



& Workers' Liberty

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WE'RE STILL FOR A UNITED EUROPE

Lessons from French strikes

Two months on, strikers still battling Macron's pension cuts

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Photo: Gemma Short



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Sanders and the unions



Sanders campaign

By Eric Lee

Bernie Sanders has introduced a new phrase into American politics: “working class.”

For decades, hardly anyone has used those two words together. It was far more common to speak of the “middle class” or, more recently, “working families”. By employing the language of class, Sanders has staked out his claim to be the candidate of the trade unions.

In early 2016, when Sanders’ chances of getting elected were considered to be around zero, the leaders of most major American unions rushed to endorse Hillary Clinton. In most cases, members were not asked who they supported, and to many union leaders it made sense to back a candidate whose nomination was seen to be a near-certainty.

Clinton offered little in exchange for that union support, saying only that if she was elected president, “workers will always have a seat at the table and a champion in the White House.”

There were some dissident unions which endorsed Sanders, most notably the communication workers, nurses and postal workers, and a lot of grumbling among rank and file union members who were far more sympathetic to Sanders than some of their leaders were.

Following Clinton’s stunning defeat at the hands of Donald Trump, some in the American labour movement began to have second thoughts.

“Organised labour is still traumatized after the 2016 Democratic primary,” wrote Politico recently. “Several unions endorsed Hillary Clinton early on, only to see the decision backfire when portions of their membership bolted for Bernie Sanders. This year, they’re deter-

mined not to make the same mistake.”

The lesson they learned was to endorse no one, not early on in any event, and perhaps to even wait until the Democratic primary battle is over and the party has chosen its candidate in July.

But some unions have already jumped in, supporting their favourite candidates.

NURSES, POSTIES, UE

Bernie Sanders has once again won the support of the nurses and the postal workers. He was unsurprisingly backed by the United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers (UE), a small progressive union that had a historic connection to the Communist Party.

But with most national unions holding back on nominations, local initiatives increasingly matter. Recently, Sanders won the support of the 10,000 member Local 1984 of the Service Employees International Union in New Hampshire. This is

expected to make a big difference in the first primary state, which votes on 11 February.

Joe Biden got the endorsement of the fire fighters, as expected. But this week, the 200,000 member Amalgamated Transit Union, which had backed Sanders in 2016, switched sides and endorsed Biden.

Instead of asking their members who to support, the union employed a public opinion pollster, who sampled the membership and decided they wanted the former vice president. The leadership seemed delighted with the result, because in their view Biden is the candidate more likely to defeat Trump.

In the run-up to the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee in July, more unions are likely to make their preferences known. So far, it seems that there is little if any union support for the other Democratic candidates, including the progressive Elizabeth Warren.

If Sanders wins the nomination, it

is likely that all the unions will throw their support behind him and this is not an insignificant thing. The 14 million strong American trade union movement may be only a shadow of its former self, but it still has the power to donate millions of dollars to campaigns it supports and to provide many thousands of volunteers.

But even more important than that, a united labour movement backing the most pro-worker candidate the Democrats have ever nominated will be a powerful force to persuade union members who in 2016 showed little interest in Hillary Clinton’s offer of “a seat at the table.” This time, they will have a candidate that really is on their side.

If Bernie Sanders is elected president, it will be due in large part to a group of people that he alone among the candidates calls by its proper name: the working class. □

• Eric Lee is convenor of “London for Bernie”, writing here in a personal capacity.

Health workers strike in Hong Kong

By Chen Ying

Today, 3 February, over 2,000 health workers went on strike, after an overwhelming ballot held over the weekend in favour of action to press their two demands, and after the Government refused to meet with them:

1) The HKSAR Government must close its border with China to prevent more and more people infected with the Wuhan novel-coronavirus from coming in.

2) The HKSAR Government must secure sufficient masks, clothing and other equipment to enable hospital staff to carry out their work with sufficient protection against the virus.

With more health workers ready to join the strike tomorrow, the Government caved in dramatically this afternoon, closing the border except for lorries carrying goods and food into Hong Kong, but keeping the airport still open to all flights, including flights from China. The health union have rejected this, because the flights from China still enable virus carriers coming into Hong Kong.

The high level of anxiety, amounting to panic, is real and widespread, given that hundreds died of SARS here in 2003. The xenophobia against mainlanders is also a real and deepening sentiment, and fuelled by people’s perception that we have a puppet government controlled totally by Beijing.

Once again, ineptness by the HKSAR Government has made a difficult situation worse and has

confirmed people’s mistrust and disgust of this unelected and dithering Government.

From one angle it might appear that the protesters are exhausted. The Lennon Walls have largely been stripped bare. Incidents of blocking traffic or firebombing Chinese banks have dwindled almost to zero. The water cannon vehicles have not been in use for weeks.

But no. Another crisis has hit Hong Kong – the Wuhan novel-coronavirus.

Whilst the Government’s attempts to ban facemasks have been rejected by the courts, the black facemasks worn by protesters have been replaced by pale blue and white surgical masks or N95 masks, with no more policemen forcing people to take their masks off.

Many cases have emerged, with a common thread – those falling ill have all travelled into Hong Kong from Wuhan. Some of their family members living in close proximity in Hong Kong are also falling ill.

The Chief Executive, Carrie Lam, previously blamed protesters for ruining the Christmas holidays. Now this virus has brought Chinese New Year celebrations all across Hong Kong and China to a dead stop. Shops and restaurants are deserted, and supermarket shelves were emptied day after day last week as people panicked, expecting the worst.

This virus has an unusually long incubation period of 14 days, and there may already be many infected people in Hong Kong who are not yet ill.



Hospital Authority Employees Alliance (HAEA) members on second phase strike outside Hospital Authority headquarters. Photo: HAEA

About 2% of those affected do not get a fever, making body temperature scanning at border checkpoints and the airport less than foolproof.

Masks are in short supply. Prices have rocketed tenfold. The Government continues to rely on “market forces” to deal with the supply of masks rather than take strategic steps to requisition them and channel them towards hospital staff and the most vulnerable sectors of the population.

Masks made by prisoners for government use have been found to be on sale on the streets much to the Government’s embarrassment. Rumours abound that most of the Government’s stock of masks have been shipped across the border to other Chinese cities.

Social media reports of mainland Chinese buying up masks in bulk in various overseas cities have added to Hong Kongers’ resentment of mainlanders.

A high profile case has really stirred up local discontent. An el-

derly couple in their 70s came from Wuhan to stay in the most expensive hotels in Hong Kong, including the Four Seasons, until they fell ill. Their daughter in Hong Kong, a top director in the financial sector, also fell ill.

People soon tracked the elderly couple down as fugitives on the run from China, wanted for corruption. They were totally unhelpful with the health service, refusing to state where they have been staying or people they have been seeing.

There are many social and economic links between Hong Kong and the rest of China. For example, 30,000 school children commute daily from Shenzhen across the border to attend schools in Hong Kong; many day traders coming over to buy milk powder, seafood and other sought-after items. Hong Kongers as well as people living in Shenzhen commute across the border for work or study.

The wealthy on both sides travel frequently across the border for

business and leisure purposes, while relying on domestic helpers from Shenzhen coming over to care for children or the elderly. Closing the border completely is like trying to turn the clock back on decades of increasing economic integration.

This necessary temporary move should have been in place a week ago. The exertion of union power to force the Government’s hand is a significant victory, and the Government’s hypocritical moral lectures about Hong Kongers discriminating against our compatriots is actually adding fuel to reactionary sentiment against ordinary people from the mainland.

So the protest movement has adjourned for now. It is still a thorn in the side of the government, waiting for a future opportunity to press its demands for a full inquiry into the Government’s mismanagement and police brutality. □

• More on novel-coronavirus: p.12



Mobilising for COP26 in Glasgow



By Peter Burton

About a hundred people attended the “Campaign against Climate Change” (CACC) conference in Glasgow on Saturday 1 February.

There were speakers from a wide variety of different campaigns who spoke in the two sessions aimed at mobilising for COP26 in Glasgow in November this year.

Key themes were 1) how to build for COP26 with a heavy focus on how to get more Trade Unions taking action for Green jobs, 2) a just transition to renewables, and 3) campaigning for Free Public Transport.

Two school student strikers announced future school strike dates. They have received invites to speak at STUC Conference and support from Glasgow Trades Council. The school students will be speaking at this year’s May day event in Glasgow, and stated that the theme of

the whole event would be the climate.

10-14 February is “Climate Learning Week”, an initiative by NEU, UCU, NUS and TES, which will see activists in schools, colleges and universities campaigning for the climate to be included in the curriculum in this week.

The main discussion and action points revolved around how to get workers taking action in solidarity with the school students and turning up in numbers at November’s COP26. There was agreement about school student strikers touring union branches and conferences to call for this.

We agreed to organise a climate bloc on the 21 March UN anti-racism day demonstration in Glasgow and for networking and campaigning ahead of the next two climate strikes (14 February and March).

Suzanne Jeffery (chair of CACC and CACCTU) called for activists to aim for workers to take action side by side with the school strikers on the Global Climate Strike which takes place on 3 April, and for transport unions to put on free

transport for COP26. A CACC Transport working group was created. □

Dale Street adds:

Glasgow “Labour for a Green New Deal” met on 29 January to plan for campaigning around COP26. We planned for a joint event coinciding with COP26, hosted by The World Transformed in collaboration with Labour for a Green New Deal.

Suggestions for further discussion include: inviting all Scottish CLPs to list themselves as “sponsors” of the event, producing a regular newsletter between now and COP26 for circulation to all CLPs, and promoting a green agenda at the Scottish Labour conference in October and in the current Scottish Policy Forum consultation.

From April or May onwards, once weather improves, we hope to start doing some street stalls, not in city centre but on the outskirts, about, for example, improved local bus services into the city centre. We will try to get members of local CLPs involved as well. □

Class struggle environmentalism

**Saturday 14 March,
10.30am- 5.30pm
Park View School, London,
N15 3QR**

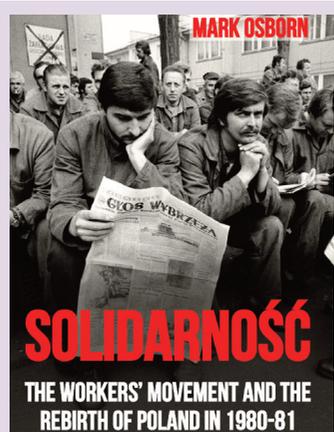
Join this day of discussions and workshops!

Buy tickets, or book a free space in the creche online. The last two years have seen an upsurge of environmental activism: the youth climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion. Workers’ Liberty activists have been involved in these actions, and in previous waves of climate activism.

Capitalism is the central driver of environmental crises. Class struggle environmentalism, and the ideas of Marxist ecology, are key to stopping climate catastrophes. Workers’ Liberty has been developing, debating, and putting into practice these politics.

Save the date, book transport and tickets, invite everyone you know!

Early bird tickets end 14 February: £18 high waged, £8 low waged, £3 unwaged. £1 for school students. Tickets and creche can also be booked in person or over the phone. □
• bit.ly/14-3-20



A new history of Solidarność from its dawn until the 1981 military coup. £5 + post.
workersliberty.org/solidarnosc

On the streets 14 February!



By Misha Zubrowski

The world’s “biodiversity hotspots” have provided refuges for many species and ecosystems — from wider climatic changes — for millions of years.

Climatic stability encourages wider and more robust biodiversity. The continued effectiveness of many of these crucial sanctuaries is now under threat from global catastrophic climate changes, one study from 3 February (bit.ly/3-feb-20) has shown.

This is one of many impacts of climate crises which is bad in itself and also contributes further to environmental threats — in this case from biodiversity loss. It should be taken as yet another call to arms in the fight for climate action.

The seriousness of the dangers are however no reason for demoralisation. Every victory we have in our environmental struggle — even small and temporary victories — tends to lead to less damage; a tangible if immeasurable improvement.

And ultimately, the prospect of a socialist working-class movement which can halt and even reverse climate change is still on the table,

and absolutely worth fighting for. The core of this wisdom has driven much of the youth climate strike movement. The next strike is on 14 February. Students and young people from across the UK will be taking part: see ukscn.org and bit.ly/ys4c-e for details of events.

Outsourced workers at the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) will continue striking over workplace issues, and will be raising environmental slogans that day, with a delegation to the climate demo.

Socialist environmentalists should talk to colleagues and organise plans for the day at work. Previously, readers of *Solidarity* have organised rallies by workplaces with delegations of workers joining youth demonstrations; others have collaborated with co-workers to make short videos for social media on the importance of climate action.

Where no such workplace plans — however small — will be made to happen this time, I’d encourage readers to take time off work to join youth climate strikes, to support and link up with them. In both cases, bringing fundamental socialist and working-class politics to bear on climate activism is crucial. □

Stop West Bank annexation!

By Colin Foster

On Saturday 1 February, some 2,000 Israelis, Jews and Arabs, demonstrated in Tel Aviv against the “Trump plan” for Israel-Palestine, and the threats by leading Israeli politicians Benjamin Netanyahu and Benny Gantz to use the “plan” as license to move quickly to annex large areas of the West Bank.

According to the Israeli press, the other opposition to annexation (this one behind closed doors) comes from the top brass of Israel’s armed forces, who calculate that it would create reverberating problems for them.

Early talk from Netanyahu of pushing through annexation this week has faded, but it looks likely straight after the 2 March election at latest.

Socialists in Britain are organising for a solidarity protest against annexation at the Israeli embassy in London, possibly on 20 February. A draft text for the call-out says:

“We stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people, and with socialists, internationalists, and peace activists within Israel protesting their own government’s brutal policies.

“We believe that only a settlement based on equal rights for both peoples, Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, can bring peace, security, and justice. Immediately, this means:

- No to annexation
- An end to the occupation and

the blockade of Gaza

- An end to all settlement building
- A viable, independent Palestinian state, alongside and with the same rights as Israel
- Full civil rights for Israel’s Arab minority
- Justice for the Palestinian refugees

“We call on trade unions, local Labour Parties, and other campaign groups to cosponsor and help us build our protest”.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign has done no more than a perfunctory statement against the plan. They are still hostile to links with the left inside Israel, and focused on activity like getting British universities and academics to break contact with their Israeli counterparts.

Socialist Worker even sees a sort of silver lining to the “Trump plan”. “Trump’s deal should be the final nail in the coffin of the ‘two-state solution’ — the idea that there could be a state of Palestine alongside Israel”.

Actually, “one-state” formulas, whether in their fantasy form of the Arab states conquering the whole territory and making the Jews a subordinated minority, or in the all-too-real form of creeping Israeli annexation of the West Bank, need to be discarded.

No settlement opening paths for working-class unity and towards a socialist federation in the whole region is possible without respecting the national rights of both peoples.

The Morning Star's "identity politics"



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

As the Brexit battle raged, the *Morning Star* identified a new and fearsome force, threatening working class unity and making rational debate impossible: identity politics (sometimes also known as the "culture war" and, more recently, by the single word "woke").

An editorial (2 Sep 2019) playing down the significance of Johnson's prorogation of parliament ("an extra few days to the habitual parliamentary break"), denounced "the one reactionary aspect that threatens to engulf the whole debate... the identity politics now gripping large parts of the pro-Remain, anti-Brexit movement."

Notice that "identity politics" – never precisely defined in the *Morning Star* – only seems to have afflicted one side of the Brexit debate (just as the so-called "culture war" is only ever waged by the "liberal" side).

Blue Labour's appeal to "family, faith and flag is not denounced as identity politics; nor is David Goodhart's appeal to the "people of somewhere"; nor is the repeated invocation of what he calls the "white working class" by *Morning Star* favourite Ian Lavery MP (they even touted him as a possible leadership candidate for a while!)

Yet the Communist Party of Britain (the

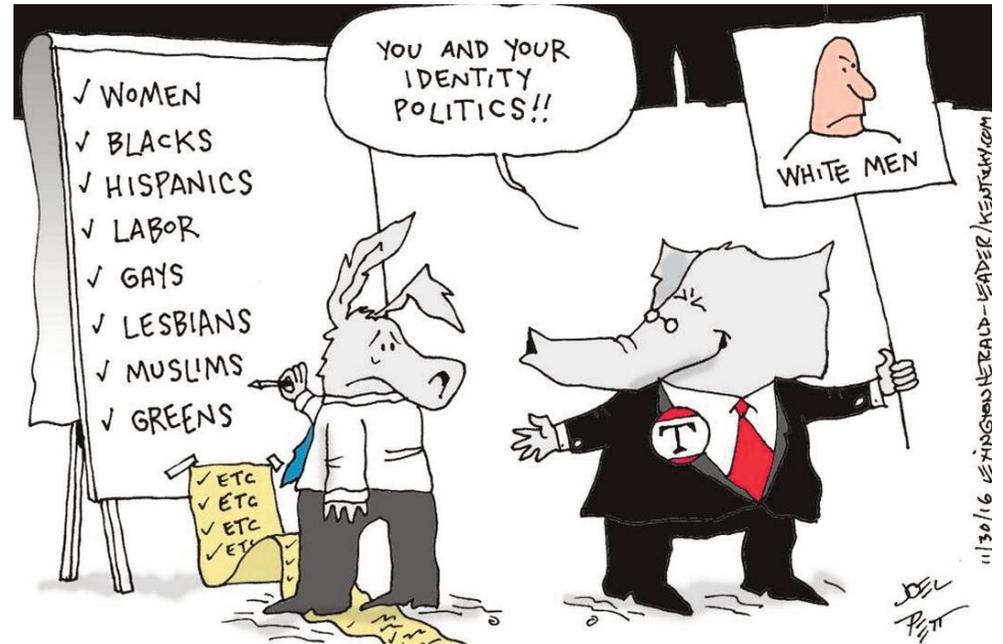
ideological masters of the *Morning Star*) could, in the immediate aftermath of the general election, put out a statement ("Politics of identity – British, Scottish or European – rather than class win the day") accusing Labour of failing to defend "the millions of working-class and Labour supporters of Brexit... in many working class communities hard-hit by industrial decline since the 1970s [who] saw this as another, more grievous example of betrayal by their own party, its leadership and a London metropolitan elite".

Marxists have a criticism of "identity politics" – of "naming and claiming", of the idea that just to name yourself as part of a given group is to claim a moral backing for your words and actions, above and beyond evidence and reason. But the *Morning Star's* idea here is just "identity politics" in the form of claiming moral authority as representing non-metropolitan, non-London, "traditional" people.

"CLASS" VS "IDENTITY"?

The MS, the CPB and other Stalinists and semi-Stalinists (e.g. Andrew Murray and Len McCluskey) pretend to counterpose what they call good old-fashioned "class politics" against identity politics ("culture wars", etc.).

The problem for these people is they understand class not by Marxist analysis (property relations and relationship to the means of production), or even serious bourgeois social science, but by categories drawn up by the marketing industry (the "National Readership Survey") that defines the "working



class" as semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers lumped together as "C2DE".

This category becomes even more problematic when applied to retired people, no longer part of the production process or connected to organised labour.

What lies behind most of the talk about identity politics, "culture wars" etc is a refusal to recognise that the working class has long been in large part ethnic minorities, women and LGBT+ people and is now majority white-collar. These are at least as much

Labour's "heartland" constituents as retired white former manual workers.

They are the actual, existing working class. The failure of some leftists and would-be Marxists to understand this can only be put down to... identity politics.

I recommend Rick Parnett's article "Elections, social grades and class" in *The Clarion* of 25 March 2018 (bit.ly/e-sg-c) for more on the National Readership Survey categories of class. □

Sectionalism harms movement



Letters

Bob Carnegie's interview in *Solidarity* 530 Tackling the union bureaucracies is instructive for understanding trade unions in the current period.

As Bob says, some of the problems are not that new, but I was reminded strongly of the situation in the railway industry in Britain.

The overwhelming majority of organised train drivers in Britain are members of Aslef, a union with membership open only to employees responsible for the "operation of trains". The industrial union on the job, the RMT, has members

across the grades, cleaners, station staff, engineers, back office staff etc.

Aslef may enter into disputes quite regularly. Often the very threat of strike action by drivers, who after will stop the service, can bring management back round the table. The proposed new legislation for a minimum service may disrupt that way of working, but here and now they are in a strong position. Only they have rarely used it to defend other jobs in the industry, and especially soon after rail privatisation they sold off their own conditions for big pay rises.

Sometimes Aslef members have stood up and refused to cross RMT pickets, but the union as a whole sees itself as a sort of professional association. At one point an Aslef general secretary proposed that the organisation cease being a union and reconfigure itself as a labour-hire agency for train drivers.

Aslef's current pay claim on London Un-

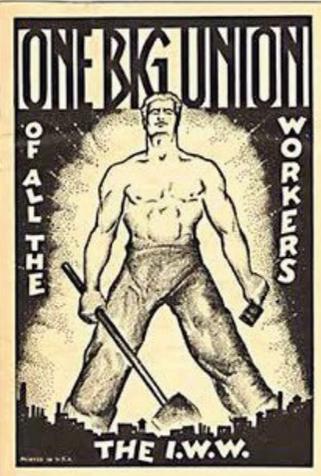
derground calls for a specific financial reward for train operators, whereas the RMT, which also includes drivers, has asked for better pay for all workers directly employed by London Underground.

As Bob highlighted, the problem is not just one of craft unions. Better paid, skilled workers, even in industrial unions, are often less receptive to demands like a shorter working week or rostering for less extreme shifts. Oddly, they are often more narrowly focused on pay rises at all costs than are worse-paid workers.

In these cases the role of politics, and the arguments for an industrial union representing all grades, have to outweigh the sectional demands of a subset of already well paid workers. Without a perspective that sees trade unions as part of a broad working-class movement, sectionalism will flourish. □

Stephen Wood, Haringey

• "The second deal of the century", a letter by Barry Finger, is on page 12.



The dialectics of homœopathy



Letters

Les Hearn's letter (*Homœopathy and Placebo*, 29 January 2020) is refreshingly even-tempered and correctly emphasises the therapeutic value of a good homœopathic consultation.

Many trained NHS GPs use homœopathy in daily practice, despite severely restrictive time pressures. However, some of his comments reveal (perhaps unintended) support for homœopathy.

He seems to miss a crucial point about homœopathy when he states that "if the water used to prepare dilutions retained a memory of a substance's beneficial effects, it would also retain memory of all its other effects, good or bad". To be effective, homœopathic remedies *must* reflect the potentially toxic effects of their source. That is the very, and dialectical, point of homœopathic remedies.

They work by the *Similimum* principle – "like cures like", as Hippocrates maintained – which may be viewed as analogous to today's conventional vaccinations. A relatively safe, altered – diluted and succussed – preparation of a harmful substance may be used to stimulate the healing of an organism having the very signs and symptoms that would be caused by a dangerous dose of that same substance.

Living on the Wirral, where most of England's coronavirus suspects are now being quarantined, I hope someone is speedily preparing a homœopathic remedy *and* a vac-

cine from that very virus. Our immune systems need help to cope with a novel threat.

Les claims that "homœopathic treatments are ... indistinguishable from placebos", but that placebos are "of immense importance". If placebo is efficacious, then it cannot be "nothing" or "ineffective". A causal power may be an overt force or a real absence (see, for example Roy Bhaskar *Dialectic: The Pulse of Freedom*, 1993), but if it can achieve a change, then it has dynamic being, which can be harnessed for healing.

I concur with Les that homœopathy should not substitute for a suitable orthodox medical intervention: setting broken bones under general anaesthetic, for example. But in such cases good homœopathy can have a powerful, complementary healing role. I also agree that "today, there are conventional treatments for which there is little evidence of benefit and indeed some evidence of harm".

I think Les is unfair to the existing evidence base for homœopathy, which shows that homœopathy is at least "placebo-plus", but I also think it is clear that more research should be conducted about unproven orthodox medical technology *and* about the methods, processes and effects of homœopathic medicine.

This is prevented at present by several factors, including the might of the global, profiteering pharmaceutical industry and the irrational, aggressive, scientific and populist opposition to homœopathy, which is encouraged by the same Establishment that is preparing the NHS for private sale. □

Richard Shield, Wallasey

• Another letter, on Israel: page 12

Brexit is happening? Don't accept it!

Editorial

The socialist left should vocally oppose the Tories' Brexit plans. It should argue for a united Europe, and for the UK to rejoin the EU. It should fight for the broad labour movement, including the Labour Party, to argue and campaign for this too.

Almost all the Labour-leader candidates say that we have no choice but to "move on" while the Tories "get Brexit done". Even Emily Thornberry, the most vocally anti-Brexit candidate, says only that Labour should *have been* more anti-Brexit.

That is wrong. Actual, really-existing Brexit involves a range of attacks on the interests of the working class. How could it not, with this government? And the scope and degree of that range is not fixed in advance. Johnson's announced plans are unworkable, so he will end with something different. What "something different"? That depends.

Sure, the UK has formally left the EU. That is unlikely to be reversed within the transition period ending on 31 December. Yet that does not settle how the left and labour movement respond. Accepting that Brexit is happening should not mean accepting Brexit.

Everyone in the Labour Party accepts that Labour should vote against the Tories' immediate plans, on issues including immigration, environmental protection, and workers' rights. But as yet there is little talk of doing more than that. We need to rouse ourselves, sound the alarm and organise action on as many fronts as possible.

The urgent priority is opposing the assault

on migrants. The Tories want to end freedom of movement, moving (non-Irish) EU citizens who want to come here into a category similar to that already occupied by many other migrants. Free movement will be replaced by the division of EU migrants into "skilled" and "unskilled", with harsher restrictions on both, but particularly the "unskilled". The result may or may not be less immigration – but it will certainly be a more unpleasant, tightly-controlled and precarious reality for migrants, and thus for all workers.

United action, of the leading civilised [i.e. economically-developed] countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat."

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, The Communist Manifesto (1847)

Solidarity supports free movement for everyone, everywhere. We won't win that without defending the free movement with EU countries which we've had for decades. Lisa

Nandy's and Keir Starmer's calls to defend UK-EU free movement are welcome, though their poor records on defending free movement previously are another matter.

ORGANISATIONS

Organisations like Labour Campaign for Free Movement, Labour for a Socialist Europe and Another Europe is Possible should take up this call, while mobilising on the streets against the Tories' attacks. That is necessary to defend our migrant brothers and sisters, and to strengthen the labour movement's increasingly shaky stance on migrants' rights.

The assault on migrants is of a piece with the Tories' wider Brexit agenda. As *The Economist* puts it (4 February), Boris Johnson has "set course for the hardest possible Brexit". Self-glorifying rhetoric about a glorious new era of "free trade" does not change the fact that the UK and EU are at odds over many issues and that it will be extremely hard to get a trade deal before 31 October.

The Tories are determined to diverge from EU rules and regulations – of course, in a

right-wing direction. As *The Economist* says, "the risk that Brexit will happen on December 31st with no trade deal at all in place must be substantial". Even if they succeed, the Tories' model of success is the kind of trade deal closest to a no-deal Brexit, citing Australia's relationship with the EU.

There will be extensive chaos and disruption on this road, and plenty of opportunity for the labour movement to mobilise – if it chooses to.

The issue is not just the type of Brexit, but Brexit itself. Reversing the unification of Europe, in train for the best part of two centuries, is radically regressive. The organised working class, for which international solidarity is so essential, must actively oppose this regression, and the re-erection of higher barriers in its midst. To fail to do so is politically bankrupt and self-defeating.

We should do much more to support and learn from struggles like the eruption of strikes and demonstrations in France – not shrug or cheer at the raising of borders between those struggles and ours.

We must confront the pro-Brexit forces that run the Labour Party and many union ma-

chines. We must convince those who accept their arguments regrettably, often out of weariness, that they do not need to do so.

REVERSE BREXIT

We should argue to reverse Brexit and rejoin the EU. Of course, the EU is not the Europe we want. Europe, like Britain, needs radical transformation, won by the labour movement from below. But the route to a better united Europe does not run through breaking up the one that exists. We need to build a much stronger, more international, cross-border labour movement, not help throw up new barriers in the way.

Different demands have different kinds of applicability, immediacy and relevance. Calling for Britain to rejoin the EU is in many ways a harder argument than the much more radical one of winning a socialist Europe. That is because it immediately cuts hard against the nationalist project currently riding high. Whatever the tactical issues – clearly rejoining cannot be won quickly or without serious upheavals – we should pursue it.

In the first place, the argument needs to happen in the Labour Party, where even anti-Brexit voices have noticeably run scared of this demand. □

Oppose retrospective "justice"

Editorial

After the knife attack by Islamist terrorist Ahsan Ali in Streatham (South London) on 2 February, the government is doubling down on its proposals to increase the prison population and curb civil liberties.

The main new item is a proposal for longer prison sentences to apply *retrospectively*. Retrospective changes to legal penalties is a dangerous violation of basic principles of justice.

Of course society and political authorities should debate how to keep citizens safe. That is not straightforward in the face of violence- and death-obsessed movements like radical Islamism. But more people in jail for longer will not address the basic problem; only a re-birth of social hope can do that, and everything this government does actively works the other way.

Serious debate is exactly what the Tories do not want, preferring to use demagoguery to bludgeon critics and rush through their changes. □



Workers' Liberty has created a new range of t-shirts.

Order them for £12 plus postage: £1.50 UK, £5 international. 100% cotton and available in sizes from XS through to XXL.

As well as being incredibly stylish, these serve three functions: fundraising for our vital activism, championing foundational political ideals, and raising the profile of our politics and organisation.

• Buy online at workersliberty.org/t-shirts

Javid plans more cuts

Editorial

Much of the press has parroted Johnson's claims about the Tories abandoning austerity in favour of more generous spending on public services.

The reality is shown by Chancellor Sajid Javid's leaked letter to cabinet ministers demanding 5% cuts in all departmental budgets, specifically telling them to each axe ten programmes not connected to health, crime or regional inequality, and to consider "radical options".

Javid says: "We have been elected with a clear fiscal mandate to keep control of day-to-day spending. This means there will need to be savings made across government to free up money to invest in our priorities." In other words, vicious austerity will continue.

Local government will continue to be systematically demolished. Now that the general level of benefits has been driven down, the benefit freeze as such is ending: but the government has confirmed it will restart the "roll out" of Universal Credit in July.

The notion that spending on health, crime and tackling regional inequality can be neatly separated from wider public spending is absurd. The Tories' austerity agenda will greatly increase ill-health and demands on the NHS, for instance.

On top of all that, Javid's plans assume that reforming Whitehall can unlock major savings and that the economy will continue to grow – just as the Tories prepare to pitch us deeper into a hard, and maybe a no-deal, Brexit.

After all the speculation about how the Tories will keep voters who switched to them in December on side, it looks as if they've decided to stick two fingers up and hope that nationalism will keep people distracted. New analysis from the (Tory-controlled) Local Government Association shows that these areas are set to lose most in the new round of council cuts.

After so many defeats, there's a sort of unspoken idea that there's not much left to fight for. If the labour movement doesn't start fighting there's a lot to lose; if we do, the Tories are vulnerable and we can push them back. □



Labour leadership: challenge the candidates!

By Mohan Sen

Rebecca Long-Bailey has challenged the other candidates to support the commitments to public ownership in the 2019 manifesto. Richard Burgon has argued for a new pro-public-ownership Clause IV in the party constitution.

Keir Starmer has backed the 2019 manifesto's plans for higher taxes on the rich and come out for re-establishing UK-EU free movement. Dawn Butler has written in the *Guardian* about scrapping anti-trade union laws, though on inspection what she means is pretty fuzzy.

Even rising challenger Lisa Nandy, who some see as the most plausible leadership candidate for a right-wing reaction in the party, has made mostly left-wing arguments. She was the first candidate to defend free movement.

Evidently wanting to move away from her "Leader's Office continuity" image, Long-Bailey has said that she would widen the range of the Shadow Cabinet (presumably meaning she would bring in figures like Yvette Cooper).

The Labour leader elections continue to be muddy politically.

There are no standouts left candidates, certainly not ones without major problems politically. Workers' Liberty conference voted by a big margin to back no candidate for leader, not yet anyway, and that still seems right to me.

We decided to quiz and press candidates on the fundamental question of democratising the party. Long-Bailey and Burgon have come out for "open selection" of MPs, but that's pretty much it. Long-Bailey has made

comments on paper about the compositing process at Labour conference which strongly implied she wanted to prevent delegates being stroppy about policy and causing difficulties for the leadership.

All of them talk as if policy is and should be something declared by the leader from on high. The idea of respecting and carrying out what conference decides, the notion that the party should be controlled by its members, seems to be on the radar of none.

Likewise, despite the candidates all talking left, none has talked about a campaign — demonstrations, rallies, lobbies of Tory MPs — to restore the NHS now.

The class-struggle, internationalist socialist left needs to get better organised to use the election to promote radical policies, on democratisation but also issues like migrants' rights, repealing the anti-union laws and various others. Initiatives like those launched by the Labour Campaign for Free Movement and Free Our Unions should be pushed harder.

A push on democracy and on policy is something that activists can cooperate on whichever leadership candidate they are backing. Affiliated unions are also in a very strong position to take it up. □

- Leadership nominations as we go to press:
CLPs: Keir Starmer, 144; Rebecca Long-Bailey, 63; Lisa Nandy, 27; Emily Thornberry, 10
Unions: Keir Starmer, Unison, Community, USDAW; Rebecca Long-Bailey, Unite, CWU, FBU, Bakers; Lisa Nandy, GMB, NUM
- Deputy leadership nominations:
CLPs: Angela Rayner, 149; Dawn Butler, 36; Ian Murray, 25; Richard Burgon, 22; Rosena Allin-Khan, 12

What France teaches us

By Rachael Baylis

My decision to go on the delegation to France organised by AWL on 25-26 January had its roots in what happened on 12 December.

As a Labour activist and socialist for two years, I had a flame of hope that a left-wing government could triumph. As we all know, it didn't. Facing an 80-seat Tory majority which will destroy communities, workers rights and environmental protections the question became — what next?

The possibility for resistance still exists and always will, so when I saw the opportunity to go and learn from the French strikes in Paris, I jumped. The only way we can resist the onslaught ahead and mobilise against the power of capital — and simultaneously right wing governments — is through the organisation of workers and communities.

On the first morning, we headed to a small café near the metro where we met with Kisky, a member of the French group *Étincelle*, who explained that, contrary to what some might assume, the majority of workers on strike are not actually members of a trade union.

The French have the constitutional right to strike, unhindered by the anti-union laws we face in the UK. When asked how France maintained their unions, a comrade responded along the lines of "Thatcher destroyed our unions in the 80s, the attempt in France failed". From how I understood this, it has resulted in a culture whereby striking is seen as fundamental to the idea of liberty that is enshrined in the slogan "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité".

I'm speaking as someone who grew up in a small semi-rural city in the West Midlands where my family only mentioned the unions when they said "they were too powerful" and that "Thatcher did what needed to be done". Even within the labour movement, more specifically the Labour Party, I've encountered countless people who are almost afraid to stand up for trade unions because the winning narrative for 40 years has been that they disrupt "business as usual".

My assumption was that it's the unions who push for strikes and resistance, but Kisky told us that trade unions in France can still be very conservative when it comes to their taking action.

In Britain, I know from my limited experience with attempting to unionise in the hospitality industry down in Brighton that the reliance upon the meeting of thresholds for recognition and the necessity for membership fees immediately act as barriers to people making the commitment.

I don't claim to be an expert on trade unions or how the internal bureaucracies work but what I've gathered is that they are still locked into a routine of gaining the threshold, balloting, reballoting and then finally taking strike action. Trade unions are rightly seen as, and rightly so, pillars of the labour movement. However, when the gig economy is so fluid, are the routines of trade unions today a hindrance when having to organise fast?

Deliveroo and Uber and McDonalds have managed to unionise and strike across the country, but are there ways in which it could be made easier? E.g. a six-month free trial of membership for those on minimum wage to enable the meeting of the threshold without costing already poorly paid workers, more income than is strictly necessary? Bigger unions can certainly afford it. This fear of judgement for taking strike action is some-

thing that I feel has been allowed to stifle not just action but also debate around trying and testing new methods of strike. Organised acts of resistance to the powers that be, such as corporations and bad bosses, are not limited to withdrawing labour.

In Japan bus drivers refuse fares. In Asia, workers in a condom factory, after being banned from striking, put a pin through one in ten condoms. The company had to release a statement and everyone stopped buying their product.

We need to get creative if we are to address the gig economy, rebrand what being in a union means. A key point for me is to address the rise of the consumer as a factor in modern society.

Following the meeting with Kisky, we headed to another café to wait out the gap between our first meeting and what was to be the highlight of the trip — the *Gilets Jaunes* demonstration.

After a serious briefing of what to do if it turned violent and a reassuring text from dad to not get my limbs maimed by smoke grenades, we hopped on the wonderfully efficient metro toward the protest. As we neared the back of it, the flashing blue lights of roughly 15 vans signalled we were going in the right direction.

As we legged it up the parallel street to overtake the demo, the back of it had a regiment of riot police armed with batons and shields. Helmets strapped to their midsection like babies in slings. The eerie in-step footfall that unified the mass of at least 40 riot police at the back was something out of a dystopian film except — spoiler alert — this is Paris in 2020, not some post-apocalyptic Hunger Games world. Slipping through a small gap between the robotic and austere looking men who refused to make eye contact, we melted into the crowd to the shouts of "na na na leeeesss *Gilets Jaunes*" and what must have been a lot of swear words followed by "Macron!".

As we proceeded, apartment windows opened. Lots of cheering and shouting and my favourite moment was when a woman waved her own yellow jacket out the window in solidarity and was received by enthusiastic cheers.

The march overall turned out to be one of the tamer ones but despite that, the ratio of riot police to protesters must have been one-to-three. The violent arm of the state was flexing itself and ready to start crushing should the opportunity arise.

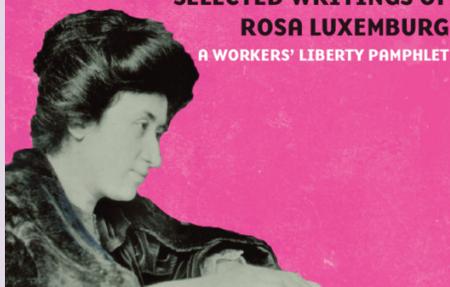
The last leg of the day was to be spent at a workers' conference in the outlying district of St. Denis. It was held in a community building in the banlieue. Free coffee and stickers abounded. As we listened to the speeches from the panel and the floor (translated by Ed and Kisky), the arguments they were making reminded me a lot of some of the arguments you hear at Labour Party conference, in terms of democracy, representation, and decision-making.

Since we left Paris, the strikes have continued, the French living up to their reputation as a revolutionary people. For the UK, a Tory Brexit poses the biggest threat to workers in this country. The focus for the next five years and further should be to build an active, diverse and inclusive workers' movement.

There are plenty of issues to campaign on and as socialists it is up to us to agitate, educate and organise. In a world where apathy on politics is a growing sentiment, it is vital to give people confidence in their own power when working as a part of a collective. □

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Students and the pensions movement in France

By David

David from L'Étincelle, a grouping within the NPA (Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste, New Anticapitalist Party), talked with Michael Elms from *Solidarity*.

When courses started again [in January], teachers started getting into the battle. There is a law that says that lots of teachers will be moved from civil servant status to temporary worker status.

So the new model will be money flowing to a small number of prestigious institutions and less money for everyone else.

[In the first wave of the strikes, from 5 December] some students were on the picket lines at 4:30 every morning – but most students were just watching the movement on TV.

Now teachers have started permitting general assemblies. For example at Nanterre, strikers and students went from class to class to build the general assembly. Teachers refused to continue teaching and told their class to follow the strikers, and it became a demonstration through the campus of about 400 people. There were 500 or 600 people in the general assembly.

So sometimes you don't need much to go from just wanting to do something but because of the long pause being rather vague about what's happening, to having something that looks really plausible you can get involved in. Now the student blocs on demonstrations have been growing again, helped by the fact that university teachers are going on strike.

Mobilisation committees exist now, but we are not going towards occupations in most places.

There's a problem with occupying or blockading universities. At some universities, if a leftist is giving out flyers within three miles of the campus, management shut down the university for maybe two weeks, so I think people are hesitant about going for an occupation right now.

If you just blockade, then you cut the dialogue. And occupations are always difficult. In 2018, in a lot of places the occupations ended chaotically, and the central core of activists completely cut themselves off from the greater body of students.

The result of that experience is that a lot of activists are fed up with occupying. They had bad experiences last time. It didn't have to go that way, but it's difficult with student occupations not to close down on yourself and cut yourself off from the rest of the student body.

Ever since 2016 there has been a student movement every year. But they've been minority movements – sometimes a bigger or smaller minority, but always a minority. In [Paris] Tolbiac in 2018 there were general assemblies of 2,000 people, but there are 14,000 students at Tolbiac. So you'd have 12,000 people not participating, not really knowing what's going on, not going to university for a month.

Now leftwing groups like ours, or feminist collectives, or groups concerned with ecology, have grown.

Between the movement of 2018 and 2019, if you were outside a campus with a political newspaper or leafleting, it was a depressing experience: the general atmosphere was not political.

Part of the reason for that is that there had been 18 months or two years where a majority just saw a minority of leftists blocking the university – like 15 people getting up at 6 in the morning and trying to blockade a university even though nobody had voted for it...



Rightwing student organisations don't win people by saying "there are too many immigrants" or "look at all those gay people kissing on our campus" – their posters say things like "we're going to stop those leftists from blocking your university, the radical left is destroying universities." I'm talking about the Front National, Royalists like Action Française. There was a gap and the right is trying to exploit it.

But today, the gap is slowly closing – this distance between people who had become politicised over the course of several big movements and were very experienced, and everyone else. And each time a new movement blows up, it takes time to close the gap by discussing with people.

We always tend to be the people kind of with a foot on the brake, saying, look, just because we've got 300-400 people in a general assembly, that doesn't mean people will understand why we're blockading the university. And if we do, we can't just be blockading the university using chairs and stuff, but we need a maximum of people out there with leaflets, explaining what we're about and talking to all the people standing around looking, wondering what's happening – you have to talk to people about the political situation, why the blockade is happening, and so on.

VISIBLE

We in the NPA say we should make the mobilisation visible, try to have picket lines in the morning, not to blockade, but so that everyone arriving hears chants, gets a leaflet, hears about the general assembly – and then afterwards, activists should go and hang out in the places around the university where students hang out and talk to people, even if that means spending half an hour just talking to one person.

Then, you go from class to class, and make announcements. Most teachers support us, so these announcements tend not to get shut down. And we'll be doing that all day, trying to talk to people.

What we haven't done as much of, and what we want to do next week, is departmental general assemblies. We're seeing people turn up on demonstrations who we had

never before in meetings, but they'd been observing things going on and said among themselves, "yeah, we'll come along and make a banner too".

So you mustn't be formulaic and imagine that there's a progression from handing out leaflets to getting a general assembly to having a super mobilisation committee: people find different ways in.

So, when I do sports at the university, there are people I don't know, and so that sports event is the first opportunity that a lot of people have to discuss about what the strike means, and what people want and so on. Having that discussion bridges the gap.

And then, of course, the political atmosphere in the country does things for us. So, everyone hates Macron. And if an autonomist guy starts screaming "fuck the police" – now, that's not something that people will run away from, because for two or three years, especially with the Yellow Vests movement, a lot of people have seen police violence. Even people who aren't in this active minority, they have a lot of reasons to ask themselves questions.

Student participation in the climate change movement is not high in universities. When Fridays for Future started in Germany, there were demonstrations every Friday, a real movement. That never happened in France. But everyone was talking about it.

Early in the year, we'd run stalls at FE colleges and talk to people about ecology. Probably the first climate strike in France was the biggest youth demonstration since 2006. But it was all young people, teenagers, even 12-year-olds. You'd get autonomists at the front, doing graffiti like "don't be vegan – eat the rich", and at the same time you'd have groups of students from schools from posh areas, and former government ministers turning up... It was really bizarre.

But it was huge – 40,000 or so people and probably only a handful of people older than 25. The second and third demonstrations were also quite big and pretty political. Everyone was discussing ecology back in September.

But the political atmosphere changed in November. People were still talking about ecology but in terms of getting active it seemed that there were some more pressing,

immediate things going on. But this is still a theme that all young people are talking about.

After the last climate strike, there was a brief phase for Extinction Rebellion, with XR tags everywhere, some spectacular actions. But the most spectacular events were when the Yellow Vests got involved with the XR stuff and people were running around supermarkets and stuff.

Lots of people got involved with those demonstrations but it doesn't follow that people were reading the stuff on XR's website and being influenced by it.

The ecological movement in France I think is a bit like the feminist movement – there are big marches a few times a year, lots of people are thinking and talking about it, but it's not like in Ireland or Argentina where there is a genuinely big mass mobilisation that's changing society.

So if you go to a college and talk to politically-minded people, everyone is interested in feminist questions and ecological questions but there isn't a movement.

There are grants and bursaries that students can apply for, if you don't live with your parents. But that comes with problems, because if you fall behind with your studies you can lose your rights.

At the moment I think the most you can get is EUR 450/month. In Paris, that might pay the rent on a 9 square-metre hole in the ground. Also it's a complicated administrative procedure to get the money.

Lots of things in France are getting more expensive, and in Paris in particular. Paris has 13 universities with tens of thousands of students. So look at living costs in Paris and that tells you how things stand for a lot of students. If you don't come from a family which is rich or has the cultural capital to guide you through these administrative routes to getting grants and so on.

Getting into university isn't hard – I do a Master's in History and I'm stupid as shit – it's not selective at an academic level, but it is difficult in other ways, which results in a very high percentage of dropouts. People don't have the support that guides them through getting by financially and in terms of the bureaucracy. □

Revolutionary organising in the German army in World War 2



Book review

By Paul Hampton

War-torn France 1943, occupied by the German army and administered by the Vichy regime: the tide had begun to turn against the Nazis, but they still ruled most of Europe.

The extermination of Jewish people proceeded relentlessly. Within France, the resistance was dominated by Gaullists and the Communist Party (PCF). Both expressed virulent nationalism, summed up by the slogan: "à chacun son boche" (let everyone kill a Hun).

In April 1943 Robert Cruau, a 23-year-old postal worker moved to Brest, along with Georges and Henri Berthomé. They were members of the Parti Ouvrier Internationaliste (POI), one of the Trotskyist organisations in France.

Cruau made contact with a German sergeant whose father was a communist functionary. A small group of German soldiers had formed their own committee. Soon the Trotskyists were helping the soldiers produce their own newspaper, *Zeitung für Soldat und Arbeiter im Westen* (Newspaper for Soldier and Worker in the West).

The newspaper was typeset by POI member André Calvès, who could not read German. Calvès printed it in a workshop hidden beneath his garden. Only a few fragments of this paper survive. The French Trotskyists supported this work, but political responsibility lay with the German soldiers themselves.

Cruau did not speak good German. The bulletin was full of revolutionary phrases, but the political level was low. One soldier wrote: "I am a member of the Fourth International and I am doing my part to end the war. We are fighting against capitalism and for the fraternisation of the whole world!"

Cruau and his comrades decided to get

some help from other comrades from the Fourth International, including a German revolutionary living in Paris.

Martin Monath, known by his pseudonym "Viktor", had moved to Paris from Belgium in May 1943. Monath was 30 years of age and had been a Trotskyist since 1939. He had already taken part in clandestine Trotskyist conferences, where the Brest work was discussed. Monath moved to a large house in the 14th arrondissement in Paris with Swiss socialists Paul and Clara Thalmann. The house contained a library, a hand operated duplicator, and typewriters.

Monath and the Thalmanns published the first number *Arbeiter und Soldat* (Worker and Soldier) newspaper in July 1943. It was ten pages long and meant for education. It was modelled on *Rabochii i Soldat*, the Bolshevik paper that first appeared during the Russian revolution in July 1917. Once or twice a week, Monath made the dangerous journey to Brest. There he met German soldiers at night, discussed with them, received letters and short articles. He then returned to Paris, where the paper was put together. Two more issues were brought out in August and September 1943.

However the group were betrayed. Konrad Leprow from Hamburg, one of their contacts, appears to have been the culprit. The Gestapo rounded up both the soldiers involved and the French Trotskyists who worked with them. In total, up to 50 German soldiers and 50 French activists were arrested in early October 1943.

On 6 October 1943 Robert Cruau was shot. Other Trotskyists such as Roland Filiâtre, David Rousset and Marcel Hic were deported to Buchenwald concentration camp. Hic, Yves Bodénez, Georges Berthomé and others never returned. Monath was able to escape back to Belgium, but went back to Paris in late 1943 with Ernest Mandel. They took part in the Fourth International conference in Paris in February 1944.

On 1 May 1944, Monath managed to publish *Arbeiter und Soldat* again as a large printed paper. In June and July 1944, two more issues published. The August issue was being prepared, but the militants were arrested by Vichy police.

Nicolas Spoulber (Marcoux) managed to escape. However Christine Heymann and Monath were "mercilessly tortured" at Vichy police headquarters for eight days, before they were handed over to the Gestapo on 21 July 1944. Heymann was sent to Ravensbrück concentration camp, managing to survive the war.

After interrogation, the Gestapo drove Monath out of the city with the intention of killing him "while attempting to escape". They shot him in the head and chest. Left for dead, he was found by a French police officer, who took him to the Rothschild hospital in Paris. There after a week in a coma he regained consciousness on 31 July. However the Gestapo found out about his whereabouts and he was taken to a German military hospital. Monath's exact fate is unknown, but in all likelihood he was killed there by the Gestapo.

The heroic role of the Trotskyists in producing *Arbeiter und Soldat* has rightly been a badge of honour for our tradition. Various memoirs of the surviving participants and by



those who knew them have been published since. The remaining copies of the paper were reproduced in France in 1978. The AWL published the first English translation of these articles in *Workers' Liberty* magazine (3/20) in June 2008: bit.ly/wl3-20.

However the identity of Martin Monath, the central protagonist in the paper, has become clear only very recently. Nathaniel Flakin's book, *Martin Monath: A Jewish Resistance Fighter Among Nazi Soldiers* was published in German in 2018 and by Pluto in English just last year. Flakin provides the most comprehensive account to date of Monath's life and politics.

Martin Ludwig Monath was born on 5 January 1913 in Berlin (although some sources say 1912). His parents, Baruch and Emilie Monath, were Jewish. His mother died in 1918. His father ran a shop for men's attire in the Kreuzberg neighbourhood of Berlin. Growing up, he joined Zionist youth organisations: Blau-Weiss, Kadimah, Hazofim and finally Hashomer Hatzair – where he was known as "Monte".

Monath went to Denmark with Hashomer Hatzair members in 1934 to learn how to farm, in preparation for work on a kibbutz as part of building a Jewish state in Palestine. In Hashomer Hatzair, he worked with Rudolf Segall and Jakob Moneta, who did emigrate to Palestine. (After the war Segall and Moneta returned to Germany, where they became leading members of the German section of the Fourth International). However they were not Trotskyists at the time.

There has been much confusion with Martin Monath's name. He is referred to as "Paul Wittlin", "Paul Widelin", "Martin Widelin", "Marcel Widelin", "Martin Monath", as well as "Monte" and then "Viktor". In 1938 the Nazis retrospectively annulled his parents' marriage because it took place in a synagogue and forced him to change his name to "Witlin", his grandmother's name. Understandably, he used pseudonyms for dangerous, clandestine work.

In 1938, thousands of Jewish people were deported after Kristallnacht. Martin's brother Karl Monath went to Poland and then to Palestine. Martin Monath's deportation order from the German Reich is dated 5 May 1939, but he had already fled to Belgium days before. The Belgian Foreigners' Police officially registered him as a refugee from May 1939 until at least 1942.

By summer 1939 Monath expressed his sympathies for Trotskyism in letters to his family. Flakin suggests that he was recruited to Trotskyism by Abraham Wajnszok (Abra-

ham Leon), who left Hashomer Hatzair along with 20 other followers in 1939 to join the Belgian Trotskyist organisation, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (PSR).

Martin Monath was therefore a Trotskyist and a German-Jewish refugee, exiled to Belgium, who then moved to France to advance his politics. His courage was extraordinary. His short life deserves to be better known. In addition to the reconstruction of his life, the book contains fresh translations of *Arbeiter und Soldat* from the original German into English.

The author, Nathaniel Flakin, has been a member of the Revolutionary Internationalist Organisation of Germany. He is now based in the US writing for their sister publication *Left Voice*. It is part of the Trotskyist Fraction, associated with the Argentine PTS. The book has traces of their kitsch-Trotskyism.

For example, Flakin poses Trotskyism as a polar antagonist of Zionism, ignoring Trotsky's position at the end of his life and the post-war Trotskyist assessments when Israel was formed, which were far less shrill than most of today's epigones. The book bowdlerises "revolutionary defeatism", which was never the best formulation for Marxist anti-war politics. It also dismisses the vital debates at the time on the class nature of the USSR and its role in the war. The book would be more accessible if it had more context about Trotskyism at the time. Nevertheless, it is a valuable contribution, shedding new light on an incredible story.

Flakin uses a reflection by Antonio Gramsci to evaluate the activity of Monath and other Trotskyist leaders of the wartime generation. Gramsci proposed two criteria for revolutionary leadership, "1. in what it actually does; 2. in what provision it makes for the eventuality of its own destruction." He opined that it was "difficult to say which of these two facts is the more important. Since defeat in the struggle must always be envisaged, the preparation of one's own successors is as important as what one does for victory". (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 1972: 153)

Martin Monath knew that publishing a revolutionary paper aimed at German soldiers in Nazi-occupied France was a huge risk, especially for a Jewish exile. Nevertheless he did his duty for working class internationalism. His death was not in vain: Monath inspired a path for generations to follow. □

• *Martin Monath: A Jewish Resistance Fighter Among Nazi Soldiers*, Pluto Press, £10.49.



Like it or not, Stalinism is still a live force

By Martin Thomas

Stalinism is a live political current today, and a reactionary one. The central place in the Labour Leader's Office of Stalinists such as Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray, and the support for the *Morning Star* by a number of national trade unions and many Labour MPs, are dangers.

Better if we had a better word than "Stalinism", which suggests only a school of thought, and probably one defunct. Even though Milne and Murray were members of the most diehard Stalinist faction of the old Communist Party in the years before its break-up ("Straight Left"), and give no evidence of a shift in fundamental views since then, they don't blazon themselves as Stalinist: few have, since 1956.

Better if the large historical phenomenon were not labelled with the name of an individual, especially since, as we'll see, the role of Stalin himself in it was anomalous.

"Stalinism" is, however, the best-available single word for:

- a form of society modelled on the stabilised version of the outcome of Stalin's counter-revolution in the once worker-ruled USSR, and exemplified today only by North Korea and Cuba

- the ideology which sees that form of society as the good and available alternative to capitalism (usually calling it "socialism")

- the political formations shaped around that ideology.

There have been many variants of the Stalinist form of society. From the 1960s to the late 1980s it covered one-third of the world. Essential common features are:

- a comprehensively state-controlled economy, with state ownership of major industry, oriented to competitive extensive industrial accumulation in the country (or group of countries). The surplus-product of the workers' labour is taken by a bureaucratic state hierarchy.

- total or quasi-total control by that bureaucratic hierarchy over civil society, in particular the suppression of any independent labour movement and (usually) the installation in its place of a state-controlled pseudo-movement. Total control by that bureaucracy over politics, too; or, to put it another way, suppression of politics by the state.

In Poland there were official "opposition parties" in "parliament" from the 1940s through to 1988. Only those "opposition parties" were as much controlled by the state as the ruling "party".

In the later years in Eastern Europe, or in Cuba now, some intellectuals are offered small spaces for mild criticism: the workers' movement as such, however, is everywhere suppressed under Stalinism.

We may argue about the theoretical tag for Stalinist society — a "deformed" state capitalism (my preference), "bureaucratic collectivism" (as other writers for *Solidarity* prefer), or another term (bit.ly/stal-dbt).

Flat fact, though, is that this social form has been, historically, a sidepath within the epoch of capitalism. Sometimes (not always) producing rapid extensive industrial growth, for a while; sometimes (not always) with welfare (health, education, etc.) achievements; but always politically regressive, and (as its collapse in most countries shows) of more limited adaptability and expandability than bourgeois capitalism (bit.ly/r-e-b).

As an old Hungarian joke had it: "communism is the most painful route from capitalism to capitalism".

The original model of this form of society

was created by the counter-revolution in the USSR. That explains why the corresponding ideology was constructed with phrases from Marx and Lenin, and claims to be Marxist and socialist.

Even back in the 1930s, Trotsky explained that the "difference" between Marxism and Stalinism was not a political and ideological difference such as the one between revolutionary Marxists and the reformist "revisionism" of Eduard Bernstein in the early 20th century.

"Stalin revises Marx and Lenin not with the pen of theoreticians but with the boots of the GPU [political police]". Stalinism was separated from Marxism by "a whole river of blood..."; there was "not only a political but a thoroughly physical incompatibility between Bolshevism and Stalinism".

Over the decades Stalinist ideologues evolved smoother variants than the crude Stalin-worship of the 1930-53. Every solid and even relatively durable ruling group (and especially one in a country concerned to become a world power and have allies across the world) generates some relatively expansive ideology to sustain its own cohesion and drive; to try to pacify those whom it rules; and to recruit and train new cadres.

But Stalinist ideology is no more a variant of Marxism in any real sense than the Vatican expresses a variant of the Sermon on the Mount, or standard neoliberals a variant of the ideology of the French Revolution.

The outcome of Stalin's counter-revolution in the USSR was the *original model* of Stalinist society. It was also *the exception*. Every other Stalinist formation was created by a process with no zigzag via workers' revolution, then counter-revolution. The Stalinist USSR was the odd one out.

PEAK

High-tension "high Stalinism" had its peak in the 1930s, as a beleaguered one-off exception in one country. Stalinism as an apparently stabilised system, appearing to show expansiveness and flexibility, a viable or even probable replacement for bourgeois capitalism in a range of countries, had its heyday much later, in the 1970s.

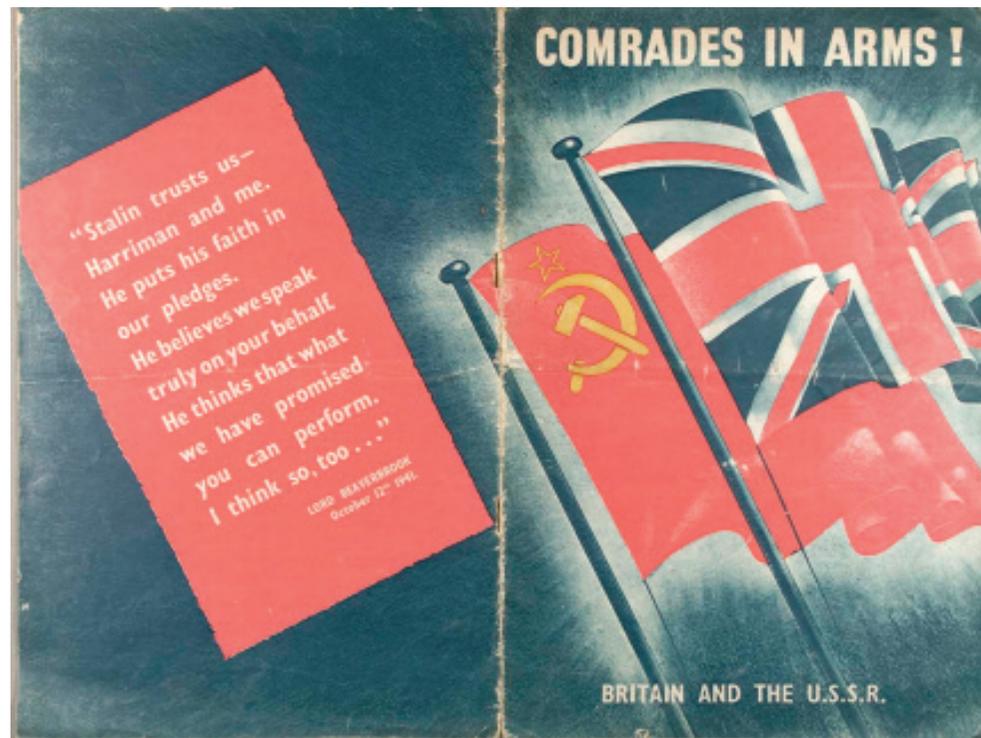
Burma is an instructive case because there a more-or-less complete "Stalinist" structure (calling itself "socialist", though not Marxist) was established by purely military methods, with a coup by nationalist army officers in 1962.

Over the next two years, they declared illegal all political opposition, took over the direct management of most educational and cultural organisations, and established a political party with ancillary "mass organisations". They nationalised external and internal trade and all manufacturing outside petty enterprises. They made quantitative physical planning the basic mechanism of economic control.

Private capitalists were forced out. Enterprises were run by military officers, as military operations. Prices were set by the government, with no concern for whether individual enterprises showed a profit or a loss. Agriculture remained in private hands, but the state became the sole buyer of agricultural produce.

In Afghanistan in 1978-9, another military group tried a similar operation but failed. (Only it called itself Marxist, explaining only that in Afghanistan the army officer corps must play the role once attributed to the working class). (bit.ly/afg-78).

Sometimes and in some countries Stalinists in their rise had large and even enthusiastic



mass support, earned by vigour against a decaying old order and the lustre of the USSR as a model of industrial growth. But that was not their universal or defining quality. And where and when they had that mass support, after taking power they erected iron controls over the workers and peasants.

In the Transitional Program of 1938, Trotsky wrote of the "definite passing over of the [Stalinist parties outside the USSR] to the side of the bourgeois order", and of the ascendant wing of the bureaucracy inside the USSR making "ever more determined attempts", in the very short term, to convert the USSR to market capitalism in "fascist form".

Just before his death two years later, he was rethinking. In words which would prove more apt in the following decades, he wrote: "The predominating type among the present 'communist' bureaucrats is the political careerist... Their ideal is to attain in their own countries the same position that the Kremlin oligarchy gained in the USSR. They are not the revolutionary leaders of the proletariat but aspirants to totalitarian rule".

In countries where the Stalinist parties were small, or where they had to look to workers as their main base of support, and they faced relatively solid structures of bourgeois rule, they saw little prospect of coming to rule society. They adapted over decades to seeking niches of power in municipalities, trade union bureaucracies, etc. By the time most West European Communist Parties collapsed, after 1989, they had become rootedly reformist and lost almost all of the "ideal" they once had ("socialism" for them, totalitarian rule for the working class).

Defeats suffered by the labour movement over the last thirty years, and retreats and failings of the authentic left, have left remnant-Stalinists still capable of holding influence at the "top".

In the late 1940s, Heterodox and Orthodox Trotskyists came to differ in their assessment of the Stalinist parties. But even James P Cannon, writing for the *Orthodox* in 1947, explained that the Stalinists were worse than social-democrats who had to see the maintenance of a labour movement with some independent life as necessary for themselves.

"The Stalinists became hated and feared as disrupters who would stop at nothing to serve party aims dictated by the momentary interests, or supposed interests, of the Krem-

lin bureaucracy... The American Stalinists wrought untold damage in the trade unions and mass organisations of the American workers by their policy of ruthless disruption and suppression of workers' democracy...

"The Social Democrats lied and slandered, murdered and betrayed. The Stalinists do the same thing... on a far greater scale".

Today in the British labour movement we deal with Stalinists who no longer have an active Stalinist movement, and who must be deeply demoralised (they no longer openly avow their "ideal", found in North Korea or Cuba, or oddly, despite its economy now highly oriented to private profit in China).

Their influence in the labour movement is almost entirely from the top down — from small groups of Stalinist sympathisers in places like the Leader's Office, or trade-union officialdom. If they led an activist contingent of anticapitalist and class-conscious workers fogged by Stalinist prejudices, there might be room for discussion about "united fronts" in the course of which the fog might be dispelled for rank-and-file workers. They don't.

The demoralisation makes today's Stalinists more stable. In 1956, the denunciation of Stalin by his successor Nikita Khrushchev and the USSR's suppression of the Hungarian Revolution shocked British Communist Party members and made tens of thousands of them quit the party. Today, however, no horror that the Chinese state can inflict on the Uyghurs even makes the rump Stalinists blink.

The Stalinists may favour more nationalisations than the next reformist, and in that sense be "more left-wing". They are also ten times more disruptive, more cynical in their use of reactionary ideologies like nationalism and antisemitism, more hostile to democracy.

There are tens of thousands of good activists with this or that idea deriving from Stalinism — illusions about Cuba, "Lexitism", a warped and demonised picture of Israel. With those we seek cooperation on issues where we agree, debate where we disagree.

The hard-core Stalinists who run the Leader's Office and the *Morning Star* are a different matter. As the Labour Party reorients after the 2019 defeat, they are not left-wing allies to be embraced so as to prevent a drift to the right. They are a danger to be fought. □

What alternative in Iraq?

By Nadia Mahmood

The protests in Iraq are not just around a particular demand, but against the whole governmental system. How can an alternative government be won, and what sort of government?

We talk about councils – in place of bourgeois parliamentary democracy, we want councils which establish direct democracy in neighbourhoods and workplaces. When there is a political vacuum, these bodies can take control of cities. However, this kind of idea is unfamiliar to the younger generation in particular, who know little about socialist traditions. The young people in the protests we discuss with often think we just mean something like a municipal council. There's also a feeling that if we organise such bodies, they will immediately come under attack from sectarian militias. In fact that happened in a suburb of Nasiriya where we tried it in October and November.

How did that take place?

We work there through a group called the October Uprising Committee, which published a bulletin two or three times a week, calling on people to organise councils locally. Two groups of young people in the city took it up, but they were quickly approached and hassled by Shia militia. To organise in a square is one thing, but to go back and try to organise your neighbourhood is quite another.

Other influential protestors have rejected the idea, and instead proposed councils of representatives from the occupied squares. This is obviously an important idea, which lacks the key elements of delegation and representation. But to try to relate to others pragmatically, we agreed. At least that allows some element of coordinated organisation.

What about councils in workplaces?

In some of the key industries, for instance electricity and oil, it is just not possible to get a look in. The oil workers, who could be decisive, have not joined the protests or taken action as an organised force. Some individuals have come as individuals after work, but that's a different matter. Some protestors have blockaded the oil fields, but it's not an action by the workers themselves, who know they would be punished. Unions do exist but essentially externally; they do not organise seriously in the workplace itself.

What about universities?

Our student comrades and friends are working to establish student unions; and our



Nadia Mahmood, is a member of the Worker-communist Party of Iraq's central committee, spoke to *Solidarity*.

other young people are working to set up unemployed unions. We have discussed the idea of councils with student and young people in the squares, but the idea has not taken off widely. I fear there is still a widespread idea of political power as something external, or from above, not flowing from below, from the movement. Of course the bourgeois political parties that are present in the squares constantly reinforce this idea.

Wouldn't all this also suggest making use of existing elections, and arguing for a constituent assembly to create a new constitution?

Many people say that if you raise the question of government and who is the government, then you will be targeted by the sectarian parties and their militias, either with bribes or with physical threats. And they are right, this is a very real threat.

So far this movement has been going for four months. If it continues, say, another year or longer then I think it will generate very widespread popular rejection of the government. I think we will also see a growing willingness to resist the militias. Already we have had militias coming into the squares, destroying tents and attacking people – which is why some call for UN intervention, by the way – but people carry on and rebuild afterwards. In some cases they have replaced their tents with corrugated iron structures.

There is also a political problem that while the protestors and most young people think the parties in power and in parliament are no good, they do not know what the alternative is. This is a major problem in Iraq – the lack of a political alternative. I think that's why there has been some retreat from talking about getting rid of all existing politicians towards just focusing on the prime minister.

Some in the movement have proposed various people, there are four candidates, to be prime minister. Three of the four are people who are widely respected and trusted by protestors, but what they stand for is neither very clear nor very good.

If things go on without a clear political alternative, won't the movement dissipate? Or some right-wing force gain hegemony over the movement?

Things can shift. Early in the movement, people rejected any idea of representation as inevitably becoming corrupted. After three months, the idea of councils based in the squares got some traction. How things will

develop further depends on what ideas and political movements gain support. That is why we continue to argue for councils.

Even if more right-wing forces gain traction, I don't think they can address the issue of unemployment. That is the reservoir feeding these protests and why they are likely to continue.

The [right-wing, Shia Islamist] Sadrists are present in the protests, aren't they?

Yes, in Tahrir Square [in Baghdad] probably a majority of tents have some connection to them. Last week they withdrew from the squares. When they did, other Shia militias, came in and attacked. But now that the protests have continued they, the Sadrists, have returned.

They present themselves as for reforms, against corruption, for supporting the poor. They emphasise wanting a non-corrupt government, even though they helped put Abdul-Mahdi in power.

The demonstrators are generally for Iraqi independence against both the US and Iran – hence the Iraqi flag, which is also an anti-sectarian thing – but the Sadrists try to shift this to being just against the US. In fact the thrust of the movement is more anti-Iran, because of the role of the Shia militias. That's why you get some naivety about the West, for instance the call for UN intervention.

On the issue of jobs, what do you demand specifically?

We say there must be jobs or social benefits for everyone. The government should ensure jobs but also provide a livelihood for everyone if they can't or until they get a job. We advocate the provision of services, electricity, water, clean streets, healthcare, social security, nurseries – free and provided by the government.

So you are demanding jobs in the public sector?

No, not necessarily. It could be the government pushing the private sector to create jobs. We do not support state capitalism as against private capitalism.

We argue for a labour law that strengthens the rights of workers in all sectors and allows them to organise. We want a minimum wage, job security, benefits, the right to strike.

What is women's role in the uprising?

Women's role in this uprising is remarkable and something new. The isolation of women from political life that has been a major feature since the Islamist takeover in 2003 is being challenged. In this movement women, and particularly young women, have played so many roles. We have tried to raise the question of solidarity between women in Iraq and women's movements in other countries, particularly in the Middle East, for instance Lebanon.

We are part of a socialist women's organisation called Aman (Security). It calls for financial security, political security, social security. We have recently set up tents in the protests under the banner October Women. The Organisation of Women's Freedom in Iraq [another left-wing women's organisation] also has tents.

Where in the country is the movement strong and where not so strong?

Baghdad is the strongest, both in general and as regards the involvement of women. It's fairly strong in all the cities of the South.

There aren't protests in the heavily Sunni



areas, where there is still major government repression. People there are afraid the government and the Shia militias will say they are ISIS and attack them. In the south, as I've explained, there is repression, and attempts to portray the protests as tools of Western governments, but it's on a much lower level. Baghdad is the place where is major Sunni participation, but those people aren't participating as Sunnis. It is a very big deal in this movement that everyone comes from a different background and nobody cares. The Iraqi flag is an expression of that, and sometimes people even carry a cross to show solidarity across different religions.

There are some Ba'athists [supporters of the old governing party under Saddam Hussein] in the squares. Some hostile Shia forces have presented it as basically a Ba'athist movement. The Ba'athists are allied with the Communist Party, who have also had alliances with the Sadrists. There is definitely money coming to them from foreign Sunni governments and Ba'athist officials who have fled abroad. Saddam Hussein's daughter has called for people to join the protests. But that does not define at all what the protests are.

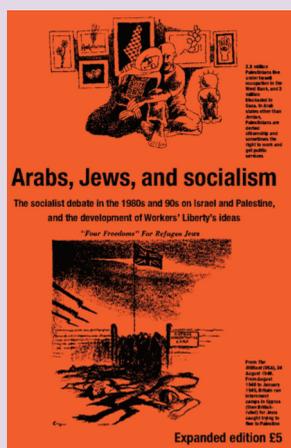
Your general picture of the movement seems similar to that of the Organisation of the Communist Alternative [a split from the WCPI we interviewed recently]. What are the differences and can you work together?

The comrades who left did not leave over political differences, but over a dispute about the expulsion of [trade unionist] Falah Alwan, who was attacking the party.

In terms of what's happening, I'm not following their line very closely. But for sure we can work together, for instance on the call for councils where we have a shared idea. And for instance our women's organisations could work together. That's not at all ruled out in principle. □

• Nadia Mahmood spoke to Sacha Ismail from *Solidarity*.

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Wuhan: a new coronavirus

By Les Hearn

WHAT HAPPENED IN WUHAN?

People visiting a seafood and wild animal market a few weeks ago almost certainly picked up a species of virus from live wild animals on sale. This virus, a member of the Coronavirus family, causes fever, a cough and sometimes pneumonia.

It seems to be relatively easy to transmit between people and identified cases have risen sharply to well over 10,000 in a few weeks, most in the city of Wuhan with a few (so far) in other towns and countries.

Each infected individual is estimated to be infecting about three others. This rate needs to be reduced to near zero to eliminate the disease, but the incubation period is up to two weeks, during which time the virus can unwittingly be passed on.

In most people, the disease is mild, but there have been getting on for 300 deaths, mainly in those with compromised health. Although the fatality rate is only about 2% (compared with 70% for Ebola), an epidemic affecting, say, one million people could still result in 20,000 deaths.

It's obviously important to interrupt its spread, hence the various steps that have been taken, including travel bans and quarantine for exposed individuals. The WHO has acted fast and declared an international health emergency (which it didn't for nearly a year after the Ebola outbreak).

WHAT IS A VIRUS?

Viruses consist essentially of small amounts of genetic material, DNA or RNA, coding for a few genes, all wrapped in a protective coat of protein. They are not alive because they lack the machinery of cells that enables growth and reproduction but they can use the machinery of cells that they infect to reproduce. Viruses are therefore parasites on living organisms, from bacteria to whales.

There are about 10^{31} (1 followed by 31 ze-

roes) viruses on Earth, some 10^{21} times more than there are humans on the Earth.

HOW DO VIRUSES INFECT PEOPLE?

Once a virus is released from its host, it must survive long enough to reach another host and then be able to enter its cells. Some are transmitted by insect bites (e.g. yellow fever), others have to be transmitted in shared body fluids (e.g. HIV), while still others are capable of surviving on surfaces, such as skin (flu) or in fluid droplets from coughs and sneezes (colds).

The virus must enter the cells of its host to be able to reproduce and this relies on the coat proteins being able to attach to a protein in the cell membrane. Most viruses can only infect the limited range of hosts whose cells they have evolved to "recognise." They can only jump the species barrier if the new host has cell proteins similar to those of their natural host.

HOW SERIOUS IS A VIRAL INFECTION?

The effect viruses have on their hosts ranges from mild (almost symbiosis) to lethal: it is a matter of what benefits the spread of their genes. For animal (including human) pathogens, the best solution seems to be for the virus to cause a mild infection that allows the host to pass on the virus to close contacts. Of course, even a mild infection can be serious for vulnerable individuals.

Some cause acute illnesses which may or may not be serious (e.g. common cold, flu, Ebola). Others can lie dormant, sometimes by incorporating their genetic material with that of their host, re-emerging from time to time to cause illness (e.g. shingles, cold sores); some cause or increase the likelihood of developing certain cancers (e.g. cervical cancer from human papilloma virus, liver cancer from Hepatitis C virus).

Most viruses co-exist with their hosts and cause few or no problems: viruses and hosts



Was bat soup sold at Wuhan market the source of the new coronavirus?

co-evolve so that both survive to pass on their genes. The major problem is when a virus jumps from one species to another which has not had time to evolve defences. Then the infection can be very severe, even life threatening. An example is myxomatosis in European rabbits.

In the 1950s, this killed over 95% of rabbits infected but resistance evolved in the surviving rabbits, while the virus evolved to become less virulent. It doesn't help the survival of the virus if the host dies out.

WHAT ARE CORONAVIRUSES?

Coronaviruses (CoVs), discovered over 50 years ago, are a family of viruses that cause zoonotic diseases (diseases in humans caught from animals). Other viruses that can jump the species gap and cause illness in humans include influenza viruses, as well the Ebola virus and HIV.

The family of CoVs seem to infect various populations of wild animals, often birds or bats, and some domesticated species. CoVs cause a significant proportion of common colds in humans. Other CoVs affecting humans include SARS and MERS, which both cause serious lung problems with high rates of fatality. The Wuhan virus is new to science and is known as novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

WHERE DID NCOV COME FROM?

The coronavirus outbreak in humans seems to have started in the Wuhan market, where many wild animals are sold (for food or traditional Chinese medicine), including bats, the probable natural host for nCoV. Many of the animals on sale, when tested, were found to be carrying the virus.

It is logical to assume that all the human cases can be traced back to this source, though infection could have arisen through contact with wild bats when capturing them. Habitat encroachment and destruction may also be routes for humans to be exposed to diseases endemic to wild animals (suggested in the case of Ebola).

TREATMENT OF NCOV INFECTIONS

There is no treatment for virus infections in general but vaccination works against specific viruses, such as smallpox. Research groups have been working on vaccines against viruses since the Ebola crisis and therefore have a bit of a head start in developing one for 2019-nCoV.

In this research, they have been supported by the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), funded by governments and philanthropic organisations. It is difficult to see how this sort of vaccine would ever be developed by private drug companies reliant on profits. □

The second deal of the century



Letters

The Israeli left is in decline not merely due to an overabundance of ineptitude.

Nor because of the violence of the second intifada, or the ill will of Israel's Mizrahi majority to the plight of Palestinians in whose cause they were cruelly scapegoated. It is in decline because it is quite literally politically bankrupt. And by that I mean, it has no credible political capital to expend.

This is the very much the result of the failure of the first deal of the century.

And that has lessons for us, because its failure is our conundrum.

What we, who support conciliation arising from a just two-state solution, envision and propose has already been put on the table -- and rejected. We perhaps chose to forget.

But the Israelis don't. Trump, Netanyahu and Gantz are the poisonous fruit of that rejection.

Let me explain. Another Israeli right-

winger, Ehud Olmert, far different indeed than Benny Gantz, made an unprecedented offer to Abbas in 2008. According to chief Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat, Olmert accepted all of the PA's publicly expressed demands and even offered Abbas more than the full area of the West Bank and Gaza.

Olmert proposed that Israel retain 6.3% of the territory in order to keep control of major Jewish settlements. But he offered to compensate the Palestinians with Israeli land equivalent to 5.8% of the West Bank along with a link to the Gaza strip — another territory meant to be part of Palestine — plus another 20 square kilometres.

Regarding Jerusalem, Olmert said — according to Erekat — "what is Arab is Arab, what's Jewish is Jewish, and we'll keep an open city".

He offered to withdraw from Arab neighbourhoods of east Jerusalem and to place the Old City under international control. Jerusalem would in effect be the capital of two countries.

He even consented to the return of 150,000 Palestinian refugees over the course of 10

years. Could Olmert, who was under criminal investigation, have pieced together a working coalition to push these proposals through the Knesset? Who knows?

Could he have saved his skin by delivering the long — and longed-for — elusive peace? We cannot comment with certainty.

What we do know is that Abbas and the PA rejected this plan out of hand.

In 2009, Erekat explained to the Jordanian newspaper *Ad-Dustour* why the Palestinians decided to decline then Prime Minister Olmert's offer. "(Prime Minister) Ehud Barak offered us 90% (of the occupied territories) and Olmert offered us 100%. Why should we hurry?"

Now we know why.

Trump has given his buddy Netanyahu a second "deal of the century." And this deal will force the Israeli peace movement to join with the PA and Hamas, who are very adept at saying no, but who, unfortunately, never learned the art of saying yes.

The Israeli right suffers no such similar affliction. America's very stable genius did not, it is true, offer the full dream-come-true for

the settlers.

But his plan does not offer the Palestinian "state" contiguous borders with any other Arab state. It permits the IDF to unilaterally erect outposts any where in the West Bank as an emergency contingent. And it confirms the dreams of annexation beyond anything ever previously green-lit by an American administration.

Territory within the Green Line in the Negev desert and in Wadi Ara in the center of Israel will be handed over to the Palestinians. 10,000 hardline settlers will have to be moved. And Israel will have to relinquish control of some East Jerusalem neighbourhoods. Perhaps these are hard pills for Netanyahu or Gantz to swallow. But the Israeli right, unlike the PA, know how to say yes.

Olmert predicted that it would take another 50 years for another Israeli Prime Minister to again extend his offer if it were rejected.

Let's hope he wasn't an optimist. □

Barry Finger, New York

Blaming “the intellectuals”

By Len Glover

Two incidents, some months apart, from two very different members of the Labour Party – one on her way to the Lib-Dems and well-deserved oblivion, the other a Labour MP and former trade union leader – illustrate what appears to be a growing problem within the broad labour movement.

When Angela Smith (former Labour MP for Stocksbridge and Penistone) announced her resignation from the Labour Party to join the so-called Change Group of MPs she made the following pronouncement (checked on the ITV website),

“For my parents, working-class pride was not about enjoying poverty and wearing it as a badge of pride. It was about self-respect and believing we could do better, that there was nothing wrong in getting on in life. This one of the values that has underpinned my political affiliation all my life. I believe in aspiration and know that people do not wish to be patronised by left-wing intellectuals who think that being poor and working-class constitutes a state of grace”.

Here is Ian Lavery, Labour MP for Wansbeck, writing in the *Guardian*:

“As someone who has opposed a so-called public vote [on an EU second referendum] not least because Parliament has no majority for it in principle and nobody has the faintest idea what we actually put on the ballot, I have been doggedly attacked by certain sections of the party, as well as those on the outside... It does feel that a certain section of “left wing intellectuals” are sneering at ordinary people and piling on those trying to convey the feelings of hundreds of thousands of Labour voters”.

Before proceeding any further it needs to be made clear that I do not put Smith (whom no-one in the Labour Party will miss) on the same level with Ian Lavery who has, in many respects, a worthy record and before becoming a MP was President of the National Union of Mineworkers.

Yet, paradoxically, they seem to share a common disdain for “left-wing intellectuals”, a disdain which is – not to mince words – ignorant and philistine. Nor are these kinds of comments confined only to them. It may be an inaccurate impression of mine but this kind of “anti left-wing intellectualism” seems to be on the increase. The common elements in this trend seem to be:

1. If you are struggling for something remotely intelligent to say and are at a loss, then blame left-wing intellectuals.
2. Even better if you can throw in some jibes about “London-based cosmopolitans” (who are all intellectuals, of course).
3. Better still mention “Islington” in this context or simply “North London” if you are not sure of the geography involved.
4. Include the allegation that the left-wing intellectual/ London/ Islington cosmopolitan elites don’t listen to anyone outside London.
5. Elite is obviously a key word here. And try to throw in “London bubble”.
6. Don’t bother to define what an intellectual is.
7. Don’t mention any names, dates or give quotes. That is completely unnecessary.

Let’s try and address some of this. In this country, as in just about every industrialised nation, in the world there has long been a bias in attitudes and practices towards the capital city – what some commentators here



An SPD party school. Rosa Luxemburg, the tutor, is standing fourth from the left.

have referred to as a “London-centric” attitude.

Successive governments (Tory and Labour) have – sporadically and piecemeal – tried to address this by, moving institutions and government departments out of the capital (e.g. the tax offices to Newcastle, the DVLA to Swansea) and offering inducements for private companies to re-locate (e.g. Midland Bank to Sheffield in the early 1960s).

However, none of that seems to have made any difference. In terms of culture, industry, finance, media and of course government, London still dominates. Labour movement and left organisations replicate this tendency.

Almost all trade unions have their HQs in London, as do the Labour Party and all left-wing organisations (including Workers’ Liberty). One exception is the NUM, which moved to Sheffield during the 1984-5 miners’ strike (and later to Barnsley).

In the 80s in the USA, the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA) contemplated a similar move to the coalfields from Washington but ultimately decided against on grounds of cost.

The point of all this is that the dominance of the capital has an entrenched, well-established history and it would take a detailed, long term plan (involving a radical reappraisal of housing policy) to reverse this. None of this is going to happen any time soon, so we are stuck with the situation we have.

This is part of the background to anti left-wing intellectualism, but we need to ask certain targeted questions. Who are these left-wing intellectuals? Neither Angela Smith nor Ian Lavery (or anyone else) gives us any names. Are these dastardly intellectuals in the Labour Party or outside it? Are they academics or part of the army of special advisers (SPADs) who populate the political landscape these days? Are they part of the media: journalists, opinion columnists (like the *Guardian’s* Owen Jones)?

The simple answer is: we don’t know. None of the anti-intellectual complainers ever mention any names; nor do they ever cite a journal or newspaper article or a TV or radio programme or interview.

So, a question to both Ian Lavery and Angela Smith: who are these left-wing intellectuals “sneering at ordinary people”, who think that “being poor and working class constitutes a state of grace”?

Let’s have some answers so we can take these people to task. The last comment, from

Smith, is so monumentally stupid that it beggars belief. How could anybody see anything remotely desirable in being poor? The whole reason for being in the labour movement and on the left is to change society and, in the process, eradicate poverty. It says a lot about the Lib-Dems that they have embraced Smith as a member.

Why do the Ian Laverys and Angela Smiths of this world go on about left-wing intellectuals? This is harder to answer than may first appear.

Here’s a few guesses: first it locates a problem away from the complainant. Everything would be fine if it weren’t for these bloody “intellectuals” who get in the way, foul things up and alienate everybody by their “fancy” talk. By doing this you can drum up a demonised image of “intellectuals” which can serve just about any purpose you wish.

Intellectuals become an all-purpose scapegoat, “whipping boy”, or “straw man” for what, often, are your own shortcomings or that of the organisation to which you belong. Lost your way on Brexit? Blame the intellectuals. Just lost your constituency in the last election. Blame the intellectuals. Lost a vote at your recent branch meeting. Blame that bloody intellectual who sits in the corner reading Hegel etc.

Note also that it is never right-wing intellectuals who are targeted, always they are left-wing which suggests that, often, it is left-wing policies that are being criticised in a round-about way.

Is anti-left-wing intellectualism better described as anti-elitism? At first acquaintance this seems to have a more secure base in reality. After all, no-one likes elitism or elites. However, this is still vague.

Who are the elitists? More to the point who are the left-wing intellectual elitists? Not all elitists are intellectuals. Some “card-carrying” members of the elite are industrialists of one sort or another, civil servants, or politicians (like Ian Lavery?) who would probably have a heart attack if accused of intellectualism.

Are they to be found in our universities, in the electronic media and in journalism? We end up with the same conundrum as before – who are the complainers talking about? Vagueness abounds and we are, again, left in a void.

On the question of geography does it really matter if someone is from, heaven forbid, Islington, or from Glasgow, Swansea or Newcastle? Does it matter if your father was a

welder in the local engineering plant or an articulated clerk in a law firm?

Your social origins don’t matter that much – what does matter is your commitment, your ideas, and your desire to see those ideas put into practice for the betterment of humanity.

If you were educated at Eton and Oriel College, Oxford, then, OK, you’ve got some work to do to acquire your “credentials”; but nobody with any sense is going to stand in your way, or sneer at you – just do the work, apply yourself and everything will be fine. All the rest is window-dressing.

One thing that can be said with certainty is that anti-intellectualism is a virus in the labour movement which must be expunged. If you are anti-intellectual then, concretely, you are against ideas and ideas are the lifeblood of the labour movement.

Take on the challenge of ideas – read, question and discuss (buy this paper regularly!), never make concessions to the philistines.

By all means couch your arguments in clear, accessible language. Even the most complex ideas can and should be expressed in a straightforward manner. This is not “dumbing down”, but its opposite – making ideas accessible to all for democratic, open discussion.

If you think about problems, read about them, discuss them and implement them – congratulations, you are an intellectual! □



Two nations, two states

Socialists and Israel-Palestine

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

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Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Uni strikes restart 20 February

By a UCU activist

University staff represented by the University and Colleges Union (UCU) are set to strike again in disputes over pensions, pay, equalities and casualisation with a series of walk-outs scheduled over fourteen days beginning Thursday 20 February.

A further fourteen institutions are joining the sixty who struck in the autumn after reballots got them over the 50% threshold. In Scotland members of EIS (another, Scotland-only, union) have also rejected the employers' offer, bringing the total number of mandates for action to seventy-six.

Despite eight days of strike action last term the employers have failed to make significant improvements in their offers. The headline pay rise is stuck at 1.8%, well below the RPI measure of inflation, while on the wider issues of casualisa-



tion, workload and equality they've come up with only slightly warmer words.

There's been lively debate within UCU over the best strategy for the disputes. A hasty email from General Secretary Jo Grady following the employers' latest offer prompted a row when it appeared she hadn't consulted with the elected negotiators before sending her take out to members.

The fast-moving social-media-led campaigns around the 2018 strikes and Grady's election have

built up expectations — especially among newer activists — about the speed of communication and decision-making in the union. But whatever the frustrations there is no substitute for proper democratic debate on strike strategy.

In the upcoming elections for the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the union, *Solidarity* will be supporting candidates who are committed to union democracy and who have a track record of militant workplace organisation. More on the elections next week. □

NHS workers win direct employment

By Ollie Moore

Outsourced workers at St. Mary's Hospital in Paddington, west London, have won their fight to win direct employment. Nine days of strikes, spread over three blocs, since October 2019 have secured one of the most significant victories against outsourcing in the public sector.

The workers, who had been employed by outsourcing giant

Sodexo, will be transferred onto NHS contracts from 1 April, initially for a one-year trial period. This will give workers access to NHS terms and conditions, including the NHS pension scheme, and means a pay rise of up to £10,000 per year for some workers, who were earning minimum wage when their campaign began.

The agreement covers all workers employed on the Sodexo contract across the Imperial NHS Trust, which includes four other hospitals

in addition to St. Mary's. A statement from the workers' union, United Voices of the World, said: "Our members were told they would never win this fight, but with the full backing of UVW and mass picketing, blockades and occupations they've won against all odds. This victory sets a historic precedent which we hope other workers will follow in demanding an end to outsourcing across the NHS." □

Royal Mail: ballot notice 25 February

By Darren Bedford

Royal Mail workers in Bootle, on Merseyside, have called off a planned series of strikes after bosses dropped disciplinary charges against their CWU rep, and made concessions in 21 other disciplinary cases.

The workers were facing charges following a wildcat strike last year, when workers walked out to protest the racist treatment of a

Muslim colleague. The strikes, which would also have involved a neighbouring office in Seaforth, were due to take place on 18 and 20 January.

There are other local disputes developing involving Royal Mail workers elsewhere in the country. Terry Pullinger, the CWU's Deputy General Secretary for its postal section, said the union will encourage local disputes and ballots while it prepares its membership list for a potential relaunched national bal-

lot. But this is a step back from Pullinger's previous comments, in which he said that a national re-ballot was planned "now".

Clearly any group of postal workers in any depot that wants to fight over local issues should be encouraged and empowered by their union to do that. CWU has now set formal notice of the new ballot for 25 February. Not a day too early. The outcome depends decisively on national action. □

Transport for London workers strike

From the Tubeworker blog

Members of Unite working for Transport for London in revenue, enforcement, and Dial-a-Ride struck on Friday 31 January, the first of four planned strikes on the last Friday of each month, until April. TfL has offered them a 1% pay rise, well below inflation. The workers held a lively picket outside Palestra, in Southwark, where many of TfL's central administration is now based, where they were

supported by RMT London Underground reps. Links between these workers and RMT are especially vital, as part of LU's plans for restructuring revenue involves having a new grade of TfL endorsement staff — Transport Safety Enforcement Officers, TSEOs — working on LU stations, in order to provide what TfL calls "a physical intervention" against fare evasion and antisocial behaviour. This will expose TSEOs to significant risk, and TfL plans to

pay them just £27k, less than an LU CSA1, less than existing TfL revenue staff, and far less than an LU Revenue Control Inspector. RMT has begun balloting Revenue Control Inspectors for industrial action to resist attacks on their grade. The ballot closes on 20 February. TfL and LU revenue staff, in Unite and RMT, must work together and coordinate action to fight for decent working conditions and to protect jobs. □

Stop these uni cuts!

By Cathy Nugent

As the UCU prepares for another round of strike action, and a further 14 universities vote to take part, more universities face potentially devastating cuts.

While there is a £1 billion surplus across higher education, those resources are unevenly distributed and over the last few years many unis have faced cuts.

Recently the University of Sunderland said it will close its history, politics and language courses, in line with a policy that all subjects need to be "financially sustainable".

SOAS University of London has curtailed research leave and sacked its non-permanent academic staff. On 29 January Goldsmiths University of London announced 10-15% cut in its cost base over the next two years. They are preparing to offer voluntary redundancies (a scheme which may also cost millions).

At both SOAS and Goldsmiths management have cited deficits as the cause of the cuts, but failed to give clear financial information.

These cuts are related to the current phase of marketisation of higher education. In 2015 the government removed its quotas on student recruitment. Higher-tariff universities expanded in subjects like history and politics because they were relatively cheap to teach. Some lower-tariff universities have become under-subscribed in those subjects and find it difficult to sustain a full range of subjects.

This means a lot of students will miss out on opportunities to study; certain subjects will become the preserve of an elite. Meanwhile at higher-tariff universities staff workloads are rising, casualisation is increasing, and students are getting worse academic and pastoral support.

This system is unsustainable and is creating more and new inequalities. HE unions and the student movement need to fight to stop the cuts and reverse marketisation.

We want:

- an end to tuition fees;
- fully-funded universities paid for by taxation;
- a full range of courses in every UK region;
- for the UCU's current demands on workload, pensions, casualisation and pay to be met in full. □

• Taken with thanks from the Student Left Network website, bit.ly/sln-cuts.

• Cath Fletcher in the *Guardian* on uni marketisation: bit.ly/mkt-he

Organising to resist new anti-strike laws: campaign meeting

**Tuesday 11 February, 7pm
Lambeth Unison offices,
Blue Star House, Stockwell
Road, London SW9 9SP.**

Meeting supported by Lambeth Trades Council, Islington Trades Council, Lambeth Unison, and Free Our Unions.

Johnson's government has pledged to introduce even more restrictive anti union laws to make effective strikes on transport unlawful. This is a direct attack on workers' democratic rights.

Although the clear target is the RMT and other unions on the underground, the proposed laws will target all transport workers, includ-

ing trains and buses. An initial meeting at Islington Trades Council agreed to establish a network of trade unionists and campaigners to oppose the new law and counter the anti working class arguments from the right wing and the millionaire press.

The more union branches and campaigners come, the stronger we are.

There are plans for rallies across the capital and a protest march as well. But we need to be creative and think how we can resist this new law, not just protest it.

Come and join the meeting and let's show Johnson he can't just push people around. Facebook event: bit.ly/fou-11f. □

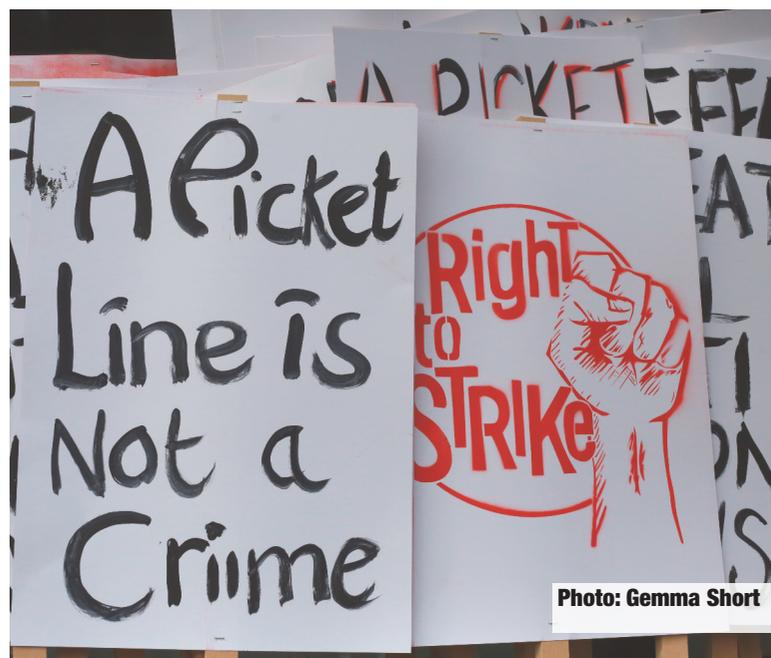


Photo: Gemma Short

Tories nationalise rail firm

From Off The Rails

On 29 January, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps announced what many had been expecting sooner or later since May 2018, that Arriva Rail North will be stripped of the Northern Railway franchise and that it will be taken into public ownership and run by the government's Operator of Last Resort.

The RMT union's press release on the subject rightly highlights the danger that the government will see this is a short-term way of "sorting out" the mess Arriva has made before offering the franchise out for re-privatisation, and calls for proper long-term investment and planning. Positively, it is also devoid of that union's usual nationalistic rhetoric about the fact that Arriva is actually owned by the German state railway, Deutsche Bahn.

Perhaps the union realises now that the franchise is actually being confiscated that it is nonsense to criticise the fact that the profiteers that own the network are "foreign", as if it would be any better if they were "British", rather than the idea

of privatisation itself.

Drivers' union Aslef issued a press release from General Secretary Mick Whelan welcoming the government's decision and echoing RMT's call for proper long-term planning of the operation. This is in line with its policy for a publicly owned railway. It also namechecks the Labour metro Mayors Andy Burnham and Steve Rotherham, in the union's typical style of bigging up all things Labour.

Aslef members in the region know, though, that Rotherham at least does not have a great record of backing workers taking industrial action against Driver Only Operation (DOO). Whelan also points out that things on Northern "would have been much worse without the flexibility of [its] members, who are also impacted when services are cancelled, because the company has never employed enough drivers to deliver the service it promised".

This masks some important details. Aslef has been sanctioning Rest Day Working by its members on Northern since June 2018, under an agreement that gave huge

ground to the company in return for little long-term improvement to the conditions of its members. In fact, a section of its membership actually saw their pay rate for working rest days reduced when compared to the previous agreement that expired late in 2017.

This agreement is acknowledged by some in the union as having rescued the company from having the franchise confiscated earlier, and this is openly admitted by some elected reps on the Company Council. In light of this, the union seems somewhat hypocritical to welcome the announcement when two years ago it helped rescued the company from this exact fate, in contradiction of its own policy.

It is impossible to predict at this stage what the Tories plan will be for Northern. With their new strength in Parliament, it is entirely plausible that Northern will be used as the battleground for a showdown with the rail unions.

Plans for a ban on all-out strikes in the transport industry were in the Queen's Speech, and with RMT guards recently returning another vote for industrial action on the floundering South Western Railway, another possible target for nationalisation, the Tories could see nationalisation as a way of attacking rail workers and our unions.

From	Time	Plat	Expt
Migan North Hest	20:52		Cancelled
London Euston	20:53		Cancelled
Manchester 0 Rd	20:55	3	21:30
Scarborough	20:59		Cancelled
Manchester Vic	21:05		Cancelled
London Euston	21:08		Cancelled
Newcastle	21:14		Cancelled
Norwich	21:36		Cancelled
Scarborough	21:59		Cancelled
Birmingham 11 St	22:16		Cancelled
Page 1 of 1		20:55:44	

We urgently need to gear up for that possibility and get our side to fighting fitness.

It is also possible, however, that they will not want to deal with the political fallout of such a course of action. There is little or no public support for DOO and the major impact on train services that would surely arise would very likely be blamed on the government, especially in the case of a publicly owned section of the industry.

The labour movement should begin campaigning to keep Northern public, and for it to be run under the democratic control of its workers and the communities it serves.

Such a campaign could articulate a progressive socialist model of how a public service could be run, and be well placed to defend the workers in the industry and their unions in the event of attacks by the government. □

• bit.ly/otr-blog

Rail Gourmet workers strike

From the Off the Rails blog

Catering workers employed by Rail Gourmet at Paddington station, in West London, struck again on 30-31 January. The workers had previously struck on 10 January, in their fight for fair rostering practices and proper payment of allowances and bonuses.

Rail Gourmet is part of Select Service Partners, a large corporation which is essentially a huge employer of fast food and retail workers across the railway industry. RG has contracts with several mainline TOCs to provide on-

board catering services, while SSP provides staff to railway station concessions of huge corporations including Burger King and Starbucks.

Drawing inspiration from fast food workers' struggles in New Zealand, the USA, and here in Britain via the "McStrike" organised by the Bakers, Food, and Allied Workers Union (BFAWU), hopefully the Paddington strike can be the start of a wave of organising and action in the industry-within-an-industry represented within which RG and SSP workers are employed. □

RMT ballots revenue workers

From the Tubeworker blog

RMT has begun balloting Revenue Control Inspectors (RCIs) across London Underground, for strikes and action-short-of-strikes, in a ballot that closes on 20 February.

RCIs are defending their jobs against a restructure that will see a two-tier workforce created in revenue, with a new "Revenue Control Officer" grade imposed, paid £33k,

almost £20k less than existing RCIs. LU also plans for new "Transport Safety Enforcement Officers" (TSEOs), who will be employed by TfL rather than LU, and paid £27k to work on LU stations. The long-term dangers are clear: RCIs will be phased out, and revenue work will be carried out exclusively by RCOs and TSEOs. A strong yes vote, and solid action, could throw a spanner in LU's plans. Vote yes for strikes and action-short! □

FCO strike



**John
Moloney**

Our outsourced worker members at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office started a month-long strike on Monday 3 February.

There'll be picket lines every day of that strike, which was a specific decision that the strikers themselves made. That's not about engaging in some sort of PR exercise, it's about the strikers understanding that effective strike action needs visible and effective picketing.

We're appealing to the wider labour movement to actively support those picket lines and attend with flags and banners.

We've had good support so far, with John McDonnell and others visiting the picket lines to support the strike. We're also asking supporters to email the FCO Secretary of State to tell them to pressure Interserve, the company which employs our members, to recognise the union — or alternatively to take the work in house.

We want recognition with Interserve, as the current employer, but our overall policy is that everyone working on the civil service estate should be a directly-employed civil servant, on civil service terms and conditions. We're confident we'll win recognition, and Interserve must be able to see, from the strength of the strike, that a majority of their employees on the F&CO contract want a union.

There was also further action at Ealing Tax Office last week, opposing office closure, and we're also looking to resume strikes by outsourced cleaners in HMRC offices in Merseyside. Those cleaners are employed by ISS, and we want to expand that dispute to other areas of the ISS contract in the civil service.

The union has also announced a national campaign around pay, pensions, and redundancies. That has to be rank-and-file led; national messaging and activity is vital, but the campaign needs local action committees and local campaigning. That's necessary not only to get the message out to more members, but to revitalise and renew branch and workplace activism.

A key goal of this campaign, which may lead to an industrial action ballot, is to develop that rank-and-file involvement. There is a widespread recognition, which I fully agree with, that the national leadership can't act like generals commanding an army. We need to develop the campaign in a way that is organic and that involves members at the grassroots, not as foot soldiers but as engaged activists. □

• John Moloney is Assistant General Secretary of PCS, writing here in a personal capacity.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

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Get Labour onto the streets!

By Mark Osborn

The labour movement must launch a counter-offensive against the Tory government. We have been defeated badly by Johnson who won over millions of workers to vote for him, workers who were often persuaded to vote Tory for the first time in their lives by the Brexiteers' xenophobic demagoguery.

We need to rally and mobilise the working class. We need to win those workers back to the labour movement. We need to stand up and fight back. But politically, what should that fightback consist of? What will be effective? What do we need to say and do?

Whoever wins the Labour Party leadership must be kept to a programme of radical reforms to capi-

talism by our pressure. But the new leadership, and Labour's activists, must also recognise that one of the key lessons from the last election campaign is that dropping a series of left-wing initiatives in front of voters, by television sound-bites and through social media, a few weeks before a vote, is not effective.

ORGANISING

Radical policies are not enough. We need to win over, and persuade, and organise workers. And that takes time and a particular type of effort.

The next general election campaign should start now. And it should be conceived of in a different way to previous campaigns.

Labour should start by calling a mass national protest march on fo-

cused, clearly-understood, popular demands with a wide reach: maybe — well-funded health and education.

We should positively demand well-paid, highly-qualified staff in our hospitals and schools, paid for by taxing the rich.

The market should be abolished in the NHS, and free education introduced in our colleges. We should demand the nationalisation of the drug companies, so the NHS is not robbed by the pharmaceutical bosses. Academies and public schools should be abolished by reintegrated into the local-authority school system.

Labour should declare it will restore benefits, build council homes with genuinely affordable rents, nationalise rail, energy and the banks. We should abolish all the

union laws. And we should explain why and how we will do this, in detail, week-in-week-out, face-to-face.

LABOUR AND UNIONS

We should put Labour's half-million members onto the streets and demand the unions take up the call, too.

This proposal is not for a one-off march. We need to give ourselves time to work steadily on each estate and in every workplace. We need local marches, public meetings and street protests in every area. We need to put the labour movement on a war footing.

Unfortunately Jeremy Corbyn allowed himself to be backed into losing his understanding of the need for mass street campaigning. He failed to lead mass actions against

the Tories. As Labour Party membership grew after 2015, paradoxically, street demonstrations, except the anti-Brexit ones which Labour didn't support, became smaller.

Now, having seen the practical results of leaving politics to professional politicians and media pundits, we should judge candidates for the Labour leadership by their willingness to launch mass, sustained action in defence of the NHS and for free and state-run education for all.

All the candidates have put on their "left face", but none has talked about the need to mobilise and protest in our thousands and millions, across the country.

That needs to be done. Labour and the unions, onto the streets! □

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