



& Workers' Liberty

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 519 2 October 2019 50p/£1

» **Stop "no deal" coup!**

» **Get the Tories out!**



Boris Johnson's politics represent a particular fraction of the capitalist class taking the initiative while the majority flounder.

» Hedge-fund financiers whose operations are global rather than European. Speculators who have bet on a sharp dip in the pound in currency markets.

» Profiteers oriented to Trump's USA more than Europe.

» Small capitalists whose horizons are limited to the British economy.

» Ultra-marketeers who relish the prospect of "disaster capitalist" improvisations to turn Britain into an "offshore" low-regulation, low-social-overheads site.

Johnson aims to create an alliance of those groups with entrenched state power and "the people" (or a section of "the people") against parliament, the courts, the labour movement, and migrants. A classic "Bonapartist" effort.

His wilder demagoguery as the weeks go by shows he's been pushed onto the back foot. But he is not yet defeated.

A strong, assertive mobilisation by the labour movement is needed to stop him getting on the front foot again.

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THE HEDGE-FUNDERS' WARLORD

Credit: George Newman
instagram.com/gewman



China 1949-1989-2019

From Mao to Xi Jinping

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No pact with Lib Dems

We should aim for a Labour government, not a "government of national unity"



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Labour plans UC change

By Will Sefton

On 27 September, just after Labour conference, the Labour Party announced that a Labour government will “scrap” Universal Credit and revise its current position of halting the roll-out.

The detail of the new policy is a series of important reforms.

“Reduce the five-week waiting period by introducing an interim payment after two weeks;

Scrap the two-child limit;

Scrap the benefit cap;

Immediately suspend sanctions and the claimant agreement;

Make split payments, payments direct to landlords, and fortnightly payments the default;

Officially end the ‘digital only’ approach by recruiting 5000 new social security advisers.”

As the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) comments, these policies will significantly increase the incomes of some households, potentially by thousands of pounds a year. They are not exactly a “scrapping” of UC in the sense of a reversion to the “legacy” benefits pending reconstruction.

“The parts of the package... that would have the largest direct impacts on household incomes are in fact nothing to do with the universal credit reform per se.

“The two-child limit and overall benefits cap are benefit cuts that took effect under the old benefits system and are simply being carried over into universal credit. Irrespective of whether universal credit continues, those cuts could be maintained or reversed.”

The specific changes relating to UC like the initial payment being made quicker, making fortnightly payments the default rather than monthly, the housing component being paid direct to landlords, and splitting the bank accounts that the money can go to, are welcome.

The constitute a reworking of the idea of a simplified and integrated system of payments, rather than a return to the complexity of the “legacy” benefits.

Labour has summed it all up as a replacement of Universal Credit with a new system run by a Department for Social Security, which will replace the Department for Work and Pensions.

Labour leaders have given no timeline for the change. Since UC already has 2.4 million people enrolled, it has the potential to be vastly complicated. Month by month more people come off the legacy benefits, and have no obvious route back to them.

It will be important to press for the specific changes promised to be brought in quickly, rather than waiting for an entire reworking of the machinery to be completed.

Hong Kong: the build up to 1 October

By Chen Ying

As I write on 30 September, the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China. Here in Hong Kong, tonight is deadly quiet, the calm before the storm.

30 September was an international day of protests involving many cities around the world, and Saturday 28 September was the fifth anniversary of the 2014 Umbrella movement, when HK police launched 79 tear gas canisters five years ago that day.

The level of police weaponry and brutality five years on have far exceeded most people’s expectations. On Sunday alone over 100 more protesters were arrested.

In the old days, protest organisers would negotiate with the police over the route of a march and almost always manage to agree and thus receive permission to march. Nowadays, the police refuse all marches point blank.

On Sunday, an illegal march started to gather at 2:30 pm. The police started launching tear gas, very early in the day by their usual standards. A combination of snatch squads as well as undercover police seemed to be aiming for as many arrests as they could achieve.

Ever since the infamous leaked tape passed on to Reuters in late September, it is now common knowledge that

- Beijing does not want to dirty their hands by sending in the People’s Liberation Army
- The Hong Kong Chief Executive has to seek President Xi’s permission over any single concession she may wish to make
- A battle of attrition will now go on for a long time – Beijing’s intentions seem to be to wear out the demonstrators, paying any temporary economic price for this period.
- Hong Kong is just one of many pieces on the Monopoly game-board in China’s struggle to fend off the USA.

Hong Kong has enjoyed de facto

city-state status after 1997, with its own currency, stock market, mini-constitution (the Basic Law), its own judiciary, civil service, police force, tax, health service, education system, Olympic team and membership of many international & UN-sponsored bodies — and many civil liberties not enjoyed in China.

It is supposed to be protected by the One Country Two Systems framework agreed between the UK and China in 1984, which leaves the People’s Republic of China in charge only of Defence, Foreign Policy and National Security.

22 years later, Hong Kong’s autonomy has been whittled away, with active collusion between its three previous Chief Executives and Beijing. Over one million people from China have migrated to Hong Kong since 1997 (there is a daily quota of 150 migrants).

BOUGHT OUT

Many Hong Kong businesses have been bought out by Chinese state enterprises.

The economic integration into the Pearl River Delta gathers momentum whilst civil rights are being sliced away salami fashion. With 28 years remaining before Deng’s promise of no change to Hong Kong’s status for 50 years, some businesses are already factoring this into their business and land deals, as Hong Kong was doing so in the two decades before 1997.

Most recently, one of the big four property developers offered a portion of their held land in the New Territories at a nominal rent of \$1 per sq foot to social enterprises to develop into community projects and low-cost housing, up to 2047.

The current generation of Hong Kong protestors are already looking at 2047 in the face and vowing that the struggle must continue now or there is not going to be a better chance in future.

Hong Kong’s GDP, 2% of China’s compared to 25% back in 1997, is not the key issue. Its special status, relative freedom from corruption



and the security of its laws to protect commercial interests, continues to benefits many state and private enterprises.

Even though China would lose out right now if HK loses its special status as a safe place and an international finance centre, the complex state of political intrigue inside the Communist Party, and the pressure it is under to continue to deliver economic growth as the “trade war” with the US gets tougher, means that miscalculations are getting made and rigid defensive stances become increasingly adopted.

The protest movement is determined not to be dissipated and defeated, learning the lessons of 2014. It will seek to escalate its action in order to force the Hong Kong government into further concessions. After the complete withdrawal of the extradition Bill last month, the movement will continue to press for its four other demands.

None of the other demands — for an independent committee of inquiry, for reversing the Government’s declaration of 12 June protest as a riot, for the release of all arrested protestors, for genuine universal suffrage to elect the Chief Executive — taken on their own, really taking Hong Kong beyond its early post 1997 days of relatively high autonomy.

However, in the current climate, these concessions are perceived by Beijing as likely to cause instability within Chinese society, and are therefore strongly resisted.

1 October will be a big day, a day to remember.

A group of Chinese/Hong Kong activists has launched a new website, translating left-wing and anti-capitalist perspectives from the protest movement: lausan.hk



Organising solidarity for Hong Kong

By Ralph Peters

The day we go to press (1 October) is the 70th anniversary of the foundation of Mao’s “Communist” China.

To challenge the lavishly staged celebration protests taking place across China, protests are taking place across Hong Kong. The protests have been deemed illegal and repression is likely to be brutal.

This follows wide-ranging attacks made on 29 September where police and thugs acting under their direction attacked not only street protestors but also leading trade unionists and politicians – in total there were 100 arrests and many serious injuries to protestors.

One of those attacked Stanley Ho Wai-hong, was attacked by four thugs with iron bars. His hands were smashed.

Stanley Ho took a lead role in the historic dock strike in Hong Kong in 2017. He is now a key activist of the pro-democracy HK Labour Party. There is no doubt about on whose behalf the thugs were acting.

Other prominent democracy activist, Eddie Chu, who is a member of the HK Legislative Council, was pepper-sprayed in the face by police. Social Workers’ General Union director Hui Lai-ming was arrested.

The repression is intensifying. Reuters report a doubling of size of the PLA garrison in Hong Kong, amongst which they report are many of the People’s Armed Police, a million-strong force across China trained in street repression and used to put down strikes and civil unrest.

Hong Kong big business mostly defers to the Beijing government. Workers for companies as Cathay Pacific, HSBC and probably many others face being sacked for calling for democracy.

Trade unions in Hong Kong must be encouraged to take on that repression. Democracy has to be fought for and established in HK workplaces, out of the reach of the police’s teargas, rubber bullets and guns.

Here in the UK, socialists and workers should campaign on the street with HK students and migrants. Protests have already been organised in many cities. We should uphold HK’s right to self-determination, independence if the HK people want it.

Sign the statement at tinyurl.com/y465uwcc

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



The urgency of tackling climate change makes serious strategy to halt it only more important.

The third edition of our pamphlet, “For workers’ climate action: climate change, capitalism and working class struggle”, December 2018, offers such strategy.

This is a collection of articles and reviews on the fight against climate change, capitalism and on the role of workers’ organisation and struggle in that.

The 2018 edition adds a new introduction, several new book reviews, an article from our 2017 bulletin at Ende Gelände, and our 2018 Labour Party conference motion

40 pages A4. Cover price £3. With UK postage £4.20. Cheap rates for bulk orders.

•Buy at workersliberty.org/climate-pamphlet

Lessons of "Heathrow Pause"

Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Attempts were made to fly toy drones in Heathrow's "restricted zone" from Friday 13 September for most of a week.

This action, "Heathrow Pause", was part of a protest against climate change, by a split from Extinction Rebellion (XR).

Measured by its stated aims and

objectives, the action was not particularly successful. There was some publicity for the plans in advance, but very little media coverage over the week of the action itself. No planes were grounded, which was part of the aim, as an end towards media coverage.

The activists' stated aim of forcing the state to send them to prison — potentially for several years — had questionable "success". Most charges were "conspiracy to commit public nuisance", rather than anything more severe.

The most severe consequences faced will probably be due to breach of bail conditions, as some were instructed to not go within five miles of any airport.

Many activists involved, associated, or suspected to be associated with "Heathrow Pause" were preemptively arrested in home raids, and charged with this conspiracy sentence. That was an affront to civil liberties. One activist suffered a serious dog bite, at home, during pre-emptive arrest, and was denied access to medical attention for over 26 hours. A journalist was arrested simply for filming.

After being charged with conspiracy, many of the activists went ahead anyway, hoping that achieving breach of bail may reward them with longer incarceration.

It seems that some such as Roger Hallam — one of XR's key theoreticians — may have managed that. Typically, people who the courts have good reason to believe will breach bail conditions are remanded in custody until their court date.

The activists' narrative, following XR's, is around the necessity of self-sacrifice and prison, given the gravity of the threat and the "failure" of other protest methods. Yet they complain of the difficulty in getting the police to arrest them, and say being in prison is "fine" and "not... a big deal".

An activist in XR told me that those involved in "Heathrow Pause" — which includes much of the leadership of XR — had repeatedly raised the suggestion within XR, and been rebuffed. It sounds as if this debate disrupted much of

XR's functioning and even alienated activists. In the end it was organised independently. Both sides went to distances to distinguish Heathrow Pause from XR, while maintaining roughly the same politics.

While we support a moratorium on airport expansion, *Solidarity* 515 was right to be critical of this attempt to short-cut the necessary struggle through bold actions by a small number of individuals (bit.ly/HP-plan). We are glad they do not face long prison sentences, and can continue to pursue climate activism with relative freedom.

Is it correct that their tactics are proved necessary because of the failure of other tactics?

Looking back at the anti-globalisation protests of two decades ago, the climate camps of one decade ago, and the smaller "non-violent direct action" protests bubbling along the whole time, we can draw useful lessons on the limitations of the narrow and particular tactics that XR and Heathrow Pause pursue (see bit.ly/lessons-cc). We support most of these movements, aiming to push them further to radical class-struggle environmentalism.

Class-struggle environmentalism clearly hasn't stopped climate change, yet, either.

That is not because the best possible attempt has been made, and failed, but because it *hasn't*. The historical weakness of labour movement, internationally, over the time period where climate-change has been a widely recognised problem; and the influence of conservative politics in the labour movement

partly explain this.

We aim to transform the workers' movement from bottom-to-top, infusing it with radical environmental politics, to make bold class-struggle to stop climate change. There are historic examples we look to, but there are also openings today. The climate strikes have kindled the beginnings of workplace environmentalism in some places, and can in more.

The radical environmental policies just passed at Labour conference provide another springboard for socialist environmentalism.

New XR action from October

Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

"To Governments of the World, we declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. You did not do enough."

"To everybody else, rebel."

Thus begins Extinction Rebellion's (XR's) call to action for two weeks from 7 October, internationally. They aim to "peacefully occupy the centres of power", to place pressure on governments until adequate action is taken. Actions are planned all across the world — at least 60 cities, to date.

Beyond "truth, action and real democracy" they are demanding that "each of the Government departments to outline their action-

able plans for responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency."

In London they will be protesting at twelve sites around Westminster (see bit.ly/XR-map for a map). Through nonviolent mass actions they hope to maximise disruption, and it seems that for this one, according to some call-outs at least, mass arrests are only a secondary aim, contributing to this end. Some of the protests will be less "arrestable" than others.

The first weekend after the rebellion, the weekend of 12-13 October, XR will hold actions around the UK, and every weekend thereafter.

Socialist activists will and should go to support these protests, and raise the class-struggle socialist environmentalist politics that can stop climate change.

Hodge and signals

By Martin Thomas

On 28 September, the result was announced of a "trigger ballot" in Barking Labour Party.

Votes were sufficient for Margaret Hodge, the Labour MP for the constituency, to face an open selection contest for the next election.

Only one "trigger ballot" had previously reached the threshold for an open selection, so many left-wingers across the country were pleased to see one more.

It is not so simple, though. Hodge first became prominent as the "soft-left" leader of Islington council in the 1980s but has been a Labour right-winger since the late 1990s at least.

In May 2019 she was reported by the *Sunday Times* as advocating votes for "pro-EU" candidates (Lib Dems, presumably) in the Euro-election. She then denied it. "What I was trying to say was... I can understand why people are voting tactically. But I would never advo-

cate voting against the party."

However, what Hodge is best-known for now is speaking out against antisemitism in the Labour Party. Whatever the excesses of her language, she has been speaking on a real issue, and for real reasons, not just as a device to do down Corbyn.

The odds are that no full selection contest will happen, because a general election is so near. The Labour Party machine has halted selection contests in seats where they were already underway. Candidates are likely to be decided by the NEC [National Executive Committee], with the Leader's Office playing a big part behind the scenes.

If a Barking selection goes ahead, then Hodge is likely to win. The local Labour Party says that 55% of ward votes and 90% of TU votes opposed "triggering".

But the NEC could take the "trigger ballot" as a mandate to replace Hodge. Replacing Hodge either way would signal a move to silence or marginalise protest against anti-

semitism in the Labour Party.

According to Jon Lansman of Momentum: "I'm told it [the triggering] happened because members on the Right had expected her to retire and want an MP who actually lives there, not one who has always lived in Islington... the Left is most certainly not behind the triggering". The Skwawkbox blog, on the opposite pole of the loosely-defined Labour left, gives a similar report: "While the left in Barking is relatively weak, two senior right-wing figures coordinated the move — and that the trigger motion only carried because of their supporters..."

Evidently not on the cards is Hodge being replaced by a left-winger as outspoken against antisemitism as she is.

For a symbol of protest against antisemitism (though not the symbol we'd wish for) to be pushed out by the NEC and Leader's Office, or by local right-wingers, would be a setback.



Arabs Jews and Socialism: The socialist debate in the 1980s and 90s on Israel and Palestine,

£5 cover price, £6.20 including postage.

Corrections

Solidarity 518: at Labour conference, the firm anti-Brexit composite was #13, and the vaguer one #14 (not the other way round).

Solidarity 515 was wrong to say the Socialist Party doesn't use the slogan "no Tory Brexit": it was on the front page of the SP's paper *The Socialist* of 4 September.

Sponsor us to help socialism

Martin Thomas, a member of the *Solidarity* production team, will do a sponsored bike ride from London to the new Workers' Liberty branch in Cambridge on 20 October, to raise money for our fund drive.

The fund drive aims to raise £25,000 by 9 December. The total so far stands at £10,530.60, leaving £14,469.40 to raise.

Just in the first 24 hours of the GoFundMe appeal for the sponsored bike ride, it has raised £145. Thanks to Paul Petersen, £20, Janine Booth, £50, Bob Carnegie,

£10, Becky Crocker, £10, and anonymous donors for £15, £20, £10, £10.

Donate at the GoFundMe page, bit.ly/l-c-bike.

Also to be launched soon is GoFundMe page for another drive to raise money for the fund drive by sponsorship, a give-up-smoking effort by Workers' Liberty student organiser Maisie Sanders. Watch www.workersliberty.org for details.

• www.workersliberty.org/donate

A lazy day in the office



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Life isn't always easy for Steve Sweeney, International Editor of the *Morning Star*. Earlier this year he was detained and interrogated by Turkish police when he landed at an Istanbul airport.

Thoughts of what had happened to Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate six months before in the same city flashed through his mind.

The *Morning Star* – quite rightly – is highly critical of the Erdoğan regime in Turkey.

But when it comes to regimes that the paper approves of – “anti-imperialist” Venezuela or Syria, for instance, or “socialist” China, Steve’s job is a lot easier. Most of the time he just re-writes the regimes’ propaganda.

Thus pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong are “black-shirted rioters” causing “carnage” (Sept 16) in an “orgy of violence” (Sept 30) while the “vast majority” of Hong Kong citizens “events dwarfing the anti-China protests ... as thousands sang the national anthem celebrating the foundation of the People’s Republic of China.”

But perhaps Steve’s easiest recent gig was a piece published on 19 September, snappily entitled “Former Jihadist base discovered near site of disputed chemical weapons attack, Syrian army claims”.

It turned out this referred to the Assad regime’s chemical attack on the opposition-held town of Khan Sheikhoun on 4 April 2017, during which at least 87 people were killed, many of them children. The shocking photographs of the massacre, which had obvious parallels with the even more devastating sarin attack on Eastern Ghouta in 2013, caused international outrage and provoked the Trump administration into engaging in a (very limited) military retaliation against the

Assad regime.

The UN-backed Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and virtually all reputable observers, have long been satisfied that the Khan Sheikhoun attack was the work of Assad’s forces.

But Steve now tells us: “The Syrian army claimed ... to have uncovered a former jihadist military base near the site of a disputed 2017 chemical weapon attack ... Mr Assad dismissed claims he had used sarin on his own people as ‘100 per cent untrue’ while the Russian government insisted it was a fabrication.”

Well, that should be good enough for anyone.

Especially as the Syrian army’s discovery of the site included “scores of various weapons and combat outfit(s) of militants.”

This account is similar to a conspiracy theory written shortly after the attack by Seymour Hersh. In fact Steve closed his piece by noting that: “Award-winning investigative journalist Seymour Hersh accused the US government of lying about the incident. He compared it to the 1964 Gulf of Tonkin incident which triggered increased military intervention in Vietnam.”

Hersh’s version of events is that the regime carried out an airstrike on a building in Khan Sheikhoun where a jihadist meeting was taking place. This strike accidentally hit a store of “fertilizers, disinfectants and other goods” held in the basement of the building, releasing a chemical cloud that resulted in the deaths.

Although the cloud had “neurotoxic effects similar to those of sarin”, it wasn’t sarin. Trump was “warned by the US intelligence community that it had found no evidence that the Syrians had used a chemical weapon”. Trump, however, wasn’t interested in evaluating the intelligence objectively but simply “wanted to bomb the shit out of Syria”.

The trouble with Hersh’s account is that it was based on information supplied by one anonymous “senior adviser to the American



A Morning Star 2016 article celebrating the Assad’s “liberation” of eastern Aleppo

intelligence community” whose credentials cannot be checked, and it differs from all other accounts, including even those (at the time) of the Assad regime and the Russians.

It flies in the face of much more reliable evidence, notably the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which confirmed the use of sarin at Khan Sheikhoun.

Additionally, Eliot Higgins of Bellingcat answered Hersh’s arguments, in detail, immediately after the article first appeared in the German paper *Die Welt*.

Seymour Hersh is, indeed, an award-winning journalist, but most serious observers judged his piece on the Khan Sheikhoun attack to be a sign of his declining powers and judgement.

Finally, its worth noting that Steve’s piece also includes the obligatory attack on the White Helmets: “The [Syrian] army official claimed the cave could also have been used by the White Helmets. The pseudo-humanitarian group has a history of filming footage of staged attacks in a bid to provoke reaction against Mr Assad.”

The role of Putin and Assad in promoting conspiracy theories has been exposed time and again (probably most authoritatively by

Olivia Solon in the *Guardian* on December 18 2017). The White Helmets play two roles within Syria. The first is their rescue work: providing an ambulance service, fire service and search and rescue in conflict areas where infrastructure has been decimated.

The second role is the documentation of what is taking place within the country via handheld and helmet cameras.

“This is the thing that has annoyed not just the Assad regime and Russian authorities but a lot of the propagandists who work in their orbit,” said Amnesty International’s Kristyan Benedict, a crisis response manager who specialises in Syria.

Their footage has helped organisations like Amnesty and the Syria Justice and Accountability Centre corroborate testimony they receive from people in Syria via phone, Skype and WhatsApp.

It allows them to check the aftermath of airstrikes to see whether civilians were targeted and whether there was any military presence or checkpoints. No-one except Kremlin stooges and Canary-type conspiracy theorists now doubts the bona fides of the White Helmets.

That really was a lazy day in the office, Steve. But Mr Assad (and, no doubt, Mr Putin) should be grateful.

The “British road” to political decay



Letters

One aspect of Andrew Northall’s article in *Solidarity* 518 was not covered in Jim Denham’s comprehensive response on the issue of antisemitism.

That was the old Communist Party “*British Road to Socialism*” strategy, now called “*Britain’s Road to Socialism*”.

Andrew says: “This simply means it includes advocating a left progressive government with Labour at its core which would implement policies which challenge the wealth and power of the capitalist class and which acts in the interests of working people. Not a million miles from the AWL’s concept of a Workers’ Government.”

But the idea of a “Workers’ Government” is several thousand miles to the left of the

programme of the Communist Party of Britain. The *BRS* was first published in 1951, with the approval of Stalin. It has gone through various iterations since.

The *BRS* based its argument on the state-monopoly capitalism (stamokap) thesis. Following the Second World War there was a fusion of big business with the state. A cartel-like state intervened to protect and to benefit the monopolies. A “progressive alliance”, for “people’s” or “advanced” democracy, was possible with smaller capitalists who resented that cartel-state.

The *BRS* has paid lip-service to the idea the emancipation of the working class by the workers themselves, but focuses on the protection of “national sovereignty” and forming a “people’s democratic alliance” or “anti-monopoly alliance” against state-monopoly capitalism.

The *BRS* has served the CPB’s agitation against the EU as a great alliance of state-

monopoly capitalism, against which to defend smaller-scale British capitalism.

At the same time the CPB General Secretary Robert Griffiths describes Russia and China in the *Morning Star* as “independent-minded states” somehow escaping the “stamokap” label.

The *BRS* as a strategy envisages gradual changes in parliamentary arithmetic, eventually producing a Labour government spurred on by a number of “Communist” MPs to progress through stages of “advanced democracy” to socialism.

This vision of de-fanging capitalism tooth by tooth would be anathema to the genuine socialism of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, whose names the CPB hypocritically use.

In contrast to a perspective of gradually re-purposing the existing state, the AWL base our idea of a Workers’ Government on writings such as this from Max Shachtman (in the *Fight for Socialism*, 1946):

“What would be the program and purpose of a Workers’ Government? Would it simply be to put the workers in the offices now occupied by capitalist politicians and bureaucrats? [No]. A Workers’ Government must have a basically different principle if it is to discharge its great obligation to those who placed it in power.

“To the evils of capitalism, it must oppose social progress and human welfare. To the interests of a ruling minority, it must oppose the interests of all humanity”.

The call for a workers’ government is a call on the organised working class to break from capitalist politicians of all types, to strive for independent political representation, and to fight for our representatives to take power, forming a government which is accountable to the working class and will carry out working-class policies.

Stephen Wood, north London

Make Labour fight Johnson!

As Parliament reconvened on 25 September, Boris Johnson declared:

"This Parliament is gridlocked, paralysed, and refusing to deliver on the priorities of the people. It is not just unable to move forward..."

"The Leader of the Opposition and his party do not trust the people. The Leader of the Opposition and his party are determined to throw out the referendum result, whatever the cost..."

"The people of this country have had enough of it. This Parliament must either stand aside and let this Government get Brexit done, or bring a vote of confidence and finally face the day of reckoning with the voters".

This sort of appeal to an alliance of the executive power with "the people" against the elected representatives and the democratic political process is the typical tactic of demagogues and despots, of what Marxists call "Bonapartist" politics.

As in the classic case, of Louis Bonaparte and his referendum in France in December 1851, ending the "Second Republic", Johnson rests his appeal on a referendum.

It is an exceptionally tawdry appeal: to a referendum over three years ago, where crucial sections were excluded (EU citizens settled in Britain, 16-17 year olds), and where the issues were posed altogether differently from in Johnson's rush to a "no deal" crash-Brexit.

Johnson hopes to supplement it with a general election run as a new referendum on

Brexit, but a rigged one. If he can scoop up enough of the Brexit Party vote, and the Lib Dems eat away enough of Labour's vote, then, Johnson hopes, he can "win the election" with a clear minority of the vote, thanks to the first-past-the-post system. He can claim a mandate to proceed with a Trump-like program.

He makes a show of coupling every statement that he will comply with the law (the Benn Act, obliging him to request a Brexit deadline extension) with a bombastic promise to find some way to defy, flout, or get round it ("Brexit on 31 October, come what may").

The labour movement must be ready to mobilise on the streets again, as we did after Johnson announced his unlawful shutdown ("proroguing") of Parliament on 28 August.

And we must organise and prepare for the general election which is sure to come fairly soon.

The Labour Party conference in Brighton on 21-25 September was a feisty, lively one which approved a range of radical policies.

Labour voted for a "Green New Deal" to reduce carbon emissions, with free or cheap public transport, full public ownership of the big six energy companies, repeal of all anti-union laws, and expanded good "green jobs" (bit.ly/lp-gnd).

It reaffirmed commitment to a new public vote on Brexit. It voted for continuing freedom of movement between Europe and Britain, and extending it.

Labour voted to replace the exam-factory-

focused Ofsted, to integrate private schools' assets into the state system, and to move to a standard four day work week.

Labour is also committed to a state-owned medicine-manufacturing operation, free prescriptions, and free social care for over-65s.

Labour has also announced plans to transform Universal Credit into a much less mean, more generous benefits system.

Labour was already committed to an increase in the minimum wage, winding back social cuts, abolishing university fees, and re-nationalisation of some utilities.

All that is good. Socialists in the labour movement need to work on three dimensions.

First, to get the policies into the Labour manifesto. The Labour leaders have already signalled that they don't want to stick to conference policies on free movement or abolition of private schools.

Second, to get a coherent, convincing campaign for the policies.

That campaign has to overcome two problems. On the most immediate and urgent issue of the general election, the Brighton conference was manipulated into planning for Labour to signal evasion and triangulation.

Labour's plan now is to go into the election with no commitment on Brexit and a promise to decide a policy *after* the election through a special conference.

In other words, to signal to voters that it lacks clear direction and well-defined convictions it will fight for.

That signal threatens to compromise Labour's message on other issues, too.

Moreover, for a long time now, pretty much since the 2017 general election, Labour's routine agitation has been whittled down so that the high-profile, "headline" message has been nothing more radical than a complaint about reduced spending on the police.

In the 2017 general election campaign, Labour was able to rally people who might otherwise not have voted, and turn round the polls, quickly. Part of that was that Labour's



manifesto focused round pledges to tax the rich, reverse social cuts, and abolish university fees — all themes on which activists had been agitating and demonstrating heavily since 2010 at least, and on which a ready and quick reception was available.

Johnson is now making anti-cuts promises, though specious ones. Labour's prospective manifesto now is more elaborate. Rightly so. But it calls for large efforts to explain it and convince people — in a short time, and more or less from a standing start.

The "Leader's Office" evidently still operates in a model of politics where "campaigning for a policy" is doing a slick operation from Westminster offices to put it out to mass media, rather than a process of discussion in the movement, education of activists, and "radiation" of the ideas in workplaces, campuses, and neighbourhoods.

The left-wing writer Alan Sillitoe, too young to vote in 1945, recalled being lent a copy of the socialist novel *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* soon after and being told it was "the book which won the 1945 election for Labour".

Whatever the exaggeration there, it's a fact that election was won on the back of millions of conversations, leaflets, newspapers read, books studied over the previous years.

That culture of working-class political education has been thinned out drastically in recent times, and we need a crash program to recreate an equivalent.

Labour for a Socialist Europe will campaign to help local Labour Parties and individual activists to get the literature and the networking they need to get across a clear socialist argument and a clear Remain message.



RALLYING LABOUR'S ANTI-BREXIT LEFT

Labour for a Socialist Europe is organising an open meeting on Thursday 3 October to discuss building an independent pro-Labour, anti-Brexit presence in the coming general election.

In the Euro-elections in May 2019, bundles of L4SE leaflets totalling some 50,000 were taken and used by local Labour campaigns and by individuals.

L4SE, a coalition of Labour activists fighting to stop Brexit and build a socialist resistance to the right-wing forces and ideas driving it, was launched from the Another Europe is Possible conference in December 2018, and held a formal constituting conference on 9 March 2019.

It was active in the effort to get anti-Brexit, pro-free-movement policy motions to the Labour Party conference.
• labourforasocialisteurope.org

The "abolish deputy leader" fiasco

By Gerry Bates

Labour conference in Brighton, 21-25 September, was lively, and passed several good left-wing policies.

Its political profile, however, was marred chiefly by two things. First, the manoeuvring from the platform to deflect the membership on the Brexit issue, and the nonsensical looking-both-ways National Executive statement which summed it up.

And, second, the failed attempt through the National Executive Committee just before conference to get rid of Labour's right-wing deputy leader Tom Watson by summarily abolishing his post (in existence since 1922).

It's a question, of course, whether parties need to have designated "deputy leaders" or "leaders" at all. Marxist parties have

never had such posts.

But this move did not come from any genuine grassroots groundswell on the issue. Many of the people behind it hate Watson mainly for his few good points — on Brexit and antisemitism.

To the argument that the proper way to oust Watson is by voting him out, they would reply that is too hard because the rules requiring nominations from a large number of MPs. I'd say that the answer is to change the threshold, and maybe make the post fixed-term.

A snap vote to scrap the post was so transparently a bureaucratic manoeuvre that the leadership quickly overruled it and announced instead a "review" of the role of Deputy Leader.

Even that damage limitation established a bad principle: that it is OK for the leadership to overrule the NEC.

Boosting our sales

The Workers' Liberty website, at bit.ly/sell-p, now carries a short video on why and how to sell papers.

Online video and audio, web content generally, our own meetings, speeches in other meetings, and one-to-one conversations are all important channels in our work of helping people learn about socialist politics.

But, as with every serious field of inquiry, extended written argument, which can be studied and not just skim-read, remains axial.

And since politics is always about now, the written argument has to cover not just history (though that is our chief source of lessons), but also current events, i.e. include a newspaper able to respond quickly as well as pamphlets and books.

As well as allowing deeper study, the paper also has a wider reach than meetings and serious conversations: more people will buy the paper and at least skim-read it than will attend our meetings or arrange intense discussions with us.

Finally, the paper is the visible and physical manifestation of each individual activist's connection with an organisation and a



broader range of activities.

It is what presents us to the people around us — at work, on campus, on the streets — as part of a larger, systematic, continuing, collective effort, rather than as scattered individuals.

• Check out the video at bit.ly/sell-p

The left at Brighton conference

By Kelly Rogers

Workers' Liberty comrades and those around us had a huge impact on Labour Party conference this year (21-25 September, Brighton).

When the Leader's Office was fishing for compromises on Brexit in the run up to conference, some prominent Remainers were arguing that we'd already won everything we wanted, and that it was reasonable for Labour not to argue explicitly for Remain.

It was at the Labour for a Socialist Europe steering committee that was all put to bed. Following that, the AEIP/L4SE campaign was clear all the way through conference: we were going to refuse to accept being swallowed into a single composite (as in 2018), force the debate out in the open, and argue our side.

The overwhelming majority of CLPs [Constituency Labour Parties] stayed in our composite (over 50 came with us, eight went with the CLPD Brexit-neutral composite). We came a lot closer to winning that I think any of us thought was possible, and we really gave the leadership a run for their money. We came out of it with a lot of people very fired up.

And all of the compromises being offered by the leadership in advance of conference have been included in the final formulation: the main one being the special conference, post-General Election, to decide Labour's Brexit position.

The victory over free movement was again was down to the hard work of ourselves and some very good comrades that we work with. I don't think we would have won it if it hadn't been for the Brexit debate taking place earlier in conference, us winning lots of peo-

ple over to us, and the leadership running out of road for manoeuvring and backroom shenanigans.

They certainly tried though: as reported in the paper they initially separated our motion from the LARAF/Momentum motion on abolishing detention centres, in the hope that neither policy area would get enough priority votes on its own.

But a campaign on conference floor with lots of speeches about hearing the motions together and a lot of leafleting outside in favour of our motion got our nose over the line.

Then the Leader's Office sent in their people to try to water down our composite (despite all eight delegates in the compositing having almost identical text). The delegates did a phenomenal job, defending almost all of the text in the face of a lot of pressure and guilt-tripping from people like Diane Abbott.

And then the party machine scheduled the

motion to be heard on Wednesday, when lots of delegates would already have gone home. We feared that conference would be closed early following the Supreme Court ruling was announced. But I think the Leader's Office knew that doing that would be too damaging for them, with everything else that had gone on at conference.

And we won — almost unanimously, with only a handful of CWU delegates voting against, and even their delegation was split.

In the Green New Deal compositing, too, it is clear that our comrades were very important. If it weren't for the Clarion motion that we supported, and our people in the compositing meeting, then Labour for a GND would have rolled over under pressure from the leadership.

But the delegates stuck it out, and most of the radical policy submitted got into a composite that was passed.

Slipshod on Israel-Palestine

By Matt Cooper

This year's Labour Party conference passed a motion on Israel-Palestine, but shoehorned into the same session as Brexit, with no debate, and even less understanding of the issues.

The motion supports a majority-Palestinian state within the territory of Israel-Palestine, but in a fashion suffused with political dishonesty, written to hide rather than explain the issues.

The motion is premised on an "internationalist Labour Party" having particular responsibility "because of the role Britain played as a colonial power during the 1948 Nakba when Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homes."

FALSE HISTORY

That is nonsense. From the end of World War 2, Britain refused entry for Jewish refugees into Palestine, already heavily restricted during the war and the Holocaust. An increasingly violent Jewish insurgency in Palestine fought the British.

In 1947 Britain handed the problem to the UN, which proposed the partition of Palestine into Arab and Jewish controlled states. Britain, unwilling to implement this plan, started withdrawing from Palestine in November 1947. Arab guerrillas, with their command mainly based in Syria, started war against the Jewish population. The Jews fought back. The British forces tried to avoid conflict, and from time to time "managed" the removal of Arab or Jewish communities fleeing from areas conquered by the "other" side.

Britain's "mandate" expired in May 1948. The Jewish Agency declared the state of Israel. Four Arab states, with smaller contingents from other states and military support from Britain, invaded to try to crush the nascent Israel and impose an Arab state. Israel won the war. Jews were expelled more completely from the Arab-held areas, but more Arabs were expelled from Jewish-held areas.

The Arab-held areas did not become a Palestinian state, but were taken over by Jordan (the West Bank) and Egypt (Gaza). It was

indeed a disaster ("Nakba") for the Palestinians, but the motion's grasp of history is poor.

Its politics are worse. It opposes any settlement that is "not based on international law and UN resolutions recognising [the Palestinians'] rights to self-determination and to return to their homes." In her speech (though not in the text of the motion) the mover ruled out a two-states solution.

RELYING ON THE UN

Reliance on the UN is not the habit of a healthy socialist movement. The UN and international law are the result of agreements between the political leaderships of the states of the world and as such represent the agglomerated interests of the ruling classes of those states.

Within this, the most powerful states have the loudest voice. This is obvious with the UN. Its General Assembly comprises representatives of most states, but its motions are not binding on its members.

The real power is with the Security Council, a faded sepia photograph of the world powers in 1945. Its permanent members remain the victors of the Second World War: the USA, Russia, China, Britain, France. Those five alone can veto any proposal.

Some UN bodies such as UNESCO or UNICEF might represent some form of liberal internationalism, at but the top level it is nothing more than a forum for reconciling the interests of powerful national and regional factions within the ruling classes of the world.

In any case UN policy is not what the motion claims. The UN General Assembly resolution most commonly cited in support of the Palestine cause is 194, passed as the 1948 Arab-Israeli War was ending. It contains the provision that "refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so."

This statement, one that has been regularly reaffirmed by the General Assembly, is not a plan for merging two populations onto a single territory, far less an unrealistic attempt to return the seven million descendants of those original refugees to where their forebears once lived and thus, on the pretext of "refugee rights", to suppress Israeli-Jewish

self-determination. Legally, it probably only applies to the original 1948 refugees, not to their descendants. The "living in peace" implies acceptance of the Israeli state.

It operates in the context of the UN's support for a Palestine divided into two states for the two peoples. Ever since the UN partition plan of 1947 as agreed in Resolution 181, some variant of a two-states solution has been a constant feature of UN policy. The UN supports Palestinian self-determination — in the context of a two-states solution.

The treaties and customs recognised by the UN's International Court of Justice have clear implications for the right of colonies to independence, but in other ways the UN charter does not promote the right of nations to self-determination as socialists might understand it (the right of subject peoples within existing states — Scots, Catalans, Kurds — to have their own state).

ILLEGAL

Rather it seeks to protect (in the words of the Charter) the "territorial integrity or political independence of any state".

It is often stated that Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is illegal under international law, but that is because these territories were previously claimed by Jordan and Egypt, not on any principle of Palestinian self-determination.

The tragedy of this motion is that it represents genuine concern in the Labour Party about the plight of the Palestinians. But the framers of the motion have concocted superficially reasonable appeals which disguise a programme that is both unachievable and reactionary.

This motion should have been (at very least) remitted for a period of serious debate in the party.

Labour should campaigning urgently and vigorously for "two states" and in support of democratic movements in Israel-Palestine like Standing Together. This motion will set back that solidarity campaigning, rather than advance it.

• Text of composite: bit.ly/lp-ip



Burnham being confronted by Lillia, a 10-year old climate activist

Calling Andy Burnham to account

By Nick Weightman

Thousands of young people gathered in Manchester's St Peter's Square on Friday 20 September. The protest was rather a warning to politicians who thought they could come along, mouth nice platitudes and pat young people on the head.

Lillia, a 10-year old climate activist (with her own blog at lilsworld.video.blog), took Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham to task when he said he was "doing his best" and made a big deal of a new free 16-18 year old bus pass and his opposition to fracking.

Lillia skewered his "lies, when you don't count the airport in emission figures" [Manchester Airport is owned by GM local authorities]

"Lies, when we have 1,200 air-pollution related deaths in Manchester just last year — but they plan to build a huge car-park right next door to a school in Ancoats" {Greater Manchester Pension Fund, run by the 10 Labour Councils is funding a "building boom" in the city}.

Trade union activists joined the crowds of young people at lunchtime. Unite's NW/389 (the Social Action Branch that organises in the voluntary sector) came with a new "Support A Green New Deal" banner.

Trade union speakers making the link between the climate crisis and poverty and the need for workers to transform industries to environmentally useful production got a really great response.

For Labour, not “progressive unity”

This is my opening speech at the debate at The World Transformed 2019 about whether it would be right for the Labour Party to enter into electoral pacts or coalitions with other parties. The other speakers were Nadia Whittome (Labour for a Socialist Europe), Clive Lewis MP and Caroline Lucas MP.

By Janine Booth

I'm going to put the case that Labour's job is to be the party of the working class, and that therefore, its priority is to build itself as that rather than make alliances with non-working-class parties.

Unity and pluralism are important. Labour needs to be a coalition rather than seek to make coalitions with non-socialist parties. It needs more member control, more trade unions affiliating, to readmit unjustly expelled socialists — to recruit, involve and represent working-class people in all our diversity.

But let's look at some examples of Labour in coalitions and pacts with other parties:

We can look at the Lib-Lab pact of the late 1970s — which paved the way for Thatcher's Tory government.

Or more recently, at coalitions with nationalists in local government e.g. the dreadful Labour-SNP lash-up in Edinburgh

And even Labour-Tory coalitions, such as the one in Derbyshire council that pushed through PFI schemes.

Every one of these attacked working-class people and discredited Labour.

Our attitude to the Greens can be more nuanced, as they are, broadly-speaking, part of the left, and are not as straightforwardly a capitalist party as the Lib Dems or Tories.

We could discuss the future relationship between Labour and Greens. But it would be wrong to advocate pacts or coalitions with the Greens in advance of that discussion.

Without asserting working-class politics as central to how we organise, pacts with the Greens become a gateway to pacts with Lib Dems, nationalists, even Tories, as shown in Caroline's recent suggested cross-party Cabinet.

It is important to build bridges — but not the sort of bridges that our enemies can march across.

Supporters of electoral pacts tend to treat this as an arithmetical issue, as though we can just add together the votes of the various parties and that will give the total. But it doesn't necessarily play out like that.

Who do you think a Labour voter and Brexit supporter will vote for in a constituency where Labour has withdrawn in favour of the Lib Dems? Not Lib Dem. Maybe Brexit Party. Possibly even Tory. Maybe not vote at all.

ELECTORAL PACT

What would have happened in the 2017 general election if this electoral pact had been applied?

Significantly fewer seats for Labour, a boost for the Lib Dems, a weaker opposition, a better terrain for the Labour right to swing the party back in their direction ... and not the major boost we gained from fighting that election as Labour on a popular and radical manifesto.

Elections are not won by mathematical tinkering, but by fighting for inspirational policies, and enabling working-class people to vote in our own interests (ie. not for the Lib Dems).

Lots of people voted Lib Dem in 2010 to “get the Tories out”. It achieved the exact opposite.

Advocates of electoral pacts and coalitions often argue that they are made necessary by our non-proportional electoral system — and I agree that we need a more democratic, proportional system.

But the way we organise politically is not just about maths — it's about politics.

Calls for anti-Tory electoral pacts define our politics by what we are against. We need to know, and to fight for, what we are for: and there is precious little that Labour and the Lib Dems could jointly advocate.

The aim of an electoral pact is to elect a coalition government — but partners in that would exact a price from Labour. They will block its radical policies and force their own reactionary policies onto the agenda.

That government would not be accountable to the labour movement. That government would fail, setting Labour back decades.

Labour can build support by arguing for its policies everywhere in the country — in every constituency. Because although there may be constituencies that Labour can never win under our current electoral system, there are no constituencies where there is no class struggle, no capitalism, no working-class political interests, no potential recruits and activists.

Under an electoral pact, many people are denied the chance to vote for who they support. It is hard to build a party by urging your supporters to vote for another party.

Labour was formed because the workers' movement realised that we would not achieve progress for working-class people's interests, let alone achieve socialism, by picking the lesser evil of the two capitalist parties: the Tories and Liberals — or by lashing up with the Liberals.

Why would we want to reverse that important step forward?

Instead of seemingly-clever electoral tricks and backroom deals, let's breathe new life into the principle of independent working-class political representation — stop looking for solutions in electoral pacts and coalitions and confidently build our own movement.

Labour must respect free movement vote

By Ben Tausz

Labour members and trade unionists have called on party leaders to implement the radical migrants' rights policy adopted by a landslide vote at last week's party conference.

The resolution, written by the Labour Campaign for Free Movement (LCFM), represents possibly the most dramatic leap leftwards on immigration in the party's history. But just a day after the vote, Shadow Home Secretary Diane Abbott contradicted it, telling Radio 4 that in renegotiating Brexit, a Labour government would replace free movement with restrictions such as work visas. An immediate backlash took the form of an open letter that accrued over 1000 signatures in just a day.

The Labour party has a poor history on migrants' rights. In 1968, the Wilson government rushed through the Commonwealth Immigration Act to lock out thousands of Asian Kenyans who had British passports and were fleeing a hostile Kenyan government, with a Cabinet memo arguing: “the Asian community in East Africa are not nationals of this country in any racial sense”. In the 2000s, the Blair government oversaw the dramatic expansion of the UK's detention centres.

And though Corbyn's 2017 manifesto shifted left on other issues, it pledged to end free movement with Brexit and extend NRPF (“no recourse to public funds” policies, which deny migrants access to major elements of social security, including many benefits, social housing, and free school meals).

Instead of challenging racist sentiments and xenophobic myths, substantial parts of the labour movement have tried to cynically manoeuvre around them. Worse, many have taken up these politics with enthusiasm, becoming champions of nationalist and racist poison that divides and weakens the working class.

The new policy ought to draw a line under that. It commits Labour to defending and extending free movement; rejecting any immigration system based on incomes, migrants' utility to business, and/or number caps and targets; closing all detention centres; guaranteeing the right to family reunion; abolishing detention centres; ending the Hostile Environment; ensuring migrants' NHS access; and extending equal voting rights to all UK residents. It comes after two years of work by LCFM, a network that Workers' Liberty activists worked with others to found, and in which we remain centrally involved.

If the Labour leadership try to sweep the conference vote into the memory hole and continue the party's history of concessions to

xenophobia, the grassroots must mobilise to hold them to our policy.

The letter of protest is a start. Supporters must take the argument into local party branches and into our trade unions too. Propose motions, invite speakers to discuss and debate the issue, and most importantly start putting the policy into action now.

We don't have to wait for an election. Let's throw our Labour and union branches into the heart of the campaigns against detention centres and against borders in the NHS, and demand that our local councils kick out embedded Home Office staff and give school lunches to hungry children deprived by NRPF. Where workers involved in implementing any aspect of the anti-migrant policy regime are sufficiently strong and organised, we should be considering industrial action to refuse these duties.

By getting active now, we can win immediate (if partial) gains, and simultaneously create the momentum that will push labour movement leaders to follow through.

• Find campaign materials and model motions at labourfreemovement.org

Report on LP conference by AEIP organiser Michael Chessum: • bit.ly/ch-lp

Uyghur rights voted through

By David Ball

Labour conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of an emergency motion in support of the Uyghur people's human rights.

The motion, submitted by Finchley and Golders Green CLP, is unequivocal — it “condemns the litany of human rights abuses perpetrated by China on the Uyghur people” including mass internment in concentration camps; extreme, intrusive surveillance; tyrannical restrictions on basic freedoms; systematically separating Uyghur children from their families; and a drive to eliminate distinctive Uyghur culture.

Labour's policy now clearly in stands “proudly and unequivocally with the Uyghur people against oppression and persecution by the Chinese State” and includes commitment to “promote this cause throughout our movement and... support and mobilise for protests and demonstrations in support of the human rights of the Uyghurs and other minority peoples in Xinjiang.”

It is extremely positive that the motion was carried overwhelmingly and it can give new hope to the Uyghur community in the UK who have been campaigning for many years against Chinese oppression of their relatives and compatriots in Xinjiang.

However, there's reason to think that it may be an uphill struggle to win Labour to act on this policy. Besides Jo Gowers, the delegate who moved the motion, no other delegate spoke on it, for or against (it was a busy conference session but...).

Perhaps more importantly, Emily Thornberry, at the start of the International session (which included the emergency motion), made no mention of China or Xi Jinping at all in a speech in which she denounced just about every other significant, powerful “strongman leader” around the world.

Thornberry managed condemnation of both Putin and Trump, as well as Maduro, Bolsonaro, Duterte, Netanyahu, Khamenei, Mohammed Bin Salman, Assad, Erdogan, Orban, Sisi — “the list goes on and on” she noted. She went on to mention human rights atrocities in Kashmir, Cameroon, Brunei and Myanmar. But it seems that using her platform at Labour conference to denounce Xi Jinping is a step too far. Overlooking the oppression being meted out by the Chinese state is really a gaping hole in this description of brutal tyranny in the 21st century.

We cannot allow the influence of Stalinism to silence the Labour Party on China.

There is an urgent task for anti-Stalinist socialists to win the whole labour movement — from the leadership to the grassroots — to energetic support for the rights of the Uyghurs, the Hong Kong democracy movement, the Chinese working class, and all those oppressed by the Chinese state.

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- In Defense of Bolshevism: a series by Martin Thomas to accompany the book
- Various “ephemeral” news videos on our social media

Plus many more debates, introductions, and coverage.

China: 1949-1989-2

By Jack Cleary

The Maoist regime began not in 1949, with the declaration of the People's Republic of China, but twenty years earlier, with the defeat of the Chinese working class movement at the hands of Chiang Kai Shek.

Masses of communist workers were slaughtered by the White Terror. After the Canton uprising of December 1927, the Chinese working class remained prostrate under the heel of Chiang. But it was still alive and capable of reviving – at least until the full-scale Japanese invasion of 1937 crushed political life in the cities.

What happened to the Chinese working class was partly determined by the actions of its political vanguard, the Chinese Communist Party. In 1927 and after that party suffered, so to speak, a three-way split.

There was the “faction” of the massacred; the faction which eventually became Trotskyist through studying the catastrophe; and the Stalinist faction which eventually came under the sole leadership of Mao.

The Trotskyist faction remained in the cities, took as its historical precedent the policy of the Russian revolutionaries after the defeat of the 1905-7 revolution, and continued to try to organise in the proletariat. In the aftermath of the defeat, it was inevitably slow work, conducted under continuing White Terror.

The Maoist faction took another road. They went into the countryside and organised their own armies. There was little effective central state power in China; in some areas there was not even any effective local state power. The Maoists conquered a succession of territories, forming a sort of itinerant state until the mid-30s, after which they held territory continuously.

After the breakdown of the moribund empire in 1911, China had been plagued for over a decade by the rule of the so called “warlords” – militarists who were local kings in

their areas. Chiang Kai Shek overcame the warlords, doing deals with some of them, and forcibly united China in 1928 — just at the point where the Stalinists effectively created the most powerful of the warlord forces, a force that would eventually destroy Chiang Kai Shek.

That is the essence of it – Stalinist warlordism. For in 1927, when Chiang Kai Shek turned on the communist workers, there was more to it than the state's butchers being turned on the people. There was a split in Chiang's own apparatus.

Many of the communists, and future Stalinists, had positions in Chiang's army. General Chu Teh created the first communist army by leading a revolt of one of Chiang's units in August 1927.

The Whampoa Military Academy, where after 1922 Chiang's Guomindang officers were trained, had been run by instructors from the USSR, and communist officers had also been trained there.

The Mao/Chu Teh group was not short of trained military personnel. They based themselves on the peasantry in some of the most backward areas of China, organised and fomented rebellion, recruited many tens of thousands of peasants into their “Communist Party”, and built up their own military apparatus, creating a local state power counterposed to Chiang's state.

The party gradually ceased to be a political selection, and became more or less identical with the cadres of the Maoist army. The Chinese Communist Party did not cease to have some presence in the towns; nor did it abjure organising the working class. But more and more it withdrew from the towns, until by the mid-30s it had no influence or implantation in the towns worth speaking of.

Because of the weakness of the central state, the poor communications and transport, and the vast distances, the Maoist “warlords” could resist the central state's drives against them. Chiang, who saw the Maoists for the threat they proved to be, hammered away at them for years without success until,

in 1934, they were driven to make the year-long Long March from their base in Kiangsi north-west to Yen-an.

The Stalinists suffered tremendous casualties, but they survived and, in 1935, the itinerant Maoist state established itself in Yen-an, close to the USSR border. Soon Chinese Stalinism took the essential shape it would have in 1949.

The party/ army ruled over perhaps 80 million people, in backward conditions. They mobilised and organised the peasants. Until 1937 they organised peasant class struggle against the landlords; but the Maoist military machine retained the power to do what Mao would describe as manipulating “the contradictions among the people”.

CRYPTO-STATE

The Maoist crypto-state was organised on the model of Stalin's USSR. They replicated Stalin's purges of “Trotskyists”, and proudly called their own political police the “GPU”, after Stalin's.

But so far, this was no more than an enlarged piece of warlordism, with a durability given to it by the revolutionary aspirations of its core and the important distinction of treating the peasants as human beings, albeit human beings subordinated to the Maoist apparatus.

The Maoists were walled off in a very backward part of China, which had no cities and was poor in resources. Their prospects of conquering all China were not very good. The political situation had to change fundamentally before their prospects would change.

Chiang Kai Shek's Guomindang regime nominally controlled all of China except the “Red” areas by 1928. The GMD had begun as an ineffective and loose bourgeois-liberal electoral alliance. In 1922 it was reorganised on pseudo-“Bolshevik” party lines with the help of Communist International (CI) experts. It became a centralised, hierarchical party — and one with its own army and its own officers' training academy, initially staffed by experts from the USSR.

The GMD was associated with the Communist International, and Chiang Kai Shek was elected an honorary member of the presidium of Stalin's CI! It was a bourgeois party, but a party of a backward and very weak bourgeoisie — moreover, a bourgeoisie tied to the landlords even more closely than the Russian bourgeoisie had been by 1917 — and a bourgeois party organised as a militarised ‘combat organisation’.

It was a bourgeois political movement capable of a high degree of independence from the bourgeoisie. This was very important for what happened to the GMD and to the Chinese bourgeoisie.

The bourgeoisie did not like the GMD, and nor did the imperialist powers which had control of large parts of cities like Shanghai and Beijing. Chiang's treacherous massacre of his communist allies in 1927 changed all

that. He made his peace with the imperialists and with the remaining unconquered warlords, and the GMD settled down to rule China.

What might at the beginning have been a movement whose core members were motivated by ideals higher than getting rich, degenerated rapidly into a corrupt bureaucratic apparatus for plundering China. Chiang Kai Shek himself was reputed to be comparatively honest, but his wife was a member of the rich, plundering, capitalist Soong family.

Despite the corruption, the GMD police state — as it soon became — was a formidable power. Then the Japanese intervened.

They invaded Manchuria in 1931, and set up a puppet kingdom there called Manchukuo. In 1937 they invaded the rest of China, and quickly controlled over half the country, including the cities. This was the test for Chiang.

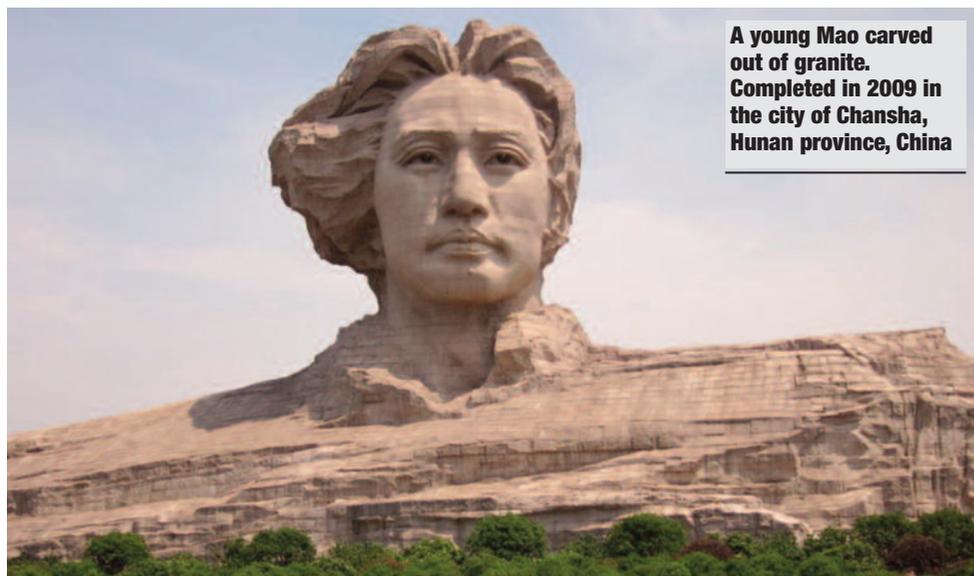
He failed it spectacularly. A national war of defence and liberation, to prevent the enslavement of China, was the burning necessity. It was endorsed and advocated by everyone from the Chinese bourgeoisie to the Stalinists and Trotskyists. Though the GMD regime was still a formidable force against the Chinese opposition, it was almost helpless before the Japanese onslaught, unable to mobilise and organise the people, Chiang seemed more concerned to prosecute his ten-year old war against the Chinese Stalinists than to defend China. Chiang was increasingly discredited.

In 1935 the Stalinists had made the turn towards Popular Front politics made by the Communist Parties everywhere. Now they called for a national front against the Japanese. This became an increasingly popular demand as the Japanese cut through China. It found echoes within Chiang's own army and party.

On the border with the Stalinist-held territories, the GMD officers made a private truce with the Stalinists. Chiang came to put a stop to it and was made prisoner by his own officers, who were now working closely with the Stalinists. After consulting Stalin in Moscow, the Maoists decided to release Chiang on condition that he agreed to an anti-Japanese alliance with the CP's “state”. He agreed, and the second ‘United Front’ period, 1937-46, began.

The Stalinists made huge concessions — on paper. They would accept Chiang as head of state, subordinate their army to his high command, dissolve the rural “soviets”, and cease being hostile to the landlords. But in fact they made few concessions in substance. They retained their own armies and their own control of those armies, whatever was said. In effect it was an alliance of states, with the Stalinist state keeping its de facto sovereignty.

The initial result was to stiffen the resistance to the Japanese. But the corrupt GMD increasingly tried to get out of the firing line



A young Mao carved out of granite. Completed in 2009 in the city of Chansha, Hunan province, China

2019

by way of local accommodations with the Japanese. The CP increased in power, strength, and credibility with layers of the people of China, and the GMD was weakened, discredited, and rendered more decrepit as a ruling force.

Even the bourgeoisie was alienated. The GMD now used the state, which it “owned”, to pillage and expropriate sections of the bourgeoisie, going far beyond the previous corruption.

Backed by the USA, which had advisers in China, and indeed had soldiers there during World War two and until 1946, the bourgeoisie organised the “Democratic League” in an attempt to regain direct power. But the Democratic League was smashed up by the GMD police state, and its leaders driven into exile in Hong Kong. Most of the bourgeoisie had been eliminated as a political force.

DECREPIT

The decrepit GMD “party-state”, hated by intellectuals, bourgeois, peasants and workers alike, faced the vigorous Maoist “party-state”, whose standing was high with large sections of all those classes and which organised the peasants as its base everywhere it went.

The Maoists took much of the credit for the Chinese resistance to Japan, and they said (sincerely or otherwise) that they wanted to continue the alliance with Chiang after Japan surrendered to the US and Britain in 1945.

Chiang launched a new civil war in 1946, throwing million-strong well-armed armies against the numerically inferior forces of the Stalinists. But his regime was even more rotten now than it had been before 1937, when it had failed to destroy a much weaker Stalinist movement.

Whole armies went over to the Stalinists, taking their equipment with them. In 1948 the Stalinists occupied major cities, returning there in force for the first time in 20 years. In 1949 the GMD regime, led by Chiang, fled to Taiwan, where it ruled for decades. In October Mao declared the People’s Republic of China.

Symbolically, Mao’s armies surrounded the cities and conquered them. Even Chiang Kai Shek had used working-class risings to capture cities like Shanghai in the 20s. Not Mao. The workers were strictly told to stay at work and not to strike or take any action against the employers.

Symbolic too was what the Maoists did to the grave of the first secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Chen Duxiu. Chen had carried out Stalin’s disastrous policy in 1925-7 against his own judgement, observing CI discipline, and then had been scapegoated for the catastrophe. He became a Trotskyist, was jailed by the GMD, and died in 1942. The triumphant Stalinists overturned and destroyed his gravestone.

Chinese Stalinism came, so to speak, out of the mountains and the wildernesses fully



A protestor during the mass student led protests in Tiananmen Square 1989

formed and able to take control of society. It had its model of society – Stalin’s USSR. It camouflaged its rule by including remnants of the bourgeoisie in its governments. For seven or eight years it allowed the bourgeoisie to flourish as they had long ceased to flourish under Chiang, and then bought the capitalists out, giving them managerial jobs and 7% p.a. on their capital. The Chinese state was still paying this 7% until 1969, and resumed paying in the 1980s.

For 20 years, through many tortuous manoeuvres and zig-zags, the Maoist leaders had been fighting tenaciously to overthrow the old order. (The pseudo Trotskyist argument that the Maoists were forced to take power by “the pressure of the masses” is utterly baseless). The Maoists had also, in that time, been shaping, augmenting, steeling and perfecting the instrument of rule of a new class of state bureaucrats.

The resulting socio-economic formation was characterised — in many ways like the ancient Chinese empire — by the preponderance of the gigantic state machine and its political control over the economy. Through that military-political control over the economy, it was able over decades to engage in wild experiments in “social engineering”, completely outside the control of the masses who bore the cost of it in their lives and, for millions of them, in the loss of their lives.

But, though the elite could crudely control the people and the economy, they could not at will escape China’s backwardness and

paucity of natural resources. Their attempts to do so by seeking economic miracles only added to the difficulties. The latest zig-zag, towards market economics, has provoked new convulsions, which are far from over.

On 6 July 1989 there was a general strike in Beijing.

STRIKES

There were strikes in other cities in 1989, and have been many strikes since. Workers have organised independent trade unions — and suffered terrible repression.

The Stalinist troops surrounded Beijing in 1989, as in 1949. Then the cities were passive or welcoming. In 1989 the cities became vibrant and alive, rejecting the Stalinist state power. As if by a miracle, the Chinese nation came back to autonomous life. The iron tombstone of the Stalinist regime has lost its power to hold it in stillness.

The regime had no authority in Beijing in 1989, nor in many other cities. Probably the regime still retained support in the countryside. The farmers had had a serious degree of self-determination restored to them in the previous ten years. They had had the benefits of a radical land reform carried out by the Deng regime, and many of them had known far greater prosperity than in a generation.

Whereas Russian Stalinism rose on the grave of the October 1917 workers’ revolution, the Chinese Stalinists led a revolution. As a result of that the Maoist regime had

great credit with the people, despite its bungling and its repression. It was a powerful nationalist force which had restored self-determination to the Chinese people and unified China. It was a regime whose members were not individually corrupt, though the ruling elite was a privileged class.

That credit has been eroded over the last decades. Individual corruption has eaten into the party and the state machine. A process comparable to the degeneration and corruption which rotted the GMD has progressed very far in the Chinese Stalinist polity over the last decades. The old Jacobin egalitarian ethos which Maoism provided for the masses (though the elite did very well for themselves behind closed doors) has given way to a new ethos of self-enrichment.

The reappearance on the political stage of the Chinese proletariat is the right time to draw a balance sheet on those socialists who, for many years, accepted the present butchers of the Chinese workers as the protagonists in the Chinese workers’ revolution.

In the 1940s, the survival of Stalin’s system in the USSR and the expansion of Stalin’s empire into Central Europe, together with the creation of autonomous state-monopoly systems by revolutionary Stalinists in Yugoslavia and China, threw the Trotskyist movement into an immense and prolonged crisis. Incoherently still hanging on to the working-class socialist programme of Trotsky, the Trotskyists responded to the survival

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China: 1949-1989-2019

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and expansion of Stalinism by saying that it was the spread of world revolution across the globe in a “deformed” way.

The argument had echoes from a century earlier. In 1850-1 the Communist League, for which Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels had written the Communist Manifesto in 1847, was convulsed by a division which led finally to a bitter split.

The division was about the European revolutionary movements of 1848-9 and the conclusions to be drawn from their defeat.

Marx declared: “We tell the workers: If you want to change conditions and make yourselves capable of government, you will have to undergo fifteen, twenty or fifty years of civil war. Now they are told [by the opposing faction in the Communist League]: We must come to power immediately or we might as well go to sleep.

PHRASE

“The word ‘proletariat’ has been reduced to a mere phrase, like the word ‘people’ was by the democrats. To make this phrase a reality one would have to declare the entire petty bourgeoisie to be proletarians, i.e. de facto represent the petty bourgeoisie and not the proletariat.

“In place of actual revolutionary development one would have to adopt the revolutionary phrase”.

Willich and Schapper, Marx’s opponents in the Communist League, insisted that immediate revolution was still on the agenda. In somewhat the same way, the Trotskyists of the late ‘40s responded to the defeats of the working class East and West by asserting that it was still the epoch of revolution. Anti capitalist and anti-imperialist revolutions were being made; so they had to be working-class revolutions, even though they had not been made by the working class and they “seemed” very far from any of the old ideas of socialist revolution.

For China, the Trotskyists were led by this sort of reasoning to identify the Stalinist “Communist” Party as the agency (for now, and in a deformed way) of the working-class socialist revolution. The Maoists had made a revolution; it must be the socialist revolution they had made, albeit in a deformed way.

If Stalin had dug the grave of the Russian Revolution, Mao had led the Chinese Revolution to victory, though unfortunately he had bureaucratic tendencies. All that Marxists could do if they were not going to be “normative sectarians” was face the facts and offer advice and friendly criticism to those who were actually leading the revolution. They wrote letters to the Central Committee of Mao’s party which, as late as 1960, began “Dear Comrades...”

Working-class democracy would of course have been better than Mao’s bureaucratism, it was said, but that was for the future. Indeed, the cunning of the World Revolution would ensure its development in the future. Trotskyists could and should help along the work of World Revolution; but they could not counterpose themselves to the real revolutionary process by calling on the Chinese workers to fight to overthrow Mao, or advo-

cating a new workers’ revolution. Even a call for the sort of supplementary (“political”) revolution which Trotsky had called for in the USSR after 1933 (and which the post-Trotsky Trotskyists continued to advocate for the USSR) would be sectarian for China.

For nearly 20 years after Mao conquered all of mainland China in 1949, the mainstream Trotskyists, led by Ernest Mandel and Michel Pablo (Raptis), refused to accept that the Chinese working class would have to act independently to overthrow the oppressive Stalinist state.

MANDEL

The Maoists were — for now — the agency of the real revolutionary process. Mandel and Pablo gave immense political and moral credit to them.

When the Maoists organised the “Great Leap Forward” in 1958-60 — and tens of millions starved to death in the consequent economic chaos — the Pablo-Mandel press published self-evidently impossible statistics and balance sheets from the Chinese government as proof of the wonders such a progressive regime could do.

In 1959 the Chinese government brutally took full control of Tibet, which had been brought back under loose Chinese jurisdiction in 1950 after half a century of de facto independence. The Trotskyists backed the invasion as a progressive extension of the Chinese revolution.

The Chinese working class has reappeared on the political scene, to confront the Stalinist butchers who rule China. That sheds a cold light on the would-be socialist politics that, for a prolonged period, accepted those Stalinists as the agency of socialist revolution in place of the proletariat.

Like a grotesque parody of the Willich-Schapper faction, the mainstream Trotskyists in the late 40s and early 50s refused to recognise the scale of the defeats suffered by the working class at the hands of both the capitalists and the Stalinists. They maintained their belief in the proletarian revolution by accepting something completely different as representing that revolution — in a deformed way, and for the time being.

Willich ended up as an officer in Abraham Lincoln’s Union army during the US Civil War (Marx also supported Lincoln, of course); but it is not recorded that Willich or Schapper or their friends justified their “perspectives” by gross and quixotic delusions about the world around them as the Mandel-Pablo current did and do.

There were deep reasons, of course, for the confusion which led so far astray people who were sincerely devoted to the international proletariat and who did their best to uphold some of the ideas of revolutionary socialism.

Those are outside the scope of this article. But the reappearance of the Chinese proletariat is the right time to draw a balance on the nonsense which has passed for Trotskyism for so many years.

• This is taken from an article in *Workers’ Liberty* 12-13 (1989), omitting the current-affairs comment on 1989 and its immediate background, and amended very slightly (tenses, etc.).

Reply to Owen



Debate

By Eddie Dempsey

Owen Jones surprised me by making me the subject of a blog post in which he attempted to sketch a caricature of me as a peddler of nativist fantasies about a supposed “white working class”.

This comes off the back of a series of slurs against me orchestrated by Clive Lewis, who compared me to the fascist leader Sir Oswald Mosley (the irony may have been lost on Clive, given Mosley’s well-known support of European unity against “dark Africa”), and Novara commentator Ash Sarkar, who withdrew from speaking at a People’s Assembly rally — citing my presence as the sole reason.

Owen’s caricature of me is unfamiliar and unfair. I am an Irish immigrant and a trade unionist. I grew up on the Woodpecker Estate in New Cross, one of the most diverse — and most deprived — estates in Britain. My first political act was to join a demonstration against the Iraq War.

The people I look up to are people like Bob Crow, Jack Dash and Mickey Fenn — Tilbury docker and founder of Anti Fascist Action, who was one of the few dockers to speak out against the 1968 wildcat strike, called in defence of Enoch Powell’s comments on restricting Commonwealth immigration.

I learnt my politics through people I met on picket lines, in union branch meetings, in the homes of veteran comrades in London such as Monty Goldman and Max Levitas who gave me my Marx and my Markievicz. Several years ago, I was elected the London secretary of the Connolly Association, the oldest migrant workers’ organisation in Britain. Inscribed on our banner are the words: “The rights of the Irish in Britain are in no way contrary to our interests as workers.”

The reason given is a speech I gave at a public meeting where I made the socialist case for leaving the European Union. Specifically, Owen is outraged with my statement in a video clip that “whatever you think of people that turn up for those Tommy Robinson demos or any other march like that — the one thing that unites those people, whatever other bigotry is going on, is their hatred of the liberal left and they are right to hate them”...

Did I say that Tommy Robinson supporters were right to hate the “liberal left”? Yes. Clearly, my comments need further explanation. I said these words as a warning against Labour abandoning large sections of the working class in favour of middle-class Remain voters.

Another comment I made in the meeting was that “too many in the Labour Party have made a calculation that there’s a certain section at the top end of the working class, in alliance with people, they calculate, from ethnic minorities and liberals, that’s enough to get them into power.”

This is a strategy being argued by various Labour MPs, and I raised this because I had recently debated a strongly pro-Remain MP — someone I greatly respect, despite our real differences — who raised this strategy. I believed that this is harmful to the long-term interests of Corbynism, because it is my opinion that a reliance on middle class Remain voters is no basis for popular support for socialist policies. This was deliberately



Six months ago now a debate was sparked by comments made by Eddie Dempsey, an activist for “full Brexit” and in the rail union RMT, at a “Full Brexit” rally on 26 March.

Dempsey said that “people that turn up for those Tommy Robinson demos or any other march like that — the one thing that unites those people, whatever other bigotry is going on, is their hatred of the liberal left and they are right to hate them” (emphasis added).

He further commented that “too many in the Labour Party have made a calculation that there’s a certain section at the top end of the working class, in alliance with people, they calculate, from ethnic minorities and liberals, that’s enough to get them into power”.

Dempsey’s remarks were criticised in *Solidarity*, and also by journalists Owen Jones and Ash Sarkar, Labour MP Clive Lewis, and others.

Now Dempsey has written a long reply to Owen Jones, abridged here (full text at bit.ly/demps-e).

Becky Crocker, another RMT activist, responds here to Eddie Dempsey.

For previous exchanges in the debate, see bit.ly/14se-fbx; bit.ly/ms-fbx; bit.ly/fullbx-r; bit.ly/r-fullbx; bit.ly/oj-demps

seized upon by some to insinuate that I see ethnic minorities as being in opposition to the working class — a wholly ridiculous proposal.

I believe the “liberal left” — what I understand to mean the political and media representatives of Blairism, who have socially left-leaning but economically right-leaning views, not “left-Remainers”, many of whom I recognise as solid comrades — have been complicit with aggressive, neoliberal policies, have allowed Labour to abandon its core base and have left millions of people disgruntled and isolated from wider society.

The far-right have sought to take advantage of this — sometimes successfully — by offering horrific alternatives...

When Jones says that Tommy Robinson supporters hate the liberal left because of their perceived anti-racist and anti-Islamophobia politics, this is true, and I agree with Owen. I have never said otherwise.

Instead, I said they are right to hate the liberal left for the liberal left’s abandonment of the working class and their interests...

Owen knows this all too — having written an excellent book on the topic. In *Chavs*, he warned of the “danger” of “a savvy new populist right emerging, one that is comfort-

Jones

We must be unambiguous against oppression

able with class and offers reactionary solutions to working class problems... rather than focusing on the deep-seated economic issues that really underpin the grievances of working class people".

When denouncing me, Owen instead claims that this is a danger that doesn't exist, except in my "perverse argument" which, he says, "rests on the assumption that Tommy Robinson's supporters represent a meaningful, if wrongheaded, constituency of working-class Britain."

Either there is a danger of the populist right winning over sections abandoned by the left as I argue now, and Owen prophesied — or I am over egging it, but both can't be true.

Indeed, Ash Sarkar appears guilty of holding the same opinions as me. When asked on Novara Media if she thought those on the Free Tommy demonstration could be won over to left-wing politics, she replied that "I am not averse to becoming friends with, becoming comrades with, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with someone who maybe once part of that march." I hope Owen thinks carefully before rushing to condemn her as being in sympathy with fascists.

We must be certain: the hard-liners of Stephen Yaxley-Lennon's mob must be physically opposed wherever they go. People in the DFLA include figures such as Frank Portinari, a UDA paramilitary man. Huge wings of its regional bodies stand proudly in the tradition of British Fascism. But, to me, to characterise anyone who turns out for one of these protests as a fascist is both incorrect and tactically foolish...

I agree, as Owen has repeatedly said to me online, that we should all "move on" from this. Despite my differences with them, I have no problem with Owen, nor Ash Sarkar and I have no doubt that they will be vocal and influential allies of myself and my union the next time we go out on strike.

I would like more than anything to sit down and have a cuppa with Owen, Ash, or anyone who thinks for a second that I am somehow a "red-brown", or anything like that. Indeed, I offered to have a chat with Clive Lewis to clarify my views to him, before he then decided to brief against me and lobby against me across the wider labour movement as a dangerous fascist.

We must not allow ourselves to get into situations like this, where democratically unaccountable figures with influential social media positions get to act like high priests of the movement to determine who is and who isn't acceptable, and are happy to use lies and smears against people who were their friends yesterday and their enemies today.

Those of us who make the socialist case against EU membership do so in the interests of the working class and socialism. It is my sincerely held political position that there is not a single socialist advance that could be made by a Labour Party that would not be prevented by membership of the EU.

Remainers have to recognise the legitimacy of our place within our movement and be prepared to engage us in political debate rather than resorting to character assassination.

There will be a labour and trades union movement after Brexit — and Owen and his friends could do worse than to remember that when they move against people for these destructive purposes.

• Abridged from bit.ly/demps-e

Debate

By Becky Crocker

In his reply to Owen Jones, Eddie Dempsey defends himself against what he says is Jones's caricature of him peddling "nativist fantasies" about a supposed "white working class".

Dempsey draws on his background as an Irish immigrant. He acknowledges that the working class is a diverse group of people; he talks about his upbringing on the Woodpecker Estate, "one of the most diverse — and most deprived — estates in Britain".

He explains that as London secretary of the Connolly Association, he believes in the slogan, "The rights of the Irish in Britain are in no way contrary to our interests as workers."

He almost echoes Workers' Liberty's understanding of the integral relationship between class politics and liberation politics. Workers' Liberty sees no contradiction between the struggles of black people, women, gay people and other oppressed groups and the struggle for the liberation of the working class as a whole.

Workers' Liberty's approach has often been in a minority in the left and in the labour movement. From Dempsey's reply to Jones, you could almost believe that Dempsey is our ally on this question.

But you would be mistaken. He demonstrates that he can talk about working class diversity when he calculates it will play well to a particular audience. He is inconsistent. His response contradicts his earlier controversial statements more than it clarifies them.

Moreover, his response to Jones, which embraces working class diversity, is not consistent with the way he relates to equalities struggles within the union in which he is active, the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT).

Firstly, to take one element in which Dempsey's response to Jones is not consistent with his original statement. One of his original controversial statements at the March 2019 Full Brexit rally was:

"The one thing that unites [the people who turn out for Tommy Robinson]... is their hatred of the liberal left. And they are right to hate them".

This foregrounds hatred of the liberal left as the unifying factor amongst Tommy Robinson supporters. It does not mention nationalism or far right politics, a striking omission to say the least. Yet in his response to Owen Jones, he states:

"When Jones says that Tommy Robinson supporters hate the liberal left because of their perceived anti-racist and anti-Islamophobia politics, this is true, and I agree with Owen. I have never said otherwise".

Does Dempsey think that uttering the words, "I have never said otherwise", will mean that we fail to notice the contradiction between Jones' depiction of Tommy supporters and Dempsey's original statement?

Jones argues accurately that Tommy supporters hate the liberal left because, however inadequately, the liberal left challenges racism; Dempsey originally claimed that the

"one" unifying view amongst Tommy supporters is not racism, or sympathy with the far right, but hatred of the liberal left because of anti-neoliberal sympathies.

Jones is honest about the right-wing politics of Tommy Robinson supporters; in contrast Dempsey's original statement tried to downplay these elements or even claim some common ground with them. Dempsey's response to Jones cannot change the meaning of Dempsey's original characterisation.

There are other examples in Dempsey's response where he attempts to re-write the meaning of his original statements. But I will leave it for readers to spot those inconsistencies.

Moving onto Dempsey's self-proclaimed advocacy for working-class diversity. Sadly, it does not match up to Eddie's record as a prominent activist within the RMT.

EQUALITIES

When the furore erupted earlier this year, I examined the debate in the light of the way that equalities groups are forced to struggle for basic rights inside the RMT, despite well-documented discrimination within our industries. I wrote:

"The experience of working in the rail industry is undoubtedly harder if you're black, gay, disabled or a woman. Therefore, there is a crying need for the unions in our industry to champion liberation politics and the struggles of equalities groups.

"We want a strong working-class movement, where no section of our class is oppressed on the grounds of their race, gender or any other characteristic..."

"The RMT has four equalities committees: Black and Ethnic Minorities (BEM), Lesbian Gay Transgender and Bisexual + (LGBT+), women and disabled people. The RMT's constitution only grants them the power to 'advise' the traditionally all-male, all-white leading body, the executive.

"I have pushed many resolutions through the equalities structures that have been carried out partially or not at all — including a very personally-felt one about challenging sexual assault and sexual harassment. When activists moved proposals to increase the power of the equalities committees at the RMT 2018 AGM, the attempt was obstructed by the current leadership of the union. We made some gains, but the leadership convinced delegates to vote down some of the most significant reforms".

Sadly, we're in a situation in the RMT where we still need to win the argument about the urgency of organising around equalities. We're still having to convince people that liberation politics does not "divide" workers' struggle; that in fact, it aims to eradicate the discrimination that gives rise to our division.

The battle win recognition for equalities struggles is a recognised issue in the RMT. In the most recent election of the RMT President, leadership-backed candidate, Steve Shaw, launched his campaign with a tirade against the idea that we should strive as a union to have black or women members in leading positions, instead insisting that people should be elected 'on merit'.

The BEM [black and ethnic-minority] and women members responded in RMT News,

exploding the myth that we are 'election on merit' is on a level playing field, especially against the background of unconscious discrimination in a macho industry such as ours. Michelle Rodgers challenged these ideas and was elected the first female President in the RMT's 100+ year history.

In the most recent RMT General Secretary election, Sean Hoyle campaigned against the incumbent Mick Cash, demanding more power for the equalities committees.

RECORD

Eddie Dempsey backed Steve Shaw and Mick Cash in those elections. He has not joined the many BEM, women, LGBT+ and disabled activists calling for greater rights for equalities committees.

His longstanding support for the Communist Party means he is inclined to back the bureaucracy against the rank and file. In addition, his RMT record is consistent with a theme in his social media profile on "identity politics".

Earlier in the year I wrote: "I have criticisms myself of 'identity politics'. It focuses on who is speaking, rather than the ideas that are spoken. It can be a source of disunity and depoliticisation.... However, I would never wish to imply that identity politics is the actual enemy of the working class".

Eddie has repeatedly accused identity politics of being an enemy of the working class.

As I said earlier in the year: "As a prominent activist in the RMT, Eddie needs to be very careful in categorising identity politics as an enemy.

"Nuanced criticism of identity politics is one thing, but as an activist in an industry with huge problems of discrimination, Eddie has a responsibility to overwhelmingly, unambiguously champion the struggles of oppressed, minority groups".

My conclusion upon reading Eddie Dempsey's response to Owen Jones is much the same as when the controversy erupted. We need unambiguous support for the struggles of minorities and all oppressed groups.

We need a clear acknowledgement that this politics in no way contradicts the struggle for the liberation of our whole class.

We need clear statements that are backed up with active engagement in struggles against oppression. Sadly, in these respects, Eddie Dempsey still has a long way to go.



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The Irish border and Brexit

By Micheál MacEoin

One crucial aspect of Brexit, the impact on the Irish (or, rather, British-Irish) Border, was comprehensively ignored in the British media during the 2016 referendum campaign itself.

It is fitting, then, that it has threatened to unravel the whole Brexit process, in the form of the “backstop”, a set of guarantees against the imposition of a hard border which have been written into the Withdrawal Agreement between the UK and the EU.

The flipside of that fact is that Johnson’s drive for a “no deal” Brexit, if it succeeds, will mean in effect a new partition of Ireland, a reversal of the slow process over decades within the EU which has made the border set by war in the early 1920s almost invisible.

Those who predicted that the issue of the Border would be straightforward would have been disabused of this notion, had they only read a book published in 2013 by the Irish historian Henry Patterson.

Ireland’s Violent Frontier: the border and Anglo-Irish relations during the troubles is a comprehensive history of the policies pursued by successive British and Irish governments in relation to the border, from 1969 to 1982, with an introduction covering the origins of the border, the IRA’s ill-fated “Border Campaign” of 1956-62 and the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1960s.

The heart of the book is a study of Anglo-Irish relations and security policy, based on extensive archive research. In it, Patterson demonstrates an interest in high politics (especially the role of politicians, civil servants and the security apparatus) and official documentation, which was in evidence even in his earlier, more Marxist-inspired works, in the late 1970s and 1980s. The book argues strongly that the role of the Border has been understated in many accounts, which focus instead on the conflict in urban areas, such as Belfast and Derry.

Though the 26-county state spent considerable resources in tacking the IRA within its own territory, and there is no evidence of collusion between the Irish state and the IRA (as Unionist have alleged), the Border and its relationship to security policy was nevertheless a constant source of friction in Anglo-Irish relations.

UK governments, on the whole, stressed that the ability of the IRA to operate in two jurisdictions, maintaining arms dumps and safehouses in the relative safety of the 26-counties, enabled them to maintain their “long war” against the British state.

The Irish governments, “with the partial exception”, Patterson argues, of the ferociously anti-republican Fine Gael-Labour

coalition of 1973-7, downplayed this factor in favour of an emphasis on the alienation of the nationalist community from the Six Counties, and the need for far-reaching constitutional reform.

At the time of the book’s publication, much media attention was focused on debates over whether Provisional IRA attacks on border Protestants constituted “ethnic cleaning”. This is a claim Patterson does not, in fact, make directly. Describing the borrowing of the term from the Balkan wars as “sensationalist”, he nevertheless recognises its “emotional truth for border Protestants”, as attacks and killings continued, sometimes against civilians. There is no doubt about the psychological impact of attacks such as the hugely provocative bombing of a Remembrance Day ceremony in Enniskillen in November 1987, which saw 11 Protestants murdered and 63 seriously injured.

Though such brutal impacts of the IRA campaign are given due attention, the book covers a wide array of issues. One is how the relentless attacks along the Border functioned, in a phrase used at a 1988 Sinn Féin conference, to “keep the pot boiling”, preventing a deal between the SDLP and the Ulster Unionists which would marginalise republicans, and wear down Britain’s will to remain engaged in the Six Counties.

DEEP ROOTED BORDER

The Border, as a site of sectarian strife and as a strategic importance for the IRA campaign, has deep roots.

As Patterson argues, due to the geographic proximity of Antrim and Down to Scotland, Scottish settlers created stable demographic and cultural domination in those two counties even before the plantation of the late seventeenth century. The border counties were different.

Fermanagh and Tyrone had Catholic majorities at the time of partition in 1921; Armagh had a Protestant majority overall but a Catholic majority in its southern-most regions.

Catholics and Protestants in the border counties “lived in close proximity in an intricate pattern which ensured that any border, however it was drawn, would be found deeply unsatisfactory by those who found themselves on the wrong side of it”.

Moreover, the position of border Protestants as a minority, “scattered in towns and villages and in their isolated farm houses”, created powerful bonds of communal solidarity, organised though the Orange Order (“strongest in the western, border counties of Northern Ireland”) and membership of the security services, including the vigilante Ulster Volunteer Force during the Home Rule crisis, then the B-Specials and its replace-

ment, the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR).

The book is very much focused on a particular time – the first two decades of the Troubles, when the Provisional IRA campaign was at its height. We can’t read off *direct* lessons for the present situation.

Nevertheless, it is likely that the border area, with its legacy of sectarian bitterness and tension, could well again become a source of friction on the ground. While the “factory of grievances” of the pre-1998 Six Counties does not exist in as acute a form, and the old raw material to sustain a prolonged armed campaign by republicans is therefore absent, it is highly likely that any physical infrastructure to enforce a hard border could become a target.

Infrastructure would require security force protection, providing a further target for radical republicans. If police are recruited from the local area, the scope for sectarian tensions to become inflamed is obvious.

Not surprisingly, there are some points to take issue with in the book. Consistent with his earlier work, including those written with Paul Bew, Patterson argues that partition “reflected not so much an imperialist imposition as a messy registering of profound political and sectarian divisions”.

Though there were indeed profound divisions in 1921, their “messy registering” in the form of partition cannot be abstracted from the imperialist power relations between Britain and Ireland, including the agreement of the Anglo-Irish Treaty at the end of the War of Independence in the context of Lloyd George’s threat of “immediate and terrible war” if it was not accepted.

It is wrong to argue, as some republicans and their more uncritical supporters in the socialist movement often do, that divisions within Ireland are simply the artificial creations of imperialism and that any recognition of the deeply-felt identity of the Irish Protestant minority (for instance, in a federal united Ireland) is inconceivable.

That does not mean, however, that the partition of Ireland was a genuine effort to reflect the demographics in a democratic manner. It was much more an attempt to create the largest possible contiguous territory for the Six Counties compatible with a stable Unionist majority.

Despite this, *Ireland’s Violent Frontier* is a fascinating work, outlining the complexity of the border issue in the twentieth century. If Brexit goes ahead, this century is set to bring its own complexities.

A federal united Ireland, with recognition of the rights of minorities, within the European Union, provides the best basis on which to unite the working-class to fight for a socialist Ireland and a Socialist United States of Europe.



Arab-Israelis at the polls

By Barry Finger

Who could have missed Ayman Odeh's eloquent op-ed piece in the *New York Times*, where he rightly asserted that "Arab Palestinian citizens have chosen to reject Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, his politics of fear and hate, and the inequality and division he advanced for the past decade"?

Or his explanation of why he and the coalition he leads chose to nominate Benny Gantz — an IDF chief accused of war crimes against fellow Palestinians — for prime minister.

It was on this promise, and with the full knowledge that the Joint List will never be part of the emerging future ruling coalition, that sixty percent of Israel's Arab citizens voted in Israel's general election on 17 September, making the Joint List coalition of Arab-led parties the third-largest list in the Knesset [parliament] and the leading oppositional force in Israel.

This needs some unpacking. Arabs within pre-67 Israel face Jewish chauvinism on two levels: as individual citizens and as a national minority. The Declaration of Independence and the Basic Laws of Israel, however, preclude the construction of apartheid, a condition characterized by institutional restrictions imposed on *individuals* due to their racial, gender, religious or national origin.

Resident Palestinian Arabs have the right to be citizens; to obtain an education; to participate freely in the political life of the country; to practise their religions; to retain the right to immigrate and emigrate; and the right to choose where to live and their job and place of work.

That those rights are often poorly enforced or enforced in bad faith, or with a blind-eye toward specific violations, does not change the fact. The legal system of Israel stipulates its non-apartheid character, which is why Palestinian-Israeli political life is not primarily oriented around the struggle for civil rights.

Palestinian-Israeli oppression is primarily and systemically rooted in the national question, at the level of the collectivity, not of the individual. In context, all existing Arab majority states arguably oppress both on an apartheid (individual, e.g., by withholding equal gender or religious minorities rights) and on an Arab chauvinist (communal/national, where minority Kurds and Berber communities, for instance, have no national rights) level.

Palestinian-Israeli parties reject the Zionist character of the Israeli state for its failure to their community as a legitimate *national* minority.

The Israeli Communist Party seek a non-national state, a state of its citizens such as exists in the US — where the state defines the nation, rather than where the dominant nation defines the state. The other Arab-based



Two nations, two states

Socialists and Israel-Palestine

A Workers' Liberty pamphlet, third edition, 2016. Cover price £3.50

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parties exist to advance an assertion of Palestinian nationalism in one form or another.

That is the common reason why the ruling Zionist parties have always refused formal electoral coalitions with these groups. It is understood that a Zionist coalition with any Palestinian party would be a slippery-slope functional concession to the bi-national reality of Israel. It would challenge the existing Jewish power monopoly over political life, a challenge that the Zionist structure of Israel seeks to suppress. Israel is not an apartheid state, but it is a Jewish chauvinist state.

That is not to deny that Zionist parties, even settler parties, have and have always had Arab lists. But these slots exist to cement loyalties based on patronage. Israel functions as a Jewish chauvinist state, not as an apartheid state, precisely because its dominant Jewish circles are unwilling to adopt the conditionality of any Palestinian-Israeli party's *national* platform as a basis for an electoral alliance.

PARTIAL INTEGRATION

Israel is willing to accept, and at times even actively promote, the social and economic integration of Palestinian-Israelis, but draws a line at their political integration.

As long as Israel remains in a cold war with its Arab minority, it will be unable to reach real peace with the Arab world. Not even if it successfully navigates formal power accords from on high with neighbouring Arab ruling classes.

Real peace between separate states no less than between nations within a binational or multi-national state framework can only be cemented from below — not by superior force of numbers or of arms, but by democratizing the relations among peoples.

That unwillingness to seek a democratic accord internally effectively locks out the Arab community from full participation in the governance of society and deprives that community from an equitable distribution of state funds — both developmentally and culturally — needed to put it on an equal footing with Israel's Jewish majority.

This democratic deficit has habitually bred a cynical contempt — even resignation — on the part of the Arab community within Israel

that no gains can be leveraged through electoral participation and has been reflected time and again in low voter turnout. Avenues of advancement could only be personal — through credentialization, entrepreneurialship, or artistic and athletic achievement.

That is until now.

NEAR-RECORD VOTING

The point is this. It was not the seemingly endless occupation that brought Palestinians to the polls in near-record numbers. If that were the decisive issue, they might have been electorally engaged and committed long ago.

They might have selected to support dovish Zionist parties that were in a position to place the occupation centre-stage as they did years ago when they backed Rabin. A poll conducted in April notably found that far more of them prefer to self-identify as Arab Israelis than as Palestinians. Even Odeh, in the op-ed piece quoted above refers to his constituents as Arabs.

No, it was rather on a far more intimate level that the loathsome Netanyahu regime threatened its Arab citizens. With the Nation-State Law, and with his attempt to permanently restrict and circumvent the legal system as a check against legislative excess — and to inoculate himself against serial law breaking — Palestinians began to see the outline of Netanyahu's ultimate nullification of the legal proscriptions against apartheid.

Finally fed up with Netanyahu's Arab-baiting, racialized othering and unhinged chauvinist demagoguery, a continuous incitement that portended an imminent rollback of whatever social gains Palestinians have attained, Israeli Palestinians took matters into their own hands.

The election was fight-back. Palestinians sought to preserve and extend their hard fought individual rights in the only way they could, by asserting their collective political rights to a shared future with Jews in this part of their common homeland.

Such is the background to the Arab vote. But before romanticizing this choice, it is necessary to understand that this is a devil's bargain. Benny Gantz, the leader of Kahol Lavan, who 11 out of 13 Arab parties on the Joint List recommended to form the next government, is no leftist, no liberal and no centrist. He is a soft Likudnik.

The party he leads is a right wing party led by generals, and certainly not dovish generals. Gantz boasted in his campaign about the

Audio of *Solidarity*

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

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

hundreds killed under his command in two Gaza incursions. He is hardly likely to restart peace talks with the Palestinian Authority and is ambiguous, in the most optimistic of readings, at a future two-state solution.

That the Joint List's Balad party refused to recommend him is cynically, but realistically seen as a feather in Gantz's cap, saving him from the charge of being an "Arab-lover" and thereby burnishing his hardline appeal. The Joint List's recommendation, even in its dissent, are two-prongs of a desperate ploy to put an end to the Netanyahu era.

Israelis — Jewish and Arab — are undoubtedly among the most misled peoples of any democracy. With the decades old dismantling of Israel's bureaucratic collectivist social democracy — in a process not utterly unlike that which transpired in Eastern Europe and Russia — state and Histadrut (Israel's Mapai-controlled labor union federation) properties were auctioned off at bargain basement prices to would be oligarchs.

Celebrated in the long aftermath as a "start-up" economy, it is now one of the most unequal among advanced economies in the world. Its wealth is concentrated within a handful of families, who dominate the political process to the detriment of any progressive social agenda. The manifest inability to find affordable housing has driven hordes of Israelis who have no real ideological or religious commitment to colonialisation to settle in the occupied territories.

And the Arab parties are really not much more appealing. Its leading faction, Hadash led by the now celebrated Ayman Odeh, is, as are most Arab Communist Parties, staunchly pro-Assad. It even staged a demonstration in Tel Aviv calling for the investigation into the world wide "conspiracy against Syria."

The rest of the Joint List contains an amalgam of Nasserists and Islamists, some of whose prominent representatives are repugnant even to Jewish leftists for their repeated public celebration of the murder of innocent Jews as a legitimate form of national self-expression and their retailing of blood libels such as the harvesting of Palestinian organs.

Still, and for better or worse, these parties are the legitimate representatives of the overwhelming majority of Israel's Arab population, and certainly no more odious than Jewish-Israel's long dominant political parties.

It seems likely that this election will end in a unity government led by Gantz and Likud. But if it were a Likud shorn of or with a massively disempowered Netanyahu, Israeli Arabs would have done themselves, Israel and the world a tremendous service.

Workers' Liberty's conference

Workers' Liberty — the organisation behind *Solidarity* — are holding our annual conference on 7-8 December.

We will debate and decide on our policies and plans, and will be publishing these documents and debate in *Solidarity*.

All members are expected to attend conference, to vote on their policies and have their say. Supporting comrades, friends and international delegates are also invited to observe, and speak in debates.

Email office@workersliberty.org for more information.

The Standing Together movement in Israel is circulating an analysis of the Israeli election by one of its activists, Hannah Pollin-Galay, written for the US liberal magazine *The Nation* on the Israeli elections. The article is available, by permission of *The Nation*, on the Workers' Liberty website at bit.ly/hp-g

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 comments on Lukács



Debate

By John Cunningham

First I want to thank Martin Thomas for his "more sceptical assessment" of the work of György Lukács (*Solidarity* 518).

This is precisely what is needed. In the same vein my thanks also to all those who attended the session on Lukács at Ideas for Freedom 2019 recently and gave me the benefit of their thoughts and criticisms.

These comments will no doubt find their way into the book I am currently writing on Lukács (excuse the plug!). I don't feel able at the moment to render a fully detailed response to Martin's comments, so what follows will no doubt appear rather haphazard in response. The numbers do not indicate any order of priority:

1. Various comments that Lukács was "the most important Marxist political philosopher since Marx" and that he was "the great theorist of revolution in the 20th century" etc. seem "over the top" to put it mildly. Also, I have always been uneasy about saying that "X is the greatest Marxist" alive/ of all time/ of this decade; how on earth are such things measured?

2. Martin says, honestly, that he is not qualified to comment on Lukács' writing in literary criticism and aesthetics. I have much sympathy — I have just ploughed my way through *The Historical Novel* and his literary/aesthetic writings can be hard work in places and as I think I have mentioned elsewhere his (pre-revolutionary) *Theory of the Novel* and *Soul and Form* occasionally verge on the incomprehensible.

The problem however is that without a consideration of his aesthetic and literary works we cannot have a full understanding of his life and work. To use Lukács' own words we need to understand the "totality" of his output.

For example, I would suggest that if we want to understand how Lukács ever progressed from upper middle class "man-of-letters" to Marxist activist, then his reading and understanding of the Hungarian poet Endre Ady and the Russian writer Dostoyevsky are essential. He wasn't alone: both Luxemburg and Trotsky were great admirers of Dostoyevsky.

I hope, at some point to address such questions. I haven't yet got round to looking at Lukács on Goethe but I understand that these writings contain a number of veiled — and not so veiled — criticisms of Stalinism as does his work *The Young Hegel*.

3. Martin says *History and Class Consciousness* was published in a "small edition (a few hundred copies)" which seems very likely although I've never come across a reference for this. As far as I know it only appeared in German, a situ-



ation that was only corrected in 1960.

There was however, a thriving "trade" in pirated editions and it is impossible to know how many people did read it. Walter Benjamin and Karl Korsch read it as did a number of those associated with the Frankfurt School. It was an influential text, although Theodor Adorno later became an opponent of Lukács. It was discussed at the "First Marxist Work Week" in Ilenau in 1923, and the future General Secretary of the Japanese CP (he was a student in Germany at the time and fluent in the language) took a copy back to Tokyo with him.

It influenced the current known as "Marxist Humanism" and the "Western Marxism" of the New Left Review. So, the book, despite its initial small print run, did have its resonances, but for many years there was no English, French or Russian translation.

DISAVOWED

4. Was *HCC* "obediently disavowed" by Lukács after Zinoviev's denunciation? Lukács did write a defence of *HCC* — *Tailism and the Dialectic*, which he probably wrote in 1925 and sent to Moscow.

It was never published and sat on a shelf in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute gathering dust till the 1990s. Lukács never mentioned it (to the best of my knowledge) and it is a mystery why this was the case and, equally, why it was never published. But it is a very robust defence of *HCC* against his two most prominent critics Abram Deborin and László Rudas.

No easy answers to this particular puzzle but it does demonstrate that Lukács did not initially take thing lying down. In fact, his first public denunciation of *HCC* only came in 1932 at a writers' conference, some nine years after *HCC*

was published.

In terms of Lukács' self-imposed "retreat" from "front-line" politics (which I think needs some qualification) I would suggest that 1929 and the rejection of his *Blum Theses* — his programme for the Hungarian Communist Party — was a more important event than the denunciations by Zinoviev, Rudas, Deborin, Kun etc. in the mid-twenties.

5. Moving on to more specific issues. I think Martin is right about "What is Orthodox Marxism?" (the first essay in *HCC*). In the draft of my book I say more or less the same. I also look at a number of comments by writers who have defended Lukács' ideas on methodology and find them all wanting (except Gareth Stedman-Jones in *New Left Review* No. 71). The conclusion that Lukács is simply wrong seems inescapable.

6. Unfortunately, the stuff on dialectics will have to wait for a response. Just a quick remark: his former student, István Mészáros has written a book *Lukács' Concept of the Dialectic* (Merlin Press, 1972) which might shed light on this topic but I haven't had time yet to look at this in any depth. Staying with Mészáros for a moment, in his magnum opus *Beyond Capital* (1995) there is a long section (pages 282-422) devoted to Lukács which contains both a warm appreciation of his work and, probably, the most detailed critique available anywhere.

7. The critique of the Hungarian CP in 1919 is right and there is much more that can be said on this topic. Just a couple of other points: not sure about HCP policy on national minorities. The hastily cobbled together Hungarian Red Army did occupy areas of what was soon to be Czechoslovakia (roughly the southern area of what is now Slovakia) but these were areas where there was a substantial Hungarian minority and some sup-

port for the HCP (a Republic of Councils was declared but didn't last very long). Most of the fighting was concerned with defensive action — defending Hungary and the revolution — and was not offensive. In this respect there were nationalist elements fighting with the Red Army, particularly in the officer corps whose military expertise was desperately needed.

RED ARMY

When the Hungarian Red Army faced the Romanians they didn't turn and flee, nor did the leadership. For all its problems the Red Army gave a good account of itself.

At the Tisza river the Red Army stood its ground for eight days before succumbing to the superiority of the Romanian army (which was supported by the French) after this the collapse of the Republic was very rapid.

The main element in the collapse of the Republic of Councils was Kun's decision to agree to a French proposal that if the Hungarians withdrew from the Czechoslovakian front they would get the Romanians to also withdraw; the Hungarian army withdrew but the Romanians ignored the French and pressed on with their advance, eventually occupying Budapest. This gave rise to widespread disillusionment with the CP leadership and some of the professional ex-Hapsburg army officers who were supporting the Hungarian army just threw in the towel.

9. Last comment (at least for the moment). Did Lukács capitulate to Stalinism? Opinions on this seem to vary between the "Trojan Horse" position — fighting Stalinism from inside — or outright surrender.

This crude dichotomy doesn't do justice to Lukács' position, which might best be described as a complex war of manoeuvre.

Royal Mail eCourier strike

By Zack, IWGB activist and Deliveroo courier

Couriers working for eCourier, a Royal Mail Group subsidiary, will strike on 10 and 11 October.

IWGB — the union they and I are in — demands the couriers be put on worker contracts, be paid the London Living Wage after costs and that the company enter into a collective bargaining agreement with the union.

For years, eCourier — like Deliveroo and many other courier companies — has been unlawfully classifying pushbike, motorbike and van couriers as independent contractors, denying them their most basic employment rights, including the right to a guaranteed minimum wage and the right to holiday pay.

The company has repeatedly exploited the precarity inherent in lacking “worker status” by threatening couriers with summary dismissals if they refuse unreasonable requests and regularly denying them trade union representation. eCourier has also used this to apply a series of unfair charges on them.

In 2017, following the launch of legal action by the IWGB, the company admitted that one courier was a worker, entitled to employment rights, and promised to launch a review into whether the other couriers should be classified as workers. However, following that review, the vast majority remain unlawfully classified as independent contractors. The few that were moved to worker contracts were unfairly



penalised with a pay cut.

IWGB Vice President and eCourier courier Max Dewhurst said: “If managers don’t agree to come to the negotiating table voluntarily, we will be forced to drag them there through industrial action.”

The strike will impact the deliveries to eCourier clients such as NHS London hospitals, private healthcare provider HCA and corporate clients Goldman Sachs, Deloitte and British American Tobacco.

In 2015, Royal Mail Group (RMG) already had “Royal Mail Sameday”, a same day delivery operation much like eCourier. RMG then acquired eCourier, which operates mainly in Greater London,

aiming to expand their market share.

Trade union and Labour party activists should mobilise to support the strike, particularly from the CWU, which represents most RMG workers, and is currently balloting over strike action.

Labour’s 2017 manifesto committed to “reverse the privatisation of Royal Mail at the earliest opportunity.”

The CWU goes further, calling for “democratic public ownership” for Royal Mail and BT. This should be expanded to include all divisions and subsidiaries of the Royal Mail Group, which should be unified into one organisation.

Tube workers take action

By Ollie Moore

London Underground station workers at the east end of the District Line began industrial action from Friday 27 September, in a dispute over workplace safety.

Workers will refuse to detrain or attend incidents alone, and will work from a place of safety, after their union, RMT, launched a campaign to demand safe staffing levels following a spike in antisocial behaviour and staff assaults. Workplace safety is becoming an increasingly acute issue on the Tube, after

a serious assault on staff at West Ham station.

Drivers in the RMT on four lines — Victoria, Central, Northern, and Jubilee — will also take industrial action from 10 October. Their dispute focuses on excessive track noise; a technology London Underground has installed to reduce the surface-level noise from trains has had the effect of forcing the noise into the driver’s cab, and the train’s passenger cars. RMT is demanding a permanent engineering solution, and its members on those lines will be imposing temporary speed re-

striction to lessen the effects of the noise in the affected areas.

Meanwhile, two RMT branches, Bakerloo and Piccadilly and District West, have demanded an immediate ballot in the ongoing dispute over pay and conditions on London Underground.

Negotiations have stalled, and with Tube bosses offering only a 30-minute reduction to the working week (the unions’ demand is for a 32-hour, four-day week), many activists are arguing that a ballot for industrial action is long overdue.

Merseyrail reps to meet

By Ollie Moore

Strikes planned by RMT guards on Merseyrail on 30 September, 3 October, and 4 October have been suspended, as RMT continues negotiations with Merseyrail bosses in the long-running dispute over Driver Only Operation.

The union is demanding a

method of despatch and door operation which retains the involvement of a safety-critical guard. Merseyrail reps are due to meet at the union’s national headquarters on 7 October to discuss the progress of negotiations, and whether to reinstate strikes.

Merseyrail is the only dispute in which guards’ picket lines have

been consistently respected by train drivers, who are overwhelmingly members of the Aslef union.

Once a potential settlement is agreed, talks about its implementation should involve both unions, to prevent bosses attempting to divide grades by convening separate talks with each union.

Tracy McGuire for NEU Exec!

By Duncan Morrison

Nominations are now open for the Support Staff seat on the National Executive of the NEU [National Education Union].

The rank-and-file network, Education Solidarity Network’s candidate is Workers’ Liberty supporter Tracy McGuire. Tracy is the only candidate with clear demands; the other two have only empty words.

Tracy’s demands are that the union should fully represent and negotiate for support staff members, thus breaking the terrible agreement the leadership signed up to through the TUC.

She is calling for a £3 per hour, across the board pay increase for all support staff and a national pay system and national pay bargaining.

She also wants the union to



clearly oppose Brexit. Many support staff are EU nationals and will be directly affected should Britain leave the EU.

Districts have until 31 October to make a nomination. The ballot opens on 11 November and closes on 2 December.

Postal workers build for ballot

By Darren Bedford

Large workplace meetings at Royal Mail depots have helped postal workers’ union CWU build its campaign for an ongoing industrial action ballot of around 120,000 postal workers.

The union has tweeted a series of videos showing large groups of members queueing up to post their ballot papers on their way into work. The ballot closes on 15 October.

If thresholds are met and a majority returned, Royal Mail workers could strike over a range of issues including working hours and workload. A 2017 deal between Royal Mail bosses and the union guaranteed to reduce the working week, but workers say progress has stalled.

Now Royal Mail bosses want to make further changes to the way deliveries are organised, moving



the delivery of larger parcels and packages out of Royal Mail’s normal workload and transferring them to Parcelforce, currently a part of Royal Mail but which bosses want to constitute as a separate company. This move would threaten thousands of jobs.

The 2017 deal also included a commitment that both sides would enter mediation prior to any future industrial action, which could delay the start of any action.

BEIS keep up the pressure

By Darren Bedford

Outsourced workers at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) are continuing an indefinite strike to win living wages, amongst other demands.

Statements by Andrea Leadsom, the secretary of state who heads the department, and other government figures, have suggested that the Department may be ready to stipulate that the contractors to whom it outsources work must pay the London

living wage of £10.55, but as yet no formal settlement has been offered.

Contractors at BEIS include ISS and Aramark. ISS’s operating income in 2018 was over £500 million, with Aramark making over £600 million.

PCS has been sustaining the action with full strike pay for the workers involved.

The strikers organised a climate-change-themed picket line on 20 September, to coincide with the global climate strike.



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A STICKY TIME FOR TEFLON DON

By Barrie Hardy

Donald Trump is such an obvious crook that he's been a prime candidate for impeachment from the minute he assumed office.

There has been such a substantial menu of grounds for impeachment that it's difficult to know what to choose.

Soliciting help from Putin's secret services to win the election itself? Illegal election payments to porn stars? Trump's various businesses benefiting from his presidency? As of last week, there were 30 separate investigations into Trump being conducted by Congressional, Federal or State authorities.

The problem so far has been that none of the accusations have stuck. Trump infamously said that he could shoot someone dead on Fifth Avenue and not lose any votes.

As befits someone with a background of privileged entitlement, he believes he can get away with anything and that seems to have been the case for the past 73 years of his life!

However, this latest crisis which nobody yet seems to have dubbed Ukrainegate yet, might spell the beginning of the end.

Trump's belief in his untouchability received a great boost when the Mueller report turned out to be something of a damp squib. On 24 July Mueller himself gave final testimony to Congress where he said his investigation had not reached the determination that Trump had committed a crime and Trump hailed this "as a great day for me."

Emboldened he made a phone call to Volodymyr Zelensky, the President of the Ukraine the very next day asking him to dig up dirt on Joe Biden, Trump's potential Democrat rival in the 2020 election.

The 25 July call to Ukraine was continuation of a plan to smear Biden which began in November last year, its chief architect none other than Trump's demented consigliere Rudy Giuliani.

The explosive whistleblower complaint that raised the alarm over Trump's efforts to solicit Ukrainian help for his re-election bid mentions Giuliani 31 times.

Giuliani has been trying to get an anti Trump conspiracy theory to stand up involving the former US ambassador to Ukraine, Marie Yovanovitch (an American citizen whose been with the US foreign service since 1986) and, amongst others, the bête noire of the anti Semitic conspiracy theorists everywhere, George Soros!

Giuliani got Yovanovitch sacked last May in what was described as "a political hit job". She had been quite vociferous in urging Ukraine to crack down on corruption and appears to have fallen foul of false accusations made by the discredited and undoubtedly highly corrupt former Ukraine Prosecutor General, Yuriy Lutsenko.

ALLEGED SOURCE

It's alleged that Lutsenko is the source of the apparently baseless accusations against Biden and his son and has also been feeding the Trump media with additional bullshit claims that Ukraine helped Hillary Clinton in the 2016 election.

Giuliani is a private citizen who happens to be Trump's personal attorney. He is in no way a representative of the American government and yet he has stated on television that his Ukraine "investigation" was carried out at the request of the State Department.

Furthermore, he brandished his phone to the camera as proof of such communication. Is this the claim the product of Giuliani's febrile imagination? If not, then Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo has a lot of explaining to do!

Then we have the matter of the

Trump phone call itself in which he says to the Ukrainian President: "I would like you to do us a favour".

In the context of the conversation and the fact that the White House put a block on \$391 million of Congress approved military aid the previous week with no really plausible reason, this amounted to a quid pro quo — Trump clearly blackmailing Zelensky.

Damning enough as this revelation is — and soliciting aid from a foreign entity for electoral advantage is a crime — the full extent of Trump criminality is not yet known because only a memo of the conversation has been released. Plenty has been left out and the full conversation record has been squirreled away onto a secret server — a classic attempt at cover up.

Trump has already denounced the impeachment moves in his familiar terms of "hoax" and "witch-hunt" and rubbished the whistleblower as "a partisan person" even though he doesn't know who this person actually is. For good measure Trump has also suggested that those in his administration who provided information to the whistleblower should be treated as "spies" and executed "just like in the good old days".

Impeachment will get voted

through the Democrat controlled House, but requires a two thirds majority in the Senate to pass. So far Republicans have been reluctant to go against Trump, but evidence in this case seems pretty clear cut. Trump is in office caught on tape committing a crime and maybe other phone conversations of a damaging nature with foreign leaders will come to light in due course?

John Gotti, the New York mobster, was once dubbed "the Teflon Don" because criminal charges against him never stuck. In the end justice caught up with Gotti and he spent the rest of his life in prison. Nothing has stuck to Donald Trump so far, but Teflon eventually wears out.

His erstwhile followers in the top levels of the Republican Party may yet desert him.

Much of Trump's right-wing base in the country, however, remains solid.

A successful fight against that right-wing base will take more than legal manoeuvres by the Democrats.

It requires the remobilisation of the US labour movement, with a political program and a plan of battle which can win over sections of Trump's plebeian base.

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