to improve their condition. It was not

by groaning, or shouting, or hissing, that they would gain their object, but by meeting and instructing each other".

Many discussions took place in Chartists' homes. Thus from June 1839 reading groups in Sunderland discussed "works by which human nature may be elevated by the consciousness of its dignity" hastening the time when "each man is fit to be his own leader".

In November 1839, Nottingham Chartists acquired a former Methodist and Primitive Baptist chapel and re-opened it as the "Democratic or Chartist Chapel", used on Saturday evenings, for "mutual instruction" and the reading of Chartist papers.

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), based on his 1842-44 stay in Salford, including conversations with his partner Mary Burns and with former factory worker and first NCA chairperson James Leach, Frederick Engels noted that: "Trades unionists, Chartists, and Socialists [i.e. Owenites], have founded... schools and reading rooms for the advancement of education... almost every Chartist institution, has such a place... and in the reading rooms, proletarian journals and books alone, or almost alone, are

to be found."

Where, then, did the Chartists' educational confidence come from?

In the 4 March 1837 *London Mercury* Bronterre O'Brien reported on the Crown and Anchor Tavern meeting, One speaker had said that both landowning aristocrats and industrial capitalists were: "vastly inferior to the working classes in all those departments of knowledge which society most needs, and without which it could not exist an hour", asking rhetorically: "what does the aristocrat or shopocrat know of husbandry or ship-building or any other of the useful arts?" Another speaker then said: "They pretend that our ignorance is the sole cause of their excluding us (but) it is our knowledge not our ignorance they fear. If we were really ignorant, they would give us the franchise... expecting that while we had it in name and appearance, they themselves would possess the substance and reality!"

Many rank and file Chartists at that time would have been close enough to an artisan, homeworker or independent agricultural background for this claim to ring true. □



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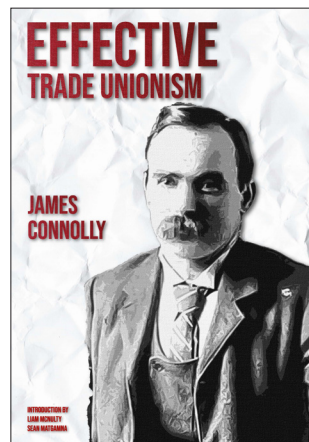
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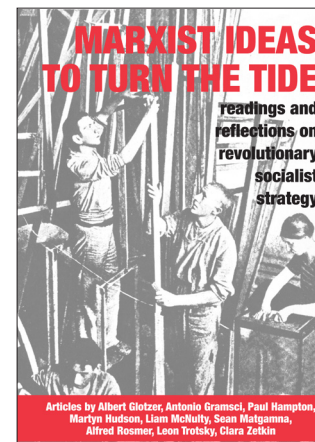
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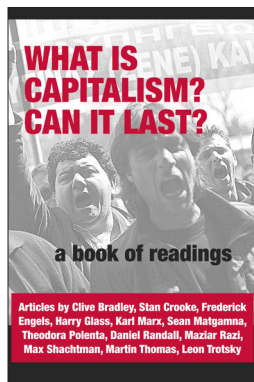
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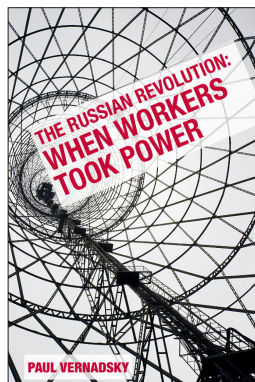
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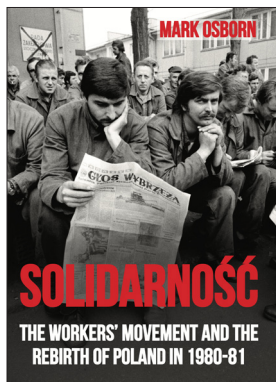
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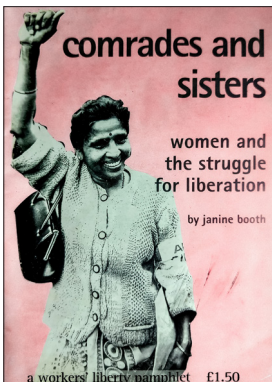
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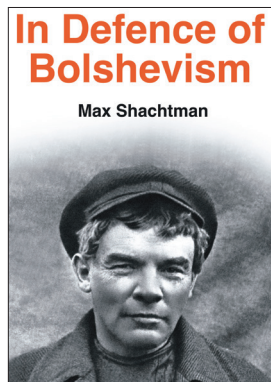
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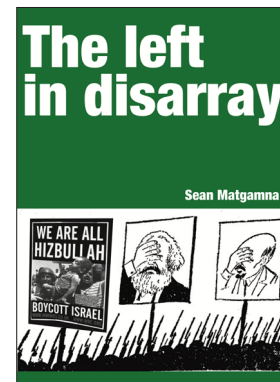
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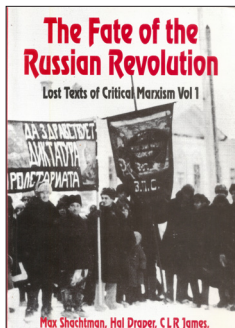
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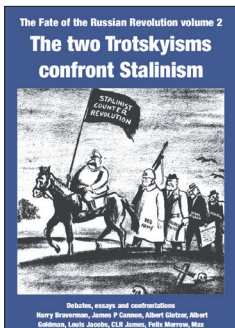
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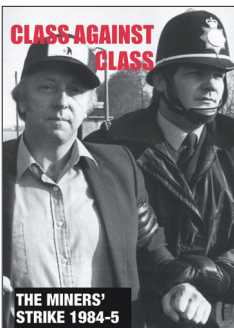
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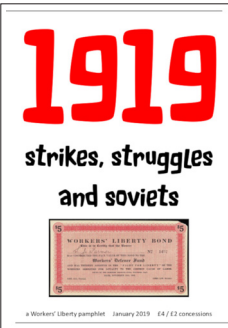
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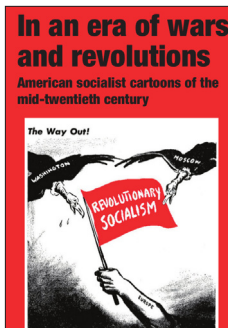
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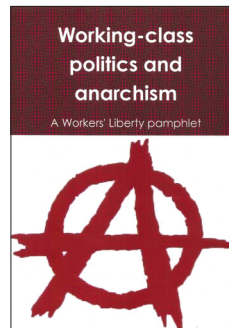
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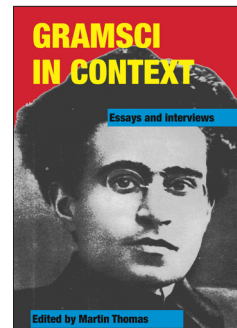
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# Tube strike solid but no concessions yet



The first three days of our five-day strike (8-12 Sep, over pay and conditions) have reaffirmed a basic

reality: our labour makes London Underground run. Without us, it grinds to a halt.

Prior to the strike, there'd been confident talk from some managers about being able to run some sort of service. In the event, it's been a near-total shut-down, with shuttles running in outer London on just three lines. This is the

first time the five-day rolling strike tactic has gone beyond its first 12 hours, and the evidence so far is that it's very effective.

As ever, the media focuses almost exclusively on the impact on passengers and businesses. We don't relish the disruption our strikes cause, but it's surely evidence of the vital contribution

we make the vast majority of the time when we're not on strike.

There's been a large amount of pearl-clutching about the fact that our RMT union is demanding higher pay and reduced hours. But these demands only seem "extreme" because we live in a period where major trade union struggles are rare. Many working-class people feel ground down and powerless, which can turn into resentment and hostility when workers who have retained some power actually exercise it.

## Another union protest on 17 September

There was a good crowd outside the Home Office on 4 September, as Transport for London and London Underground workers facing deportation due to visa sponsorship revocation protested along with supporters from RMT and other unions, campaigns, and political groups.

It was good to see the RMT union's Assistant General Secretary and National Executive rep for the London Transport Region turn out too; it's important these workers feel their union is fully behind them.

As well as the affected

workers telling their stories, we heard speeches putting the visa sponsorship changes in the context of a wider attack on migrants' rights. These laws have the effect of dividing working-class people against each other, all the while those who are really to blame for inequality, the bosses and the super-rich, continue to amass enormous wealth. There'll be another demonstration in the same location (2 Marsham Street, SW1P 4DF) on 17 September, hopefully with even more backing from union officialdom. □



### Inspiration

But the many supportive conversations with members of the public on picket lines show that there are also many people who see our action as an inspiration.

There's a simple way to avoid further strikes: management must make an improved offer which meets our demands for an above-inflation pay rise with a flat-rate minimum, a reduction in the contractual week, and the abandonment of attacks on terms and conditions.

If it doesn't, a reps' meeting, which we hope will be called immediately after our strikes, must consider calling further action. □

## Fight clampdown on international students

By Sam Myerson

In the coming weeks, the Home Office will write, text and email at least 130,000 international students threatening them with deportation at the end of their student visas. There were almost one million such students in the UK last year.

Many international students chose to return to their home country after completing their



studies. A small minority stay on to work. (Other countries, such as Australia, make it much easier for students to do that, but the UK has made it harder and harder). Only 14,800 asylum applications, in the year to June 2025, came from people in the UK on a study visa.

Many international students "come out" or become politically active at university, putting them at odds with the state at home and maybe with their families too. Or there may be a coup or war in their country while they are here.

While the organised far right is building street movements

targeting minority communities, and demanding mass deportations, the Labour government is lurching further and further to the right.

The Higher Education sector is propped up by the exorbitant fees that international students pay. Almost £10bn in tuition fees was collected from international students in 2021. Even from a narrow "economic" point of view, it is short-sighted to tell those students they are not welcome.

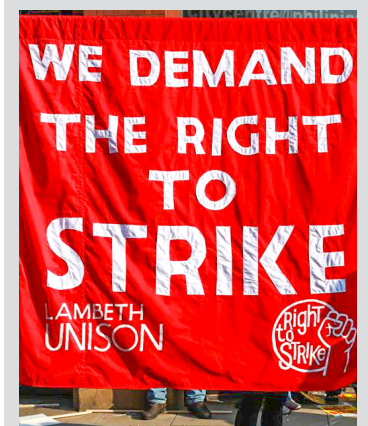
This Labour government is already making things harder for migrant workers by increasing the conditions for

the skilled worker visa. It has already changed the rules for international students making it harder to come and harder to stay.

The racist rhetoric that this government swims in will not rescue their falling popularity. These lurches to the right have done nothing but encourage Reform to shift further right, with Nigel Farage now proposing Trump-style mass deportations.

Meanwhile the National Union of Students (NUS) has mired itself in a fight with sabatinal officers over the war on Gaza. Its only movement so far has been to call for students to write to their MPs about BNO passport holders.

Students, workers in the sector, and the broader labour movement must resist these attacks. The TUC congress has adopted policy to fight for free education. That must also apply to international students. We must campaign for free movement for all. □



## More online

### More work to free the unions

The Employment Rights Bill, and case for an ERB #2: [bit.ly/ier-he](https://bit.ly/ier-he)

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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:

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

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

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# Back on the picket line



## Diary of a Tube driver

After nearly 18 months, we finally got back to our picket lines on 8 Sep.

A flurry of last-minute messages meets the various union and depot WhatsApp groups, "Any more talks?", "Definitely going ahead then?" "What time will we be picketing from?" "Can my partner use their nominee pass to get the bus if I am on strike?"

According to some, the writing was on the wall once Coldplay changed their Wembley date. That meant TfL had told them that either they were offering nothing new to the RMT, or whatever might be offered would be rejected. So far, it is the former, with no revised offer on the table.

So, after a day of disruption and trains being put away early on Sunday, 7, drivers, station, and fleet staff were all out on Monday, 8.

A mild if windy 0430 start for a lot of us as we made our way down to the pickets, taped up our "RMT Official Picket" notices, adjusted our picket armbands and then waited.

As 0500 rolled around, the first book-ons at my depot had not materialised, "Good, let's get the kettle on". Refreshed from our first of many cups of tea, the reps got out the list of duties for the day, and we went down the question marks for the day. Non-RMT members, non-union members and/or people who had crossed pickets in the past.

Fortunately, this is not a big list, but with multiple entrances and not everyone fancying quite such an early start or able to get across London, we might

have our work cut out.

Hours continue to roll by as we discuss the impact, which has so far shut down everything until management gets a few pointless shuttles up and running so they can claim some sort of service.

All remained quiet on our front. While the sun came up and the local cafe opened, allowing us to get a bit of breakfast, one of the Fleet reps, now able to leave the picket as all the book-ons for the day had been filled, came and wished us their solidarity, then headed off home.

Unfortunately for us train crew, we have people who could come in from 0500 through to 2300.

A manager drives through to work. Not much point stopping him. Later he comes out and tells us someone had got in without us seeing, albeit two hours after we expected. We split our forces to cover another likely entry point, although with five potential ways in, and some of those difficult to picket, we've no guarantee of stopping anyone who really wants to get in.

Still, we end up with fewer than the fingers on one hand getting in, and no service runs all day. Two contractors refuse to cross to fix the depot air conditioning. They wish us luck, and the RMT member among them gets a photo of the picket.

Those who did get in have to resort to avoiding speaking to us, and in one case, to being driven in convoy by an Aslef rep from a different depot. Still, we've shut down the job, and people are pleased with the new people who came to picket and for the solidarity that the majority of us showed.

We aren't really in a very public place, so visitors are infrequent. Two activists from the SWP, masquerading as Stand

Up To Racism, come to talk to us about the 13 September Tommy Robinson demo and plans to counter an anti-migrant protest in West Drayton the week after.

The usual supportive beeps and waves from postal workers and some others are appreciated, but none stop to chat.

The depot manager comes out, friendly, confirms their journey in was a bit chaotic, reminds us we should be careful about how loud our music is, in a residential area. We receive no complaints.

A picket line birthday means we all get some cake, much-needed sustenance for those now flagging.

Still, with a bit more sun now hitting where we are, and confirmation that the strike is strong everywhere, we keep on, knowing that we'll be back here on Wednesday, and if there's no movement, we'll be back again, and again, until we win! □

## Join Workers' Liberty!

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

## My favourite Western



## Kino Eye

By Barrie Hardy

The 1970s were the decade of the "revisionist" western. No "goodies" in white hats or "baddies" in black. No revolvers in leather holsters, "Cowboys" had shooters tucked into their belts, keeping things historically accurate. And the US cavalry was more likely shown massacring First Nation women and children than rescuing beleaguered wagon trains.

*Soldier Blue* (1970) drew an allegory with the My Lai massacre of the Vietnam War, and *The Wild Bunch* (1969)

depicted a gang of murderers whose behaviour could not be further from the altruistic gunslingers of *The Magnificent Seven* (1960).

My favourite Western, though, is *The Missouri Breaks* (1976), starring Marlon Brando. Set in Montana, the film tackles the issues of exploitation and law and order, or rather the lack of it and centres on a struggle between a land baron and some destitute farmers, led by Jack Nicholson, who resort to horse rustling. Brando is the bounty hunter hired to eliminate them but the just deserts he gets from Nicholson's character are pretty sudden and memorable.

### Ire

It drew the ire of a number of critics, who disapproved of Brando portraying the paid assassin as an off-the-wall



eccentric. Nowadays they say "its lunatic take on a decadent, dying frontier seems oddly appropriate." This was Brando's penultimate significant film role before *Apocalypse Now*. □

• This week's is a guest column. John Cunningham will be back in *Solidarity* 752.





## Unis need new anti-cuts campaigns

By Sam Myerson

Queen Mary London UCU reports five more universities announcing cuts to staffing just in late August and early September. In the last two years thousands of jobs have been lost, and courses or in some cases entire departments shuttered. Half of all universities are making cuts to jobs and courses. The pace continues unchecked.

University of Sheffield bosses agreed, after strikes, to a stay of execution and no further job losses for 2024-5. Roll forward a few months and a new programme of cuts is being forced through. Staff there are balloting for new strikes.

That story repeats itself up and down the country. Workers win deals for no compulsory redundancies, and bosses renege only months later. Or, in Edinburgh, only weeks later.

The University and College Union (UCU) has announced it will ballot nationally. The figures for the indicative ballot do not provide any confidence that this will be successful. Much support was wasted during the long-running and badly handled "Four Fights" dispute which the union leaders wound up with a bad deal.

Workers and student activists need to speak to each other, to build joint campaigns. The full impact of the cuts will be lasting and long term, with courses and departments lost. Students should take motions to their student union councils and put pressure on sabbatical officers.

The National Union of Students (NUS) has still not set up NUS England as promised during the "reform" which saw NUS UK effectively dissolved. There is currently no national leadership, no national organisation of students. But examples in Sheffield, Cardiff and Liverpool show that broad anti-cuts campaigns can be built from the ground up.

The TUC Congress has adopted policy proposed by the UCU on fighting for free education, for a publicly funded sector, for pay parity between FE staff and school teachers.

Now we need action for that policy. Make the rich and big business pay! □



## Birmingham bins vote 99.5% to stay out

By Jim Denham

Birmingham bin workers have "overwhelmingly" voted to extend their long-running strike into next year if necessary. The latest ballot produced a 99.5 per cent vote in favour of staying out on a turnout of 72 per cent.

Refuse collectors and drivers began their current action almost six months ago, having staged intermittent strikes since January. The dispute is over plans to downgrade roles that would lead to losses of up to £8,000 in annual pay.

Talks at Acas in May led to an agreed "ballpark" deal which would have ended the dispute, according to Unite, but council chief executive Joanne Roney later revealed that she could not get the deal past the commissioners appointed by the Tory government (and kept in place by Labour) when the council became unable to set a balanced budget in 2023.

Negotiations ended altogether in July, with the council leadership saying they had reached "the end of the line".

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Throughout this dispute, the

government has denied any involvement. It is now clear that commissioners reporting to Angela Rayner blocked a ball park deal thrashed out at Acas."

Unite national lead officer Onay Kasab said: "Strike action will continue for as long as necessary with Unite's unyielding support. Politicians' treatment of these workers, including lies about no-one losing pay and broken promises about being able to retrain in driving roles that are now nowhere to be seen, is amongst the worst Unite has even seen. The only way this dispute will end is with a fair and reasonable deal for Birmingham's bin workers."

A total of 121 "driver team leaders" are currently facing redundancy as part of the council's plan, and an estimated 200 more bin workers are still also facing uncertainty; while another 113 staff have taken redundancy voluntarily since the start of this year.

Some of the striking staff have spoken out about their dire circumstances and say they are being "given no choice" but to take redundancy, often after decades of hard work.

While there can be no doubt about the strikers' determination, there is an increasing sense of a lack of direction and leadership from Unite at both local and national levels.

Sharon Graham has said: "There is no point at this stage negotiating further with the council as they do not have authority to resolve the dispute. If Labour cannot see what is happening in Birmingham is wrong, it is little wonder workers are turning away from them in droves." But the union has not used its influence and representation within Labour to demand a fair settlement and Graham (urged on by the likes of the Socialist Party) now seems to think the answer may be to disaffiliate from Labour!

It is essential that a serious campaign demanding negotiations, without preconditions and without the interference of the commissioners, is built within the Labour party. Meanwhile, a rank and file strike committee and regular mass meetings are needed to maintain morale and decide on the parameters of any settlement. □

## Nottingham Uni strikes 22-24 Sep

By Vicki Morris

Unions at University of Nottingham, both Unison and UCU, have now informed university management that they will strike – together – in Welcome Week, 22-24 September.

The unions are demanding the university commit to no compulsory redundancies (CR). 250+ support staff have left or are leaving soon through voluntary redundancy.

The University is carrying about 500 vacancies but still won't commit to no CR. It is currently "slotting" 266 staff who are still at risk of redundancy but won't promise they can all stay.

Phase 2 of Nottingham's "right-sizing" "Future Nottingham" plan has been postponed till November, probably so the University can see what the final student figures are in the at-risk departments. Phase 2 will likely see further cuts to support staff and to academic staff as courses and even departments might close.

Arts subjects are particularly threatened as they were not allowed to reduce their tariff to pick up students in

Clearing. The Vice Chancellor, Jane Norman, has already said that not every university can do everything.

The unions are resisting further job cuts against a background of backlogs in finance, HR, etc. And term has not even started yet. The management are oblivious to or don't care about the low morale and high levels of stress among support staff who have seen colleagues leave but no reduction in workload. Returning academics will be shocked to find how many of their colleagues have disappeared over the summer and will soon be facing threats to their own jobs.

The Unison branch has not struck at all in living memory and UCU have a strong record at UoN but have never been out together with support staff colleagues.

We are looking forward to our joint strike and hope to make it an example of union cooperation for our crisis-ridden sector! □

• Vicki Morris is UoN Unison branch secretary, writing here in a personal capacity.

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## Contact us

 [020 7394 8923](tel:02073948923)

 [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

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

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



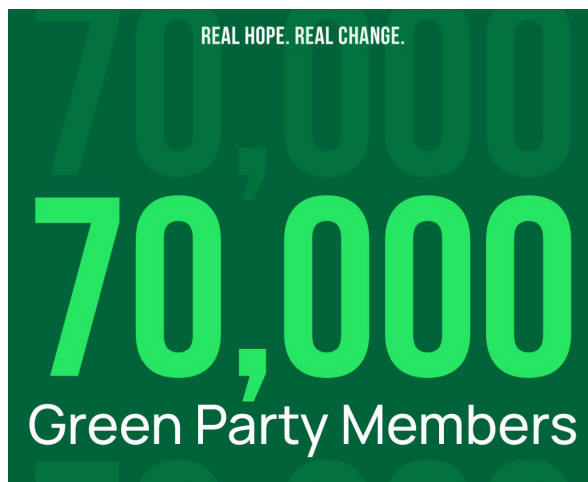
# The Greens and Sultana-Corbyn

By Rhodri Evans

On 2 September Zack Polanski won the Green Party leader election by a landslide. The party is now above its previous 2015 membership high of 65,000 and at 10% in opinion polls, up from 7% in the 2024 election.

It is turning to the Australian Greens "model" of a soft-left opposition party, as against the Scottish or Irish or German Greens "model" of left-ish junior coalition-government partners.

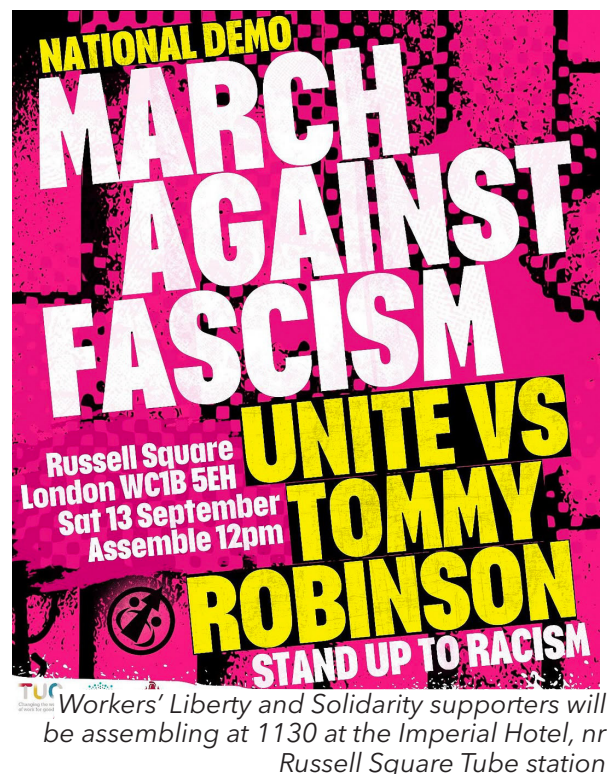
Polanski says he will discuss deals with the pro-



jected Sultana-Corbyn party, but also: "Whatever they are going to set up does not exist yet... I would say to anyone who wants to have social, environmental, racial and economic justice – join the Green Party right now." In fact, the Greens are now clearly to the left of most Sultana-Corbyn MPs and councillors, if not of the ex-Labour and left activists attracted to Sultana-Corbyn.

The Australian Greens, despite a strong history as a left electoralist force, have still not provided, or incubated, leverage to transform the labour movement or workplace and street activism. *Solidarity* continues to orient to the labour movement. But local labour-movement campaigns should reach out for unity with Green activists.

See page 7 for more on Sultana-Corbyn. Also inside, pages 12-17: the "Popular Fronts" of the 1930s are now cited as models by many. But they were in fact the opposite of class-struggle unity. □



## 17 Sep: Trump is not welcome

On 7 September Donald Trump posted on social media (and the White House re-posted) that Chicago is "about to find out why it's called the Department of War" (Trump's new, and of course more honest, name for the Department of Defence). As *Solidarity* goes to press, the dispatch of National Guard troops to Chicago, following Washington DC and Los Angeles, could come very soon.



On 6 September thousands marched in DC against Trump's troops there. The SEIU, Unite Here, National Nurses' Union, and local AFL-CIO backed the protest.

On 1 September there were hundreds of "Labor Day" protests across the USA.

We can show our solidarity on 17 September with a "Trump Not Welcome" protest on the day of his state visit. More: page 9. □

## Palestine Action: lift the ban!

Nine hundred people were arrested at the second Defend Our Juries protest, on 6 September, against the banning of Palestine Action as supposedly a "terrorist" group after it splashed paint on military planes.

520 had already been ar-

rested on 9 August for holding signs saying "I support Palestine Action".

Cops have been quoted as feeling "ashamed or sick" about the arrests, or at least to finding the operation "unsustainable".

The labour movement must

demand the Labour government removes the ban, repeals the Public Order Act 2023 and the Police Act 2022, and stops all arms sales to Israel. □

## Getting the left heard within Labour

By Rhodri Evans

Manchester mayor Andy Burnham has got together with the Labour soft-left groups Compass and Open Labour to launch "Mainstream".

What it's for, beyond a wealth tax, scrapping the two-child benefit limit, public ownership of water, and more protest on Gaza, we don't know. Nor do we know of any democratic structure.

The first move of "Mainstream" will probably be around a candidate for deputy leader (ballot is 8 to 23 October). Candidates need 80 nominations from Labour MPs, and the nomination period has been made very short (until 11 Sep); so Bell Ribeiro-Addy, who has declared as the left contender, will find it difficult. And a soft-left deputy is likely to end up like Angela Rayner for Starmer or John Prescott for Blair, as "left cover". Emily Thornberry, named as a possibility there, has incurred anger from her middle-of-the-road local Labour Party (where she was previously popular) because of her refusals to come out early for a ceasefire in Gaza or to back

the revolt on disability benefit cuts.

Still, even a "Mainstream" contest may make openings for the more consistent left to intervene in hustings and similar, and to raise ideas about a deputy acting as a "speaking truth to power" representative. (The deputy has no formal powers or even responsibilities other than a seat on the National Executive). Starmer's post-Rayner reshuffle is, broadly, a further move to the right, but we hear anger against him is rising even among MPs.

We hear Labour Left Internationalists will be active at Labour Party conference from 27 September, and seeking co-operation on issues with groups such as Labour Campaign for Council Housing, Pride in Labour, Labour Campaign for Free Movement, and Chartist.

Local Labour Parties decided their delegates to conference back in June, and are deciding motions (which must be "hooked" on an event after 8 August) up to 11 September. The trade unions also submit motions, but detail there will not be known until the eve of conference. □

• More info and links at [labourleftint.uk](http://labourleftint.uk)



# Solidarity

**For a workers' government**

# ISRAEL OUT OF **GAZA** AND THE **WEST BANK**

See page 3



Anti-war protest in Tel Aviv

Pic: @oren\_ziv