



Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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FIGHT THE TORIES' BREXIT COUP PLOT



If Boris Johnson prorogues (suspends) Parliament to force through his no-deal Brexit, then, says Tory maverick Rory Stewart, "I would work with colleagues simply to organise another parliament across the road."

"That sounds quite Civil-War-ist, but that is what happened in 2002 when Blair tried not to have a vote on the Iraq war".

Tony Blair had tried to push along his support for the invasion of Iraq while Parliament was not sitting. The backbench Labour MP Graham Allen booked a hall to convene MPs "unofficially". Blair backed down and re-



called Parliament for a debate.

As we go to press on 15 July, all reports have Boris Johnson well ahead of Jeremy Hunt in the race to become Tory leader and prime minister on 23-24 July.

What Johnson will do as prime minister (and what difference it will make if somehow Hunt wins) we don't know.

We can most firmly exclude what Johnson (and Hunt) say they will do: negotiate a "backstop"-free deal, very different from Theresa May's, and have it done and dusted by 31 October or soon after.

Johnson has said he thinks it "absolute



folly" to rule out suspending Parliament so that he can push through a "no deal" Brexit over the heads of the MPs.

If it seems improbable that he will attempt that, it is only because of the angry response of dissident Tories like Stewart.

Labour has consistently opposed "no deal". But more limply than the dissident Tories. Labour has now said it will demand a new public vote on any Tory Brexit formula, deal or "no deal", and back Remain in that new public vote. But with ostentatious reluctance.

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Trump's Gulag-on-the-border

By Martin Thomas

Nearly 550 workers at the Wayfair company in San Francisco and Boston have staged walk-outs outside company headquarters after hearing that the company had taken a \$200,000 order including kids' beds for a contractor known to work with detention centres.

That protest, and others, were sparked after Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and other members of the US Congress got to visit the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) detention centre in Clint, Texas, on 1 July.

CBP did some "cleaning up" before the members of Congress arrived. A group of women, pictured above, told Ocasio-Cortez that they were moved into the crowded room from outside tents before our arrival. "They said they'd gone 15 days without a shower, and were

allowed to start bathing four days ago (when the visit was announced)".

The CBP people were openly hostile — a Facebook group including 9,500 out of their 20,000 number has been revealed, which carries openly racist and abusive comment — and made the members of Congress hand in their phones before the visit. But one Congressman, Joaquin Castro, was able to get a phone in.

"The members of Congress asked the women's permission to photograph — they said yes, please share what's happening", reports Ocasio-Cortez.

Women and children are held in crowded rooms, with little access to washing facilities. They are refused soap, toothbrushes, and toothpaste, and given only sachets of shampoo. When they ask for water, they are told: drink from the toilet.

Men are held in rooms so crowded that it is standing-room only. The same was done by the Stalinists in eastern Poland in 1939, when they rounded up Poles for deportation into the USSR. This is in a rich, supposedly democratic country.

And much of this is done for profit. Many of the USA's detention centres — not Clint, but many others — are run by private contractors, who turn a tidy profit. GEO Group and CoreCivic, the two largest private prison companies, are known financial supporters of Trump.

There are 300 children in Clint. One reason there are now so many



The Customs and Border Protection camp in Clint, Texas: there, some men are held in rooms with standing room only

children in federal custody is that the Trump administration has threatened to arrest and deport the parents or other adults if they don't have legal status. Even immigrants with legal status are afraid to claim the children.

Lawyer and child advocate Warren Binford told the New Yorker magazine after she and a team of attorneys interviewed dozens of children detained at Clint. "They are not safe, because they are getting sick." Dolly Lucio Sevier, a doctor, has called the conditions: "tantamount to intentionally causing the spread of disease." As of June, two dozen detainees have died in Immigrations and Customs

enforce custody since Donald Trump took office.

A "stench" pervades the Clint detention centre — stained clothes, toddlers without nappies, and babies caked in dirt. Fluorescent lights remain on overhead 24 hours a day, the building is often cold, children and adults lie on concrete, sometimes under an aluminium foil blanket, sometimes not.

In June, US government lawyer Sarah Fabian argued in court that the law's "safe and sanitary" stipulation doesn't mandate that the government provide detained children with soap or toothbrushes. CBP currently holds 2,000 children in federal custody a day. When

local people have tried to donate stuff, CBP has refused the donations.

The Trump administration has responded with a grudging admission that some things need to be fixed up at the detention centres — and a message from Trump personally to the Congresswomen (all non-Anglo, but most born in the USA) that they should "go home", plus a threat of renewed swoops and deportations of "illegal" migrants.

Close these detention centres! Let families be reunited! End the deportations! Legalise the USA's millions of "undocumented" people! Open the borders!



New setback in USA

By Rhodri Evans

There is no public announcement about this yet, but we reliably hear that the conference of the US revolutionary-socialist group Solidarity on the weekend 29-30 June voted to set up a committee to explore converting it from an organisation into an educational centre.

This follows the decision by the larger International Socialist Organization (ISO) in March-April to dissolve itself.

With Solidarity, there is no hint of a scandal or row triggering the dissolution. The word is that the group came to consider itself too small, weak, elderly, and divided to function as an organisation.

These moves mark the expiry (at least for now) in the USA of two major political traditions originating from the Trotskyism of the days of Trotsky: the Heterodox Trotskyist tradition of Max Shachtman and Hal Draper, considerably-mutated follow-ons from which operated within both ISO

and Solidarity, and the mainstream Orthodox Trotskyism of Ernest Mandel, represented within Solidarity.

Workers' Liberty has had friendly relations over the years (as well as political differences) with Solidarity, and we see this as a setback. We hope to learn more.



Corrections

The date on the front page of *Solidarity* 512 (3 July) was given wrongly on the front page as "2 June" (though it was right on the back page). This year's Workers' Liberty summer camp is the *ninth*, not the eighth. Carola Rackete's name was misspelled as Rakete.

Solidarity 514: 14 August

Solidarity 514 will be printed on 14 August, and 515 on 4 September. Then usual weekly schedule.

Socialist Party calls a special conference on 21 July

By Pete Boggs

The SP (Socialist Party) is holding a special conference on 21 July to discuss issues from the conflict in the international network linked to the SP (Committee for a Workers' International, CWI), and a split looks likely.

SP doyen Peter Taaffe has formed a faction in the CWI, "In Defence of a Working-Class Trotskyist CWI". They contend that the Irish section has moved into "petty-bourgeois Mandelism" through its work in its feminist pro-choice campaign ROSA and an overemphasis on students.

The "Non-Faction Faction" (NFF) in the SP, aligned with the majority in the CWI, charges Taaffe with bureaucratism and being unable to relate to the new wave of left-wing and liberation movements across the world.

Taaffe's faction has a comfortable majority in Britain, and has been able to remove NFF supporters Sarah Wrack and Claire Laker-Mansfield as (successive) editors

of the SP's weekly paper and from the SP's Executive Committee.

Evidence for the NFF's claims of bureaucratism comes from an email sent in error by Taaffe-supporting CWI secretary Tony Saunois to every national section revealing plans to expel Taaffe's opponents if they convened a meeting of the CWI's leading committee.

The history of the SP, and before it Militant, also includes antipathy to movements which fought against oppression outside of solely class boundaries.

CRITICAL

Autonomous struggles for women's, gay, or black liberation have been dismissed as unnecessarily divisive.

In a factional battle when Militant had hegemony on Liverpool City Council in the mid-80s, its members spread racist slanders about the Liverpool Black Caucus being "pimps and gangsters" (bit.ly/1pl-bc). Around the same time its paper published misogyny

nistic cartoons of Margaret Thatcher (bit.ly/th-ctn).

The SP has come a long way since the 1980s, but even now it feels like much of their politics on such issues has merely been grafted on to avoid putting off all but the most backward recruits.

There is little evidence that the NFF or the Irish section have fallen into identity politics or a wholesale abandonment of working class politics. The greater fear should not be that they are openly propagating opportunist politics now, but rather that if flung out of the SP they will flail around and then descend into the opportunism which they have been accused of.

SP comrades who have been prompted to rethink should make a critical reassessment of the whole SP/ Militant tradition and the "Orthodox Trotskyist" legacy of which it is a splinter.

The Socialist Party is not the party of Lenin and Trotsky, but rather a much-downgraded version of those of Zinoviev and James P Cannon in his post-1940 phase.

Hong Kong confronts the CCP

Chen Ying writes from Hong Kong

Within an explosive period of six weeks, we have seen protest marches totalling close to five million people, together with the most heavy-handed use of police firepower since 1997.

The invasion of the Legislative Council building went viral around the world. This level of sustained social protest has not happened since the march of 1.5 million people in Hong Kong against the Tiananmen massacre in June 1989.

Hong Kong has had enough. This is our city's reaction to decades of Beijing's undermining of the "one country, two systems" accord, signed with Britain in 1984.

In 2003, 500,000 marched against the enactment of an anti-sedition law, Article 23, which eventually forced the first post-1997 Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa to step down.

Five years ago, the 2014 Occupy Central or Umbrella Movement started after the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) blocked proposed reforms to the Hong Kong electoral system. The occupation of Hong Kong's Central District paralysed traffic for 77 days. At the peak of the protests, on one afternoon 89 tear gas canisters were launched.

Occupy Central was defeated. Whilst repeatedly mobilising over 100,000 people to demonstrate, without a clear programme or leadership the protest lost its focus. Its leaders were given jail sentences and some pro-democracy legisla-

tors were barred from holding office. Only half of Legco is directly elected, and the pro-democracy minority has been further marginalised by disqualifications and tightening of Legco procedures to restrict debate.

Five years on, with near-total control over Legco, the HK Government exploited the case of a Hong Konger who committed a murder in Taiwan to attempt to push through an extradition law. This touched upon a raw nerve. Hong Kong is already weary of the arbitrary disappearance of people taken across the border. The new law would enable many more people to be extradited to China.

SPILLED

The massive explosion of opposition spilled over into a society-wide protest against the Government's arrogance and its refusal to address many economic and social ills:

Expensive housing, low pay and long working hours, deteriorating health care and no retirement pension for an aging population, plus the emphasis on Putonghua (Standard Mandarin) over the local Cantonese language in schools, the attacks on press freedom, the increasing numbers of super-rich mainlanders.

During 2004, a Hong Kong Lennon Wall sprang up – thousands of post-it notes, cultural revolution-style big Chinese character posters, works of art etc. Today, there are over a hundred Lennon Walls springing up all over different neighbourhoods in Hong Kong.

The public image of the police, already tarnished since 2014, has further plummeted. The attack on the Legco building expressed activists' frustration that the neutered Legco no longer functions as any check against Government excesses. Society appears sharply polarised between blue and yellow camps – the blue pro-government, pro-Beijing and pro-police camp on the one hand, and the much larger oppositional yellow camp.

All this is occurring against a steadily deteriorating economic background. In the past two decades, Hong Kong's economic importance to China has diminished dramatically. In 1997, HK's GDP was 20% of China's (though with six million vs 1200 million people) and it handled about half of China's international trade. Now its GDP is 3% of China's and falling further, overtaken by Shanghai and Shenzhen.

The Gini coefficient in Hong Kong is very high at 0.54, with a minute layer of super-rich individuals exercising an uncurbed monopolistic stranglehold over the city. The movement's immediate demands are very focused and enjoy widespread support – withdrawal of the extradition proposal, the resignation of Carrie Lam as chief executive, amnesty for those arrested, and an independent commission of inquiry into the whole event, not just police brutality.

However, its political leadership and more long term programme is currently not clearly formed. Whilst this has made it impossible for the government to identify and

target leaders, like in 2004, it does beg the question of what will happen next.

The government is totally paralysed and has lost its credibility – the ruling elite, including those who are strongly pro-Beijing, think they are a complete failure. Beijing, through its liaison office in Hong Kong, already calls all the shots.

A serious flight of capital has begun, with Singapore the main destination. Those with the capacity to emigrate are actively planning to do so (as many did before 1997). The fear an economic collapse of confidence and a free-fall for the Hong Kong currency, currently pegged to the US Dollar.

Hong Kong is in an unprecedented crisis, not seen in a couple of generations. This is happening during an epoch where China is on a collision course with USA. Pro-independence political forces in Hong Kong and Taiwan are already in close dialogue.

A majority of Hong Kong people still consider themselves culturally as Chinese, and see their future destiny as part of a modern Chinese nation which is liberated from the stranglehold of the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP itself, whilst forever plagued by infighting and power struggles, will not just implode or give up its monopoly of state power on its own.

The necessary task of uniting the best elements of the protest movements in Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China to build a proletarian party to take on the CCP will be a huge challenge.

£25,000 by 9 December

Our new fund drive, aiming to raise £25,000 by 9 December, was launched at our summer school, Ideas for Freedom, on 22-23 June.

We raised £8,515 there. Since then we've had in another £1,300, from donors who want to be anonymous, so we're at £9,815.

Our income from regular supporters' contributions and literature sales covers our basics: rent, utilities, office supplies, stipends for some of our office staff.

Other things — such as buying in outside expertise to help with our website, paying organisers' fares to travel to meetings, printing new pamphlets and books — depend on the fund-raising.

On 11-14 July Workers' Liberty ran a residential week school, on the Wales-England border, about the lessons of the several revolutionary crises in Germany between 1918 and 1923, and the efforts then to build a solid German Communist Party (which after 1923 were snuffed out by "Bolshevisation", then by Stalinism).

In one session we looked at the basic routines of that Communist Party when it was a real revolutionary party, 250,000 strong or more, in 1922.

It levied dues of the equivalent of £50 per month from the average member, who was then a manual worker in a much poorer Germany, where the great bulk of wages went to basics of food and shelter.

It demanded much more from its better-paid members. It organised each member rigorously into two regular streams of meetings, their workplace "fraction" and their neighbourhood "group of ten".

It ran residential Marxist-education schools, one month or three months long, and provided financial support for workers to attend.

Without that sort of effort, the question of the party leading a revolution would not even have been a possibility.

That mass Communist Party stemmed from an initial all-Germany meeting of socialists willing to organise against World War 1, canvassed for energetically by Rosa Luxemburg in 1914, which drew just seven people. (Others said they opposed the war, but they felt unwell, the journey was too long, they had domestic problems...)

At all stages, from the tiny nucleus to the big party, revolutionary socialist politics is impossible without fund-raising efforts.

Help us!
workersliberty.org/donate

Sudan: protests against stalled deal

By Simon Nelson

Further demonstrations have been held in Sudan's capital Khartoum following the killing of a civilian in El-Souk by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia.

There had been demonstrations in El-Souk calling on the RSF to leave.

The demand for civilian rule and an end to the Transitional Military Council (TMC) regime that replaced that of Omar al-Bashir is increasing.

A rotten deal, not yet signed, would allow the military to govern for 21 months and then hand power to a civilian administration for a further 18 months. In face of that, the protests have continued.

The deal would form an 11 member council, five civilians, five military representatives, and an 11th person elected and agreed by both sides. The first person put forward was a retired military officer!

The Central Committee of Sudanese Doctors (CCSD) has said on Twitter that six civilians have been killed in Sudan over the past three days. The CCSD said the Transitional Military Council (TMC) must be held responsible for the deaths.

Negotiations between the Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC/FFC), an umbrella group for the opposition dominated by the Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), and the TMC have stalled but are due to start again as Solidarity goes to press on 16 July.

Following the initial agreement, protests have continued with another "million man march" on Saturday 13 July to mark 40 days since the violent break-up of the Khartoum sit in on 3 June.

Details of the massacre and the atrocities committed by the TMC backed RSF and other militias are only now coming to light. Videos and pictures can be shared after the TMC allowed internet usage to resume.

While negotiations may well stall again, the AFC appear to have been far too accepting of the proposed transitional arrangement. In a statement they said: "What we have realised today is a gateway to the application and the realisation of the goals of the revolution. We will continue our road through a vast partnership with all the national forces that have not fallen in the mire of the oppression of the late regime of al-Bashir."

A vast partnership with all national forces that were not a part of the oppression of the Bashir regime cannot by rights include the military.

With the prospect of the army having almost two years running the country, with the AFC's consent at least for now, the danger of a military consolidation of power and the crushing of the burgeoning labour movement and civil society is very real.

To give an indication of the control the military still seeks to put

forward, crowds celebrating the agreement were fired upon with live rounds by the RSF. Already longer standing opposition movements have rejected the deal. Many of these are armed groups that have fought the government and the RSF in different formations in Darfur and elsewhere. They do not provide an alternative, but their distrust is not misplaced.

Worryingly, the deal has not raised the ire of Egypt, Saudi Arabia or the UAE. All of them are key players in the Arab League and want to see "stability" in Sudan.

And we should remember that Bashir provided that stability until recently.

•An audio recording of the speeches by Namaa Al-Mahdi and Stephen Wood from Workers' Liberty London Forum, "Sudan: democracy and revolution", can be found at workersliberty.org/audio

Who needs the “horseshoe” theory?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Having to follow the *Morning Star* (and, therefore the politics of the Communist Party of Britain) on a regular basis, teaches you to read between the lines.

Various themes and leitmotifs are hidden away in apparently innocuous asides (eg pro-Remain forces within Labour routinely referred to as “Blairite”) or contained in articles that are superficially about something else entirely.

Thus last Wednesday’s *Morning Star* carried a quite lengthy piece by one Nathan Akehurst, denouncing the so-called “horseshoe” theory which posits that the far right and far left eventually converge.

Akehurst claims that the recent BBC drama *Years and Years*, in which a radical left government in Spain clamps down on migrants, is an example of this “theory” being used by “centrists” to attack the left as anti-migrant. Akehurst protests that “the left at its worst has merely failed to oppose the violent ex-

cesses of what already exists.”

Later in the article, Akehurst complains that “the existence elsewhere in Europe of forces like migration-sceptical left-wing party Aufstehen in Germany, has been deliberately twisted by neoliberals keen to play up the ‘liberal’ side of their credentials as demonstrating that the left is not much more progressive than the far right”.

“To this end”, continues Akehurst, “evidence as absurd as the existence of Mette Fredricksen in Denmark (a mainstream social democrat who is a migration-sceptic) or Jeremy Corbyn’s relative pragmatism over the Brexit referendum is conscripted into the narrative of a radical left that can be thrown in with the far right in a bag labelled ‘populism.’”

I’ve never heard the (simplistic and unhelpful) “horseshoe theory” used in political discourse. Undeniably, though, significant sections of the left, or what considers itself the left, are pandering to nationalism.

Aufstehen’s Sahra Wagenknecht in Germany and La France Insoumise’s Jean-Luc Mélenchon in France are both militantly nationalist and anti-migrant: France is no longer an “independent country”, says Mélenchon; “Open borders in Europe means

more competition for badly paid jobs,” says Wagenknecht.

The support for Brexit by the SWP, Counterfire, the Socialist Party, George Galloway and especially the *Morning Star* is another case in point; Corbyn’s betrayal of the principle of free movement, yet another.

Not so long ago, the *Morning Star* was denouncing the Brexit Party. An editorial on April 24th sneered: “Even the news that the Brexit Party confected by Nigel Farage is to present the Moral Maze’s shape-shifting Claire Fox as a candidate fails to astonish. There can hardly be a more suitable candidate for the Brussels talking shop than a motor-mouth Trotskyite turned right-wing libertarian.”

Claire Fox and her in-absolutely-no-way-Trotskyist organisation, *Spiked!* support something called The Full Brexit (TFB), a pro-Brexit organisation that claims to be on the left.

Another leading light of the Full Brexit is Peter Ramsay, Professor of Law at the London School of Economics. And who do we find writing a conspiratorial, nationalist twaddle for the *Morning Star* on 9 July?

Why, none other than Peter Ramsay. His article denounced John McDonnell’s for back-

ing a second referendum and a Remain position for Labour. That would, says the author, represent the “Syrizafication” of Labour, making “Tony Blair’s political divorce of the party from Labour’s working class base irreversible” and mark Labour’s going over “to the elite resistance to Brexit” ... “the middle classes [and] big business.”

Ramsay, with fellow-academic Chris Bickerton, has an article on TFB’s website on the Irish border question and Brexit which effectively recommends: send in British troops.

“Behind the intransigence of Michel Barnier and Leo Varadkar”, the article continues, “we find potential threats from diehard republican grouplets, effectively recruited as the armed wing of the European Union. In London, we find a British political class that has been willing to send its armies on bloody adventures in Iraq and Afghanistan, but is unwilling to face down even the slightest hint of violence closer to home to ensure that a democratic decision over the constitutional future of the UK can be implemented.”

Also on TFB, Ramsay has argued that although Farage’s Brexit Party is not “the answer to the deep problems of British politics”, nevertheless “all democrats” should support it.

Disabled, not impaired



Letters

Martin Thomas is still insisting that the student he referred to in a previous letter is impaired, but has yet to offer convincing evidence of this.

He appears to conclude that if we don’t recognise this student’s impairment, then we are denying the existence or significance of impairment.

I am comfortable with being labelled “disabled” as an autistic person, because society disables me by being geared to neurotypical interactions and sensitivities. I don’t think my autism is an impairment. I accept that for some people, their neurodivergence — or aspects of it — may be impairment.

I have no problem in accepting that impairment exists, and that it exists in varying degrees. I spend a fair amount of time arguing with approaches that appear to be, or which risk, denying this, which might potentially erase impairment by insisting that everything is merely difference.

Disability and impairment are not the same thing. Disability is the way in which society creates barriers and difficulties to people with impairments and differences. It is possible to be impaired but not disabled (for example, a short-sighted person whose vision is easily corrected with freely-available lenses), and also to be disabled but not impaired (as, for example, some autistic people are).

Martin argues that his student was impaired in “participation in collective learning and discussion”. I am still not convinced that Martin can know that for sure.

His student was certainly disabled in an environment which did not suit his neuro-

logy and learning style. But he may have been able to participate in collective learning and discussion in a different format (for example in a different physical environment, through differently-structured activities, online, in written correspondence, in a smaller group, etc). Unless you know for sure that this is not the case, then the assertion that he is impaired remains open to doubt.

Moreover, “collective learning” is only one form of learning. I’m not sure that there are sufficient grounds to assume that learning in largeish groups is such a superior form of learning that it warrants “hard-wired” preference for learning alone or one-to-one as “impairment”.

Of course we can not blame capitalism for impairment being a significant factor. But we can indict capitalism for the massive barriers it puts in the way of people with impairments — and of people with differences.

Sometimes those barriers are such that they make difference look like impairment even when it is not.

We can also blame capitalism for its narrow definitions of what is the “norm”, including in learning and interaction styles, and its consequential assumption that those who differ from that norm are impaired. Capitalism operates what we might call a “neurocracy”: a rigid conformity, arising in large part from the conformity it demands of workers’ roles in production.

But let’s end by reasserting that whether a neurodivergent person (or any other disabled person) is impaired or not, our demands remain the same: equality, dignity, rights, the removal of barriers.

For many of us, this will require not just adjustments or workarounds, but major societal changes.

Janine Booth, Hackney

“Inspired by internationalism”

By John McDonnell MP

First, I fear that Johnson is willing to tip our country into the disaster of a no deal. We must work across the House to prevent this being inflicted on our community.

We cannot stand by and allow Parliament to be prorogued or ignored. Johnson and his wealth friends will be largely protected from the increased food prices, threat to NHS drug supplies and eroding living standards caused by a no deal Brexit.

I warn you not to underestimate the reckless, ruthless self serving ambition of Johnson, who is willing to put our people at risk to secure the temporary keys of No. 10.

Second I am tremendously pleased that we are now committed to a referendum in which we will campaign to Remain. This reflects the increasing level of awareness of the impact Brexit would have on our economy and the jobs of the people we represent.

Third, in any future campaign we must learn the lessons of the last referendum campaign. I campaigned in that referendum with others on the slogan “Another Europe is Possible.” I believe that we failed in the last referendum because we failed to convince large areas of our country that another Europe was possible. We didn’t promote sufficiently the transformative policy programme we are constructing for many of the areas that in frustration and anger voted for Brexit.

So we must campaign for Remain but also the change that many of our communities desperately need after decades of neoliberal dominance and years of harsh austerity.

Fourth, that transformative programme includes both the large scale economic investment needed in these towns and also proposals for reform of the way the institutions of the EU operate to increase accountability and participation. That’s why I have



favoured consideration of the use of Citizens’ Assemblies before any vote to both better inform the debate but also build understanding and, wherever possible, consensus.

Finally, we now need to campaign with idealism. Of course the economic argument is critical to our campaign but we also need to inspire people with the principles of internationalism that assert the unity of peoples rather than the separateness of nation states.

At Labour’s International Social Forum at the weekend we agreed that a new Internationalism was not only possible but needed. We should reframe our debate and campaigning over Europe into that inspiring vision.

• This was the message from Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell to the “Love Socialism, Hate Brexit” meeting on 15 July.

Fight the Tories' Brexit coup plot

From front page

It has opposed "no deal" only through parliamentary manoeuvres.

Socialist internationalists demand Labour take the idea of an "unofficial Parliament" out of the hands of Rory Stewart and running with it.

We demand that Labour plan for mass protest demonstrations in every city if Johnson attempts to suspend Parliament. Besides that Labour should be supporting the anti-Brexit marches on 20 July and 12 October and putting a Labour-oriented political stamp on them.

Boris Johnson is enough of an unprincipled opportunist that we can imagine he might do a u-turn once prime minister, dish his supporters, and delay Brexit.

If he tries that, or anyway, an energetic Labour campaign could force him into calling a general election.

One of the less-improbable improbabilities of the next few months is that he may call a general election anyway, gambling that he can scoop back the Farage vote.

Whatever the variant, we must work to mobilise the labour movement to fight and bring down the sub-Trump demagogue Johnson.

For that to work politically, we must push Labour into sorting itself out.

Into making a clear call against Brexit, for "Remain and Transform", for free movement and migrants' rights.

Into tackling antisemitism, and declaring clearly that hate-Israel conspiracy theories are off limits and, besides, no help to Palestinian rights.

Into standing firmly and emphatically with workers on strike, committing to repeal *all* anti-trade union legislation.

Away from reducing its anti-cuts message to a call for more spending on the police, and into pledges to tax the rich to restore the NHS, education, and benefits. Into serious action on climate change.

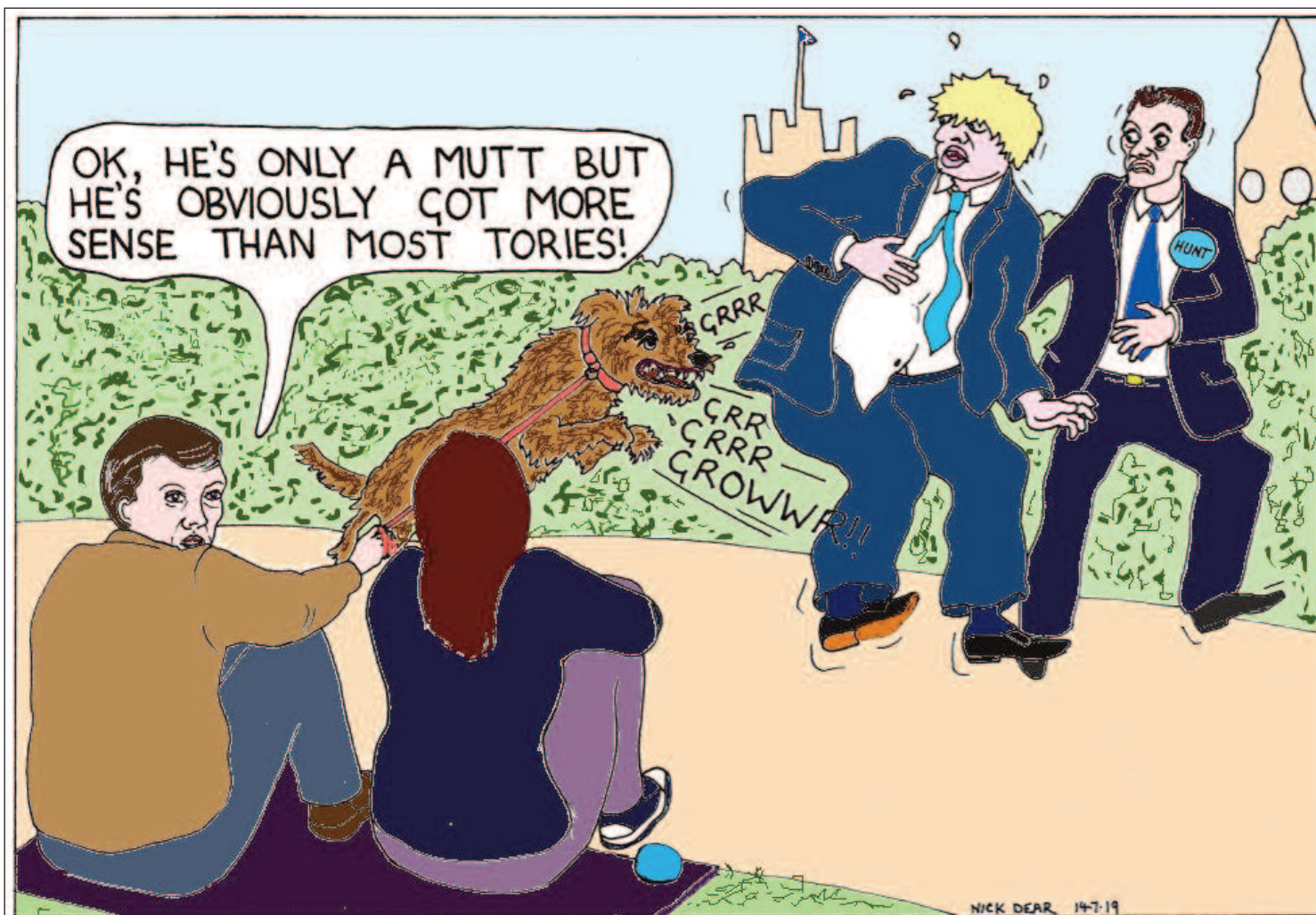
And to drastically extend public ownership and democratic control of economic life.



Arabs, Jews, and socialism

Arabs Jews and Socialism: The socialist debate in the 1980s and 90s on Israel and Palestine, and the development of Workers' Liberty's ideas.

£5 cover price, £6.20 including postage.



Labour shifts on Brexit. Now clinch a victory!

By Colin Foster

"No matter what deal is on the table, and which party has negotiated it, our position must be to remain in the EU and oppose any form of Brexit", declared shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry at a "Love Socialism Hate Brexit" meeting in Parliament on Monday 15 July.

Diane Abbott, Dawn Butler, Jon Ashworth and Keir Starmer also spoke. John McDonnell and Scottish Labour leader Richard Leonard sent messages of support.

"Love Socialism Hate Brexit" (now renamed "Love Socialism Rebuild Britain Transform Europe") was at first, when launched in February, a small group of nine left Labour MPs, Clive Lewis, Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Alex Sobel, and others.

Agitation and campaigning from the grass roots by groups like Labour for a Socialist Europe — the huge anti-Brexit demonstration on 23 March, street stalls, meetings, motions through local Labour Parties — have expanded its reach.

The real, though mealy-mouthed and inadequate, shift in policy on 8-9 July by the Labour-affiliated trade unions (TULO) and then by the Labour Party also shows the impact of that campaigning effort.

Jeremy Corbyn said on 9 July: "Labour would campaign for Remain against either no deal or a Tory deal that does not protect the economy and jobs".

As Alena Ivanova and Ana Oppenheim have written (Labour List, 10 July): "We are getting closer and closer to becoming an anti-Brexit party.

"This policy shift... follows many months of sustained pressure from the grassroots, from the same mass membership that secured Corbyn his leadership victories on the promise of listening to the movement".

They add: "Labour must have the courage to win the argument on immigration. So far,

its approach has been timid and has accommodated anti-migrant narratives.

"Our 2017 manifesto accepted that freedom of movement would end, and Labour was initially reluctant to oppose the Tory Immigration Bill, which threatens to give Boris Johnson's future cabinet a blank cheque to rewrite migration laws.

"If the new Leave campaign is anything like the last one, we must be ready to tackle head-on its agenda of racist scapegoating. We know that it's years of austerity, privatisation, deregulation and attacks on trade unions that are to blame for poverty and inequality — not fellow working people with foreign passports.

"We can only beat hate and division by combining a socialist programme with a strong pro-migrant message".

The union position had a second clause, suggesting that a Labour government in the near future would seek a better Brexit deal and then call a public vote between a revised deal and Remain, leaving open Labour's recommendation in that case.

Insider reports say that the Labour shadow cabinet rejected that second clause. Labour's public statement said nothing on the question, and left open what Labour would say about Brexit in an early general election.

There remain those who want to rebuild walls between nations in Europe, turn back the economic and social clock, divert attention from class struggle against our own ruling class towards shadowy but above all "foreign" officials in Brussels, make barriers between British-born and migrant workers, and spin varieties of illusion about the possibilities for a reshaped "capitalism in one country". Nigel Farage. Boris Johnson. Jeremy Hunt. And, on the self-proclaimed left, the *Morning Star*, and the *Morning Star's* allies in Labour's Leader's Office, Seamus Milne and others.

Their hope now rests on weariness and

"we've done all we can" feelings gaining ground among the anti-Brexit majority of labour movement activists.

Such weariness, such force of inertia, is what the power of the ruling class always rests on. The great appear great because we are on our knees. Let us rise!



A pamphlet from Workers' Liberty summarises our arguments on Brexit, Europe, international solidarity, free movement, immigration, and how to build socialist politics cross-borders.

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Start local for climate action

Workers' Liberty activists have been proposing and debating initiatives on climate change.

By Matt Cooper

In his article in *Solidarity* 512 (bit.ly/cc-512) Mike Zubrowski argues that a focus on limited local issues and (by implication) workplace initiatives “distracts from the real forces at play” which are international and require that the working class “take democratic public control” of key sectors of the economy.

I would suggest that we need more debate about the degree to which the response to climate change should be predicated on successful socialist transformations around the world (but I do not have space to deal with this). Here I will focus on the immediate need to start a struggle against climate change based in workplaces based on a focus on immediate local issues which Mike disdains.

THE STRAW MAN OF LOCALISM
Mike argues local actions are inadequate to deal with the threat of climate change. This is a truism.

Some climate change NGOs build activism with virtue-signalling lifestyle politics that appears to be such localism, most egregiously the Earth Day Network’s “Billion Acts of Green” of urban tree planting, “sustainable cuisine,” campaigns for climate change on school curricula and the usual #NoMorePlasticBags fluff. However, this is not (in the parlance of NGOs) their “theory of change”. These activities are not their end product. Such NGOs seek to build awareness

and create activist-leaders to affect change through the existing decision making process. While Mike is right to call this “liberal”, its alleged localism not a fault but a strength (building activist movements and winning majorities). Their flaw is using this as a foundation for traditional lobbying, or, at best, a generational shift in opinion leading to an environmentalist march through the institutions.

INTERNATIONALISM
Instead Mike states that we need “bold, internationalist politics” without any indication of what these might be.

Without a movement in community or workplace, there is no local movement. Without local movements, no national movement. Without national movements, no international politics, bold or otherwise. Without a base, internationalism is passive propaganda aimed at existing school strike and Extinction Rebellion activists lacking the ability to create the agent for its implementation. Such directed propaganda is necessary but we need to present these activists with a cogent alternative.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLASS POLITICS
The criticism of localism, when transferred to the workplace, is even more problematic.

Mike writes: “For socialists to *advocate* ... this or that workplace becoming ‘decarbonised’ or ‘carbon neutral’ is to perpetuate muddled thinking” (original emphasis). But Mike’s proposed bridge between workers organised in workplaces and the international

solution required for climate change is (again) propagandistic, “advocating for society-wide changes and supporting youth climate strikers” along with fighting for a more climate-relevant school curriculum, more research in universities and (vaguely) the organisation of workers in key industries. While Mike states that workplace campaigns are important in “creating a sense of agency” he does not seem clear about the fundamental nature of struggle in the workplace.

Socialists’ next strategic goal is to win workers’ action alongside the school strikers. This might not be possible for the next round in September. While we should do what we can, union activists will be hindered by (among other things) such strikes’ illegality. Our approach must be based on workplace issues, not only to build awareness and support but to create a route to legal strike action. The demands will necessarily tend to the local (focused on the employer), although posing these in a wider context is not difficult. They could include:

a. *Transport*. Rather than selling the car park, we should demand that employers recognise why many workers are forced to drive to work: demand the employer subsidises public transport costs, accounts for the extra time as part of the working day, allows the necessary flexibility in working arrangements etc.

b. *Discussing emissions on the level of collective agreement*. Make emissions part of the formal worker-employee relationship making it clear that the workers will fight for the employer to bear the cost of mitigation. This could extend to workforce refusing to undertake damaging activities (e.g. shop workers refusing to handle certain goods). This is not

simply “lifestyle politics with a syndicalist spin” (as Mike has previously called it) but rank-and-file struggle.

c. *Transition*. In areas where moves to a carbon neutral economy would have a serious effect on the industry (e.g. motor, construction, transport, aerospace, tourism, agriculture) seek to create workers’ plans for transition.

d. *National union policy*. Demand that the nation’s leadership escalate climate change disputes to industrial action automatically. This would allow climate related strike action, initially in response to the school strikes.

Upcoming climate events

Workers’ Liberty activists and supporters are supporting, building and attending the following events. Please join!

At them, we will advocate working-class climate action, with bulletins and more.

- 25 July, 6.30pm, London: discussion organised by the Free Our Unions campaign to contribute to building workers’ climate action on 20 September. bit.ly/cc-fou

- 26-31 July, South-East of England: camp taking action against new gas-fired power stations, plus workshops on climate and migrants’ rights action. bit.ly/rtp19

- 20 September, globally: young people and students, will walk out to demand action on climate change. This time there have been calls for workers to join. While a general strike is unlikely, we are organising for strikes, walk-outs and other actions where possible. bit.ly/cs-20sep

Contact us to co-ordinate!

Climate activism in the workplace

By Paul Hampton

Business and government rely on workers’ passivity to do what they want to do – which is to make profit, while polluting freely. Workplaces are an important site of struggle to reduce carbon emissions.

Individuals have little influence; but workers at the point of production have tremendous collective power.

One of the results of concerted trade union campaigning over a number of years around issues of workplace health and safety was the winning of “health and safety reps”.

Many unions have fought for the election of “green reps” to play a similar role, and sometimes won management recognition for such positions.

Of course, it is entirely possible for green reps to be management toadies, allowing themselves to be used to publicise and promote management’s environmental policies which often seek to shift the blame for environmentally-damaging waste in the workplace onto workers.

But green rep positions can be used in a radical way. Green reps should be fighters, rather than a management stooge who just goes round telling workers to turn their lights off.

A low-level start is to organise a green day, show a DVD or environmental awareness film, or run a Q&A or informal debate, or some other public event to start discussion and meet people.

Green reps can demand the employer to carry out a feasibility study to install wind turbines and solar panels in the workplace. This has already happened in many workplaces, such as Tilbury docks, the BBC, BT, numerous universities and other big sites.

Insulation makes the workplace more comfortable to work in, as it balances out the seasonal impact on internal temperature, and saves money while reducing emissions. Old buildings should be upgraded – new buildings should adopt the best available technologies.

Automatic sensor lighting and energy-saving bulbs make a big difference. Similarly, new IT equipment will make workers jobs easier while using less energy, if power-saving devices are included.

Get the boss to commit to a green travel plan! This means the employer subsidising public transport use e.g. by paying for annual travel passes. A loan is a start, but better if it is free for workers.

Bosses should also be paying for bikes, as well as the safety equipment, storage and showers to freshen up. Where driving is essential, employers should buy dual fuel and electric vehicles, especially for urban areas. Drivers should get training for fuel efficient driving.

Employers should organise recycling schemes for metal, plastic and other materials, not just paper. It should include food waste, water use (e.g. rainwater for toilets).

The basic strategy of a radical green rep is

to reduce carbon emissions in the workplace by imposing workers’ control. This means workers taking decisions usually left to management’s prerogative. It is imposed because management will probably not allow it without a fight.

We fight for the right to know about real scale of workplace, industrial and employer greenhouse gas emissions, energy use, transport arrangements, waste etc. Demand your employer account for all their emissions – and not fob them off by carbon credits, outsourcing or cuts.

Energy efficiency reduces carbon emissions. It also saves bosses a lot of money.

These funds should be used to benefit workers, not swallowed up by shareholders as profits, or given to managers as fat-cat bonuses. Serious energy saving could be used to stop job cuts.

Workers need to see that action on climate change leads to direct, tangible benefits for them and their workmates. Radical green reps can ask questions, and demand answers about who pays and who benefits from climate-related measures.

• *Abridged from a briefing produced by Workers’ Climate Action in 2010 (bit.ly/wca-2010).*

For workers’ climate action: climate change, capitalism and working-class struggle



A collection of articles and reviews, produced by Workers’ Liberty (£3)

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Intertwining the threads

By Martin Thomas

The main sources of carbon emissions are:

- power generation (25% worldwide, 28% USA)
 - other industry (18% worldwide, 22% USA)
 - transport (14% worldwide, 29% USA)
 - agriculture (20% worldwide, 9% USA).
- So the major steps to decarbonise are:
- converting from coal, oil, and gas power to renewables and nuclear power
 - converting to low-emissions transport, expanding public transport, restructuring work and cities to reduce travel
 - reforestation

All of those require government action, and can't be completed through a linear-build-up of local activities.

Thus far Mike Zubrowski (*Solidarity* 512, bit.ly/cc-512) is right. He recognises that local activities are important too: "Environmental workplace activism... helps to pose the question of power in the workplace: who does and should run it, workers or bosses? Socialists should initiate such campaigns".

Some small-scale greenery is fake. The corporation that wins environmental awards for its new office with neat energy-saving tricks in the green countryside induces more carbon emissions through all the driving to and fro than one which fixes up an old building in a dense city.

But Mike is wrong, I think, to say that a big ailment of environmental activism has been a "tunnel-vision of institution-by-institution focus". There has been lifestyle and win-environmental-awards greenery. But that's not really activism.

The chief ailment on the activist side has been an intertwined running-down both of worksite or campus level activity and of large-scale government-focused activity (demonstrations etc.), or at best a turning-to-the-defensive on that front (stop fracking, stop Keystone XL, etc.).

The "green bans" by the New South Wales Builders Labourers in the 1970s, which first put the word "green" into large-scale politics, were all disputes about particular worksites.

In the earlier years of the 21st century there was a scattering of workplace union actions to reduce carbon emissions significantly. They were nourished by and nourished the big political demonstrations.

Paul Hampton, the researcher who documented those union actions, says that since then the "activity has dropped off because of union indifference". That drop-off came with

a drop-off in big political demonstrations on environmental issues. The new rise in big political demonstrations (school students, XR, etc.) can and should intertwine with a renewal of workplace and campus activism.

You can't allocate a precise carbon-emission figure to each segment of society. But you can do it roughly, as has been done in the figures I cited at the start of this article. Without doing it roughly, you can't even know where a workers' government would start with a socialist environmental program.

Google defines "decarbonise" as "reduce the amount of gaseous carbon compounds released in or as a result of a process". The current use is an adaptation from the older one — removing soot and other carbon accretions from an engine. The word is ok: to use the single word "decarbonise" rather than the two words "reduce emissions" carries no necessary implication of illusion.

Stanford University in the USA has reduced its emissions drastically. As far as I know, the reduction was driven by the university management wanting to look good, rather than by students and workers organising.

But rather than leading to complacency, the university's plan has led to students agitating for further reductions in the carbon emissions from travel connected to Stanford. They urge the university to deal with "Scope 3" — "all other indirect emissions that occur in a company's value chain": bit.ly/st-sc3.

The initial "decarbonisation" activity at Stanford has led to more attention to wider carbon emissions than on campuses which belch out carbon emissions without comment. Not to tunnel vision, but to wider vision.

The Stanford action is also significant because it has acted as a test-bed for low-emission energy techniques which could then be spread to other large institutions.

University campuses are a good focus for workplace decarbonisation because they are some of the largest workplaces around these days. A big university in England will have maybe 50,000 students, academics, and other workers.

Universities also have on-site expertise for emissions audits and emissions-reduction technology.

Campus emissions-reduction efforts can be used as test-beds for new technologies, and can be used to stimulate further research of wider application.

Mike Zubrowski's reply to this is online. See bit.ly/mz-reply

Start small, but aim big

By Mike Zubrowski

I must admit to being disappointed with much of Matt's response to my article in this *Solidarity*.

He makes various insightful points, and points I agree with. He has previously made other thought-provoking and good points. However, he seems to misrepresent me quite seriously, replying at an angle to my arguments. I'm sure this is unintentional, so significant fault presumably lies with me for insufficient clarity. I guess underlying perspectives are being read into my article which aren't there.

There are, or have been, disagreements, which I have no desire to soften. However, its necessary to be clear about what is being debated, what my previous article was arguing.

CLARIFICATIONS

Matt: *In his article in Solidarity 512 (bit.ly/cc-512) Mike Zubrowski argues that a focus on limited local issues and (by implication) workplace initiatives "distracts from the real forces at play" which are international and require that the working class "take democratic public control" of key sectors of the economy.*

I do not say that focus on local initiatives — and even less so workplace initiatives — distract from the real forces at play. I said "... approaches which see bit-by-bit 'carbon neutrality' as the solution. Implicit in the language of a single 'carbon neutral' institution...", i.e. certain ideas promoted about the role of local transitions, not transitions in themselves.

Matt: *... immediate need to start a struggle against climate change based in workplaces based on a focus on immediate local issues which Mike disdains.*

In my introductory section, I summarised my overall argument (emphasis added):

"In this article, I make the case that (I) the forces driving climate change are internationally entwined, an integrated whole; (II) that climate change can't be fixed by *focussing exclusively at a local level*; (III) that dominant ideological currents push in the direction of such a limited focus, hence the importance of critiquing them; (IV) what we can and should do, on a local and wider level, and how. *Local campaigning has a crucial place, which we must contextualise within a broader perspective*: the final section gives suggestions on how."

What I argue against is thus, I repeat, not "focus on immediate local issues". Perhaps — but at worst — I underplayed or underemphasised the role of such foci.

Matt: *Instead Mike states that we need "bold, internationalist politics" without any indication of what these might be.*

I said that "Workers' Liberty has and continues to argue for bold, internationalist politics to fight climate change;" the indication is in my reference, to what we have argued for more widely. These are sketched within our recently reprinted pamphlet *For workers' climate action: climate change, capitalism and working-class struggle*; our 2019 pamphlet *Remain and rebel: a socialist manifesto for Europe*; many of weekly environmental articles I have written for *Solidarity*; in our motions to trade union and Labour party branches; in campaigns we're involved in; and beyond.

Matt has correctly highlighted, elsewhere, that we haven't directly proposed — anywhere — a fleshed out international programme on climate change. I will do so in future articles, but unfortunately there has been no appetite in this or the previous issue for a twenty-page paper.

Matt: *But Mike's proposed bridge between workers organised in workplaces and the interna-*

tional solution required for climate change is (again) propagandistic, "advocating for society-wide changes and supporting youth climate strikers" along with fighting for a more climate-relevant school curriculum, more research in universities and (vaguely) the organisation of workers in key industries. While Mike states that workplace campaigns are important in "creating a sense of agency" he does not seem clear about the fundamental nature of struggle in the workplace.

There is a disagreement here, as I don't see the workplace demands my previous article advocated calling for as "propagandistic", but more than that.

I said "To get to a sustainable world requires not just promotion of, persuasion to, education about environmental socialism, at least in a narrowly conceived way. It also requires a raising of the confidence, horizons and organisation of the working class — the force capable of winning such changes — through struggle, including environmental struggle."

"In part this must be through trade union branches, workers organised at the point of production, advocating for society-wide changes, and supporting youth climate strikers. But there's more that can be done."

"There are immediate possibilities for activism which engages wider levels of workers, widens their political horizons, brings them into conflict with their bosses, and helps to move the trade union movement as a whole forward on these issues."

Matt: *Discussing emissions on the level of collective agreement... is not simply "lifestyle politics with a syndicalist spin" (as Mike has previously called it) but rank-and-file struggle.*

There are disagreements here, I believe, in emphasis and presentation, but again more.

What I was referring to previously was *not* rank-and-file struggle over emissions, collectively, *in itself*. It was the idea or goal which I saw as implicit in slogans of / and the proposals at the time, "decarbonise your workplace", which I believed were promoting the idea that individual institutions could go "carbon neutral", and all the associated ideas.

TAKING STOCK

Perhaps my emphasis read as unbalanced, I aim to clarify below.

The local workplace, for organising against climate change, is a the necessary starting point; the working-class are the agent for social change we orient to. However, tackling the fossil economy, and the society-, nation- and world-wide social relations driving climate change are necessary starting points for the slogans and associated ideas we promote.

This is not to suggest, by analogy, that we should not demand wage increases, or "the living wage" without demanding socialist revolution. But it is to suggest that we should not *advocate* demanding "fair pay", or "a fair day's wage for a fair day's work". This is generally attached to specific demands over pay and perhaps hours, which even at their boldest necessarily leave the exploitative relation with the employer intact. Implicit in such a demand is the widely endorsed assumption that the fundamental ills of society can be addressed — made "fair" — by slightly higher wages, a slightly lower rate of exploitation.

I'll comment more on substantive points in future articles: my reply to Martin partly does (bit.ly/mz-reply).

"Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there must the chains be broken" — Rosa Luxemburg's proclamation remains as true today as ever. New meaning, and fresh urgency, is breathed into Marx's "[t]he proletarians... have a world to win." These need not be in tension.

Hipster reformism and the technolo



Review

By Bruce Robinson

Back in 2013-14 there was a lot of excitement on the left about “left accelerationism” and the prospect of a transition to a “post-capitalism” fuelled by technological advances based on information.

Aaron Bastani coined the meme of “Fully Automated Luxury Communism” (FALC), and it led a fitful life on the Internet. It has now returned in the form of a book which sets out to be a manifesto. Since 2015 Bastani has moved from a politics rooted in “post-workerist” thinkers to become a born-again supporter of Jeremy Corbyn.

The book divides into two parts: the first containing the basis for and outline of FALC as a future communist society near the “end of history”, and the second providing a political and economic platform rooted in the present, self-consciously populist and anti-globalist, in which FALC is “a beginning, not a destination”.

The basic thesis underlying the book is that we are undergoing a “Third Disruption”. The first was agriculture, the second industry and the third is based on information.

“The defining feature is ever-greater abundance in information.” As information goods have a cost that declines to almost zero as more are produced, we live on the brink of “extreme supply”, a post-scarcity society delivered by courtesy of technological breakthroughs produced by capitalism. Labour is also no longer scarce. (There are a number of economic objections to this, and issues of viability, which I will skip over for lack of space).

On this basis, Bastani details a number of technologies that he claims will resolve contemporary crises. Energy scarcity will be overcome by harnessing solar energy on a massive scale. Raw material scarcity will be overcome by mining in space, using asteroids.

Problems of an ageing population are solved by gene editing to prevent genetically determined illnesses. The provision of sufficient food is ensured by the creation of synthetic protein that’ll taste as good as meat and by the completion of the Green Revolution of the 50s and 60s that introduced higher yielding crops and the use of chemical fertilisers to countries such as India. These measures combined will enable a slowing and eventual end to global warming.

TECHNOLOGICAL FIXES

A lot of the book is taken up with advocating these technologies and demonstrating that they already exist – or are about to – so that in places it reads like a publicity blurb for synthetic hamburgers or reusable rockets.

This is the politics of the technological fix, where social and political problems are taken to have technological solutions. The technologies are assumed to function well and not to have detrimental social, economic and environmental side effects. (The Green Revolution is disputed on all three grounds.)

If you look closely, Bastani has caveats — not quite there yet, but success is just coming. Those are not allowed to tarnish the overall confidence that the technology developed under capitalism will lead to FALC. This is

based on the assertion that “capitalism is incompatible with natural abundance”.

“Facing such conditions... production for profit begins to malfunction.” FALC is therefore the conclusion of the Third Disruption — capitalism will be driven by its own dynamics to innovate and thus hasten its own demise.

This represents an extreme but not original reading of Marx which takes his words on the development of the productive forces under capitalism (narrowly understood as technology) to imply its transcendence. Productive forces clash with the social relations of production and capitalism cannot survive, in this case because it cannot deal with “extreme supply”, even though, as Bastani accepts, today’s capitalism is finding ways to circumvent that by controlling and restricting supply through enforcing monopoly rights.

ABSENCE OF HUMANS

In one of the many absences from the book, the human side of the social relations of production gets little attention, whether in the workplace or society in general.

Both the working class and class more generally are absent as agency and struggle.

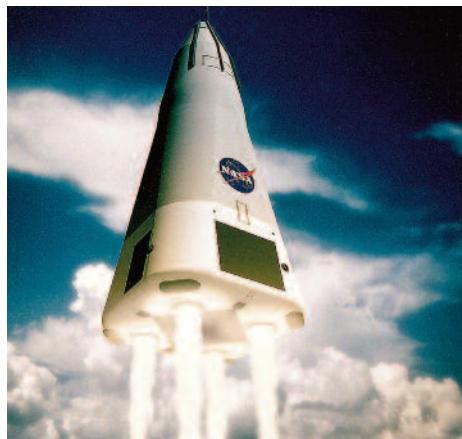
Class struggle also affects not merely the way in which technologies are developed and implemented under capital but also the content of the technologies themselves. We need a means for the democratic assessment of technologies. Instead here we have uncritical technophilia.

His reading of Marx leads Bastani to conclude that the productive forces needed to support “a post-scarcity, post-work” world were in existence only from the late 60s. To attempt socialism before then was impossible: “You could conceive of it... but you could not create it. This was... simply an inevitability of history.”

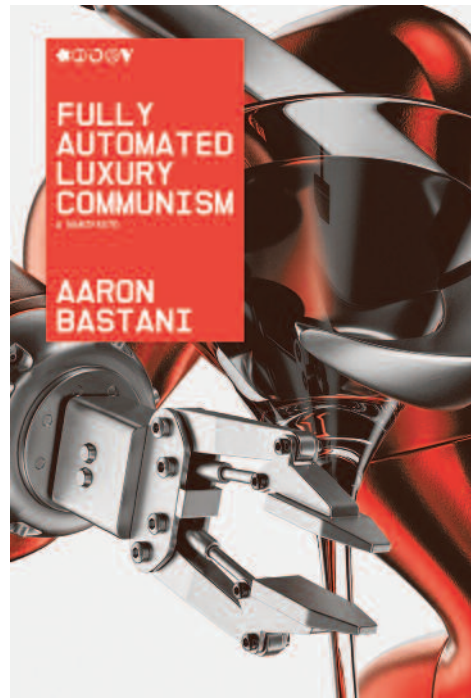
But it was well within the economic potential of the mid 20th century to provide sufficient housing, healthcare food and education to create a viable socialism, even if not a post-scarcity utopia. It was quite possible to provide a number of the free services that Bastani advocates as transitional measures to FALC.

For Bastani revolutionary socialists in the 20th century were simply before their time and their failure an inevitability. The Russian Revolution was “an anti-liberal coup”. (Was Kerensky really a liberal?)

The consequence of that reasoning is to airbrush Stalinism as something inevitable and indistinguishable from the revolutionary years of the USSR: “Its [the Soviet Union’s] seven decade survival was one of the great political achievements of the last century.”



Mock-up of DC-X reusable launch vehicle, '95



Bruce Robinson reviews Aaron Bastani's book *Fully Automated Luxury Communism*

His vision of communism is “a society in which work is eliminated, scarcity replaced by abundance and where labour and leisure blend into one another”. He takes up Marx’s notion of “free individuality” as the essence of communism, but ignores its grounding in social labour, leaving out the need for collectivity and forms of social solidarity and democratic control that flow from the need to produce.

The realm of necessity — the labour of the associated producers — is not abolished, however many robots there are, but rather diminishes relative to free time.

INDIVIDUALIST VISIONS

With social labour deleted, Bastani's communism reduces to individualism. Freedom is “self-authorship... Liberal ends... are impossible without communist means.”

FALC is “the politics of the self-help guru — be precisely who you want to be — embedded within a programme for political change.”

Looking at “full automation”, Bastani argues that, despite the waged working class having grown massively to be the majority on the planet, we have reached “peak labour” and that AI and automation will shrivel the amount of work that needs to be done. Such projections remain speculative.

As Bastani conceded, not all jobs will disappear. (He points to health, education, geriatric care and jobs requiring creativity and emotional connection). If social labour continues, then the need continues for decisions about how remaining work is divided up and how a division of labour is put in place that enables needed skills to be developed.

Bastani never considers whether full automation is something desirable from the point of view of a socialism that puts humans and the environment first. Should we just assume there is no alternative to the technological path enabled by capitalism?

For example, the machine learning techniques on which contemporary AI is based are inherently open to bias, false assumptions and false positives. Do we want to live in a machine-run society? Who decides on how technology develops and is implemented?

Technocrats or workers?

If the first part of the book might be considered an exercise in utopian thought, the second brings us back to earth with a crash. Purporting to set out the political and economic road from here to FALC, it aims to provide theoretical ballast for Corbynism. In doing so it embraces various classical reformist aims and methods put in a modern context.

“CONCRETE POLITICS”

The “concrete politics” consist of “a break with neo-liberalism, a shift towards worker-owned production, a state-financed transition to renewable energy and universal services.”

Bastani’s “communist means” are based on “reforging the capitalist state”, “demanding that the conscious, intentional planning at the heart of modern capitalism be repurposed to socially useful ends.” This rests on “the re-localisation of economies”, “socialising finance” and a range of free services that will put much of the economy under public ownership.

Relocalisation is based on the premise that also underlies Bastani’s opposition to “globalism”: that “locally we can start right away” and “break with neo-liberalism without needing national state power” via “local protectionism” (the Preston model). But, for Bastani, the national state is the best environment for beginning FALC.

This approach, like Brexit, is both regressive and utopian in trying to reverse capital’s integration and development across local and national boundaries. Of course useful action can be taken at national or even local levels, but to see the local as the source of spreading worker enterprises that will eventually bring us to FALC is an illusion.

Even if central and local bankers favour worker-owned enterprises (Bastani believes central bankers should become central planners), they still have to compete with much larger capitalist enterprises. The Preston model does not “scale”.

As Rosa Luxemburg pointed out in her 1899 reply to Eduard Bernstein’s “revisionism” of that era, cooperatives can only survive if protected from the operation of capitalist competition. Rather than being the means to implement new technologies as Bastani argues, small and local firms, even if worker-owned, are less likely to be able to afford and be able to implement the new technology that he sees leading to FALC.

Why are they able to deal with “extreme supply” if large capitalist enterprises can’t?

A big gap remains between the communist model supposedly just around the corner and Bastani’s immediate programme, which essentially gives a contemporary gloss to long established social democratic strategies for improving the capitalist state piecemeal.

Having freed himself from any concept of class, Bastani unashamedly embraces populism. “The people [is] not “a permanent and immutable entity” but has its roots in “certain kinds of assembly, social trait or capacity.” He



The world's first “cultured hamburger”, 2013

gical fix

recognises that there is nothing fundamental here to distinguish this from the populism of the right – it just depends who you think the people are and which traits you choose. The book doesn't give a clear answer on Bastani's criteria here.

How are the "people" mobilised? Here the Bastani of 2010 who favoured the network organisation of the Internet reappears: "the party form... makes increasingly little sense. The same is true of worker organising, radical or reformist, which are [sic] erroneously premised on the society of work enduring forever." But a few lines later the Bastani of 2019 counters "The role of the labour movement is to liberate the working class... We must build a workers' party against work..." Bastani here makes increasingly little sense.

This book is notable for a number of absences. There is no conception of working class self-activity either in bringing FALC about or in managing production under it. There is no conception of democratic control in the workplace, in governance of technology or in society more generally. There is no notion of struggle from below to transform economy or society. Those things are presumably out of date.

Instead the book combines a view of a future close by in which technology enables us to forget the collective and focus on self with an immediate platform for Corbynism which repackages some traditional left social democratic policies and ideas about how it might come about. These ideas may become fashionable for a while in the same way as Bastani's original meme.

But, however well- wrapped in the ultra-modernity of new technology in a sort of hipster reformism, they do not offer a road to emancipation from capitalism.

"Islamophobia"? It's anti-Muslim racism



Interview

By Pragna Patel

We were against the idea of having a specific definition of "Islamophobia".

Racism against Muslims exists. It is pervasive and needs to be resolutely challenged. "Islamophobia" conflates legitimate criticism of religion, which groups like Southall Black Sisters have always engaged, with racism towards people of a particular minority.

The use of the term "Islamophobia" makes it very easy to label criticism of religion as "Islamophobic".

It is a linguistic minefield. There is no satisfactory interpretation of what "Islamophobia" means. Even the Runnymede Trust, which put the term forward in 1997, accepted its own definition as problematic.

Why not speak instead of anti-Muslim racism? Anti-Muslim racism is like any other form of racism — the vilification, the attacks.

Can't it be said that it is a merit of the definition that it says explicitly that criticism of Islam is not necessarily Islamophobic?

I don't accept that. This defining of Islamophobia creates a norm within society which makes it hard to speak out. We've seen it many times. Why call it Islamophobia? Why not just talk of anti-Muslim racism?

Isn't it too late? We wouldn't have chosen the term Islamophobia, but it's current now whether we like it or not.

Just because something has existed, doesn't mean that it should continue. The language has long existed to challenge racism. In the 1970s we were able to come together on a platform of anti-racism.

The term "Islamophobia" is mostly not used against the racists. It is used against people from within or around the Muslim religion who are dissident or more secular.

Its use is also creating the space for other



Pragna Patel from Southall Black Sisters spoke to Martin Thomas from *Solidarity* about the controversy over the Government's rejection of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) definition of "Islamophobia", see bit.ly/appg-i

religions to find similar terms of their own. Some Hindu fundamentalists are now pushing the term "Hinduphobia".

Why "phobia"? Racism, such as the far right's agitation against immigrants, is not based on irrational fears. It is calculating.

Groups who challenge conservatism and religious fundamentalism are often accused of "Islamophobia". That creates an environment for harassment and even death threats, as we saw with Salman Rushdie. In 2016 Asad Shah was killed in Glasgow because he came from the Ahmadi sect and was not considered Muslim.

In much of our work, whether about gender segregation in schools or about Sharia tribunals, we've constantly been accused of being "Islamophobic".

This language prevents solidarity being formed between different groups which experience racism.

Groups which challenge religious conservatism are also often simply called "racist": for example, the SWP calls the Council of Ex-Muslims "racist". So not having the term "Islamophobia" doesn't fix the problem.

I don't see what the term "Islamophobia" adds. On the contrary, it serves only to create groups which can claim a privileged sense of

victimhood, a situation of each group vying to be the ultimate victim.

"Antisemitism" exists as a term distinct from racism: in fact both the term, and the reality described, are older than racism (in the form of Christian antisemitism, for example). Some of us would say that today, too, there are forms of antisemitism which are not racist, and in any case antisemitism operates in different ways from regular racism. Why not a specific term for "Islamophobia"?

I don't see that racism against Muslims acts in any different way from other racism. Using the classification "anti-Muslim racism" creates a broader platform which enables people to come together. While recognising that racism can take different specific forms, that allows for solidarity, because groups are not competing with each other to claim the greatest victimhood.

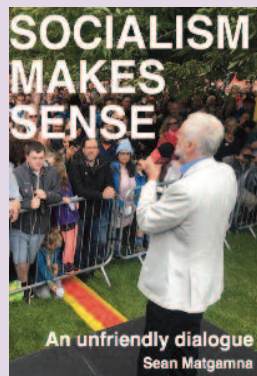
There are issues about the words chosen for the definition, as well. They are: "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness." If it is a type of racism, then it can't add anything to say that it is "rooted in racism". The words accept that we're talking about a subtype of racism, but where racism is surely about prejudice towards or ill-treatment of people, the words say that this is about disapproving attitudes to behaviour.

Yes, the wording conflates racist views against people with criticism of anything they believe or do. Who decides what is "Muslimness"? Some people perceive Southall Black Sisters' criticism of gender segregation in schools as an attack on "perceived Muslimness".

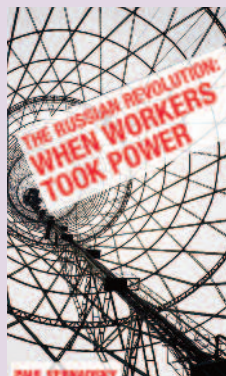
What do you think will happen now that the Government has rejected the APPG wording?

I don't know, but the voices demanding to have "Islamophobia" accepted as a term are rising.

We've seen what's happening around schools in Birmingham.



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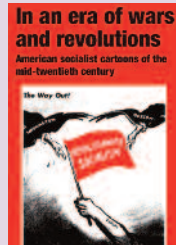
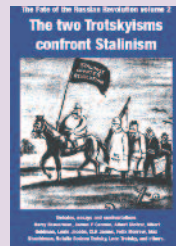


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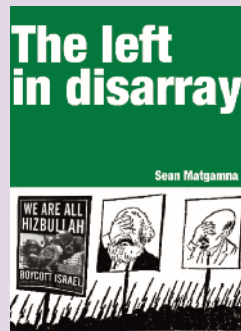
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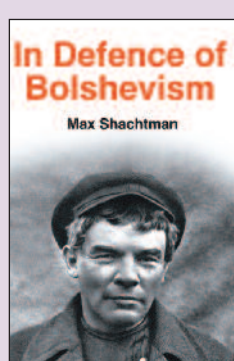


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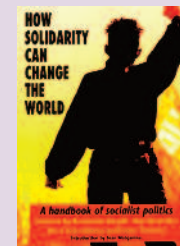


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Corbyn and us in the 1980s



Interview

Sean Matgamna talks to *Solidarity*

We have serious political differences with Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party.

But Corbyn has the record of an honourable, serious left-winger, who — unlike many others who had some association with *Socialist Organiser* in the 1980s — did not change his coat in the years of Blair's New Labour Party. He never gave any sign of being a careerist. He was not one to hide his politics.

Nobody needed to dig in old archives to know what Corbyn is and was in politics, or what *Socialist Organiser* was.

The *Times* condemns *Socialist Organiser* for its comments on the October 1984 bomb attack by the Provisional IRA on Margaret Thatcher and other Tory leaders, and Corbyn for being associated with *Socialist Organiser* after those comments.

The article about the Brighton bombing reported accurately the feelings in the labour movement. No doubt at all: across the country vast numbers of people regretted that Thatcher had survived the bombing.

The level of hatred in British politics at that point was very high — and in both directions. Thatcher had a small-shopkeeper, petty-bourgeois hostility to the working class. She was a spiteful Victorian throwback to attitudes which the Tory party had seemed to be “educated” away from over decades.

Dominic Kennedy quotes *Socialist Organiser* as saying: “Thatcher is a Tory pig”. That was unfair to every halfway-decent pig in Britain.

In October 1984 the miners' strike was still being fought. Over 12,000 miners and supporters were arrested in that strike, hundreds were jailed, over 50 were injured in the “Battle of Orgreave” (June 1984) alone, two pickets were killed.

The article also said that the bombing was not a good way of fighting the Thatcherites.

We made a distinction between the right of the Irish Republicans to take military action, and the advisability of what they were doing. But, yes, the Cabinet was a legitimate military target, as *The Times* quotes us as saying. That is incontrovertible unless you think that the Republicans had no right to fight.

It is easy now to forget what the British were doing in Northern Ireland then. The Six Counties entity imprisoned a Catholic minority which was about one-third the whole population at the time of partition, and a majority all along the border areas, including in Northern Ireland's second city, Derry.

Gerrymandering of the borders meant that for decades there was no political redress for the built-in Catholic minority. That is what led the IRA to resort to military action.

Whether you thought that advisable or not — and I would have said it wasn't advisable — there was no mystery about it.

The British army was holding the existing system in place — even after Britain abolished Protestant majority rule in Northern Ireland, in 1972 — and trying to beat down the Catholics by terror, internment without trial, collusion with Unionist assassins.

Of course we backed what the Republicans were trying to do against the British war to maintain the blatantly untenable Six Coun-

ties entity. What else should socialists in Britain — including Jeremy Corbyn — have done?

Wag our fingers at the people trapped within the artificial Six Counties entity and told them: “No, no, no, you don't fight back”?

You didn't have to think what the IRA was doing was the best sense to side with them as against our own state and government, imposing severe repression to maintain the partition status quo.

It is to his credit that Jeremy Corbyn backed the Catholics, and did not indulge in typical British politicians' cant to denounce the Republicans.

In relating to *Socialist Organiser*, Jeremy Corbyn was also linking up with the only people on the revolutionary left who attempted to produce sober and accurate coverage and debate on Ireland.

Socialist Organiser was the only paper on the left where you would get serious discussion on Ireland, and attempts to deal with questions like the rights of the Protestant community in Ireland. *Socialist Organiser* carried articles defending the rights of the Protestants in Ireland, despite our continued general support for the Catholic revolt. We had a vigorous debate in the paper in 1983, which you can find collected on our website (bit.ly/wl5-pp).

The *Times* accuses Corbyn of being linked with a paper which was revolutionary socialist rather than reformist.

Yes, the people who ran *Socialist Organiser* were certainly not reformists. We were proud to identify ourselves as revolutionaries dedicated to the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and of capitalism.

At the same time we saw *Socialist Organiser* as a paper of the broad labour movement, and we had many mainstream Labour figures writing for us or being interviewed.

For example, *The Times* quotes Jeremy Corbyn as advocating in *Socialist Organiser* something like the Alternative Economic Strategy then popular on the Labour left. Those views appeared in *Socialist Organiser*, and so did debate with them from a revolutionary socialist perspective.

For another example, we had an interview on Ireland with Clive Soley, who was the Labour front-bench spokesperson on Northern Ireland from 1981 to 1984. The interview, which became a debate, was conducted by Jonathan Hammond, president of the National Union of Journalists, and me.

We had comment from Tony Benn on many questions — for instance, we interviewed him on the EU (then called EEC), with Benn supporting “Brexit” and us opposing — and Benn was not a revolutionary socialist. Jeremy Corbyn, as a non-revolutionary, was not at all an unusual figure in the pages of *Socialist Organiser*.

The *Times* suggests that the Labour Party was slow to realise what *Socialist Organiser* was, but banned it in 1990 when they realised it was revolutionary socialist.

It wasn't we who had changed, or become more visible. The Labour Party had changed, becoming narrower.

But Jeremy Corbyn eventually moved away from *Socialist Organiser*?

Corbyn, who became an MP in 1983, was involved in the group that set up *Socialist Organiser* in 1978 — the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, a broad front of Labour left-



The *Times* of 6 July 2019 ran an article by Dominic Kennedy, “Corbyn's hard-left blueprint revealed”, attacking Jeremy Corbyn for his links in the 1980s with *Socialist Organiser*, a forerunner of *Solidarity*. Sean Matgamna was editor of *Socialist Organiser* at the time.

ists which included Ken Livingstone, Ted Knight, and others.

There was a division in the ranks of the SCLV, with Ken Livingstone on one side and us on the other, over policy for the Labour left in local government, where it was then strong. Corbyn can be found signing a document of people who defended Livingstone's peaceful coexistence with central government.

That group seceded from *Socialist Organiser* in 1980 to found *London Labour Briefing*. Corbyn continued to write for *Socialist Organiser*. But in terms of his political genealogy he had sided with the reformist group which seceded from *Socialist Organiser*.

He became less involved with *Socialist Organiser* from the mid-80s, though he still occasionally wrote for us.

The Times cites an article he wrote in 1990 opposing the USA's plans for the first Gulf war. Opposition to the first and second US wars against Iraq are not positions that anybody, reformist, middle-of-the-road, or revolutionary socialist, needs to apologise for!

Jeremy Corbyn had no organisational connections with *Socialist Organiser*. If there was any particular point at which a separation took place between him and us in the mid 1980s, I have no memory of it, and neither do others who were involved then.

But the Corbyn who wrote for the *Organiser* belonged to what might be called the Trotskyist left, and over time he gravitated towards the Stalinoids of the *Morning Star*.

The *Times* holds it against Jeremy Corbyn that he criticised Michael Foot in 1982.

Of course Corbyn criticised Michael Foot as Labour leader! Despite Foot's left-wing past, there was nothing left-wing about his policies as leader.

The *Organiser* carried detailed arguments against Foot, and later on, in 1994, I debated him face-to-face in Conway Hall over the issues of the early 1980s. You can find that debate in print. (bit.ly/foot-d)

The fact that Corbyn criticised Foot only meant that he was broadly left-wing, not that he was a revolutionary socialist.

And that Corbyn criticised Eric Heffer over Tariq Ali's attempt in 1981 to join the Labour Party

Heffer deserved to be criticised over that. Ali had broken with the Fourth International because they supported, and he opposed (as did we), the Russian occupation of

Afghanistan after Christmas 1979.

In any case, in the Labour Party, being reorganised as it was then, we were for the affiliation of the left groups that wanted to affiliate, including the Communist Party if it had wanted to. Heffer was acting against that.

Yet probably the most frequently interviewed MP in *Socialist Organiser* over its entire history was Eric Heffer. In the years before the proscription of *Socialist Organiser* in 1990 and Heffer's death in 1991, he was the nearest thing to a “Third Camp” socialist MP, or even a “*Socialist Organiser*” MP, in Westminster.

Heffer held no grievance against us for our criticisms.

The *Times* concludes by equating the Labour Against the Witch-hunt of Tony Greenstein today with the Labour Against the Witch-hunt which *Socialist Organiser* and Corbyn supported in the early 1980s.

The equation of the left of the early 1980s with the antisemites of today made by quoting Tony Greenstein is completely off-beam. The word “witch-hunting” is now tossed around in the labour movement as a charge against reporting on any information someone thinks is not favourable to them. It is just cant.

In the 1980s, the left was really being witch-hunted — as the cases of Peter Tatchell and Tariq Ali, the banning of Militant and then *Socialist Organiser*, showed.

The equation today is with the purge carried through by Labour Party officials, especially in 2015 and 2016, to try to exclude left-wing Corbyn supporters.

Many of those purged then are still excluded now. The organisation campaigning against that is not today's “Labour Against the Witch-hunt”, which did not stir until October 2017, but Stop the Labour Purge.

Audio of *Solidarity*

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Leonardo and the oligarchs



Review

By Cath Fletcher

On 13 April 2019 *The Times* splashed on the headline “Fresh doubt over world’s most expensive painting”.

Accompanied by a picture of the *Salvator Mundi*, controversially attributed to Leonardo da Vinci in a National Gallery exhibition of 2011, the newspaper reported on claims in Ben Lewis’s book *The Last Leonardo* that the attribution was now in doubt.

The *Salvator Mundi* sold at auction for \$450 million in November 2017. (A picture of Christ holding a crystal globe, its title means Saviour of the World.) The buyer is believed to have been acting for the Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

He bought it from one Dmitry Rybolovlev, who had purchased the painting four years earlier, for \$127.5 million, plus 1% commission for the middleman, a certain Yves Bouvier. Bouvier in turn had bought it for \$80 million, netting himself a profit of \$48 million in the space of a day. You will not be surprised to learn that litigation is ongoing.

Bouvier’s profit is not, though, as spectacular as that of the two dealers who sold him the \$80 million painting, Robert Simon and Alex Parish. In 2005, they bought it at an obscure New Orleans auction house for just \$1,175. Even after substantial costs, they can presumably afford to retire.

What makes a thousand dollar painting become a \$450 million painting? The answer is a great deal of restoration and enough prominent experts willing to say that this is indeed a Leonardo — or at least, that enough of it is a Leonardo.

That’s where the controversy comes in. Lewis has done a great deal of work to show that in fact many experts were rather doubtful about the attribution. Key research was not available for public scrutiny before the sale. Plenty of buyers wavered, aware that whatever the National Gallery claimed there was good reason not to open their wallets.

“It was clear”, Lewis writes, “that it would take a very particular kind of collector to buy the *Salvator Mundi*. He would need to be very rich, of course, but also less discerning than those who came before him, or more desperate to own a Leonardo, or poorly advised”.

The painting, so far as anyone can work out, is now sitting in a warehouse in the Geneva Freeport, a holding facility near the city’s airport that is legally neither in French nor Swiss territory. Freeports are a key element of the offshore financial industry, enabling the storage of high-value items outside any tax system. (Just last week, Boris Johnson proposed that post-Brexit Britain might establish its own.)

ART AS INVESTMENT

Art has become an increasingly important mechanism in offshore transactions too.

That’s because (as the *Salvator* case shows) its value can be highly volatile. A price that might seem “over the odds” can be the consequence of a new attribution, or simply someone’s passion for a work.

Moreover, art isn’t subject to the transparency rules that have been tightened in recent years for other sorts of investment. Today’s equivalent of the old anonymous Swiss bank account is a not-quite-Swiss



Cath Fletcher reviews Ben Lewis, *The Last Leonardo* (William Collins, 2019)

Freeport locker full of Old Masters.

What would Leonardo da Vinci himself have made of all this? I doubt he would have been impressed. “That is not riches which may be lost”, he wrote. “Virtue is our true wealth and the reward of its possessor... As for property and external riches hold them with trembling; they often leave their possessor in contempt and ignominy for having lost them”.

He described money and gold emerging “out of cavernous pits” and making “all the nations of the world toil and sweat with the greatest torments, anxiety and labour, that they may gain its aid”. He wrote of metals as a monster that “shall increase the number of bad men and encourage them to assassinations, robberies, and enslavement”. (Whether he was speaking of the production of coins or weapons there is a moot point.)

The Leonardo who may or may not have painted the *Salvator Mundi* was born in 1452, though almost certainly not at the house in the Tuscan village of Vinci that is now his “birthplace museum”. Apprenticed to Andrea Verrocchio, a prominent painter in the nearby town of Florence, Leonardo worked across painting, sculpture and engineering projects, as well as filling notebooks with all manner of scientific studies.

Giorgio Vasari, whose sixteenth-century book *Lives of the Artists* is a founding text of modern art history, described Leonardo as “truly wondrous and divine”, a man who “left behind all other men”, a “genius endowed by God... rather than created by human artifice”.

The emphasis on Leonardo’s individual genius, however, obscures the reality of Renaissance art production. Like all the star names of this period, Leonardo ran a workshop, with numerous assistants who contributed to his works. The workshop system lies at the heart of the dispute about the authenticity of the *Salvator Mundi*.

There are in fact several versions of the painting, most of which are attributed to Leonardo’s assistants. Numerous artists were associated with the workshop, among them Giovanni Boltraffio, Andrea Solario, Cesare da Sesto, Francesco Melzi, Bernardino Luini, Marco d’Oggioni and Gian Giacomo Caprotti, who was known as Salai.

Hence the business of expert attribution to determine the artistic whodunnit. When the two small-time art dealers who first pur-

chased the *Salvator Mundi* at auction looked at what they’d got, they thought it might be a Luini.

ART AS COLLABORATION

“A beautiful Luini would be into six figures”, Alex Parish told Lewis, “and let me tell you, that’s exactly what I want”.

It is tempting to see the whole *Salvator Mundi* affair as the workshop’s last laugh against the people who hype up only the master’s true genius, forgetting that Renaissance art was a collaborative business.

Leonardo was well-known for not getting projects finished (Vasari said as much). Fewer than twenty paintings are now attributed to Leonardo rather than his workshop.

A buyer at the turn of the fifteenth to sixteenth century who wanted a painting in Leonardo’s style had a much better chance of getting one if he or she was prepared to accept one produced by the workshop, rather than insisting on the master’s hand alone. Then as now, a range of paintings at different price points were available.

In fact, Leonardo himself was as interested in pursuing aspects of mathematic and scientific study as he was in delivering paintings on time, perhaps more so.

So if the workshop could deliver or, even better, if he could attract a patron who required rather little in the way of actual artwork that suited him. Fortunately Leonardo was in demand by the competing royal courts of Europe, for whom art patronage was a means to burnish their princely status, and also by the leading oligarchs of his age, for whom a knowledge of art shored up their cultural credentials. If the *Salvator Mundi* is indeed now owned by a prince of an absolutist regime, it is close to being back where it came from.

Over the centuries, collectors have decided that a “real” Leonardo should be worth more than one partially or exclusively executed by assistants. From the seventeenth century onwards, art collecting has been a cut-throat business, with wealthy patrons often hiding behind anonymous agents so as to avoid the price being forced up when sellers realised what they might pay.

ART AND POLITICS

Charles I — the king who lost the Civil War and with it his head--was an acquisitive purchaser who snapped up multiple works (including a *Salvator Mundi*) via overseas agents.

The documents from the sale of the late



Salvator Mundi: one of the many versions

king’s goods during the English Republic are one of the key sources for early modern art history, not least when it comes to the detective work of tracking down who owned which *Salvator Mundi* when.

Lewis pieces together this tale in some detail (though we’re promised an account from the people who did the pre-sale research later this year, and it will be interesting to read both together).

It was announced in 2018 that the *Salvator Mundi* would be shown at the Louvre Abu Dhabi. But two weeks before it was due to go on show the exhibition was cancelled. It remains to be seen whether it will be shown at the major Leonardo da Vinci exhibition in Paris later this year.

Even if it does appear, it may well be a disappointment. It was in extremely poor condition on purchase and has been extensively restored.

Yet whatever the state of the painting — and whether or not it proves worth the price paid—its story remains fascinating. Five hundred years on from the point when Leonardo da Vinci was employed by the duke of Milan, the government of Florence and the king of France to produce their propaganda, his art is still entwined with politics.

This time, however, it’s the politics of offshore finance, the Russian oligarchy and Saudi royals. *Plus ça change*.

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Why and how the left has shifted on Israel



Interview

By Susie Linfield

Many of the eight writers you analyse had their thinking on Israel shaped by Stalinism. But you don't mention Stalinism.

That was most true of Maxime Rodinson. He was a Stalinist, and even after he left the Communist Party, he remained a Stalinist. Then in some ways he substituted what he called the Arab Revolution for the Soviet Union.

He was acutely aware of the regression, autocracy, dictatorship of the Arab states. But at many times he tried to overlook that.

Isaac Deutscher was different. He was basically a Trotskyist, but he believed a "democratic Communism" would emerge in the Soviet Union. He was also very critical of Maoism. He wrote to the effect that it was too bad that socialist revolutions had happened in the underdeveloped world rather than the more developed countries, but that was how history had unfolded, and we had to live with it.

Alberto Memmi never, I think, looked to the Soviet Union. Arthur Koestler joined the German Communist Party and then became crazily anti-Communist.

Noam Chomsky has always been clear that Stalinism, Maoism, Trotskyism are all antithetical to his thinking.

Stalinism had defined alignment with the supposed "Arab Revolution" as a "left" stance as early as the late 1920s. Stalin's support for the Jewish community in Palestine in 1947-8, driven by hopes of disrupting the British Empire, was a temporary wobble on that path.

Rodinson was living in Damascus and in Lebanon during World War Two. Describing his circle of associates there, he writes to the effect that "we viewed the UN Partition vote in 1947 in the same way that people viewed the Hitler-Stalin pact". He went along with it, but he was surrounded by people who thought it was a travesty.

Rodinson also knew a lot about what was going on in the Arab regimes. He knew that Iraq under Saddam, or Syria under Assad, had nothing to do with socialism, and he sometimes criticised them; but I think he still looked to the Arab states, or at least to what he called the Arab masses, as representing a transformative project, or at least a potential one.

Unlike some other intellectuals, Michel Foucault for example, he immediately saw that the Iranian revolution was a regressive disaster.

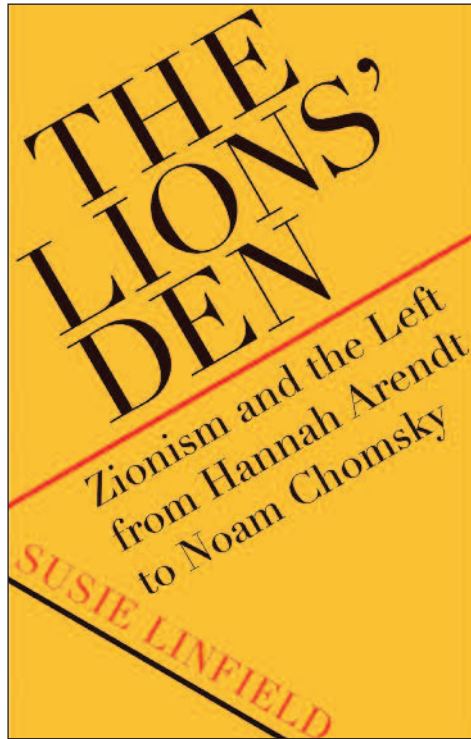
Fred Halliday came of age politically in 1968 in Britain, when much of the left was not looking to the Soviet Union. He is the figure in the book who became most disenchanted with the idea of "anti-imperialist revolution" as equalling a transformative socialist project.

Halliday, when young, was a disciple of Deutscher.

He was also very much influenced by Rodinson's writings on the Arab world and on Islam.

And Chomsky came into politics as an activist against the Vietnam war, in a political environment shaped not just by opposition to what the USA was doing in Vietnam but also by the idea that Ho Chi Minh and his associates represented some sort of progressive, liberating revolution.

Yes. I remember that. I was only in high



Susie Linfield, author of *The Lions' Den: Zionism and the Left*, talked with Martin Thomas from *Solidarity*

school then, but there was a tremendous belief in the North Vietnamese revolution.

How did you make the choice of whom to discuss in the book? Why, for example, not include Edward Said? Or Hal Draper? Or Moishe Postone?

Thinking about it now, I wish I had included Said. Actually, the choice was a bit of a game of telephone, where one writer led to another.

For example, I was reading a book by Michael Walzer, and he mentioned Memmi. I hadn't read Memmi, but once I started, I was fascinated.

I knew that I wanted to begin with Arendt, though it took me a long time to wade through all her writings and figure out what I thought.

From a certain point I knew that I would end with Chomsky, because of how influential he is here in the left.

I had long been a big admirer of Deutscher's biographies, and I was interested to see what he had to say. I knew that I would include I F Stone. First off, I admire him as a journalist and for his anti-McCarthy stance. My parents read him when I was a kid, and I think that in terms of views on Israel he was very influential in the USA not just among leftists but also among liberals.

Hal Draper? I've heard of him a little bit. Maybe if I do a second edition I could include him. But he's not very influential in the USA.

Moishe Postone? I'm an admirer of his work, but I fear he has little influence here, except among a small group of academics.

As you said, you remember the left of the early 70s, which was mostly saturated with the idea that the revolution was happening in Vietnam. How did your thinking about politics develop in the decades after that?

Like many left-wing Jews, I was very critical of Israel, but back then I wasn't particularly interested in the Middle East. My formative influences were the civil rights movement and the movement against the Vietnam war.

Then for many years I was much more interested in feminist politics. I was very influenced by Silvia Federici and Selma James and Wages for Housework.

In the 1990s, with the end of the Soviet Union, the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia made me think anew. Like a lot of people formed by the Vietnam movement, I began to reassess the question of military intervention.

I started thinking a lot more about the Middle East pretty late. What jolted me was 9/11. I started reading a lot more about what was going on in the Middle East. I had always subscribed to *MERIP Reports*, but now I came to think that something systemic was wrong in the Arab world.

Some people may think that is a very "Orientalist" thing to say, but I think many Arab intellectuals would agree that it is true.

I belong to a group called the New York Institution for the Humanities. I was put in charge of organising a series of talks about 9/11. We had all sorts of different speakers — Iraqis and Iranians and Palestinians and Israelis — and I was listening pretty carefully. Each of them challenged many of my preconceived notions — and my ignorance. I started reading a lot.

Also, when I wrote the chapter on Robert Capa in my photography book, I realised how passionately pro-Israel he was when he covered the 1948 war. And not just he, but a whole panoply of left-wing activists who saw the fight for Israeli independence as part of the anti-imperialist struggle: England was the imperialist, and those terrible feudal Arab monarchies. I started to think about how differently things are seen today.

Teaching at a university in New York, you can't not be aware of just how reflexively anti-Israel — I don't mean just anti-Occupation, but anti-Israel — the whole left is now. Most of the lefty professors at NYU [New York University] are pro-BDS.

I was aware of a sort of Pavlovian anti-Zionism. Of course vehement criticism of Israel is absolutely justified, but by "Pavlovian" I mean that the hostility to Israel is a reflex, often without any historic knowledge.

British political culture has been shaped over decades by a strong "Arabist" current in the ruling class — with the idea that Britain would do well in the Arab world were it not for the uppity Jews — and more recently by an "absolute anti-Zionist" activist left which is much more influential than its equivalent in the USA. But how does that reflex hostility to Israel arise in the USA?

In all honesty, most people on the left here know little and care less about the Arab world. The left here has for the most part been shockingly silent about the Syrian civil war.

But there is an obsession with Israel-Palestine, which is really an obsession with Israel — and frankly, I think, with the Jews.

My university has a campus in Abu Dhabi, which is completely financed by a sheikh. Talk about corruption! Abu Dhabi has an appalling human rights record. There was a meeting at NYU in New York about the campus in Abu Dhabi and the lack of academic freedom — but the discussion kept going back to Israel, as if people couldn't focus on anything but Israel.

Whatever you think about the Israel-Palestine conflict, it has absolutely zero to do with the repression in the Gulf states.

To what extent has that culture been shaped by the writers you mention?

Especially among young people, to be anti-Zionist or to have a blanket hostility to Israel has become the way to be a leftist or a progressive. You don't have to know anything or have any position on many other issues.

I can see some reasons for that. The Occu-

pation has been going on a long time, and the trajectory of internal Israeli politics is horrible.

But for a lot of people the hostility to Israel has a faux moral quality and moral clarity not attributed to other issues.

There is also a very long history — as in, 2,000 years — of identifying the Jew as the problem in Western culture, whether it is the Jew as Christ-killer, the Jew as communist and revolutionary, or the Jew as capitalist. In some ways, to be rabidly and ignorantly anti-Israel is a continuation of that trajectory.

The subtext is: "If only Israel did not exist, how much better the world would be". But if Israel did not exist, all the other conflicts of the Middle East would continue.

I'm not saying that to be critical of Israel is necessarily to take part of two thousand years of antisemitism. I *am* saying that it's hard to look at the obsessiveness of the vitriol that so many of the people direct at Israel without thinking about that much longer history — and thinking honestly about where your criticism fits into it.

For a lot of people on the left, Israel has come to represent everything they hate. It represents nationalism, colonialism, imperialism, religious fanaticism — everything which they see as against a multicultural cosmopolitanism. There is an irony there, since Israel is more multicultural and cosmopolitan than any other country in the Middle East.

My book is in part an attempt to figure out why Zionism is considered as so different from any other national liberation movement, and it's hard to ignore the peculiar role which Jews have played in the history of the West, and now of the East, when considering that.

The left here isn't intellectually sophisticated. I find that people have read a little of Arendt, they've read Chomsky, they've read Edward Said. They've read Judith Butler, who may be a brilliant gender theorist but who knows very little about the history of the Middle East or of the Zionist movement.

In an interview with Fathom, you expound your "two states" view on Israel-Palestine as part of a general anti-utopianism, saying that the problem with the left is that it is enamoured with building a whole new world. But the "left" views you've criticised sound to me not utopian at all, but reactive and a-utopian.

I guess you're right. Leftists now do not have the dreams the Bolsheviks had. Maybe naivete would be a better word than utopianism.

But when I hear people saying a one-state solution for Palestine would be democratic, and everyone would be equal, I wonder what world they're talking about. Do you honestly think that Jerusalem and Ramallah are Berkeley and Brooklyn? Here they are sitting in America, and they're advocating taking two peoples who have been killing each others' children for a hundred years, smushing them together like baking a cake — and suddenly they'll have this civic, democratic culture of equality. That seems to me to have nothing to do with what we know about history and what we know about human beings.

On all sides in Israel-Palestine there are many well-meaning people, but to create a viable and democratic state you need a lot more than that.

If Israel could get back to its democratic institutions, and the Palestinians could have a reasonably functioning state, that's enough. Forget utopia.

“Labour should work with Standing Together”

Interview

By Steve Lapsley

Israel is in a very dark place. We have a very right-wing coalition government, there are more elections in October, the formal opposition is not left wing.

Netanyahu has aligned himself with Donald Trump, Modi in India and Orban in Hungary and right wing leaders internationally. Israel is doing huge damage to its reputation and standing internationally, and is the only country whose right to exist is continually questioned.

The Israeli Labour Party has been in decline for some time. But even the genuinely left wing parties like Meretz and Hadash, which is the Arab-Jewish Party, have not made many inroads lately.

There has been talk of them merging or some new joint Jewish-Arab political project. But every time that gets close, and this has been the case for twenty or so years, everyone seems to back away.

The more promising stuff is less from political parties but from civil society. Standing Together is growing quite well and there have been some impressive demonstrations over the last few months. I think that is the future for the left in Israel.

But things are difficult at the moment, particularly as the demographics change, as they have, a lot, over the last 20 years.

There is no doubt that the “two states” solution is struggling as a concept at the moment. Primarily because the Israeli government has acted wilfully against it.

The extension of settlements on the West Bank has also been pushing against us. But I don't think the “two states” solution is dead.

Most of the settlers are in a small area. I have always been of the opinion that those people are building on internationally disputed ground and should a two-states solution come about, they will be living under Palestinian authority.

When people are building these settlements, they need to know that.

“Two states” is in trouble; however, it is probably the only option. You cannot imagine a single federated state with Hamas and the settler movement living happily side-by-side. That is away-with-the-fairies stuff.

I have friends who advocate a single “democratic secular” state. There are things I completely understand about it. What I cannot see is how it could possibly come about. There are two clearly separate peoples. In an ideal world we would want both peoples — and others — living together in harmony. That is what we all want. But right now, Israel is going further to the right. Many Palestinians, certainly Hamas in Gaza, are clearly stating that they don't want such a single state.

It seems to be based on a moral resurgence. Anyone who has been in Israel, as I have, even with my friends there on the left who I generally know, will not see any the required resurgence that matches that aim.

It is idealist. It is utopian. On the left we can dream of that solution, but practically it is nowhere near. I realise that the two-states solution is battered and bruised and under attack from everyone from Netanyahu to Donald Trump. But practically two-states is the only solution which can lead to peace.

I would like to see the Labour Party talk

with people like Standing Together. I would like to see better links with the left wing in Israel, such as Hadash and Meretz, and more understanding about what is going on.

At the moment, I'm afraid the Labour Party is talking in clichés. Of course we should ban arm sales to Israel or to any government that abuses human rights.

We need to go against Donald Trump. There is no doubt that he is attacking Palestinian rights, bringing forward his ridiculous deals that no-one wants, other than probably the Americans and Saudis. We should clearly back away from that rubbish.

What I would prefer the Labour Party to do is to work with our partners across Europe — though that cooperation is now under threat from Brexit — to push for practical solutions in Palestine/Israel — things that can work, that can bring peace. Things that can bring a better hope for the future for everyone.

I have no problem focusing on Palestinian rights, because they are an oppressed people. I think we should recognise a Palestinian state. We should have done that a long time ago. It is good that some European countries that are now doing that. Those countries are now coming under great pressure, especially from the US, which is quite absolutist.

In my speech at the 2018 Labour Party conference I made reference to Robin Cook's ethical foreign policy. The foreign policy I want to see is that we ban arms sales across the board to any rights-abusing countries.

Israel is certainly one of those countries. But I do worry about the party exclusively focusing on Israel — not just at the top and at conference, but in the number of motions that go through branches and CLPs that are very Israel-Palestine focused.



It is far too easy now for people to say you are only focusing on Israel. Some argue that it is antisemitic if you focus on the only Jewish state and not the others. Whatever you think about that argument, you do have to wonder why it is only Israel human rights abuses that are focused on all the time.

Most British Jews, Israeli, and probably American Jews, still have a cultural link with Israel. Many have family there. There is still the idea that Israel was a safety net for Jewish people — a Jewish homeland. There is some basis in religious prayer and other culture for that.

The older generation of Jewish people tends to defend Israel, no matter what.

I see that slipping with younger Jewish people. That is a good thing, as the Jewish diaspora has a big role to play in challenging where Israel is now.

• Steve Lapsley is a Labour Party member in Nottingham, and a candidate this year for Labour's National Constitutional Committee: bit.ly/sl-ncc. He spoke to Pete Radcliff for *Solidarity*.

Greece's election: end of a chapter

By Theodora Polenta

The 7 July election in Greece confirmed the trends that emerged in the Euro elections:

- a comfortable ND (New Democracy, equivalent of the Tories) dominance that revolved around engaging the centre right and alt right voters
- a lack of momentum from Syriza (the leftist party that has governed since 2015), which paid the price of its capitulation and transformation into a pro-memoranda, pro-austerity party
- the weakness of the anti-capitalist Left to persuade and inspire
- the continuing fall of the Golden Dawn, leading them out of Parliament for the first time since 2012.

Abstention was at a historically high 45%. We are entering a new period in which a two-party system similar to the old one between ND and Pasok seems to be there, but without the depth or the stability of the old.

New Democracy got 39.8% and 2.2 million votes. It regained the number of votes it received in 2009, but remains far from its number of 2007 (three million). ND did not collect a large number of votes from those who voted Syriza in the 2015 elections. The electoral percentage of ND was largely due to the mobilisation of the votes of centre-right and the collapse of alt-right formations such asANEL, who did not participate in the election.

There was a swing from loose Golden Dawn voters to ND.

Due to fears about ND leader Mitsotakis's tough neo-liberal agenda, Syriza kept 31.5% of the vote. Statements from Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras show him recognising no structural error in their politics. Instead he wants a “transformation of Syriza into a great democratic party” (that is, a party whose sole aim is to take power).

The most positive development in the election was the non-entry of the Golden Dawn neo-Nazi gang into parliament.

That development was due to a number of factors, but one was the constant mobilisation of the anti-fascist movement exposing the criminal Nazi gangs, and the ongoing trial of the Golden Dawn leadership. There must be no illusions that fascism has died in the polls.

THE LEFT

Aside from the relatively good result from MERA25, a new party set up by former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis which got 3.44% (194,149 votes), the left did badly.

KKE (the Greek Communist Party) lost votes slightly, staying around 5.3% despite an active election campaign and the erosion of Syriza.

LAE (Popular Unity, a party set up in August 2015 by former Syriza Leftists) continued on a course to annihilation, receiving 16,000 votes, just 10% of its score in September 2015, and half of what it got in the Euro-

pean elections in June 2019.

Antarsya (a left coalition including SEK, linked to the SWP in Britain) got 0.4% (23,000 votes), half what it got in September 2015 and less than its 36,000 in this year's European elections. The remaining left-wing lists took less than 0.1%.

Instead of the Leftist leaders to reflect on this electoral defeat, it seems they are trying to blame it all on a shift to the right of the electorate.

MERA25 convinced a part of society with its positions where the left could not. Yet it is only a regroupment of former left-wingers with neo-liberal pro-Europeans and others on a mixed-economy euro Keynesian program against austerity.

LAE had already eliminated all references to Marxism and the working class, transforming it into a petty-bourgeois party with nationalist leanings. Its degeneration comes from a refusal to break with Stalinism, its traditions and practices.

LAE offered a “drachma road to socialism”, a pseudo-technocratic focus on the benevolent development of the productive forces, and triangulation to the alt right.

It had carried articles describing the movements supporting Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen as anti-systemic, anti globalisation forces. It had taken over the alt-right nationalist narrative on Macedonia (against the Syriza “traitors” who negotiated the Prespes agreement to recognise “North Macedonia”). It had adopted chauvinistic nation-centric

positions on issues such as Greek-Turkish relations and the Cyprus question.

Despite the militancy of Antarsya activists in social struggles and some good results in municipal and regional elections, its score revealed a strategic deadlock. Its programmatic and political inadequacies, its limited social composition, and the contradictory choices of its components created confusion for its physiognomy and its political orientation.

Maybe, I think sometimes, the only way to learn to fly is when all of our roads are blocked, when their fences are even taller, and their labyrinths have no way out. When the dim light is diminished, then, maybe then, the need for escape and resistance grows. When our legs have no roads to traverse, then maybe we will grow wings in our backs.

Those who dream know deep inside that sooner or later our tomorrow will arrive... Part of the revolutionary communist left...

It is high time to open an in-depth discussion in the subversive left, to discuss the mistakes, and put forward a transitional program with subversive positions which have a direct connection with the current phase of the movement, and to create a left front that can give a way forward to the popular strata.

In the coming period, attacks on workers' and people's rights will intensify, especially as a threatening new international recession looms.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



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Diary of an engineer



Diary

By Emma Rickman

I'm a first year engineering apprentice at a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) plant in Sheffield.

The plant takes domestic black bin waste and burns it at high temperatures to heat steam, which drives a turbine and an electricity generator.

The excess steam from the turbine is then used to heat water, which is pumped around the city to heat buildings — such as the local swimming pool.

This morning I cycled the two miles to work in the sunshine, all downhill. Because it's midsummer, lots of work is taking place on the District Heating network while demand for heat is low, so my route passed a lot of cordoned-off construction works.

I arrive in the car park at 7.40am and will leave around 4.15pm. I'm only an apprentice so I work 8-4, no shifts; although I know other apprentices in steel and manufacturing who went straight onto nights.

I lock up my bike and scan my ID card to enter the metal gate that surrounds the plant. The Energy Recovery Facility is roughly the height of a 12 storey office block. To your left as you walk in is a large rectangular building on stilts, which drags the air beneath it up through two enormous fans — this is the air coolant system that condenses steam back to water once the plant has extracted as much energy as it can.

To your right is a large dusty warehouse called the Ash Hall,

usually with two or three contractors' trucks collecting waste ash and metals from the incineration process. Closer to the entrance is a large water storage tank, about the size of a semi-detached house.

I sign in by pushing a slide across the "Out" plate next to my name on the board. I check the board to see who is already in; there are around 50 workers in the plant, and for some reason a lot of Johns, Deans and Steves (I haven't managed to keep track of the Steves).

There are two other apprentices, one in the year above me. Apprentices work with different teams week-to-week, and this week I'm working with the Mechanical Fitters. I notice that at least one Fitter — P aka 'Raggy' — is clocked in and that's good, because I can't access the fitters' workshop without him.

I go up to "Level 3" which is Amenities — most of the plant smells of bin waste, but efforts are made to keep the showers and mess-room clean. I pass the physiotherapist's studio, who visits several times a week to treat plant employees and bin-collection workers ("waste operatives"). Many of the plant operators have worked in collections, and they tell me on average a bin worker walks or runs 20 miles a day.

The physio treats all kinds of injuries, and is one of the three women who use this floor; the women's changing room is just used by me and M, the office and cabin cleaner. I'm glad of this, because from what I hear the men's showers are huge, filthy and there is very little privacy. The tiny women's changing rooms are where I go when I need time to my-

self. I change into overalls, boots, gloves, hard-hat and protective glasses, then walk to the Fitters' workshop.

I go back outside, then back in through a concrete corridor, passing several rooms full of chemical treatment systems, then through the Low-Voltage switch room. The grey metal cabinets are laid out in labelled rows and they hum slightly. I'm careful not to knock anything with my elbow as I walk through.

To the left is another cabin for high voltage switches, which is kept locked at all times — for obvious reasons, as the switches carry 11 kilavolts.

I pass the Electrician's (Sparkies) shop, then open a door onto the yard. The ERF is gearing up for a two-week annual maintenance shutdown, where hundreds of workers employed by outside contractors will be working on site, and these workers need space to wash, eat and sleep. A lorry is unloading metal cabins — roughly the size of two shipping containers — into the yard and stacking them on top of each other.

Other workers are building steps to access the first level cabins, and the Sparkies are fitting electrical cables into others. Beside these are thousands of scaffolding poles, brackets and wooden platforms; most of this will be erected inside the furnace, which is seven storeys high, so that workers can clean and inspect the insides.

Also piled up in the yard are the large, heavily insulated pipes used in District Heating; manifolds of pipes for furnace "feed water"; skips and forklifts; traffic cones; and fenced-off storage areas for the

various bottled gases.

To the right of the cabins is the Stores building, where all new equipment, from socks to motors, is delivered, catalogued and stored. The Stores' manager is one of the Steves I remember, because he spends some of his empty work hours building old electric bicycles.

Behind Stores is the Bernard Road Boiler House, which is the main distribution centre for District Heating; to the left of that, the Fitters' Shop, and behind all that, a large fence and the railway line.

Above all of this and set slightly away from the main building is the Stack. It's a 75 metre tall concrete chimney connected to the plant by a wide stainless steel pipe. I learned from the older workers that the previous incinerator building was occupied by Greenpeace in 2001, protesting against pollution regulation breaches.

They climbed up the stack with ropes and painted "Toxic Crime" down it, then camped in hanging tents until the police removed them. Most of the operations team agree with the protestors "It was toxic crime! The old plant was terrible..." and of course unlike other shutdowns, there was no work to do until the activists left, even if bonuses and overtime were lost.

Since then Veolia (previously known as Onyx) have rebuilt the plant to meet the Environment Agency emissions limits, as per the European Waste Incineration Directive (WRAP).

Despite researching, I've been unable to find out WRAP's reasoning — why are the limits set as they are, not lower or higher? However, there have been no protests at the ERF since 2006.

Land and the oligarchy



Review

By John Cunningham

The appearance of two books on landownership in Britain^[1], within the space of a year or so, is yet another "flagging up" of the growing importance of the "land question" and a "wake-up call" for the Left.

We have to take the question of the land on which we live — who owns it, how it is exploited, how the overwhelming majority of us are excluded from it — much more seriously than we have in the past.

Guy Shrubsole's *Who Owns England?* gives us a long term overview of how the land in England has been progressively exploited and expropriated by an obscenely

wealthy elite from the time of William the Conqueror up to the present day. Brett Christophers's *The New Enclosure* deals almost entirely with the privatisation of public land by the ideologues of neo-liberalism, from Margaret Thatcher, through Blair and Brown, to Theresa May.

Successive governments have encouraged and coerced the sale of land to the private sector from school playing fields, one-time nationalised industries such as British Rail, the NHS; and the Ministry of Defence.

The neo-liberal drive for profit has fuelled such bizarre calculations as the so-called "space-utilisations targets". In other words, how little space does a full-time employee (FTE) need to perform their duties?

The figure has been whittled

down from 14.5 metres per FTE to 8 square metres per FTE and recently a new target of 6 metres per FTE has been established for government multi-regional departments (or "Government Hubs"). This reduces workers to the level of battery hens. Take a second to measure it out on your living room floor and you'll see what I mean.

The fundamentally undemocratic, oligarchic, greed-driven nature of landownership in England is shown by a picture in Guy Shrubsole's book, with a sign reading: "St. George's Hill. Private Estate. Restricted access. Next Entrance 200 yards".

The "private estate" referred to is a gated community, with a private golf course, of mainly, offshore-owned mansions (the Beatles once owned some of the properties).

St. George's Hill is also the his-

toric site of the Diggers' Commune — a radical group of dissenters who, at the end of the English Revolution in 1649, established a community based on communal ownership and working the land in common, the very antithesis of what St. George's Hill is today.

One of the prominent Diggers, Gerald Winstanley, proclaimed: "The Earth must be set free of intanglements of Lords and Landlords, and...become a common treasury for all".

These ringing words come to us across a void of over 350 years, but they retain all their truth and validity today.

^[1] A review of *Who Owns England?* by Guy Shrubsole (William Collins, 2019) and *The New Enclosure: The Appropriation of Public Land in Neoliberal Britain*, by Brett Christophers (Verso, 2018)

All out strike at BEIS

By John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS union (pc)

Cleaners and catering staff at the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) began an all-out, indefinite strike on 15 July.

This is extremely significant. It's the first all out strike in a Whitehall government department for decades. The demands include the London living wage, sick pay, and direct employment.

The union is paying full strike pay. We won't let these members be starved back to work. Fundraising for the strike funds is one of the best things activists in the wider labour movement can do to help these workers win.

On Thursday 18, there'll be a joint march of striking outsourced workers, involving workers at BEIS, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and cleaners from HMRC offices in Merseyside. We're planning to take a more systematic approach to organising outsourced workers in the civil service, looking to spread the energy of these disputes.



On Monday 22 July, the BEIS strike will expand, as security and post room staff join the strike for a week. They plan to take further action in future. On 26 July, the union will meet with Interserve, the company which employs outsourced workers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to discuss the dispute there and possible union recognition.

Elsewhere in the civil service,

we're fighting against office closures, for example of the tax office in Ealing, where workers have previously struck. Our demand is to keep offices open, but even if they close we refuse to accept that this means workers should lose their jobs; in the 21st century there's no reason why many office workers can't work remotely or from home. Some branches in the Department for Work and Pensions are also gearing up for disputes, over workload and management bullying.

Shortly after taking office as Assistant General Secretary, I published a statement detailing exactly how I'd be enacting my policy pledge to take an average workers' wage. This has had a positive impact with rank-and-file reps.

I've had a good response even from reps who don't agree with the policy but who think it's respect-worthy that I'm keeping my commitments.

RMT halts ballot

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT has halted a ballot of around 2,000 workers on London Underground, mainly in engineering grades.

The workers were being balloted for strikes to stop job cuts proposed as part of Transport for London's "Transformation" scheme. The scheme also includes a proposal to outsource a section of waste disposal staff currently employed directly by London Underground.

The ballot had been due for return on 16 July. The union says it plans to rerun the ballot with an expanded electorate, as it believes the cuts may be more extensive than first thought.

Stop Brexit: Left Bloc on "No to Boris, Yes to Europe" march

11am, Saturday 20 July, Stanhope Gate, W1K 1, London



Our new pamphlet, *The German Revolution*, has Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.

They span from when the 1918-9 German revolution began, until her murder by a Social Democratic protected right-wing militia.

Paul Vernadsky's introduction tells the story of the German revolution and discusses findings of recent scholarship on it.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. Buy online at bit.ly/rl-gr

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• **Daniel Randall debates with *Tribune* editor Ronan Burtenshaw about Brexit: bit.ly/dr-rb**

• **Barry Finger replies to Rhodri Evans on binationalism and Israel: bit.ly/bf-binat**



NEU "maybe" on ballots for boycott

By Patrick Murphy

At the NEU (National Education Union) Executive on 13 July, the decisive amendment, passed with just one vote against, proposed that the union consider formal ballots to boycott the tests in selected areas.

The consideration is to be in consultation with the branches, and for areas which achieved the required 40% yes vote of eligible members and those who were close to it.

The Executive report on the ballot had included some recommendations to take the campaign forward, but none had involved any further consideration of action to boycott.

An amendment from supporters of the Education Solidarity Network (ESN) argued for calling a special conference of primary members and branch secretaries in autumn to consider the ballot results in full and debate the options for action. It listed the main options as a national ballot counted in a way that allowed disaggregation, ballots in areas which reached the thresholds in the indicative ballot, or no ballot for action. Our amendment was heavily defeated.

ESN Executive members supported the successful amendment as well as our own.

A proper discussion with primary representatives and branches which kept all options on the table would have been preferable, but this outcome is better than many expected. It keeps the prospect of a selective boycott alive, though very far from certain.

Much of the information discussed at the Exec meeting was confidential, but the basic picture from the consultative ballot was fairly clear. 97% of the members who responded supported for the union's campaign to abolish them the testing regime.

A clear majority also supported a boycott. But the turnout didn't suggest that the draconian thresholds required by the anti-union laws would be met in a formal national ballot.

For action to be legal in schools the law imposes a double test. We are required to get a 50% turnout and to have 40% of all eligible

members vote for the action. The ballot indicated that at least 10 districts would meet those thresholds with another group close behind.

It was argued (by ESN) that the testing regime is very vulnerable to *any* significant boycott, reliant as it is on all schools completing the tests so that meaningful league tables can be produced.

It is a pity that the substantial positives in the ballot were not reflected in the Executive's report and even less so in how it was presented at the 13 July meeting.

This was the highest turnout in any national ballot in either the NUT or ATL in over 20 years with one exception. The exception was the pensions ballot of 2011 which achieved a turnout just 1% higher. That was a ballot of all members, whereas this involved primary members only.

The turnout in secondary schools and sixth forms is always higher, and it is extremely unlikely that the primary turnout was even close to 40% in 2011. On the last three occasions when the NUT balloted only primary members, the turnout was well below the vote in this recent ballot.

From November 2018 to January this year the NEU ran a full national ballot on pay and funding for all members in all sectors. The ballot was open for over two months. The testing ballot was for primary members only and ran for just four weeks.

Every branch and every region saw a higher vote in this ballot. This campaign has galvanised and motivated union branches and activists. It has pushed testing higher up the union and political agenda, it has demonstrated the overwhelming support amongst school staff for ending high stakes testing, and turned many NEU branches out to their primary members. It is likely, in time, to have improved union organisation and rep density in primary schools.

The fight to achieve a meaningful boycott of the 2019-20 tests is not over. Activists will be working to build as far as possible on the limited opportunity opened up by the 13 July decision.

• Patrick Murphy is a member of the NEU Executive, writing in a personal capacity.



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Labour and antisemitism: yes, it's a real problem

By Cathy Nugent

The BBC Panorama programme (10 July) about Labour's antisemitism problem has intensified the Party's internal row.

Unfortunately, because the programme was not well done, and because Labour's response has been to "shoot the messenger" as Emily Thornberry rightly put it when criticising that reaction, the renewed row has brought very little light so far.

Thornberry said: "I think that we shouldn't be going for the messengers, we should be looking at the message. I think that is what is important."

"Nobody can pretend that there isn't an ongoing problem within the Labour Party about antisemitism, about our processes for dealing with it."

Twitter is always a forum where any kind of intellectual or moral light finds it hard to shine. The row over the Panorama documentary, as played out on Twitter, has been no exception.

After Tom Watson put the boot into Labour's General Secretary Jennie Formby, currently undergoing treatment for cancer and signed off sick, the predictable re-

sponse included 3,000-plus replies to a Tom Watson tweet, telling him to do one, echoing Len McCluskey's unparliamentary language at the Durham Miners' Gala.

The silliest response from the (non-Labour) right has to be Rachel Riley's tweet that a brass band playing the Hebrew folk song Hava Negila at Durham was "as tasteful as showing Black Panther at a Klan rally". The band plays a variety of tunes from around the world every year.

The reaction to Panorama from Corbyn-loyal antisemitism deniers has been stunningly poor. It has displayed the standard responses to all complaints of antisemitism in Labour. First, that the number of cases is tiny. Secondly, that Panorama shows not a jot of evidence. Three, you can't trust the messenger.

Numbers are tiny? A few months ago Jennie Formby gave an interim report on the number of antisemitism cases that Labour's Complaints Department had processed and where action had been taken. Labour itself continues to repeat the number as a tiny percentage (less than 1%) of the membership, as if it is a known fact which will stand for all time.

But "less than 1%" is some thou-

sands. And it is an interim figure, produced when there is known to be a big backlog of complaints! Putting "the tiny percentage" into circulation, to be repeated across Twitter so many thousand times, seems to me to be a hostage to fortune. Who knows what the actual figures of antisemitic incidents will be if, and when, they eventually come out?

WILFUL IGNORANCE

No evidence? Arguing there is "not one jot of evidence", in face of all the news reports and sharing of screenshots across social media, is the equivalent of: "I'm going to stick my fingers in my ears and shout I can't hear you."

It is difficult to know where to suggest such wilfully unobservant people go to for "evidence" that they won't consider tainted by the unreliability of "right-wingness" and "Zionism". But they can begin with Socialists Against Antisemitism (website saasuk.org, and Facebook page), who have a growing collection.

Unreliable witnesses? One of the Jewish Labour members who appeared on the Panorama programme, Ella Rose, has been called out by Asa Whinstanley of the Electronic Intifada (31.1k followers

on Twitter) as being an unreliable witness because back in 2015-16 she worked as a public affairs officer for the Israeli Embassy (before becoming a director of the Jewish Labour Movement).

Not my dream job, but does that mean she has not been the victim of antisemitism? No one can possibly know that!

Where does this "bad faith thinking" come from which leads people to conclude that she and other Jewish Labour members on the programme *must* be lying, or at least exaggerating? That's what the Labour Party said about former staff members on the programme...

The problem here is much deeper than bad faith or a lack of empathy or faulty logic. There is also a political problem of definitions.

Labour presents the issue of antisemitism as one of simple "racism". Hence, it is often said Corbyn is an anti-racist, so he can't be antisemitic. But beyond the Holocaust deniers and conspiracy theorists, antisemitism on the left is usually an issue of absolute anti-Zionism rather than theories about a Jewish "race".

Absolute anti-Zionism is a virulent political hostility to Israel (to its very existence, as opposed to its

current government). Because, given the still-recent history of the Holocaust, most Jews have some affinity with Israel, this root-and-branch hostility to Israel is always going to communicate hostility to Jews in general, in a variety of contexts.

Absolute anti-Zionism teaches its supporters that when Jews are open and proud about their affinity with Israel and therefore self-described as Zionist – people like Ella Rose – they can never tell the truth. And the conclusion echoes the old trope that Jews are chronically untrustworthy, devious, conspiring.

The Labour leadership have a duty to set the tone of the conversation on this issue, and they are currently failing spectacularly. Whatever the rights about defending themselves against the likes of Watson, they have escalated an often ludicrous but always nasty and ignorant exchange of hate on social media.

That can and will spill over in real live Labour Parties, where it will make it difficult to have a rational exchange of views and assessments.

Labour needs to change tack, and soon.

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