



& Workers' Liberty **Solidarity**

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 510 12 June 2019 50p/£1

Johnson, Hunt, Gove: TACKLE THEM HEAD ON



Corbyn: oppose Brexit!

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Labour and Brexit: call a Special Conference!



**Ideas for
Freedom
20-23 June**

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Trump's envoy backs land grab

By Rhodri Evans

David Friedman, Trump's US ambassador to Israel, told the *New York Times* on 8 June: "I think Israel has the right to retain some, but unlikely all, of the West Bank".

His declaration boosts Israel's right-wing prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu — or, looking at it another way, puts him on the spot — in the run-up to new elections in Israel on 17 September.

Although Netanyahu came top in the 9 April poll, he was unable after it to put together a right-wing government coalition. The Israeli

parliament voted on 30 May to dissolve itself. Netanyahu will be running a caretaker government until September. The coalition talks failed on the question of ending ultra-orthodox Jews' exemption from military service.

The US State Department semi-disavowed Friedman, stating that "reports, according to which Israel is holding talks with the US about annexation plans in the West Bank, are false".

The Democrats have put down motions in both the Senate and the House of Representatives opposing annexation, and a big swathe of left and centre opinion in Israel is out-

raged, as well as, of course, the Palestinians.

Under terms dating from the Oslo process, Israel currently controls Area C, over 60% of the area of the West Bank, including all the Jewish settlements and land surrounding Areas A and B, under Palestinian Authority semi-control, which are made up of over 160 distinct patches of land, cities, towns, villages in which almost all the Palestinians live.

The divisions in the Trump-Netanyahu camp, and the new election, give us more time to stop annexation and push a democratic "two states" settlement.

JVL and "destroy Israel"

By Colin Foster

Destroy Israel? The 2 June AGM of Jewish Voice for Labour — a group campaigning to dismiss or discredit concerns about anti-semitism in the Labour Party — discussed the question.

JVL "political officer" Graham Bash said: "I am sometimes asked if I support the destruction of the state of Israel. I always answer no, provided the Israeli state — like almost every other state — becomes a state of its citizens, rather than a Jewish state that gives me, a British Jew who has been to Israel once, over 50 years ago, a greater right to live in Israel/ Palestine than a dispossessed, ethnically cleansed Palestinian. As a socialist I say I will never accept that..." (bit.ly/jvl-gb)

"No, provided" is another way of saying "yes, unless". Yes, destroy Israel, unless it adopts an immigration policy to Bash's liking.

Suppose Israel's immigration policy is worse than "almost every other state's". It does not follow that destroying the state — i.e. subjugating, dispersing, or massacring its majority population — is the answer.

Which other states does Bash want to see destroyed as punishment for bad immigration or other policies? And destroyed by whom?

In the case of Israel, it must be Iran, Iraq, Syria and other neighbouring states, if they could form a coalition. Why does Bash think that Khamenei, Assad, etc. are the people to create a more socialistically-acceptable order in the territory which is now Israel?

Israel does many things which should be opposed — in the first place, its occupation of the West Bank and its siege of Gaza. It is not true that its immigration policy is worse than "almost every other state's". Most of Israel's Jewish population are of families who fled there in recent decades from varying degrees of persecution, from post-Holocaust Europe, from British-run detention camps, from Arab states, from Russia. No wonder they want to keep an open door for other Jews who may suffer persecution in future.

Not many Irish-origin or German-origin or Greek-origin people in Australia, for example, use the similar "laws of return" of Ireland, Germany, or Greece. No-one pro-

poses that Ireland, Germany, or Greece should be "destroyed" (by Britain? Russia? Turkey?) as punishment for those laws.

Israel says that "return" of six million people (mostly grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the 700,000 Palestinian refugees of 1948) to repossess territory now occupied by other (Jewish) refugees and descendants, likewise ten times as numerous as in 1948, can only mean displacement.

Socialists want a peace settlement which includes the creation of a Palestinian state with full rights which can give the refugee-descendants citizenship, full rights for the Palestinian refugee-descendants who choose to remain in other Arab states, and agreements to enable realistic numbers of Palestinians who may prefer to live in a Jewish-majority state to move to Israel.

We also want to change the brutal policies of the EU and Britain towards refugees from Syria.

Singling out Israel as the one country in the world to be destroyed on grounds of bad policies (and destroyed by states with worse policies) is anti-socialist.



Friends and activists of Workers' Liberty ran a stall and discussion forum at the annual Lutte Ouvrière fete, near Paris, on 8-10 June. The fete draws about 20,000 people each year.

The rise of Salvini

By Hugh Edwards

The ascent of Matteo Salvini's Lega in Italy has no equal in Europe in its astonishing progress — from 17% in Italy's March 2018 election to 34% in the May 2019 Euro-election.

In May 2019 the Lega got three million more votes than in March 2018, though seven million fewer votes were cast overall.

It advanced further on its already historic mass base in the North. It advanced significantly in the hitherto "red" centre. It quadrupled its presence in the South and the Islands.

Its social bloc has now extended vastly beyond its historic hegemony among the small and medium producers of the commercial-industrial zones in the Veneto and Lombardia provinces.

New sectors of the industrial working class, and vast sections of the impoverished poor of the South, have turned to the snake-oil peddler Salvini, snared by the poison of racist filth and anti-migrant repression.

In Riace (southern Italy) and Lampedusa (an Italian island south of Sicily), mayors who for years had defied Salvini and his predecessors, fighting to welcome and integrate the refugees arriving on their doorstep, were thrown out in elections on 26 May.

The Lega continues to siphon off support from Berlusconi's Forza Italia, now in freefall, to capitalise on the relative decline of the Five Star movement, and even to drain support from the electoral base of the fascists of Casa Pound and Forza Nuova.

The only force, so far, holding its own against Salvini's advance is I Fratelli d' Italia (Brothers of Italy), rival reactionary scum to Salvini.

In Italy, as elsewhere in Europe but more so, the profound weakness and retreat on every front of the working-class movement, and



the absence of anti-capitalist challenge, has let the mounting anger, discontent and demand for change of the masses be hijacked by the variegated ranks of populist reaction.

On 26 May the liberal-bourgeois PD (Democratic Party), itself part-author of the two-decade-long rout of the trade-union and working class movement that paved the way for Salvini, re-emerged as the only opposition. The radical left was reduced to larvae.

The support for Salvini and his party is no longer only a protest against the "elites" of the nation and Europe. It has become also, and more so, a vote for "Order" and against the "Invasion" (migrants) and social and political "delinquents".

Salvini, minister of the interior, is pointedly outfitted in police uniform everywhere he appears in public.

He has promised or threatened to restore the "grembiolini" (the schoolchildren's smock of the pre-war era: as yet, school uniforms are unusual in Italy). He offers prayers to the Madonna, the glorification of the Christmas crib, and mawkish veneration of the "traditional family".

This is not fascism — yet! Neither is it just the return of the centre-right. Rather, Italy is moving towards a mass-based authoritarian regime crowned by an aspirant would-be Bonapartist chief.

Leicester protest at Trump's state visit

By Liz Yeates

Despite the rain and it being a weekday, roughly 100 people gathered at Leicester's clock tower to protest the ridiculous state visit laid on for Donald Trump.

There was a buoyant atmosphere and a diverse crowd — much like the previous Trump actions in Leicester, just a little smaller.

Leicester was an early starter on the anti-Trump circuit due to the rather odd invitation from the Director of the Richard III Centre to Trump, who predictably believes he is descended from the controversial monarch.

Leicester against Trump, a coali-

tion of Greens, regular folk, and supporters of Workers' Liberty, built for a protest outside the Richard III visitor centre. Our first demo attracted 600 protesters in the city centre to mark Trump's inauguration.

On Tuesday 4 June, people gathered as local hero Grace Petrie's music was played over the PA system. A number of speakers, both individuals and representatives of local organisations such as CND, Indian Workers' Association, and school climate strike, spoke with passion, giving confidence to people who had never spoken publicly before to pick up the mic.

In the recent local elections, Labour in Leicester had bucked the national trend and increased its majority on the council. The

protest was attended by some of the councillors, including newly elected Lindsay Broadwell, Leicester's first openly gay councillor. Lindsay also represents a significant shift to the left within the council, and had a great class perspective on Trump's threat to specific communities such as the trans community. The NHS was a priority for speakers, as well as Trump's climate denial. Young and old used chalk to send messages of solidarity and organisers encouraged people to talk with each other and to go back to their places of work and play and to organise against Trump and of course against capitalism.

A clear message that socialism is the only solution for people and planet was delivered.

Environmental policy needs members' input



By Mike Zubrowski

Labour-left commentators have been stumbling over each other to congratulate Rebecca Long-Bailey on her strong words for climate change in Prime Minister's Questions ([bbc.in/2IBmIL3](https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-50812345)) and in her video on the "green industrial revolution" ([bit.ly/2KJeGT1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2KJeGT1)).

Strong words on climate change are welcome, as are bolder visions. But what does it boil down to, and is it bold enough?

In PMQs, the scale of her vision is seen in her claim that "to safeguard our future, we will need to mobilise all of our resources, just like we did when we rebuilt Britain after the second world war." We certainly do need to take climate change seriously, mobilising vast resources for it. Did "we" do that after the second world war?

Threatened with the prospect of wide-scale working-class unrest – perceived by some even as the threat of revolution – the ruling-class gave widespread concessions. Much of the welfare state was created, and various key industries were nationalised, under the direction of a left-wing Labour govern-



ment. The country's fundamental capitalist social relations, and most of the wealth of the rich, remained in tact.

Coal was one of the nationalised industries, and, like most, resembled a state-owned and backed private corporation. It was not run democratically, by the workers in the industry by businessmen, often the same large capitalists who had been running it before. The regime was still, at root, the despotism of profit.

The whole of industry, or the wealth of the rich, was not then mobilised. What about Labour's modern vision? The closest we can see to that is Labour's Green Transformation document, co-authored by Rebecca Long-Bailey, and released during Labour's most recent national conference. In terms of funding, it promises £25 billion a year, a meagre proportion of what is available in the pockets of the

rich, and woefully inadequate for tackling climate change.

In her video, Long-Bailey emphasises that they are going around the country talking to people about these transformations. While this, some nifty video-editing, and some emotive rhetoric might give you that squishy feeling inside and make you feel valued, it lacks substance.

At best it's a consultation, whose input and results will be interpreted, ignored or highlighted selectively to justify whatever environmental policy. What we need is not that, but *democracy* over any such proposals.

Making such policy with reference to existing democratic structures, like Labour's national conference, rather than using such conferences as a PR event to showcase policies developed behind closed doors, would be a start.



Ban is antisemitic

By Chris Reynolds

On 7 June, a lesbian pride march in Washington DC, the "DC Dyke March" banned marchers who had Stars of David on their rainbow flags.

The organisers said that anti-Zionist Jews were welcome, and that they banned flags with Stars of David because they wanted to ex-

clude all "nationalist" symbols.

Lots of people are nationalists of different shades.

Why should they be banned from lesbian pride marches?

And Palestinian flags weren't banned.

A similar ban was imposed at a pride march in Chicago in 2017.

Root-and-branch anti-Israel politics inevitably spills over into antisemitism.

Rohingya still under attack

By Simon Nelson

Seven soldiers jailed for killing 10 Rohingya men and boys in 2017 have been released by the Myanmar government, under pressure from the military.

The soldiers spent less time in prison than the two Reuters journalists that exposed the massacre in the first place.

Since 2017 more than 730,000 Rohingya, Muslims living in the border area of Rakhine, have been driven from Myanmar and into Bangladesh. The UN said that the expulsions were done with "genocidal intent" and included mass killings, widespread arson of Rohingya villages and property as well as the frequent use of rape.

Amnesty International now re-



ports that Rohingya Muslims and other minorities are still being attacked and persecuted by the Myanmar military. The new operations have targeted the whole population of Rakhine and those accused of being part of the Rakhine-nationalist Arakan Army (AA).

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees, more than half of them children, still live in increasingly bad conditions in Bangladesh, over the border from Rakhine State.

Aung San Suu Kyi, the Myanmar "State Counsellor" and Nobel Peace Prize winner, is currently visiting Europe. She met with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and signalled common ground with him over Muslim immigration.

Suu Kyi continues to refuse to guarantee the safety of Rohingya refugees if they return to Myanmar. Orbán's government has been accused by the Council of Europe of using rhetoric to promote "xenophobic attitudes, fear and hatred".

Bigots attack women on bus

By Charlotte Zalens

Two women travelling on the N31 night bus in Camden, north London, on 30 May were attacked and left injured in a homophobic and misogynist attack.

Melania Geymonat and her partner Chris were harassed by a group of men who noticed they were a couple. The men demanded that they kiss for their entertainment, described sexual positions, and threw coins at them. When the couple did not go along with their demands the men beat them up, leaving Melania and Chris with facial injuries and covered in blood.

The sort of verbal abuse in this case will be far too familiar to queer women. In a press interview Melania said: "I'm tired of being [seen] as a sexual object...these situations are usual for gay friends who are beaten up just because [of their sexuality]. We have to endure verbal harassment and chauvinist, misogynistic and homophobic violence because when you stand up for yourself s**t like this happens."

Every one of us has stories of similar harassment, many of which now look like close calls. I can recall countless times when I, or my partner and I, have been targeted with homophobic and misogynist abuse — men following us and making comments

about going home with them, about what it would be like to have sex with lesbians, and getting angry when turned down.

These are men who seems to think they are "complimenting us" — they *like* lesbians — or that obviously we would like nothing better than to share our sexuality with them.

This is the particularly toxic mix of homophobia and misogyny. The very existence of queer women is a challenge to the idea of women's sexuality belonging to men. And it provokes a violent reaction.

Five teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 have been arrested over the attacks. At the time when the teaching of LGBT+ inclusive relationship and sex education in schools is under threat, the age of the attackers is particularly worrying.

Just a few days after the attack in London, two actors who were due to be in a play about gay women in Southampton were pelted with stones as they kissed in the street on the way to the theatre — leading to the performance being cancelled.

In a TV interviews since the attack Melania and Chris have bravely said that they will not change the way they act in public. They are right.

We must not be forced back into the closet.



By a technical error, *Solidarity* dated 5 June 2019 was labelled on its front page as no.508. It was in fact no.509 (and labelled correctly on its back page).

China: a “socialist superpower”?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

From the *Morning Star* (07/06/2019) it seems that their people had a wonderful time on a recent visit to what they describe as “the world’s socialist superpower.”

“Earlier this year”, reported the *Morning Star*, “Communist Party of Britain (CPB) representatives took part in a joint delegation of Communist parties from northern Europe and North America following an invitation from the International Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC)”.

CPB Executive member Jonathan Havard told the *Morning Star*: “Their utilising capitalism to move forward to a modern First World society is entirely based upon Marxist-Leninist theory. It’s difficult to define the Chinese characteristics [as in ‘Socialism with Chinese characteristics’ – JD] but they would say they have learnt from the mistakes of the collapse of the Soviet Union.”

The *Morning Star* concedes that “Havard was... critical of the very limited role of trade

unions in Chinese society... Their idea of independent trade unions is not the same as ours.”

Actually, the Chinese Communist Party’s (CPC’s) idea of independent trade unions probably is “the same as ours”... it’s just that they don’t allow them

Thus far, workers have mostly struggled to make the state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) more responsive rather than to replace it. (Sometimes, especially in disputes with foreign owners, the state-appointed ACFTU officials have been willing to take up workers’ grievances, as also, sometimes, have local authorities and the CPC-controlled press). But workers have taken action independently of the ACFTU, and it is increasingly common for them to elect their own representatives for the duration of particular disputes.

It’s not clear from the report whether the Brits asked their hosts about human rights at all. Havard told the *Morning Star*: “The human rights issue is in the background in the literature they give you. Freedom of religion is mentioned, but there are certain things they won’t tolerate such as organisations plotting the overthrow of the party...”

“it was kind of an unspoken thing that you

wanted to ask questions about Tiananmen square but it was never asked.” Very diplomatic, comrade Havard.

It was also very diplomatic to ask no awkward questions about the treatment of Tibet, protests in Hong Kong against Chinese rule, or the Hukou system that effectively imposes apartheid upon migrant workers from rural areas.

Or about the estimated one million Turkic Muslims detained in what are euphemistically called “de-extremification training centres” in Xinjiang where they are made to disavow Islam, criticise themselves and their families’ beliefs, watch propaganda films, and study Chinese language and history. Those who object risk solitary confinement, food deprivation, being forced to stand against a wall for extended periods, waterboarding and electric shocks.

There is also growing evidence from relative’s accounts and satellite photos that following a course of indoctrination, internees are forced to work in factories in or near the camps.

The delegation chose instead to look on the bright side. They visited the Nanhu Revolutionary Memorial museum “to learn about the early history of the CPC”, and then there

was “an opportunity to visit the famous Red Boat where the first national congress of the CPC was convened in July 1921.”

The comrades also had a “key meeting” with officials from the central committee of the Communist Youth League and were “impressed by their ideological and philosophical grounding.”

Havard told the *Morning Star* that “on the one hand they (the CPC) are developing diplomatic links with the capitalist world. On the other hand they are maintaining links with what’s left of the socialist countries including North Korea – if you regard that as a socialist country – and also with communist parties across the world.” The comrade did not offer an opinion as to whether he regards North Korea as a socialist country.

Havard “admit[ted] that China’s environmental record and contribution to reducing climate change is mixed”. He “argue[d] that China is still largely a patriarchal society despite some progress” and suggested that the decision to relax the one-child policy “may have to be re-examined in the future.”

But, after all, this was Socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the Brits weren’t going to let their trip be spoiled by pettifogging concerns about so-called human rights.

Pete Willsman, antisemitism, and the banning culture



Letters

FIRST CRITICISE

Time was that halfway healthy labour movements and socialist organisations expelled members only to save the integrity of the organisation. And not often.

The “soft” Labour left used to condemn the “democratic centralist” ways of the Marxist left as meaning excessively tight discipline; but the groups that could be called “democratic centralist” only ever expelled small numbers.

Now the labour movement and the left have picked up a different culture, mostly I think from US academia. The standard response to the badly wrong or the offensive becomes not to dispute, criticise, or lambaste, but to seek an Authority to whom to make a Complaint. Scarce any argument about why

something is badly wrong is required, only a demand for banning or exclusion.

Oddly, the Labour Party in its new left-wing period has expelled and suspended more people (mostly without precise charges, and without hearings) than even in the most vindictive times of previous right-wing leaderships.

That the Labour Party should declare racism, antisemitism, sexism, and homophobia to be off-limits is good. Sometimes demonstrative exclusions can have an educational effect.

A routine of summary exclusions without explanation will not educate. The first response should be criticism, loud and angry criticism if necessary. Actual expulsion should be reserved for clear-cut, heavy-weight cases, and after due criticism.

I agree with the analysis of Labour NEC member Pete Willsman’s comments to journalist Tuvia Tenenbom made by Sean Matgamna and Simon Nelson in their articles in *Solidarity* 509, showing antisemitism in

those comments. Maybe also his comments now dug out from 2017 were sexist.

But Willsman’s divagations are not a serious factor in the integrity — or otherwise! — of the Labour Party as a Jew-friendly, woman-friendly organisation.

The drive to exclude Willsman is a matter, for some, of picking on garrulous follies in order to settle other scores, and for others, of cynically diverting attention from bigger problems by offering a victim.

Martin Thomas, Islington

AVOID KNEE-JERK RESPONSES

Sean Matgamna and Simon Nelson, presenting alternative perspectives on “The Willsman Affair” in *Solidarity* 509, are, in part, both right, but also both limited.

Simon correctly points to a history of left antisemitic remarks and affiliations by Pete Willsman. Sean’s apologetics, or at best extreme caution, in his characterisation of Willsman and his behaviour, is untenable and unnecessary.

Strong distinctions between repeated “off-hand, casual remark[s]” and “clear-cut, public, persistent violations” cannot be preserved. We advocate that people take and apply political ideas seriously, and excusing “casual” promotion of ideas cuts against this. At an extreme, the “alt-right” — trendy far-right — and their imitators on the left, “alt-Stalinists” such as those in the “Red London” orbit, *publicly* promote their politics predominantly “casually”, in “jokes” or “memes”, and “off-hand”.

Such unserious political cultures are incubators and transmitters of toxic politics, inconsistent and incoherent in a way that would crumble in the clear light of reasoned debate. We aim to shine high-energy germicidal light on such cultures, through responding to them with political seriousness, holding ideas within them — and their pro-

motors — to account as we would if they were advocated seriously and clearly. Willsman is not of or within such cultures, but we must be consistent.

Sean rightly points out that Labour’s leadership “identify with a daily paper which actively foments antisemitism, the *Morning Star*... [and] do not intend to fight the serious antisemitism in the labour movement.” They are, as noted, scapegoating Willsman. But does that acquit him as “a victim of panic”?

Suppose a group of armed and masked bank-robbers carry out a heist. On their exit-route, they realise they are being chased down. Most of them effectively hide their loot, then point the finger at one, to the wad of cash peaking out of the accused’s sock. That individual is dutifully hauled away by the police, guilty as charged, a *victim of panic*; the accomplices let off the hook. Should we pity and defend this poor victim, “unfairly singled out”?

For all this, Sean’s indictment of the Labour and left’s “off with his head” culture hits the mark. This scandal-mongering culture impedes and substitutes serious discussion and debate, obscures the bigger pictures and leaving them untouched. It is hard not to suspect that fear of scandals being mongered by those around him drove Ken Livingstone into bottling on the debate with Sean. I, too, was “looking forward to [Sean] kicking [Livingstone’s] butt” (*Solidarity* 509).

We have and should continue to be sharply critical of ideas masquerading as left-wing and influenced by antisemitism, and simultaneously of bureaucratic disciplinary responses and cultures, of expulsions and suspensions as the knee-jerk response to endemic left antisemitism, and of inadequacies of wider responses.

Our firm denunciation of one should not facilitate softening on the other, as Sean and Simon seem to do with Willsman, in converse ways.

Mike Zubrowski, Bristol

GIVE WILLSMAN CREDIT

Sean Matgamna’s piece in *Solidarity* 509 “A victim of panic” appears to miss the mark. Sean says that Pete Willsman “Possibly he gives credence to some form of ‘Jewish Conspiracy’ theory”.

This underplays what Willsman said and in doing so seems to excuse him as a fool rather than someone who knows what they think.

I would give Willsman more respect than that. I think he genuinely believes what he says and he does so from a position of influence with the votes of 70,000 Labour members (including my own) behind him. Sean asks if expulsion should only be reserved for those who make “clear-cut” “persistent” and “public” violations. Well this may well be such a case.

Sean ends by asking if Willsman is being

unfairly singled out? Well it’s true that his colleagues on the NEC include Darren Williams and Yasmin Dar, defenders of Ken Livingstone (when Sean, in the same issue rightly accuses of promoting antisemitism) and the Iranian regime respectively.

Like Sean and the AWL I want to see proper education and full discussion on the roots, history and expression of left antisemitism as well as a greater understanding of what meaningful Palestinian solidarity means. We urgently need a labour movement campaign for two states; that says explicitly that there must be an independent Palestine alongside Israel.

To defend Pete Willsman, in the midst of the EHRC investigation and a deepening crisis on the left on antisemitism, is actively harmful in achieving both.

Stephen Wood, Haringey



Labour after Peterborough

By Martin Thomas

Labour's victory in the 6 June Peterborough by-election has reduced the threat of a right-wing challenge to Jeremy Corbyn's leadership challenge.

The Peterborough result was won by a vigorous and well-resourced campaign. But it gives no grounds for complacency.

The Peterborough campaign was not left-wing. It focused heavily on demands for more money for the police.

Labour won essentially because the Tory vote held up better than in the 23 May Euro-elections. Enough Tory voters thought that they will soon have Boris Johnson or another hard-Brexit as leader, and so no longer have to protest by voting Farage.

Labour still lost many votes to Lib Dems and to abstention.

The easing of pressure to oust the 3 Ms, the Milne-Murray-Murphy group who run the Leader's Office, is not good. Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray are longstanding Stalinists, and responsible for shaping Labour's shameful evasions on Brexit and anti-semitism.

Those evasions affront most members, and demoralise and lose members. They affront most Labour voters, and lose votes.

They have ruined Jeremy Corbyn's personal standing with the broad electorate. The latest poll (YouGov, 5-6 June) had Theresa May, at 29%, scoring much better as "best prime minister" than Corbyn, at 17% — even after May had resigned!

To all appearances, Corbyn is demoralised.

Yet there is a real possibility of a new Tory leader after 22 July calling a quick general election. That would be risky for the new leader, but then so would be everything else they might try; and, at least, if the new election gamble paid off, the new leader would have a new base in Parliament and a new mandate to win some tweaks or adjustments (though not more) from the EU.

Labour is not in condition to run a general election. On the top issue of that possible general election, Brexit, it has a non-policy, and a non-policy rejected by most of its members and voters.

Yet the Leader's Office are doubling down. They are boosting shadow business minister Rebecca Long-Bailey as the successor to Corbyn, for example by putting her forward to deputise for Corbyn in Parliament on 5 June and fixing wide media coverage of that.

Long-Bailey has no substantial political record other than of being Corbyn-loyal since 2015 and pro-Brexit. At the first Liverpool Momentum conference in 2015, doing her best to appeal to a lively left-wing audience, the sharpest words she could find against the Tories was that they "put profits above..." — what? — "patriotism".

The Skwawbox blog, close to the Leader's Office, has mooted the idea of a deputy leadership contest, for Long-Bailey to displace Tom Watson (as a first step towards becoming the next party leader?)

At the same time, shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry, also a solid Corbyn ally since 2015 but anti-Brexit, has been denounced by Skwawbox as "figurehead for the tactics underpinning the latest Labour right coup attempt", because she has spoken out for Labour taking a clear stand for Remain.

The *Guardian* (8 June) reported rumours that the "inner circle... are considering a frontbench reshuffle" and that the Leader's Office "did not rule out" those rumours.

Hubris misdirects. Hubris based on as qualified a triumph as the Peterborough by-election is ridiculous.

The answer is democracy. Labour Party democracy. A special conference on Brexit. A revitalising of left-wing policies; a switch to a focus on the NHS, schools, and benefits, away from cops; a commitment to repeal the Thatcher anti-union laws.

Corbyn: oppose Brexit!

The Tory leadership contest, due to end soon after 22 July, is almost certain to give us a hard-right, hard-Brexit new prime minister.

Boris Johnson and most other candidates want to have Britain out by 31 October, even if that means a no-deal Brexit and a new hard border in Ireland. Dominic Raab says he might "prorogue" Parliament — send the MPs home — to prevent MPs stopping no-deal.

Michael Gove says he might consider a "short" delay, but that would be to finalise a supposed "alternative to the Irish backstop" which May's efforts over many months have shown to be illusory.

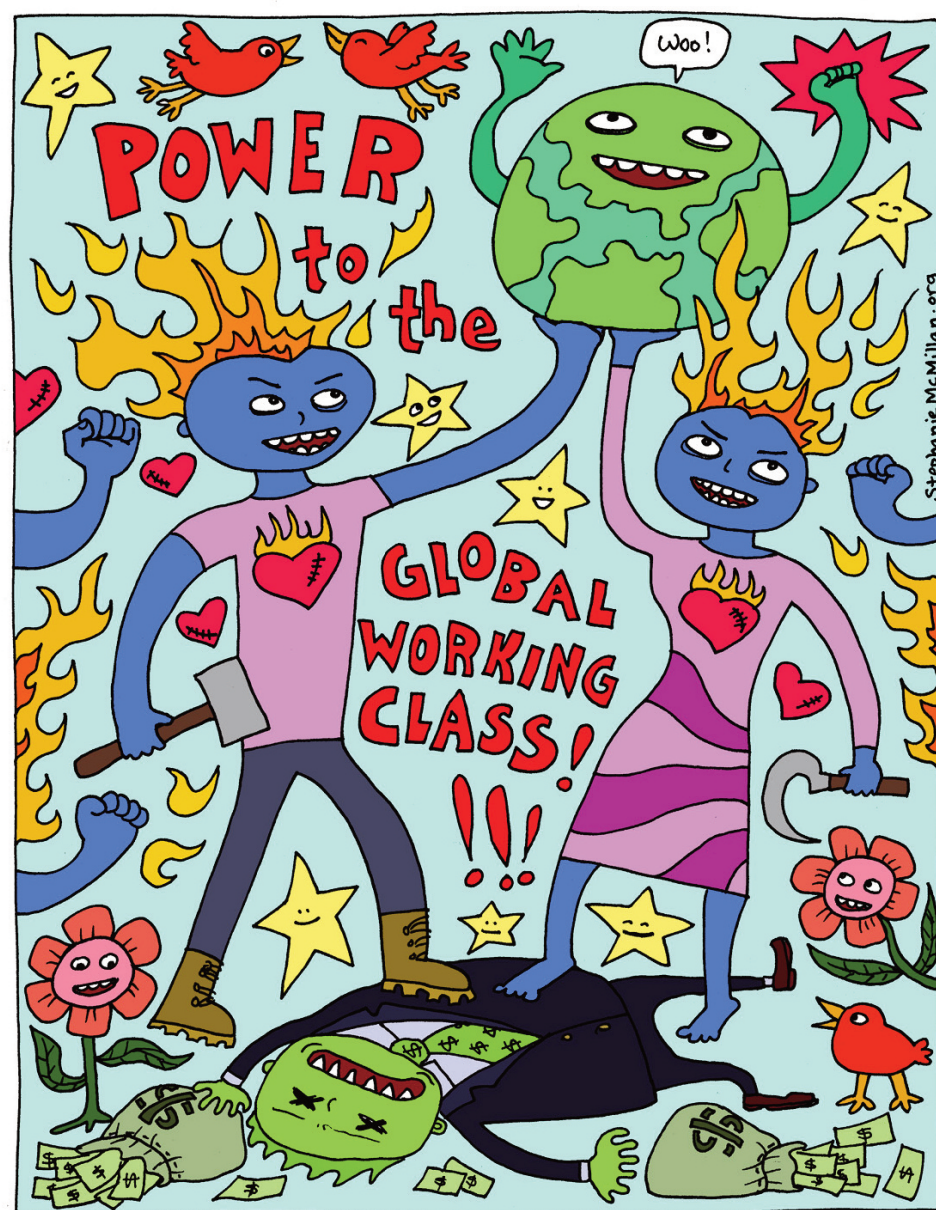
The basic Tory-Brexit aim is to "complete" the "Thatcher revolution", to cut the

UK free of EU pressures for social "levelling-up", and to reorient it to a big new trade deal with the USA. A new leader has to promise and attempt a more energetic drive than May's.

The new leader — whoever it is — may even take the risk of calling a quick general election to give themselves at least the possibility of a more favourable Parliamentary balance and a new mandate to help getting tweaks from the EU.

Early general election or not, Labour must be prepared.

Labour needs a clear line for a new public vote, against Brexit, for "Remain and Transform", for rebuilding social provision, and for trade-union rights.



Stephanie McMillan

Workers' Liberty London forum

Fighting testing, fighting academies — education for liberation, Friday 14 June 2019, 7pm, Room 828, IoE, Bedford Way, WC1H 0AL

The left in Israel



Interview

THERE'S STILL A MAJORITY FOR TWO STATES

By Maya Ilany

What are the prospects for the left, following the poor results in the 9 April elections?

When we talk about the left in Israel, we need to distinguish between political parties, grassroots movements and campaign groups, and ideas. Which parties are considered part of the left is subjective. A very generous definition would include everyone from Blue and White, in the centre, through to Hadash on the radical left. Some would also include Balad [a secular Arab nationalist party].

Labor and Meretz (the Green Party) crashed at the last elections. Unless there are major changes in their leaderships and campaigns, I can't see a different result for them in the next elections. It looks like everyone on the left will run the same campaign as they did first time round. They will be running against a right-wing that has already learnt lessons from the last election, and will be running a joint slate of smaller right-wing parties to ensure they pass the threshold this time.

If we talk about ideas on the left – a two-state settlement, a peace plan; and radical economic platform; the welfare state; secularism, separation of synagogue and state; equality; democratic and constitutional checks and balances – those ideas are still, despite years of right-wing propaganda, very popular amongst the Israeli public.

There is still majority support for a two-state settlement. There is majority support for LGBTQ rights, full civil equality, secularism, for transport services to run on Saturdays... it's only a small minority that is ideologically committed to "Greater Israel" expansionism and settlement, and religious law.

There seems from a distance to have been something of a revival in social movement activism. Is this impression accurate, and is there any potential for this to find an echo in official politics?

I wouldn't necessarily call it a "revival", but as things have been getting worse around many social issues people have been taking to the streets. However, these movements have tended to be led by people whose social position is more secure, so lots of the most affected are still absent from the struggle.



Maya Ilany is the deputy director of Yachad, which campaigns for a two-state settlement to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Eric Lee is the editor of Labourstart, and when living in Israel in the 1990s ran the BibiWatch website. On Saturday 22 June, they will participate in a panel on "the future of the Israeli left" at Ideas for Freedom, alongside Tom Harris. Maya and Eric spoke to Solidarity (in their personal capacities) about the context for the discussion.

But in the past year, we have seen huge demonstrations against anti-LGBTQ laws, against domestic violence, against deporting asylum seekers. Unfortunately, there is a disconnect between politicians and those leading the struggle on the streets.

It's a symptom of a bigger problem for the left, which is that it doesn't function as a coherent political camp, or an ecosystem that includes parties, campaign groups, journalists, and so on. Left organisations function as lone satellites floating through space, without much communication or collaboration with each other, and often with a lot of conflict within the left.

The right stokes division: orthodox Jews against secular Jews; Jews against Arabs; religious people against LGBTQ people and so on... We have to combat that and make all these different groups to come together and see that they have a lot in common. This means that the left has to spend more time attacking its political opponents and less time attacking each other.

A recent conference organised by the Berl Katznelson Foundation is a source of hope. It took place in Tel Aviv and was attended by 900 people. Figures from the entire left spectrum, from the centrist Blue and White party to Ayman Odeh from Hadash, all sat together on panels to discuss strategy, not just for the next elections but for the next ten years.

I'm an optimist, so I believe it is possible for the left to regroup.

NEW IDEAS TO STOP DECLINE?

By Eric Lee

I've been asked to comment on the prospects for the Israeli Left in 2019 and my short answer is: bleak.

To understand how bad things are, one needs a bit of a historical perspective. In the first Israeli parliamentary elections in 1949, over 50% of the votes were cast for the two socialist parties, Mapai and Mapam, which won the majority of seats in the Knesset. Seventy years later, in the elections earlier this year, those two parties (now Labor and Meretz) won just 8% of the vote. They have gone from complete dominance of Israeli politics to total irrelevance.

But it's just the spectacular electoral collapse that matters. There's been a nearly total disappearance of the political culture in



which the Israeli Left thrived. Three decades ago, two of the daily newspapers in Israel were socialist – the Histadrut's *Davar* and Mapam's *Al Hamishmar*. Both had existed for many decades and both were shut down in the 1990s.

The newspapers in Israel today are all in decline, and one of the most popular, the free newspaper *Yisrael Hayom*, is Bibi Netanyahu's house organ.

More important than that is the collapse of the Histadrut trade union federation, which was until the early 1990s one of the most powerful trade unions in world, with Israel having a very high rate of trade union density. Thanks to changes introduced by the Labor Party, hundreds of thousands of workers quit the Histadrut, and according to OECD data trade union density in Israel fell by 50% in the first years of this century. The once-mighty Histadrut has now been reduced to a rump.

In the face of the collapse and imminent disappearance of the organised Left – especially the Labor Party – the response of the Left's leadership is to do... more of the same. This is where my questioning of the two-state solution comes from.

For the last two decades or so, the Israeli Left used the slogan of 'separation' as a way to reach out to right-wing Israeli Jews who didn't like, or feared, Palestinians, and for whom the slogan of "peace" was anathema.

One recent media campaign put the two alternatives before the public as "annexation" or "separation" – peace not being considered as an option.

But it didn't work. It didn't stop the Left's decline. It turns out that Israeli Jewish voters who don't believe in peace are more likely to vote for a right-wing party like Likud than for tough retired generals who lead parties of the Left or centre.

For a whole range of reasons, the Israeli Left appears to be in terminal decline, and instead of looking for new ideas, it repeats the same tired old slogans which convince increasingly smaller numbers of people.

The only hope is not a change in the leadership of the Labor Party – though that is desperately needed – but a change in the message.

A new Israeli Left will be born, just as strong trade unions will reappear, because these things are needed. But there are no short-cuts, and this will be a long and difficult struggle.

Making



Interview

Can I start from an unusual angle? In mathematics, up to the present day, there have always been many – not a majority, but many – of the most brilliant mathematicians whom later historians or biographers describe as being autistic.

Those people were accepted in fact as "neurodivergent" – though the word didn't exist – as "just different". They got support. Others went out of their way to work with them in a way that suited them. Could we say that what we want to do today is extend that support to other neuro-atypical people, including those who may be fairly average in their talents in all areas?

Yes. There's always been a recognition of eccentrics as people with a valuable contribution. But now we live in a time when everyone is expected to have a great level of social skills. We're trying to open up a space of recognition that people don't entirely choose their behaviour, to a certain extent they're born with it, and that society has got to accommodate that.

The idea of "treating" what were seen as mental afflictions is really a creation of the Enlighten-

Venezuela: w

By Eduardo Tovar

In the midst of the Venezuelan Presidential crisis, a new coalition of Venezuelan socialists and trade unionists has formed in opposition to both the incumbent President Nicolás Maduro and his National Assembly-backed challenger Juan Guaidó.

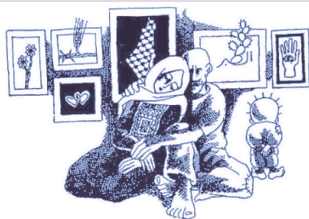
The Presidential crisis began on 10 January 2019 when the National Assembly, held by the right-wing coalition Mesa de la Unidad Democrática (MUD), disputed the process and results of the May 2018 Presidential election, which saw Maduro re-elected. Guaidó declared himself interim President of Venezuela on 23 January 2019, setting off the fiercest challenges yet to Maduro and the Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela (PSUV).

Guaidó enjoys support from numerous foreign governments, including those of the United States, Brazil, and Colombia. Russia and China continue to back Maduro.

These intense months have included clashing protests in the streets, barricades at the Venezuelan border, and a failed attempt by Guaidó to spark a military uprising against Maduro on 30 April.

As reported on the *Venezuelan Voices* blog on 7 June, the new socialist and trade unionist coalition, named "Workers in Struggle", seeks "to confront the brutal anti-worker policies of the Maduro Government and to repudiate imperialist interference".

It includes several union leaders and the organisations Marea Socialista, Lucha de Clases, Liga de Trabajadores por el So-



2.8 million Palestinians live under Israeli occupation in the West Bank, and 2 million are in Gaza. In Arab states other than Jordan, Palestinians are denied citizenship and sometimes the right to work and get public services.

Arabs, Jews, and socialism

Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: The socialist debate in the 1980s and 90s on Israel and Palestine. £5 or £6.20 with postage.

space for diversity

ment. Before that, probably, not just among mathematicians but also in a peasant village, those whom we would now call “autistic”, on any level, were mostly regarded as just different. What support they got, if any, would probably depend heavily on their family’s attitude and resources.

Then we had the “medicalisation” of unusual behaviour. That was a two-sided thing. It signified recognition of a social obligation to help people with difficulties, but also a stigmatisation.

Could you say that the neurodiversity movement is trying to push back that “medicalisation” a bit?

Originally we had a “Medical Model” of Autism, looking at it as a problem within an individual. Then in the UK disability rights activists started to talk about how society constructed disability by creating barriers, and about taking down those social barriers.

The concept of disability arose as a concept within the welfare state to distinguish between the “deserving poor” and the “undeserving poor”.

As a maths teacher, I’ve had many autistic students who were fine, needing only some adjustments in teaching methods. And the other students were fine with them, too. But I’ve also had students like one who would sit in the middle of the room, in every lesson, knitting, occasionally shouting out about things with no connection to

what the other students and I were talking about. There’s a distinction between “just a difference” and “impairment”, isn’t there?

That’s very controversial. There are some people who would say that autism is a difference which shades into an impairment. Other people would want to say that there is no such thing as “mild” and “severe” autism.

My sociological research in the 1990s was based on Asperger’s Syndrome, then also known as High-Functioning Autism or HFA. I’ve not really spoken much about what was known as classical autism.

But for me it does shade from “a different way of thinking” to something which some people would not want me to call “severe”. I want to continue to make those distinctions, even though I know the boundary between difference and impairment is very hard to define.

As it is with physical traits: where’s the boundary between being slow and awkward, as I am, and being “impaired”? Apart from autism, the neurodiversity movement is concerned with dyslexia, dyspraxia, and ADHD, isn’t it? And dyslexia is the most common?

There’s also Tourette’s, and I have been invited to address the National Stuttering Association of the USA, who are interested in adopting the concept.

Dyslexia is usually taken to be the most common, but there are people who say that dyspraxia is under-counted, and a lot of people identify with ADHD. But everything here has a fuzzy boundary.

I’m working with Nancy Doyle of Genius Within CIC, who looks at finding accommodations for people who are neurodivergent. Often it’s a simple matter, e.g. of adjusting the soundscape or the lighting in a room. There we’re moving away from the labels and looking at the specific issues which prevent people from participating fully in society.

We are in a transition phase on all this, and I can’t tell how it will end. Human beings are incredibly diverse, and there is a lot of scope for much more individualised provision in education and in workplaces.

Our culture was a kind of Procrustean bed — everyone had to be cut down or stretched into a fixed norm. Now people have more of a sense of empowerment about asking for adjustments. I’m not an extreme social constructionist. When I was doing sociology I was pretty much surrounded by extreme social constructionists. I learned much from them, but I wanted to find a synthesis of the Social Constructionism and Medical models, and I added a third element, a Minority Model, which I learned from the Deaf Movement.



Judy Singer, the writer who coined the term “neurodiversity”, will be speaking at Ideas for Freedom, 22-23 June, about how society can and should make more and better space for the “neuro-divergent”. She talked with Martin Thomas from *Solidarity* about some of the issues. This is not a verbatim transcript of the conversation, but a summary checked with Judy.

The Deaf Movement defines being deaf not as a disability, but as belonging to a “linguistic minority”.

I grew up in a time when people were widely reckoned to be born as “blank slates”, and eccentric behaviour was something to be blamed on the parents, on society, or on the individual. Now it’s more often described as a matter of being “born like that”.

I want to move away from a punitive blame culture to a positive recognition of diversity.

Workers against both Guaidó and Maduro

cialismo, Izquierda Revolucionaria and Partido Socialismo y Libertad (Socialism and Freedom Party)."

PUBLIC DECLARATION OF “WORKERS IN STRUGGLE”

On its side, the bosses’ opposition headed by Guaidó, supported by Trump and U.S. imperialism, seeks to... impose its policies of subjection and corporate giveaways, resorting to putschism and the worst of demagoguery. Imperialism has applied economic sanctions that only add to the suffering of the people, confiscated Venezuelan State accounts and PDVSA/CITGO assets abroad, taking control over billions of dollars.

And since January, they have attempted to develop a military coup to seize power and apply their Plan País, made up of austerity, privatisations, low wages, and giveaways to transnational capitals.

Before this terrible tragedy, the Government chose to side with the capitalists, and auction the country off to transnational sectors. The Maduro Government is anti-worker, authoritarian, anti-democratic and repressive. It is a government that has nothing to do with socialism, and the workers’ and people’s interests.

Both the right-wing Opposition and the national Government pay tribute to capital, are subordinated to foreign interests, and seek to maintain the privileges of their respective elites against the needs of the people. They negotiate according to their interests behind

the back of the working people.

In this context, we call to form the widest unity of the working class in defense of our interests and rights. We must build and political and syndical alternative for workers, autonomous from the Government, the right-wing Opposition, and any other bosses’ proxies.

An alternative of struggle, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist and anti-patriarchy, that confronts with organization and mobilization the imperialist intervention, the putschism headed by Guaidó and the traditional right-wing parties, and the nefarious policies of the Maduro Government. An alternative that rejects the interference of North American imperialism and the Lima Group, but that also repudiates the interference of China and Russia, opposing the negotiations by great powers behind the backs of the Venezuelan working people.

We stand for the construction of a plan of struggle at a national level that corresponds to ongoing workers’ conflicts, to confront the Government’s austerity package, along with any other variant, such as the Plan País proposed by Guaidó.

We workers must struggle for our fundamental demands. We have to fight for a living wage adjusted to inflation, for our collective bargaining agreements. Ultimately, we must struggle for a workers’ and popular Emergency Plan that begins immediately with the massive importation of foodstuffs, medicines and production inputs; that repudiates the foreign debt; that achieves the statisation of oil, without transnationals or mixed compa-

nies; that confiscates the wealth of the corrupt and the capitalists that have pillaged the country; and that pushes a democratic and structural agrarian reform that ends the great landlords, and that grants land, inputs and technical support to the poor peasantry.

We demand the fulfilment of Articles 89 through 91 of the Constitution of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the Basic Labor Law, that establish that wages, pensions, retirements and social benefits must equal the basic costs of family life.

We denounce the interference of the National Electoral Council and the Ministry of Labor in trade union elections, placing obstacles in the legitimation of trade unions, federations and professional associations.

We demand the recognition of trade union leaders without political conditions.

We demand the repeal of Memorandum 2792 from October 20 of 2018, that pretends to encroach on collective bargaining agreements and labor norms, positioning the Labour Ministry as a watchman for capital.

We condemn the bosses’ persecution, harassment, assaults and threats against workers and trade unions.

We demand an end to the assaults, harassment and criminalisation by the State security bodies (Bolivarian National Police, Special Armed Forces, Bolivarian Investigation Service, CICPC and the Bolivarian National Guard) against workers’, peasants’ and popular struggles and leaders.

We condemn the criminalization of protest as a mechanism of bosses’ terrorism.

We demand the repeal of all laws, practices

and norms that criminalise the rights to strike and struggle.

We denounce the massive direct and indirect layoffs of workers, and the deterioration of existing working conditions.

We demand the reincorporation of all those fired for struggling for their rights, victims of anti-union retaliation.

We demand full freedom for all workers, peasants and others imprisoned for struggling.

We denounce the theft of our social benefits (pensions and funds) through the monetary reconversion and hyper-inflation. And we demand the indexing to inflation of these social benefits.

Enough with imperialist aggression. We oppose economic sanctions, and stand for the return of CITGO and our confiscated wealth.

Based on this standpoint, as members of the organisations forming the space, we believe that permanent organisation and mobilisation is our duty in the struggle for our rights, through regional conventions and protest actions. We stand in solidarity with the ongoing labor struggles, among which we can point out those in the Hyper Mercado Modelo, Bridgestone-Firestone, Chrysler, and the Caracas Metro.

We also issue a convocation to accompany our plan of actions and mobilisations in defence of the living wage, against layoffs, and for solidarity with those in struggle.

Abridged from bit.ly/2WZ7g4S. Original Spanish bit.ly/2K7oSpb. More: bit.ly/v-wkr

Corbyn is reactionary on Europe

Reason in revolt

By Sean Matgamna

Labour's victory in the Peterborough by-election on 6 June was of course good news. It was also bad news.

It seemed to vindicate the Labour leadership's political cloak-work and shilly-shallying on the EU.

In the 2016 referendum Labour fought Brexit. Now, behind the attempt to avoid alienating either the Remainers or the Brexiters, by fudging and mudding, the Labour leadership are committed Brexiters. They want Brexit, a soft Brexit, yes, but Brexit is Labour's policy, no less than that of the May government — Brexit, and refusal to commit to a "people's vote" that would include a Remain option. Logically, they would themselves campaign for exit in a new referendum.

And if it comes to a general election, Labour will stand as a Brexit party. Their policy now amounts to rolling back the film of EU development over the last near-half-century, to a mere Common Market, cutting loose from the structures of European political union.

This is both reactionary and profoundly undemocratic. The idea that the 2016 referendum vote to leave, by a very ill-informed electorate inflamed against Europe by fears about immigration, precludes later, better-informed reconsideration is shamefully undemocratic. It is a one-shot automatic-pilot conception of democracy, locking us into a mechanical trajectory on the authority of a referendum already three years in the past. Except that automatic-pilot systems do not rule out reassertion of direct human control. Corbyn and his associates do.

On the EU, the Corbyn Labour Party is on the side of reaction, regression. The argument

in terms of democratic righteousness by Corbyn and his colleagues counterposes one-shot and then automatic-pilot against living, ongoing democracy. Here the hegemony of the conventional left in the party brings with it no real left-wing politics, but nationalist politics that properly belong to the right and the old Stalinists.

In a Europe experiencing a wave of right-wing populism, xenophobia, hostility to immigrants, the "left"-led Labour party lines itself up with the nationalist politics of the right. There is nothing "left" about that.

Certainly, this is a matter of catch-penny opportunist electoral calculation. But it is more, much more than that. It is the Labour leaders and the left around them reverting to politics that we seemed to have outgrown years ago.

The British left was for decades as bitterly opposed to the EU (the Common Market, the EEC, etc.) as the *Morning Star* — which each day carries the same lauding endorsement from Jeremy Corbyn — is now. There is no mystery about why.

The Communist Party opposed the EU because Russia, naturally, opposed any strengthening of the bourgeois states in Europe. From the late 1940s the policy of the Communist Parties was to foment nationalist opposition to the USA, in Britain, France, Belgium, etc.: pseudo-nationalist opposition to loss of "national sovereignty" to Europe was parallel to that.

It didn't matter to the CPs that the nationalism of the strong capitalist powers had been thought of as reactionary by socialists and Lenin-Trotsky communists. A thing was rendered reactionary or "progressive" according to its relationship to Russia and the "socialist state's" perceived interests. Foul could be fair; black, red; national chauvinism, the highest form of internationalism.

In the early 1960s Trotskyists had to fight against such slogans on peace marches as "Yankee bastards, go home". That was before the growth of the US movement against the

Vietnam war shamed the CP types into silence.

The British CP had a powerful influence in the trade unions and in the left of the Labour Party. There was also a strong sentiment in the Labour right and centre of commitment to the British Commonwealth.

Britain stood aloof from the initial Common Market of France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg, set up in January 1958. It was part of a much looser association, EFTA.

When Britain made its first attempt to join the EEC (as it then was) in 1961-2, the right wing Labour leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, Dennis Healey, etc. opposed it (together with Labour leftists such as Michael Foot), and thereby won much credit with the anti-European nationalist left. All the Trotsky-tinted left groups poured contempt on the British-nationalist "left" opposition to the EEC, though without ourselves positively favouring European unity, even bourgeois unity, as, it now seems plain, we should.

The second of Britain's failed attempts to join, by a Labour government in 1967, was opposed by such Labour leftists as Michael Foot, and of course by those influenced by the CP. The major "Trotskyist" group, the SLL (later WRP) now joined the anti-EEC outcry.

Why? Well, you see, the Wilson Labour government was going for the EEC instead of building socialism in Britain. That was the first time that socialism, in the future, was counterposed to European unity, in a political reality where the alternative to joining in the creation of European (bourgeois) unity was not socialism but the capitalist Britain we had.

Slowly the Trotskyist left stepped into line with the political ancestors of the modern Brexiters. Britain's final, successful, attempt to join the EEC, in 1971-3, triggered a shift to opposition by the main hold-outs against it, the IS (today's SWP). [1]

IS-SWP shifted in order not to be out of step with the politics of the big battalions on

the left. From 1971 opposition to the EEC came to be an article of faith for leftists, one which scarcely needed thinking about. It was an addled expression of opposition to capitalism. Newcomers were inducted into this political culture rather as now new leftists are inducted into the politics of root-and-branch hostility to Israel.

The powerful Labour left shot its bolt in campaigning — in company with right-wing Tories and worse — against the EEC in the 1975 referendum on it, and collapsed after its defeat. The Labour Party shifted to accepting British membership of the EEC. After reverting to Brexitism again in the early 80s, it shifted again, and solidly, to a pro-EEC line from the mid late 1980s.

Corbyn and the group around him, were politically formed in the 1970s or early 80s. They have reverted to type. The *Morning Star's* claim to express their essential politics is perfectly just. It does.

Without a clear Labour Party conference decision to change the position on which Labour fought the 2016 referendum, or even an open debate on it, the Labour leaders are now foisting on the movement the politics on Europe of the CP-influenced left of the 60s, 70s, and most of the 80s. They know they embody that tainted tradition, and want to do this. These people are, on this issue, reactionaries.

The good news here is that now most people — including MPs — who in any real degree are on the left on the Labour Party oppose the neo-Stalinist Brexiters at the head of the party and support a new public vote.

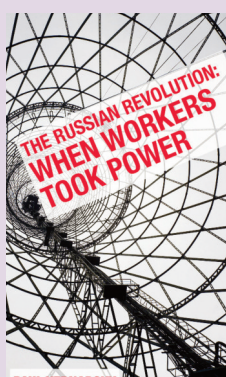
I repeat: the politics of the Corbyn group are not just wrong on this issue. They are thoroughly reactionary.

What might be called the contrarian left — AWL and others — have a pressing duty to oppose and fight them.

[1] The expulsion from IS of the predecessors of AWL was triggered by our opposition to that change of position on Europe.

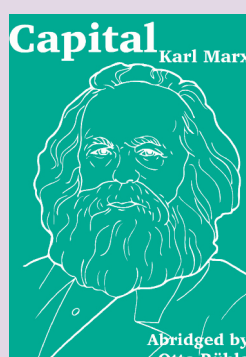


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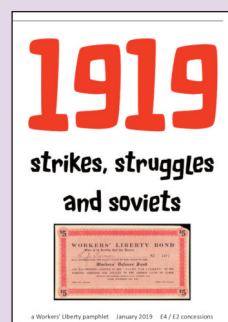
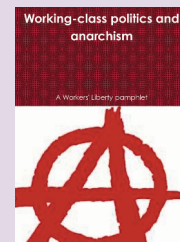
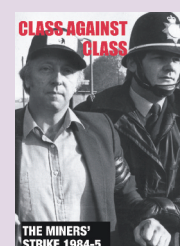
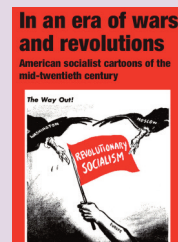
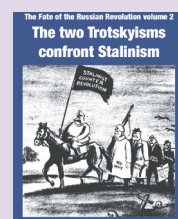
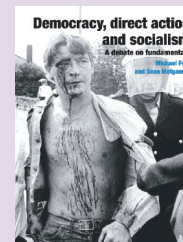
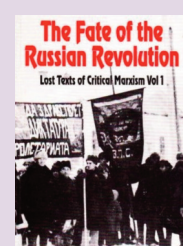


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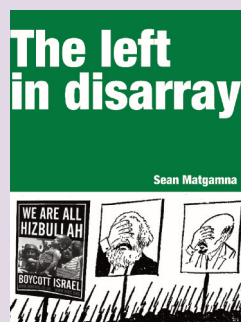
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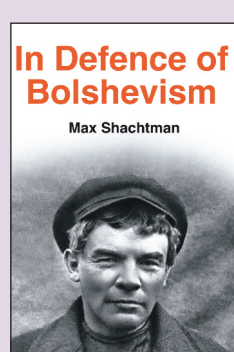


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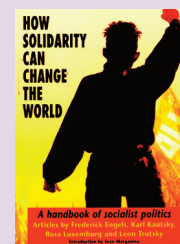
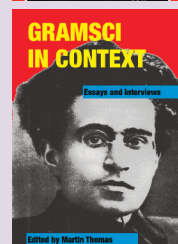


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How not to quote Lenin

By John Ryan

"The October Revolution is an imperishable page in the history of the great movements of the masses to take their destiny into their own hands that began with the French Revolution."

"It was the second stage of the elemental upsurge of the Russian masses that began in February.

"The Kerensky regime had done its utmost to block its further advance by frustrating the efforts of the masses to end the war and divide the land. The regime sought to stretch out its undemocratic authority as long as possible by repeatedly postponing the elections of a Constituent Assembly. If the revolution was to advance, Kerensky had to go. Only the Bolshevik Party was able to show the way to the teeming, creative, democratic Soviets of 1917.

"The revolution broke through the impasse and opened a road toward a solution of the land and peace questions. Far from carrying out a coup d'état, as their opponents charged, the Bolsheviks rode to power on the crest of an upsurge that sought to realize the long-promised objectives of land and peace" — Ernest Erber, *Statement of Resignation*, Bulletin of the Workers Party 1949

With the benefit of having read Ernest Erber's statement of resignation and then Shachtman's criticism of it, Alan Johnson's reply, *In defence of Ernest Erber (Solidarity 488)*, could have taken the opportunity to respond to some of Shachtman's criticisms and hence move the discussion on rather than just decrying its "repulsive crude sarcasm".

For instance, at one stage, discussing the meaning of Lenin's theory of the state and its relation to the ideas of Marx and Engels Shachtman wonders why Erber, who had called it "the textbook of the Leninist school", doesn't quote from Lenin's *State and Revolution* (1917) to buttress his case. "Shachtman's



claim that 'Lenin's theory is nothing but a re-statement of what Marx and Engels taught' is spectacularly, staggeringly wrong", says Alan. But he tries to refute Shachtman's contention not by rising to his challenge and quoting from the far more relevant and rounded and full treatment of the issue in Shachtman's book, but by giving us an isolated quote from Lenin in 1906, "given as it if it were Lenin's prospectus for 1917" (bit.ly/wl-68).

The previous reference also deals with the epigraph given in Alan's article. He uses it to show why the revolution ended in tyranny, and Erber uses it to prove that weeks before the October revolution Lenin had "the anti-democratic view of the party ruling on behalf of the masses".

The difficult thing then, of course, is to explain how to square that with this article's epigraph, which also comes from Erber's resignation letter. The Bolshevik party in October both led the "democratic soviets" and ruled "on behalf of" the masses: surely a contradiction?

The Russian Revolution did end in counter-revolution and tyranny, but that is not where it began. And the timescale isn't "within months", as Alan would have it, but years. He is also wrong to say that Lenin was opposed to democracy. He uses some neat splicing of quotes and misquotes to make his case:

Alan: "He [Erber] pointed out that far from being a mere 'machine for the suppression of the working class' as Lenin had it, representative democracy was an arena of struggle..."

Erber: "The bourgeois state was now stripped down to its real function as 'nothing else but a machine for the suppression of the working class...'"

Unless the bourgeois state is the only form of representative democracy, what about the "teeming, creative, democratic Soviets"? Alan's splice has simply got this wrong.

Alan: "Lenin was completely wrong to claim that 'The parliament can in no way serve as the arena of a struggle for reforms, for improving the lot of the working people'."

Erber: "Lenin concluded: 'The parliament at present can in no way serve as the arena of a struggle for reform, for improving the lot of the working people, as it was at certain periods of the preceding epoch. The centre of gravity of political life at present has been completely and finally transferred beyond the limits of the parliament'."

Notice how Alan drops the time qualifier "at present", and finishes the quote before getting to "as it was at certain periods of the preceding epoch". Thus "proving" that Lenin was always opposed to fighting for reforms in parliament. And it gets worse. Lenin allegedly didn't like voting at all ...

Alan: "Lenin ... denounced 'all kinds of voting, democracy and suchlike bourgeois deceit'."

Lenin: "There is and can be only one alternative: either the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, disguised by constituent assemblies, all kinds of voting systems, democracy and similar bourgeois frauds that are used to blind fools, and that only people who have become utter renegades from Marxism and socialism all along the line can make play of today — or the dictatorship of the proletariat for suppressing with an iron hand the bourgeoisie, who are inciting the most backward elements against the finest leaders of the world proletariat". (bit.ly/vil-19-1)

Alan: Lenin ... oppose[d] ... the elective principle per se, the universal franchise, representative assemblies (i.e. elected parliaments and elected local councils), the rule of law, and the separation of powers between executive, legislature and judiciary.

Lenin: "Once again, we must say: the lessons of Marx, based on the study of the Commune, have been so completely forgotten that the present-day 'Social-Democrat' (i.e., pres-

ent-day traitor to socialism) really cannot understand any criticism of parliamentarism other than anarchist or reactionary criticism. The way out of parliamentarism is not, of course, the abolition of representative institutions and the elective principle, but the conversion of the representative institutions from talking shops into 'working' bodies. 'The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time'." (bit.ly/sr-3-3)

You really should have taken Shachtman's advice to Erber, Alan.

There are lots more points to cover in Alan's article, but in lieu of a proper treatment here are a few quick-fire replies and questions for further discussion

Trotsky's authoritarianism — a useful quality for a military commander?

On Luxemburg and Trotsky's predictions — "baseless nonsense ... somewhat tarnished" (Lih, *Lenin Rediscovered* pp 529, 551).

Were the non-Bolsheviks shot by the Bolsheviks the SRs that had killed Voldarsky and Uritsky?

How much of an authoritarian travesty of socialism was the Bolsheviks' effort to do without a standing army after October?

The people killed by the Cheka before 6 July 1918 were common criminals (*The Cheka*, George Leggett, p.58).

The Bolsheviks' call for a Constituent Assembly in the months after April and before October was not hypocritical (bit.ly/marot-hm).

If the Bolsheviks were so opposed to parliamentarism, how do we account for Lenin and Trotsky's efforts for the United Front at the Third Comintern congress in 1921?

Erber did get one thing right, though. Commenting on the role of Bolshevism in the Russian Revolution he says:

"It remains a vastly rich experience which no serious movement of social change can ignore, no matter how different the conditions under which it operates are from those of Russia".

In Defence of Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



Edited by Sean Matgamna

John Ryan continues the discussion on the Bolsheviks and the 1917 revolution opened by Alan Johnson's critical comments (*Solidarity 487 and 488*, bit.ly/aj-0 bit.ly/aj-2) and Sean Matgamna's response (*Workers' Liberty 68*: bit.ly/wl-68)

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Bridgend: fight the closure!

From Labour for a Socialist Europe

On 6 June, Ford said it would close its Bridgend engine plant in 2020. Steve Turner, assistant general secretary of the Unite trade union, declared:

"Unite representatives across all of Ford's UK sites have previously stated if any plant in the UK is faced with closure or compulsory redundancies that they would all move to a ballot for industrial action."

"Ford bosses should be in no doubt. Unite will not stand back and let Ford turn its back on its loyal UK workforce and allow our members' livelihoods to be shredded because they are cheaper and easier to fire than their counterparts elsewhere in the world."

"In the coming days Unite will be consulting with our members across all of Ford's UK sites on our next steps."

Turner was repeating the decision of a meeting of the Ford national joint negotiating committee back on 12 April. The threat to Bridgend was already clear back then. In September 2017 JLR said it would end its contract for the Bridgend factory to supply engines early, in 2020. In January 2019 Ford said that it would cut 1,000 jobs at the 1,700-worker site.

After the 12 April meeting, Unite announced: "Trade unions Unite and GMB called on Ford to come clean over the future of its UK operations today... warning that its members at all five of the car giant's UK sites were 'ballot ready' and ready to stand with any UK site faced with closure or compulsory redundancies."

"In a statement to workers at Bridgend, Dagenham, Daventry, Dunton and Halewood, the... committee said 'if any location is faced with compulsory redundancies, or plant closure, then each location would be balloted for industrial action'."

Sadly, Unite insiders report no actual move to call meetings or start ballots at the car factories. A statement later on the same day, 6



June, from Unite general secretary Len McCluskey, denounced Ford's decision and "call[ed] upon the governments at the Welsh Assembly and Westminster to join us to save this plant", but said nothing about industrial action. It did not even specify exactly what Unite is demanding from Cardiff and Westminster.

A strike across all Ford UK's plants could turn Ford round, and force it to convert the Bridgend plant to electric engine production. Even if Ford plans to run down its four other UK sites, it needs the production from them now to keep its supply chains running.

In 1997 workers at Renault plants across France, Belgium, and Spain staged an international strike against the closure of Renault's Vilvoorde factory in Belgium. The strike was for only one hour. Vilvoorde eventually closed for car assembly, though there is still some component manufacture on the site. But that shows that if the unions mobilise and organise, even international strikes are possible.

Mark Drakeford, Wales's Labour First Minister, condemned the closure but made no call for it to be reversed. He said that the Welsh government would set up a "task force" to seek other jobs for the Ford workers, looking "at who we need to bring around the table to make sure that those skills are known and advertised, whether there is a need for re-skilling, to make sure the training packages are in place, and that they are tai-

lored to the needs of individuals".

The prospects for such a "task force" are poor. Bridgend is a fairly small town (47,000), and the Ford engine plant is a big factory (1,700 workers). According to Carwyn Jones, Labour member of the Welsh Assembly for Bridgend: "When it was built [in 1977, Ford] was the largest factory in Europe under one roof". Swansea and Cardiff, the larger cities where other jobs might be found, are both 20 miles away.

Both Mark Drakeford and Bridgend's Labour MP Madeleine Moon have said that Brexit is a factor in the closure, and Welsh Labour has come out for a new public vote on Brexit. An editorial in the *Observer* (9 June) spelled it out further:

"Only four years ago... car production was heading back to levels not seen for decades and investment in research and development was on the up..."

[Now] "Honda announced in February that it planned to shut its Swindon plant in 2021 with the loss of 3,500 jobs. In the same month, Nissan reversed its decision to build the new X-Trail vehicle at its Sunderland plant."

"More recently, Jaguar Land Rover, which is Britain's largest car-making operation, said it would be cutting thousands of jobs after its Indian owner, Tata Motors, revealed its UK arm suffered a £3.6bn loss over the previous year..."

"Keen to avoid upsetting Leave voters, most [car industry bosses] have refused to cite Brexit as a rea-

son for plant closures. Behind the scenes, though, executives talk about little else, ranking Brexit among the top two or three reasons to curtail investment in the UK and switch production to sites inside the European Union's single market and customs union".

In 2012, Patrick Minford, a pro-free-market academic economist, told a Parliamentary committee that in case of Brexit (which he strongly advocated and advocates): "you will have a change in the situation facing that [car] industry, and you are going to have to run it down. It will be in your interests to do it, just as in the same way we ran down the coal and steel industries". Leading Tory Brexiter Jacob Rees-Mogg has repeatedly praised Minford's predictions.

Labour for a Socialist Europe calls on Labour:

1. To declare support for industrial action by Ford workers, on the lines of the April Unite-GMB decision.

2. To pledge that a new Labour government will take the site into public ownership and redevelop it with good, green jobs making electric or other low-carbon-emission engines

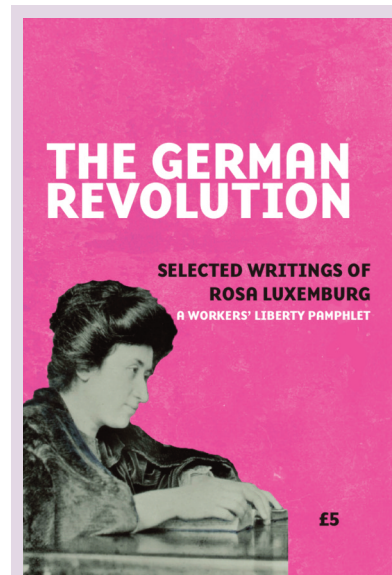
3. To highlight this new evidence of the slash-and-burn economic impact of Brexit, and to take a firm stand for "Remain and Transform".

• bit.ly/l4se-w

Audio of Solidarity

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper.

Links to the audio version are at workersliberty.org/audio, and can be found through many podcast providers: search "Workers' Liberty" or "Solidarity & More". Email awl@workersliberty.org for e-reader versions of *Solidarity*.



A new pamphlet from Workers' Liberty, "The German Revolution: Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg", has Rosa Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.

They span the time from when the German revolution of 1918-9 broke out, and she was released from jail on 8 November 1918, through to her murder on 15 January 1919 by a right-wing militia operating under the protection of the Social Democratic government.

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IWGB surveys its work

By Zack, delegate to IWGB AGM

The Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB), a seven-year-old small union of mostly low-paid, often precarious, and disproportionately migrant workers, had its union-wide AGM on Saturday 8 June.

The IWGB, with almost 5,000 members now, is known for a combative and creative approach to fighting for its members, with loud, disruptive and sometimes secret protests, flash-occupations, and the like.

IWGB's ten "branches" — what in many UK unions might be called "sections", although with considerably greater autonomy from the central union — gave reports. Some highlights:

The University of London branch, representing all categories of workers in the University of London, reported first. They told of a two and a half year campaign of strikes, coupled with encouraging organisations to boycott UoL's Senate House in solidarity, and some partial wins. The branch reported support from branches and now the congress of the University and Colleges Union UCU, but did not touch on difficulties it has had — if any — with other unions in the same workplace.

CLEANERS

The Cleaners and Facilities branch recently separated from the UoL branch, covering cleaners not otherwise represented.

The energy and commitment of those cleaners, mostly Latino migrant workers, and the strength of the common organisation there of migrants and non-migrants and across linguistic barriers, is a living indictment of all those who seek to blame migrants for the plight of sections of the working class.

IWGB's biggest branch by far is the United Private Hire Drivers branch, representing minicab drivers. It was with GMB, and migrated en masse to IWGB two years ago. Systematic over-engagement of labour (to minimise waiting times) is an issue for them as for the Couriers and Logistics Branch.

Minicab drivers — those working for companies like Uber — face



discrimination compared to "black cab" drivers. Minicab drivers are 91% BME, and black cab drivers 85% white. Minicab drivers are much more likely to be stopped by the police, and by Transport For London, despite higher rates of compliance with TfL regulations than taxi drivers. Taxi drivers have representation at TfL, and are exempt from London's ULEZ (congestion charges), unlike minicab drivers.

Minicab drivers have been fighting and winning, and are taking TfL and London mayor Sadiq Khan to court. Uber drivers have taken international action.

IWGB's second biggest branch, organising previously largely un-unionised workers, is the Foster Care Workers of England, Wales and Northern Ireland. There is a sister branch, the Foster Care Workers of Scotland.

Foster care workers are badly paid, and falsely categorised — like so many of us — as "self-employed independent contractors". They face traumatic experiences with no or little support, and are often threatened with "de-registration" by their employers or local authorities. There is a powerful gendered dynamic to all that.

It was inspiring to see them standing together, standing up for themselves, and starting to take confrontational actions, as well as organising parliamentary pressure. A key aim is the establishment of a central licensing body and independent tribunals.

The second newest branch represents workers in the computer games industry. They are expected

to do incredible amounts of unpaid overtime, working extremely long hours, and it is a not-very-diverse workforce.

The workers who formed this branch had met with several unions before choosing the IWGB. They have no campaigns yet, and in general have low union density, but they are starting to assert themselves as workers.

IWGB's legal department has dealt with hundreds of cases and dozens of employment tribunals, with a large success rate. The main goals are worker status and employment rights, trade union recognition, and dignity and respect — fighting bullying and the like.

As workers, our main power derives from the workplace and industrial action. However, previous class struggle has won some legal protections, and those are now another tool in our arsenal. It should not, and with IWGB currently does not seem to, be seen as a substitute for fighting directly.

IWGB's financial situation sounds better than it has been previously. Much funding comes from membership dues through recent expansion of branches, and a significant amount from external sources funding particular projects. Over the last year, the number of paid staff has roughly doubled, to over twenty.

Robust democratic accountability structures are needed to guard against the danger of bureaucratisation. My follow up article will cover the AGM motions debates and unpick this issue in greater detail.

even bother to show up. Negotiations ground to a halt at 2pm and a new meeting will take place next Friday 14 June.

The couriers put postponement of Monday to the vote over the weekend and agreed to delay Monday's strike to see if TDL will see the light when negotiations resume on Friday 14th.

Watch this space for more developments.

Outsourced workers' strikes spread

By John Moloney, PCS Assistant General Secretary (in a personal capacity)

Outsourced workers' disputes in the civil service are spreading.

Cleaners, porters, and maintenance workers employed by the contractor Interserve at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office began a five day strike on 10 June.

The situation for the workers there is acute: Interserve hasn't paid them since 28 April, plunging many of them into severe hardship. The union is setting up food banks on the picket lines. We've called for a day of labour movement solidarity there on 12 June, where we hope other union branches, Labour Parties, socialist groups, and others will support the picket line.

Following this, there will be further strikes at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy from 17 June, again for five days, with picket lines, demonstrations, and other actions planned on each day.

Security workers have just voted, by a 100% majority, to join that strike, and Aramark workers, who the union had to re-ballot due to the six-month time limit, also voted by 100% to continue action. ISS contractors are also involved. Altogether the strike involves cleaners, security workers, porters, caterers, and post room workers.



Also from 17 June, we'll be balloting cleaners employed by ISS in HMRC tax offices on Merseyside. The demands in that dispute are for living wages, better holidays, company sick pay, and job security guarantees for cleaners in offices threatened with closure.

All these workers do essential jobs within many government departments. Their labour makes the buildings run, but outsourcing means they have vastly worse pay, terms, and conditions than their directly-employed civil service colleagues. These disputes show that our union is making a serious effort to end that injustice and inequality.

Our approach should be, "if you're in the building, you're in the union." If we can organise seriously amongst outsourced workers, we can spread and win these disputes.

Tube prepares to ballot

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT is preparing to ballot its members across London Underground for industrial action, after talks with LU bosses over pay and conditions reached a dead end.

Directly-employed Tube workers' pay deal expired in April, with all four unions which organised on LU submitting claims which included the demand for a 32-hour week (most Tube workers currently work 35 or 36-hour contractual weeks).

LU has refused to engage with these demands, offering first a 2.5% pay increase, then a two-year deal with RPI+0.1% and RPI+0.2% pay increases.

RMT is the majority union by a considerable margin, and will ballot close to 10,000 workers. Drivers' union Aslef; TSSA, which organises mainly supervisory and clerical grades amongst station and office staff; and Unite, which has a small membership in some engineering workplaces, have all also rejected LU's offers and are likely to follow RMT into dispute.

This will be the first network-wide ballot of Tube workers since

the imposition of new laws requiring turnout thresholds, and a double threshold for workers in "essential services", including transport.

An RMT rep told *Solidarity*: "We've got an opportunity to run an enthusiastic, assertive campaign that gets the union on the front foot. It's unfortunate we've taken as long as we have to get to the point of going into dispute and preparing to ballot; many of us were calling for our pay claim to be submitted much further in advance of the expiry of the last deal than it was.

"But now we're here, we need to run a campaign that members feel ownership over and which is a positive fight for our demands, rather than a haggle over the company's derisory offer. Work/life balance and fatigue is a major issue across the job, especially for station staff, so we should approach this as an offensive campaign for a reduced working week.

"We can't just go through the motions of a routine pay round and end up with a deal a few fractions of a percentage point higher than the one management offered."

Talks restart at TDL

By Duncan Parker, TDL courier and IWGB union rep

The 10 June strike by TDL couriers was postponed when negotiations restarted on Friday 7th.

After months of silence from management, TDL CEO David Byrne emailed the entire fleet saying that negotiations had never

been closed and threatened couriers with prosecution over behaviour during strike action. The email, coming a week before planned strike action, was seen as a cynical attempt to save face and discourage the couriers' resolve.

The IWGB got ready for negotiations on 7 June, and unsurprisingly were stonewalled by CFO Tom Aimes, who refused to budge a few pounds. The CEO didn't



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Thursday 20 June Queer Walking Tour of Brixton

Join a guided walking tour with Ian Townson on the radical gay community and squats in and around Brixton Road from the mid-1970s to 1981, the year of the Brixton riots
• 6.30pm, meet Herne Hill Station, SE24 0JW



Friday 21 June Ruth Cashman debates Paul Embery: Socialists and Brexit

• 7pm, Student Central, Malet St, WC1E 7HY

Saturday

- Registration from 11am, Camden School for Girls, Sandall Rd., NW5 2DB
- 11.45-12.25 Opening plenary

12.30-2pm, sessions including... Brexit and imperialist nostalgia with Danny Dorling and Cath Fletcher

- Was workers' revolution possible in 1919? Was it desirable? with Simon Webb and Janine Booth
- The Tiananmen Square uprising: when Chinese workers and students fought for freedom with Camila Bassi
- The future of the left in Israel with Eric Lee (Labour Start, p.c.), Maya Ilany (Yachad, p.c.), Tom Harris (Workers' Liberty)



2-3pm: lunch



3.20-4.35pm, sessions:

- Richard Wilkinson on "The Inner Level: how more equal societies reduce stress, restore sanity and everybody's wellbeing"
- Labour and antisemitism with Sean Matgamma (Ken Livingstone committed himself, but then withdrew from debate)
- Diane Reay's "Miseducation: Inequality, Education and the Working Classes", with NEU activist Gemma Short
- Andreas Malm's "Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming" with Mike Zubrowski

4.55-6pm sessions, including...

- LGBT+ education in schools with Khakan Qureshi, Birmingham South Asians LGBT, and NEU activists
- 1917 and the legacy of the Bolsheviks with Paul Vernadsky and Steve Smith

- Workers' struggle and political prisoners in Iran, with Morad Shirin (Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency) and Azar Majedi (Worker-Communist Party of Iran — Hekmatist)
- Arguing for Autistic Rights: the backlash against neurodiversity and how to overcome it with Judy Singer, author of 'Neurodiversity: the birth of an idea'; Janine Booth, author of 'Autism Equality in the Workplace'; and Fergus Murray, co-founder of Autistic Mutual Aid Society, Edinburgh

6.10-6.25pm: break



6.25-7.35pm sessions:

- US teacher struggles and reviving the labour movement with teacher trade unionist and socialist activist Lois Weiner
- Zetkin, Luxemburg and the German Social Democratic Women's Movement with Kelly Rogers and Kieran Miles
- The bourgeois Marx: a critical appraisal of Max Weber with Dan Davison
- Hungary 1956 with John Cunningham

Sunday

Registration from 10am, Camden School for Girls, NW5 2DB



10.30-12, sessions including...

- György Lukács: a Marxist of 1919 with John Cunningham
- The Roots of Lexit with Paul Vernadsky
- What kind of "Green New Deal"? with Luke Neal
- The breakup of Yugoslavia with Sarah Correia



12-1pm: lunch



1-2.25pm, sessions including...

- Luxemburg and Luxemburgism with Justine Canady and Martin Thomas
- 40 years of Southall Black Sisters with Pragna Patel, SBS
- The Uyghur people's fight for freedom with Aziz Isa Elkun, Uyghur activist
- The Deliveroo strikes: workers fighting back in the gig economy with Zack Murrell-Dowson and Tom Harrington, couriers and IWGB activists

2.25-2.35pm: break



1-2.25pm, sessions including...

- Solidarnosc: workers against Stalinism with Chris Marks
- Identity politics and class struggle with Ralph Leonard and Christie Neary
- Independent working-class education and the legacy of the Plebs League with Colin Waugh
- What kind of left does Labour need? Speakers TBA

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Riley Road, SE1 3DG

Paper production: Simon Nelson,
Cathy Nugent, Martin Thomas
(ed.), and Mike Zubrowski

Printed by Trinity Mirror