

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

**Fight the far right • For civil liberties
For migrant rights • No to tariff war**

TRUMP'S WORLD OR OURS?

The fight is down to us



See inside page 2

The case for backing Ukraine

A fight for national freedom against Russian imperialism

Page 5

Political crisis in France

Can the labour movement intervene decisively?

Pages 18-20

"Your Party": plans still opaque

Zarah Sultana calls for more democracy, but politics still unclear

Page 4

United fronts and popular fronts

Classical Marxists debates and their relevance now

Pages 12-13

Trump's world or ours?



Nigel Farage's Reform is strengthening its lead in opinion polls, currently up to 15% over Labour.

It is doing that on a prospectus that could be called "Trumpism for Britain". It wants "mass deportations" as the cure for all social ills, plus repression ("restore law and order") and cutting taxes.

It talks also of "repairing our broken public services", but says nothing about how that can be done with public revenues reduced by tax cuts.

In councils where Reform has won, it promised to introduce local equivalents of the Trump-Musk "Department of Government Efficiency" which cut hundreds of thousands of jobs in the US federal government. Now Reform says that's not workable. Most of what councils do now, after 15 years of cuts in central government funding, is tasks imposed on them by law (social care, homeless provision, etc.) Kent's Reform council says it will have to raise council tax, and is promising no service improvements.

But the facts aren't stopping Reform, any more than they are stopping Trump.

Labour's leaders talk about wanting to improve "delivery" of public-service improvements, but in fact are "delivering" mostly destructive gestures seeking to placate Reform: cuts to civil liberties, anti-migrant moves.

Starmer and Reeves have made some swerves under labour-movement pressure – on the winter fuel allowance and now, they suggest, the two-child benefit cap – but such small sops fall miles short of a political alternative.

Reform may ruin itself over the coming years by the poor record it is certain to have in local councils, or by internal conflicts. But it is far from certain. And, if that self-ruin happens, the most likely beneficiaries are the Tories, now pitching with the right with promises to quit the European Convention on Human Rights and to emulate Argentina's ultra-cutting president Javier Milei.

Trump 2.0 in the USA has its own specifics and its own specifically-US roots. Those can be traced back at least to the rise of the Republican right in the Reagan era; and to the USA, in that same era, taking an unsustainable path of huge budget and trade deficits, managed by selling more and more US financial paper to the rest of the world.

But Trump 2.0 also has roots in global developments. After the crash of 2008-

9, diverse varieties of right-wing nationalism mostly, and in most countries, eventually won out against left-wing impulses as people came to think the previous regime of "world-market neoliberalism" was fading.

Step by step, the capitalists' cherished "rules-based" worldwide order has ceded to a world of bilateral and "bloc" economic deals, and renewed focus by states on building their "own" industrial bases.

Trump 2.0 has global roots. It also has global impacts, of which the Reform surge is one.

In the USA, Trump and his "Secretary of War" (as now officially titled) Pete Hegseth summoned the top 800 commanders of the US armed forces from around the world to an "emergency" conference on 30 September.

Trump told the commanders that they should see major American cities as their "training grounds" for the "maximum lethality" sought by Hegseth – "the ones that are run by the radical-left Democrats ... That's a war, too. It's a war from within".

He has sent troops already to Los Angeles and Washington DC, and promises to send them soon to Chicago and Memphis and Portland, Oregon. He says he will use the Insurrection Act if courts obstruct him. Part of the troops' job is to help a hugely-expanded Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) police force to make mass deportations.

Shutdown

Trump is using the current partial shutdown of federal government (because the USA has a legal limit on federal debt, and only Congress can raise it) to cut federal workers' jobs further. He had already largely abolished their trade-union rights.

He has exerted "executive power" over media, universities, schools, law firms, and even museums and galleries.

He has made possibly the most sudden, drastic change to world-trade conditions in history, replacing mild and more or less predictable levies by a whirl of arbitrary and high tariffs. Other states are generally not raising their own tariffs, for now anyway, but Trump constantly makes new announcements.

Some of the commanders summoned by Trump must have raged inwardly about being berated by Hegseth: "It's completely unacceptable to see fat generals and admirals in the halls of the Pentagon and... around the world" and his arbitrary decrees: "male standards" of fitness and "no more beards".

Other ruling-class people in the USA must be alarmed by Trump's increasingly rambling and chaotic edicts.

But now Elon Musk, who appeared to



"break" with Trump over the tariffs and the tax-cutting "Big Beautiful Bill", is signalling reconciliation. His political rage now is expressed in public calls for the overthrow of the British government and declarations that "violence is coming to you".

Even should Trump himself somehow be sidelined, Trump 2.0 has changed the USA seriously and is changing the world.

The far-right push does not work the same everywhere, far from it. Le Pen and Bardella in France, feeling closer to power than ever, keep a distance from Trump and rebrand themselves as competent mainstream managers. Meloni in Italy has governed more on conventional hard-right patterns than in line with her neo-fascist past.

The Chinese government seems to be the "anti-Trump". It is about the only major government in the world openly contesting Trump. The current US-China "tariff truce" runs only to 10 November. But the Xi regime is more a "mirror-Trump" than an "anti-Trump".

It has the same repression of civil liberties and workers' rights, indeed much more. It has the same nationalism, though more directed at internal minorities like Uyghurs than at migrants as in the USA. It has its own leader personality-cult.

The Chinese influence and model, like the US influence and model, are driving us towards a world of authoritarian government, scapegoating of migrants and minorities, imperialist impositions (Gaza, West Bank, Ukraine, Hong Kong), social cuts, and unabashed rule by the ultra-rich, for the ultra-rich.

The new tariffs and rising government debts are sapping economic vitality. A full-blown economic crisis is most likely to be sparked by breakdowns in the murky worlds of "shadow banking" and cryptocurrencies, but the back-

ground is there for financial snarl-ups to escalate into full crises. Such crises will intensify all the pressures towards a world "Trumpified" in different ways and at different tempos in different places, and without mechanical inevitability anywhere, but widely.

As the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci put it in 1930: "The ruling class has lost its consensus... the great masses have become detached from their traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously... The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; *in this interregnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear*".

Our task, as socialists, is to help along the birth of a better world. More specifically it is to help the education, organisation, cohesion, and confidence of the working class, the social force which can make this new world. The new world is one of democratic public ownership of the big concentrations of productive wealth, taking the riches back from the billionaires, and instituting social provision and social foresight in place of the drive for profit.

The first step, as Ferdinand Lassalle put it, is "to say what is". A Trump-transformed world will be a horror. The old global-neoliberal world was also a horror, and the option of restoring it with this or that "competent" tweak is gone anyway.

The fightback may begin with small things: winning local strikes, rebuilding workplace union organisations, pushing back far-right migrant-haters on this or that street, achieving partial relief from this or that social cut, explaining socialist ideas in a small meeting or through a small newspaper like this one, getting a few new young people to read books or join discussions. It will end either in huge defeat or huge victory. □

Protests multiply inside Israel

By Ira Berkovic

The new ceasefire plan may yet prove unviable. The “yes, but” response given by the Hamas leadership may harden into a rejection. Netanyahu may torpedo the arrangement once implementation has begun, as he did with the previous ceasefire. Israeli air strikes continued despite a message from Trump that Israel must “immediately stop bombing.” Solidarity remains urgent.

Trump has already said that, should Hamas reject the deal, the US will support a continuation and intensification of Israel’s war. Press reports indicate that Hamas’s military leadership on the ground in Gaza wanted to reject the plan entirely. It appears, therefore, that at least a section of the Hamas leadership has concluded that an endless war is preferable for them to agreeing to the deal, even if it means unrelenting slaughter for the people of Gaza.

Gazans remain horrifically trapped, at the mercy of political forces – the US, the Israeli state, and Hamas – over which they have no means of exerting control. The Trump plan has been drawn up by diplomats and political officials with no direct connection to Palestinian life – except, to the extent Israeli officials have been involved, as oppressors. It is a plan for the future of Palestine in which the Palestinian people have had no say. Trump recently refused to allow Palestinian diplomats to attend a UN conference in New York; the idea any plan architected by him could lead to real peace or justice for the Palestinians is a grim joke.

The left-wing binational (Palestinian-Jewish) social movement Standing Together said: “Any conversation about a ceasefire proposal must start with

this: Palestinians in Gaza and hostages in captivity deserve to be free and safe from bombing, starvation, and suffering immediately. Any deal that brings us closer to a cessation of this intolerable reality is welcome.

“But a deal to end the war of annihilation in Gaza and return the hostages is not enough on its own. We cannot go back to a reality of endless occupation and violence across this land.

“Instead we must fight for true Israeli-Palestinian peace. A Palestinian state alongside Israel. Safety, justice, and freedom for everyone and independence for both peoples. Now is the time for peace, for an end to the violence, for life.”

In the West Bank, Israel’s project of military occupation and settlement, possibly driving towards formal annexation, continues. Road construction and settlement building in Palestinian areas has moved forward. Raids by Israeli forces are frequent. On 29 September, dozens of homes near Kafr Sur were raided, leading to seven arrests. On 1 October, a Palestinian man was shot and killed near Beit Ur Al-Faqwa. Over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank since 7 October 2023.

Occupation

Previous Israeli administrations presented the West Bank occupation primarily in security terms, claiming an Israeli military presence was necessary to suppress Palestinian terrorism. The current regime is more explicitly political and ideological. It sees settlement building, house demolitions, road construction, disposessions, and military raids as part of a political project to “erase” or “bury” any possibility of Palestinian statehood, or autonomy of any kind.

On Friday 3 October, Italian workers struck for a second time over Gaza, this time in response to the Israeli military’s blockade of a flotilla of aid ships and the arrest of activists on board.

Such actions have significant symbolic importance. Other actions by workers can have an even more direct impact, for example refusals by dockers and other transport workers to handle munitions bound for Israel.

The politics that inform the organisers of the Gaza flotilla are obviously inconsistent. Many vessels fly the flag of Türkiye (Turkey) – which, like Israel, is a regional-imperialist power ruled by an authoritarian regime, pursuing a violent colonial project towards a national minority, the Kurds. The project itself is, necessarily, a form of political provocation, rather than something that can hope to bring immediate material redress to suffering Palestinians. The flotilla organisers know Israel will not let the vessels pass, and will almost

certainly board ships and arrest and detain activists. There is a risk that focus is drawn to the activist-celebrities involved, such as Greta Thunberg, more than to the conditions the flotillas aim to protest.

Nevertheless, as Standing Together’s Alon-Lee Green has rightly said, “It doesn’t matter what you think about the flotilla or Greta, what matters is that Gaza is [one of the] only places in the world that aid workers, doctors, and journalists can’t enter. Why? What are we hiding?”

Standing Together itself has continued to mount protests, rallies, and other direct actions throughout Israel, demanding an end to the war and occupation. After protests outside TV studios on Wednesday 30 September, the movement wrote: “Last night we came to protest outside the TV studios of mainstream Israeli channels that refuse to show the reality in Gaza. Even now, as the annihilation continues and men, women, and children are bombed, starved, and displaced every single day by the army, the media is mostly hiding the truth from the public!”

“This genocidal war is killing tens of thousands of Palestinians and it cannot free the Israeli hostages. We demand that mainstream media reveal the horrors being carried out in Gaza!”

The movement also organised a protest against the war in Nazareth, a predominantly Palestinian city in northern Israel. A statement said: “Today we were in the city of Nazareth, Jews and Palestinians, to raise a voice for an end to this genocidal war in Gaza once and for all! We’re on the streets week after week fighting for the future of everyone on this land. We cannot stand by and let these horrors continue.”

Freedom

Palestinian Arabs make up 20% of Israel’s population, and just under one-third of the Palestinian population overall, excluding the diaspora. Whilst they face intense racism and discrimination, they have a relatively greater degree of freedom to self-assert than the Palestinians of the West Bank, who face military occupation, or those facing bombardment and starvation in Gaza. Standing Together’s efforts to mobilise Palestinian citizens of Israel to resist, in a common organisation with Jewish Israelis, therefore has disproportionate political significance.

Any effort to amplify and support resistance, including Palestinian resistance, within Israel has largely been missing from the political narratives that predominate in Palestine solidarity spaces internationally. Indeed, many see the claim that resistance within Israel is even possible, and might have some progressive potential, as a form

of “normalisation”. Some go as far as to demand boycotts and deplatforming of Israeli-Palestinian peace movements like Standing Together. This approach is utterly self-defeating.

Unless there is a strong, grassroots movement fighting for social transformation within Israel, external diplomatic pressure will be limited in its effects, and may even ultimately boost the regime. The popular claim that consumer boycotts were key to toppling South African apartheid is largely a form of mythologisation. Various forms of “BDS” were practised against South Africa for decades; what ultimately shook, and finally toppled, the apartheid regime was action by black workers in key industries. The lesson from the experience is that agency and leverage still exist within an oppressive society.

The apartheid regime was the expression of the rule of a 13% white minority over a black majority, resting substantially on the exploitation of black labour, giving black workers’ organisations immense potential power. Israel is different; the Israeli Jewish nation is class-differentiated within itself to a far greater extent than the white South Africans were, and is of roughly equivalent size to the Palestinian nation. The equivalent agency in Israel-Palestine exists in potential: a movement based on Palestinians mobilising in co-resistance with as large a minority of the Jewish population, and especially the Jewish working class, as possible. Standing Together remains the best hope for building such a movement. □

UK Friends of Standing Together

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

UKFoST promotes their work in the UK: for peace, justice, and equality for Israelis and Palestinians – Jews and Arabs – including an equal right to self-determination, and for the full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.

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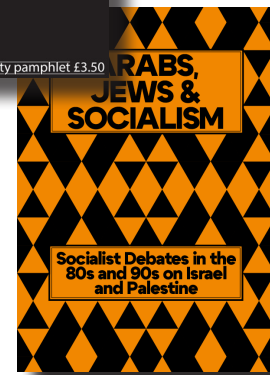
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“Your Party” plans remain opaque



Eye on the Left

By Matt Cooper

The rollout of the new party – perhaps we should now just call it the new Jeremy Corbyn party – continues. On 24 September the official membership portal finally opened, following Zarah Sultana’s pre-emptive launch the previous week. But confusion quickly followed. In an accompanying video on X, Corbyn announced that members of other parties would not be allowed to join. This was soon “clarified” twice.

The first clarification stated that the ban applied only to members of national parties, not local projects such as Jamie Driscoll’s Majority in the North-east – unsurprising, since local initiatives have been central to Corbyn’s idea of a grassroots movement. The second clarification said the restriction applied only to registered parties (one assumes with the Electoral Commission). That would seem to exclude most organised left groups, few of which are registered.

The Socialist Party’s TUSC is registered, but it is an electoral alliance, not a membership organisation. Galloway’s Workers Party is registered nationally – is that the intended target? Surely not the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), since Andrew Murray, a senior CPB figure, was part of Corbyn’s Labour leadership team, and his communications

director, Seamus Milne, had a CPB-type background. Murray has been involved in the new party’s development, and Milne is rumoured to been helping shape the new party’s policy documents.

Karie Murphy, who appears to be managing the preparations for a conference in November, is known for her hostility to the organised revolutionary left (of the SP, SWP, or AWL type. Not the CPB). Yet the wording of Corbyn’s comments doesn’t appear aimed at them. Does he mean the Greens? It seems very unlikely that Zack Polanski is plotting an entryist coup, but the statement could mean that Green members sympathetic to the new project are barred from holding dual membership. In any case, without an agreed constitution or party machinery, the statement looks more like a polite request than a binding rule.

Wider

The wider picture points to a lack of organisational capacity at the centre. Corbyn’s long-time ally James Schneider is said to have walked away from any formal role. Joshua Virasami – an anti-racist and renters’ campaigner, brought in to strengthen the civil-society side of the project – was vice-chair of the organising committee but has now left, or been pushed. He is now a key figure in the Our Party initiative, which argues that the process of founding the new party should be handed to a fresh group of labour-movement figures and then to an elected steering group.



The “Memorandum of Understanding” (MoU) group, which through MoU Operations Ltd had handled the funds, also seems to have been frozen out. Two of its three directors, Andrew Feinstein and Beth Winter, are now due to appear at a 14 October online meeting of the new “Democratic Bloc” – an organisation apparently formed by non-aligned ex-Labour leftists from the Momentum and The World Transformed milieu.

This leaves the question of who, if anyone, is actually running the project. Most assume Corbyn has delegated it to Murphy, but beyond her there seems little visible capacity. The roadmap to the founding conference promised that by late September four

draft documents would be circulated for discussion and amendment. As we go to press, none have appeared. The first of the “huge regional deliberative meetings” took place in Birmingham on 6 October, but without any substantive material to debate. Four more meetings have been announced – and that’s all.

The process itself remains opaque. Draft documents are to be amended by unknown means, followed by a “sortition” conference with a different batch of 6,500 delegates on each of its two days, then an online OMOV vote to approve or reject the outcomes. This was already a travesty of democracy. It now risks descending into farce. □

Zarah Sultana and her political mix

Summary from reports from local Workers’ Liberty activists

On 24 September Zarah Sultana addressed a rally in Sheffield organised by Sheffield TUC. About 350 came. Overall the crowd was older, but with a few dozen younger people in attendance.

Sultana said that she knew that a lot of people were feeling demoralised and angry. But, she said, she had always been motivated by a desire to set up a properly democratic party and that “you can’t correct that later on, after the train has left the station.”

The rest of Sultana’s speech was all right on party democracy; bad on Palestine; and quite good on anti-fascism and trans rights.

Throughout her speech she repeated over and over again the formulation that she doesn’t want Your Party to be

“led by MPs”. She didn’t get into much detail about the nature of the November conference.

Hague

She again pulled out her line about how the Labour leadership should all be in The Hague: they are all war criminals. No mention of Tory politicians who have collaborated with the Israeli war on Gaza. (One of Sultana’s previous themes has been that “Labour is worse than the Tories”).

The most specific programmatic thing she said was that “Your Party will be an anti-Zionist party, fighting for a single secular state with equal rights for all – and if you’re not in favour of that, then you’re against democracy.”

Recognising a Palestinian state? That would have been good in the 1990s. But now, she said, the time for such

“half-measures” was past.

(The “full measure” is erasing Israel from the map to make way for a Palestinian-dominated “single state”? In our view, this is unrealistic – by far the most likely form of “single state” is an annexation by Israel of all the Palestinian territories – and anyway could even hypothetically be achieved only in a reactionary way, by suppression, necessarily with huge violence, of Israeli Jews’ right to national self-determination).

Another speaker, a Sheffield SWP NEU officer, towards the end, declaimed: “billionaires – fascists – Zionists – we are coming for you!”

Re-think

Zarah Sultana thanked Stand Up To Racism for their efforts in organising, but said that the movement against Tommy Robinson was not sufficient

and a re-think and re-organisation was required. In particular, she said: “trade unions, get your shit together,” adding that a union logo at the bottom of an SUTR leaflet is totally inadequate without any other action.

Sultana has also spoken at a Wandsworth (South West London) launch meeting (1 October), pulled together by the SWP.

Ukraine

Much of the meeting was given over to small-group discussions of set questions. In the discussions Workers’ Liberty people got some support on democracy, Ukraine, free movement.

Zarah Sultana’s speech was quite left-wing. As in Sheffield, she apologised for the difficulties so far. Fascism is at the door, she said, with the scapegoating of migrants, capitula-

tion by Labour, and a broken political system. We need to build united positive working-class movement.

Democratise

Nationalisation is not enough, she said. We must end production geared to profit and based on exploitation, democratise the economy. We can’t democratise society or economy by way of a party with no democracy.

She confirmed the planned “Your Party” conference will go ahead as planned. Sultana said she was against sortition and for all-member meetings electing delegates. She also said that it was too late to fix that for this conference, but we must fight for the right for amendments, and that local branches need to be given data about sign-ups in their areas. □

Our case for backing Ukraine

By Michael Baker

Russia's invasion of Ukraine continues unabated. All talk of peace deals has now fallen quiet, and Putin has resumed (in fact, he never stopped) the bombing campaign that the Ukrainian population have faced since February 2022. On just 28 September alone, over 600 drones and 40 missiles were fired at major cities, with one of the worst attacks on Kyiv since the beginning of the war.

Putin has also announced a draft target of 135,000 for Russia's Autumn draft – the largest target since 2016. New soldiers drafted by twice-yearly conscription drives are not, in theory, supposed to be deployed to Ukraine (though some clearly have been). But more soldiers on military bases within Russia allows for more to be released to go and fight on the front lines. Russia does not publish the figures of its military losses during the war, but some estimates now put the number of casualties over one million. Ukraine's casualties are smaller, but still in the hundreds of thousands, with tens of thousands of killed and injured civilians. More than ten million Ukrainians have been displaced as a result of the war.

None of these millions of lives had to be ruined. Russia's invasion is a naked piece of imperialist marauding, intended to subjugate and recapture a former colonial subject of the Russian empire. Trotskyists in the 20th century regularly referred to Ukraine as "the world's largest oppressed nation", and supported attempts for Ukraine to free itself from the Russian-chauvinist Soviet Union.

In resisting the Russian invasion, Ukraine is fighting a war of national liberation, akin to the Vietnamese resisting French then American imperialism in the 1950s and 1960s, Algerians resisting the French in the 1950s, and the Finnish resisting the Soviet Union in 1939. It is a cornerstone of truly democratic socialism that socialists must stand with the oppressed nation's struggle for freedom against the empire.

As the American third-camp Trotskyist Hal Draper put it, "We support a struggle for a national liberation or independence because this national aim is a democratic demand. We are for all genuinely democratic demands – for the same reason we are for socialist demands and aims: because their fulfilment is necessary for a world in which human potentialities can best flower. National self-determination is a democratic demand even if it means self-determination under an undemocratic national government, as it often has."

The Zelenskyy government in Ukraine is a class enemy to Ukrainian workers.



Zelenskyy himself was propelled into office with the funding and publicity of Igor Kolomoisky, one of Ukraine's most powerful oligarchs. His tenure as leader has included vicious political attacks on the Ukrainian working class, including repressive labour laws that attack the right to strike and collective bargaining, and the enshrining of zero-hours contracts.

His government, as with every Ukrainian government before it, has had its fair share of corruption scandals. Ukraine remains an oligarchy, in which moguls of industry that enriched themselves after the breakup of the Soviet Union now have undue power and are overrepresented across every area of Ukrainian society, including government, the courts and the media.

Campaign

And yet, socialists should support a Ukrainian victory, and should campaign for Western governments to arm Ukraine sufficiently for it to win the war. To do otherwise would be to say that the Ukrainian people's wish to be Ukrainian, and not Russian, doesn't matter, or that there is no meaningful difference between the limited democracy of Ukrainian capitalism and the non-existent democracy of the Russian state.

Ukraine has a workers' movement. It is under extreme pressure from Thatcherite attacks and the strictures of martial law, but it has the right to organise, to hold meetings, agitate for reforms, and to go on strike. These actions are the lifeblood of the socialist project.

In Russia, since the start of the invasion all genuine trade union activity

has been clamped down upon. Trade unionists who organise in any capacity are [arrested](#), and often given jail sentences. Russians are denied the ability to protest, or even to post about the war on social media. Those who try anyway are given long periods in remand, put through kangaroo courts and given lengthy prison sentences.

The situation is even worse in the territories of Ukraine that Russia has illegally [occupied](#). There, even those who refuse to accept a Russian passport face punitive measures, and doing so much as speaking Ukrainian at school can result in a child's parents being punished. Russia's puppet governments in the occupied territories have systematically kidnapped tens of thousands of Ukrainian children and moved them thousands of miles away through the Russian "care" system, and ethnic minorities such as the Crimean Tatars have also been systematically persecuted and imprisoned.

Workers' Liberty wishes to see Ukrainian workers overthrow their government in the name of socialism, just as we wish that in Russia, America, Britain and everywhere else. The working class has no nation, and but one goal. This does not mean that there is no difference between different forms of capitalist class rule, or that it would be just as easy for Ukrainian workers to organise under Putin as it is under Zelenskyy. That is clearly not the case.

To build a militant working-class movement requires time, dedication and basic liberties. Ukraine's struggle for independence from Russian imperialism has to be won for the working class of Ukraine to have those liberties,

and that time.

Many on the left consider Ukraine's cause to be tarnished by the fact that the West, or NATO, support them. NATO is a capitalist military alliance that we wish to see disbanded, but there are NATO member states supporting both sides of this war, so it would be nonsense to claim that they are in a meaningful way "forcing" Ukraine to fight.

It is irresponsible to see Ukraine's existence as a nation only through the lens of Western expansionism, or a geopolitical battle between the West and Russia. America is losing no soldiers in Ukraine, and – as we have seen since Trump's return to power – Ukraine will keep fighting even when threatened with the loss of American support. Socialists who claim otherwise deny Ukraine the agency to decide its own future.

The West does have dangerous designs on Ukraine: American businesses, and international capital more broadly, are forcing Ukraine into decades-long loan repayment schemes under the guise of "reconstruction", which will mean a repeat of all the worst excesses of the "shock therapy" of the 1990s: lowered wages, stagnant economy, weak trade unions and Western profit. Our solidarity is with the Ukrainian working class in that battle. But that should not cloud our judgement of the military battle being waged simultaneously.

For the Ukrainian working class to survive, it must win its fight for self-determination. Socialists mustn't lose sight of this, no matter how long the war may be. □

Do they get paid for this?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

The editor of the *Morning Star*, Ben Chacko, was an honoured guest at The Belt and Road Media Co-operation Forum in the Chinese city of Kunming on 17 September.

Since then the paper, whose coverage of anything to do with China has long been little more the propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party (i.e. the Chinese ruling class) has gone into propagandist overdrive.

On 18 September the paper reported Chacko's speech, in which he waxed lyrical about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), calling it a "remarkable success story" and complaining that "the West peddles a negative narrative" about it, whereas China "was offering opportunities to the global South for increased co-operation and development."

The day after that (19 September) an entire page was devoted to Chacko's report from the Forum, telling readers that "200 journalists from 71 countries celebrated a new openness and optimism, made possible by China's enormous contribution to global development." He contrasted this with

"Britain's monopoly media" which ignores "serious analysis of politics in even close neighbouring countries like France or Germany" although he did except "specialist publications like the *Financial Times*".

Someone should tell Chacko about the existence of the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Guardian*, *Observer*, *The i Paper*, the BBC, ITN and Channel 4.

Oh, but politics in the US is "the glaring exception" which does get covered in Britain, though the US is "an increasingly intolerant, nationalistic and authoritarian United States". The contrast with the "optimism and openness on display [in China] was stark." And (Chacko didn't add) in a further contrast with the US, there is no need to gerrymander elections. Somehow when it is Xi enthusiasts at the *Morning Star* who complain about authoritarianism even in Trump's America (let alone Starmer's Labour Party and/or Britain), the hypocrisy seems just a little... well... laughable.

Censorship

The Chinese model of social control is the world's most extensive system of censorship, surveillance and control of the internet. It has implemented a range of new technologies to enforce rules about what can and can't be said beyond just politics – in video games and even on issues like "manhood".

Anyway, back to the MS's coverage of the forum: apparently the event was inspired by "China's historic role in establishing the Silk Road and the maritime voyages of 15th century admiral Zheng He, and the confident promotion of modern concepts like President Xi Jinping's Global Governance Initiative" which (and you'll gasp in surprise here) did not "make the hosts less proud to be Chinese."

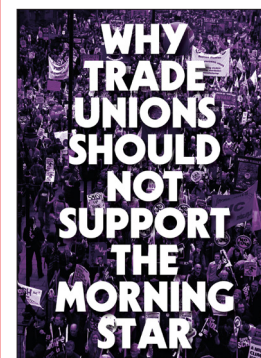
Enthuse

The next day (20 Sept) Roger McKenzie (who had accompanied Chacko to the Forum) was given a whole page to enthuse over the Belt and Road Initiative, and "the spirit of the Silk Road [which] evokes the key principles of peace, co-operation, openness, inclusivity, mutual learning, trade, exchange and the promotion of cultural diversity", all of which "draws on ancient Chinese wisdoms of Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism to emphasise the principles of interdependence between all peoples." Since then, the paper has carried (23 Sept) a transcript of the pro-Putin German politician Sevin Dagdelen's turgid speech to something called the 12th Xiangshan Forum in Beijing; one Paul Atkin (25 Sept) on "China's leadership on climate change" (which fails to mention that China is failing to meet its emission reduction targets under both its own Five-Year Plan for 2025

and its 2030 NDC commitment under the Paris Agreement); and – inevitably – a full page (26 Sept) from Carlos Martinez of the Friends of Socialist China, entitled "China – a force for peace and progress."

Does the paper receive any funding from the CCP in exchange for this rank propaganda? I honestly don't know.

You'd never guess that China is a state-capitalist country that denies its citizens the most elementary democratic rights and has no independent unions. Or that more than a million Uyghurs are confined in camps. You'd never guess that the Belt and Road Initiative is essentially an imperial extension of a Greater China sphere of influence intended to create credit dependency while giving China monopoly access to scarce mineral and raw material resources as well as a generous supply of cheap labour and massive demand for its exports. □



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School libraries: Labour's plan is not enough



Eric Lee

I learned two things this morning that came as a surprise. The first is that there are 1,700 primary schools in England that do not have a library. And second, under the law, every single prison is required to have one.

Rachel Reeves has just announced that the government intends to spend £10 million to ensure that there's a library in every primary school in England before the next Parliament.

To me that doesn't sound particularly ambitious. With a budget of under £6,000 per school, that means libraries without librarians. And if it's just a question of buying a bunch of books and getting some IKEA Billy bookcases, why does that require waiting until 2029?

I'm not privy to any insider information here, but my guess is that not all that much thought has gone into the Chancellor's announcement.

I remember school libraries when I was growing up in New York City. They were not small, they had librarians, and they were a place where kids could meet and talk and learn together. When I became a socialist, I went looking for books about Marxism in my high school's library. There was nothing by Karl Marx. But there was FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's *Masters of Deceit*. School libraries weren't perfect. But they are necessary.

Here in Britain, libraries – both school libraries and public libraries – have suffered from decades of neglect. And the decline of children's reading reflects that.

Lucy Taylor and Paula Clarke from the University of Leeds write: "According to a 2025 survey by the National Literacy

Trust, only a third of children aged eight to 18 enjoy reading in their free time. Government data shows that 25% of pupils leave primary school unable to read at the level expected."

Obviously, children from working class and poor families suffer the most from this neglect. That's why it's an issue the labour movement should campaign on.

Reaction

The first critical reaction to the proposal came from a trade union. According to the BBC, "Paul Whiteman, who is in charge of the school leaders' union NAHT, is concerned about a lack of "space and staffing" when it comes to running the libraries. He hopes that some of the money will be used to tackle those challenges."

We can do more than hope. We can make proposals to the government, and suggest changes, so that the 500,000

children affected will actually benefit. For example:

Spend more money on this. The NAHT is right – if these school libraries are to be useful to anyone, they need staff and they need proper spaces.

Speed this up. It doesn't take four years to implement such a modest plan. Hundreds of thousands of children can benefit from the rapid creation of small libraries.

Have a public conversation about which books we want in these libraries. In the United States, books are routinely banned from public and school libraries because they are seen as too sympathetic to LGBTQ people, or too critical of the country's racist past. According to PEN America, authors banned from at least 50 school districts in the US include Margaret Atwood, Anthony Burgess, Toni Morrison, and George R.R. Martin. School libraries here in Britain should encourage students to

think critically.

Don't limit the libraries to books in print. (And I love books in print). Libraries can share e-books and audio books that children can read or listen to on their phones. The current budget of £10 million breaks down to about £20 per child – that's not enough to buy very many books. But it can give access to electronic versions of books.

Rachel Reeves' proposal points in the right direction. But it's not ambitious enough. Parents, teachers and the children themselves need to have a say.

As for J. Edgar Hoover's book on Communism, I'd give it a pass. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* on the other hand – well, that should be in every school library. □

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

Labour: some shifts, but still uphill

By Chris Reynolds

This year's Labour Party conference (28 September to 1 October, Liverpool) was an odd one in some ways.

In general terms our prediction in *Solidarity* 752 was confirmed - "The immediate prospects are for things to get worse. A fightback... will be uphill". Yet there were as many conference defeats for the leadership as in any half-way-recent year, and a series of policy about-turns by the leadership around and about conference.

Perhaps we can say: uphill, but there may be some precarious footholds within reach.

The leadership was defeated in "open battle" in a debate on blocking all arms sales to Israel. It was also defeated on wealth tax and on making migrants wait longer for Indefinite Leave to Remain. There, as on Winter Fuel Allowance in 2024, the leadership had the now long-traditional response of letting the motions go through without a battle and hoping everyone will forget.

Before the conference Labour leaders announced u-turns on recognising the state of Palestine and on reinstating MPs suspended from the whip for voting to end the two-child benefit cap. On the Tuesday, they signalled via the *Guardian* that they will scrap the two-child cap (though maybe only to modify it to, e.g. a three-child cap?) Evidently they wanted to adjust, yet not to be seen to be pushed. Within the conference, Rachel Reeves came out for an "ambitious agreement" with the EU for a "Youth Mobility Scheme", which Labour leaders had previously rejected outright.

Deputy leader candidate Lucy Powell spoke out (mildly) against the EHRC indications on trans rights. This was reported by media on Wednesday as having happened at an un-named fringe meeting on Monday, though it created no noise at conference on Tuesday. A fringe meeting that day for trans rights drew about 300, one of the biggest of the conference.

The Labour Party, with an always-mostly-passive membership base and a bureaucratic structure, has always been undemocratic, though not always as much so as now. It is usual, not exceptional, for the leadership to sail uninflected through Labour conferences. Until the 1960s that was done by the trade-union block vote being sewn up in advance by the leadership. Effective left triumphs at conferences, when they have happened, have usually come by a more left-wing leadership having previously won office, and then conceding or positively assenting to conference moves.

The incremental shifts, as with the climbdown over cutting access to Personal Independence Payments, can-

not however be explained solely by Labour polling badly. Much of what Labour leaders have done in response to the rise of Reform has been in the opposite direction, as in the increased flag-waving (much of that at the conference, too). When governments have previously become unpopular rapidly (Labour in 1967-8 or early 1977, Tories in 1979-82), they have responded more by "sweating it out" or "doubling down" than by political shifts around party conferences. Some of the shifts are surely due to the Labour leadership feeling pressure from the unions, from MPs, and from local Labour Parties (CLPs).

But the adjustments do little more than round the edges for Starmer's and Reeves's desired course: a government simultaneously "pro-business" and "for working people", and hopelessly trying to work the combination in adverse economic times by a promise of "competence" and "stability" in administration.

The "left" element at conference depended heavily on the unions, and really on the top union officials themselves rather than on any surge from the union ranks or pressure from escalating industrial battles.

The ballot for the six (seven this year) agenda topics chosen by the CLP delegates was won by deliberately insubstantial right-wing choices, as it was in 2022, 2023, and 2024. But in 2024 many spiky motions on housing ran close. This year the top spiky topic ("Supporting Families", i.e. two-child benefit cap) got nowhere near. (The unions could at will have made the topic one of their seven choices, but didn't).

Manipulation

That CLP delegates got to see the motions and "topics" only an hour or so before the ballot started, and other manipulation, explains only a bit of that. The two-child benefit cap motions had previously been ruled out of order (on spurious grounds) by the Conference Arrangements Committee (dominated by the unions, but manipulated by Labour HQ staff). A campaign by the new soft-soft-left group Mainstream got them ruled back in order, thus flagging them up for attention.

Conference Arrangements Committee and National Constitutional Committee CLP-rep elections went heavily for the right, as in 2024. Huge numbers of CLP motions (on a rough count, 149 out of 244 submitted) were ruled out of order. Many of the relevant CLP delegates did not even challenge the CAC report, which at least gives you a chance for a speech. Often, it seems, CLP members had had enough energy to get a left-ish motion through but not enough to get delegates who would fight for it. CLPs made little use of their



right to "refer back" sections of the National Policy Forum report.

Although the weather was better than in the last few years, there was less life outside the conference. The "security cordon" between conference and the outside world has been tightened. (In 2024 two delegates were arbitrarily expelled from conference and suspended from the party, before being reinstated. This year, three media people were expelled. A rule against distributing literature inside the "cordon" is now rigid). The "cordon" has also been extended: in 2024 and this year it walled off open space outside and neighbouring big hotels as well as the conference centre itself. There were often a lot of police around the "cordon", called in because of several, mostly small, far-right demonstrations. Fringe meetings were probably on average a bit smaller than 2024.

Mainstream and Momentum made an effort (but only a token one) to canvass delegates on the Monday morning to prioritise the 2-child benefit cap. (The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Labour Left Internationalists made the same case in their regular bulletins). Aside from that effort, Mainstream was visible at conference only via a (well-attended) social with brief speeches about winning back the party for left policies (which, for what appeared to be the organising hub in Mainstream, Compass, means not-very-left: but none of the speeches mentioned Powell or Burnham). It remains to be seen what will come of it.

The unions got the debate on arms exports to Israel. All CLP motions on Israel-Palestine had been ruled out. Un-

ions, notably Unison and Aslef, put in an emergency motion to stand against an insubstantial one promoted by the leadership, and unions can get motions ruled in order if they want. The way Starmer and Reeves are going, they could lose Labour some union affiliations soon (e.g. Aslef), but probably for now the union link puts a "floor" under Labour to stop it declining at the speed of the French Socialist Party or the Dutch Labour Party after 2012.

Richard Burgon, secretary of the Campaign Group of leftish MPs, made a similar speech at many fringe meetings. Britain, he said, faces the threat of a distinctly far-right government (Reform) for the first time in history. The only vehicle to stop it is Labour. But Labour under its current leadership is incapable. The task therefore is to turn it round, while - he stressed - also uniting with other left forces (like the Sultana-Corbyn project) in non-electoral battles against the far right and for working-class interests.

He is probably right, yet at present the Reform threat seems mostly to be pushing Labour activists into despondency rather than galvanising them. I've heard of Labour councillors (right-wing, but not the most right-wing) saying that the only rescue for the May 2026 council elections is to "depoliticise them as much as possible" and run only as competent managers.

That way lies ruin. Whether the whip of reaction will stir larger revolt, including within the Labour Party and the unions, and when, we can not know. But if the push for revolt fails, it must not be because we ourselves have scattered or subsided. □

Tories say they will scrap net-zero



Environment

By Alan Gilbert

Seeking to regain ground from Reform, Kemi Badenoch has pledged the Tories to repeal the Climate Change Act, the 2008 law mandating future governments to cut carbon emissions.

David Cameron's Tories in their time supported the Climate Change Act. They paid lip-service even when deciding privately to "cut the green crap". Boris Johnson actually strengthened the Act's emission-cutting targets.

But now the Tories want to scrap "net zero" even as an aspiration.

They are following in the tracks of Donald Trump in the USA and of much of big business. Trump has outright-denounced wind turbines, and told fossil-fuel capitalists to "drill, baby, drill".

Trump

The texts of Trump-aligned think-tanks to plan for his new presidency were lengthy, very lengthy, but said almost nothing about climate change or ecological destruction. They did not even have the old "denialist" line, saying all the worries are false. At best some of the think-tankers would say that ecological destruction is real, but better dealt with by adaptation as we go along than by pre-emptive measures.

Why is that wrong? Adaptation will surely be necessary, as well as pre-emptive measures to stall further destruction.

But some damage, desertification, or ocean acidification, or melting of ice, or destruction of biodiversity, cannot be kept at bay, once well advanced, by adaptation. Global warming which escalates through positive feedbacks cannot be neutralised through adaptation. In many cases even where adaptation is possible, it will be vastly more difficult and expensive than early action.

Big capitalists are often looking the same way as Trump and the Tories. Big fossil-fuel firms are doubling down on oil and gas, and cutting the efforts they once made for renewables.

At the very same time, one scientific report after another finds that ecological destruction has gone faster and larger, already, than previously predicted.

Relied-on "stopgap" technologies like Carbon Capture and Storage, and Direct Air Capture, are proving more expensive and less effective than hoped. Airline bosses openly saying that Sustainable Aviation Fuel will never produce the emission-reductions expected.

The current Labour government, people who in 2021 were promising to



invest £28 billion in green conversion, is reduced to nudging schools into installing a few more solar panels on their roofs. Now Ed Miliband is saying the government will find ways round its ban on new licences for North Sea oil and gas, by way of classifying some new areas as "tie-backs" to existing licences.

The government has given the go-ahead for new runways at Heathrow and Gatwick.

In the ruling class, the basic thought seems to be: "once upon a time they dressed so fine". They had good profits and government revenues, and hoped soon to regain good profits and revenues. Why not look to a longer term and do some green stuff which might after all yield new profit streams?

Tomorrow

Now they "don't walk so proud". They are bothered, well, not about "scrounging their next meal", but about securing their next profits and bonuses in an unpredictable world.

The "green crap" suddenly looks very expensive. Better grab revenues now, and leave it to future generations to fix the problems if they can.

Sober truth is that some of the same spirit of "so many problems today that we can't worry about tomorrow" has also infected our side, the working class. We have long argued for a "just transition", in the phrase coined by US union leader Tony Mazzochi in the 1970s, a green conversion of the econ-

omy where workers can move from old jobs to new jobs on good conditions and without excessive extra living costs.

Many workers have become less confident about the labour movement's ability to win that justice, and thus more inclined to hunker down in "no transition at all" than to push for what

seems risky. Thus pressure on governments and capitalists to deter them from policies of maximum profit today, and never mind about tomorrow, has declined.

It is our task as socialists to raise the sights of the labour movement again. □



Activist Agenda

Meetings

Mon 13 Oct: How to beat the far right. Newcastle AWL. 6:30pm. Northumbria Students' Union, 2 Sandyford Rd NE1 8SB

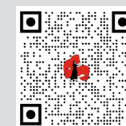
Mon 13 Oct: Europe's left parties. North London AWL. 7:30pm Menard Hall, 14 Galway St EC1V 3SW

Tue 14 Oct: Class struggle in education. Manchester AWL. 5:30pm, The Salutation Pub, 12 Higher Chatham St M15 6ED

Sun 26 Oct: Fighting the far right. London AWL. 1pm-5pm, Brunker Hall, 152 Lever St EC1V 8BG

At work or on campus

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



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

[erslibertystudents](https://workersliberty.org), and email awl@workersliberty.org for more.

Template motions

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

Socialist-feminist book clubs

workersliberty.org/sf-book-clubs

Edinburgh: Caliban and the Witch. Tue, 14 Oct 6:30pm. The Ventoux, 2 Brougham St EH3 9JH

Campaigns

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

The “Rockwell paradox” and fatherhood



Women's Fightback

By Dominika Szarek

“The history of fatherhood is a succession of identity crises spanning thousands of years.”

A *History of Love and Power* by Augustine Sedgewick is a sweeping and provocative attempt to chart how fatherhood has been constructed, idealised, and weaponised across time. But he does in an odd way, by looking at a selection of individuals, mostly upper-class individuals, from different times and in different parts of the world (but all in what he anachronistically calls “the West”).

He tends to conflate “fatherhood”, understood in many societies today (at least aspirationally) as fathers’ work in nurturing small children, with “patriarchy”. In very many societies, “patriarchy” meant the social hegemony of older males. Far from being about older men nurturing small children, it was about them allocating that work to women. Older men often had a role in bringing up older boys (initiation ceremonies; training in hunting, war, herding, heavy work in agriculture; etc.), but that was often a collective responsibility of all the older men, rather than an individual responsibility of the individual father to the individual son.

To be fair, the book does tell us (what we probably already knew) that fatherhood is a social construct shaped by patriarchy, religion, and capitalism, rather than a universal or benign force. Sedgewick introduces the “Rockwell paradox”, named after the mid-20th century US painter Norman Rockwell: the idea that Rockwell’s portrayals of idyllic families presided over by slightly-distant but benign fathers actually tipped more fathers into mental

health crises and addictions, often projected onto their wives and children, and creating an ongoing cycle of harm.

But centring the biographies of “great” white men – from ancient figures like Plato and Aristotle, to Thomas Jefferson and Sigmund Freud, and then Bob Dylan – as the primary lens through which to understand fatherhood fails to illuminate its implications for ordinary men. Nor does it convincingly argue that these individual lives and private familial dynamics shaped or modelled structures in broader society.

Sedgewick’s claims (oddly, if we consider that patriarchy is much older than modern concepts of “East” and “West”) that the West represents the “world’s dominant patriarchal tradition,” and uses that as an excuse for a narrative tethered to elite, Western figures, leaving little room for intersectional analysis or the lived experiences of fathers outside the dominant category. This approach ultimately undermines the book’s stated thesis.

Elevate

Sedgewick suggests that fatherhood’s so-called “identity crisis” stems from the desire to elevate its status in response to the biological incapacity of men to give birth. But this idea is never fully developed. Instead, the book reads more like a collection of biographies than a sustained critique of anything.

As a history enthusiast, I appreciated the archival detail. But the book’s structure – fragmented and lacking connective tissue between chapters – made it difficult to follow, and even harder to review concisely. By focusing on biographical rather than thematic threads, Sedgewick leaves the reader wondering: is he truly critiquing anything general? If so, that critique only flickers into view in the final chapter, leaving me with the uneasy realisation – was that it?

Take the final chapter on Bob Dylan, for example – a musician whose fame was built on anti-establishment songs. Sedgewick reveals that Dylan’s private life mirrored the 1950s suburban ideal he seemed to reject, with the breadwinner father who is both authority and companion.

Despite publicly distancing himself from his family – denying connections and even familiarity – Dylan (born Robert Zimmerman) secretly maintained contact with his relatives, including a father who had initially disapproved of his love for rock’n’roll. Dylan seemed to crave and replicate the very traditional family structure he once fled – and critiqued in his music.

This contradiction is compelling: a love-hate relationship with fatherhood, where the father remains on a pedestal. But so what? People are contradictory. Bob Dylan, too. This remains a bio-



Norman Rockwell presented idealised fatherhood in mid-20th century USA as benign but slightly distant, leaving the work at home to women

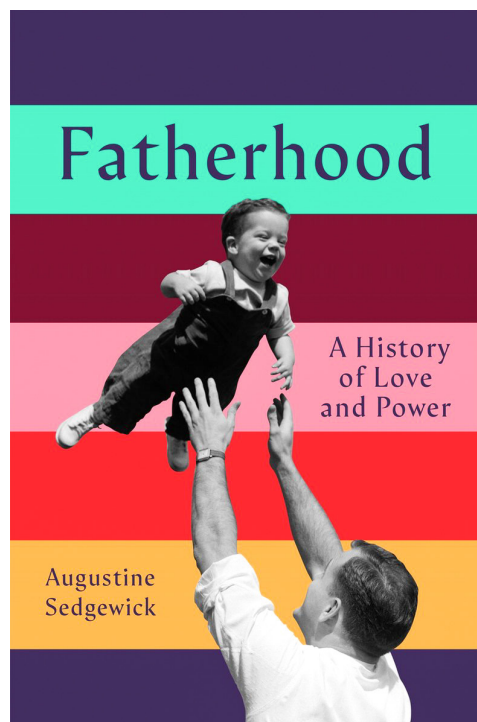
graphical anecdote rather than a lens through which to examine how fatherhood functions as ideology.

Even more confusingly, Sedgewick juxtaposes this with the story of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a conservative US Democrat, and an assistant in the Nixon and Ford Republican administrations. Moynihan’s *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action* pushed back against the then Democrat administration’s “War on Poverty” by arguing that action to open up more well-paid jobs for Black men was less needed than action (somehow) to change Black family structures. Moynihan claimed that slavery had produced a Black family structure rooted in matriarchy rather than patriarchy. It pathologised Black motherhood and pushed for culturally-improved fatherhood as the necessary corrective. The president responded with a token, giving official recognition to “Father’s Day” (celebrated since 1910, and to be made a national holiday by the Republicans in 1970). What is the relevance to today’s issues? I am yet to grasp it.

There are two aspects of this book I genuinely appreciated. First, it recognises that “fatherhood”, in most of his-

tory, was inseparable from ascendancy over women – a dynamic continuously reinforced through law and custom. Second, that in a world increasingly challenging traditional gender roles, especially around childcare, we’re also witnessing a counter-movement seeking to restore an idealised image of the patriarchal father.

Perhaps men must now confront what it means to be a father not through nostalgia, but through a reimagining of masculinity itself, one that might allow them to discover new facets of their being and forge more honest, nurturing relationships with their children. □



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Sudan: horror continues despite ceasefire talk

By Matt Cooper

On 12 September, the US announced a fresh bid to end Sudan's two-and-a-half-year civil war. But so far, at least, the announcement appears to have had little impact on the ground.

The war has left perhaps 100,000 dead, ten million internally displaced, and over three million refugees abroad. Half of the country's 50 million people face severe hunger, with two million in famine conditions.

Background: a 2018-19 uprising toppled Omar al-Bashir, but then the new government was crushed by a 2021 military coup. In April 2023, the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) turned their guns on each other.

The US corralled Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt into a "Quad" that proposes an immediate three-month ceasefire and a nine-month timetable to a civilian-led government. Both the SAF and RSF would be barred from running the transition, as would networks linked to al-Bashir's old order, including Islamist currents still embedded around the SAF.

The RSF, backed chiefly by the UAE, has reportedly received armed drones and air-defence systems in recent months. Forced out of Khartoum earlier this year, the RSF has consolidated in Darfur and kept up its siege of El-Fasher, the region's capital and the last major SAF foothold there. Some 260,000 civilians, half of them children, are trapped in the city.

Aerial imagery shows an RSF earthen berm, now 68 km in length, almost encircling El-Fasher to choke aid and block flight. Civilians trying to escape have been robbed or killed. Despite, or because of, the Quad's announcement, RSF assaults have intensified. A further Quad ceasefire declaration on the margins of the UN General Assembly on 26 September appears to have been similarly futile.

The SAF may be less shameless about open brutality than the RSF, but the army's conduct in areas it controls has been marked by indifference to civilian



welfare, extortion and sexual violence. Recent reports from newly retaken districts of Khartoum describe summary executions of civilians suspected of sympathising with the RSF.

The SAF is not the "lesser evil"; like the RSF, it is parasitic, both profiting and aiming to profit further from Sudan's mineral wealth.

Lack of will

There appears to be a lack of will on the part of regional actors to pressure the SAF into agreeing to a ceasefire. The SAF is supported by Egypt, Turkey, Iran and several Arab states. Saudi Arabia, long publicly neutral, has edged towards the SAF, seeing it as the "last remaining state institution", a shift that helped make the Quad possible. Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt are increasingly concerned about RSF drones menacing Port Sudan and thus the Red Sea.

Fault lines in the Quad's plan are already visible. Egypt and Saudi Arabia appear comfortable with the SAF holding areas it currently controls; the UAE prefers a brisk transition that would curb the army's grip. Neither the SAF nor RSF shows signs of accepting a process that limits their military hold on territory. The RSF is consolidating

its hold on Darfur and clearly seeks to take El-Fasher. The SAF's recent gains around the capital reduce its incentive to compromise.

Sudan's people face the prospect of either continuing war, or a bargain between local military leaders and regional powers that threatens to leave them spectators. The civic infrastructure remaining from the 2018-9 revolution, of neighbourhood resistance committees, women-led protection networks, volunteer kitchens and ad hoc clinics, keeps people alive, but much of the political purpose of 2019 has been scattered by displacement and targeted repression.

With an estimated 90% of Khartoum's industrial base destroyed, the urban working-class ecosystem that powered mass mobilisation has been shattered. The professional associations that were important in 2019 have largely been destroyed. Mutual aid persists, often via diaspora remittances and NGOs, but those are focused on survival, not political power.

The formal opposition is fragmented. Taqaddum, the exile-led coalition around former prime minister Abdalla Hamdok, has split. One wing has joined the RSF-aligned "Government of Peace and Unity", an RSF vehicle to institutionalise control in Darfur and a platform to push into Kordofan. The remainder formed Sumoud, a civilian alliance rejecting both armed camps. On the ground, however, Sumoud lacks the legitimacy and delivery capacity of the horizontal networks that are still feeding, sheltering and documenting under fire.

UN envoy Ramtane Lamamra has tried to knit these strands together, convening consultations with Sumoud, RSF political representatives and civil society groups. Thus far, there is no movement towards a credible transition that starts with lifting sieges, open-

ing aid corridors and guaranteeing a decision-making role for independent civic actors.

The larger story is one of shifting power. The US can no longer dictate outcomes in the Red Sea basin; it can, at best, align interests among regional players whose rivalries fuel the war. If the Quad matters, it is because the three regional powers involved now share a minimal interest in stopping a conflict that threatens trade, security and their regional ambitions.

A "civilian-led" process that sidelines resistance committees, unions and women's groups will entrench warlordism in new clothes. The current peace process may create some space, and surely even small respite will be welcome, but our solidarity remains directed to civil-society groups on the ground in Sudan. □

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Don't boycott Israel's Standing Together movement

From UK Friends of Standing Together

Taken with thanks from bit.ly/sol-st

The Palestinian Academic Committee for the Boycott of Israel (PACBI), a leading body within the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) in the UK, have published renewed calls to boycott Standing Together, this time also targeting the Friends of Standing Together network, including UK Friends of Standing Together. Their texts repeat and expand on the themes of a previous statement, published in January 2024.

In a response to the January 2024 statement, Palestinian members of Standing Together's leadership wrote: "The fight for Palestinian liberation is multi-faceted. As a movement operating within Israel, we took upon ourselves a specific role: to shift Israeli public opinion away from supporting policy that maintains and deepens the subjugation of Palestinians."

No attempt has been made to respond to the statement from Standing Together's Palestinian leaders. PACBI and PSC's new statements are also noteworthy for an almost total lack of reference to Standing Together's actual activity.

We urge all readers to make up their own minds on this matter, and read the calls for boycotts in the context of Standing Together's record.

In the past weeks and months, Standing Together has:

- Held multiple demonstrations at the Gaza border, including engaging in civil disobedience which attempted to block troop transport vehicles
- Held disruptive direct actions at Ben Gurion Airport, and disrupting live television broadcasts
- Campaigned consistently to encourage Israeli soldiers to refuse illegal orders
- Physically confronted far-right settlers and defeated their attempts to impede aid trucks
- Conducted its own "Aid to Gaza" campaign, collecting donations from across Israel, especially in Palestinian communities in the north
- Stood alongside Arab-Bedouin communities in the Negev/Naqab to resist displacement
- Crowdfunded to build bomb shelters in unprotected Arab-Bedouin communities during Israel's war with Iran
- Mobilised to defend Palestinians and Palestinian-run businesses in occupied East Jerusalem against attacks by racist mobs
- Supported and organised nationwide protests, strikes, and other direct actions to demand a ceasefire
- Spilled red paint outside the residence of the IDF chief of staff
- Held a die-in outside the army HQ



in Tel Aviv.

Are these actions worthwhile? Would the Palestinian cause be better served if the movement organising these actions did not exist?

Also characteristic of PACBI and PSC's recent statements is a fixation on forms of language above practical politics. The terms we use to describe things do matter. But attacking Standing Together for not using certain words, whilst making no reference to what Standing Together actually does, privileges the linguistic over the material. In any case, the attacks are inaccurate on their own terms: Standing Together does refer to Israel's policy in the West Bank as apartheid, and does describe the war in Gaza as genocidal.

Contrary to the claims of PACBI and PSC, Standing Together does not equate oppressors and oppressed. They acknowledge, and mobilise to resist, the violent structures which maintain inequality between Palestinians and Israeli Jews.

The movement's Theory of Change states: "We will take an active role in the struggle to end Israel's rule over the Palestinian people." It affirms that: "The current regime serves the interests of a small group – the capitalist financial elite and the settlement-building political elite – at the expense of the majority's interests", whilst acknowledging that the regime "remains dependent on the majority's consent."

Standing Together mobilises amongst the Palestinian minority within Israel, a two-million-strong community comprising almost one-third of the Palestinian population between the River Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea. Half of the leadership body of Standing Together is made up of Palestinians. The fact of their Israeli citizenship does not make these people any less Palestinian.

They have written: "We believe that it is politically effective to argue that oppression, racism, and bigotry harms the people of the oppressor as well as the oppressed. The harm is by no means equal, though the role of self-interest in political organising must not be underplayed. We work under the basic assumption that millions of Palestinians and millions of Jews live in this land today, and no one is going anywhere. Ending Israeli control over Palestinians and forging a society in which everyone is free and equal between the river and the sea is in the interest of both Palestinians and Jewish Israelis."

Perspectives

Readers should consider the perspectives of Palestinians in Standing Together about their own movement: "Standing Together is the only organisation that has provided us and tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel a safe political refuge during these challenging times, a place to demand a ceasefire, grieve safely, and organise for a future where we are free and equal in our homeland."

Standing Together is a growing movement, and efforts to boycott it have not affected this. But if they were to do so, the beneficiaries would not be the Palestinian people, but the Israeli government. As Standing Together's Palestinian leaders put it: "Efforts to silence and isolate Standing Together do not serve the Palestinian cause, they serve the interests of Israel's political establishment, which is also attempting to silence us."

Standing Together activists have been arrested for their actions, including an August protest outside the IDF chief of staff's residence, and a protest at the Gaza border in May. In August, a Standing Together fundraiser in Jerusalem was banned, with the police alleging it could "serve Hamas". Authorities

at the University of Haifa, where almost 50% of students are Palestinian, banned the Standing Together chapter in April, after it organised a protest where images of children killed in Gaza were displayed. The ban was subsequently overturned after a local campaign. In April, police attempted to ban demonstrators at an anti-war rally organised by Standing Together from displaying pictures of dead children, or placards using the word "genocide". Activists defied the attempted ban. In January 2024, a Standing Together protest in Tel Aviv was banned entirely, forcing organisers to rearrange the event.

If the claims made by supporters of the PACBI/PSC position, such as that Standing Together "appeases", "normalises", or "whitewashes" Israel's actions were true, why would the Israeli state make such efforts to suppress them?

Anyone who wants to see a stronger anti-war, anti-occupation movement within Israel should support the one that currently exists, and help it grow.

UK Friends of Standing Together remains open to working with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and its supporters wherever we have agreement, for example in campaigning to demand an end to arms export licenses to Israel and in protests to demand an immediate end to the ongoing genocide in Gaza. PSC activists who want unity in action wherever possible, whilst respecting political differences, will always be welcome at our events. □

"Peace is only way forward"

Standing Together's Alon-Lee Green on two years since 7 October. bit.ly/Oct-7

Trotsky's theses on United Front

By Leon Trotsky

The basic idea of "united front" goes back to the very beginnings of Marxist politics, but the form of words originates in discussions in the German Communist Party (in December 1920 in Stuttgart, then across Germany) and in the Communist International in 1921-2. Trotsky wrote the "theses" below for the French Communist Party. The French CP was not ultra-left, as were many Communist Parties which opposed the "united front". It had taken the majority of the old French Socialist Party, and was reluctant to propose united actions to the reformist remnant party, dismissing it as insignificant.

After assuring itself of the complete independence and ideological homogeneity of its ranks, the Communist Party fights for influence over the majority of the working class. This struggle can be accelerated or retarded depending upon objective circumstances and the expediency of the tactics employed.

But it is perfectly self-evident that the class life of the proletariat is not suspended during this period preparatory to the revolution. Clashes with industrialists, with the bourgeoisie, with the state power, on the initiative of one side or the other, run their due course.

In these clashes – insofar as they involve the vital interests of the entire working class, or its majority, or this or that section – the working masses sense the need of unity in action, of unity in resisting the onslaught of capitalism or unity in taking the offensive against it. Any party which mechanically counterposes itself to this need of the working class for unity in action will unfailingly be condemned in the minds of the workers.

Consequently the question of the united front is not at all, either in point of origin or substance, a question of the reciprocal relations between the Communist parliamentary fraction and that of the Socialists, or between the Central Committee of the two parties, or between *l'Humanité* and *Le Populaire* [the two parties' newspapers]. The problem of the united front – despite the fact that a split is inevitable in this epoch between the various political organisations basing themselves on the working class – grows out of the urgent need to secure for the working class the possibility of a united front in the struggle against capitalism.

For those who do not understand this task, the party is only a propaganda society and not an organisation for mass action.

- Wherever the Communist Party already constitutes a big, organised, political force, but not the decisive magnitude: wherever the party embraces organisationally, let us say, one-fourth,

one-third, or even a larger proportion of the organised proletarian vanguard, it is confronted with the question of the united front in all its acuteness.

If the party embraces one-third or one-half of the proletarian vanguard, then... the party must assume the initiative in securing unity in these current struggles. Only in this way will the party draw closer to those two-thirds who do not as yet follow its leadership, who do not as yet trust the party because they do not understand it. Only in this way can the party win them over.

- If the Communist Party did not seek for organisational avenues to the end that at every given moment joint, co-ordinated action between the Communist and the non-Communist (including the Social-Democratic) working masses were made possible, it would have thereby laid bare its own incapacity to win over – on the basis of mass action – the majority of the working class. It would degenerate into a Communist propaganda society but never develop into a party for the conquest of power.

It is not enough to possess the sword, one must give it an edge it is not enough to give the sword an edge, one must know how to wield it.

Separating

After separating the Communists from the reformists it is not enough to fuse the Communists together by means of organisational discipline, it is necessary that this organisation should learn how to guide all the collective activities of the proletariat in all spheres of its living struggle.

This is the second letter of the alphabet of Communism.

- Does the united front extend only to the working masses or does it also include the opportunist leaders?

The very posing of this question is a product of misunderstanding.

If we were able simply to unite the working masses around our own banner or around our practical immediate slogans, and skip over reformist organisations, whether party or trade union, that would of course be the best thing in the world. But then the very question of the united front would not exist in its present form.

The question arises from this, that certain very important sections of the working class belong to reformist organisations or support them [yet] the circumstances thus make wholly possible joint action on a whole number of vital issues between the workers united in [different] organisations and the unorganised masses adhering to them.

The Communists, as has been said, must not oppose such actions but on the contrary must also assume the initiative for them, precisely for the reason that the greater is the mass drawn into the movement, the higher its self-confi-

dence rises, all the more self-confident will that mass movement be and all the more resolutely will it be capable of marching forward, however modest may be the initial slogans of struggle. And this means that the growth of the mass aspects of the movement tends to radicalise it, and creates much more favourable conditions for the slogans, methods of struggle, and, in general, the leading role of the Communist Party.

Potential

The reformists dread the revolutionary potential of the mass movement; their beloved arena is the parliamentary tribune, the trade-union bureaux, the arbitration boards, the ministerial ante-chambers.

On the contrary, we are, apart from all other considerations, interested in dragging the reformists from their asylums and placing them alongside ourselves before the eyes of the struggling masses. With a correct tactic we stand only to gain from this. A Communist who doubts or fears this resembles a swimmer who has approved the theses on the best method of swimming but dares not plunge into the water.

- Unity of front consequently presupposes our readiness, within certain limits and on specific issues, to correlate in practice our actions with those of reformist organisations, to the extent to which the latter still express today the will of important sections of the embattled proletariat.

But, after all, didn't we split with them? Yes, because we disagree with them on fundamental questions of the working-class movement.

And yet we seek agreement with them? Yes, in all those cases where the masses that follow them are ready to engage in joint struggle together with the masses that follow us and when they, the reformists, are to a lesser or greater degree compelled to become an instrument of this struggle.

- A policy aimed to secure the united front does not of course contain automatic guarantees that unity in action will actually be attained in all instances. On the contrary, in many cases and perhaps even the majority of cases, organisational agreements will be only half-attained or perhaps not at all. But it is necessary that the struggling masses should always be given the opportunity of convincing themselves that the non-achievement of unity in action was not due to our formalistic irreconcilability but to the lack of real will to struggle on the part of the reformists.

In entering into agreements with other organisations, we naturally obligate ourselves to a certain discipline in action. But this discipline cannot be absolute in character. In the event that the reformists begin putting brakes on



The term "united front" originated in an approach by the then-Marxist German Communist Party in late 1920 to the Social Democrats in Stuttgart. The prime mover was Clara Zetkin

the struggle to the obvious detriment of the movement and act counter to the situation and the moods of the masses, we as an independent organisation always reserve the right to lead the struggle to the end, and this without our temporary semi-allies.

This may give rise to a new sharpening of the struggle between us and the reformists. But it will no longer involve a simple repetition of one and the same set of ideas within a shut-in circle but will signify – provided our tactic is correct – the extension of our influence over new, fresh groups of the proletariat.

- It is possible to see in this policy a rapprochement with the reformists only from the standpoint of a journalist who believes that he rids himself of reformism by ritualistically criticising it without ever leaving his editorial office but who is fearful of clashing with the reformists before the eyes of the working masses and giving the latter an opportunity to appraise the Communist and the reformist on the equal plane of the mass struggle. Behind this seeming revolutionary fear of "rapprochement" there really lurks a political passivity which seeks to perpetuate an order of things wherein the Communists and reformists each retain their own rigidly demarcated spheres of influence, their own audiences at meetings, their own press, and all this together creates an illusion of serious political struggle. □

- Abridged from Trotsky's Theses on the United Front of March 1922.

United front and popular front today

By Rhodri Evans

In *Solidarity* 751 we carried some classic Marxist texts on "Popular Front" and "United Front", and in this issue we have another classic, theses by Trotsky from 1922.

What is the relevance today?

The gist, as one of the texts in *Solidarity* 751 put it, is: "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..." We are for united fronts.

"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 [bourgeois] program". The classic Popular Fronts, France and Spain in the 1930s, were political blocs with bourgeois parties deliberately and explicitly relegating independent workers' struggles to a later "stage". We are against popular fronts.

Or, more precisely, we are for united-front *policies*, and against popular-front *policies*. United fronts and popular fronts are not so much "things" which we approach with some sort of stethoscope-type device to see which sort of "front" each "thing" is, but different policies which may be pursued by a working-class party (or smaller agitation-and-education group). As the texts in *Solidarity* 751 explained, those different policies – working-class-based "march separately, strike together" vs class-coalitionism – are much older than the terms "united front" and "popular front" coined in the 1920s and 30s.

Debate about this is often confused today, and the 1920s-30s language is used inconsistently.

At his "Claim the Future" Labour left conference on 19 July, John McDonnell MP called for a "Popular Front" of the Labour left with the Greens and the Sultana-Corbyn project to combat the far right day to day. But that isn't a "Popular Front" in the sense of an alliance with a bourgeois party to chain socialists to a limited bourgeois-democratic program "for now" and relegate working-class struggle to the "next stage". If it can be done, for example by developing active local anti-fascist alliances of the left and labour movement, it will be good.

The Greens are not a working-class party? Indeed not. But they are not an anchored bourgeois party, either, and allying with them on the streets against fascists, for example, would be nothing like deferring politically to an anchored bourgeois party. Given the realities of the Labour Party today, and indeed of the smaller "left groups", "purism" here would be pharisaical. The prob-

lem is elsewhere: even after their new left shift, or where in other countries they have long been "left", it is rare for Greens to engage collectively in street protest, picket lines, etc.

On the other hand, Jon Lansman, a figure on the Labour left for decades, and now in the new "Mainstream Labour" group, is arguing for a deal to stop Reform in the 2029 election, with Labour divvying up seats to contest with a range including Lib-Dems, SNP, Plaid. Back in 1920 Lenin suggested the then-revolutionary Communist Party propose to the Labour Party "workers' primaries" in constituencies to decide whether a CP or Labour candidate against Tories and Liberals in the official election. But Lansman's proposal goes beyond that to actual "Popular-Frontism", erecting a barrier to even notional or fragmentary working-class socialist policies in the election.

The "Republican Front" policy in France, where the Communist Party and Socialist Party withdraw voluntarily in run-offs to back "centre" candidates against the far-right, is similar.

Then again, the so-called "New Popular Front" (NFP) in France is not quite what the name says. None of its component parties is a workers' party with previous socialist policies now silenced for the alliance; none of them is an anchored bourgeois party. The problem with the NFP is rather than it has been only an electoral deal (divvying up seats), not a frame for local committees of action.

Builder

The Socialist Workers Party has long promoted itself as a builder of what it calls "united fronts", and the Counterfire group split from it in 2010 wanting to be even more so. Some of those "united fronts" have elements of Popular Front in them. Unite Against Fascism, an ancestor of Stand Up To Racism, got future Tory prime minister David Cameron as one of its sponsors. But they most resemble another model, the Stalinist fronts.

In the 1950s and after, Stalinist (official "Communist") parties would have small armies of full-time employees, financed by USSR aid, constructing "peace movements" and "friends of the Soviet Union" groups, with conferences, international junkets, and so on.

The model had actually been pioneered during the Stalinist "Third Period" when, alongside refusal by Communist Parties to push for unity on the streets with Social Democrats against fascism, the Stalinists also had a well-funded contingent, around Willi Münzenberg, who organised showy "anti-fascist" conferences with platforms full of individual liberal celebrities (and divorced from day-to-day workplace or street activity).

Those "fronts" served a purpose for



This Stalinist graphic hails the "united front", but by the time it came into use the Stalinists were pushing "popular fronts", something quite different

the Stalin regime in wooing some liberal allies, and possibly for individual CPers in enabling them sometimes to appear as respectable liberals and thus find circles of people they could "talk to". But they were manipulative and could not serve socialist education or mobilisation.

The SWP and Counterfire do not have a government to fund their "fronts" (Stand Up to Racism, Stop The War, People's Assembly, etc.), and so the main function of those "fronts" is to give their socialists another (liberal) "hat to wear", or to enable them to act as contracted-out backroom organisers for mobilisations with official union sponsorship.

Some of the mobilisations are useful, or at least the best available given that the unions will not do the work directly, and there is no sizeable party able to do it. But they also act as a diversion from the task of rousing the unions.

On the other side, some anti-fascist or trans rights activists these days will refuse to work with Labour Party activists however anti-fascist or pro-trans they may be. That is a reprise of the anti-united-front policy the Stalinists had before the "popular fronts".

The Labour Party is bad? But the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Germany backed the Brüning rule-by-decree regime there from 1930 to 1933. It ran the state police force in Prussia (by far the largest of the German states). When bourgeois politicians in behind-the-scenes talks suggested restoring the monarchy to stabilise Germany, the SPD assented with the proviso that a suitable member of the royal family be chosen, to be a "constitutional" monarch.

For sure, the whole temper of politics then was more left-wing than now, and the SPD had working-class members who considered themselves Marxists. But if today's Labour people, faded and demoralised as they mostly are, should be excluded from activity, then the SPD would not qualify either. Nor would the French Socialist Party of 1922, about which Trotsky was writing in his theses of that year.

The circumstances have changed

hugely since Marx and Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto in 1848, but the basic approach was outlined vividly there:

"The Communists, therefore, are on the one hand, practically, the most advanced and resolute section of the working-class parties of every country, that section which pushes forward all others; on the other hand, theoretically, they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement".

They would ally with the Chartists in England, for example (who, as it turned out, were already in decline then, and had always included middle-class sections) and the so-called Social Democrats in France. Marx and Engels criticised the "sectarian socialists" (Owenites, etc.) for refusing to do so.

"In Switzerland, [the Communists] support the Radicals, without losing sight of the fact that this party consists of antagonistic elements, partly of Democratic Socialists, in the French sense, partly of radical bourgeois.

"In Poland, they support the party [i.e. loose trend] that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846...

"But they never cease, for a single instant, to instill into the working class the clearest possible recognition of the hostile antagonism between bourgeoisie and proletariat, in order that the... workers may straightway use, as so many weapons against the bourgeoisie, the social and political conditions that the bourgeoisie must necessarily introduce along with its supremacy" – i.e. bourgeois democracy and civil liberties, though we now know that the bourgeoisie can use modes of rule more "absolutist" and dictatorial than any 1848 "old regime".

We seek broad unity in action, but never shelve or silence or postpone our efforts to advocate and explain working-class socialism. □

Maoism with Italia



Book review

By Martin Thomas

From 1968 to the late 1970s, Italy saw huge working-class struggles and the biggest rise in revolutionary-left activism of any industrially-developed country since the 1920s. That rise was dominated by Maoism in different forms, and it collapsed heavily by 1980. The experience has largely vanished from left memory.

Marco Gabbas and Lorenzo Capisani, in their book *Maoism With Italian Characteristics*, have sifted the archives of Avanguardia Operaia (AO, 1968-77) and Lotta Continua (LC, 1969-76), two of the biggest groups of those years, and given us valuable materials to learn from.

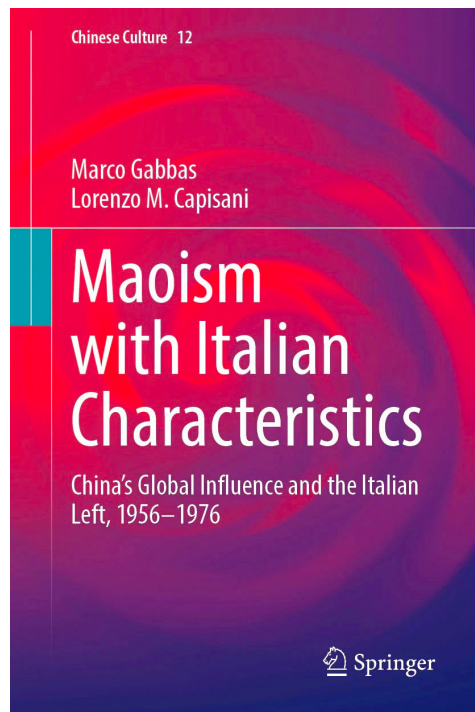
In his preface, Gabbas cites as his mentor Gao Mobo, an Australian-Chinese academic who has defended elements of the Maoist legacy against the denunciations in recent decades of the Great Leap Forward (1958-62) and Cultural Revolution (1966-76) as bureaucratic atrocities. Gao's defence is much more critical than the assessments of most Western liberals and leftists in the 1960s, but still, it is a sort of defence.

In some places, Gabbas and Capisani seem inclined to validate the Maoist influence in Italy's left activism back then as positive. But their detailed narrative stands, and to my mind indicates different conclusions.

The authors say little about other components of the Italian far left in the crucial years - PdUP, Il Manifesto, the "workerist"- "autonomist" PotOp then Autonomia Operaia, the hard-Maoist UIC (M-L) which flourished briefly in 1969, etc.

They cover anarchists who adopted elements of Maoism, and "non-party" Mao-sympathising journals, *Quaderni Piacentini* and the Italian edition of *Monthly Review*. They also trace the "pre-history": the emergence, during the early 1960s "Sino-Soviet split", of Mao-sympathising circles in and around the then-huge Communist Party of Italy (PCI), which had 2.3 million members at its peak, four times the size of the also-big French Communist Party.

They show that the originator of the "workerist"- "autonomist" current, Rainerio Panzieri, who was in the Italian Socialist Party, was one of the China sympathisers. Antonio Negri, who became the main figure in that current after Panzieri died in 1964, was a member of the "China-Italy Association", an element in the pre-history of Italian Maoism.



In memoirs much later, Mario Tronti, another early "workerist", declared that "we were never Chinese and the Cultural Revolution of the East left us cold, estranged, more than a little sceptical and indeed strongly critical of it" (*New Left Review*, Jan-Feb 2012). I think, however, that must be read as referring to the close associates of Tronti, who stuck with the PCI all the way to its disbandment. Tronti contrasted his "workerism" ("critically inside the workers' movement"), with "later endeavours" which "placed themselves dangerously against that movement".

An element in the pre-history which gets only passing reference is the condition of alternatives to Maoism which existed in 1968 and could have offered different political paths to the tens of thousands of students and young workers newly radicalised then.

Burrowing

The Italian Orthodox Trotskyists (Mandelites), the GCR, had, by 1968, reached 250 members, or even by some accounts 400, by 1968 by burrowing away in and around the PCI. That made it markedly bigger than the Mandelkite JCR in France, which would expand dramatically in 1968-9. The GCR, in contrast, almost collapsed. Many leaders and members jumped ship to Maoism, notably to AO.

Young radicals open to a critical perspective on Maoism found little other than the writing of Lotta Comunista (neo-Bordigist or semi-Bordigist), and of actual Bordigist groups. Those groups' debunkings of Maoism, their arguments that specifically working-class action was necessary for socialism, and their contentions that China was a class-exploitative society were right, but the groups were too

"propagandist" to draw many activists.

AO and LC were always hostile to those who displayed Mao badges and Little Red Books. AO criticised the UIC(M-L) as "ever more similar to the first-hour Fascist movements". Even in the early and mid 1970s, AO and LC were sceptical about the Chinese government's international policy.

Why did the Chinese government offer fulsome tribute when France's right-wing president Charles De Gaulle died in November 1970? In fact, because China saw the Gaullists as diplomatic allies, but AO and LC were puzzled.

Why did China so support the development of the EU, seeing it as a counterweight to the USSR and USA?

Why did China support Pakistan in its March-December 1971 war to retain control of what became Bangladesh? (In fact, because China had border conflicts with India).

Why did Mao give a friendly reception to the right-wing US president Nixon in February 1972? (The Italian Maoists thought maybe this was the US being forced into diplomacy by military-political setbacks, and up to a point they were right).

Denouncing

Why did China become effectively pro-US and pro-NATO in 1975-6, denouncing the USSR as the world's hyperimperialism in much the same way as Maoist rhetoric only some years before had denounced the USA as the root of all global evil?

Why, in Angola, did China back the FNLA (also backed by apartheid South Africa, the ultra-corrupt president of Zaire/ DRC, Mobutu, and the USA), against the majority-backed (but Russia-aligned) movement against Portuguese colonialism, MPLA?

AO and LC were sceptical about such issues. But they never "joined the dots". And until the end they remained credulous about the Cultural Revolution.

AO wrote that Trotskyism had become a "dogma" incapable of appreciating new experiences. "The revolutionary experience currently ongoing in China practically indicates how proletarian power can be safeguarded... through mobilisation of the masses". Trotskyists failed to see Maoism as a "contribution to Marxism-Leninism founded on a very important revolutionary experience and on the application of dialectical materialism to a concrete, national and international, context of political and class struggle".

Mao had won in China because he contested the schemes imposed by Stalin (as indeed he did, tactically, from time to time). So the way to revolu-

tion was by abandoning international schemes and instead on revolutionary initiative in each country, cross-fertilising but always based on fresh local investigation. AO and LC were unworried about the fact that Beijing, even at the height of its world-revolutionary rhetoric, showed little interest in Maoist revolutionary movements elsewhere and more in opportunist deal-seeking. Beijing's official "franchise" in Italy was held by, not even the UIC(M-L), but the PCd'I(M-L), a group whose feebleness, indeed practical non-existence, even a minimally curious Chinese apparatchik could have seen.

For AO and LC, the USSR showed that degeneration could follow revolution. But the Cultural Revolution showed how to avoid that. (Another soft-Maoist group, the PRP in Portugal, very active in 1975, would describe itself as a "suicide party", vowing to dissolve once it had taken power, to avoid the risk of the party degenerating and corrupting the revolutionary state. I don't know whether it took direct inspiration from the fact that the formal institutions of the Chinese Communist Party practically broke down in the Cultural Revolution, with the Politburo not meeting and central authority residing only with Mao personally and whomever was judged to have his favour at each stage).

AO leaders, disgusted as most Italian radicals and even the PCI were by the Russian-organised invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, preferred the Maoist account that the USSR had become state-capitalist to the Orthodox Trotskyist formula that it was a "degenerated workers' state". The conclusion was understandable. The actual Maoist argument was nonsense, dating the advent of the state-capitalism to the death of Stalin in 1953 and attributing it to what it described as the "revisionist" views of Stalin's bureaucratic successors.

Economically, Maoist "orthodoxy" indicted the USSR's turn to using more market mechanisms. But it was cautious or even ineffectual, and did not come until 1965.

AO and LC disliked Stalin, and suggested that the decisive degeneration to state-capitalism in the USSR had come under Stalin, not after him. Jacques Sapir, the "Russia expert" of the soft-Maoist OCT in France, wrote a book about the Stalinist USSR which reads "very Trotskyist", more "Trotskyist" arguably than the post-1940 "Orthodox Trotskyists", and was in fact partly informed by Sapir's family connections with the circle of Trotsky's widow Natalia Sedova.

But even the OCT believed nonsense about China's supposed immunity to

n characteristics

Stalinist-type bureaucracy. When Mao died in September 1976, the OCT declared:

"The theoretical and practical work of Chairman Mao Zedong taught the peoples of the Third World that imperialism, even the most powerful, is nothing but a paper tiger in the face of the revolutionary struggle of an entire people, and that, relying on their own strength, they can defeat it and free themselves from misery by marching towards communism. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in the People's Republic of China, under the decisive leadership of Mao Zedong, showed that the exploitation and oppression that have reigned in Eastern Europe since the Stalinist period, and the revisionist degeneration of the main communist parties, were not inevitable".

That the Orthodox Trotskyists seemed like fussy formula-mongers to the young "soft Maoists" we can understand when we read the Mandeliste LCR's comment on the same occasion:

"One of the greatest political figures of the proletarian revolution of this century has passed away... The persistent political crises and bureaucratic gangrene in China, as well as the course of Chinese foreign policy, cannot tarnish this historical figure, who helped open the way to hope for all oppressed peoples".

The Trotskyists-turned-Maoists in AO must have interpreted Mao's talk of "uninterrupted revolution" (originally from the 1958-62 Great Leap Forward) as a new and improved version of Trotsky's idea of "permanent revolution". In fact Maoist "uninterrupted revolution" had nothing to do with the working class winning hegemony in battles for democracy, or with the idea that workers' revolutions must spread internationally or die, the key elements in Trotsky's writing. It was a formula akin to Stalin's of "sharpened class struggle" after revolution, in fact a formula giving license to leaders like Mao or Stalin to



use revolutionary-civil-war-type methods against factional opponents and to deny the workability of regularised, open, deliberative democratic structures allowing change through debate and vote.

The soft Maoists took "uninterrupted revolution" as licensing something like the idea current in some early-1920s Communist Parties of permanently "offensive" tactics. They knew they could not get rural "red bases" as Mao had in peasant war, but they thought they could scale up agitation in some campuses and even cities so much that the capitalist class would lose control and see no alternative but escalation to the next stage of civil war. In practice it meant ultra-leftism and a destructive swing towards street-fighting as the main form of activity.

The soft Maoists were fond of citing Mao's dictum of "truth from facts", or his saying "unless you have investigated a problem, you will be deprived of the right to speak on it". (Whether, how, and how much this cross-fertilised with the "workerists" theme of "workers' inquiry", which those workerists derived also from the Johnson-Forrest tendency and from Karl Marx's own "Workers' Inquiry" of 1880, I don't know).

In Mao's Maoism, those thoughts were constantly balanced with anathemas against "empiricism" and "revisionism" (as if carefully "revising" theory is a disease, not a necessity), licensing Mao to get any conclusion he wanted. No doubt the Maoists in the 1930s and 40s paid serious attention to peasant conditions in the areas where they sought support, but that Mao was good at checking against facts is doubtful. One

of the big arguments of those who seek partially to excuse him for the horrors of the 1958-62 Great Leap Forward is that he knew little about the failures of crackpot economic schemes pursued then. Certainly, Chinese official statistics broke down in that period, as they did in the Cultural Revolution.

AO and LC were not much better at sober investigation. They vastly overestimated the extent to which young workers were willing to follow them against the PCI and the trade unions.

Alternative

Another Mao phrase much used by AO and LC was "politics in command". They understood it as an alternative to all schemes saying that revolutionary action must wait until economic conditions became mature.

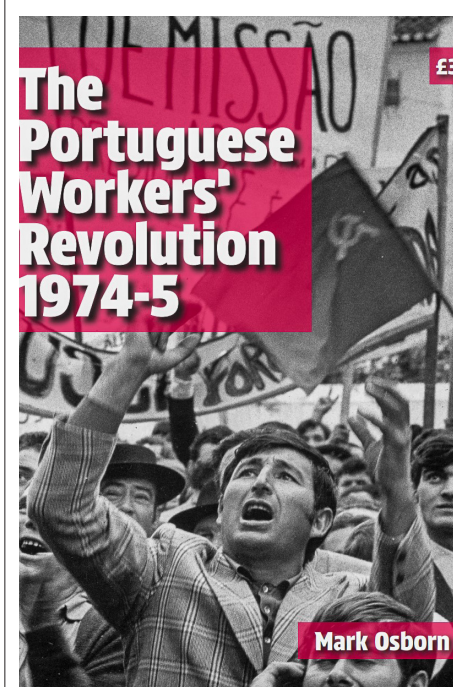
The theme was expanded by the French writer Charles Bettelheim, probably the most influential academic Maoist of the time, in his once-celebrated work *Class Struggles in the USSR* (three volumes, 1974, 1977, and 1982). Like AO and LC and the OCT, he placed the rise of a new exploiting class in Russia much earlier than in 1953, and he attributed it to ideological errors of "economism" (meaning: socialist relations depend on economic development) for which he blamed Stalin and Trotsky more or less equally.

That sort of "anti-economism" could enable AO and LC to believe that advanced socialist relations (including advanced forms of women's emancipation) were being generated in China's "People's Communes", with barely-above-subsistence-level economics, just by Maoist enthusiasm and

mobilisation.

In day-to-day politics in Italy "politics in command" translated into localism and the replacement of patient education and self-education by delirious competitive enthusiasm. It was bound to crash, and it did crash.

The flamboyance which AO and LC were able to mobilise at their height looks fresh and inviting in a snapshot comparison with the drab minimalism of much left activity in recent decades. Gabbas and Capisani have given us valuable materials for a sober check on such appearances. □



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A postscript on Foster and Monthly Review



Debate

By Martin Thomas

Paul Hampton's thorough survey (*Solidarity* 752; bit.ly/mr-ph) of the long-running US left magazine *Monthly Review*, of which John Bellamy Foster has been the main editor since 2000, is very useful as a comprehensive and critical account of an influential and well-known school of thought.

It is an edited version of a contribution in a long-running debate in *Workers' Liberty* about how to evaluate the political and theoretical contribution of the discourse which centres the terms "metabolic rift" or "metabolism". Foster and his associates have been the most prolific in that discourse, and Foster himself was the pioneer of the specific idea that the term "metabolic rift" can be made the axis of a "Marxist ecology".

The editorial team of *Solidarity* asked for the edited version of the article because we thought the critical survey of *Monthly Review* and Foster valuable whatever one's views on "the metabolism debate" in ecology. Obviously, however, there is spillover, and thus this short indication from one of us who thinks that the "metabolic rift" framework, or metaphor, or terminology, or whatever, is too vague to help us much, but does not "blame" it for *Monthly Review's* and Foster's politics. Readers can survey the whole debate at bit.ly/eco-db.

For myself, I do not blame the politics which Foster had long before he started writing about "metabolic rift" on his use of that language. Rather, I would say that the ability of Foster and others, in a long series of books, to dovetail that terminology (or framework, or metaphor, or analogy, or whatever) into *Monthly-Review* political conclusions demonstrates that it has not had power to improve politics.

Others have dovetailed that language into different conclusions.

Kohei Saito dovetails it into a Popular Front to win degrowth.

Andreas Malm dovetails it into a wild variety of conclusions.

Paul Hampton has dovetailed it into political conclusions which I agree with.

I take that as evidence that the language, or framework, or metaphor, is not precise enough to lead to political conclusions.

Alfred Schmidt used the term *Stoffwechsel* (and his translator rendered it as metabolism, which by that time was the dictionary translation), in a 1962 book on philosophy. Neil Smith used the term metabolism in a 1984 book on geography. Both books are valuable in their fields. Neither drew any very special ecological-politics conclusions.

Marx used the word *Stoffwechsel*, fairly unusual in his day. It is a compound noun made up by combining two very "ordinary" German words (*Stoff* - substance, material, matter, stuff - and *Wechsel* - change, exchange, etc.). English has compound nouns like that (steamship, basketball, etc.), but German develops more of them. Marx could thus be sure that a German reader who had not seen the word before would understand the gist: material exchange.

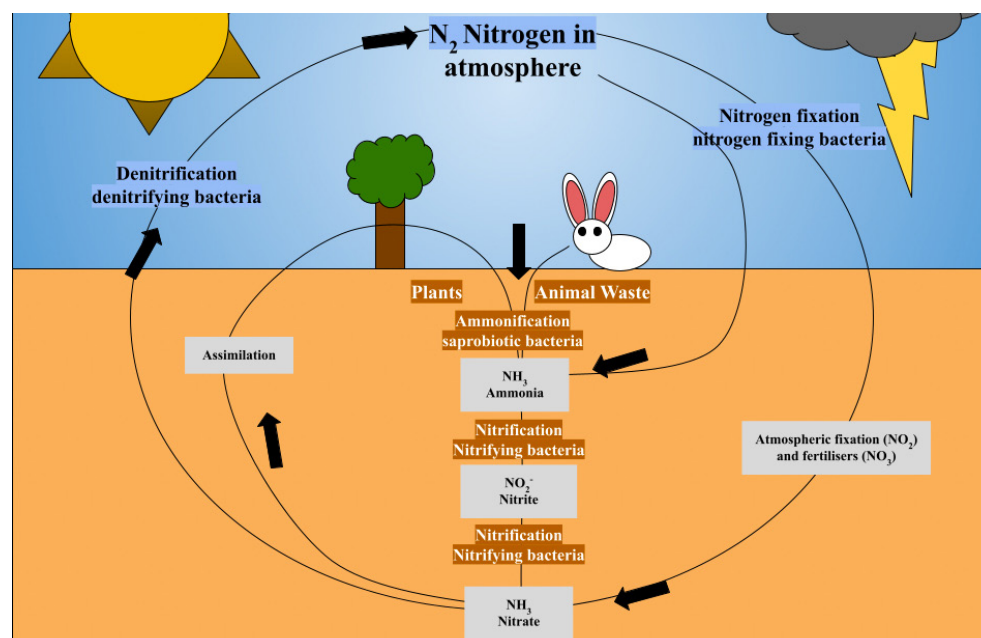
Better-read readers would get a bit more, because the compound noun had been put into circulation before Marx by well-known German scientists such as Liebig and Moleschott. With them it surely had its baseline meaning of material exchange, but also had an added connotation of circulation - a cycle or spiral of interactions, rather than just a one-off. A famous 1852 book by Moleschott was titled *The Circuit [Kreislauf] of Life*.

Stoffwechsel

Over the 20th century, the word *Stoffwechsel* became much more common, but also narrowed in everyday usage. German readers will now be introduced to it in school science, where it means the chemical reactions within living cells (plant and animal). Metabolism is a word which gained currency in English from the late 19th century, from a Greek root meaning simply "change". Over time became the standard "dictionary" translation of *Stoffwechsel* (as it was not when Engels supervised the first English translation of *Capital* volume 1). Like *Stoffwechsel*, it has become a term everyone learns in school, but at the same time narrowed in its usual connotation.

The word metabolism is also used these days in looser or analogical senses, as in "industrial metabolism". That's all right, too, as long as writers explain what meaning (different from the usual school-science one) they are using.

In the German text of his completed *Capital* volume 1, Marx used *Stoffwechsel* repeatedly, but mostly in reference to the market circulation of commodities. Seeing that circulation as a "spi-



ral" process in time - rather than being about instantaneous equivalence, as in the neoclassical model of "the Walrasian auctioneer" - was important, I think, for Marx's refutation of "Say's Law" and his description of capital as value-in-process rather than a thing.

Marx's usage of *Stoffwechsel* for interactions between human society and the rest of nature shows he latched on early to the importance of what since the 1960s, at least, have come to be called (and analysed in detail as) "biogeochemical cycles". That is of interest, but the study of biogeochemical cycles is of course not distinctively "Marxist", and I remained to be convinced that referring to those cycles as "metabolism" adds special insight. I also remain to be convinced that translating Marx's use in this context of the very ordinary German word *Riss* (rip, tear, break, etc.) as "rift" rather than "break" adds anything special.

In his study of *Monthly Review* and Foster, Paul Hampton credits Foster with developing a "metabolic" approach into three propositions, roughly:

- Labour as the mediator between human society and the rest of nature
- A crisis in that interaction
- Socialism as the way to restore a better interaction.

Paul introduced the whole approach to readers of *Solidarity* in a long series of reviews of books by Foster and his co-authors. Those reviews were never uncritical, but they started by telling us: "Foster's work has been central to the revival of interest in Marx's ecology. He is responsible for developing the metabolic rift expression, taken from Marx".

In broad terms, I would agree with the three propositions. (Whether they depend on this or that use of the word "metabolism" is another matter). My worry is that I read them as too imprecise to be the foundation of a theory, and as sometimes even formulated in ways that may mislead. I've explained that worry in the articles which interested readers can find in our eco dis-

cussion bulletins.

The whole debate has shown one thing at least, namely, that the word "metabolism" is used in a number of different ways today in ecological debate. And the usages are always different again from the most widespread usage, which we learn in school science, and which is different yet again from the meaning and connotations of "*Stoffwechsel*" in the mid 19th century.

I can understand that comrades may find the word useful when writing about ecology. But the best way to go forward would be to discuss issues like aviation and agriculture, and dispute about "metabolism" when contributions on those issues introduce it substantively.

In discussing those issues, I've not found it necessary or helpful to use the word "metabolism". Maybe other comrades can show that introducing the word, in one usage or another, can improve or refute the argument. □

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Corrections

A sentence from the discussion-bulletin version of the survey of *Monthly Review*, edited out of the version for #752 online, was by mistake included in the printed version: "Stuart does not draw out those conclusions when he advocates for *Monthly Review*". See bit.ly/eco-db for the full text, for previous discussion on "social metabolism", and for forthcoming further contributions on that. □

Fight the prejudices which feed the horrors

By Will Roberts

The attack and murder at the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation synagogue on Thursday 2 October (Yom Kippur) have brought antisemitism back to the fore in public discussion.

We know very little of Jihad Al-Shamie's motivation for the attack, but it has occurred against a backdrop of rising antisemitic attacks and a growth of antisemitic beliefs in one form or another across British society. The stark truth is that the issue has not been paid the due attention for several years, and socialists and consistent anti-racists should see it as their duty to be aware of the issues, which will allow us to consistently oppose racism and bigotry in all its forms.

A new survey of British Jews arranged by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, surveying 4,800 people, found that 35% of them feel unsafe in Britain, compared to just 9% before the 7 October 2023 attack. 47% (up from 11% in 2012) see antisemitism as a "very big" problem, and 32% report experiencing at least one antisemitic incident in 2024.

The Community Security Trust (CST) has carried out regular surveys of antisemitic incidents for decades. The first half of 2025 saw a drop in total number of incidents year-on-year from 2024 - but both years are significantly higher than any other year on record, with 1,521 cases recorded from January-June this year. Of those, 51% were said to be "linked to Israel, Gaza, the Hamas terror attack or the subsequent conflict."

Israel's invasion of Gaza lurks large in discussions around antisemitism in Britain. Many of the reported antisemitic incidents involve the use of the terms "Zionist" or "Zio" or Jews being seen as in some way representatives of, or responsible for the actions of, the Israeli state. A forthcoming report from John Mann, commissioned by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, will explore this phenomenon in more detail. In an interview with the BBC, Mann said that "ordinary Jewish men and women are going about their everyday life particularly at work and suddenly being held to account for what's happening in the Middle East in their workplace". Whatever else we think of Mann, he's right about that.

The invasion of Gaza is horrific, and Workers' Liberty has been campaigning for an end to the assault, and supporting Israeli and Palestinian anti-war groups on the ground, since the war's beginning in October 2023. We want as many people around the world as possible to agree with us on these politics. But it would set a dangerous precedent to require people, or groups of people, to hold a particular political position in order to live a life free from discrimination.

75% of British Jews see themselves as "emotionally attached" to the state of Israel, and 49% "very attached". These figures are up from 72% and 40% respectively before the October 7 attack. Many of those "Israel-attached" Jews will also oppose Netanyahu's war, as great numbers of American Jews (and now of Israeli Jews) do. The same survey also found that Jews who considered themselves "anti-Zionist" had grown in the same period, from 8% to 12%.

In this context, it is easy to see the issue with boycotting "Zionist businesses", or using chants like "Zionists off campus". If your definition of "Zionist" is broad enough to include the vast majority of British Jews, it is not hard to see how forms of "anti-Zionism", if not carefully framed, can take on an antisemitic character.

Holding British Jews responsible for the crimes of another state, no matter their personal views on that state, cannot be used as a justification for antisemitism, and responses to the war in Gaza have sometimes involved normalising a low-level, generalised antisemitism in public discourse.

The oft-repeated mantra on the left that "anti-Zionism is not antisemitism" is true if it means denouncing actions by Israel, or criticising various historic Zionist ideologies (Herzl, Jabotinsky, Ben Gurion, whoever), is not antisemitic. *Solidarity* has carried criticism of the Israeli state and its far-right government in virtually every issue since the beginning of the current war. But there are ways of criticising the Israeli state that do cross the line into antisemitic rhetoric, and refusing to distinguish between the two is a dangerous path to go down. Using "Israel" and "Zionism" as sort-of-synonyms (and then equating "Zionism" unilaterally with the worst variants of Israeli chauvinism), as if the Israeli Jews are not a nation but an ideological selection, is also dangerous.

Attention

Those who have responded to cases of antisemitism by stating that a lack of attention has been paid to anti-Muslim rhetoric and racist attacks against Muslims do that important issue a disservice. Hatred for Muslim people in Britain is also on the rise and poses a real threat to Muslim communities. This summer's far right protests have drawn



"The Rothschild King" an 1898 antisemitic cartoon by Charles Léandre

that threat into sharp focus.

That fact is no reason to demote or wave away a genuine rise in antisemitism across the country. Anti-racists oppose bigotry and systemic oppression in all their forms, no matter who is on the receiving end, and no matter the politics or worldview of the victimised person or group. Pitting Jewish and Muslim communities against each other helps neither and harms both.

Workers' Liberty has long argued that the revolutionary left has a duty to address a "left antisemitism" that has worked its way into the thinking of socialists and other leftists over many decades. Political arguments that rely on attacking a nefarious conspiracy that "secretly runs society" are not just dangerous because they are an incorrect class analysis of modern society; they also feed into centuries-old ideas of Jews as somehow all-powerful and malevolent, and into the broader stigmatisation of real Jewish people.

In response to Manchester, *Socialist Worker* denounced antisemitism, but claimed it was something unique to fascists and the far-right. "The torrent of racism - pushed by the fascists and far right and legitimised by Labour - is to blame". We do not know the politics of Jihad Al-Shamie. He was almost certainly not inspired by an otherwise socialist-minded "left-antisemite" to carry out his attack. But it's unlikely he was inspired by Tommy Robinson or Nigel

Farage, either; and quite likely that some variant or another of low-grade antisemitism, which is much more widespread, helped him along his way.

Many surveys have shown that low-grade antisemitism ("Jews have too much power", etc.) remains present across society, not just on the far right, but in the political centre and even, shamefully, on the left. To box off antisemitism as only a problem of the Robinson-Farage far right, as if going on protests against those far-right figures is all we need to do to combat it, is evasion.

The left must be clear in its own ideas if it wishes to properly combat antisemitism more broadly. A socialist who is susceptible to left antisemitism will draw the wrong conclusions from this attack, and be useless in fighting the resulting ideological battle required of all of us, against both crimes like Manchester and the lower-grade prejudice they feed on. □

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France's crisis an

On Monday 6 October, the latest prime minister appointed by France's president since 2017, Emmanuel Macron, resigned.

The outgoing prime minister, Sebastien Lecornu, has told Macron he will spend another 48 hours trying to shape a government which may be acceptable to the National Assembly. After that, he can continue as a "caretaker" administration for a while, and theoretically the 2025 state budget can be rolled over into 2026, but that is far from an outcome to the political crisis.

France's "Fifth Republic" constitution, adopted after a "soft"

military coup in 1958, is designed for strong presidential power. But it assumes that the president can find a majority in the National Assembly willing, at least, to accommodate.

Since mid-2024 there has been no such majority. The "soft left" (France Insoumise, Communist Party, Socialist Party, Greens, loosely allied in the so-called New Popular Front (NFP)) and the far-right Rassemblement National of Marine Le Pen and Jordan Bardella are too strong.

Meanwhile, France has a government-debt crisis much worse than Britain's. The Macronist "centre" and the

old mainstream right (Les Républicains) want social cuts. The left demands a wealth tax. Both the left and the RN demand repeal of Macron's 2023 law which raised the minimum pension age from 62 to 64 and required at least 43 years of contributions.

There have been many strikes and days of action against social cuts, but so far they have neither pushed back the successive governments nor translated into a political strengthening of the left.

The RN is moderating its profile, promising competent government, and pushing for new elections to the National

Assembly. Opinion polls show little shift there since 2024. That means the RN would probably top the vote in the first round. In 2024 it was outstripped on the second round by the NFP, thanks to deft electoral deals among the left, and the result was a "hung" Assembly where neither NFP, nor RN, nor Macronists-with-mainstream-right, had a majority; but it's not certain that would happen again.

The Socialist Party calls for Macron to appoint a prime minister from the left. Jean-Luc Mélenchon and France Insoumise call for Macron to resign so there are new pres-

idential elections. According to the polls, RN candidate Jordan Bardella would probably win. The candidate most likely to defeat Bardella in a second-round run-off is Edouard Philippe, who was Macron's first prime minister (2017-2020) and then stepped aside to become mayor of Le Havre.

Below we print recent responses from sections of the French Marxist left and from the CGT, the traditionally-more-left of France's biggest trade-union confederations. □

Arguments pour la lutte sociale, 6 October

Lecornu's resignation won't save them

On Monday evening, 6 October 2025, Macron gave himself a 48-hour respite by asking the "already-resigned prime minister", Lecornu, to "save France". After that deadline, what can he do?

Any "Macronist" solution is now doomed. A Retailleau government [Bruno Retailleau is a mainstream-right politician and a minister in recent governments] supported by the RN, or a "centre-left" [i.e. Macronists with maybe some Socialist Party people] government against which the Socialist Party would not support censure-votes, would both be the death of "Macronism". And so of course would the democratic NFP government that should have seen the light of day in the summer of

2024. Likewise dissolution of the Assembly [new parliamentary elections] and, of course, resignation [a new presidential election].

Let's be clear about what is at stake, because it goes beyond Macron. It involves the institution of the presidency, the keystone of the regime of the Fifth Republic. The deconstruction and dismantling of the institution has begun, from within. In fact, it was the Minister of the Interior [Retailleau] who began the process of gradually "dethroning" the President over banning Palestinian flags from town halls, in contradiction with presidential diplomacy. That has accelerated since last night.

Those in favour of a return to a strong, "Jupiterian" [Macron's phrase], Napoleonic Fifth Republic – in short, those

in favour of a more or less disguised dictatorship – are, by way of undermining Macron, who still happens to be the President, in the process of undermining the institution they want to restore.

They want him to resign... but they also fear it, because it will mean overthrowing the head of the regime they want to revive. Meanwhile, the conviction [of Sarkozy, president 2007-12] shows that the head of state can be tried and punished.

They want a dissolution of the Assembly, as Le Pen does, but they also fear it because it could lead to a united democratic response, and because the more time passes, the more it would mean that the legislative elections would precede and influence the presidential elections.

The dynamiting of the presidential institution has begun. The risk of an anti-social dictatorship by a government combining the Right and the RN will give a powerful impetus to the demand for left unity. The threats to democracy and the rule of law will give a powerful impetus to democratic demands.

This situation places the Intersyndicale [the coordinating committee of France's several "TUCs"], which has chosen not to meet until Wednesday morning [8th], in a central political position, whether it likes it or not. It is the only legitimate institution, because it did not emerge from the regime of the Fifth Republic and its scheming, corruption and backroom dealings.

Any impetus to action, through strikes or mass

demonstrations on a Saturday, towards a national demonstration and the formation of local and sectoral committees and assemblies, would be a step towards the real solution to the crisis of the regime.

Against Macron, Retailleau and the RN, we must force the political forces born of the NFP to unite. Against their regime, the Fifth Republic, we need to prepare for the election of a constituent assembly [i.e. an elected Assembly empowered to write a new constitution], imposed by democratic mobilisation – weren't the strikes of 10 and 18 September political strikes? – called upon to establish a democratic, social, secular, feminist, ecological and effective Republic in this country. □

NPA-Révolutionnaires, 29 September

Social regression cannot be negotiated with, it must be fought!

For the past week, right-wing and far-right politicians have been rallying around Sarkozy. All day long, these people have been calling for exemplary sentences for petty crime, but they can't stand it when one of their own is convicted.

On Thursday 2 October, workers and young people will once again stand shoulder to

shoulder in the streets and on strike. After 10 and 18 September, this will be a third opportunity to show that we are the only force capable of putting an end to all the policies of social regression.

Lecornu's government... will resemble the previous ones: a bunch of mouthpieces for the shareholders of the CAC 40 [big companies]. The Prime Minister's interview with Le Parisien had barely been published on Friday when the

President of Medef [bosses' federation] praised him. Because, surprise, surprise, there will be no return of the wealth tax, the rich will not be taxed (not even symbolically in the Zucman fashion [Gabriel Zucman is the architect of the wealth tax proposed by the NFP, and a professor both in Paris and in California]), the pension reform will not be repealed...

One more effort, little Lecornu, and the big "angry

employers" meeting scheduled for 13 October will be cancelled. Only the PS can play the odd-one-out: if what Lecornu is planning is "too unfair", it says it will back a vote of censure in the Assembly.

And the social war will continue unabated!

[Previous prime minister] Bayrou wanted to reduce the public deficit to 4.6% of GDP, while Lecornu would stick to... 4.7%! His intentions are in line with those of his predecessor:

skyrocketing military spending, continuing to shower shareholders with subsidies to capitalist firms, and cutting public services. Gone are the days when Macron's allies made eyes to the Socialist Party; now the Macron government is counting on the RN MPs.

Lecornu has taken up the racist, anti-poor agenda of the far right, which attacks those on welfare, foreigners and the unemployed. The result is a

d far-right threat

brutal attack on the most vulnerable members of the working population, workers who have lost their jobs or are undocumented.

Yet they are not the ones plundering the State budget. That is the rich who practise tax evasion and avoidance, and the capitalists who pocket 270 billion euros in subsidies every year. The bosses are the real welfare recipients, the real parasites who gorge themselves on our exploitation at work!

We can't defend ourselves with cardboard weapons

In the wake of the success of the strikes and demonstrations on 10 and 18 September, the union leaderships did no better than to issue an "ultimatum" to Lecornu... who didn't give a damn. Once they had come away empty-handed from Matignon on 24 September, they called for another day of strike action on 2 October.

Now, Sophie Binet, leader of the CGT [the more traditionally-left of the two biggest federations], says that they will go back to see Lecornu "on the basis of the balance of power after 2 October". As if we were only taking to the streets to go and beg Matignon the next day!

To make the government and employers back down, a single additional day of mobilisation will not be enough. We'll have to force them to do so by "blocking everything" through a strike that spreads across all sectors and lasts long enough to paralyse the profit machine. Making the bosses pay means extracting better living and working conditions from them: who can live today on less than 2,000 euros a month?

Let's strike en masse... Not to beg for talks in the halls of Matignon. But to organise ourselves at grassroots level, to decide for ourselves what we want to



fight for, and to build up a class-wide movement. No cutting our lives: to

live and not just survive, let's take the money back from profits! □

Lutte Ouvrière, 6 October

Regain confidence in our own strength

Real power lies neither at the Matignon [prime minister's palace] nor at the Élysée [president's palace]. Lecornu has thrown in the towel. Does Macron still have a card to play? Will he resign himself to another dissolution of the Assembly? In either case, it will be a mug's game.

The real leaders of society are neither at the Matignon nor the Élysée Palace. They are on the boards of the major capitalist groups. They are the big shareholders, the multi-billionaires, French and others, who are extending their tentacles to exploit workers throughout the world.

They ordered the theft of two years' pension. The redundancies, company closures and poverty wages that are becoming the norm can be explained by their greed, by their desire to add billions to their billions.

Inflation has been the fruit of their policies, because all capitalists have taken advantage of international tensions, supply difficulties or political changes to drive up prices. The price of a car, for example, rose by 24% between 2020 and 2024! Carmakers complain that they've sold fewer cars, but

they've sold them for more and maintained their gigantic profits.

Even the national debt that most politicians blame on the sick, the retired or the unemployed is the responsibility of the capitalists. Because even if these gentlemen have overflowing pockets, they are the first to whine and ask for help from the State. They have benefited from tax cuts and aid of all kinds. The subsidies add up to between €211 billion and €270 billion a year.

One of the ways in which employers blackmail workers is to cry international competition. But they are among those who organise it!

The Shein group, criticised because it is Chinese, produces in factories that already work for all the major European brands, from Pimkie to Decathlon... Stellantis has joined forces with a Chinese manufacturer, so that it can play on both sides. The tomatoes that arrive on our shelves from Morocco are produced by the Azura group, a Franco-Moroccan company that exploits Moroccan workers or African day labourers paid 9 euros a day. So French farmers are in competition with very French agricultural capitalists!

These capitalists are always presented as investors who should be

thanked. But for them to deign to invest, the State has to hand them everything on a platter: the site, funding, trained workers, help with research, etc. They are nothing more than mercenaries of profit and adventurers of finance.

They are also responsible for the increasingly nationalistic and warlike evolution of society. For it is their interests, their desires to plunder this or that region and their desire to gain access to this or that market, that fuel the rivalries between states. Competition and economic warfare, which capitalist groups have always waged on a national scale, are now raging on a global scale. This is what is plunging more and more peoples into fratricidal wars.

The Dassault family has no interest in seeing an end to the war in Ukraine. The fact that the Middle East is a powder keg is to their advantage. So that's who has the real power over our lives, over the economy and over the development of society as a whole!

And this dictatorship of employers cannot be challenged by any election, because it is not based on the results of the ballot box. It is based on the private ownership of capital. A bourgeois family like the Arnault family, which owns the luxury goods group LVMH, man-

ages more money than the Minister for Education and the Minister for the Armed Forces put together. This gives them the power to exploit workers not just in France, not just in Europe, but on a global scale.

As long as this capitalist class has power and dominates by directing the major economic groups, we are heading for ever greater inequality, exploitation, deprivation, division, crisis and war.

But we will also be heading for new revolts like those that have exploded in Nepal, Madagascar and Morocco. In these countries, working-class youth are refusing to accept poverty, exploitation and corruption – and rightly so!

It is through such social explosions that the workers can play their leading role and transform society by expropriating the big bourgeoisie and ousting it from political power. It will then be possible to rebuild society and pool the immense possibilities it already holds.

So let's not expect anything from the institutional and electoral circus. Let's regain confidence in our own strength, because there is a world to change! □

CGT, 6 October

Social progress, the only way out of the crisis!

Prime Minister Sébastien Lecornu announced his resignation on Monday 6 October, just 27 days after his appointment, before he had even delivered his

policy prospectus and presented his budget. Since his appointment, workers have mobilised on three occasions to denounce the budget in preparation and to demand social responses, making for an unprecedented new start

after the summer holidays.

Instead of revising his plans, abandoning the social setbacks (budget freezes, unemployment insurance reform, doubling of medical deductibles, etc.), instead of implementing

tax justice and repealing the pension reform, Sébastien Lecornu preferred to maintain his predecessor's budget and government. He did not have the

continued on page 20 →

→ from page 19

courage to confront the big bosses and the richest and break with Emmanuel Macron's policy.

He is thus the fifth prime minister in two years to be forced to resign because of the social violence of his policies.

Once again, instead of changing his policy, the President of the Republic is choosing institutional chaos. He is taking the risk of transforming a social and democratic crisis into a regime crisis. The Medef [bosses' confederation], for its part, bears a heavy responsibility by multiplying its remonstrations against any fiscal and social justice.

This decision is all the more serious in a context of major geopolitical tensions, when the far right represents a central danger to democracies, freedoms and social rights in France and around the world.

For two and a half years, workers, young people and pensioners have built up an historic mobilisation against pension reform. Emmanuel Macron chose to ignore this and impose his reform using Article 49-3 [rule-by-decree powers which allow a government to

push through measures without a vote]. He was therefore punished at the ballot box and lost the chance of a working majority, following his decision to dissolve the National Assembly.

Workers and the general public must be heard. The denial of democracy and authoritarian measures must stop.

As the CGT insists: there can be no stability without social justice.

In the face of the irresponsibility of the President of the Republic, the government and their employer allies, the CGT is calling for the forces of social progress to come together to block the path of the extreme right and finally win the response to urgent social and environmental needs:

- Establish tax justice
- Release the resources needed for our public services and for environmental transformation
- Repeal pension reform
- Increase wages, pensions and minimum social benefits
- Stop redundancies, reindustrialise, and decarbonise the country
- Put an end to the hunt for undocumented workers and the stigmatisation of foreigners and those in precarious employment.



In this context of maximum instability, the CGT will continue to take all its responsibilities to ensure that the voice of the workers' movement is finally heard.

More than two million workers, the unemployed and young pensioners have already mobilised on 10, 18 September and 2 October as part of an historic social upturn. On 9 October, on the initiative of professionals in the health and social services, social secu-

rity and medicine sectors, a national demonstration will be held to demand a completely different social security budget in line with social needs.

The CGT calls on workers to continue their workplace actions for wages, employment and working conditions. The CGT will continue to work to strengthen trade union unity and enable the broadest possible mobilisation. □



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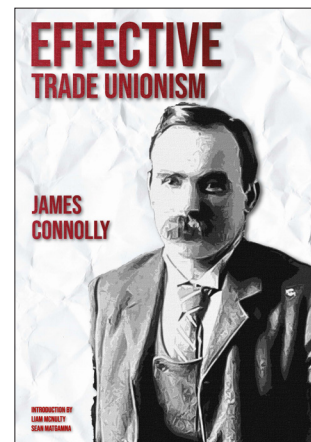
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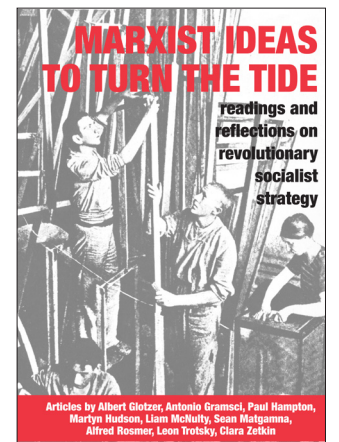
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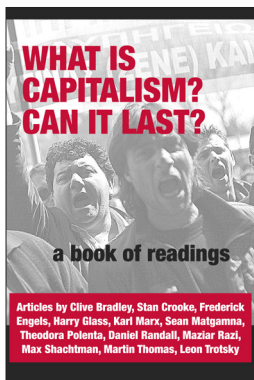
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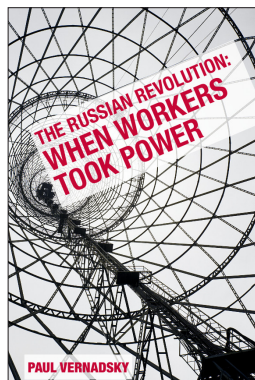
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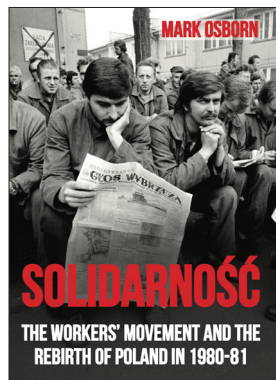
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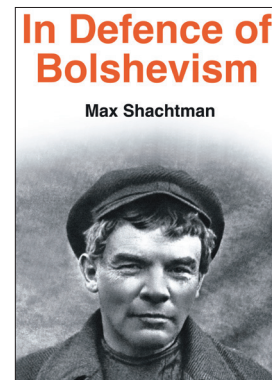
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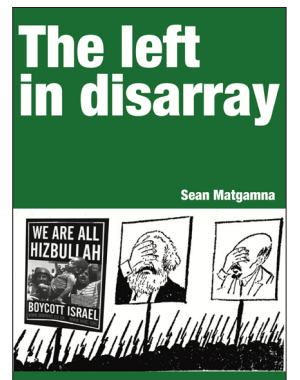
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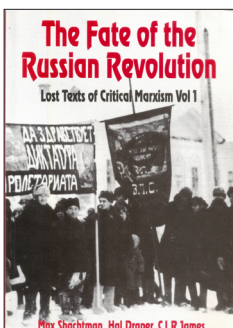
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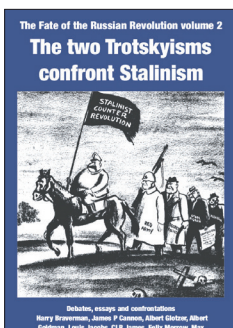
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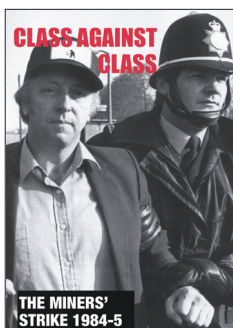
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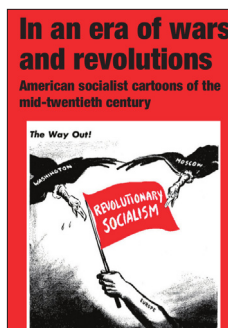
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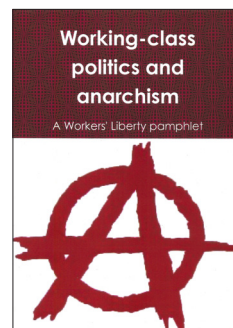
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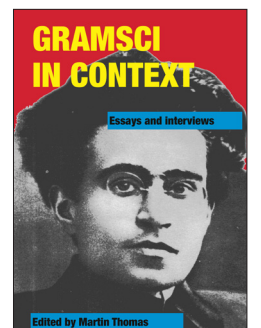
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Labour goes for mini-grants

By Sam Myerson

It has been ten long years since the last crop of maintenance grants were provided for students in higher education. The Blair Labour government of 1997 abolished them in favour of loans in 1999, then reintroduced them partially in 2006. The Tory/ Lib Dem coalition government abolished the grant completely as from 2016.

At this year's Labour party conference Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson announced that grants would return, but only "for the poorest students" and only if they were studying the correct

course.

These miserly grants will be paid for, not by taxing the rich, but through a levy that the government plans to introduce on international students. Universities have already said that most likely they will pass on the levy, expected to be around 6%, via increased fees.

International students already face eye-watering fees, and the maximum that they can be charged has increased again. They also now face restrictions on graduate visa rules, the raising of the income threshold for work visa applications, removal of a host of roles that are covered by the scheme, and

limits on having family members join them here.

Putting more barriers in the way of international students is unjust, won't help struggling institutions, and will do nothing to "promote growth" as per Rachel Reeves.

The National Union of Students (NUS) has cautiously welcomed the grants proposal as a supposed victory for "years of campaigning by student activists". You could be forgiven for having seen none of that campaigning from NUS outside of some posts on social media and chats with MPs.

In student unions, on campus, and

on the left we have to keep making the case for universal free education, funded by taxing the rich. This year's Labour conference called on the government to implement a wealth tax. That is how we can start to fund public services properly.

As students find their feet on campus in the coming weeks, Workers' Liberty students will be working in anti-cuts campaigns, and arguing for universal, life-long, free education. And let's make the labour movement fight for a wealth tax, not just vote for it. □

Tube: an "improved" offer?



The press is reporting that London Underground has made an "improved offer" to Tube unions on pay and conditions for 2025-6.

This rather stretches the definition of the word "improved".

The difference between the new offer and what was on the table already is that LUL has added two extra years, 2026-7 and 2027-8, onto the deal, with exactly the same in those years as

they're offering in the current one: a pay increase pegged to the February RPI rate.

This is not an "improvement". It's simply an extension of what's already on the table for an additional two years.

It might be worth us entertaining a multi-year deal if it guaranteed above-inflation increases, or if it involved a graduated reduction in the contractual week over the life of the deal. But a multi-year deal that gives us nothing except an RPI pay rise, with no movement on our other key issues, would simply tie our hands.



What would a real "improvement" look like? An increase in the basic pay offer, to take it above RPI. A commitment to include a flat-rate minimum, so lower-paid workers benefit most. A reduction in the contractual week, leading to additional time away from work. With-

drawal of the Aslef so-called "four-day-week", which gives up hard-won rights and protections for drivers as productivity savings to pay for an extra day off.

Let's see if the company moves closer to that when we call more strikes. □

Sheffield UCU votes for strikes

By Sam Myerson

University and College Union (UCU) members at the University of Sheffield have voted 76.9% in favour of industrial action, and 82.3% for action short of strike. The UCU branch has taken action repeatedly over the last five years. This time we hope for, and will argue for, stronger action, more than odd days of strike.

Students are already planning how they can add to the fight against cuts. In Sheffield the student Anti-Cuts Coalition has met for the first time this term to discuss tactics and plan actions. Students are working on a new open letter to signal to students and workers the support for fighting cuts, and to press the student union into action.

Students need to make plans for practical solidarity: fund-raising for strike pay, student demonstrations in support of the strike, and expanding the Anti-Cuts Coalition as a broad united front of student groups and activists.

The other question on the table is tactics: how to maximise support for the dispute most deftly and effectively. We have seen an increase in surveillance of students on campus, vindictive disciplinary processes, and management applications for possession orders over buildings to prevent occupations. But our tactical resources are not exhausted! □

Birmingham bins: bring back the offer!

By Jim Denham

Birmingham bin workers have been on all-out strike for well over six months.

They are resisting a pay cut of up to £8,000 and the threat of compulsory redundancies.

Last month they voted by over 99% on a 75% turnout in favour of continuing their action into 2026 if necessary.

Despite their determination, and an impressive rally and march on Saturday 20 September, there is a sense that the action is losing momentum and lacking direction. Some strikers have become demoralised and taken voluntary redundancy.

This has been one of the longest industrial disputes in Birmingham's recent history. Although the refuse workers were celebrated during the Covid pandemic as key workers, the Labour council is treating them with

disdain and broke off all negotiations in July. The council has clearly decided to "tough it out" and is using scab labour brought in from Coventry and other nearby authorities to clear away the worst of the rubbish.

At last month's rally, Sharon Graham stated that, before the council withdrew from negotiations, a deal had been close and she considered it good enough to be recommended for acceptance. That deal was then withdrawn. She believes it was on the instructions of the government-appointed commissioners, sent in by the Tories because the council went into "Section 114" in 2023.

The aborted deal is believed to have included "ballpark" mitigation payments to compensate for the changes in status and pay of around £14,000 for some of the bins staff, rising to £20,000 for drivers.

The council's managing director

Joanne Roney had responded positively and said she was keen to bring the dispute to a close. They agreed to meet again two days later.

But then Roney sent a message, read out by Graham, which said: "I need some more time to deal with the commissioners. I've asked the team to keep you informed and Acas advised. Not clear on the issues but you know the discussion is not just resting with me... also the commissioners... it needs wider approval. Frustrating for us all."

After that the negotiations abruptly ended.

It is now essential that Unite, instead of empty talk of disaffiliation from Labour, uses its delegates and its influence in the party nationally and locally, to demand that negotiations are resumed and that the offer that Graham considered good enough to put to a vote is put back on the table. □

More online

Putin's philosopher

Alexander Dugin exalts war: bit.ly/dugin-w

“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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Leaf-fall: let's talk about it



Diary of a Tube driver

By Jay Dawkey

The introduction of the "leaf fall timetable" should now prepare the trains and track for the problems caused by rain and falling leaves. Following the fiasco last year, when trains were unable to run on a branch line for over two months, management hopes that the changes they have made will mitigate the impact on the train wheels.

As always, there are briefings to be delivered to everyone. A sensible ap-

proach would be to brief all drivers before the start of the timetable, or at the very least, at the beginning. But many of us have been driving for over a week with reduced speed limits and other apparent mitigations, but without an in-person chat or briefing.

One mitigation/trap that has not yet happened is a brake modification that may ease the wear and tear on the wheels but both might make braking harder, particularly for inexperienced drivers, and would increase the amount of brake dust we'd be exposed to in the tunnel. RMT health and safety reps rejecting the proposal means it will be referred up higher. For the safety of our jobs and the railway, I hope the idea is

scrapped.

Engineering works over the last weekend gave many drivers a bit of "DMI", driver managers' instructions, aka they can find work for you. That time might have meant the delivery of the briefing, but it didn't look that way. The multiple signal failures, station closures, and overall poor service on Sunday played their part. Still, a briefing delivered well into the process of working according to new rules is hardly ideal.

It may not be the first rodeo for a lot of us, but it's not really an excuse when you have plenty of newer drivers who will be driving in leaf-fall conditions, even if they are yet to hit their worst point. □

Portraying a world of anger

By Len Glover

The poet Tony Harrison has died. I must confess to not being closely acquainted with his work but I do remember the poem *V* published in January 1985 and performed on Channel 4, Nov. 1987, prompted by a visit to his parents' graves in Holbeck Cemetery, Beeston in Leeds.

Harrison was shocked to find so many graves vandal-

ised and scoured with graffiti. The poem cites many examples of the profanities daubed on the gravestones. It is a complex text full of anger and sadness at the apparently mindless and motiveless use of cunt, fuck, piss and shit, references to football, mainly Leeds United (whose ground, Elland Road, is near the cemetery), various bits of racist abuse and the Swastika.

The use of "*V*" on the gravestones is open to various interpretations.

With the miners' strike in progress then, unemployment high, and Thatcher high in the polls too, Harrison must have seen the devastation in the cemetery as, somehow, a comment or reflection on the world we lived in at the time, full of anger, frustration but with little hope for those at the

bottom.

As if playing to a script, a Tory MP Gerald Howarth, lost his marbles over the language employed by Harrison and filed a motion, supported by 120 other bone-heads, to raise the issue in Parliament.

When questioned by a reporter Howarth admitted he hadn't actually read the poem. Read it online at bit.ly/v-tha □

A Sicilian detective thriller



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Recently in Kino Eye I expressed my admiration for the TV and film adaptations of Georges Simenon's French police detective Maigret. I have since discovered a worthy challenger in the shape of the Italian writer Andrea Camilleri's Sicilian police detective inspector Salvo Montalbano, played on TV by the excellent actor Luca Zingaretti.

Montalbano should not be confused with Manuel Montalbán, the Spanish writer of detective fiction whose best known work is *Murder on the Central Committee*.

In *The Shape of Water* Montalbano investigates the death of Silvio Luparello, a local politician whose body is found in the "Pasture", a patch of wasteland which is a gathering place for prostitutes, pimps and drug dealers. The



coroner's verdict is "death by natural causes" but Montalbano suspects foul play (this is Sicily, after all). He proceeds to unravel a tangled web of intrigue, blackmail and treachery among the Sicilian political elite although the Mafia is only marginally involved.

Luparello actually died many miles from the "Pasture" and his death is re-arranged to compromise his party and boost the opposition in a complex plot impossible to summarise in such a short space. The TV series is available on BBC4 or Netflix. □

Buses strike again from 10 October

By David Axon

The bus drivers' [strike](#) in Greater Manchester is continuing for most drivers, with a further six days of strikes planned over pay.

One thousand Bee Network drivers employed by Metrolink struck again on 30 September to 2 October, after they and drivers employed by First and Stagecoach struck for four days earlier in September. Unite "paused" the action for Stagecoach drivers to ballot on a pay offer. The offer was overwhelmingly rejected, meaning that Stagecoach drivers will be striking alongside Metrolink again for six days in October (10-11, 13th, 18th, 23-24).

The lowest paid and smallest group of Bee Network drivers, First Bus, based in Rochdale, have ended their dispute. Drivers voted to accept a two year deal that involves just a £1 an hour increase immediately from £15 per hour to £16 per hour, with phased increases until April next year. The deal involves First drivers reaching broad parity with the current pay of other Bee Network drivers in January, and then £18 per hour in April (with an additional £1 on Saturdays and £2 on Sundays. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham described this as "exceptional", but by the time it is implemented it is likely that Stagecoach and Metrolink drivers will have won improvements in their pay, leaving First once again the lowest paid across Greater Manchester.

Striking against three different employers is complex, and drivers need ways of linking their disputes at rank and file level. The labour and trade union movement across Greater Manchester must show solidarity with Stagecoach and Metrolink drivers on the upcoming October strike days. □

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Standing firm against PFI profiteers

By Gerry Bates

Outsourced NHS workers at Newham Centre for Mental Health are in their fourth week of strikes (until 12 October) in their campaign for NHS pay, terms, and conditions.

For four weeks, workers have folded their arms and refused to work for the poverty pay GFM is offering. In response GFM management have been busying themselves trying to break the strike. National and regional management, agency staff, insecurely employed probationers and workers from other sites outside London have kept the hospital just about running. GFM have admitted to the union that they have breached the Working Time Regulations by getting strikebreakers to work illegally long hours to the point of exhaustion.

Despite these efforts the strike is causing huge disruption. NHS staff complain of a lack of clean linen, overflowing bins, substandard patient meals, a staff canteen that closes early, and potential infection control issues due to lack of domestics and porters.

Having already extracted multi-million pound profits from the £213 million PFI contract, GFM and its parent company claim that they cannot afford to settle the dispute without further handouts from the taxpayer. But the hospital only cost £14.5 million to build and has been paid for many times over. East London Foundation Trust is paying out £8.21 million in PFI fees at a time it is cutting £40 million from frontline health services. The PFI deal which ELFT is locked into will cost the taxpayer a further £94 million before the hospital enters to public ownership.

The GFM workers' strike poses the question of whether all of this £94 million is extracted as profit for the idle rich or whether we can take back a fraction to pay decent wages, terms and conditions to the workers running and maintaining the hospital.

In this dispute, Unite has highlighted the demand for full sick pay. Five years

after the Covid-19 pandemic struck it is a national scandal that NHS workers lack the financial security to take time off when sick. The GFM strike is part of a wave of outsourced NHS workers campaigns that are winning NHS equivalent pay and insourcing. Health unions should follow the lead of the ELFT Unite branch and organise around the demand for full sick pay as an essential infection control measure.

On Friday 19 September, striking workers lobbied East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) headquarters and presented a letter to Trust executives explaining that the strike was causing GFM to provide a substandard service to the hospital and should be regarded as breach of contract. Patients and NHS workers should not suffer because GFM's shareholders and their PFI partners refuse to give up a fraction of their multimillion pound profits.

Inspiring

The workers' inspiring stand is generating support from across the labour movement. Over 350 people have sent emails to GFM management demanding they settle the dispute and over £1800 has been donated to the strike fund. A rally on Friday 3 October was supported by delegations from London Renters Union, Newham Trades Council, the BMA, NEU, the National Shop Stewards Network and the Unite Region. Neighbouring Bart's Unite branch sent a message of solidarity:

"Bart's Unite members salute your resolve and determination to stand up for dignity and respect, to demand equality of treatment for GFM workers and to resist the attempt to continue to treat essential safety critical workers as mere 'profit fodder' in the continuing privatisation of our NHS."

"Know too, that you will never be defeated with the magnificent unity in action that you are displaying in your inspirational campaign. Previously outsourced workers at Bart's Trust, two years ago, travelled this very same road as you taking strike action and in the

process, not only saw off a profiteering contractor, but won the return in house of 1,800 porters, cleaners, caterers and security workers on full Agenda for Change pay, terms and conditions.

"Lastly, we commend your principled stand for properly resourced patient care through your united and powerful strike action and pledge £500 from our branch towards the coming victory that will surely be yours."

This largely migrant workforce knows the value of their work and have pledged they will not turn back until their demands are met. The workers are meeting soon to plan further strike dates. Contact: stuart.jordan@uniteth-eunion.org. Model motion, donations to strike fund, send a message to management: bit.ly/gfm-s □

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Rally against antisemitism in all its forms!

By Ira Berkovic

We cannot know for sure whether Jihad Al-Shamie, the British-Syrian man who carried out an attack on a Manchester synagogue on 2 October, Yom Kippur, before police shot him (and also at least two synagogue-attendees trying to bar the door to Al-Shamie), saw his actions as directly connected to Gaza. The balance of probabilities, however, suggests this is likely.

Al-Shamie's actions were acts of antisemitic terror. That is not changed by the fact he might have seen them in the context of an ongoing war and occupation prosecuted by Israel. Jews in Manchester, whatever their personal political beliefs about Israel and Palestine, are not responsible for what the Israeli government or military does.

When Elias Rodriguez murdered two staff members from the Israeli Embassy in Washington DC in May 2025, we wrote: "No-one rational can possibly believe the killings have done anything to advance the cause of Palestinian freedom, to save Palestinian lives, or have any impact whatsoever on the Israeli war machine.

"The killings only 'make sense' in the context of an antisemitic worldview: the belief that there is a form of power that is so compact, singularly malign, and entirely world-shaping that any damage to it is justified, and that anyone and anything connected to it is a legitimate target. That power is usually named 'Zionism'; its base is Israel, but its tentacles spread to every corner of the world."

The police's assumption is that Al-Shamie was influenced by Islamist ideology, where claims of Jewish conspiracy are often prominent. Sadly, similar claims are a feature of some would-be "left-wing" ideology too.

Some, including Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood and Prime Minister Keir Starmer, called for pro-Palestine protests planned for the week-end of 4-5 October to be cancelled. Others have straightforwardly called for such protests to be banned. Such protests can sometimes be sites of

antisemitism; nevertheless, the solution is not for state bans, but for antisemitic currents and ideas within such movements to be robustly challenged by others who want to ensure protests against Israeli government policy reject conspiracy-theorist perspectives.

The organisers of some protests on the week-end of 5 and 6 October, such as the London Friends of Standing Together rally on 5 October, did expand the focus of their action to include commemoration of the victims of the Manchester attack, and opposition to antisemitism.

The consistent left must stand against antisemitism in all forms – whether, as in Nazi ideology, it designates Jews a racial "other", or sees Jews as agents in a conspiracy of global "Zionist" power. □

Restore the right to protest!

By Colin Foster

New Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood plans to introduce even more curbs on protest.

The measures are specifically directed against the "Defend Our Juries" protests at the government's banning of Palestine Action as "terrorist" on grounds of some Palestine Action members spraying paint on a military plane. Over 2,000 people, many very respectable and elderly, have been arrested simply for holding signs on those utterly-peaceful protests.

Police powers to stop protests have been large since the Public Order Act 1986, and were increased by the Police Act 2022 and the Public Order Act 2023, both of which Labour voted against in opposition.

Lift the ban on Palestine Action! Defend and restore the right to protest! □

Rotten apples or rotten barrel?

By Gerry Bates

A police sergeant has been suspended and arrested after a BBC Panorama investigation found London cops denouncing immigrants from anywhere near the Middle East as "scum", calling for immigrants to be "shot", glorying in hurting people by taking fingerprints by force, and dismissing rape charges.

The official Casey Review, ordered after the murder of Sarah Everard in 2021, found that the Metropolitan Police was institutionally racist and misogynistic.

Top cops say they're working on it; but evidently with little result.

Such diseases are inevitable in a force whose primary role is to protect the powerful and propertied, and which is set up as a walled-off, hierarchical culture "above" and separate from the general population.

We are for democratic investigations and controls, curbs on police powers, and decriminalisations, to mitigate as far as they can. Mitigations can be significant. In good part because the British police are not routinely armed, they kill only a few people each year (19 since 2020 inclusive), while the highly-militarised US police kill well over 1,000 a year.

But even a "civilised" bourgeois police force



will always serve and be attuned to the ruling class. A workers' government will need to replace it by something totally restructured, based in and accountable to communities. §

Digital ID is a snare

By Colin Foster

The government plans to introduce "digital ID", in the first place an electronic identity record which you can access, linking such items as National Insurance number, NHS number, etc.

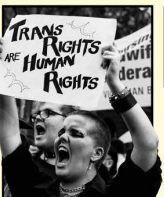
The plan is bad on two grounds. It is "sold" as a measure against undocumented migrants (though laws already require employers to check workers' identity).

The path to such an ID system coming in may be long and laborious, and it may be ineffectual in the short term. But a future Reform or Reform-Tory government will be able to expand the system into one putting very many of us in

fear of being challenged at any time by cops to prove our identity.

The government says that ID schemes in Europe are harmless and ease access to public services. Partly true. But in France even now (let alone under a future far-right government) police can ask you to show identity papers on minimal suspicion, and hold you for four hours if you can't show them.

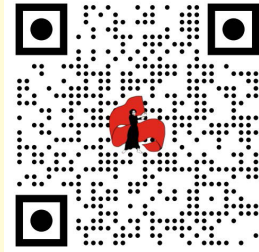
Also, the fact that the far right may be the deadliest users of an ID scheme in future does not stop them whipping up conspiracy theories against it now. The immediate effect of the government announcement will be to push more voters to Reform. □



IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

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ISRAEL OUT OF GAZA AND WEST BANK!

By Ira Berkovic

As Israel's genocidal war continues to pulverise the conditions of life in Gaza, where the death toll is now at least 66,000 people, anything that halts the slaughter is preferable to it continuing unchecked.

Any pause in the killing, any respite in the near-starvation that has been imposed on the Gazan people, any freedom for the surviving hostages, is a breathing space, an oppor-

tunity for internationalist and democratic forces around the world, including within Israel, to press for further concessions and redress. Basic demands must be for complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, a massive in-flow of aid, and an end to the military occupation and settlement project in the West Bank.

The "peace plan" announced by US president Donald Trump, and publicly accepted by Israeli prime minister Benjamin

Netanyahu, has also been endorsed by numerous other governments, including the Gulf monarchies. No consistent democrat or socialist can have any trust in such forces, some of the most reactionary on earth, to usher in any long-term "peace" or justice for the Palestinians, or the people of the region more widely.

Nevertheless, should the plan be implemented, then the respite it will bring will be welcome. □