

# Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



**For social ownership of the banks and industry**



Pic: @G\_for\_Gemma

# WIN OUR:

» **RIGHT TO PROTEST**

» **RIGHT TO STRIKE**

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Reject blaming "the Jews", and equating "Zionists" and Nazis!

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# Right to protest, right to strike!



The campaign to stop the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill is relaunching on 29 May with a fourth national Kill the Bill day of action" @ [killthebill\\_1](#).

Labour movement activists should get out on the streets with trade union, Labour Party and campaign delegations and banners.

Socialists need to push harder in the labour movement, both trade unions and Labour Party, to mobilise it in support of the struggle against the Police Bill.

We need to widen discussion, in the labour movement and among Kill the Bill activists, about the right to protest.

If the Police Bill passes, it will severely limit the right to protest. But that right has already been restricted repeatedly, over decades. In particular, since the late 1980s, the *right to strike* has been

more narrowly constrained than the Tories now want to make the right to demonstrate.

The right to strike is essential as a means for workers to defend and improve their conditions *and* as a potentially extremely powerful means of protest. But most forms of strikes and industrial action have now been illegal for over thirty years, and the rest are allowed only in tightly controlled circumstances ([bit.ly/au-law](#))

These legal shackles on workers' right to protest were maintained in full during the 13 years of the Blair and Brown Labour governments. Now, in addition to the specific threat the Police Bill poses to strikes and trade unions ([bit.ly/pb-un](#)), the Tories plan to ban large-scale strikes on public transport ([bit.ly/pt-law](#)).

The [Free Our Unions campaign](#) fights for the labour movement to defy the anti-union laws and clearly and militantly demand their repeal.

The right to demonstrate was [cur-](#)

[tailed](#) by the 1986 Public Order Act (introduced after the defeat of the year-long national miners' strike, the decisive turning point in the Tories repressing the workers' movement), the 1994 Criminal Justice Act and the 2011 Police Reform and Social Responsibility Act, among others.

As with some other defeats and regressions, these earlier restrictions on the right to protest have become implicitly accepted, not discussed or thought about.

To the immediate demand to Kill the Bill, we should add pro-active demands to remove the older restrictions on our rights – including, perhaps most importantly, on the right to strike.

*Solidarity* is promoting a model motion on the Police Bill, the right to protest and other demands on policing and criminal justice ([bit.ly/polbillmotion](#)) for labour movement and other groups.

And there's another model motion for Labour Party conference motions



Pic: @G\_for\_Gemma

(being debated between now and September): [bit.ly/lp-pb](#) □

• Newcastle activists are raising money for the legal costs of protesters arrested at their Kill the Bill protest on May Day: [bit.ly/pb-nc](#)

## “New plan” for immigration? Same racist policies

By Wilson Gibbons

On 24 May Home Secretary Priti Patel was the keynote speaker of the “What’s next for immigration?” [online conference](#) hosted by Bright Blue, a “liberal conservative” think tank.

The “new plan for immigration”, she claimed, is simply a “fair but firm” expression of the democratic rights of the people of the UK first in the EU referendum and again in 2019. She lambasted anyone who had the guts to stand up against her government as sowing dissent whilst she is, of course, in line with the opinion of the silent majority of UK citizens with “legitimate concerns”.

Emily Kenway, in her [interview](#) with *Solidarity* on “modern slavery”, explained that as Home Secretary Theresa May used that issue as “a kind of heroic grandstanding as a counterweight to really abhorrent policies.” Patel appears to have learned from the best. One of her proclaimed three key objectives of the “[new plan](#)” is “to deter illegal entry into the UK, thereby breaking the business model of criminal trafficking networks”, as if the real problem is the “traffickers” rather than the government which bans legal entry to migrants and asylum-seekers.

Characteristically loose on detail, Patel talked about protecting the vulnerable while

drawing a bright red line linking dinghies in the channel and the smuggling of drugs and guns. And another between the migrants in Glasgow saved from deportation by community intervention and rapists and murderers being allowed to roam the streets. Who needs a dog whistle?

### Danger

Patel’s policy empowers the UK Border Agency to seize and dispose of small boats used by undocumented migrants or to redirect them back away from the UK. This won’t protect anyone. Quite the opposite, it could prove deadly: confiscating boats will simply lead to more dangerous vessels being used to reduce the costs of losing a vessel. Rerouting them away from the UK will prolong the length of time migrants spend in small boats in dangerous shipping lanes.

The “new plan” also empowers the home secretary to personally intervene in the immigration process, and to deport someone or not on their individual say-so. Patel boasts about the use of new technologies to “secure” our borders, and greater cooperation between different law enforcement agencies. In practice this

means a dystopian expansion of the UK’s border regime further into everyday life, further into hospitals, schools and universities. This again endangers the most vulnerable migrants who will inevitably be forced into more dangerous and precarious forms of work.

Patel repeatedly contended that free movement wasn’t an option. In fact it remains the only coherent option for lessening suffering. Borders *cause* human trafficking, they *cause* “modern slavery”. When gov-

ernments raise borders ever higher and make it more difficult for people to migrate legally, that only makes migrants’ path more dangerous and their life more precarious.

The left and the labour movement must mobilise to oppose the New Plan For Immigration. We must fight for free movement as a human and workers’ right, organising at the rank and file level with migrant workers and protecting those in the most precarious jobs. □

## Our videos!

Watch Workers’ Liberty’s videos, subscribe to our youtube channel! Many have subtitles. **Playlists include:**

- The State, Crime, Prisons, and Police
- Socialist Feminism
- Black Lives Matter
- Socialist commentary on the Covid-19 crisis
- ABCs of Marxism, an introductory series
- An introduction to Marx’s Capital, with Martin Thomas
- Tubeworker/Off The Rails, by the makers of the bulletins □

Watch, comment, share: [youtube.com/c/WorkersLibertyUK](#)

## Upcoming meetings

Workers’ Liberty meetings are open to all, held online over zoom.

**Wednesday 26 May, 6.30-7.30pm:** East Midlands Workers’ Liberty: Is Labour finished?

**Sunday 6 June, 6.30-8pm:** Northern Ireland’s post-Brexit tensions – can there be working-class unity?

**Sunday 20 June 12pm:** Socialist Feminist Reading Group – *Transgender Marxism*, by Jules J. Gleeson and Elle O’Rourke

### Plus

**Weekend of 10-11 July:** Ideas for Freedom 2021 festival of socialist ideas. Online or in person – buy tickets now!

**Thursday 8-9.30pm:** Lenin’s *What is to be done?* reading group

**Mondays, 6-7pm:** AWL Students’ discussions

For **our calendars** of events, updated details, zoom links, more meetings and resources, see [workersliberty.org/events](#) □

# New forced Uyghur labour revelations hit Apple, Tesla, Amazon

By Ben Tausz

Seven more companies in corporate tech giants' supply chains have been linked to the Chinese state's forced labour schemes conscripting Uyghurs.

Solidarity has reported on previous revelations about these schemes. This month, an investigation by tech journalists and human rights groups identified yet more businesses that received thousands of workers, manufacturing and assembling components for dozens of international brands. These include Apple, Amazon, IBM, Dell, Samsung, and Elon Musk's Tesla.

Beijing claims that these are voluntary "poverty alleviation" programmes for the Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, and other majority-Muslim indigenous peoples of Xinjiang province (the Chinese state's name for colonised East Turkestan). However, those who decline to participate can be labelled "extremists" and then find themselves among the (at least) one million indigenous people subjected to mass internment over the last few years.

The programmes send coerced work-

ers in batches to factories both within their homeland, and in provinces across China hundreds or thousands of miles from home. They are segregated from other workers and heavily surveilled: for instance, by facial recognition cameras at their dorms, minders when going out, and police assigned to oversee and discipline work groups. They are required to undergo "patriotic" political re-education.

The forced labour schemes are part of the industrial-scale persecution of the Uyghurs and other indigenous groups. They have been subject to Chinese colonialism since long before the 1949 revolution, and in recent years, this has escalated into a drive for forced assimilation amounting to genocide.

The Tech Transparency Project had already raised concerns about one of the companies last year: Lens Technology, a major supplier of iPhone cover glass as well as Amazon and Tesla. Apple claimed that it found no Uyghur workers transferred to Lens. But this new investigation found multiple Chinese state media reports directly contradicting Apple's denials.

The report flagged that Apple still has not publicly disclosed all its hundreds of suppliers. One demand the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK (USC) raises is for new laws to force big capitalists to open the books: to audit their supply chains right back to source (not just in China, but worldwide) and publish everything. This information would help empower workers' and rights groups to organise and act.

These are just the latest revelations illustrating that the struggle against the persecution of the Uyghurs is not a matter of picking a side in some battle between a "free" capitalist West and a "communist" China. Both Chinese and Western capitalists profit from the forced labour and by outfitting Xinjiang's vast surveillance system.

In February, *The Intercept* exposed how US tech giant Oracle was equipping violently racist police and security forces from Xinjiang to the USA and Brazil to Dubai. Oracle is close to the US military-industrial complex, with senior executives allied to Donald Trump, and was set to benefit from the former President's posturing, nationalistic attempt

to force TikTok's transfer from its Chinese owners.

So we cannot align with Western hawks, like Republican Senator Marco Rubio or Tory MP Iain Duncan Smith, who cynically use human rights concerns as a fig leaf for their rivalry with China. Instead, the USC wants to help build grassroots solidarity by connecting struggles around the world against racist exploitation and the state violence enabling and enforcing it.

Apple has already faced widespread pressure and protests after another of its suppliers, O-Film, was implicated last March in the forced labour schemes. This seems to have pushed Apple to dump O-Film. Solidarity campaigners must redouble our protests and direct action targeting Apple and other implicated brands. Most importantly, we need to organise with workers in those companies, who could exercise enormous leverage against their bosses' outrageous practices. □

• Ben Tausz is an organiser with the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign UK, writing here in a personal capacity

## Tooting protest against racist police raids

By Katy Dollar

In the week ending 22 May, local residents in Tooting, south London were outraged when the police used a "road safety policing operation" to check delivery drivers' immigration statuses. Two people were arrested for immigration offences.

Tooting MP Rosena Alin-Khan responded:

"Today in Tooting, a Met Police Team were stopping

fast food delivery drivers and checking immigration status under the guise of 'Covid compliance'.

"Covid compliance is crucial to stop the spread, but it doesn't explain why Immigration Enforcement were in attendance.

"I don't think there's been full transparency with the public about the reasons for conducting such an operation – and I certainly disagree with police time being used to prop up

the Home Office's hostile environment policies.

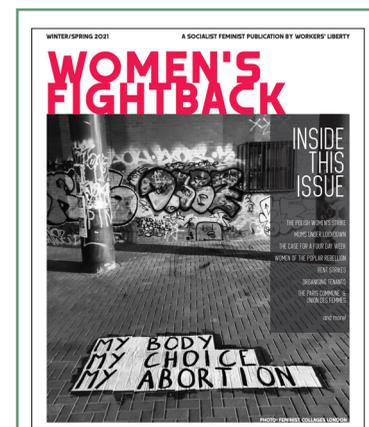
### Racial profiling

"This looks like racial profiling and I am concerned that under the Equalities Act 2010, this may amount to indirect discrimination due to its disproportionate impact on ethnic minority groups.

"If it's not unlawful, then it's definitely immoral and I cannot defend it."

Local unions have come

together with migrant rights and anti-racist groups to call a protest on Sunday 30 May, 12.30 on Bickley Street London SW17. We are here to say no to racism. We stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees. We call for the end of racist police harassment of riders. We want a major rethink of the entire approach to crime and immigration, one based on human need, not on racist prejudice. □



Women's Fightback is a socialist feminist publication. Issue 25, £1! □ [workersliberty.org/publications](http://workersliberty.org/publications)

## Our pamphlets

Browse, download, buy, or listen to [our pamphlets](#) including:

- The German Revolution: writings of Rosa Luxemburg
- Workers' Climate Action
- Two Nations, Two States
- Workers Against Slavery
- How to Beat the Racists
- Remain and Rebel
- Shapurji Saklatvala: Socialist Rebel in Parliament
- Stalinism in the International Brigades
- Left Antisemitism: What it is and How to Fight it
- Arabs, Jews, and Socialism: Socialist Debates on Israel/Palestine □

[workersliberty.org/publications/](http://workersliberty.org/publications/)



Socialists organised through the Labour-left group Momentum Internationalists held a series of actions in the week 17-23 May outside branches of global clothing giant H&M in solidarity with Myanmar strikers. (Pic: Newcastle). Myanmar trade unions are demanding that H&M stick up for staff in its supplier factories by ensuring that workers are not sacked if they are unable to attend work due to violence and repression. More activity is planned for June. □

# Open letter from a “quitter”



**Antidoto**

By Jim Denham

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now: Chelley Ryan has resigned from the Labour Party!

Naturally, this news has come as a crushing blow to the entire UK labour movement and warranted nearly a thousand words, in the form of an open letter to the Socialist Campaign Group, in the *Morning Star* of 18 May (“Leaving Labour is a legitimate choice”).

Mind you, it wasn’t an easy decision for poor Chelley, who’s “wrestled with this decision for 13 months”. And she’s “sorry if I’m disappointing you.”

But Chelley, you see, is speaking for a lot of “distressed people who have fought tirelessly for the party for years... and you glibly say, stay in the party... expecting members who are overwrought, filled with despair and rage to say, ‘Ah, of course I should stay.’”

Chelley clearly feels very strongly

that members (and, indeed, ex-members like her), must be listened to by the leadership and the Parliamentary Labour Party. Yet strangely, she also mentions that she “came very close to resigning in the summer of 2019, after the party had adopted a more full-throated Remain policy I was both morally and politically opposed to.”

Now this is a bit strange, coming as it does from someone who poses as a champion of the rank and file membership. Who does Chelley think demanded that Labour adopted a “more full-throated Remain policy”, if not the members? The clear wishes of the members for a reversal of the top-down steering of Labour towards Brexit, and a return toward the definite Remain policy of 2016, were frustrated by Brexiteers like Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray, key advisers to Chelley’s hero Jeremy Corbyn. They frustrated those demands and came up with what she herself described (in another open letter – this time to Tom Watson) as “our sensible compromise position”, i.e. the position that Labour put forward in the

2019 general election and that she and the *Morning Star* both now blame for Labour’s defeat.

Anyway, Chelley doesn’t just want “sympathy” for, and “validation” of, her decision to leave. As spokesperson for the “thousands who have left”, she wants the entire Socialist Campaign to follow her: “Many speak about their hope that you will leave the party, a party filled with MPs and staffers that did so much to deliver a Tory government in 2019 and stand as independents to threaten the status quo in Labour – but you won’t.”

There always was a strand of the Corbyn movement that was essentially an apolitical fan club, lacking any coherent programme (beyond personal adulation of Jeremy, a determination to downplay evidence of antisemitism and, very often, support for Brexit): such people, who now regularly threaten to tear up their membership cards, and evidently relish electoral defeats for Labour, are well represented on social media (e.g. websites like *Skwawkbox* and *The Canary*) and it’s no surprise to

see the *Morning Star* offering its pages to them.

In the run-up to the 6 May elections, the paper failed to call even for a critical Labour vote (except, unaccountably, in Wales), plugged the CPB’s no-hope left-reformist candidates, carried an uncritical interview with the Northern Independence Party’s Hartlepool candidate Thelma Walker, and noticeably failed to address what it described as the “widespread belief that a non-Labour vote only helps the Tories in England and Wales, and the SNP in Scotland”(editorial, 13 April).

Chelley Ryan pleads of the Socialist Campaign Group: “Don’t drive a wedge between us by dividing us into fighters and quitters”. But what should we call people who put their own self-righteous, self-indulgent sense of entitlement ahead of the struggle for socialism within Labour, and the desirability of electoral victories for Labour against the Tories, if not... “quitters”? And what more fitting print-media platform for them than the irresponsible, sectarian *Morning Star*? □

## Industries and socialist priorities



**Letter**

In his [Solidarity 592](#) article on union organising in the USA, Traven Leyshon backed moves within the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) to encourage young socialists to get jobs in the logistics industry.

The priority for young socialists to integrate themselves into workplace and union organising applies across different countries. How does that priority work out in the UK?

Socialists should go for jobs which will give them good chances of building a base for intervening in working-class struggles from “the inside”.

Workers’ Liberty has long argued for a priority to sectors like the railway including London Underground, the civil service, the post, local government, telecom (BT), and the NHS. These jobs are available in big cities where we have AWL branches. They have large workplaces with a higher than average level of union organisation (and some AWL experience and presence in the unions). They also give

access to jobs which (because of the union organisation) are relatively well-paid, and which people can sustain alongside on-the-streets activity and a full schedule of political meetings for the many years needed to make difference in union organising, even where shift work is involved.

Some of those sectors are strategic sectors of the economy with significant industrial muscle. Logistics, of course, is another such sector.

At the present stage, it would make no sense for small socialist groups to try to “substitute” for the mass

trade-union movement or foster the illusion that a few individual activists taking jobs in logistics would be a sufficient fulcrum to organise that industry. Unions in the UK, unlike in the US, do not have energetic campaigns to organise logistics and warehouse workers. The DSA has around 90,000 members and can reasonably hope to place sizeable groups in individual distribution centres and in nearby cities to give external support. No socialist organisation in Britain is currently capable of that scale of operation.

Socialist activists are much

better placed to intervene in industrial disputes and to light the fires needed to embolden the labour movement if they are active within the workplace rather than just advocating from outside. Active intervention to establish a socialist presence in particular jobs is good; but, to be effective, needs thought-out and consistent targeting.

Stronger and more militant rank-and-file organisation in target sectors can revitalise the mass union movement, and build the base for future organising efforts in logistics. □

Jay Dawkey, south London

## Trotsky and “switching the points”



**Letter**

I agree with Eric Lee’s substantive argument ([Solidarity 593](#)) that socialists must aim to reconstruct mass politics, not just hope for better “leaders”.

But I think he gives a skewed picture of Trotsky’s 1938 declaration about “the crisis of the leadership of the proletariat”.

Trotsky’s argument was not one about poor leadership in politics in general, for example in bourgeois governments, but a specific one about the labour movements at that time.

The previous 50 years or so of educational and organising work by socialists of different sorts; of industrialisation and urbanisation; and of the self-discrediting of capitalism by wars and crises, had produced powerful labour movements with the rank and file committed, in general terms and by their

lights, to socialist revolutionary aims.

But those movements had been hijacked at the top, notably by Stalinists. Even if the Stalinists’ policies were seen by the activists as off-beam and puzzling (and they were), for now workers were inclined to stick with them because that seemed to be the way to stick with the powerful mass movements.

Hopes of forestalling descent into world war and widespread fascism in the short time available depended

on the authentic Marxists developing enough energy and effort to “switch the points” of the labour-movement “locomotive”.

In the event, descent was not forestalled. The argument that the labour movements would now require transformation from the ground up would become a chief focus of debate between “heterodox” and “orthodox” Trotskyists after 1945. □

Rhodri Evans, London

# A victory at Pimlico Academy

By a Future Academies worker

Staff and students at Pimlico Academy in London have already seen a first victory. On 18 May, the day before a National Education Union (NEU) ballot for strike action, closed, head teacher Daniel Smith announced he would leave on 31 May. Student protest and the threat of workers' action has seen off the ultimate school bully.

Staff have been organising over bullying management; failure to address accusations of racism; lack of adequate safeguarding and unreasonable workload. The NEU strike ballot, which closed last week, came back with a resounding yes vote, and staff are due to hold their first strike day during the first week back after half term (31 May – 4 June).

On 31 March, around a thousand students at Pimlico Academy refused to go to lessons, and demanded Smith's resignation (see [Solidarity 587](#)). They were protesting, among other things, the school's racist uniform policy, its failure to support students that had made sexual assault complaints against other students, and its white-



washed curriculum. Pimlico Academy is not the only school in the Trust to see discontent. When pupils at Millbank Academy, a primary school down the road in Pimlico, were instructed to eat their lunch in silence, the upper KS2 students (9-11 year olds) wrote to their Head Teacher, asking for permission to whisper to their neighbours. After all, they said, school is for socialising too. When their request was refused, the pupils, inspired by their peers over at the secondary school, took to the playground with placards that read "We want change!"

The events at Pimlico Academy have been covered extensively in the mainstream press, with right-wing papers dubbing the school the "Academy of Anarchy". Tory MPs have expressed concern that the Trust is giving in to the "woke mob" by taking down the Union Jack, following their protest last term.

But the events at Future Academies in recent weeks reveal which way the wind is blowing. Staff and students are united in the task to tackle bullying, racism and bigotry and to introduce inclusive, empowering curricula. Our job now is to support the coming strikes. □



## Activist Agenda

Uyghur and Hong Kong rights campaigners will be on the street outside the Chinese Embassy at Portland Place, London W1B 1JL, on 4 June (from 7pm, rally at 8pm). Plans are also being discussed for further Uyghur solidarity activity on 5 June.

In a response to the Queen's Speech, Neurodivergent Labour has highlighted the government's failure to deal with the crisis in social care, which many neurodivergent people rely on. It also objects to the procrastination over the outlawing of LGBT+ "conversion therapy", which provides a model for abusive so-called "therapies" used on autistic people.

ND Labour has joined the wide opposition to compulsory photo identification for voting: this will present a bureaucratic barrier to neurodivergent people exercising their right to vote. □

• Links and info for these and other campaigns, and suggested words for labour movement motions on many issues, at [workersliberty.org/agenda](http://workersliberty.org/agenda)

# Lockdown-easing sharpens lockdown danger



## Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

Five women were killed in Spain in the week from 17 May by their partners or ex-partners. In Asturias, Maria Teresa Aladro was found dead in her home with two shotgun wounds in her back. Her husband, whom she was in the process of divorcing, was arrested on suspicion of murder. A 42-year-old woman in Barcelona was stabbed to death by her husband, who then killed

himself. In Mallorca a pregnant Moroccan woman and her young son were killed by her partner, who called police to confess.

Their deaths bring to 14 the number of women killed in Spain so far this year by their partner or former partner, and to 1,092 the total number killed since the government started keeping a tally in 2003.

Campaigners attribute the increase in killings to the easing of coronavirus restrictions since the end of a state of emergency on 9 May. Women are at greater risk of physical violence from an abusive

partner when they attempt to leave, and this is probably happening more often now that curbs on movement have been lifted, they say.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence in Britain has also warned that though in lockdown incidents of domestic violence have become more complex and serious, with higher levels of physical violence and coercive control, lockdown lifting presents new dangers.

"A perceived loss of control can be a trigger for abusive behaviour. During lockdowns, perpetrators may experience

an increased sense of control. This could be threatened as lockdowns ease, and perpetrators may intensify coercive control or engage in new, more harmful behaviour to re-exert control."

During the first national lockdown, calls to the domestic abuse charity Refuge's helpline increased by 65%, and the number of visits to their helpline website increased by 700% in the same period.

Solace, a charity supporting women experiencing domestic and sexual violence, recorded a 62% increase in women calling their advice

hubs in May 2020, at the height of the first national lockdown. This was followed by another spike in September, as schools returned, which Solace attributes to women having greater freedom to move and more time to access support. The government acted slowly and inadequately to domestic violence spike at the beginning of the pandemic. Facing new risks we must campaign for full funding for sexual and domestic violence services, under local authority control, including specialised BME, LGBT+ and disabled women's services. □

# Climate change, shocks and growth



## Letter

We don't know how climate shocks will impact on capitalism. (See Todd Hamer, [Solidarity 593](#), response to my letter in [Solidarity 590](#)). We do know that capitalism is adept at making phases of destruction (wars, natural disasters) into prompts for booms, and

that its chief trigger of crisis is periods of exceptional construction (booms).

Capitalism's great period of (relatively, and only very relatively) smooth growth was the 1950s and 60s. The last 40 years have brought slower growth (except in some countries, like China) and more and sharper crises. Triumphalism is increasingly shouldered aside in bourgeois politics by calls like "Make America Great Again" and "Take Back Control". Not for the better.

This is evidently a longer debate than short letters can handle. That already-locked-in climate changes will bring escalating natural disasters is spur enough to activate us.

We don't need to add in dubious speculation about them triggering generalised property-price crashes, or ending capitalist growth. □

Chris Reynolds, London

## Second hand books!

Workers' Liberty is selling hundreds of second hand-books – politics, but also fiction, history and much more. Visit [bit.ly/2h-books](http://bit.ly/2h-books) for the current stock and prices, and to order.



# A platform for care workers

By Ali Treacher

Ali Treacher is a care worker, Unite the Union activist and workplace rep, and Secretary of the Care and Support Workers Organise! network (CaSWO!). She is also a supporter of "Anti-Capitalist Resistance". She spoke to us about the care workers' fight.

CaSWO! has been meeting since the start of the pandemic, after a Unison-organised call which brought together care workers around issues like workplace health and safety and PPE. The initial focus was offering solidarity and advice and sharing information.

We've organised public meetings. That's been important for giving care workers a platform, which doesn't happen in many arenas. We've had MPs speak too, Nadia Whittome and Paula Barker.

Our initial demands were mostly about PPE and safety measures. We also raised a demand about the reinstatement of whistle-blowers, which was quite a big issue early on. However moving forward we felt we needed focus on making demands for wider change. Social care was broken before Covid-19, and the pandemic has just made things worse, for care workers and the services we provide.

With that in mind we've now developed six demands: we're advocating for £15 an hour, with holiday pay based on normal wages and pension parity with public-sector workers; contracts of employment including minimum hours based on the needs of workers and those receiving support; occupational sick pay including full pay protection for absences arising from Covid; safe workplaces with genuine support for every aspect of workers' health and well-being; trade union access to all social care workplaces and the right to union recognition; and the last one is social care being brought into democratic public ownership, guided by "co-production" of workers and those receiving support.

These are radical demands compared to what the unions are calling for, but it was easy to come to a consensus as it's really so clear what is needed. We're going to confirm them at a meeting on 2 June.

We're mainly lay trade unionists, though there are also some ununionised workers in the group. We're definitely growing, though we face an issue of people dropping in and out, which is exacerbated by the nature of our work. We're in Unite, Unison and United Voices of the World. The Sage workers [North London care home workers in UWW, who have been taking strike action over pay, terms and conditions and union recognition] are in the group. There are particular workplaces that are



represented, and new ones are getting involved.

Unite tends to be the main union in the third sector. Unison is stronger in the bulk of private provision and services that used to be public.

## More broadly, what have been the issues facing care workers over the last year?

The main struggle early on was around the crisis in PPE, about it being distributed and actually getting down to the frontlines. Even when we finally got PPE we often found it was out-of-date. There were boxes where stickers had just been stuck over, changing the expiry date. I remember being on that first Unison call and people were talking about employers saying workers didn't need PPE and workers having to make their own out of whatever they could find. There were a lot of issues about lack of PPE training too.

Sick pay was obviously a huge issue. After union pressure, in May last year the government brought in the Infection Control Fund, from the point of view of public health and stopping the virus spreading, with little discussion about what was happening to care workers. The result was extreme slowness in workers getting isolation pay. Even now, 20% of care workers still aren't getting it.

Meanwhile, most of the sector remains on the minimum wage or close to it. Long hours and understaffing are also very big issues. I don't know a care worker who does 37.5 hours. That doesn't exist. If you add sleep-in shifts which now aren't counted as hours, people can do 60 hours weeks, easily. There's well over 100,000 vacancies in care and there just aren't the staff to staff projects safely, and large numbers off sick has made it worse. So there's a massive increase in stress for workers, leading to a mental health crisis.

Bear in mind that we've had huge numbers of those we support dying. It's not just Covid either. The last year has seen drugs and alcohol deaths skyrocket, as people's human connections are cut off.

I also want to highlight the issue of forced vaccinations. I'm fully vaxxed

and I've gone out of my way to work with my employer to encourage vaccination. I was shocked when I discovered only about 50% of workers in my organisation had taken up the vaccine. I reached out to a comrade in the BMA [the British Medical Association, the doctors' union] and got a GP to come in and speak about vaccine hesitancy. Now we're over three quarters vaccinated. However I do oppose forced vaccination. Care workers feel seriously aggrieved that the government is appealing to our professionalism when we have been and still are being treated so badly.

You also have employers saying they won't employ people unless they're vaccinated. Of course there's a debate about the balance between the rights of the people using the service and workers' bodily autonomy, but forced vaccination is not a good answer.

## What struggles and organising have come of this?

I don't have figures about unionisation generally but in my workplace for sure lots more people are joining the union.

The Sage workers' fight is really important. They're actually taking industrial action and that's something more of us need to be doing.

What Unison are doing in the North West is significant in a different way. They've run a campaign, Care Workers vs Covid, with paid organisers, and done some great work. They've made

demands on local authorities, with some results, particularly in Salford. It hasn't stopped with the win on isolation pay. On the day of the Supreme Court decision about sleep-in shifts [not qualifying for the minimum wage], [Salford mayor] Paul Dennett said not in our city, and insisted employers pay the rate for those shifts. The council has good links with Unison and has cooperated to tackle employers.

I'm sure that's resulting in increased density, but at the moment I don't see a sea of shop stewards and grassroots activists coming forward out of it. I'd say the main mechanism for winning there has been political leverage rather than building organisation in the workplace. That's what makes the Sage workers so distinctive and inspiring.

It's a strength that CaSWO! is independent of all the unions but has members from each of them, as there's things we can learn from them all. We push union membership in general, but we're not sectarian. It's very positive to have a forum for members of different unions to discuss and work together. It's allowed various kinds of inter-union networking that go beyond social care, for instance different unions in London talking about going to each other's picket lines.

In my view the action taken by UWW has had some impact on the pushiness and demands of the big unions.

In Unite we generally don't have care branches; care workers are in composite branches, often health branches. Mostly, even when there's recognition, union reps don't get facility time or only a very small amount which is eaten up by case work. I get three hours a week and that's for an organisation of a thousand people. A lot of full-time officials get drawn into case work which reps should be doing; there's an awareness of this problem and the need to develop organisation, but it's difficult. □

- More next week. More: [bit.ly/al-tr](https://bit.ly/al-tr)
- Contact CaSWO! [careworkersorganise@gmail.com](mailto:careworkersorganise@gmail.com)

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# Vaccines and blood clots



By Les Hearn

Does the AstraZeneca vaccine (AZV) cause rare and dangerous types of blood clot? Probably yes, and AZV is now not recommended for people under 30. Let's look at the overall picture.

Out of 4.4 million people confirmed to have Covid-19, over 150,000 have died. That's about 34,000 per million confirmed cases. Confirmed cases are likely to be an underestimate of actual cases but, taking the highest estimate, the fatality rate is still at least 10,000 per million cases or about 1%. In principle, mass vaccination should eventually be able to reduce Covid infection rates, and therefore deaths, to almost zero. However, if the vaccines themselves carry a risk, they may cause some illness and deaths. This is just what has been claimed for AZV, with reports of blood clotting (venous thromboembolism – VTE) and deaths.

Here, it might be useful to look at the problem of inappropriate blood clotting in general. Clots form to prevent us from bleeding to death from cuts but if a clot forms inside a blood vessel (typically a leg vein), bits can break off and lodge in a narrow vein somewhere else, blocking blood flow (mostly VTEs). If in the lungs, this causes pulmonary embolism (PE).

NICE estimates 2,000 cases of VTE per million occur each year, of which about 750 per million are cases of PE (other estimates are available!). The risk

is far higher for older and far lower for younger people, 5,000 per million for over-85s versus 100 per million for under-40s.

We would expect some cases of VTE to occur naturally during the time following a vaccination. Let's say that the relevant time period for the immune response is a month: for 22.6 million people, we might expect one-twelfth of a year's cases to occur, about 3,600 for the average population but more for the older population that made up the majority of the vaccinated. In fact, yellow card (adverse event) reports for AZV total a bit less than this, at around 3500 for thrombosis-related events (though not all such events will have been reported).

The question of risk has particularly arisen with AZV, where rare cases of abdominal and brain blood clotting have occurred. AZV seems to be linked to the incidence of blood clots in connection with thrombocytopenia (low platelet count in the blood). In particular, AZV is linked to a rare type of clot in the brain, cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST). There have so far been 242 cases of clotting with thrombocytopenia, including 49 deaths, among 22.6 million first doses of AZV (latest government figures on 28 Apr). This gives a risk of about 11 cases (with 2 deaths) per million doses. Of these, 140 were cases of CVST, including 16 deaths. This is about 6 cases (with 0.7 deaths) per million doses. People affected ranged in age from 18 to 79 years, two-thirds women, whereas Covid-19 deaths are skewed towards men and much older groups.

The question now arises of how many

cases of CVST might normally be expected. Estimates vary, partly because it's difficult to diagnose CVST (a brain scan with a specialised form of magnetic resonance imaging is needed), but boil down to around 0.7 per million per month so, on the face of it, the number of cases with AZV at 6 per million doses seems rather higher. In view of this, despite the small number of cases, it makes sense to offer an alternative vaccine to the younger age groups, whose risk of serious illness and death from Covid-19 is very low.

Overall, however, we should remember that Covid-19 brings a risk of death of about 10,000 per million cases, with a greater risk of lengthy hospitalisation and a variety of long-term symptoms (not least PTSD) which can be very debilitating. (The experiences of children's author [Michael Rosen](#) illustrate this well).

We also know that Covid-19 itself comes with a serious risk of blood clots, either from the effects of the virus (causing severe inflammation, triggering the clotting system) or from patients being immobile at home or in hospital, especially in intensive care. Immobility raises the chance of deep vein thrombosis (DVT), which accounts for some 40,000 hospital deaths per year (nearly half preventable by better care such as mobilisation of legs, anticoagulant drugs or wearing compression stockings).

Covid sufferers have had life-threatening clots in legs, lungs, hearts and brain. These have led to heart attacks, strokes, pulmonary embolisms or amputations; if not fatal, these can lead to long-term debility. □

## Covid and “too little, too late”



By Martin Thomas

Fifteen or 16 months after SARS-Cov-2 started to spread widely in Britain, the government is looking at public provision of quarantine accommodation for people who would otherwise be trying to “self-isolate” in crowded housing.

It still hasn't budged on isolation pay beyond its meagrely-available £500 payment and concessions forced by campaigning in some areas (some care homes, Test Centres, etc.).

It is not supporting the demand to end patent restrictions on Covid vaccines, and requisition Big Pharma assets to speed vaccine production. World job rates have increased a little, from 0.2 jobs per 100 population per day to about 0.33, but are still far too slow.

Covid deaths were increased by long-term policy of running the NHS with minimum “slack”, and social care at minimum cost. The Tories' insulting 1% pay offer to NHS workers shows us that those long-term policies continue, underneath and behind the emergency measures improvised under pressure.

The news on vaccine efficacy continues good, so the latest seven-day figures show UK Covid death rates about as low as last July-August, and hospital admissions down 7% on the previous seven days, even though cases were up 17%.

Worldwide, death rates have dropped a bit since 29 April. (India's rates have fallen; Argentina's have risen steeply, but on a smaller base).

But worldwide rates are still higher than at any time before 8 January 2021. Even the recent improvements may be just until the next variant spreads, or until the current vaccinations start to lose efficacy. The need remains for covid-distancing measures and quarantines, and for the labour movement to fight for social measures to make those policies workable and efficacious and reduce their social costs.

Workplace risk assessments, for example, need to be looked at again, since the variant now becoming dominant in the UK, B.1.617.2, may be over twice as transmissible as older variants dominant before October or November 2020.

Keep up the fight against the virus for social solidarity, mutual aid, and workers' control! □

On 25 May, striking school staff, parents and local trade unionists protested at County Hall, the headquarters of East Sussex County Council in Lewes, against the forced academisation of Peacehaven Heights primary school. □



# New mobilisations inside Israel

By Martin Thomas

The new mobilisation of the Palestinians within Israel is, or could be, a historic shift.

The Arab grandees, and much of the small middle class, had fled Palestine before the 1948 war started, many hoping to avoid war and return after the Arab states had won.

The Arabs remaining in Israel after the war and the expulsions were mostly peasants. They lived mostly under military government until 1966. Large tracts of their land were [seized](#) by chicanery.

As with the Palestinian Arab people in the West Bank and Gaza who submitted to Jordan and Egypt seizing those areas and extinguishing the UN-promised Palestinian state, they resisted little. They had been defeated both in the Arab-nationalist rebellion of the late 1930s and, by proxy, in the war fought over their heads in 1948. They had been ruled by the Ottoman Empire for centuries, then by the British; and now it was another power.

A general Arab nationalism emerged in middle-class circles in the early 20th century. After 1967 a distinct Palestinian nationalism gathered more shape, first among exiles and refugees, in the Gulf, in Jordan, in Lebanon. Its influence filtered across, notably into the West Bank (leading to the “first intifada” of the late 1980s).

Inside Israel, some things eased from the 1970s and 80s. Arab-majority towns and villages gained local self-government. More Palestinians have moved to live in “mixed cities” like Haifa, Acre, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa. Arabic had been

notionally an official language from 1948, but its actual official use on anything approaching parity with Hebrew expanded greatly from the 1990s.

More Palestinians now enter Israeli universities and get “professional” or public-service jobs. Benjamin Netanyahu may believe such improvements will reconcile Palestinians both to democratic inequality and to material inequalities like difficulties in getting building permits and thus continuing demolitions of “unauthorised” Palestinian homes. In fact, they have increased confidence and rebellion.

Christian and Druze Arabs, previously more reluctant to identify as “Palestinian”, have done so more since the campaign against the Nation-State Law of 2018, formally demoting Arabic to an “auxiliary” language.

The assertiveness, if it can win appropriate political shape, can push back and win concessions. Those will always be limited until victory for the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination in a state of its own alongside Israel, and for peace; but a new surge of Palestinian activism within Israel on democratic and secular lines has the potential to filter out into the West Bank and Gaza and the diaspora, breaking a decades-long political impasse there.

Some have seized on recent reports from the Israeli human rights group [B’tselem](#) and from [Human Rights Watch](#) that Israel is guilty of “apartheid” to bolster already-held views that Israel is unreformable and nothing will serve except conquest and suppression of Israel.

In the first place, to remedy one injus-



tice (oppression of the Palestinians) by imposing another (suppression of the Israeli Jews) is not progress.

The brief B’tselem document attempts no equation with South Africa before 1994. It lists, with justified anger, the inequalities suffered by Palestinians, and argued that they amount to “apartheid” in a looser sense, without any argument about equation to South Africa rather than to, say, Turkey in its treatment of Kurds, or Algeria, of Berbers.

The Human Rights Watch document is much longer. It states that it “does not set out to compare Israel with South Africa under apartheid or to determine whether Israel is an ‘apartheid state.’” Its chief argument is that the whole Israeli-ruled realm must be taken as a whole, and that the horrors of Israeli colonial rule in the West Bank, especially, feed back to and define the whole picture.

The answer, difficult but clear, is for Israel to get out of the West Bank and make way for an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

Talk on protests in Britain of Israel being “an apartheid state” or “a terror state” is not just loose but understandable expression of anger against oppression, as it might be within Israel.

It serves a noxious narrative. Israel

equals South Africa before 1994. Apartheid had to be wiped out, so Israel must be wiped out. The Israeli Jews equal the white minority caste in South Africa (13% at the time of the apartheid in 1994), with its monopoly on political power and economic advantage. If any of the Israeli Jews can stay, that can only be after they are reduced to a harmless minority. Apartheid in South Africa was brought down by boycotting South Africa, so boycotting Israel is the answer now.

In fact the Israeli Jews are a nation, with a bourgeoisie and a working class. In fact, they are mostly a refugee-origin nation, not an upper crust superimposed on a majority.

In fact, the boycott of South Africa between the early 1960s and 1994 was a selective tactic widely supported by the majority *within* South Africa and supposed to target the South African upper crust. The proposed boycott of Israel has seen its “successes” mostly in the exclusion of Israelis, as Israelis, from film festivals, LGBT rights marches, academic posts, and such. In fact, apartheid was brought down not by boycott, and certainly not by external conquest and wiping South Africa off the map, but by democratic revolt of the majority within South Africa to reshape the country.

Standing Together in Israel aims to speak for a Jewish-Arab democratic majority there. That majority remains to be shaped, in battle both against Netanyahu and the other Jewish chauvinists, and against Hamas and its like. Our solidarity should be with that democratic battle, and with movements like Standing Together. □

## Equal rights: Two nations, two states

By Martin Thomas

Kenan Malik’s column in the [Observer of 23 May](#) starts by arguing that the slogan “from the river to the sea” is a sectarian dead-end in both current variants.

“In the hands of Hamas, it is a call for the driving out of all Jews from the region”; in the hands of Netanyahu, it has “blocked any workable two-state solution”.

There are two nations in the area. The Israeli Jews have recent historical experience of their parents and grandparents being massacred in Europe, denied refuge worldwide, and expelled from Arab states; the Palestinian Arabs,

of expulsions and of mistreatment under Jordanian, Egyptian, Syrian, Israeli, and other rule.

Because of those imprints of history, neither nation will be anywhere near the first in the world to become so confident in neighbouring nations’ goodwill that it can happily shelve its right to a state of its own and instead trust in life as a minority under a majority of another nation.

So: two nations, two states. Malik seems to agree: “the aspirations of the 6.9 million Jews now living in the region cannot be ignored. Nor is corraling Palestinians into their own territories while denying them control over their lives

any ‘solution.’”

But then his last sentence is unclear: “‘Self-determination’ in that piece of contested land that is Israel-Palestine can only be the self-determination of all the people who live there, Palestinians and Jews, in a single shared future”.

He is right if he means that the single demand of self-determination for both nations is much less than a whole program – that a socialist program also includes minimum walling-off and maximum co-operation between two states, minority rights and democracy within states, broader federal link-ups, and social leveling-up and socialism.

He is wrong if the word “only”



is to be taken literally, as meaning that neither nation should recognise self-determination for the other until confident of harmony in a “single shared future”; that we should give up on the Palestinians’ right to a state of their own alongside Israel until guarantees of harmony; or that the Israeli Jews have no rights until that harmonisation is already won.

Some on the left “support”

two states with provisos to relegate it to a hypothetical later stage: two states only if both are already socialist, or both are democratic, etc. That comes down to saying: our answer to the national conflict is to suppose that it has *already* been solved, by everyone becoming socialist, democratic, etc., and thus bypassing the need for mutual recognition of national rights. “Two states” is part of a program, not a whole program. But an operational part, and immediately, to win workers’ unity; not something tagged as becoming operational only after the rest of the program has (by some other agency than workers’ unity) already been achieved. □



# Thousands rally for peace and equality

By Ira Berkovic

Up to 3,000 people demonstrated in Tel Aviv on Saturday 22 May, in the largest anti-occupation protest in many years. The protest was called by Omdim be'Yachad (Standing Together), a left-wing social movement seeking to mobilise both Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel in a common struggle for equality. Slogans included "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies".

Addressing the rally, Sally Abed, a Palestinian leader of Standing Together, said: "I refuse to return to the routine of institutional discrimination, of police violence and political arrests. I refuse to have second-class citizenship, and a racist government that is threatening all

our lives for the benefit of an economic and settler elite. This government has no interest in serving our interests."

Ayman Odeh, a left-wing Palestinian Member of the Knesset (Israeli Parliament), said: "We do not accept the dichotomy of nationalism. Our path forward is together. Jews and Arabs together [...] There are two nations here. Both of them have a right to self-determination. Both deserve peace and equality. We respect the national identity of the Jews and the national identity of the Arabs, we respect both nations. We have a path forward."

Other organisations including Peace Now, leftist party Hadash, and Combatants for Peace also supported the protest. Women Wage Peace, an Ar-

ab-Jewish women-led peace movement, were there. On Wednesday 19 May, Women Wage Peace activists organised a human chain in Jerusalem in opposition to war and occupation.

Prior to 22 May, Israeli police attempted to obstruct the demonstration from taking place, pressuring organisers to cancel it and insisting that the lack of a ceasefire meant the demo was unsafe. Organisers refused to back down.

The 22 May demonstration followed weeks of smaller local actions across Israel called by Standing Together. On 21 May, police blocked buses from attending a joint Jewish-Arab "Freedom March", supported by Standing Together, in Beit Jala, in the West Bank,

and violently dispersed the demonstration. Renewed protests in Sheikh Jarrah, the East Jerusalem neighbourhood where Palestinian residents face eviction by Jewish settler organisations, have also been met with police repression. Police repression of demonstrations has disproportionately targeted Palestinian protesters. Israeli police now say they plan to arrest 500 Palestinians in a further crackdown.

In the face of significant challenges, the movement Standing Together is now cohering represents the best hope for a social upheaval that can change the balance of forces away from national chauvinism and towards a shared future based on equal rights for both Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs. □

## Palestinians on strike

On Tuesday 18 May, Palestinian workers and businesses in Gaza and the West Bank, along with Palestinian citizens of Israel, participated in a general strike, in protest at Israel's bombing of Gaza and ongoing suppression of Palestinian rights. The strike involved workers withdrawing their labour, and shopkeepers and businesses closing up for the day.

The call for the strike, which quickly went viral across Palestinian society, seems to have originated with the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, a cross-party body which has semi-official status in Israel. Former Hadash leader and MK Mohammad Barakeh has been cited as a key organiser. Most major Palestinian political forces formally backed the strike, as did Palestinian unions.

Some sectors of the Israeli economy, such as construction, are dominated by Palestinian workers. The Israel Builders' Association said the strike cost \$40 million in lost revenue, and estimated that only 150 out of 65,000 Pales-

tinian construction workers went to work. Protests and rallies were held in towns and cities throughout Israel-Palestine.

Workers at Cellcom, a major Israeli telecoms firm, held a one-hour work stoppage to mark the strike. A statement, issued by the company's works committee but with the backing of management, supported peaceful co-existence between Arabs and Jews. Although a small-scale action, it is nonetheless notable, especially as the Cellcom workers' union is affiliated to the Histadrut, Israel's mainstream trade union federation, which excluded Arab workers until 1959 and is not known for its radicalism. The Cellcom workers' action is a small glimpse of the potential for a movement against occupation and for Palestinian rights which also mobilises Jewish workers.

The publication of the Cellcom statement provoked a right-wing backlash, with political figures in Jewish settlements calling for a boycott of the company. Following the backlash, Cellcom management rowed back, saying the

"timing" of the statement had been poor and that it had nothing to do with the Palestinian strike.

But Ayman Odeh MK tweeted: "I heard settlers are disconnecting from Cellcom. I never thought I'd be jealous of a cellular company."

Solidarity has also seen reports of Jewish bus drivers in Tiberias, organised by Koach L'Ovdim (Power To Workers, a radical union centre independent of Histadrut), organising private transport for their Palestinian workmates, who were afraid to travel home due to far-right Jewish gangs attacking Arabs in the street.

Rula Daood, a Palestinian socialist who is the co-director of Standing Together, supported the strike, saying: "Years of institutionalised discrimination, oppression, occupation, and racism have given rise to protests by all Palestinian society in Israel. Today we are on strike [...] Join us, support the just struggle for a life of peace, equality, liberty, and justice for all of us." □

## "We can create a different reality"

This is an abridged version of a speech given by Alon-Lee Green, co-director of Standing Together, at a demonstration on 20 May. Taken from [twitter.com/alonleegreen](https://twitter.com/alonleegreen).

"We are here this evening – and this is important for me to say – not only because we want to stand together, Arabs and Jews, Jews and Arabs, and not only because we want to stop the violence. We are here because we want peace. Because we want to put an end to the settlements, to the wars, to the constant rounds of violence.

"We are here today not only to say that this is not

inevitable, but to prove that this is not inevitable. We are here today to show that there is hope. We are here to demand an immediate ceasefire – a ceasefire that will prevent the deaths of more children in Gaza and Sderot, a ceasefire that will prevent the deaths of innocents on both sides. [...]

"This is not easy to achieve. But all of us, Jews and Arabs, who are standing together right now across Israel, demanding change, prove that we can organise. We can think together, we can act together, we can dream together. We can create a different reality." □

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# Support Palestinian rights, oppose antisemitism

By Matt Cooper

On 15 and 22 May London saw large demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinians.

The anger at the bombing of Gaza and the Israeli government's disregard for Palestinian rights is fully justified. But as I talked with young people on the demonstrations, it became clear that some have picked up reactionary ideas: that Jews should be driven out of the Middle East, that they are Europe's "problem", and that the Holocaust is exaggerated by Israeli Jews in their own interests. Many of these ideas are promoted by various shades of political Islamism, expressed on the demo by the very common chanting of "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" (sometimes without the implications of the slogan having been thought through) and the fairly common chanting of "Allahu Akbar".

In the run up to the 22 May demonstration, one of the organisers, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), made a public appeal against expressions of antisemitism on the march. PSC [specified](#) that this meant no targeting of Jews, only Israel, and no comparisons of Israel with Nazi Germany. As far as I could see, there were certainly fewer egregiously antisemitic placards

on these marches than on similar ones in the past, although there were some. "Zionism=Nazism" and similar slogans have become less common.

Any move to combat antisemitism within the Palestine solidarity movement is welcome. The PSC's moves are, however, limited. They focus only on antisemitism defined as "the hatred of Jews because they are Jews", stating: "Our anger should be directed at Israel, not British Jews or those from anywhere else."

This leaves much antisemitism untouched, particularly that targeting Jewish Israelis as being undeserving of the right to national self-determination despite the Jewish Israeli nation being formed by refugees from genocide and persecution, and then targeting "Zionists" (Jews outside Israel who feel empathy with Israel) as guilty by association. The demand for boycotts of Israel as "the apartheid state" remains central to PSC's approach, as does the highly ambiguous demand for a "Free Palestine". (Does it mean an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel? Or "freeing" the territory of British Mandate Palestine of Israeli and Jewish presence?)

The PSC needed to counter media reports of increased antisemitic attacks

after the 15 May London demonstration (including reports of a convoy of cars decked out in Palestine flags driving through Jewish areas with shouts of "Fuck the Jews and rape their daughters").

However, Tariq Ali's speech on the 22 May platform effectively relegated the clean-up operation to a shallow public relations exercise. He said:

"The Zionist governments of Israel" and "settlers from Brooklyn... who are semi-fascist... have learnt nothing from what happened to them in Europe. Nothing". The most generous interpretation of this is that Israeli Jews are now doing to the Palestinians what was inflicted upon them in Nazi Germany, exactly the comparison the PSC claimed was unwelcome on the demonstration.

He [continued](#): "Every time they bomb Gaza, every time they attack Jerusalem – that is what creates antisemitism. Stop the occupation, stop the bombing, and casual antisemitism will soon disappear."

Ali said [similar](#) at a 2018 Palestine demonstration: "The purveyors of antisemitism today, those who have encouraged antisemitism, are the Israeli government. Killing Palestinians the way that they do it, targeting children as they have done, this is what pro-

duces a crude form of antisemitism. And the support given to this by right-wing Zionist organisations in Europe and America doesn't help challenging antisemitism either."

Ali claims antisemitism is the fault of the Israeli government and of Zionists (that is, Jews who feel empathy with Israel) in Europe and America. He need not denounce the antisemites, or examine his own attitudes: just by denouncing Israel he has done all he needs to against antisemitism.

Ali forgets two principles. First, the responsibility for antisemitism lies not with any Jewish person, but with antisemites. Second, if people are encouraged to look at the Israel-Palestine conflict through an antisemitic lens, they will come to see more of the world through that lens. Socialists should counter that vision – patiently but firmly – with the ideas of working-class solidarity based on the mutual recognition of rights, as against sectarian delegitimation of Jewish Israelis as undeserving of rights.

Antisemitism must be opposed in all its forms and wherever it is found. As long as Palestinian solidarity protests are tainted with antisemitism, they will fail to help build pressure for a just peace. □

## Socialist Worker chooses its "resistance"

By Phil Grimm

*Socialist Worker* has detailed and decried deaths and casualties in Gaza. And rightly so! But *Socialist Worker* has not found the space or the inclination to report on protests by movements like Standing Together. Instead, it refers to Hamas, persistently and euphemistically, as a "resistance organisation", and compares it in favourable terms to other Palestinian forces for its "militancy".

Hamas is a far-right political-Islamist party and militia

with its origins in the Muslim Brotherhood. It favours the military conquest of Israel and the setting up of an Islamic state in historic Palestine. In 2006, benefiting from the corruption and stagnation of the dominant Fatah faction of the PLO, Hamas won Palestinian elections. Following a nasty civil conflict, it consolidated its power in Gaza, where it has ruled with a tight grip ever since.

Hamas was not the moving force in the street movement that has contested the planned

evictions in Sheikh Jarrah. Its "contribution" was to fire hundreds of rockets from Gaza towards residential neighbourhoods in Israel. These attacks were by their nature indiscriminate – indeed, among the first casualties were an Arab mother and father killed in the Arab village of Dahmash, near Lod. The purpose of the rocket attacks was to return Hamas to a position of relevance and leadership. The effect was to provoke a murderous Israeli bombing campaign, and to allow Netanyahu to rally the

Israeli-Jewish public behind the banner of national self-defence.

On the scanty occasions when Hamas come in for criticism in the paper, it is for making deals with Egypt or "preparing to compromise". On 7 May, an article fleetingly conceded that Hamas was "an Islamist movement", but by 25 May, Alex Callinicos was approvingly quoting Israeli politicians noting Hamas' capacity to "break out of its Gaza cage".

The starting point of Marxist politics is to acknowledge that

the working-class has separate interests from the classes that exploit it, and that consequently the workers need their own independent political programme. *Socialist Worker* has junked all that in favour of a myopic boosterism for a far-right theocratic organisation hostile to democracy and the labour movement. There is no criticism of their Islamist politics, no criticism of their rocket attacks, no serious engagement with what a victory for that organisation would actually mean. □

## Antisemitism is on the rise in the USA and UK

By Colin Foster

Antisemitic attacks in the USA over the two weeks to 23 May ran at over twice their average rate in 2019, according to [figures](#) collected by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL).

Some examples: "A synagogue received an email... 'Die fucking jew cockroaches! Israel = racism, apartheid, genocide'... a Jewish man wearing a Star of David necklace was punched by a man who allegedly asked him, 'What

is that around your neck, does that make you a fucking Zionist?'..."

"A Jewish man was beaten by a group of anti-Israel protestors in Times Square [New York]. In another incident, anti-Zionist protestors shouted, 'Fucking Zionists' and threw fireworks at passers-by..."

The ADL stresses that many of the protests about Gaza "did not include antisemitic language"; but on or around many protests, there was antisemitism, even though protesters saw

themselves as left-wing and "anti-racist".

The 205 incidents over the two weeks compared with an average of 40 a week in 2019, but 2019 itself was a record high. It was 12% up overall on 2018, 19% up for cases of vandalism and physical damage, and 56% up for actual physical assault on people.

In Britain, the [Community Security Trust](#) reports a 500% increase in antisemitic incidents from 8-18 May compared to the previous 11 days.

Again, CST stresses that "anyone is entitled" to "express support for Palestinians", but these are incidents of "singling out Jews and treating them as a participant in the [Israel-Hamas] conflict".

Antisemitic attacks have been increasing in Europe and the USA for some years. This increase is correlated with upsurges of the far right, and in the USA especially of Trumpism. □

# Goodlord: 13 weeks on strike

By Athena Parnell

Workers at Goodlord, a tech company providing tenant referencing services to letting agents, have been striking against attempts by their employer to impose worse contracts. Goodlord has now dismissed the workers who were continuing to resist the imposition of the contracts, using “fire and rehire” tactics. Their union, Unite, says the workers have effectively been sacked for going on strike, and that it will pursue legal action. Athena Parnell, a former Goodlord worker involved in the strikes, spoke to Solidarity about the dispute.

The fight began at the end of October 2020 when our employer offered us permanent contracts. We were on fixed-term contracts at that time, and had been asking to be made permanent. So in theory it should have been an improvement. But the terms of the new contracts were much worse than our existing terms, including a pay cut of around 25%, around £6,000 per year.

The bosses’ justification for this was that, as we were working from home in the pandemic, and not travelling into the office, we could make do with lower pay. This was especially galling given that, prior to the pandemic, they’d always consistently opposed homeworking and insisted our jobs couldn’t be done from home.

The work we do is around doing referencing and background checks on potential tenants on behalf of letting agents. Checking people’s ID and

credit ratings to see if they are “acceptable” tenants is not exactly “moral” work, but workers don’t always have an absolute choice about what work we have to take. Prior to this attack on our terms, none of us were members of a union. Very few of us even knew much about trade unionism in a formal sense. But we were very tight-knit as a group of workers, and there had been some unofficial workplace organisation and activity in the past. In August 2020, we’d got together to send a letter to management to ask them discuss moving us onto permanent contracts. They had simply refused.

When they announced the new contracts in October, we again organised collectively and sent another letter, signed by 85-90% of people in the department, asking for a discussion about the contracts. Again, management refused. That was when we started discussing formalising our organisation by unionising. We reached out to Unite, immediately very helpful and supportive.

We’ve learnt so much since, about what trade unionism is and how it works, and how workers can organise. I’m a firm believer in trade unionism and workplace organisation now.

As soon as we joined Unite, we began the process of balloting for industrial action. We were initially quite cautious about that, as none of us had ever been involved in strikes before. But Unite were extremely good at reassuring and galvanising us. Once we balloted, the

company said they’d make us an offer by 22 February to resolve the dispute. But the company didn’t offer an acceptable resolution, and wasn’t negotiating in good faith, so we decided to go on strike.

Going on strike was a big step, but we weren’t afraid. Being in a union gave us confidence. We felt that it was a choice being striking, and doing nothing. We weren’t prepared to give up, and taking action made us feel empowered.

There is a lack of understanding amongst young people about unions and striking. We’re fed propaganda against strikes. But organising at work is where we have power; it’s one of the only places where we do. That power has to be used, especially as we’re seeing workplace exploitation intensify.

Our strikes were later escalated to all-out, indefinite action. As the dispute has gone on, some people, including myself, have left. Workers who refused to accept the worse permanent contracts were given extensions to our fixed-term contracts and then let go, which is why we’ve talked about our dispute as being against a form of the same “fire and rehire” tactics bosses have used in many other workplaces. Even though I no longer work for the company, I’m still involved in supporting the campaign. There have been negotiations at Acas, but the employer hasn’t moved from its position.

We’ve seen 13 weeks of strikes so far. There’s had to be a re-ballot, due to restrictive anti-union laws. We need

to step up the fight against those laws too, which must be scrapped. We are seeing management intimidation and threats increase.

We’ve been holding physical picket lines, which will continue as demonstrations. There’s also a strike fund. Donations are essential as the workers have now been dismissed, it’s important the workers don’t give up. People can also use platforms such as TrustPilot and other review sites to express their opposition to Goodlord’s treatment of its workers.

My message to other workers, especially in non-unionised workplaces, who want to win change – either to stop and attack from the boss or to win improvements – is that we must stand together and act collectively. The people who own companies, who own property, who have money... they won’t give us rights and power, no matter how articulately we ask for it on an individual basis. The idea that if we work hard, we will be rewarded is simply not true. When things improve, it’s always via collective organisation and collective action.

Within any workplace there will always be pressure from above to cut costs and increase profits. We must counter that with pressure from below.

- More, and strike fund: [bit.ly/g-lord](https://bit.ly/g-lord)

A proposed sale of the Stocksbridge steelworks by Liberty Steel was announced on 24 May. Coverage in next week’s *Solidarity*.

## Where Labour made gains on 6 May

On 6 May, Robina Baine won Southwick Green ward for Labour, a seat in which Labour usually stands “paper candidates” and does not canvass. This time, an active campaign secured a remarkable 20%+ swing from the Tories to Labour. Janine Booth interviewed Robina.

### Tell us about yourself.

I’m a very ordinary 61-year-old, mother of four and teacher for most of my life.

### What does being a socialist mean to you?

Socialism means all have an equal right to a share in the wealth of a country where public ownership meets public need. Personally, it means everyone has value and a voice that needs to be both heard and listened to. It means society and community, working together for the good of

all; protection of the weak and vulnerable, education, acceptance and support for everyone.

### Tell us about Southwick Green.

Southwick Green ward is almost midway between Brighton and Worthing on the south coast. The last elected Labour councillor was in the 1970s; since then, it’s been solid Lib-Dem and, from the 2000s, Conservative.

### Why did you decide to stand?

After teaching, I worked in a charity shop in Southwick and became a member of the Traders’ Association. I came home from a meeting one evening so incensed by the dismissive comments of the local Conservative councillor that I immediately emailed our local Labour branch and said

I would stand at the next local elections. Red rag to a bull!

### What were the key issues during the campaign?

Key issues were entirely local: affordable housing; the local tip; support for the local economy post-Covid.

### What views did voters express about the Labour party?

I stressed that this was local, and very few views were offered about the Labour Party on the doorstep.

One lifelong Labour voter said he’d “never vote Labour again”, but he was a Covid denier who had lost his business and didn’t think lockdown should have happened. His wife, a specialist cancer nurse, agreed.

A young couple asked me what I thought of Keir Starmer. I stressed that this was a local

election, but I did tell them what I thought. They voted for me!

### How were you able to win support for Labour?

You listen to every voice and talk to everyone. Canvassing would be made easier if I could regulate what people read!

### Why do you think Labour did well in Southwick Green, when it did badly elsewhere?

You don’t “parachute” someone in from outside. You stand people from the community they want to represent. You

start local and grow outwards, building a relationship with the wider community. There’s no point talking to people in the month before an election and assuming they’ll believe that you’re concerned about them because they won’t!

We need to provide a united front. If the electorate see you fighting amongst yourselves and not supporting each other, how are they meant to believe that you’ll support them?

### What direction would you like Labour to take now?

“Go left and then left again”! □

## Anti-racist resources

We have compiled various anti-racist resources to learn about anti-racist movements, and arm yourself with ideas to beat back racism: readings and pamphlets, video and audio.

See [workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources](https://workersliberty.org/anti-racist-resources) □

# Students mobilise on Palestine

By Abel Harvie-Clark

The student union at SOAS university in London joined the Palestinian call for a strike on 18 May, and finished the week with a campus vigil for lives lost to colonial violence. London students went on to join the internationalist bloc at the Palestine demo in London on Saturday, connecting struggles from Colombia, Ethiopia and Palestine as a common struggle against oppression and state violence.

Apartheid off Campus, a student campaign group, has called a day of action

for Friday 28 May: "a call for students to unite for BDS". The student union at SOAS university in London voted to reaffirm "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" (BDS) last week, resolving that the union will boycott all Israeli goods and cut ties with all Israeli universities. A wide range of student societies at UCL also signed their commitment to BDS in the last week, and campus protests against their universities' connections with Israel are taking place at UCL and LSE.

Workers' Liberty has long argued against such academic boycotts, and counterposed building links with democratic movements in Israel, including on Israeli campuses. (31% of the students at Haifa University are Palestinian, and 18% at the Technion).

Antisemitic threats of violence against Jewish students at UCL have led to increased police patrol on UCL campus. The threats are seriously worrying, but the police presence also threatens students on campus. Student organisation and education, not police presence, is needed to root out antisemitism on campus. □

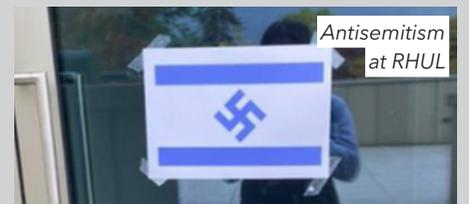
# Make solidarity without antisemitism

By Workers' Liberty students

Many students at UK universities have rightly responded to the escalation of violence in Israel-Palestine by mobilising in support of the Palestinians. In some places there are campaigns to get universities to stop investing in companies that financially back Israeli military industries.

We hope Palestinian solidarity campaigning continues beyond the cease-fire, and that university divestment campaigns succeed. At the same time we continue to criticise the blanket boycott policies which dominate on campuses (including academic boycotts), with their implicit backing for a "one state" outcome in Israel-Palestine. In coming issues we'll write more about this and our positive ideas for solidarity campaigning.

In the last two weeks Jewish students and Jewish student societies have become targets for explicit antisemitic abuse on social media. Such abuse probably does not come, in the main, from other students. But there have been "real-life" issues and harassment from other students.



For example, at Royal Holloway University a sticker of the Israel flag with a swastika replacing the star of David in the middle was placed near the library. And University College London (UCL) reports physical threats against Jewish students as well as harassment of Muslim and Palestinian students.

As politics moves right, many forms of racism – antisemitism, anti-Asian racism, and Islamophobia – are on the rise. Student unions must be very clear that no Jewish student is responsible for the actions of the Israeli government and should condemn any rhetoric and abuse which makes Jews responsible. They need to show how it is possible to oppose the Israeli government without being antisemitic – without, for example, drawing equivalences between that government and the Nazis, or saying Zionists (meaning Jews) are creating a Holocaust. □

**workers' liberty**  
reason in revolt

**Solidarity, yes! Boycott, no!**  
Why supporters of "two states" should not join the "smash Israel" boycotters

On solidarity vs boycotts, and on the creation of Israel: *Workers' Liberty 3/12* and *3/13* are available online at [bit.ly/wl-12-13](http://bit.ly/wl-12-13); to get print copies of both, postage free inside UK, pay £1 at [workersliberty.org/payment](http://workersliberty.org/payment)

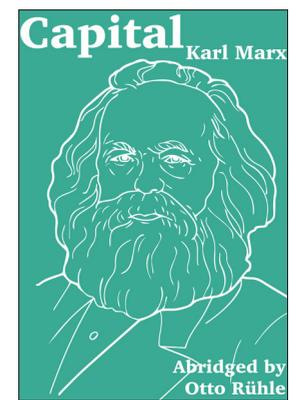
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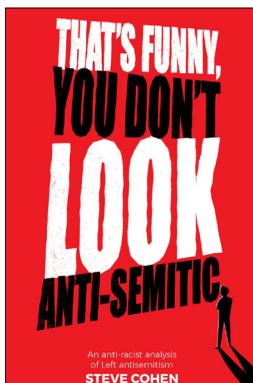
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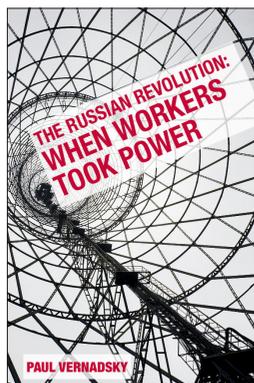
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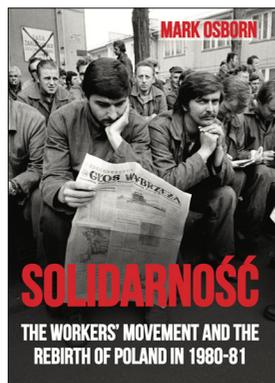
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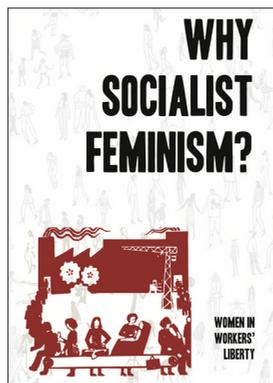
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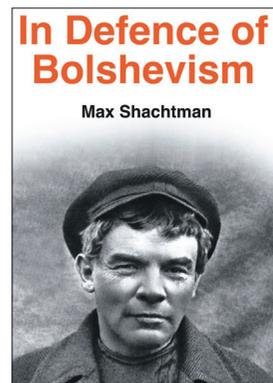
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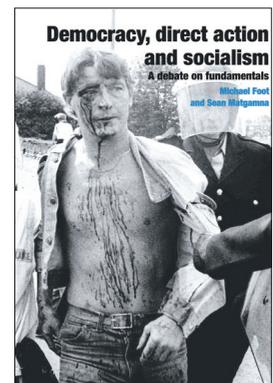
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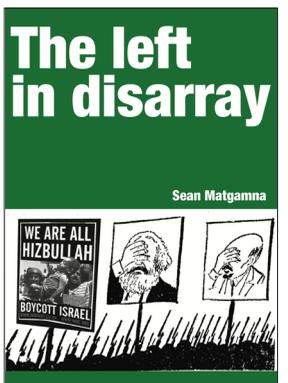
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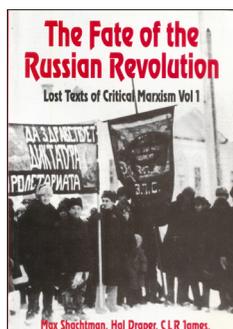
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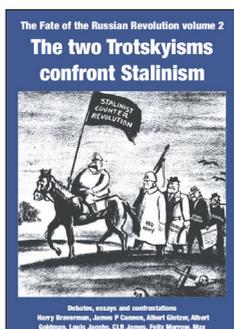
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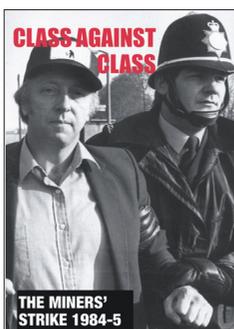
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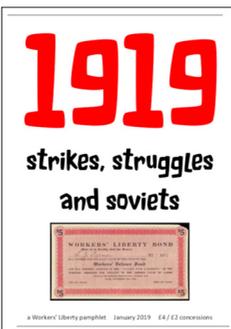
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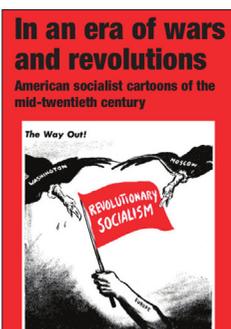
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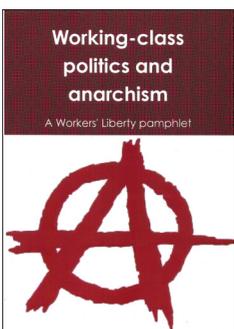
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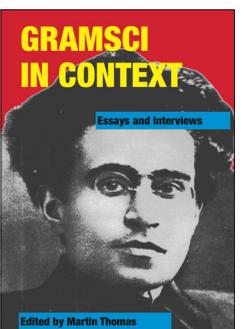
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# Night Tube jobs robbery



London Underground has unilaterally incorporated Night Tube train operator duties into full-time train operators' rosters, consolidating the former TO23 (Night Tube) and TO21 (full-time) T/Op grades into a single grade.

This will mean fewer train operator jobs, increased night and weekend working for full time train operators, and an end to driving parameters that stop us starting or finishing a duty at any time of the night. It is also an end to the "clean wage" – the principle that we all earn the same for doing the same job – as those who volunteer for Night Tube duties (or are forced to do these unsocial hours if there aren't enough volunteers) will get a bonus payment for doing so, in most circumstances.

Bosses went into negotiations in January, looking to make current Night Tube train ops full-time as they are desperate for more drivers. They came out of those negotiations securing that goal, which both unions supported, but also grabbing a plethora of work-life-balance gains and conditions, eagerly handed over by Aslef, in a move that



is largely unsupported by full-time drivers and the RMT.

Further to this, London Underground forced this attack through ignoring the "machinery of negotiation", which lays out the parameters of how such issues are discussed, and overriding the 2015 pay deal which tube workers in both unions took industrial action to defend in 2016.

RMT has announced they will fight the London Underground/Aslef plan – something to be welcomed. Tube-

worker believes the following factors are crucial for all unions and Tube workers to ensure:

- No jobs lost or reduction in headcount in full-time or Night Tube T/Op grades
- No increase in night or weekend working for the full-time T/Op grade
- Waiting lists must be protected; station staff shouldn't see training dates for a train operator role further delayed.
- Promotional options must be preserved: many Night Tube CSAs [sta-

tion staff] want Night Tube T/Op jobs as these are, demonstrably, the hours they can work.

Many Night Tube drivers who want it now have a full-time contract, which is to be welcomed. They should consider the role they will be moving into and join the fight back to ensure it has the same terms and conditions it has at present, rather than allow the detrimental changes that will occur if Night Tube operation is incorporated into the full time roster. □

## PCS: we still need to transform the union

By a PCS activist

On a woefully low turnout of just 7.5% of members the ruling Left Unity (LU) group has secured a comprehensive victory in the elections for the National Executive (NEC) of the PCS civil service workers' union (results announced 14 May). PCS will continue to be run by the same LU faction that has failed the membership for 18 years, but now minus the Socialist Party which was for most of those years central to that leadership and its failings.

For many years the LU leadership has presided over defeat and retreat. It has lurched from inertia to belated, poorly prepared campaigns that treated the membership as a tap to be turned on and off. The PCS membership is headed for more of the same in very difficult circumstances and with the Tories once again cutting real pay.

The election was a three way contest between LU, In-

dependent Left (IL), the only principled and long standing opposition to the leadership, and the Broad Left Network (BLN). The latter was set up by the SP to place its supporters back in PCS leadership positions after it badly lost an unprincipled faction fight within LU.

The BLN's platform was essentially "get rid of the leadership". The marketing point was that they were the only force capable of defeating or inflicting serious harm on their former LU allies. Instead, they achieved a much poorer result than the IL obtained in the last NEC elections in 2019, when the SP campaigned with and for the current leadership. In 2019 IL won four seats, reduced to three because successful NEC candidate John Moloney was also elected Assistant General Secretary against the LU candidate and SP member, Chris Baugh. In the current election the BLN

has secured one NEC seat, for an activist who is not a member of the SP.

### Opposition

Even in this election, and even though losing its three NEC members (Bev Laidlaw would have been elected but for departmental limitations), the IL polled well in relation to its number of branch nominations and it continues to be the only coherent opposition to the failed PCS leadership, offering positive policies and initiatives.

The IL's support was hit by the presence of another "opposition" slate, albeit one that ran without a genuine and developed critique of the 18 years of LU misleadership. The lack of critique was hardly a surprise given that the SP and some fellow travellers had been centrally and deeply involved in that misleadership. Essentially the SP offer the same "leadership" that they provided for so many years

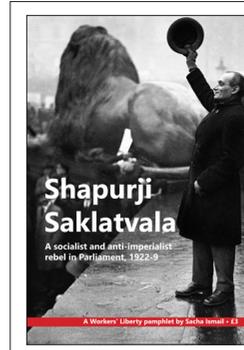
alongside their former LU allies: "lets go back to the good old days" is their unspoken motto.

The IL built its campaign around the need to transform PCS. The BLN campaign was built around Marion Lloyd, who trailed in third in the Presidential election, well behind IL supporter Bev Laidlaw.

When the SP approached the IL prior to the NEC elections they did so with a full slate, i.e. one aimed at IL as much as the leadership, and insisted that Bev Laidlaw should stand down as a presidential candidate. IL was not

prepared to stand aside for a SP candidate who was part of the PCS leadership as late as 2018 and who was on the LU slate in 2019 and elected that year to the NEC as a LU member.

The SP/BLN representatives were not interested in discussing a programme for transforming PCS whereas for the IL an agreed programme for transforming the union is at the centre of its campaigns and is the only principled basis for joint work with any other organisation. The IL will continue to map out a way forward for serious activists. □



### A socialist and anti-imperialist

Shapurji Saklatvala was Labour's first BAME MP, and a revolutionary socialist and anti-imperialist. Learn about his life and struggles in this pamphlet, replete with lessons for today. £3. □

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## 6699 What we stand for

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

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

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

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

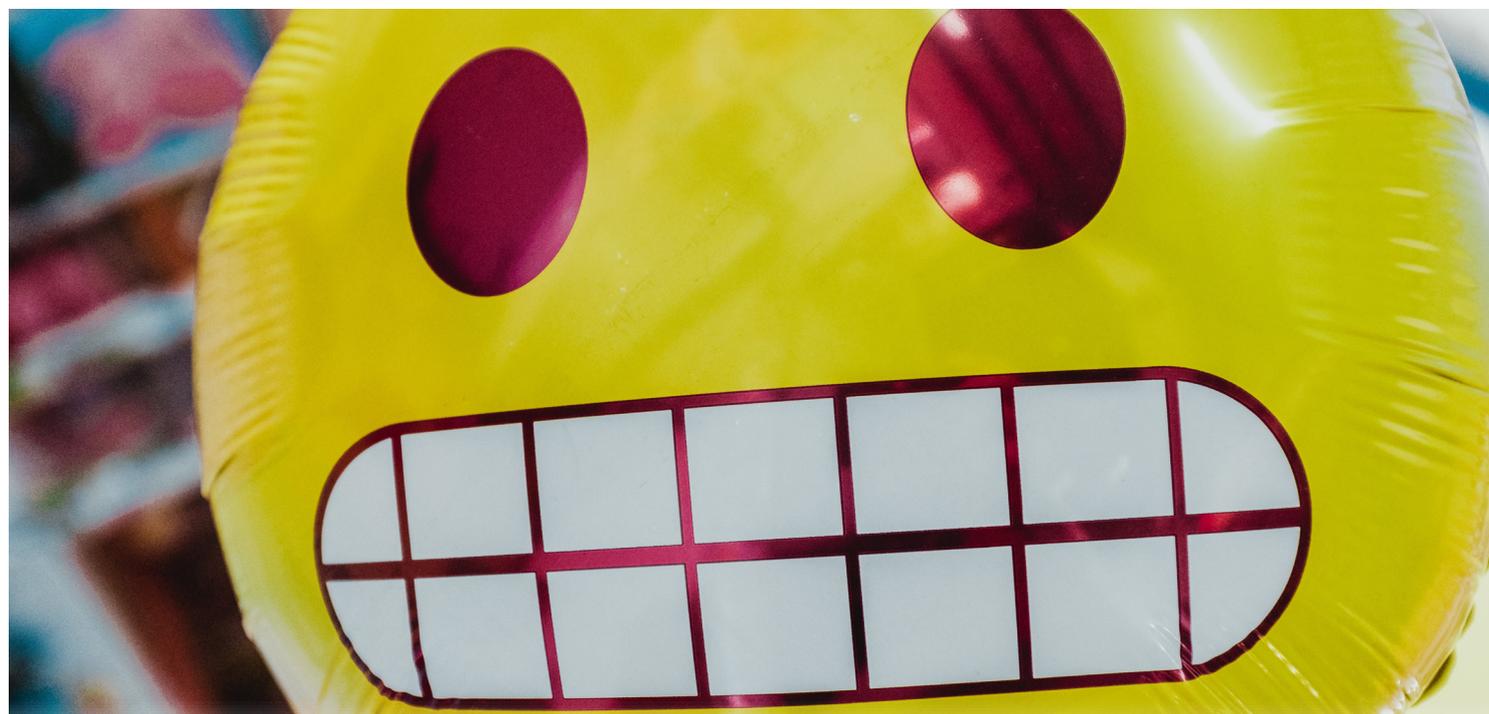
We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses, to militantly assert working-class interests.

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

- Independent working-class representation in politics
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement
- A workers' charter of trade union rights – to organise, strike, picket effectively, and take solidarity action
- Taxing the rich to fund good public services, homes, education and jobs for all
- Workers' control of major industries and finance for a rapid transition to a green society
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. Reproductive freedoms and free abortion on demand.
- Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people
- Black and white workers' unity against racism
- Open borders
- Global solidarity against global capital – workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
- Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small
- Maximum left unity in action, and full openness in debate

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

• [workersliberty.org/join-awl](http://workersliberty.org/join-awl)



## These times are a bit awkward



### Diary of a tubeworker

By Jay Dawkey

I've come in off the front to have a break. D has just walked into the room from a meeting with a manager. "They have said they can just terminate our contract".

"Really?" F says, putting the duty book down and looking pained. "Yeah, it isn't just you can't be an instructor, if we continue to refuse we either go back to just being an operator or they sack us". (Train operators who also work as instructors have been refusing some modes of work they consider covid-unsafe).

"So what are you going to do?"

"Well, I might take their option to stop for six months and go from there".

"Maybe if I was at the end of my time here I would keep fighting it, but now with so many already back doing the training, I can't see us winning that fight."

D goes on: "But I still don't get why we don't do the lateral flow test every day. It is all well and good going and doing the PCR test weekly, but you could catch this on your way home from the testing centre. It isn't a bubble with a trainee... if they then go home and do whatever, you do whatever, see family... plus now people can go out and go to the pub... that makes a difference. It isn't safe like they are saying."

"I think they are still cutting corners and we should just have stood together, but I get why some came back. It isn't easy to just refuse all training. But it doesn't sit right with me".

"Times like this are a bit awkward in training, every depot you hear the same discussion, and friends tell me

it's happening on all the lines. But here we are in training with some instructor or other, while the others obviously feel let down".

I will just sit this one out, I think. Not much I can offer, but I respect the decisions that have been made by train instructors. Of course, if they all downed tools and refused, I'd back them. For now I should remember where my limit of shunt boards are... □

• "Jay Dawkey" is a Tube worker currently in training.

## Contact us



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Production team: George Wheeler, Martin Thomas (editor), Sacha Ismail, Simon Nelson, Zack Muddle

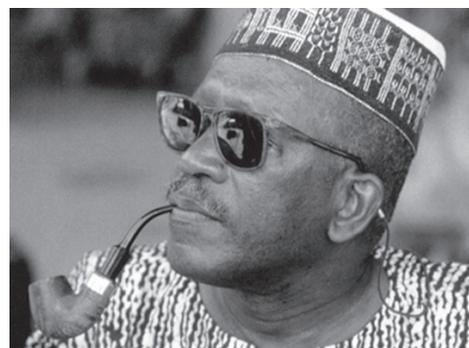
## A post-colonial film from Senegal



### Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Ousmane Sembene of Senegal, a former French colony, was one of Africa's pioneer filmmakers. His 1975 film *Xala* is set at the time of the colonial power's withdrawal. The main character, businessman Aboucader Beye (known as "El Hadji"), becomes one of the new elite. He is utterly corrupt and accepts backhanders from French financiers. He already has two wives and marries a third, much younger than himself, a move which angers and upsets the older pair and Rama, his politically active daughter. She is opposed to the corruption of the new bourgeoisie which, of course, includes her father.



She speaks Wolof rather than French while admiring the anti-colonial fighter Amílcar Cabral. On his wedding night El Hadji discovers that a xala (a "curse") has rendered him impotent. The film then depicts his hilarious and pathetic attempts to have the xala lifted. Finally, he submits to a humiliating ritual at the hands of a group of street beggars (who actually put the xala on him in the first place). The xala disappears. □

## £20,000 by 11 July

An additional £130 brings our fund appeal total so far to £6,670.94. £90 came from Tony and Stuart towards Tim Cooper's sponsored parachute jump, and the rest from online second-hand book sales. Proceeds so far have enabled us to buy a "new" (second-hand) computer for our office, able to run up-to-date software at reasonable speed as the old one couldn't, and to print placards for the recent Israel-Gaza protests. We need more as we're able to get out on the streets more! [workersliberty.org/donate](http://workersliberty.org/donate) □

# Resisting parks job cuts



**John Moloney**

Following a meeting with the United Voices of the World union (UVW), we'll be issuing a letter to the outsourced contractor which employs cleaners in the Royal Parks. Currently workers are assigned to specific parks, but the contractor wants to move to a mobile workforce model.

UVW estimates that this could lead to job cuts of up to 25%. In particular, all existing women workers can't drive, so they'd be particularly at risk as workers would now be expected to drive between parks as part of the mobile workforce model.

Our letter will make a series of demands. The key one is that they commit to not making any job cuts, but there'll be other demands, including around pay. We'll give the employer a deadline of 2 June. If the demands are not met, we'll be balloting outsourced cleaners in Royal Parks – who are dual members of PCS and UVW – for strikes.

In the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) Swansea, we're planning a further strike in the contact centre, from 2-5 June. There had been a plan for a wider strike, involving all workers on site and those working at home, but the branch executive committee voted to revise that after concessions were made over the numbers of workers on site. The decision to move to selective action did prompt some debate within branch, so a members' meeting was held to discuss the strategy. Negotiations are taking place, in which the most senior manager in the department, the

private secretary, is now involved. We believe their involvement signals either that we're close to a settlement, or that the bosses are digging in. If it's the latter, we're prepared to see this dispute through and be in it for the long haul.

In the Department for Work and Pensions, our consultative ballots on whether to take action over workplace safety have been extended. The argument for this is that there's likely to be a renewed wave of anger amongst the workforce due to increased pressure on job coaches to conduct more in-person interviews. Once those ballots are returned, there'll be a discussion about where to go next – whether to a single ballot of the entire workforce, or a series of ballots disaggregated on a local basis.

Across the civil service, a particular issue I have been pushing for is service-wide talks with the employer around environmental sustainability. This isn't an abstract question, it's a class issue. Working-class people will bear the brunt of sharpening climate crisis; but workers also have the means to avert it by forcing employers to take action to decarbonise. The civil service has now agreed to talks on the issue and I want to drive that forward.

In those talks, we won't just be asking for more recycling facilities or low-energy lightbulbs; we'll make demands for major structural changes, such as an end to outsourcing policies, which, as well as exploiting workers, increase waste and make transparent auditing around the emission levels in supply chains harder. □

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the PCS civil service workers' union (personal capacity).

# Rail: threats from the Williams Review



**Off The Rails**

Reading the Government's Williams-Shapps Rail Review is like watching someone say they're too hot in a jumper and deciding to put on an overcoat. The report slams the inefficient ways the rail industry is organised, especially the ridiculous "delay attribution" industry [process of allotting blame for delays] that results from the privatised system. But then it proposes more of the same, and worse.

The key news is that Network Rail is to be abolished and replaced by "Great British Rail". It is not exactly clear, but this appears to be the same kind of pseudo-public body as before. It will expand to encompass many of the functions currently performed by the Rail Delivery Group, and some formerly performed by the private train operators.

Train Operating Companies and Freight Operating Companies will be replaced by private contractors. GBR will take on the fares and manage the timetables but sub-contract out the actual running of trains. The report highlights that this will mean the wasteful process of delay attribution can end, but it also means a new wasteful process of contract tendering and arbitration can begin. If a train is delayed, GBR will be responsible for holding the contractor to account; in practice it's not clear what this will involve beyond the same old delay attribution process we already have.

Staff working for operators will still remain employed entirely by the private

sector, but now all the decisions about how services are run will be made by the new GBR. This will make it harder for staff working for operators to fight job cuts and other attacks. The anti-union laws mean we can only take industrial action against our direct employer. We can strike against the operating companies we work for, but it won't make much difference if GBR is making the cuts.

And attacks do seem inevitable. In a section of the report entitled "Empowering Rail's people" one of the first sentences highlights that pay in the rail sector has risen faster than inflation in recent years. It promises a further review of how to rectify that situation. It proposes a year on year saving of £1.4 billion from these reforms. It is hard to see how else these savings are envisaged other than staff costs.

Some of the biggest changes are proposed for stations, which are currently managed by the private operators. After this review, they would be managed by GBR. This is coupled with a proposed simplified ticket system, similar to contactless pay as you go in London. Given the push for lower staff costs elsewhere in the report, it is likely this will translate to ticket offices closing.

We cannot wait on organising until these plans to become concrete. After the McNulty report recommended cutting Guards' jobs, the rail unions waited for each employer to attack before starting to fight, even though we all knew the attacks were coming. We must organise now to demand a fully nationalised railway network, no job cuts, and decent pay and conditions for all across the sector. □

# Another brink for London transport funding



**Tubeworker**

The government has extended the funding of Transport for London (TfL) to 28 May. Negotiations between TfL, City Hall, and the Department for Transport continue.

The current pattern of short-term funding bailouts is unsustainable. It suits the Tories, as every round of negotiations is another opportunity to attempt to attach strings to the deal. The government commissioned a financial review, conducted by auditing and accountancy firm KPMG, which was explicitly instructed to identify cuts and workplace

reforms. The full contents of the KPMG review have never been published.

London Mayor Sadiq Khan then commissioned his own independent review, which also urged cuts, and explicitly identified the TfL pension scheme as in need of reform.

Bosses previously told unions that jobs cuts or attacks on terms and conditions would not take place as long as the existing funding arrangements were in place. That commitment has already been broken by LU's decision to consolidate full-time and Night Tube train driver grades, meaning full-time drivers will now have to work nights. Driver jobs are also being cut on the Bakerloo

line.

Previous funding deals committed TfL to returning to being "self-financing" by 2023. This is a trap; passenger levels may or may not have returned to pre-pandemic levels by 2023, but in any case, for a transport system like TfL to rely solely on fares is ridiculous. TfL needs stable, sustainable, central government funding. It is the only metropolitan transport system of its type in the world not to receive state subsidy. Pre-pandemic, it was reliant on fare revenue for nearly 75% of its income, nearly double the amount of similar systems in Paris and New York. Sadiq Khan should be demanding the restoration of the grant the

Tories abolished in 2018, not making cuts proposals of his own.

RMT has already declared a dispute over grade consolidation for train drivers. That dispute should be progressed to a ballot as soon as possible. Drivers' union Aslef, although it has scandalously supported LU's grade consolidation plan,

still has a live ballot mandate from a pre-emptive ballot it conducted in March over potential threats to terms and conditions. As we lurch from one short-term funding deal to the next, it's time for RMT to prepare a wider ballot for pre-emptive action against the cuts we know the bosses will be planning. □

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» Is socialist revolution possible? Is it desirable? Ruth Cashman, Workers' Liberty, debates Professor John Strawson

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» Alan Turing and us

» Organising the unorganised, with speakers including John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS union (pc), and Kelly Rogers, former Picturehouse striker

**2:20pm**

» Should socialists support a "Progressive Alliance"? Neal Lawson (Compass) debates Elaine Jones

» The next wave of climate activism, with speakers including Simon Pirani, author of *Burning Up: A Global History of Fossil Fuel Consumption*

» Confronting antisemitism on the left, with speakers including Keith Kahn-Harris

» Covid: what we know and what we don't know, with Prof. George Davey Smith

**4:20pm**

» The experience of "Corbynism" and the future of the left in Labour, with speakers including Alan Simpson, former Labour MP

» Winning freedom of speech, with speakers including Shiva Mahbobi, women's rights activist and spokesperson for Campaign to Free Political Prisoners in Iran (CFPPI)

» China, Hong Kong, East Turkestan: workers' and democratic struggles, with speakers from the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign and Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong.

» Capitalism and mental health, with speakers including Jean Lane, Workers' Liberty

**Sunday 10:00am**

» What should feminists say about sex work? Anita Downs debates Ruth Tweedale

» What's happening in Myanmar? with speakers from the Myanmar labour movement

**12:30pm**

» Trade unionism in and after lockdowns, with speakers including Prof. Gregor Gall and Janine Booth (RMT activist and Workers' Liberty)

» Left perspectives on Lebanon's protest movement, with Lebanese socialist Joey Ayoub

» Understanding the Renaissance, with Prof. Cath Fletcher, author of *The Beauty and the Terror*

» USA: where next for workers, unions, and the left? with speakers including Traven Leyshon, Vermont AFL-CIO and Democratic Socialists of America, and Justine Canady, Workers' Liberty

**2:30pm**

» From #MeToo to the future: confronting violence against women, with speakers including Jill Mountford (Workers' Liberty)

» The historical roots of antisemitism on the left

» Erdogan: Turkish imperialist?

**Plus...**

» **Thursday 8th:** film screening and discussion *Dear Comrades!*

» **Friday 9th:** walking tour "Battersea vs the British Empire"

» **More** to be announced... □



## **Build back fairer: tax the rich!**

**By Sacha Ismail**

Robert Watts, who compiles the *Sunday Times* Rich List of the thousand richest individuals and families in the UK, feels obliged to comment on the 2021 List: "The fact many of the super-rich grew so much wealthier at a time when thousands of us have buried loved ones and millions of us are worried for our livelihoods makes this a very unsettling boom."

There are now 171 billionaires in the UK, up from the previous high of 151 in 2019. Their wealth has risen 21.7% during the pandemic, to £597.2bn.

Between 2008 and 2009, the total wealth held by the Rich List fell as a result of the financial crash (though the top entry still held over £10bn in wealth, while the tenth richest held £1.5billion). Every year since, while individuals and families moved around, the Rich List's wealth increased substantially – until 2020.

There was a fall last year as a result of the pandemic, but much smaller than the one after the financial crisis – from £143.5bn in the hands of the top ten in 2019 to £131.5bn in 2020, compared to £82.6bn falling to £47.7bn in 2008-9. And this time the UK's super-rich have made up their lost ground faster, with the top ten on the [2021 list](#) reaching £154bn.

In 2019 the top-rankers were Sri and Gopi Hinduja, with £22bn; last year James Dyson and his family, with £16.2bn; this year Leonard Blavatnik, with £23bn. In 2019 Blavatnik held £14.3bn in wealth and last year £15.8bn. The tenth richest on the 2021 list has £11bn. (By the way, none of these figures include money in personal bank accounts.)

Already in January, looking at the figures from previous Rich Lists, the Resolution Foundation (broadly right-wing Labour but thoughtful) calculated that the concentration of wealth in the hands of the super-rich was much worse even than previously estimated – by a margin of around £800

billion in total! Meanwhile the worse-off and economically-insecure have been hammered, and will be hammered more as furlough tapers off and the government seeks to "re-balance" its budget after emergency payouts.

As the *Financial Times* put it on 19 May: "Boris Johnson's new legislative programme hammered home the point. Among the items missing were the overdue plan to fund social care; any move to raise statutory sick pay from the low rate of £96 a week... and the long-awaited employment bill strengthening protections for workers. One could also cite the meagre one per cent pay rise offered to nurses".

The trend to spiralling inequality is built into capitalism, and can only be comprehensively and sustainably tackled by abolishing the super-rich along with capitalism. The labour movement should set itself that goal; and we should also fight for emergency measures to check and reverse the spiral.

Even middle-of-the-road political figures are now proposing "wealth taxes" – taxes on accumulated wealth. We need a range of measures to assault the wealth of the super-rich from all sides – both to fund policies to improve the lives of the majority and to diminish inequality as an end in itself.

As the "Build back fairer: attack poverty and inequality" [motion](#) Momentum members voted to promote for Labour Party conference puts it:

"We need to take back wealth, with a wealth tax, increased corporation tax, capital gains tax and taxing very high incomes; and taking banking and finance into democratic public ownership."

Alongside the fight to tax and take control of wealth "from above", through government measures, we need to build up, transform and mobilise our trade unions, to make them powerful instruments "from below" both to fight for these policies and to redistribute wealth away from the super-rich. □



# Solidarity

For a workers' government



## ISRAEL-PALESTINE: FOR TWO STATES, FOR EQUAL RIGHTS

By Colin Foster

Thousands protested in Tel-Aviv-Jaffa on Saturday 22 May, in Israel's biggest peace demonstration for many years.

Breaking The Silence, an association of Israeli ex-soldiers which co-organised the protest with the Jewish-Arab social movement Standing Together, declared:

"The ceasefire [on 21 May, after 15 days of rockets and bombs] is of course good news, and we hope it will hold out for as long as possible. But it's only a matter of time until the next round of fighting; a question of when, not if. Because as long as we continue holding Palestinians under occupation, violence is inevitable".

One of the slogans of the protest was: "The answer to the Right is Israel and Palestine".

On the other side of Israeli politics, Benjamin Netanyahu plans on a further spell in prime minister, helped by the falling-apart during the bloodshed of negotiations for an anti-Netanyahu coalition. Having Netanyahu as their opponent suits Hamas; having Hamas ruling in Gaza and a surging force in the West Bank suits Netanyahu; the symbiosis obstructs workers' unity, a democratic way out, and peace.

The Israeli press reports that since 21 May Israeli police have stepped up checks and a heavy-handed presence in Arab districts of mixed cities.

Soon the postponed court hearing will come on plans to evict six Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah district of East Jerusalem from their tenancies in now Jewish-owned (since 1972) houses.

Netanyahu now faces a stronger opposition. Too much of the generally pro-Palestinian protest in Britain has sided implicitly or explicitly with Hamas. That is a dead end.

The way to a democratic peace and towards workers' unity in Israel-Palestine lies in solidarity with the new movements inside Israel, and with the fresh hope that they may be able to inspire in the West Bank and Gaza. □

• More: pages 8 and 9