

Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry

Against Chinese state tyranny:

» UYGHURS, HK, TIBET — SELF-DETERMINATION

» FREE TRADE UNIONS, WORKERS' RIGHTS



Neither Beijing nor Washington: workers' solidarity

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Against Beijing tyranny: workers' solidarity!



June 4 2021 marks 32 years since the Chinese state's massacre of hundreds or thousands of pro-democracy protesters around Tiananmen Square. Workers' Liberty will join the vigil in London to commemorate the movement and its bloody suppression, and to re-affirm our solidarity with everyone still struggling today for the liberation sought by the 1989 movement.

Repression

Today, the Chinese "Communist" Party (CCP) continues to brutally repress the people under the rule of its dictatorial party-state.

Its economy is characterised by rampant exploitation of workers and peasants for the profits of big capitalists and state bureaucrats. Wealth inequality approaches that of the USA. The state-backed trade union almost never supports workers in disputes, instead serving the CCP and employers. Independent trade unions are illegal on the mainland. Avenues to express or organise dissent are heavily restricted.

In Hong Kong, the CCP has brutally suppressed the pro-democracy movement, and is strangling the partial democracy that previously existed in Hong Kong by barring candidates and seat-holders not loyal to Beijing.

Now, 47 campaigners face the possibility of life in prison under the aggressive new National Security Law, for the "crime" of organising a primary election to select pro-democracy candidates for the legislature.

Defendants include leading trade unionists Carol Ng and Winnie Yu. Independent union leader Lee Cheuk-Yan and veteran socialist Leung Kwok-Hung are among those already sentenced to lengthy prison terms over an unauthorised 2019 pro-democracy march.

Exploitation

China's colonialism in the region Beijing calls "Xinjiang" ("New Frontier") dates to the Qing Empire. Despite proclaiming itself "Marxist-Leninist", the CCP flouts socialist principle by continuing to deny Uyghurs self-determination. Now it has escalated to genocidal persecution.

Aiming for forced assimilation, the

state suppresses and punishes Uyghurs' and other Turkic majority-Muslim ethnic groups' cultural, political, linguistic and religious expression. It has interned over a million for re-education. Coercive labour schemes force them into factory lines and fields for the profit of both Chinese and Western companies. Policies targeting Uyghur women, including forced contraception and sterilisation, have caused the sharpest drop in births anywhere in the world since 1950.

Other oppressed nations and ethnic minorities have suffered within China's increasingly ethno-nationalist empire, such as Tibetans and Mongols.

Socialism

Historic US socialist Eugene Debs defined socialism as "an extension of the ideal of democracy into the economic field."

Under capitalism, much of social life is outside democratic control, along with most of the resources and industry on which we all rely. They are the private property of a small minority, who organise economic activity to maximise their profits, not to fulfil social needs. Our workplaces are petty dictatorships, and the unequal distribution of wealth and power curbs and warps even the limited political democracy that currently exists in countries like the UK.

The socialism for which Workers' Liberty stands does not seek to replace capitalist ownership with top-down state bureaucracy. Nor do we want to roll back parliamentary democracy. Instead, we fight for a radically deeper and broader working-class democracy. For democratic self-rule across social life, won by and for the currently-exploited majority who produce all the capitalists' and state bureaucrats' wealth. We stand for the same tradition that the Beijing Workers' Autonomous Federation and other independent workers' organisations of 1989 espoused, when they challenged dictatorial control in the factory as well as the state.

The CCP's reign since 1949 has had nothing to do with either political or economic democracy, and therefore nothing to do with socialism. Not in the Maoist period, when economic and social organisation were rigidly dictated from above by party-state bureaucrats. Nor since the reforms initiated under Deng, which simply opened a larger role for private capitalists as another kind of tyrant. Indeed, with the CCP's growing ranks of influential billionaire members, the two classes of tyrant increasingly overlap.

Hypocrites

Not all opponents of the CCP's rule can be our allies. Here in the UK, in the USA and elsewhere, hawkish politicians, media and far-right activists cynically use these issues to garner support for

nationalist, xenophobic conflict.

Their hypocrisy shows on the question of refugees. Surely anyone who denounces oppression abroad, should welcome victims who escape and seek sanctuary?

The Conservative government's new immigration policy includes a major attack on refugees fleeing political and religious persecution. The narrow BNO (British National Overseas) scheme offers safety only to Hongkongers, and among them, only a fortunate few. The implications are obvious for anyone else escaping CCP repression, or similar repression elsewhere. Where is the pushback from these right-wing politicians? Or from their campaigns, like the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China and Hong Kong Watch?

Racism is also apparent in the paranoid McCarthyism they stoke. They demonise ordinary Chinese workers, international students and academics as fifth columnists. This encourages the bigoted anti-East-Asian violence on our streets. And it opens the door to policies stifling civil liberties, press independence, academic freedom, and intellectual and cultural exchange.

Imperialists

The push for militarisation is especially perilous. The people of Hong Kong, Taiwan or the Uyghurs can gain nothing from being drawn into the epicentre of a potential confrontation between nuclear-armed superpowers.

More broadly, we cannot rely on the British and American states and their allies in this cause. Fundamentally, our states' foreign policies serve no ideal higher than the power and profit interests of our capitalist ruling classes. The "democratic" states consistently violate human rights around the world, and willingly prop up murderous tyrants like the Saudi monarchy when it suits them.

The enormous military and economic power projected worldwide by those states still significantly outstrips China. We oppose the Chinese ruling classes' imperial ambitions and projects. But scare-mongering about imminent CCP global takeover is unrealistic. It is particularly hypocritical coming from supporters of the actually-existing US-led international order, which does not promote democracy, justice or equality. It is designed to ensure a conducive business environment for the West's big capitalists, protecting their position at the top of the pile, at others' expense.

The hawks also hand-wring about the CCP "stealing" those capitalists' intellectual property and the "threat" to western technological advantage. But common challenges, from climate change to pandemics, demand radically open sharing and application of technological and scientific knowledge. Not further hoarding for profit.

Complicit

In fact, many of those western capitalists are part of the repression and exploitation in China.

They are happy to benefit from the anti-union regime suppressing labour costs. Uyghur forced labour stains the supply chains of companies like Nike, Zara, Apple and Amazon. British corporate giants HSBC, Swire and Standard Chartered endorsed the Hong Kong National Security Law, and Cathay Pacific sacked workers for pro-democracy activities. Our government has done essentially nothing to curb these corporations' actions.

Third camp

We stand for an alternative to reliance on western imperial states and Cold War hawks. We believe that the interests of workers and oppressed peoples around the world lie with each other, not with any of our exploiters or rulers. And it is down to us to emancipate ourselves, together.

Against Beijing and Washington (and Westminster, and Moscow, and Brussels...), we aim as socialists to build a "third camp" that makes links and solidarity across borders, to take on all our rulers and exploiters.

With others, we participate in the Uyghur Solidarity Campaign and Labour Movement Solidarity with Hong Kong. In these campaigns we work to build grassroots fighting solidarity, particularly in the trade union movement. We protest the Chinese state, and the British state and politicians which exclude refugees. We target the corporations complicit in repression with demonstrations and direct action. We seek common cause with others struggling against racist state violence, authoritarianism, national oppression, attacks on reproductive freedom and so on.

Crucially, we know that without workers, nothing moves. So we learn from dockers who have refused to work ships with weapons bound for the Saudi government, and Google workers who forced their employers to dump US military contracts and collaboration with Chinese state censors. Capitalism's global supply chains connect workers around the world and offer powerful levers for practical solidarity, if we can grasp them.

And we look with hope and solidarity to the green shoots of resistance in China's enormous working class. Despite the repression of unions, localised unofficial strikes and worker protests crop up constantly. We must redouble our efforts to reach out and make connections and solidarity with these wherever we can. The question is whether, and when, these limited eruptions will link up into a mass workers' movement. The prospect of such a movement is the hope for China's future, and the world's. □

Protest on 4-5 June

Friday 4 June: 8pm to 10pm, Chinese Embassy, Portland Place, London W1B 1JL. Saturday 5 June: noon. Protest against Swire corporation's complicity in Chinese state repression. Swire House, 59 Buckingham Gate, London SW1E 6AJ. bit.ly/21-6-4 □

To curb Covid: isolation pay, requisition Big Pharma, workers' control



By Martin Thomas

Under the noise, the same sort of short-sighted Covid policies are back again. It is down to the labour movement to force effective policies against a third surge of the virus.

Turning against his former patron Boris Johnson, Dominic Cummings has declared that Covid blunders in 2020 shows that "in any sensible rational government, it is completely crazy that [Cummings himself] should have been in such a senior position, in my personal opinion. I'm not smart..."

Too true. Infections have been increasing again in Britain since about 7 May. Hospitalisations are now increasing again, and also deaths and probably "long Covid" cases. They will increase less (maybe very much less) than they would have done without the vaccinations. But they will increase. And the Tories flounder and bluster again.

The Seychelles, with the highest vaccination rate in the world and almost no Covid until early 2021 (because it is remote islands), has had cases and deaths rising since it reopened for tourist business at the end of 2020 and then more widely in March 2021. Since the start of 2021, it has had Covid deaths, relative to its small population, equivalent to some 24,000 in the UK, and counting. Vaccines are effective, but not 100%.

Britain's new surge is down to the B.1.617.2 ("Delta") variant first identified in India. Without good quarantine measures, that variant will spread across Europe, and wider, as the B.1.1.7 variant ("Alpha", in the WHO's [new listing](#)) did in late 2020.

Reopening pubs and cafés indoors on 17 May was reckless. Easing restrictions further on 21 June would be doubly so.

It's not just about restrictions. Restrictions are necessary, but socially costly; and their effect (and cost) depends on social measures. Argentina had maybe the world's longest lockdown in 2020, and has a cumulative Covid death rate not much less than Brazil's.

• Millions of workers are still denied isolation pay. In March 2020, almost no care home workers had isolation pay. After much campaigning, still 20% of those workers lack isolation pay. Test Centre workers have been promised isolation pay only recently (thanks to efforts by the Safe and Equal campaign), and it remains to be seen how well the promises will be met.



• The Tories had run the NHS for years on a rule of maximum cost-cutting to allow "just getting by" in normal times, with run-down reserves of PPE and no spare capacity. Campaigners had warned for years that even a bad flu season would swamp hospitals. Now the government is refusing the NHS extra money to deal with backlogs, let alone to expand and build in leeway. It is saying NHS workers should get only 1% pay rise.

• Social care, too, was run on a rule of cost-cutting, made worse by almost complete privatisation and high casualisation, low pay, for the workforce. The government has not even produced its promised "plan" for social care, let alone taken social care into the public sector and given its staff NHS-level pay and conditions, as it should do.

• The International Monetary Fund, of all institutions, has published a [plan](#) to end the pandemic within a year if covid precautions are sustained for that year and vaccination is accelerated. For now, vaccine nationalism and Big Pharma profit-drives rule. The world vaccination rate has inched up, to 0.38 doses per 100 people per day in the last fortnight, when it was 0.23 per 100 in April, but it is still far too low. The IMF plan relies on nudging governments and Big Pharma. *Solidarity* calls for the requisitioning of Big Pharma and an emergency drive to expand vaccine production and vaccine programs.

• Unless border quarantine rules are

uniform and well-resourced, they will always respond "too late", as Britain's did with "Delta". The looser borders in Europe and South America, a boon in usual times, obviously make efficient quarantining more difficult than for islands like New Zealand. Yet public provision of quarantine accommodation can be radically improved. Only now, sixteen months on, is the British government thinking about quarantine accommodation for people who would otherwise be "self-isolating" in crowded housing.

• [Ventilation](#) which frequently replaces indoors air by outdoors air will reduce infection risks. School workers' unions in some US cities have won strict ventilation checks in schools. Very little has been done about ventilation in schools and workplaces in Britain. We need workers' control of workplace safety, with risk assessments revised to fit new variants. The official Health and Safety Executive has been run down by the Tories over the years; did zero (yes, [zero](#)) workplace inspections in the first surge of Covid; and still classifies Covid as not a "serious" health risk in workplaces.

Billions

The government has spent many billions on business loans and handouts, furlough money, and pay-outs to Test and Trace and PPE contractors. Much has had minimal effect on infections: it puts cash into the pockets of the Tories' cronies, shows the government as "doing something", and does that in a way that minimises the risk of costly better worker standards for the future, like improved sick pay.

Gradual lockdown-easing (notably including school reopening) was relatively successful in Europe in early summer 2020, and in Britain until 17 May. Only in July-August, when schools closed again and bars, cafés, and tour-

ist industries were reopened, did a new rise start. The new rise generated the "Alpha" variant, and that in turn made the rise explosive. "Delta" threatens to do the same again.

The record so far suggests that relatively soft (and so long-term sustainable) covid restrictions, like Europe in early summer 2020 or Britain before 17 May this year, may keep infections down until vaccine coverage is extended worldwide – at least if coupled with good social infrastructure and social measures.

Of all the world's countries with permeable, high-traffic natural borders (not remote islands or the like), relatively high numbers of elderly people, and good health and death statistics, Norway, Finland, and Denmark stand out for the lowest excess deaths in the pandemic so far. (Norway and Denmark have actually had [fewer deaths](#) than their long-term norms). The most likely reason is not special virtues of their current governments. Norway's is conservative, Denmark's and Finland's are right-wing social democratic. All three countries have been at the looser end of the spectrum of European lockdown measures. Rather, longer-term better social infrastructure (health, housing, sick pay, elderly care, etc.) resulting from longer-term greater strength of labour movements.

As a new Covid surge develops, a renewed drive from the left to impose better social measures becomes urgent. Against the pandemic, we all need to be able to help each other, and for that we need social solidarity in the form of rights, guarantees, and workers' control! □

Push back on evictions!

Around 400,000 households have been served an eviction notice or have been told they may be evicted. And the ban on evictions during the pandemic, dating from March 2020, ended on 31 May.

Unemployment is still up because of pandemic job losses, and the Bank of England forecasts a further rise in autumn when the Tories plan to scrap furlough.

The [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) estimates that a further 450,000 households are in arrears with rent.

The "community union" [Acorn](#) and the Labour left group Momentum aim to mobilise people to stop these evictions. *Solidarity* supports their campaign. □



Upcoming events

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

Wednesday 26 May, 6.30pm: Is Labour finished?

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

Sunday 20 June, 12.00-1.30pm: Socialist Feminist Reading Group – *Transgender Marxism* by Jules J. Gleeson and Elle O'Rourke

Friday 9 July, 6-8pm: Battersea vs the British Empire walking tour

Plus

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

Mondays, 6-7pm: AWL Students' discussions

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

Lukashenko, Orban, and “enemies’ enemies”



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

“Whataboutery” is an old trick favoured by Stalinists whenever difficult questions about human rights under “socialist” (or, these days, “anti-imperialist”) regimes are raised.

So, in the old days of the Stalinist empire, they would respond “what about racism in the US?” to questions about the lack of democratic rights in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

The other old trick of that sort is “my enemy’s enemy is my friend”. Some of the most blatant cases you’ll come across involve the *Morning Star* and its efforts to deny or justify the Chinese state’s treatment of the Uyghurs.

The editorial (25 May) on the Lukashenko regime’s hijacking of a civilian aircraft and seizure of Belarusian journalist Roman Protasevich and his girlfriend, surely represents a new low.

The editorial is headed “Western histrionics over Belarus are ridiculous and hypocritical”. Online (but not in the print edition), the piece is illustrated by a photo of Julian Assange, although he is not mentioned in the text.

Let me offer some edited highlights:

- “[T]here must be many millions of viewers, readers and listeners across the world who are drawing a stark contrast between the outpouring of condemnation for Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko and the failure of those same politicians, editors and military figures to condemn Israel’s merciless bombing of Gaza.”

- “It should also be noted that a sovereign state has every right under the UN International Civil Aviation Organisation’s Chicago Convention to require an overflying aircraft to land should there be a suspicion of its use for illicit activity. Military interception is permissible so as long as lives are not endangered.”

- “More clear-cut was the diversion of a jet flying Bolivian president Evo Morales home from Russia in July 2013. Rumoured to be carrying US whistleblower Edward Snowden to asylum in Bolivia, the plane was denied airspace over Italy, France, Spain and Portugal and forced to land in Vienna for fuel, where it was searched by the Austrian authorities.”

- “For that matter, Belarus has not made national heroes out of war criminals and collaborators who helped the Nazis exterminate almost a million of



Lukashenko (left) meets Vladimir Putin (right), 2021

the country’s Jews in the Holocaust – unlike the historical revisionism rampant in our ‘free world’ allies, Ukraine and Nato members Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.”

For now, let’s just accept that everything the *Morning Star* claims about the diversion of Evo Morales’ plane in 2013 and about “historical revisionism” regarding Nazism in Ukraine and elsewhere, is true. It isn’t, by the way. But how would that, or the undoubted war crimes of Israel, justify the paper’s de facto “Hands Off Lukashenko” stance?

The paper’s “my enemy’s enemy is my friend” approach was sorely tested

a few days later (29-30 May) in an editorial denouncing the visit of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban to Britain. The editorial correctly points to Orban’s racism and antisemitism, his “anti-immigrant hysteria” and “calculated authoritarianism”, while trying to make out that his regime is a fairly mainstream member of the EU and skirting around the fact that Hungary under Orban has a record of using its veto in the EU to water down or even kill measures or statements detrimental to authoritarian regimes with which it enjoys close economic ties, such as Russia, Belarus and... the *Morning Star*’s beloved “People’s Republic” of China. □

Republicans decry “woke capital”



Letter

There is an interesting subplot to the US struggle over voting rights covered in *Solidarity* 590 and 593.

Many corporations have come out against restrictions on voting rights – and been attacked by Republican leaders for getting involved in politics!

In March the voting rights debate ramped up when the important swing state of Georgia passed new restrictions. Activists pressured Georgia-based corporations that made supportive noises during the Black Lives Matter protests to speak out – and a number did, including Coca-Cola, Delta Airlines and Home Depot.

Then in April hundreds of companies and executives including Amazon, BlackRock, Google, General Motors, Starbucks and Warren Buffet signed a statement against restrictions on the right to vote.

Republican leaders have denounced “woke capital”. Trump called for a boycott of companies opposing re-

strictions. Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell told reporters: “Parts of the private sector keep dabbling in behaving like a woke parallel government. Corporations will invite serious consequences if they become a vehicle for far-left mobs to hijack our country from outside the constitutional order.”

The hypocrisy and incoherence of this doesn’t really need elaborating here. However, the row does raise issues for the left and labour movement.

Whatever the tactical detail, socialists should surely argue against reliance on stances by corporations and business people to shift things in politics.

What the “woke” corporations have done to oppose the assault on voting rights is actually minimal.

But in any case, the influence of corporations in politics is a fundamentally anti-democratic force – as is their “influence” in society and the economy. For



their own reasons, Amazon and others favour the right to vote freely in elections (at the moment). They oppose workers’ right to vote freely for unionisation, as Amazon’s campaign of intimidation in Bessemer showed. As Jamelle Bouie put it in the *New York Times*: “To the extent that ‘woke capital’ even exists, it involves real questions of political economy. Simply put, there are few countervailing forces in American life to corporate speech, corporate money and corporate political action... the solution is to reanimate those countervailing forces, which is to say, to put life back into organized labor.” □

Alexander Herman, London

Antisemitism on the left



Letter

I find it interesting that Colin Foster in his piece about the rise of antisemitism (*Solidarity* 594) looks just at the aspect of far right antisemitism, concluding: “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.” Whilst I agree it is important to recognise this aspect and talk about it, as the rise and threat of the far right is very real, it’s not looking at the full picture.

Historically it is the far right who are antisemitic and they’ve expressed this antisemitism via violent means, but in modern times it’s found very much so on the left and I would argue more so.

As reported by *The Jewish News* on Friday 28 May: “The CST confirmed this morning there has been 325 incidents of antisemitism since the start of the recent conflict. This

surpasses the 317 recorded in July 2014 at the height of Operation Cast Lead, the last war between Israel and Hamas.” And later in the article a spokesperson for CST says: “Every time Israel is at war antisemitism hits record levels in the UK”.

The recent surge of antisemitism as reported by CST and others isn’t down to the far right, and the same with recent antisemitic attacks across Europe and America. It’s aspects of the left uniting itself with Islamism, which I guess itself could be argued to be far right.

It’s important not to lump in all antisemitism as far right, as it’s failing to recognise and deal with the problems on the left. □

Mo Starke Hannon, London

• *Editor’s note:* The *Solidarity* 594 article was on a page with an article about antisemitism on Gaza protests. Whether antisemitism is “more” around the left than the right is another matter, but that there is a significant amount is bad enough.

Dark secret in the Channel Islands



Eric Lee

By Eric Lee

The *Sunday Times* (30 May) featured a front page story with this headline: "Exposed: Horrors of Channel Islands concentration camps". The article reported that official documents describing the German treatment of prisoners on Alderney – where thousands died – would be published for the first time.

That may well be the case, but the story of the German occupation of the Channel Islands in general, and Alderney in particular, is already well known. Alderney, one of the smaller islands, has been described as the biggest "crime scene" in British history. As the *Times* reported, "Britain later refused to bring any war crimes prosecutions and appears to have failed to help countries seeking to do so".

At the centre of the story is Eric Pickles, Tory grandee and "United Kingdom Special Envoy for post-Holocaust issues". Pickles said that people deserve to know why Britain failed to prosecute a single German in relation to war crimes committed in Alderney. He added: "What happened does not reflect well on the British government at the time, and we are eager to ensure the full facts are understood by the nation".

But what happened on Alderney was not the only war crime carried out by

the Nazi occupiers of those islands. On all the islands, civilians were deported by the Germans to the continent to engage in forced labour, or sent to internment camps. In Guernsey, the handful of Jews living there were handed over to the Nazis by local authorities and taken to death camps. The collaboration between local officials and the Nazis is well documented. One of the little museums on Guernsey even displays the letter sent by local leaders to the Germans listing the names and addresses of the island's few Jews.

No punishment

The really dark secret about German war crimes in the Channel Islands, which Eric Pickles does not mention, is not only that no Germans were ever punished for them. It is this: local leaders quickly reached an accommodation with the Nazi occupiers. There was no organised resistance to speak of, and certainly no acts of violence committed against the Germans. The only Germans who died in the Channel Islands were killed by British commandos, not by local partisans.

After the war, the British government was keen to be seen to punish traitors who had openly taken the side of the Germans. Most famously, William Joyce, an Irish-born Nazi who did radio broadcasts as "Lord Haw Haw", was arrested, tried and convicted of treason in a British court. He was hanged in Wandsworth prison in early 1946.

But this was not to be the case in the Channel Islands. For example, the

Dame of Sark, Mrs Sybil Hathaway, was investigated after the war by the Military Investigation Branch, which concluded that she "has also been guilty of friendly and ingratiating behaviour towards the Germans ... [she] has preserved her property and privileges intact throughout the occupation; her gardens have not even been modified by wartime agriculture".

Hathaway was a fluent German speaker, encouraged the teaching of German to students in the local school during the occupation, and seemed to get along with the occupiers. The investigator concluded that "It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that had Great Britain been defeated people such as Mrs Hathaway and the Bailiff of Guernsey would have been qualified for the title of Quisling".

Instead of being arrested at the end of the war, Hathaway was rewarded with a royal visit, as were the other island leaders.

Our national mythology features a heroic island nation, united in its determination to stand up to Hitler, with the promise that a German invasion would be met with determined resistance – fighting them on the beaches and on the hills and in the streets, and never surrendering. Unlike the less courageous Europeans on the continent, there would be no collaborators here.

The real history of the German occupation of the Channel Islands, however, tells a different story. □

Labour deadlines 11 June and 9 July



Activist Agenda

The Labour Campaign for Free Movement had its banner leading the Tooting anti-raids demo and protest on 30 May, and will support work to build an ongoing anti-raids network in South London.

Neurodivergent Labour has been giving presentations at Labour Party meetings, which have been very well-received and led to lively discussions and affiliations. If you would like to invite an ND Labour speaker to your CLP, DLP or branch meeting, please contact info@ndlabour.co.uk.

The deadline by which Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) must propose rule changes for Labour Party conference is 11 June, if they decide to go for a rule change rather than a motion (motions deadline: 13 September). 11 June is also the deadline for nominations for National Constitutional Committee and Conference Arrangements Committee. The deadline for CLPs to elect delegates will be 9 July.

• Links and info for these and other campaigns, and suggested words for labour movement motions on many issues, at workersliberty.org/activistagenda

The Tarun Tejpal case: rape victim on trial



**Women's
Fightback**

By Katy Dollar

In India, a judge has thrown out charges against journalist and publisher Tarun Tejpal, accused of raping a female colleague. The allegations attracted a lot of attention as it involved a major media figure. His magazine was one of the leaders in Indian investigative journalism, his publishing house India Ink represented major figures, and he was often seen with friends Arundhati Roy and VS Naipaul.

Not content with acquitting the accused, the judge went on to question the character of the alleged victim. The 527-page judgment reads like a checklist of sexist tropes on rape victims.

Judge Kshama Joshi wrote that in photographs taken after the alleged assault, the young woman was "smiling and looked happy, normal, in [a] good mood".

"She did not look disturbed, reserved, terrified or traumatised in any way even though this was immediately after she claims to have been sexually assaulted," the judge wrote.

"It's unbelievable that she forcefully struggled but sustained no injuries,"

She questioned why the woman had told three male colleagues about the alleged assault and not her female roommate, why the woman didn't cry in the presence of her friends, and why she didn't "demonstrate any kind of normative behaviour".

Lawyer Payal Chawla said the judgement was "not just character assassination, it's a massacre of her character".

"The woman partying in a bar and dancing with a drink in her hand seemed to have irked the judge. It seems like the young woman's morality was on trial, and not whether there had been a rape," the lawyer said.

The judgment begins by questioning the journalist's previous work on rape. The judge's bias suggests a "capable, intelligent, independent person" conversant with the amended law and "rape cases after the Nirbhaya case" could not be a rape victim. The rape complaint was likely not true because the victim wrote about the rape law, interviewed rape survivors, won a book grant and knew feminist lawyers. It was unsafe to rely on her testimony, since she is well-educated, a good writer, a journalist, proficient in English and above all understands rape law. This would all be true

for the accused too, but such knowledge was not seen to prove his dishonesty.

Mr Tejpal's acquittal surprised many. His description of events had shifted somewhat, from initially saying their encounters were consensual, to blaming them on "a lapse of judgement" and "a misreading of the situation" which had "led to an unfortunate incident", and then retracting an earlier statement in which he'd said he had "attempted a sexual liaison with [the alleged victim] despite [her] clear reluctance"

– saying he had been forced to issue it in the first place.

In court papers, he described the incidents in the lift as "drunken banter".

The 2013 criminal law amendment was supposed to change this prevent such "trying" of rape victims through their sexual past. The Goa government, which has appealed the decision, stated that the acquittal order was "erroneous in law" and "unsustainable". The High Court judge agreed and said he would hear the case on 2 June. □

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 for the current stock and prices, and to order.



Defending the “Anti-Monopoly Alliance”



Debate

By Andrew Northall

I appreciate Luke Hardy's response (*Solidarity* 591) in both tone and content to my letter (*Solidarity* 589) re the Communist Party of Britain (CPB), the Party's programme *Britain's Road to Socialism*, and the concept of the broad, democratic, anti-monopoly alliance.

Unfortunately, Luke in his polemic makes a number of important errors in characterising the current positions of the CPB. The first point is that the CP has always had a wide range of views within it and its agreed position has evolved and developed over time. Quoting from various “tendencies” and individuals over the past 50 years or so can be interesting and illuminating but not always helpful in understanding agreed CP positions in the here and now.

The central misunderstanding or misrepresentation concerns whether the alliance we seek is primarily a cross-class alliance or about transforming the working class into a “class for itself”, a force for fundamental social change and socialism. My view and the position of the CPB is clearly the latter.

This is closely linked to the definition of the working class itself. Is it narrowly defined as being industrial, manual, blue-collar, close to the point of production, close to the actual production of surplus value? Or broadly, as anyone who is dependent on a wage, salary, benefit or pension to survive? And recognising that large sections of the working people whilst not directly involved in producing surplus value are nonetheless part of and ensure the running of the whole capitalist economic and social system and the maintenance and reproduction of labour.

Clearly and logically, the narrow definition of the working class tends towards requiring a cross-class alliance, although always with the working class playing a leading role (echoes of Lenin's *Two Tactics*, 1905), whereas the broad definition, which in 21st century Britain means the majority of the population, tends towards the focus of the alliance being transformative of the working class itself, although recognis-

ing that the organised working class and labour movement needs to exercise a leading role within it.

It is no secret that the definition of the working class and the strategic consequences which flow from that was one of the central issues of debate and division within the old Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1970s and 80s. That debate has largely been resolved within the current CPB and the BRS in favour of the broad definition. The central role of the broad, democratic, anti-monopoly alliance is therefore primarily to transform the whole of the working class politically and organisationally into a force for socialism, “the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority” (*Communist Manifesto*, 1848). There is no “cross class” alliance with sections of the bourgeoisie, there is no diluting of the class demands of the working class.

Luke repeats the assertion which I countered in my letter in *Solidarity* 586 that “anti monopoly” means a cross class alliance and somehow in favour of a de-monopolised capitalism. No, that would be nonsensical. The CPB is hardly in favour of reverting back to early 19th century free market capitalism. The CPB describes capitalism in Britain as it evolved in the late part of the 19th century as monopoly capitalism and later in the 20th century as state monopoly capitalism, indicating the high degree to which the capitalist state has become enmeshed with large powerful finance and industrial monopoly capital. State monopoly capitalism is very different from the free market capitalism of the early 19th century but it remains capitalism nonetheless. When the CPB talks of being anti monopoly capitalism it is simply referring to capitalism as it is in the here and now, being specific about the nature of that capitalism.

What the CPB does say is that while, obviously, we continue to make the basic case against capitalism and for socialism (the title of the recent election manifesto was *Capitalism is the Problem, Socialism is the Solution*, pretty clear one would think), the broad mass of working people are not yet persuaded by basic socialist ideas. The Party puts forward a comprehensive range of economic, social, political and democratic demands which pro-

ceed from what working people actually need and deserve in the here and now, not what capitalism or its media says is “realistic”, “credible” or “affordable”. In many cases they proceed from demands made by workers in struggle and by progressive movements for democracy, equality and justice and point to the need to challenge the capitalist system itself to make real progress.

To deliver and fund such a programme a progressive or left government would have to make deep inroads into the wealth and power of monopoly capital, including making major democratic reforms and changes to the state apparatus. “Monopoly capital” not because we think it is the monopoly phase of capitalism which is the problem, but because that is the nature of capitalism itself today and where the true wealth and power resides.

Now such as the Socialist Party of Great Britain would claim such a programme is “reformist”, can only be about reforming capitalism and that the only useful thing socialists can do is stand on the sidelines and preach socialism and nothing but. That is not the approach of the CPB. I do not think of the AWL either. “The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement”

(*Communist Manifesto*, 1848). Challenging the capitalist system on the basis of what working people actually need and attempting to implement a comprehensive reform programme by making deep inroads into the wealth and power of capital is part of the revolutionary process through which we seek to transform people's understanding of the need to go much further, to end capitalism and establish socialism. Socialism will not instantly solve all our problems or resolve all current contradictions and oppressions, but will provide a reasonable and rational framework for doing so.

It is not the whole of the revolutionary process by any means. We may never achieve such a government under capitalism but while there are parliamentary elections and a mass electoral party of the working class, we should make maximum use of these opportunities and place clear demands and expectations on such a potential government. Socialists and communists will continue to make the basic case against capitalism for socialism day in day out and will continuously seek to build the mass, class and democratic structures and organisations of the working class to enable it to fulfil its independent and leading political and organisational role in society. Ultimately to overthrow capitalism and establish socialism. □

• For the whole debate see bit.ly/ama-d

Unite deadline is 7 June

By Dale Street

Two of the four candidates seeking election as the next General Secretary of Unite the Union have already won enough branch nominations (175) to get on the ballot paper. Branches can add nominations until 7 June. Voting will be between 5 July and 23 August.

Sharon Graham, head of the union's Organising Department, announced her 175th nomination on 25 May. On 29 May Howard Beckett, head of the union's Legal Department, announced that he had 231 nominations. Assistant General Secretary Steve Turner, backed by the union's United Left (UL), had just 120 nominations (as of a tweet on 26 May), while the hard-right candidate Gerard Coyne is rumoured to have around fifty.

The fact that Turner is struggling even to get on the ballot paper highlights the decline of the UL. In the 2017 General Secretary election the UL secured over a thousand nominations for McCluskey. The UL backed the rule-change which increased the number of branch nominations needed to get on the ballot paper from 50 to over 150. The change was designed to exclude rank-and-file

candidates. But now its own candidate may possibly fall victim to it...

A hundred of Beckett's nominations have come from Scottish branches. The union's Scottish bureaucracy and its fake “Progressive United Left Scotland” (PULS) have clearly delivered for him. Graham's employees in the Scottish Organising Department must now be regretting the effort they put into building (PULS) over the past four years in order to undermine genuine rank-and-file activists.

With Graham and Beckett competing for the let's-not-bother-with-the-Labour-Party-vote – both have promised “no more blank cheques” for Labour – even Coyne has been able to say something relatively sensible: “Unite members do better with Labour in government. You won't see me playing student politics and threatening to pull our funding from the Labour Party.”

That is not all there is to it in the choice Unite members will have to make after 5 July; but on this front Unite members are left with a choice between anti-politics (Graham/Beckett), humdrum politics (Turner) and right-wing politics (Coyne). □

• More: bit.ly/unite-gs

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Redesigning social care



Interview

By Ali Treacher

Second part of an interview with Ali Treacher, secretary of the Care and Support Workers Organise! Network (CaSWO!)

How do you assess what's been won in Salford?

It seems pretty substantial. It hasn't stopped with their victory 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.

During the elections, I think it was 56 out of 60-odd Labour council candidates signed Salford Unison's pledges on social care. So what Salford has done is not enough, but it's a beacon.

Unison nationally has a wider care charter, but it's much more woolly and toothless than what Salford Unison has won.

At the same time it does seem that Salford council isn't willing to fight cuts or even make a noise about it?

I don't know. Maybe it's not their priority; their priority is to work as creatively as they can do to deliver for people in that city, to do what it's in their power to do, and build consensus around left-wing policies. I'm not a housing activist but as I understand it they've also built more council housing.

How have Brexit and anti-migrant measures impacted care workers and the sector?

Priti Patel's points-based immigration system is going to lock many migrants out of working in social care because of the disgustingly low rates of pay. So we've got a sector with gaping holes and loads of vacancies, and this is going to make it worse.

Could you say something about the issues in home care?

In CaSWO! we've got some personal assistants who are directly employed by disabled people. There's a whole set of issues there. Who do they get PPE from? Is it the responsibility of the people receiving support, who we know don't get enough money through direct payments? It was a real post-code lottery on whether people got any support at all. There was also a big issue with vaccinations. If you work in an organisation, we got it quite early on, but for individually-employed workers, who has records and who makes

sure they get vaccinated? Even though they may be going into multiple different houses. You've got the general issues of individuals having to act as employers, particularly if they have limited capacity for health reasons, and then you bring in all the safety issues.

The extent of those problems are only coming to light now, with the emergence of facts about how many people have died in connection with homecare. A lot of the previous discourse was just about care homes.

Are there tensions between reinstating social care as a collective public service and service-users having independence and control?

I'm not a fan of monolithic public ownership, or care homes as a system. We need a more radical rethinking. Are we advocating for these kind of institutions, in which the virus spread like wildfire? And when you're 70 do you want to live with dozens or hundreds of other people you don't know, all sitting in a big room? Is that the best we can imagine for care? Some people would like that communal living, but does it have to be on a factory scale? In big institutions like that, that's where safeguarding concerns come in.

With more resources you could have collective living but on a much smaller scale, rather than what are effectively farms. At the same time, lots of people want to stay with their families, but again this is often isn't possible because the resources aren't there.

I don't think the right to independent living, choice and control and person-centred care should be counterposed to public ownership. Of course the existing system of direct payments as it is has developed is neoliberal. It has individualised it. It means a vast system of bogus self-employment, a complete lack of workers' rights and a



CARE & SUPPORT WORKERS ORGANISE!

very problematic relationship between workers and those employing them, where there's a constant threat you'll be sacked whenever there are bumps in the road or challenges.

But surely we can have a system of choice and control where the workforce is still grouped collectively, delivering services collectively and able to organise and have decent terms and conditions. You could have centres for independent living where there's a workforce around that. You could have people receiving payments and then paying into collective systems, rather than being an employer and having to manage everything.

Isn't it largely the case that the public debate in the labour movement, in Labour and most unions, has not even reached the level of advocating public ownership, in any form?

Part of the problem is that the mainstream of the labour movement is generally arguing for the "integration" of health and social care. This is yet another route for private providers to encroach into the NHS from below. It sets in stone the situation of private or third-sector organisations picking up contracts and operating under the guise of the NHS, with NHS reduced to a label. You'll get even more of a two-tier workforce, with people doing the same jobs but on very different terms and conditions. There's other problems too, around the medicalisation of social care, which need to be considered too.

Unison aren't even arguing that. They're supporting the Future Social Care Coalition, which seems to just be

arguing for more money for the private providers. In this crisis situation, after so many cuts, we do need to push for more money, as an emergency measure; but that should be on the basis of also advocating public ownership and transforming the whole system.

There's now a few initiatives around public ownership, notably Reclaim Social Care and NCSIL [campaign for a National Care, Support and Independent Living Service]. In addition to UVW taking a strong stance [for public ownership], I think GMB has also taken a pro-public ownership position, and there are proposals coming forward in Unite too.

What can others in the labour movement do to support the struggle?

We should recognise this is an issue for everyone, not just care workers. It needs pushing forward. The debate, or lack of real debate, has been going on for far too long, with both main parties advocating very little. There's debate around various aspects of funding, but that's not where the real debate is. Neoliberalism is destroying the care sector, far more insidiously than just in terms of underfunding. Funding is important, but what care looks like, what support looks like, are more fundamental.

What are we even talking about? Social care is a relatively new phrase, from the Blairite era, and it's not often considered what it means.

The debate gets very easily narrowed down to old people, who are presumably respectable and deserving, but what about drug and alcohol services? Nobody's talking about those services being smashed. The current debate splits the working class into deserving and undeserving.

We need to listen to our disabled comrades. If I have to go to a meeting and hear another union bureaucrat describe disabled people as "vulnerable", I might scream. It's rude and insulting. They're not inherently vulnerable, it's our society which marginalises and makes them vulnerable.

This should be a really important struggle for socialists. This is a debate about the kind of world we want to live in – about pushing capitalism back, about social provision versus profit, but also the social relations capitalism imposes on us and how we can challenge them, redesigning things on the basis of cooperation and power-sharing. □

- Full interview: bit.ly/ali-tre
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Racist war in the USA, 1

By Sacha Ismail

First of a series of articles on the Tulsa Massacre of June 1921, and events which led up to it.

In June 2020, at the height of the Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Donald Trump announced an election rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma: his first real-world public campaign event since the outbreak of the pandemic, and while infections were still running very high.

Despite the Trump campaign's embarrassing failure to come anywhere near filling the venue, the rally did result in a spike, with new cases in Oklahoma more than tripling in the month afterwards.

Trump's choice of Tulsa had deep and extremely sinister historical significance.

The US President scheduled his event – which he would use to attack the BLM protests and defend monuments honouring leaders of the Civil War Confederacy – to clash with events for “Juneteenth”, the 19 June holiday celebrating the emancipation of enslaved African Americans at the end of the war in 1865. (A week before the rally he moved it back one day). He chose Tulsa because of a more recent episode in the history of American racism.

A hundred years ago – in the days from 31 May 1921 – the city was the site of a bloody orgy of murder and destruction against its black population, backed up by the power of state and local government.

At the height of the pogrom the main centre of Tulsa's black population was subject to state-organised aerial bombardment. Probably between 200 and 300 people were killed and approaching 1,000 injured. 10,000 were made homeless, many for a long time. And one of the richest black communities in the US, famous around the country, was smashed, with effects still felt today. This horrific story was first openly celebrated by the white racists who dominated Oklahoma, and then suppressed for half a century.

Tulsa was one of a series of mass killings of black people in the US which erupted at the end of First World War. The counter-revolution against the revolutionary black liberation struggle which took place during and after the Civil War began in the 1860s, triumphed in the late 1870s and deepened in the 1890s.

As Tulsa shows, in many ways it did not reach its worst until the 1920s. Yet even in those depths there was important resistance.

Black Oklahoma

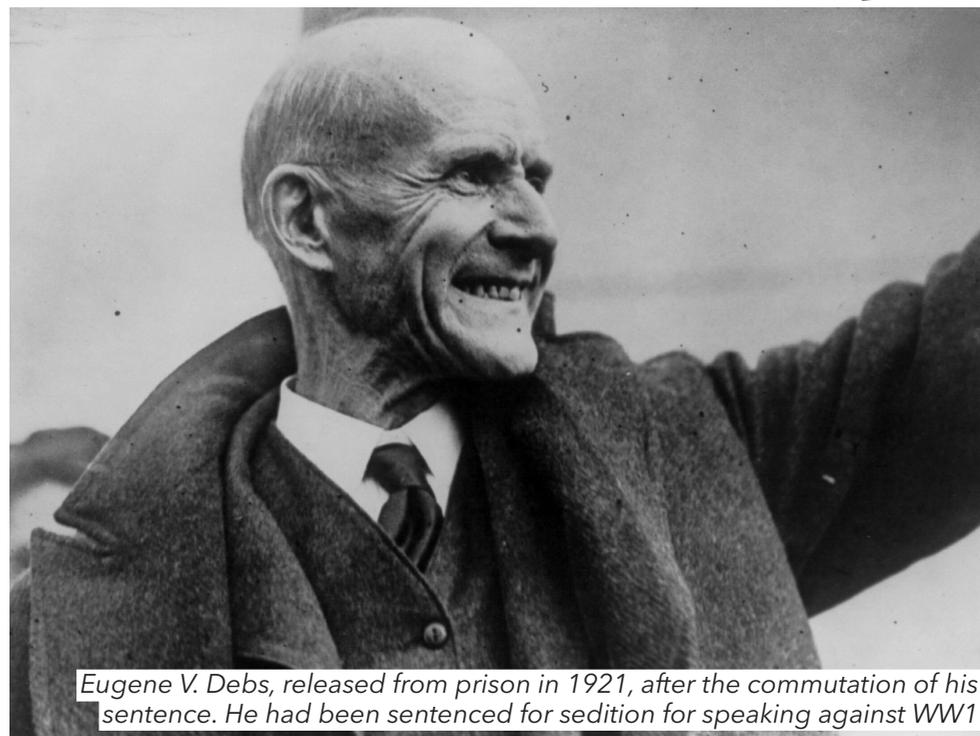
Oklahoma did not become a state until 1907 (the 46th of 50 to formally join the US). Before that it was designated as “Indian Territory”, a place for Native Americans driven from their ancestral lands. During the Civil War the territory was dominated by the Confederacy, but in the area of Tulsa there was a struggle pitting white and Native American slave-owners against African Americans and Native Americans who supported the Union.

In the 1870s, as railways and capitalist development came to Oklahoma, resistance by African Americans and Native Americans to the railroad companies' incursions on their lands was violently suppressed.

Attempts to create a Native-dominated state were seen off; western Oklahoma was separated from the Indian Territory and opened to white settlers from 1888; and then attempts to create a separate state of Sequoyah in the East were also blocked. The “compromise” was the 1907 admission of the whole of Oklahoma as a single white-dominated state.

In addition to the Indian Territory slaves liberated in 1866 (later than in the US and its other territories), tens of thousands of African Americans settled in Oklahoma between the Civil War and statehood, by 1907 accounting for 10% of the population of 1.5 million. They established 27 all-black towns, with thousands of farms, businesses, schools, churches, newspapers and other institutions.

There was campaigning among black people in the US South to encourage migration to Oklahoma, presenting it as a “promised land” of opportunity for blacks; and indeed African Americans in the territory did mostly live a richer and freer life than their counterparts in the US proper, South or North.



Eugene V. Debs, released from prison in 1921, after the commutation of his sentence. He had been sentenced for sedition for speaking against WW1

But as the white population grew and statehood approached, there was a drive to implement “Jim Crow” segregation as elsewhere in the South. A key organiser in this effort was William Murray, the first speaker of the state's House of Representatives in 1907-9. In the 1930s Murray would become an admirer of Hitler and, as Oklahoma's governor, establish a record for the number of times he used the National Guard (47) and declared martial law (30) against social unrest.

Although the white Oklahoma state-builders were pushed by the US government to retreat from adopting an openly segregationist constitution, they quickly found ways to disenfranchise and legally discriminate against African Americans.

Legal changes were backed up by racist terror, both state-implemented and unofficial but state-backed. By 1911 more blacks were hanged in the state than whites, even though the latter made up over 80% of the population. Lynchings became common. Black people were driven out of some areas of the state; there were attempts to prevent further black immigration.

Rise and repression of the left in Oklahoma

In the same period Oklahoma had a fast growing, astonishingly strong left and labour movement, which generally crossed racial lines and resisted racism. Unsurprisingly, this left also suffered brutal repression, an essential part of the context for what was happening by the

1920s.

In the last decades of the 19th century the territory became a stronghold of the left-wing Populist movement and, from the turn of the century, of the Socialist Party. In 1915 there were more Socialist Party members in the state than in New York, which had seven times Oklahoma's population; the state party had 800 branches. It also had 175 elected officials. In the 1912 presidential election Socialist candidate Eugene Debs received 6% of the vote nationally, but 16.5% in Oklahoma, the highest of any state. In the 1914 election for state governor the party won 21%.

As elsewhere – but not everywhere – the Socialist Party in Oklahoma involved African Americans and actively fought against racism. Historian Jim Bissett argues that the SP was “the most hospitable political institution for black Oklahomans in the early twentieth century”. It led mass opposition to the 1910 constitutional amendment by which the new state effectively disenfranchised large numbers of black voters. As a result it won over many prominent black activists.

Around the start of the First World War rural Oklahoma simmered with hostilities between the “Working Class Union” (WCU), a mass, radical, multi-racial tenant farmers' organisation inspired by the Industrial Workers of the World but frustrated by the IWW's refusal to organise among farmers, and conservative and racist forces.

American's entry to the war in 1917 was a turning point.

In August 1917 black, white and Native American WCU activists attempted an armed uprising against the introduction of conscription as the US entered the war (the “Green Corn Rebellion”). Quickly fizzling out, it became an excuse for massive repression against the



The Tulsa district of Greenwood after it was burned and bombed out in the 1921 massacre. Before the massacre Greenwood was so prosperous it was known as the “Black Wall Street”.

921: the Tulsa Massacre

whole of the state's left, including the IWW and the Socialist Party. Between the 1916 and 1920 presidential elections, the SP's national vote share increased slightly, but in Oklahoma it fell by two thirds.

These developments found expression in the new city of Tulsa, whose population grew by over 5,000% between 1900 and 1920 as it became the centre of an oil boom.

The new millionaire barons of the oil industry embraced established right-wing traditions, relying on violent white supremacist groups to drive union organisers out of Tulsa, or murder them. The same year as the Green Corn Rebellion, eleven IWW organisers in the city were tarred and feathered, with the anti-union drive clearly linked to patriotic pro-war agitation.

1919: "Red summer", red scare

The wider political and social climate in the US as the war ended was violently racist and counter-revolutionary. In 1919 the UK experienced an organised wave of racist assaults against BME and migrant workers, mainly seafarers, in seaport cities. It was driven partly by activists and leaders of the main seamen's union, and we should learn more today about this shameful part of our history.

But it pales in comparison to the US's "Red Summer" the same year, which saw hundreds of killings of black people by white "rioters", in many parts of the country, North and South, with thousands injured and made homeless. In addition to more "ordinary" killings, at least 43 were lynched, with eight burned at the stake.

The context was both rising white racism and a growing black self-assertion which enraged the racists. In 1915 the



Black First World War veterans were central to resisting the racist violence which erupted after the war.

Ku Klux Klan was refounded, an explicit successor of the white supremacist terrorist organisation which helped overthrow multi-racial governments in the South in the decade after the Civil War. Klan membership soared. By its peak in the mid-20s there would be four million members, 15% of the "eligible" total of White Protestant Americans (the organisation hated Jews, Catholics and migrants from parts of Europe as well as non-white people).

Activists in Tulsa's already flourishing white supremacist ecosystem founded the Tulsa KKK six months after the 1921 massacre.

Something like four hundred thousand black men had fought for the US in the World War (in segregated units). Many came home in no mood to put up with the same old shit, particularly after the US government's rhetoric about "democracy" and "self-determination", and some kept hold of their guns. Despite most white racists' support for the US war effort, and the imperialist, racist goals and politics underlying it, the sight of uniformed black veterans was a driver of racist outrage.

The war saw an acceleration of black migration from the South to urban areas in the North, the start of what would come to be called the Great Migration. Many black people entered industrial jobs. A fast growing Northern and industrial black population provided both a stronger basis for black self-confidence and self-assertion and, given the strength of white racism, another flag and target for racists.

Unlike the IWW, the mainstream American unions of the American Federation of Labor for the most part excluded black workers. Unsurprisingly, in the context of rising industrial militancy, some capitalists sometimes attempted to use black workers, generally worse off and excluded from the unions, as strike-breakers.

The multi-layered betrayal of the

black working class by the white-dominated labour movement and many white workers was a disgrace to the principles of solidarity, and led to defeat for the whole class. The defeat of the 1919-20 four-month national steel strike, which resulted in the virtual disappearance of unions from the industry for fifteen years, was due in no small part to racial divisions among the workers.

In the 1920s many steel towns became centres of the surging KKK – even though the Klan was aggressively and explicitly anti-labour-movement.

“The counter-revolution against the revolutionary black liberation struggle during and after the Civil War reached its worst in the 1920s”

Although black workers were also sometimes stereotyped as strike-breakers, the racist political climate and agitation surrounding and fuelling the violence of 1919 very often linked black people, labour militancy and socialism.

One version of the idea was that black resistance to racism and oppression was a result of socialists and anarchists stirring up ignorant and simple-minded people who would otherwise be quite content. The *New York Times* carried a headline "Reds try to stir negroes to revolt".

The administration of racist Democrat Woodrow Wilson (1913-21) – which had segregated federal government departments and purged black civil servants – did nothing to stop the 1919 violence, which it also blamed on black trouble-makers and white radicals stirring them up. It carried out heavy repression against the left, including by

deporting almost 600 foreign-born socialists and anarchists. Although the victims were overwhelmingly white, more than half the reports which led to the deportations covered radicalisation in US black communities.

It actually was true that growing numbers of black Americans were looking or beginning to look to the radical left. As in many European colonies, the Russian revolution, with its mass struggles against national and racial oppression as well as for workers' power, became a point of reference and attraction for many black activists.

Most of the Red Summer's major incidents took place in cities. But the most deadly occurred in a rural area, the farming community of Elaine, Arkansas, from the end of September, after black sharecroppers defended their union meetings against violent disruption. Perhaps 150 black people were killed by vigilantes, in this case not just ignored but actively aided by federal troops. The state governor appointed a committee of white businessmen to "investigate"; they declared that the sharecroppers' union was a socialist conspiracy "for the purpose of... the killing of white people".

No white people were prosecuted but 79 black people were, all convicted by all-white juries in a courthouse surrounded by armed white militia, following confessions extracted by torture.

Faced by the mounting horrors of 1919, many black Americans fought back heroically. I will look further at that resistance, and its connections to the socialist struggles of the time, in another article. The next article will tell the story of the Tulsa massacre itself – in which black people also resisted, against impossible odds. □



Poster in Alabama, 1930s

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Malm's "Fossil Capital"



Environment

By Paul Vernadsky

Andreas Malm's writings on climate change have been widely lauded across the left in recent years, including in *Solidarity* (Zack Muddle, 588, 14 April 2021). In my view, Malm is a charlatan, a pretentious poseur, who sows confusion on Marxism and climate change politics. This became clear with his book *Fossil Capital* (2016) and has worsened subsequently.

Fossil Capital

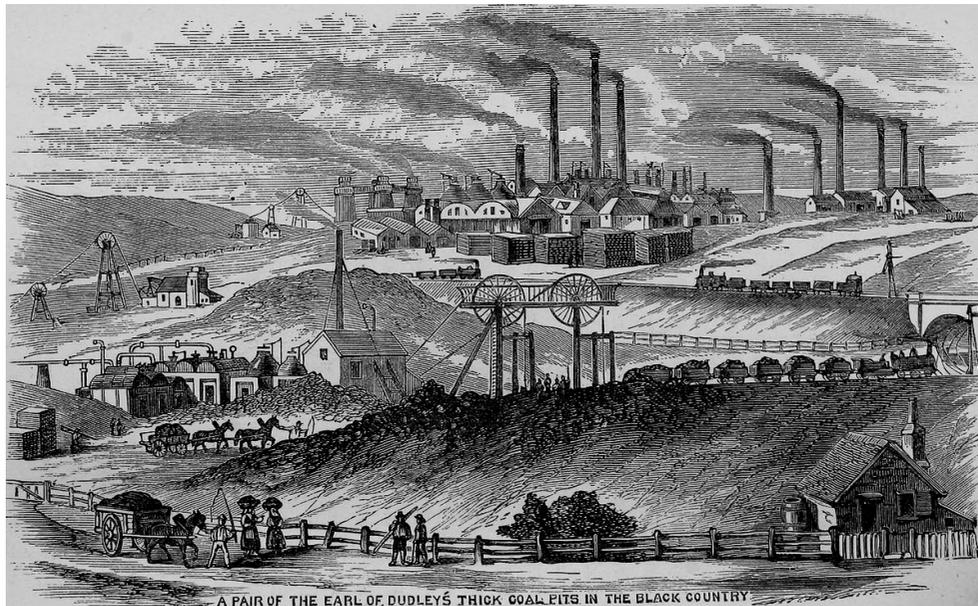
Britain was the first industrial capitalist state. Climate scientists estimate that Britain accounted for 80% of global emissions of CO₂ from fossil fuel combustion in 1825 and 62% in 1850. Therefore accelerating fossil fuel use, which later led to climate change, started with British capitalism.

Malm's book *Fossil Capital* (2016) is mostly a stylised narrative of steam power in mid-nineteenth century Britain, furnished with a "Marxist" gloss. Much of it is drawn from the work of existing historians. The bulk of the text describes the views of British cotton manufacturing capitalists and the bourgeois economists who articulated their interests at the time.

The book focuses closely on the demand for steam power by British cotton manufacturers, who thereby indirectly gave rise to a sharp increase in coal use – and thus the take-off in greenhouse gas emissions. Malm foregrounds the displacement of water power by steam engines in the mid-1800s. He maintains that steam power "gained supremacy in spite of water being abundant, cheaper and at least as powerful, even and efficient".

Ultimately, Malm borrows from autonomism the argument that these capitalists adopted steam power primarily because it strengthened their control over labour. This insight adds little. After all, textile workers in steam-powered factories as well as coal miners soon proved their militancy.

Individual cotton capitalists adopted steam power in their mills because they thought it would be more profitable. Many transformed the labour process, making manufacturing exceptionally lucrative for them. Other capitalists saw these profits and joined the frenzy. There was no controlling capitalist mind making a deliberate turn to steam power; some individual capitalists tried and failed. Capitalist profiteering



and competition explain the adoption of steam power from fossil fuels well enough.

Malm does not generalise too far. He accepts that "the astounding growth of the global economy and population would not have been possible without fossil fuels" and that "the watercourses available on the British Isles could not have powered all their industries" to the late twentieth century. He acknowledges that water power damaged the environment through extensive reservoirs and exploited workers, including through forced labour. There was no renewable energy road within early capitalist development.

Malm reinterprets the wave of working class protests during the 1830s and 1840s, notably the Chartists' 1842 general strike. He states that these struggles were "collective bargaining by rioting against the fossil economy" and reads into some Chartists "what we might call a proto-environmentalist component of the critique of steam". However this is contradicted by his admission that "by no stretch of the imagination can they be regarded as a revolt against steam power: this was an uprising for decent living standards and political power".

At the beginning of the book, Malm accepts that global warming is "the unintended by-product par excellence". The significance of climate change was not understood by anyone in the nineteenth century. Yet he overburdens the origins of fossil fuel use for current politics. Malm writes as if current concerns about fossil fuel use and climate change can be read back into early nineteenth century British capitalism. His wider generalisations are fundamentally flawed. In particular Malm's interpretation of Marxism and his views on the present climate politics are dangerous snares.

Maligning Marxism

Malm's treatment of Marxism in *Fossil Capital* is probably the most galling aspect of his oeuvre. Some of his comments in chapters 12 and 13 are simply petty. He wrote: "Nothing indicates any apprehensions on his part [Engels] or that Marx about the noxious effects of the gas [carbon dioxide]." So, Marx and Engels did not have our current understanding of anthropogenic climate change. But neither did any of their contemporaries. Marx and Engels certainly thought the climate was important and commented on its interaction with human society. They made the link between capitalism and environmental degradation. Marx and Engels paid careful attention to the physical sciences of their time and integrated this knowledge into their politics. They were bound by their era, missed some key issues, and made mistakes. But to criticise them for failing to anticipate climate change is simply anachronistic.

Malm constructs a caricature of supposed "productive forces determinism", which he believes afflicted Marx and Engels, as well as other classical Marxists from Kautsky to Plekhanov, from Lenin to Trotsky. Ironically, given his emphasis on coal, steam and machines, Malm could easily be read as committing precisely such a fallacy.

Malm insists that production relations take primacy over the productive forces. He revives a sterile, decades-old debate, mostly between Stalinists, akin to whether the chicken or egg came first. Malm turns an analytical distinction into an historical fetish. He achieves this caricature by narrowing his conception of the productive forces to technology. He name-checks a range of "authorities" in support his view, among others Maoism, autonomism and Althusser.

It is well known that Marx wrote in his early work *The Poverty of Philoso-*

phy (1847): "The hand-mill gives you society with a feudal lord; the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist." This sounds like technological determinism. But this is a distortion, because at this stage Marx had barely even developed a conception of social relations of production, from what he had previously called "the forms of intercourse".

Marx explicitly corrected the point in *Capital*, volume 1 (1867), when wrote: "The steam-engine itself did not give rise to any industrial revolution. It was, on the contrary, the invention of machines that made a revolution in the form of steam-engines necessary." Malm is well aware of this, since he quotes the passage in his book. However he presses on with his reconfiguration:

Relations of production → productive forces → human and extra-human nature

"This is the line to follow, if we are to reach a theory of capitalist destabilisation of climate."

Malm puffs this up as a great innovation, but there is little real theoretical advance. Capitalism (and indeed Stalinist social formations) generate relations of production that employ fossil fuel energy and technologies, which in turn damage the climate. Few Marxists today – or indeed liberal climate activists – would object.

Mangling political economy

Malm borrows freely from Marxist idiom, but ends up distorting Marxist political economy. First, Malm defines the "fossil economy" as "an economy of self-sustaining growth predicated on the growing consumption of fossil fuels, and therefore generating a sustained growth in emissions of carbon dioxide". This seems like a tautology and not specific to capitalism. Malm frames matters in terms of the consumption of use values, rather than particular modes of exploitation and production.

Second, Malm defines "Fossil Capi-

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tal”: mired in slurry

tal” as “self-expanding value passing through the metamorphosis of fossil fuels into CO₂”. This sounds very Marxological, but the “capital” Malm has spent most of the book describing is solely British cotton manufacturers, whose demand for steam power drove demand for coal. Malm barely discusses the economic and political power of coal capitalists, nor does he extend his argument to other fossil fuels in the book. Malm does not produce an indictment of capitalism in general – only a critique of a small, long-dead group of British capitalists.

Third, Malm inserts “Fossil Capital” into Marx’s circuit of capital, which is usually designed to explain the production of surplus value. Malm renders Marx more climate profound by amending the sequence of money – commodities (labour power and means of production) – production – (more) commodities – (more) money:

$$M - C (L + MP) \dots P \dots C' - M'$$

Malm adds fossil fuels (F) and then CO₂ emissions:

$$M - C (L + MP (F)) [\dots CO_2] \dots P \dots C' - M'$$

It seems awry to impose solely material stocks of coal into the valorisation process – and Malm persistently conflates value and material flows. It looks slightly odd to foreground “Fossil Capital”, yet exclude other forms of capital that were central to the growth of emissions and the valorisation process.

The muddle is particularly acute, because Malm’s fossil energy/emissions additions are contingent, while Marx’s circuit expresses necessary relations under capitalism. Malm’s own account undermines his creation. At the beginning of British capitalism, water power dominated the textile industry. If inserted into his contrived circuit, it would not yield excess CO₂ emissions.

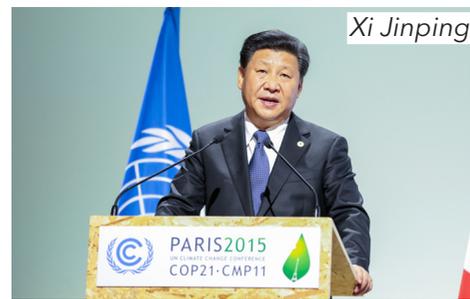
Similarly, advanced capitalism might in the abstract replace fossil fuels with renewable energy. Again, if this were added to Malm’s contrived circuit, it would not yield additional CO₂.

Malm wants to claim fossil fuels are integral to capitalism. The aim is laudable, but his presentation is artificial. The criticism is deflected, because neither Marx nor nineteenth century capitalists knew that fossil fuel substitution would produce emissions sufficient to alter the climate. The focus would be better placed on modern, advanced capitalism and its states, in an epoch when the risks of climate change are both known and becoming more tangible through extreme weather and other climate impacts.

Apology for Chinese capitalism

Malm spent three quarters of his book making an argument that British capitalists were the originators of climate change, through their instigation of the “fossil economy”. This is meant to be his intervention into the long-running climate change debate about “historic responsibility” for emissions. This is fine as a corrective to Westminster politicians, who boast of cutting emissions and the UK’s small global share, in order to duck the responsibility British capitalists and their state have for the mess we’re in.

However Malm’s Chapter 14 also reads as elaborate apologism, excusing the current Chinese ruling class for their own current and future liability for climate change. Malm writes rather more softly about rising emissions from the “People’s Republic of China”, whose name alone elides its exploitation and oppression of workers and peasants (never mind its environmental degradation). Malm states: “If Manchester was the ‘chimney of the world’ in the 1840s, the People’s Republic of China assumed that position in the early



twenty-first century primarily because globally mobile capital seized upon it as its workshop.” He points to a spike in fossil fuel burning after China’s accession to the WTO in 2001, as well as the increased emissions from the export sector. Of course capitalism is a global system, and international capitalists bear heavy responsibility for the acceleration of greenhouse gas emissions in recent decades. But capitalism operates and rules through ruling classes and national states. Capitalists are located (unevenly) in place and space. Malm broaches no criticism of Chinese capitalists and their state, deflecting any criticism of them by pointing towards other capitalists – and to Western consumers – who are deemed more responsible. This is not Marxist climate geopolitics, but inverted “anti-imperialist” nationalism.

Authoritarian climate politics

After all his huffing and puffing about capitalism, Malm offers remarkably little by way of political remedies in this book. Malm is credited with describing the geological epoch not as the Anthropocene, but as the “Capitalocene”. This is a snappy phrase, but lacks substantiation. For all his rejection of the “undifferentiated ‘we’” implicit in the Anthropocene framing, Malm does not propose either an alternative mode of production or a different ruling class. There is little “system change” in his programme to tackle climate change. In the final chapter, he dismisses all talk of socialism. Malm wrote:

“It tightens the screws on Marxists as much as on everyone else. Any argument along the lines of ‘one solution, revolution’, or less abbreviated, ‘socialist property relations are necessary to combat climate change’ is now untenable. The experiences of the past two centuries indicate that socialism is an excruciatingly difficult condition to achieve; any proposal to build it on a world scale before 2020 and then start cutting emissions would be not only laughable, but reckless.”

Similarly, Malm fails to identify any climate subject or agency, for all his critique of capitalism. In places, he appears to write-off the working class, at least in advanced capitalism. He stated:

“The subjects most thoroughly constituted by fossil fuel use-values and therefore resistant to climate change mitigation are the richest consumers”. He appears to chastise “certain privileged segments of the working class”.

Instead, Malm looks to existing capitalist states to impose the necessary solutions. He flirts with geoscience, but backs away. His calls to action are coated with socialist referents. Malm laments that “in the Soviet Union, the five-year plans often missed their targets; we need plans that do not. There is no alternative: planning is ‘inevitable’”. He describes the vast global write-off of Fossil Capital as a “transitional demand”, but without working class agency it is an ultimatum. Malm garnishes calls for (bourgeois) state intervention with references to Trotsky on “war communism” and “harsh measures”. The net effect is an authoritarian climate politics, in which the same bourgeois states that have presided over successive decades of emissions growth will somehow put the situation right, if necessary, by imposing “solutions” on their populations by force. This is neither a programme for climate mitigation nor guide to mass political action. It is shallow left populism, dressed up with left wing phrases. Malm’s *Fossil Capital* miseducates climate activists and the labour movement. His framing is not the basis of a working-class-based climate movement. □

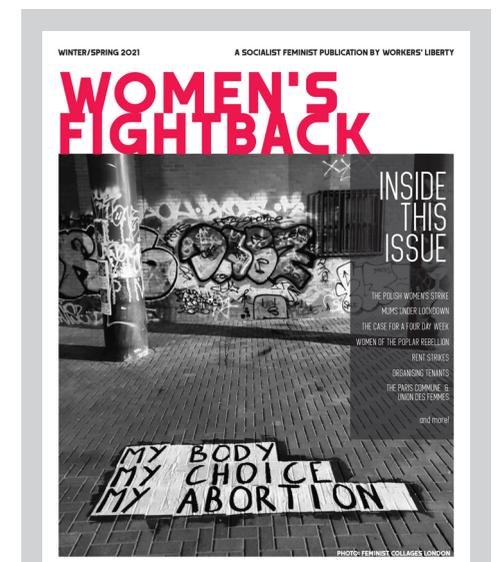
- More: bit.ly/malm-d
- First of a series of articles on Malm. More on this debate: bit.ly/malm-d

G7 protests, 11-13 June, Cornwall

The leaders of the “G7” group of seven of the world’s richest countries will hold their annual meeting 11-13 June at Carbis Bay, Cornwall. The G7 house 10% of the world’s population but 60% of global net wealth. They plan to discuss climate change, Covid-19, and economic recovery. We can expect a continuation of: greenwashing and inaction on climate change; strengthening the power and wealth of the richest capitalists, states, and fossil fuel companies; and vaccine nationalism.

There will be environmental and social justice demonstrations over those three days, in Carbis Bay and beyond. Camping near the site of the G7 is being organised. We are organising a delegation of supporters and friends of Workers’ Liberty, to support these protests and bring much-needed class-struggle socialism to the movement. We are co-ordinating travel and accommodation. □

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Batley, blasphemy, and the religious right

By David Pendleton

After the [Batley Grammar School](#) row, which led to protests outside the school, teachers being suspended, and one going into hiding for his own safety, the teachers have been reinstated.

On 27 May an independent investigation commissioned by Batley Multi Academy Trust found that teaching staff at Batley Grammar School who had shown one of the Charlie Hebdo images of Mohammed “genuinely believed that using the image had an educational purpose and benefit, and that it was not used with the intention of causing offence. The image was included to initiate a discussion about the meaning of ‘blasphemy.’” The teachers involved have been allowed to return to their work. That is good.

However, the investigation also found: “... in respect of the views of our school community the Trust is clear that it is not necessary for staff to use the material in question to deliver the learning outcomes on the subject of blasphemy; or any such images of the

type used.” This sets a very dangerous precedent. The Humanist Society, correctly, observed it is a de facto re-imposition of blasphemy laws in schools.

The laws were repealed 13 years ago. Most schools will surely follow the Trust’s view. Teachers and educators will be further intimidated into self-censorship. The ability to develop critical thinking in our young people is being endangered and curtailed by the religious right.

The National Education Union (NEU), who represented the Batley teachers, has been weak. A legitimate concern for the well-being of the teachers involved and not wanting to inflame tensions around the school led them to



The Kill The Bill protest on 29 May was smaller than earlier ones. We must take the fight against the Police Bill into the unions and Labour Party. □

make no clear statement on the principles involved. Indeed, many in the union’s leadership agree with the practical conclusions of the investigation.

The labour movement must rally to defend free-speech and not allow our schools, the curriculum they teach, and the way it is taught, to be dictated by the religious right. An inspiring example of this has come from Bury Unite

commercial branch who have moved a motion to the National Conference of Trade Councils calling for the NEU and other unions to condemn the threats to the teacher and criticise the attempts to control the curriculum. A spokesman said “We are affiliated to the Orwell Society and freedom of expression is very important. I don’t feel guilty in any way for taking a stand on this issue.” □



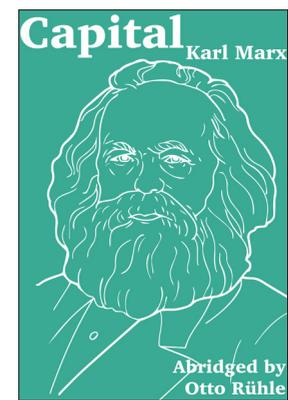
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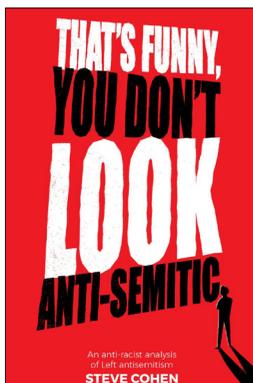
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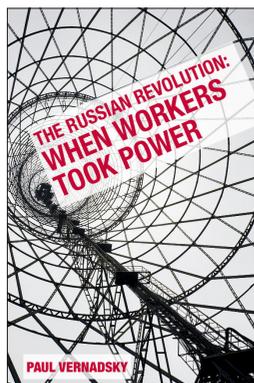
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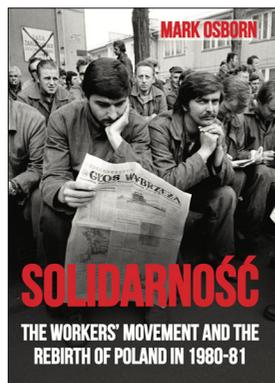
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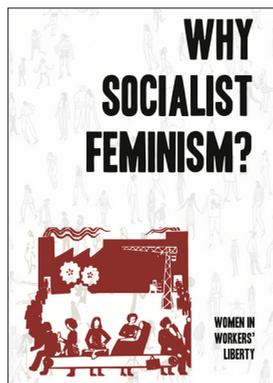
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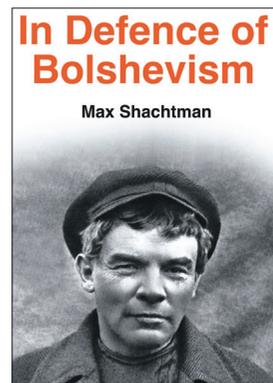
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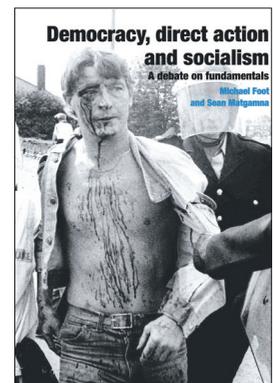
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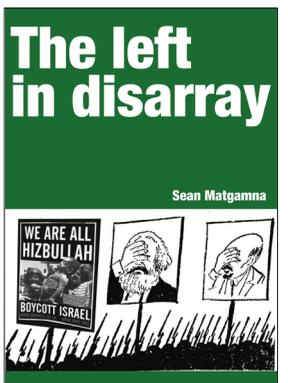
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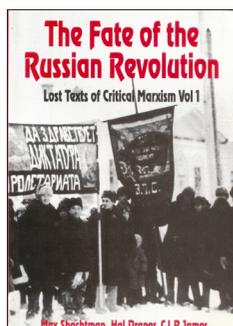
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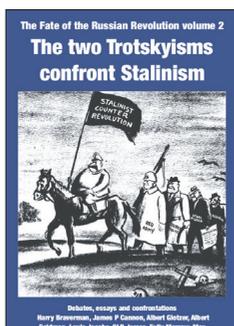
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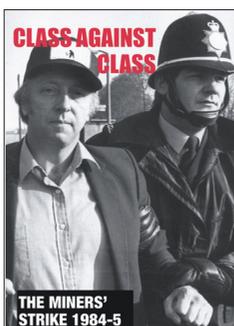
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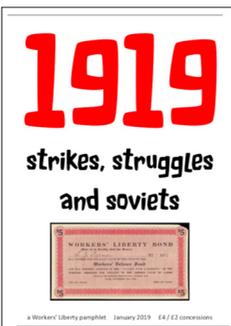
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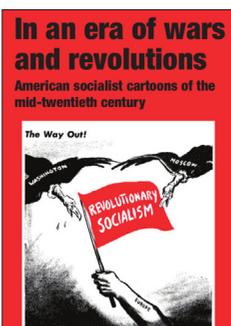
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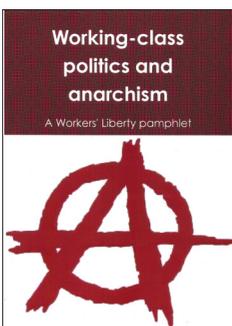
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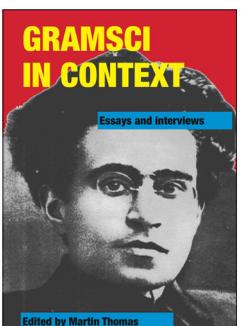
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Steel jobs under threat from Gupta sale

By Len Glover

Sanjeev Gupta, the owner of Liberty Steel, has announced he intends to sell-off the steelworks at Stocksbridge, South Yorkshire, which were taken over by Liberty, part of the Gupta Family Group (GFG), from Tata Steel in 2017.

GFG, currently under investigation by the Serious Fraud Squad following the collapse of the finance company Greensill (for whom David Cameron lobbied), is using the livelihoods of the 750 steelworkers at Stocksbridge as a financial pawn to pay off Gupta's £1 billion debt to Credit Suisse, inherited when Greensill collapsed in March.

Liberty Steel has sites elsewhere (Brinsworth, Motherwell, Hartlepool) and in total about 3,000 jobs are at risk. Gupta's plan, supposedly, is to concen-



trate on developing a scrap-processing plant in Rotherham with the cute name "Greensteel". Given the huge quantities of electricity used in scrap-processing, it is difficult to see how it could ever be green. Meanwhile, Gupta can always retreat to his £42m London mansion or his Scottish estate, where, I understand, the grouse shooting is first class.

Since the late seventies the British steel industry (once the British Steel

Corporation) has been steadily run down. The industry employed 325,000 workers in 1971. It was below 100,000 by the end of the Thatcher years, in 1990, and has only 30,000 odd today. Steelworks have closed across the country. The main steelworkers' union over most of the period, the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation (ISTC, now merged into a small "general union", Community) pursued a feeble policy of fighting each closure on an individual basis. It never developed an industry-wide strategy to oppose what was clearly an all-out war by the Thatcher government on the steel industry.

A spokesman for the National Trade Union Steel Co-ordinating Committee was quoted in the *Yorkshire Post* (24 May): "Liberty must act as a responsi-

ble seller and run a transparent process which fully engages with the trades unions". Given that the Tory government only recently refused Liberty a loan, on the grounds that its business dealings were 'too opaque', this doesn't seem likely to happen any time soon.

The Labour Party argues that the government should step in and public ownership "should be considered". Ed Miliband, the Shadow Business Secretary, has called for a "Plan B".

In response to the sell-off, with the loss of jobs this will surely entail, workers need more than just a set of "appeals" to the likes of Sanjeev Gupta and Boris Johnson. A robust, fighting response based on the rank and file on the shopfloor and the local community must be mounted. □

McVities factory: more strategy needed

By Dale Street

Around 250 people turned up on 22 May for a rally protesting the proposed closure of the McVitie's biscuit factory in the East End of Glasgow.

The focus of the campaign against closure is a cross-party alliance to demand intervention by the Scottish Government to guarantee the factory's future.

Having the local Tory councillor denounce Pladis (owners of McVitie's) for treating the workforce with contempt probably helps build confidence ("everyone is on our

side"). But, for obvious reasons, it also lacks credibility.

Demanding intervention by the Scottish Government also makes sense. Some 700 jobs (500 in the factory itself, and another couple of hundred dependent on them) are threatened.

But the focus on the government is putting a lot of eggs in one basket. And why should the future of a workplace be dependent on whether a government can offer a company enough taxpayers' money to bribe it into remaining?

The closure announcement by Pladis was the culmination of a long-term strategy. There

has been a long-term lack of investment in the factory. Some of the machinery is 60 or 70 years old.

In 2015 the size of the workforce was cut through voluntary redundancies, pay was cut by introducing ordinary rates for weekend working, and set working hours were replaced by "flexing" up and down. Workers were told that would guarantee the future of the factory.

But in 2016 management returned to the attack with threats to shut the factory, scale down production (and the workforce), or sell off the factory to another buyer if fur-

ther changes were not made in working practices.

Having classed the workforce as "key workers" throughout the pandemic and lockdown, Pladis announced the factory's closure even while Glasgow was still in level three. The first redundancies are due to be implemented in early 2022.

80% of the workforce is unionised, three quarters in the GMB and the remaining quarter (management and engineers) in Unite.

The GMB has put a lot of resources into the campaign to keep the factory open. By contrast, Unite has done nothing – only one post on its

Scottish Twitter account, and no attempt to mobilise members for the anti-closure rally, at which there was not a single Unite banner.

Activists in Unite are challenging the inertia of "the fightback union" and demanding that the union commits itself fully to the campaign.

But both unions, GMB and Unite, also need to develop a strategy which goes beyond a cross-party alliance and pleas to the Scottish Government and focuses on trade union action, in the factory, in the supply chain, and in other Pladis workplaces, to defeat the closure. □

Go North West: gains and concessions

By Darren Bedford

As we reported in *Solidarity* 591 (5 May 2021), sustained strikes by bus drivers at Manchester's Go North West succeeded in forcing bosses to back down from their plans to use "fire and rehire" tactics to impose new contracts. The dispute has now been formally settled, with drivers voting by a 79% majority to accept a deal that sees the "fire and rehire" plan scrapped.

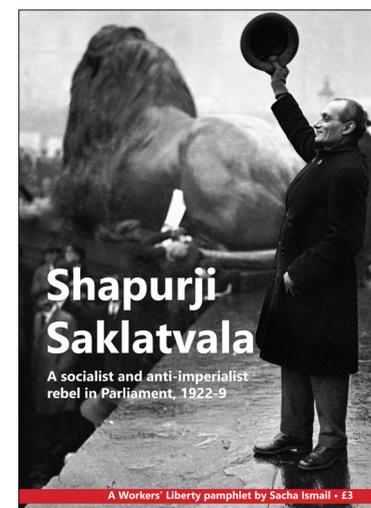
The strike ran to 12 weeks in total, the longest bus workers' strike in British history. Two workers sacked during the course of the dispute have been reinstated, with disciplinary charges against 37 more dropped. An above-inflation pay rise for the next two years has been secured, and Go North West has committed to not using "fire and rehire" tactics in future.

However, as some other disputes against "fire and rehire" have shown, an overemphasis on the means of imposition of changes to terms and conditions, rather than focusing on the changes themselves (i.e., making "fire and rehire" itself, rather than the new contracts, the issue) risks an outcome where bosses are able to impose most of the changes they wanted anyway, with unions declaring victory as long as bosses have backed away from using "fire and rehire".

The settlement undeniably represents a compromise, with bosses making gains on issues like working time, unpaid breaks, and, potentially, staffing levels. The 21% minority who voted to reject the deal, against the strong recommendation of the Unite officialdom, shows there is a constituency of drivers, albeit a small one, which believes

more could have been won. Some activists have criticised Unite's local leadership for focusing picketing entirely around one depot, and blocking drivers from visiting other depots to try to expand the dispute and spread the action. Unite's approach throughout the dispute was to accept cuts were necessary, and to propose alternative packages of cuts to those planned by the bosses, rather than rejecting the logic of cuts altogether.

Nevertheless, forcing a previous intransigent employer to abandon core elements of their plan is unquestionably a testament to the workers' resolve. They should use the momentum to build towards further disputes to win back terms and conditions conceded in the dispute, and to make further gains. □



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- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation
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Reshuffle in the power plant



Diary of an engineer

By Emma Rickman

One of the operators is retiring, and we gather in the control room for presents, leaving speeches, a raffle and a free lunch. The man retiring is T, "the Scotsman", with the driest sense of humour on the plant. The Ops team gift him a fishing rod and a bottle of famous grouse, and G makes a speech about how "we'll all miss T's constant stream of abuse." When T speaks, he's very serious:

"It's been an absolute pleasure to work with you these past 35 years. I've made some great friends here – unfortunately they've all started leaving, so it's time I went too.

"Covid has made me think about my priorities, what's actually important to me at this point in my life. I also think higher management (no-one in this room), higher management, have treated us appallingly during the pandemic. That's another reason I've decided to go.

"Thanks everyone – please eat!"

A, one of the managers and raffle-organiser, looks unhappy at the speech. But she's also had a hard time with Covid, nearly losing her Dad and shielding for a year so she could care for him. A has also announced her retirement.

L, the young electrician whom I was on shift with during lockdown, is leaving too. He took a leave of absence last month to deal with a family crisis and take care of his kids. Now he's leaving to move back to Scunthorpe so he can be closer to them.

Me: "You're off then?"

L: "Yeah, unfortunately. Gonna be a supervisor." He catches P's eye, another electrician, "No more quizzes on Fridays."

With L leaving it makes sense for an apprentice electrician to apply for his job, and the obvious candidate is LW. The fitters discuss this over tea with the other apprentices:

D: "LW is the clear choice."

Me: "He'd be really good, perfect for him."

D: "Thing is I don't think they're going to let him. Say he's not ready yet."

Lu: "How's he not ready? He's finished his apprenticeship, practically."

D: "It's whether he can be left on his own though – can he do weekends? Is he safe without supervision? I mean I think he deserves a job definitely, but you need to be able to do it, safely. I don't think they'll give it to him 'cause it would mean paying someone overtime to supervise."

Lu, whose apprenticeship contract is nearly finished, tries to hide his anxiety. Whenever anyone asks he shrugs and says "Worst case I'll fix cars and sell drugs, I'm not that bothered." Later in the week the Veolia Apprenticeship

mentor visits me and LW to chat about jobs. When it comes up in the fitters' shop Lu is furious.

Me: "They're pushing us through the last bit of our training so we can apply for these positions."

Lu: "I thought we weren't allowed to apply for jobs until our contract had finished?! That's why I couldn't go for P's job when he left!"

J: "That's what it's like around here though – say one thing one day and change it the next day. You never really know something's going to happen until it's happening – and then it's too late."

Me: "That is bullshit. Look, Lu, you should speak to N – speak to the mentor, she's here all afternoon. Just go up and talk to her."

Lu: "I'll email her – I'll message her now."

While the mentor and our line manager are on site talking, Lu tries to ring HR services and gives up when he's put on hold for fifteen minutes. After he leaves, I ask one of the fitters about him.

Me: "He rang HR instead of knocking on N's door – I didn't want to patronise him, but he's not ok, is he?"

J: "He really doesn't like talking to management. I think he also didn't want to go in there 'cause he's afraid of what they might say." ☐

• Emma Rickman is an apprentice engineer at a Combined Heat and Power Plant.

Wedding in Galilee



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Wedding in Galilee, an early Palestinian feature film, was directed by Michel Khleifi in 1987. Abu Adel, a Palestinian village mayor, wants to celebrate his son's wedding in traditional style, but the local Israeli military commander insists the curfew regulations must be observed (the film is set in the period of "military government" of Arab areas inside Israel). Eventually, he agrees to let the wedding go ahead but on condition that he and his officers attend, to which the Mayor reluctantly concedes.

Unsurprisingly, the presence of the soldiers creates tensions. Some relatives threaten to boycott the proceedings. But despite everything the wedding goes ahead.

In the heat, an Israeli female officer faints and is helped by the Palestinian



women who dress her in cooler, Palestinian clothes. According to tradition the groom is brought to the wedding on a horse, but as the guests feast the horse wanders into a nearby minefield. The Israeli soldiers fire guns to try and frighten it back to its stable, but the Mayor whistles and speaks its name and the horse gently trots back to him. Khleifi, of Christian-Arab descent, has lived in Belgium since 1970, while the actor who plays the Israeli commander, Makram Khouri, is a Palestinian born Arab-Israeli who has won Israel's highest award in the arts. ☐



Searching for new premises

An additional £1,147.44 brings us to £7,818.38 towards our £20,000 target by 11 July. We have an additional £400 or so from second hand book sales, and £700 from comrades in Workers' Liberty Australia, Leon, Janet and Bob. This week we're starting to look for new premises, with several viewings arranged. We want to raise enough money to have some kind of shop front and publicly accessible space for meetings, rather than just a "backroom" office, so people know a place they can guarantee to find us and our literature. Please keep donating! workersliberty.org/donate ☐

Disputes in DVLA, DWP, Parks



John Moloney
(PCS AGS, p.c)

Negotiations with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA) over safety arrangements at the Swansea complex continue. A strike of contact centre workers there is planned for Wednesday 2 June. There'll be a members' meeting on 1 June which will discuss the dispute. Wales has a high vaccination rate, and bosses want to increase the numbers of people working on the site. We're insisting that the union has a say in those decisions, and they're not simply unilaterally imposed by management.

Our consultative ballots for potential action over workplace safety in the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) will conclude on 2 June. They're conducted internally and electronically, so we'll know the results straight away. My view all along has been that we should have proceeded with formal ballots, and, assuming the consultative ballots now return majorities, that will remain my view. There is a feeling amongst activists in the department that the management has raised the stakes by increasing pressure on job coaches to conduct more in-person interviews, and we need to respond in kind.

We will be in dispute with the outsourced contractor in Royal Parks by next week if they don't agree to our demands by a Friday 4 June deadline. We're seeking guarantees of no job cuts to cleaners' jobs, as well as other demands around issues such as pay parity. I have been working closely with the United Voices of the World union throughout this campaign.

We also have another burgeoning dispute with an outsourced contractor, Mitie, which took over from Interserve and has numerous facilities management contracts across the civil service. On some of those contracts they've announced a change to the pay frequency and method, which could lead to workers losing money. Even though the move has only been announced on a few contracts, it is clear that all their contracts will go the same way in the end. That is why I have written to them asking for company wide talks and agreements. If these are not forthcoming then we will be in dispute with Mitie. We know that the RMT are having problems with Mitie as well, so if possible we should link up with that union to campaign jointly. □



Two Tube strike ballots close 29 June

By Ollie Moore

Tube union RMT has launched two parallel ballots of its driver members across London Underground, both closing on 29 June.

One ballot is for action to win reinstatement for Gary Carney, a union rep sacked after allegedly "avoiding" a drugs and alcohol test about which he was not informed. Drivers on Gary's line, the Central line, were due to strike on 6 May, but strikes were suspended to allow further talks. After London Underground upheld the sacking, the ballot has been widened to include all drivers across the Tube.

The other ballot is for action against so-called "grade consolidation" for drivers. Previously, driving during Night Tube, the 24-hour service running on certain lines on Friday and Saturday nights, was done by a dedicated grade of driver, with regular day shifts done by a separate grade. London Underground has now unilaterally merged those grades, meaning Night Tube shifts will be incorporated into full-time

drivers' rosters, damaging work/life balance. Drivers working Night Tube shifts will receive a shift supplement, equivalent to slightly over £60 after tax. The abolition of the Night Tube driver grade also means fewer driver jobs overall, and closes off potential lines of promotion for staff in other areas, especially existing Night Tube station staff.

When Night Tube was first announced, London Underground insisted the duties would be incorporated into the rosters of existing staff, on both stations and trains. Both RMT and Aslef (a driver-only union which is a small minority across London Underground as a whole, but a slight majority amongst train drivers) struck against this proposal, succeeding in winning an agreement that saw a dedicated Night Tube workforce instated, creating hundreds of relatively well-paid, secure, unionised jobs. London Underground's unilateral grade consolidation rips up that agreement.

Disgracefully, Aslef are now colluding with the bosses; despite initially opposing grade consolidation, they have

since changed their position and have supported London Underground's plan.

Night Tube has been mothballed throughout the pandemic, and is expected to resume in 2022.

Meanwhile, negotiations between Transport for London, London Underground's parent company, and the Department for Transport about further funding continue. The last funding bailout expired on 28 May. The Tories want TfL to commit to year-on-year cuts, including £300 million in the current financial year, and to attacks on workers' terms and conditions such as reforms to the TfL pension scheme, as a condition of further funding. A report in the *Financial Times* says a £1 billion bailout, which would cover TfL's budget for six months, is likely.

Aslef members voted in March to take industrial action against potential changes to terms and conditions, and RMT also has policy to ballot members if conditions are attacked as part of any funding deal. □

Three wins, two setbacks

By Pat Markey

The United Learning academy chain has pulled back from dismissing teacher and National Education Union (NEU) activist Kirstie Paton. The win is down to Kirstie's tenacity and to NEU members, parents, and students at the John Roan School in Greenwich who have been unwavering in their support for Kirstie. With the recent reinstatement of suspended NEU Rep Louise Lewis at North Huddersfield Trust School, and the victory for workers at Leaways Special School in Hackney, both following strikes and community campaigns, this is a warning for cavalier school trust CEOs.

However, Tracy McGuire's victimisation by Rydal Academy in Darlington will now go to an Employment Tribunal. The chain there, Swift Academies, claim they want to "develop a sense of responsibility of self and the community; to encourage tolerance, sympathy and understanding of others; to produce members of society capable of per-



forming useful adult life-roles, with the ability to change society for the better".

They have fallen way short of their own stated aims in victimising a union rep and much-respected member of their staff.

And Tom Mitchell, former NEU health and safety rep at Taverham High School in Norfolk, Tom Mitchell was suspended on 18 May. He faces possible dismissal for allegedly "bombarding" management with concerns about the welfare and safety of pupils, staff, their families and the wider community of Taverham during the Covid-19 pandemic. □

Sign the petition: bit.ly/tom-mi

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Saturday

11:30am

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

» QAnon and the rise of a new far right, with speakers including Joe Mulhall, Hope Not Hate

» Alan Turing and us

» Organising the unorganised, feat. John Moliney, 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 (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'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

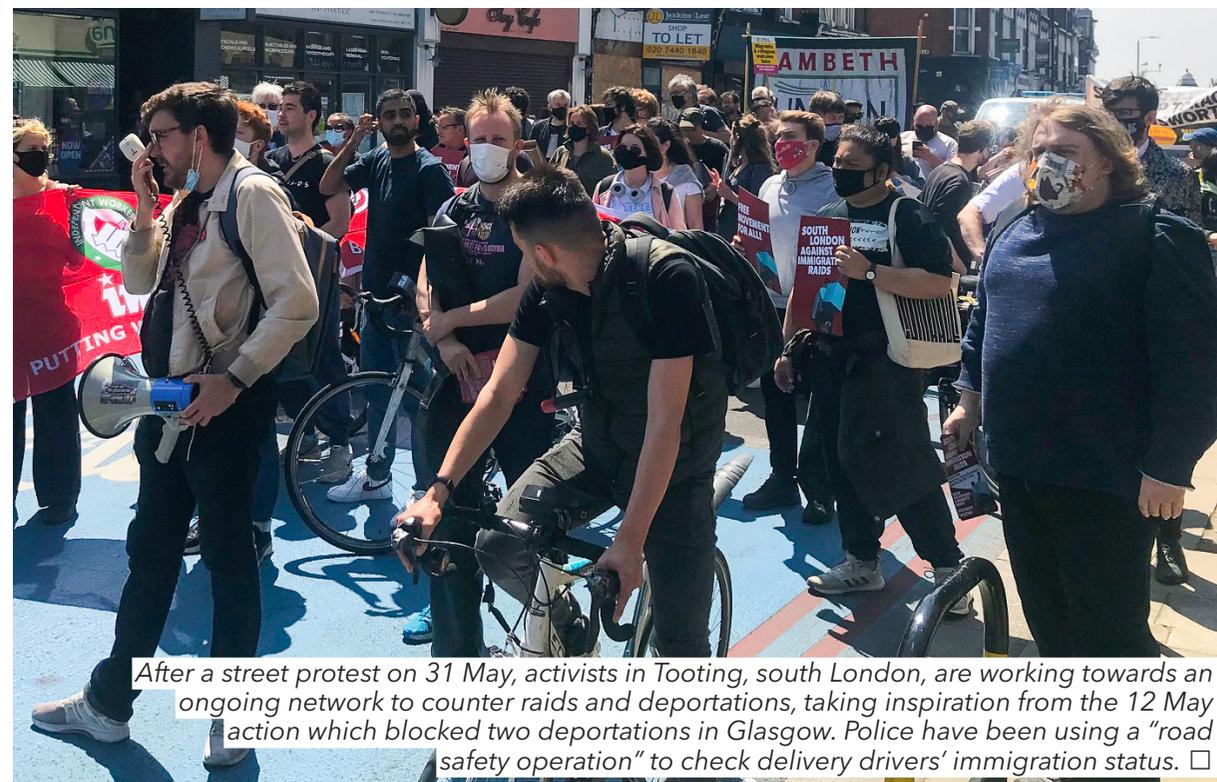
» Erdogan: Turkish imperialist?

Plus...

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

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

» **More** to be announced... □



After a street protest on 31 May, activists in Tooting, south London, are working towards an ongoing network to counter raids and deportations, taking inspiration from the 12 May action which blocked two deportations in Glasgow. Police have been using a "road safety operation" to check delivery drivers' immigration status. □

Uber signs union agreement

By Darren Bedford

Ride sharing and food courier app Uber has signed an agreement with the GMB union. The agreement covers Uber drivers, but excludes Uber Eats couriers.

According to the GMB, the agreement allows them to discuss issues including "national earnings principles", pensions, and discretionary benefits. The agreement does not, however, enable the GMB to collectively bargain in a formal sense, and submit claims on pay and conditions on behalf of drivers.

Following a legal challenge initiated by Uber drivers, who were then members of the GMB, Uber has been forced to recognise drivers as employees entitled to guaranteed rights, including a minimum wage. Uber has committed to paying all drivers at least the "National Living Wage" (in fact significantly less than an actual living wage) for their working hours. Exactly what constitutes working hours have been, and will undoubtedly continue to be, a matter over which Uber and workers' organisations disagree.

A GMB statement said: "This groundbreaking deal between GMB and Uber could be the first step to a fairer working life for millions of people. History has been made. This agreement shows gig economy companies don't have to be a wild west on the untamed frontier of employment rights. When tech private hire companies and

unions work together like this, everyone benefits – bringing dignified, secure employment back to the world of work. We now call on all other operators to follow suit."

Other unions organising Uber drivers had a less rosy view of the deal. The United Private Hire Drivers' union (UPHD, a section of the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain, IWGB) said:

"It is concerning to see reports that this recognition agreement will not allow for bargaining over earnings. Recognition agreements are only worth so much at best, but to take key areas of negotiation off the table before discussions have even started is appalling, particularly as Uber still fails to uphold the law on minimum wage after the Supreme Court ruling earlier this year.

"Until we see Uber meaningfully engage with drivers, we see these announcements as yet another PR stunt by Uber to try to give off the impression they are doing right by their drivers while continuing to exploit us and deny us what is rightfully ours."

The App Drivers and Couriers Union (ADCU), which was formed following a split from the UPHD, which itself originated in a split from the GMB, said: "Overall, this is a step in the right direction, but there are significant obstacles in the way of ADCU reaching a similar agreement. For us, compliance with legal minimums should be the point of departure for any union agreement with Uber." □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

Israel-Palestine: Jewish-Arab unity in fightback

By Martin Thomas

Since the 21 May ceasefire, hundreds of Palestinians in Israel have been arrested on charges to do with protests and conflict inside Israel.

There were some attacks during the 6-21 May war on synagogues and such – and a great many attacks by Jewish chauvinists on Palestinian shops and Palestinians. Few of the Jewish chauvinists have been arrested.

The run-up to the rockets and bombing was a rise in street protests by Palestinian citizens of Israel and residents of East Jerusalem, with Jewish allies, against planned evictions, especially in the Sheikh Jarrah district of East Jerusalem; and the bombing of Gaza generated new joint Jewish-Arab street protests inside Israel.

The police are out to quell that new mobilisation. But it continues: the Jewish-Arab social movement Standing Together was on the streets on 30 May over Sheikh Jarrah.

Protests across the West Bank are likely on 4 June.

On 26 May Israel's Supreme Court instructed the government Attorney-General to make his submission within two weeks on an appeal against planned evictions by three Palestinian families in Sheikh Jarrah.

Although [East Jerusalem's](#) Arab majority has increased since the early 1990s, Jewish-chauvinist groups are intent on increasing Jewish settlement there as an obstacle to East Jerusalem becoming the

capital of a Palestinian state in a two-states settlement. The other obstacle, which has developed continuously, is Jewish settlements set up around East Jerusalem to cut it off from the West Bank.

How long the Israel-Hamas ceasefire will hold, we don't know. It has resolved no basic issues. A coalition government may be able to oust Israel's long-time right-wing prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu. But the first coalition candidate for prime minister, Naftali Bennett, says to waverers: "It will be more right-wing than the current government".

The right to self-determination for both nations, Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab, "two states", is not the end of the story, but it is an indispensable step.

Standing Together organiser Alon-Lee Green has commented on Twitter: "It's increasingly common for supporters of the Palestinian cause to demand Israelis 'return to Europe'. Let's be clear: none of us, Jews or Palestinians, is going anywhere. This is our home. The only way to fight for freedom for all is Jews and Palestinians, side by side, *together*."

Besides the simple "expel Jews", another variant has been to demand removing *Israel*, but to say individual Jews (who were mostly born there, and whose families mostly came as refugees, including from Arab states) can stay because the replacement will be a secular and democratic state in all of British



Mandate Palestine.

Who could make that single state? Jewish and Arab workers cannot unite without mutual recognition of rights. If the single state is to be won through conquest by Iran or its allies, it will not be democratic. And if a single state were somehow to emerge as democratic, then... it would recognise both nations' right to self-determination, to make it "two states".

A "reformist" variant of "one state" was advocated by the *Economist* magazine of 29 May: the USA should continue to give up on "two states", but should nudge the Israeli government instead for better individual welfare for Palestinians.

US leverage with Israel is less than it was. US aid to Israel is now about 0.8% of Israel's GDP. After 1967 it was higher, and in the 1970s and 80s sometimes 10 to 20%.

Even small improvements in individual welfare are good (and in fact even the Netanyahu government has been pushed by increasing Palestinian assertiveness to spend more on education). But nudges like that will not bring peace. Peace requires equal rights for both peoples, mutual recognition which allows cooperation side by side. □