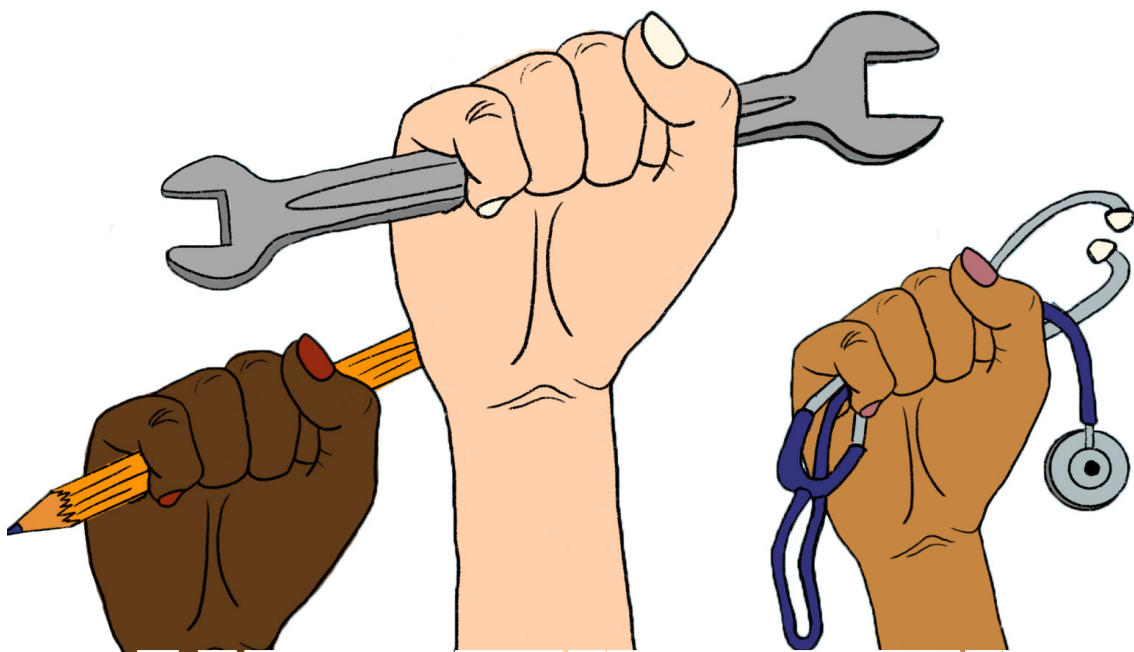


Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty



For social ownership of the banks and industry



CHANGE THE FUTURE: ORGANISE!

- » **Workplace solidarity!**
- » **Make unions push Labour**
- » **Agitate for socialism!**

See inside

PCS, NEU, UCU, doctors, Tube, rail

Battles on pay and conditions remain open-ended

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The left and a famous cartoonist

Syd Hoff became a famous illustrator after his time on the left

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On "war is hell", and on the German and British Empires

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Agitate for socialism!



The working-class movement is on an uphill journey. The latest official (Certification Officer) statistics on union membership, published 6 July, are thankfully out of date, but sobering.

Between December 2019 and December 2020, union membership rose a bit. Between December 2020 and December 2021, it fell a bit, despite lockdowns and work-from-home beginning to fade.

The figures depend on unions compiling returns at their year-ends (mostly December 2021, a few as late as September 2022) and sending them in. Even now, the result is incomplete because Unite the Union has done no report since December 2020, but it's unlikely that Unite increased membership in 2020-1.

Union membership has improved since then, at least in some unions. The National Education Union [reported](#) 34,000 new members in early 2023 after it returned a vote to strike, and reports hundreds of new workplace reps. The civil service union PCS reported a 5% upturn in 2022, and activists say more have joined this year.

Unite will surely have recruited from the good pay battles it has organised among bus workers, dockers, and others this year. GMB will have recruited from its efforts in Amazon warehouses.

The BMA and RCN, professional associations now becoming more like unions, have started setting up workplace branches and workplace reps.

Workers' Liberty meets on 13-16 July for our annual summer school, Ideas for Freedom. The current strike wave started shortly before last year's Ideas for Freedom, and is still rolling on.

There are gains from that strike wave. Relatively good pay deals have been won in some private-sector areas, improved pay offers (even if still real-wage cuts) have been gained and sometimes accepted in many areas, and the higher-stakes battles, involving jobs, conditions, and pensions, are still live in rail and on the Tube.

That has been much less than the potential. We argued from the start against the "marathon, not a sprint" philosophy of most union leaders. That has meant a dribble of one day's strike here, a few days there, spread over months, and with workers told each time to "wait and see" for the next action. We have argued for unions to coordinate strike schedules to achieve the maximum joint impact, on a much larger scale than 1 February and 15 March.

If that argument had prevailed – which is partly another way of saying, if union organisation had been less faded before high inflation jolted unions into action, and if the socialists promoting the arguments had been more numerous, more coherent, more energetic – then we would have seen more victories by now.

And we could see the beginnings of the translation of the section-by-section industrial remobilisation into working-class-wide social and political mobilisation which we so far lack. The Enough is Enough campaign, launched in August 2022 as a sort of strike-solidarity movement, held several well-attended rallies and then shrivelled, without generating continuous week-to-week activity.

Workers' Liberty has campaigned to get Trades Councils to act as ongoing centres of solidarity, but our success there has been patchy.

The Tories, despite everything, remain fierce and coordinated in their drive to use the economic turmoil to tilt the balance of class forces against us. The working-class resistance remains patchy and sectional, and weak on whole-class issues like the NHS.

Stubborn

The Tories stand more stubborn against public-sector pay demands than private capitalists (or the Scottish and Welsh governments). They are driving through the Minimum Service anti-strike bill, the Illegal Migration Bill, and the Public Order Act. They sit on the NHS's runaway waiting lists and staff shortages.

They are likely soon to approve a huge new [oilfield](#) development. The government's own official watchdog, the Climate Change Committee, [reports](#) "inaction", "continuing support for further unnecessary investment in fossil fuels", "progress not made", "off-track", or at best "worryingly slow".

Despite the Tories' unpopularity, their version of "financial responsibility" – no tax rises, squeeze wages and public services, assuage "the markets" – continues to hegemonise Keir Starmer's Labour leadership, keen to show it is "pro-business".

Unite conference on 10 July heavily voted down moves to disaffiliate the union from Labour. General secretary Sharon Graham said:

"This is the moment of maximum leverage for the union where we can hold Labour to account. Now cannot be the time to walk away. We would be weakening our own arm."

"It would be the worst time to leave the Labour Party when they are in touching distance of power, if we leave we wouldn't influence that power."

"Labour must be Labour and the union must push them to into that position we must make them take different choices..."

She did not, however, suggest what the union will do at the National Policy Forum in Nottingham in late July, or at the Labour conference in Liverpool, 8-11 July. The unions have great weight at those events. At the 2022 conference they chose to give Starmer an easy ride, presumably relying instead on backroom haggling.

The US academic Eitan Hersh, a conservative Democrat but an acute observer of much of the US left, in or out of the Democrats' orbit, has noted: "Many of us think we're politically active – but in fact, we're doing little more than signalling".

Fail

That is true of union general secretaries if they fail to help members organise politically, openly, week by week. It is also true of individuals who lack weekly activity through workplace "singlejack" agitation, regular meetings, street-stalls, demonstrations, picket-lines, etc., and instead are left-wing via social media.

Wilhelm Liebknecht summed up the tasks of socialists as: "study, propagandise, organise". Individual backroom work (reading, social-media and web activity) is part of it. The pivot must be coordinated out-in-the-world, in-person activity, drawing people "round" socialist ideas in workplaces, on the streets, and in regular labour-movement and other meetings weekly or monthly.

And round comprehensive *socialist* ideas, not just this or that militant or activist proposition on this or that issue.

We cannot foresee or dictate the large-scale ebbs and flows of working-class confidence and combativity. We can't answer tactical questions in advance. Yet even in the most adverse times, we can build up a coherent network of activists, reliable each week in the workplace, in meetings, and on the streets, who educate each other in the principles of working-class solidarity, both as the guide in immediate struggles and as the foundation for reshaping society. Thus we can generate a collective capacity, a collective body of opinion able to answer those questions and organise for the answers.

If we had had more of that a year ago, we'd be further up the hill now. If we can do more now, we'll get further up in the hill in the next year.

We produce our paper *Solidarity* as an instrument in building the network we need.

Historically, when trade-union move-

ments, even, were most vigorous – let alone socialist political movements – writing, circulating, discussing regular newspapers was central to them.

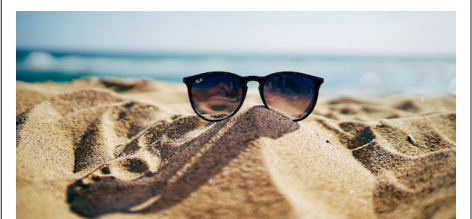
Activists of the Industrial Workers of the World in its heroic period before 1914 probably spent more of their energies on the streets, circulating *Industrial Worker* and *Solidarity* (their paper the same name as ours) and waging free-speech fights, than in strictly-workplace activity. The life of the French CGT in its great days of the early 20th century centred round its paper *Vie Ouvrière* and other journals. Even the less-revolutionary United Auto Workers of the USA, in its heyday of the 1930s and 1940s, had a lively eight or twelve page newspaper, the *United Automobile Worker*. The archives include a local UAW paper for the West Side of Detroit, in which a column would advertise several union meetings every day, of different branches, committees, etc. in that area's UAW hall.

Websites and social media are important. They cannot substitute for printed papers and meetings in drawing together and energising an activist collective. The printed paper comes with a person (to discuss, to propose activities, to make connections). The person, the socialist activist, comes with a paper, a rich and wide-ranging offer of ideas and visible evidence that the person is part of a collective effort.

Vladimir Lenin described the socialist newspaper as "the collective organiser". Antonio Gramsci wrote that it might seem absurd to say that socialist activism is an "intellectual" effort; but it must in fact be "directive and organisational, i.e. educative, i.e. intellectual".

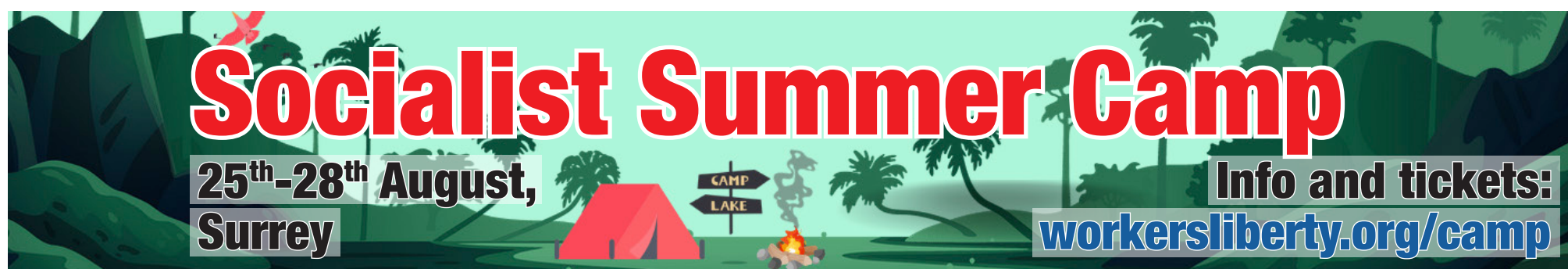
We cannot hope to, and do not aspire to, coordinate working-class struggle by clambering into "official" positions and then issuing administrative directives.

We hope and aspire to advance working-class confidence, combativity, and solidarity, by discussion, self-education, education. This paper exists to serve that effort. □



Our schedule

Solidarity will skip some weeks in late July and in August. No.681 will be 2 August; 682, 23 August; 683, 5 Sep; then back to the usual weekly schedule. □



Against Putin: victory to Ukraine!

By Dan Katz

It is now slightly more than 500 days since Putin launched Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Putin's imperialist war, launched with the intention of abolishing Ukraine as an independent entity, to subordinate Ukraine to Russian political power, has been a disaster for not only the Ukrainian people, but for the Russians too.

The war has also broken down important global economic bonds, especially in energy, fertiliser and food markets, and reshaped world politics for the worse.

Putin has threatened nuclear war. Russia has developed a transactional relationship with Iran, whose disgusting clerical regime has supplied drones to attack Ukrainian cities and kill Ukrainian defenders. Russia has become more closely aligned with China, and in a subordinate role. And if Russia wins, or partially wins in Ukraine, a Chinese invasion of Taiwan will become more likely, as will further Russian aggression against Moldova, the Baltic states, Georgia and the central Asian states which were formerly part of the Soviet Union.

The UN claims that the death toll of Ukrainian civilians is now 9,000, including 500 children, while admitting that the real figure is probably much higher. The US estimates Ukrainian civilian deaths at 42,000 (to May 2023).

One of Russia's many war crimes has been the relentless missile strikes on Ukraine's civilian population and infrastructure. In the first ten months of the war \$10bn of damage was done to the Ukrainian energy grid; at one point Ukraine's generating capacity had been cut by 61%, and power had been cut for 12mn people.

Before the February 2022 invasion Ukraine was already a poor country with a GDP per head of only \$3,700, or one third of the GDP of the EU's poorest state, Bulgaria. Ukraine's economy contracted by 30% in 2022. Inflation was running at 15.4% in May 2023, and unemployment stood at 10%.

Russia has been responsible for the massacres of civilians around Bucha at the start of the war, the abduction of thousands of Ukrainian children and their removal to Russia, the execution and mistreatment of prisoners of war, and the blowing of the Kakhovka dam.

The possibility of a nuclear disaster – deliberate or otherwise – at the Russian occupied Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant is real. The Russian army has a military base at the facility and appears to have mined it in anticipation of a Ukrainian attempt to retake it.

In the Russian-occupied territories new puppet authorities have been imposed and attempts have been made to crush all resistance through abduction, disappearance and torture of hundreds of Ukrainians. Elected authorities have been abolished, fake referendums have been staged. Unions and political parties have been unable to operate.

Ukrainians have been coerced into taking Russian passports. School curricula have been aligned with Russian education, and pro-Ukraine teachers have been sacked and persecuted. Ukrainian art galleries, museums, fire stations and hospitals have been looted.

Disorderly Russian troops have robbed and stolen from the civilian population and raped and harassed civilians.

Fled

6.3mn Ukrainians, from a population of 44mn, have fled abroad and a similar number are internally displaced.

In Russia the war has led to a clamp-down on liberals, leftists, anti-war activists and independent media. By October 2022 at least 900,000 Russians had fled Russia to avoid the draft and the repression against oppositionists. Russians have often met a hostile response in their new host countries as rents have increased (Georgia) and traditional anti-Russian nationalist hostility has revived (the Baltic states).

In Ukraine opposition to Putin's war has spilled over to the destruction of Russian books and the refusal to stage Russian theatre or play music written by Russian composers.

One bad consequence of this reactionary anti-Russian backlash is that it gives a gloss of credibility to Putin's absurd argument that Ukraine and the West pose an existential threat to Russia, intending to destroy Russia.

Western sanctions have done less immediate damage to the Russian economy than originally expected. Revenue from fossil fuels exported to the EU has declined more than 90%, but China is still a big buyer of Russian oil and gas, and India has increased imports by 10-



Supporters of Ukraine and its labour movement at Durham Miners' Gala, 8 July. The flag of Ukrainian miners' union NGPU was signed and sent specially for the Gala

fold since February 2022.

Sanctions have not deterred Putin, who looks likely to prolong the war, hoping for a change of government in the US, and war-weariness in Europe which saps Western backing for Ukraine.

Nevertheless the corrupt, kleptocratic Russian ruling class, and the thugs that rule over Russia are clearly under pressure. Divisions were very clearly revealed by the failed Prigozhin-Wagner mutiny of 23-24 June. Prigozhin, the billionaire leader of Wagner, loudly denounced the incompetence of the army leadership and rightly claimed that they were under-reporting the number of Russian casualties in Ukraine. The UK's military estimates Russia has suffered 220,000 killed and wounded to June 2023 (against a US estimate of 20,000 Ukrainian troops killed and 130,000 wounded).

Workers' Liberty has backed Ukraine's war for self-determination against Russia and campaigned for the UK and Western powers to give generous aid to Ukraine, cancel Ukraine's debts, and to provide it with the arms Ukraine needs, promptly and in adequate quantities, so it can force Russia out.

We want peace, but any stable, democratic peace must respect Ukraine's right to self-determination.

Simultaneously we back Ukraine's unions and left in their fight to defend the Ukrainian working class against Ukraine's capitalist politicians and bosses.

However sections of the far left across Europe have opposed support for Ukraine. The Stalinist *Morning Star* and

groups like *Socialist Worker* in the UK have refused to support Ukraine and argue that the war is being fought between NATO and Russia. SW concludes that, although Putin is bad, since we live in a NATO member state we must focus on opposing the "NATO" (in fact Ukrainian) side in the war.

Those arguments make no sense. Solidarity opposes NATO as we also oppose the British military establishment. We oppose the recent drift by some leftists like Paul Mason towards supporting NATO. But NATO troops are not fighting. For their own reasons, the US and UK have made great efforts to stop the war escalating and spreading. Ukraine, the victim, fending off obliteration, has the right to ask for help and support from wherever it can get it.

Just as the Vietnamese got help from China and the Soviet Union in their war against America, even though Russia then ruled a big semi-colonial empire and China would soon after invade Vietnam, Ukraine has the right to take weapons from the Western powers.

True, NATO has expanded since 1991, but that expansion was at first by agreement with Russia (which for a while developed friendly ties with NATO), and since then has been driven by justified fear in Eastern Europe of Russian imperialism. Longstanding and big majorities in Sweden and Finland which opposed NATO membership were spectacularly reversed in the months after February 2022.

Victory to Ukraine! Back the Ukrainian workers' movement! □

Morning Star veers even more anti-Ukraine



By Jim Denham

The *Morning Star* these days is increasingly open in its desire to see Ukraine defeated. While denouncing, and not without some reason, the new inclusion of cluster bombs in US military aid to Ukraine, it is actually much more excited about signs of backtracking within the US ruling class ("Cluster bombs grab the headlines, but backtracking may be underway too", MS editorial, 10 July 2023).

"It is a sign of the difficulties the Nato strategy is encountering in Ukraine that a top-level US delegation of foreign policy figures recently met with senior Russian figures including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

"Outgoing Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass, CFR figure and Georgetown University professor Charles Kupchan, and Kissinger Associates managing director Thomas

Graham, went to discover 'where there might be room for future negotiation, compromise, and diplomacy over ending the war. [...] As the existing US-Nato strategy loses both coherence and credibility, elements in the US are bound to seek a face-saving formula."

There follows the obligatory denunciation of the EU ("too many of the governments in Europe are prepared to sacrifice their own economies to the initiatives of the US hegemon and that the EU bureaucracy is the most compromised in this respect") before a final appeal to "elements in British politics, on both left and right, and especially in the labour movement who allowed themselves to be incorporated in the effort to settle the Ukraine question on the battlefield... to recover their critical faculties and a sense of where British and European interests lie." "British and European interests", you will note: no mention of the people of Ukraine and their right to defend themselves. If it wasn't already obvious, it's now obvious that the *Morning Star*, for all its occasional token criticisms of the invasion, wants Putin to prevail and holds the people of Ukraine in contempt.

Cluster munitions are horrible weapons that can be delivered by rockets, missiles, and aircraft. They open in mid-air and disperse dozens and even hundreds of smaller sub-munitions, also called bomblets, over an area the size of a city block.

Many sub-munitions fail to explode on impact, leaving duds that act like landmines, posing a deadly threat to civilians for years and even decades.

The 2008 Convention on Cluster Munitions comprehensively prohibits these weapons because of their indiscriminate effects and the long-lasting danger that they pose. It requires the destruction of stockpiles and clearance of areas contaminated by cluster munitions.

Cluster

The Convention has been signed by 123 countries, including Britain – but not by the US, Russia or Ukraine.

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February last year, Russian forces have used cluster munitions in attacks that have caused hundreds of civilian casualties and damaged or destroyed homes, hospitals, and schools.

The Ukrainian military has not denied its own use of cluster munitions in the conflict and has long publicly asked to be supplied with them.

Biden's decision poses real issues for those of us on the left who support Ukraine's right to fight the invaders and to obtain the weapons it needs in order to do so.

Since World War 2, cluster bombs have been mainly used in invasions or to put down domestic rebellions. In nearly all those cases, they were dropped indiscriminately. In fact, very often the intent was to attack the civilian population as well as enemy combatants.

That is not the type of war Ukraine is fighting. The Ukraine government is fighting against an invasion and is unlikely to use cluster bombs indiscriminately amongst its own population.

But solidarity with Ukraine does not mean endorsing its military choices, any more than it means endorsing its government's domestic policies.

Meanwhile the *Morning Star* veers close to solidarity with the Russian forces, and without even mentioning their use of cluster bombs. □

The US left, Ukraine, and Biden



Eric Lee

While Republican politicians are queuing up to take on Donald Trump for the party's nomination next year, there's hardly anything going on in the other camp. Unless he falls ill or changes his mind, Joe Biden will undoubtedly be the Democratic Party candidate. Only three people with any name recognition have challenged him inside the Democratic Party or to its left. They are a diverse crowd, but one thing unites them – and it's not what you'd expect.

To the left of the Democrats, Cornel West has announced he's running for president. It's unclear which party will support him as he initially spoke about the People's Party, but lately, he seems to be aiming to run as a Green. West is

a well-known left-wing academic and former supporter of Bernie Sanders. Last week a top Democratic strategist warned that a good showing by the Greens in next year's election could lead to Biden's defeat. Meanwhile, some left-wing voices are calling on West to follow Sanders' example and run as a Democrat.

Among the Democrats, two candidates have emerged with significant support, according to the polls. The first is anti-vaxxer and conspiracy theorist Robert F. Kennedy Jr. According to some polls, Kennedy is getting 20% of the Democratic vote. Trailing behind him is Marianne Williamson, author and celebrity guru to Oprah Winfrey. Williamson ran briefly in 2020 but pulled out of the race before the first primary. In her campaign launch speech and subsequently, she has been channeling Bernie Sanders, speaking about social justice, working

people and the power of billionaires.

On the face of it, West, Kennedy and Williamson have little in common other than a certain degree of name recognition and the fact that none of them are Joe Biden. There is evidence that many former Sanders supporters are lining up to support them, even though Sanders has clearly backed Biden for re-election.

What they have in common is their support for Putin's war on Ukraine.

West has very little detail about his foreign policy (or anything else) on his official campaign website, but here's what he says that will warm the Russian dictator's heart: "Bring our troops home and invest those trillions of war dollars into American communities. Support veterans, stop all foreign military aid, close the bases, disband NATO, and ban nuclear weapons globally." If West were ever given the keys

to the Oval Office and had the chance to withdraw the US from NATO, that would mark the end of Ukraine – and guarantee Russian domination over Europe. The organisation West is most closely associated with is Democratic Socialists of America, which has advocated for the dissolution of NATO.

Kennedy also blamed the West and NATO for the war in Ukraine and pledged to end US involvement there. Williamson has been slightly less specific but has not supported US aid to Ukraine, instead advocating the creation of a Department of Peace.

None of these candidates represents a serious challenge to Biden. But all of them represent a serious threat nonetheless. The entire field of Republican candidates, led by Trump, are outspoken supporters of Putin and enemies of Ukraine. The Democrats who challenge Biden (and those to their left) are no better.

Even if Biden wins re-election, which now seems likely though a lot can change in the next 16 months, the discourse in America has completely shifted. The consensus in the UK, with the major parties opposing Russian aggression, does not exist there. A significant part of the public, including on the left, opposes any further support for Ukraine.

America needs a left that vigorously supports Ukraine in the same way that a previous generation supported the Spanish Republic during that country's Civil War. A left that opposes imperialism – including Russian imperialism – and that will not turn its back on the Ukrainian people in their hour of need. Such a left does not yet exist in America, and its creation is a matter of some urgency. □

• Eric Lee is the founder editor of LabourStart, writing here in a personal opinion column.

Pro-choice plans for 2 September



Women's Fightback

By Katy Dollar

The latest official [figures](#), recently released, covering the first six months of 2022, show that 123,219 abortions took place in England and Wales. It's an increase on the 105,488 over the same period in 2021. As Abortion Rights chair Kerry Abel has commented, the cause may be the cost-of-living crisis.

The big majority of abortions were in the early stages of pregnancy: 67% up to and including seven weeks gestation; 93% up to and including 12 weeks, and 98% up to and including 17 weeks gestation.

Telemedicine accounted for fully 50% of terminations each quarter since April to June 2021.

Abel also commented: "Changes to the way women and pregnant people can access abortion pills through telemedicine routes have improved services and resulted in swifter abortions... better for care all round".

There were 346 abortions to women recorded as living outside England and Wales. 28% were from Northern Ireland and 25% from the Republic of Ireland. Despite massive steps forward in abortion legislation in the Republic and the North, people still cannot access abortion services for lack of provision.

Anti-choice group March for Life have called their annual anti-abortion march on Saturday 2 September. Abortion Rights have announced they will

hold a March for Choice counter-protest, details not yet fixed. A coalition of feminists, queer, trans, migrant, and anti-racist activists, including Women's Strike and Feminist Fightback, has called a protest assembling at the Home Office at noon. It's unclear so far whether the two pro-choice mobilisations will come together on the day.

There have been some small but lively pro-choice protests since Carla Foster was jailed after pleading guilty to procuring drugs to induce an abortion after the legal term limit.

In the US state-level attacks to abortion rights following the Supreme Court decision on Roe v Wade continue. Iowa will hold a special session on further restrictions. Abortion is currently legal in Iowa up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. The bill would ban abortion once cardiac

activity can be detected, which is usually around six weeks of pregnancy.

The current draft of the bill, which may be amended before a vote, includes limited exceptions for medical emergencies, rape, incest and fetal abnormality.

Planned Parenthood, has said it plans to protest outside the Iowa Capitol on Tuesday. Polling shows most Iowans do not support "heartbeat" bills or other further restrictions on abortion.

Most Republican-led states have significantly curbed abortion access in the year since the U.S. Supreme Court reversed itself on Roe v. Wade. Fourteen states have bans with limited exceptions and one state, Georgia, bans abortion after cardiac activity is detected. □

Capitalism and converging crises



Environment

By Stuart Jordan

Nancy Fraser's [Cannibal Capitalism](#) tells us that capitalist society is an insatiable glutton that "makes a meal of our creative capacities and of the earth that sustains us – with no obligation to replenish what they consume or repair what they damage".

Racism, sexism, ecocide and creeping authoritarianism are "non-accidental" features of capitalism's deep structure. Through blind, systemic parasitism on human and extra-human nature, capitalism undermines the social, political and natural bases of its own existence lurching into ever-escalating crises which resolve periodically into new regimes of accumulation. After four decades of neoliberalism, we are now at a moment of general, epochal crisis "in which multiple bouts of gluttony converge".

Fraser's emphasises that capital accumulation involves not only the exploitation of wage labour, but also the expropriation of racialised peoples, women and extra-human nature. "Exploitation transfers value to capital under the guise of a free contractual exchange... In expropriation by

contrast, capitalists dispense with all such niceties in favour of brute confiscation of others' assets." The primitive accumulation described by Marx was not simply a one-off historical event. Rather "expropriation is an ongoing, albeit unofficial, mechanism of accumulation, which continues alongside the official mechanism of exploitation". Capitalism is a "type of society...that authorises an officially designated economy to pile up the monetised value for investors and owners, while devouring the non-economised wealth of everyone else."

Capital

Through every successive regime, capital feeds evermore voraciously on the biosphere, treating non-human nature as both inexhaustible resource tap and infinite waste sink to the point where capitalism has now "destabilised its own ecological conditions of possibility".

Conscious that a complex global economy cannot simply do away with market exchange, Fraser advocates a socialism with "no markets at the top, no markets at the bottom but possibly some markets in between".

At "the top" the surplus product should be collectively owned by society as a whole and allocated via collective democratic decision-making.

This ensures the direction of economic development is under the control of society rather than impersonal market forces which lead inevitably to further capitalist feeding frenzy. Control of the surplus is also the answer to those who wish to fix the world's ecological crisis with the utopian demand for "degrowth".

Socialism "must deinstitutionalise the growth imperative hardwired into capitalist society...[but] this does not mean... that we must institutionalise degrowth as a hard-wired counter-imperative. It means, rather, that we must make the question of growth (how much, if any; what kind, how, and where) a political question, to be decided via a multi-dimensional reflection informed by climate science."

At "the bottom", the means of life such as "shelter, clothing, food, education, health care, transportation, communication, energy, leisure, clean water, breathable air" should be provided "as a matter of right, rather than on the basis of ability to pay". By decommodifying the means of life (however defined) workers will no longer be dependent on wages to simply live. Such a system of universal basic services would allow democratisation of work so we were not forced, by dull economic compulsion, to simply follow our bosses' orders.

The weakest part of Fraser's book is her suggestion that structural racism, sexism and ecocide were overlooked by Marx in favour of an almost exclusive focus on the exploitation of wage workers. This is not only ungenerous to Marx but betrays a deeper political deficit.

Emphasis

By placing heavy emphasis on the importance of these "non-economic domains", Fraser loses sight of the centrality of class struggle for socialist revolution. Fraser's agent of change is not a growing workers' movement, armed with an understanding of these multiple converging crises, but an ill-defined "counter-hegemonic bloc" that spontaneously generates out of "people" engaged in social struggles.

Anti-racist, feminist and environmental struggles are extremely important, but these movements alone cannot socialise capitalist property and democratise economic decision-making. Marxists prioritise class struggle not because we think workers are morally more worthy, but because the workers' movement is the only social force that has both the potential power and the interest to overthrow capitalism.

The multiple crises Fraser describes are also problems confronting the workers' move-

ment. To different degrees, all wage workers have their lives blighted by various forms of capitalist expropriation and most are on the sharp end of racial and/or gender-based oppression. The working-class is a class with radical chains and our mass organisations become a force in history to the extent we represent the interests of the whole class.

Only a workers' movement that champions anti-racist, feminist, internationalist, democratic and ecological struggle and can explain their common root will be up to the task of winning socialism. □



Activist Agenda

Our calendar for the summer and early autumn includes the Troublemakers at work conference, 29 July; the Student Cost of Living campaign activist weekend, 12-13 August; AWL summer camp, 25-28 August; pro-choice protests on 2 September; and protests at the Tory party conference in Manchester (People's Assembly, 1 Oct; NEU, 3 Oct). More at workersliberty.org/events, and template motions, campaign links, etc. at workersliberty.org/agenda □

France: cops and courts on a rampage

By Michael Elms

Since 27 June, France has seen waves of protests and rioting following the police killing of 17 year-old Nahel Merzouk during a traffic stop in the Paris suburb of Nanterre. Over 1,300 people have been arrested, over 700 police officers have been injured, and many schools, shops, police stations, town halls and other buildings have been set on fire, not to mention many cars. For over a week, many workers have been unable to get to work as public transport has been disrupted.

The unrest was a response to France's murderously racist and out-of-control police force. On 29 June, a protest march was organised in Nanterre by Nahel's family. Demonstrators raised slogans such as "Justice for Nahel!"; "Police everywhere, justice nowhere!"; "How many Nahels were not filmed?"; and "Death penalty abolished but we still fear for our lives".

On 14 June, another teenager, 19-year old Guinean migrant worker Alhoussein Camara, was shot to death by police in the town of Angoulême, while he commuted to work. He was slain at 4am while on his way from a migrant workers' hostel to his temporary job in a supermarket warehouse.

On 8 July, a demonstration was held in Paris, in spite of a police ban, in memory of Adama Traoré, who died in French police custody in 2016, at the age of 24.

The last similar outburst of rioting in the banlieues – suburbs around French cities which are home overwhelmingly to working-class and ethnic minority communities and plagued by deprivation – was in 2005, in which two children died when chased by police into an electricity substation.

The background to the latest shooting was a 2017 law brought in by President Emmanuel Macron's government, which gave the French police the right to open fire on drivers who attempt to escape traffic stops. In 2022 alone, police shot at vehicles 138 times, according to Deutsche Welle. The French outlet Basta records that while 27 people were killed by police in 2017, in 2020 the police killed 40. The number of police killings in France peaked at 52 in 2021. Inquest in the UK reports that in that same year, two people were killed by the police in England and Wales. Police violence in France now is more than the bottom-line level of violence inevitable with any capitalist police force.

Macron's 2017 law was surely de-

signed to help him and his party look tough and keep ahead of Marine Le Pen's far right Front National (FN) party, who were Macron's main competition for the presidency. This bidding war between these two parties has fuelled the rise of authoritarian and racist violence against the French working class.

But evidently Macron now feels that matters have got out of hand. Evidently hoping to head off protests, he described Nahel's killing as "inexcusable". The response of the French police's "trade unions" National Police Alliance and UNSA was to issue a statement criticising Macron for not accepting that the police were "at war" with "hordes of savages". The police demanded emergency powers to prosecute their "war" and threatened the government, saying that the police would surely soon be "resisting" the government, as well as the rioters.

In 2011, when rioting broke out in the UK, Workers' Liberty said the following:

"The rioting, looting and burning [...] can have no directly positive effects on the lives of those who riot or on the lives of their families. The very opposite is true.

"In politics the effect will be to strengthen the 'law and order' Right and push a lot of new people in their direction."

The rioting in French cities – what French socialists in Lutte Ouvrière have called "blind destructive rage" – is doing exactly that today. A fundraiser for Nahel Merzouk's family raised about a quarter of a million euros. A fundraiser for the policeman who killed Nahel has raised over a million. Anecdotal support for right-wing and law-and-order politics is on the rise even (or especially) among working-class people in the suburbs at the centre of the protests and riots who are scared and angry at the destruction of local schools, shops, etc. The latest opinion polls show Marine Le Pen's RN way ahead of Macron and of the left.

The French right and far right have the bit between their teeth. And the French judicial system is already responding to their agitation by heaping harsh punishments on young people. Of the more than 1,300 arrested, the French New Anticapitalist Party's [web-site](#) reports that a majority are aged between 13 and 18, "and are receiving very heavy punishment for very minor offences. Six months, ten months, a year in jail or more, for young people who by and large have no criminal records".



As we [wrote](#) in 2011:

"The labour movement must defend those young people who will now be hauled into the legal system. It must insist against the capitalist Establishment – the politicians, the press and the courts – that the responsibility for their blind raging anger lies squarely with those who run the Establishment that will now seek vengeance against them."

We agree with the comrades in Lutte Ouvrière who write that "blind destructive rage must not win out". And we agree with the following [call](#) of 30 June, signed by the former socialist Presidential candidates Olivier Besancenot and Philippe Poutou:

"Justice means first and foremost justice for Nahel, for Zyed and Bouna, for Adama, for Alhoussein, for the three

young people in the 20th arrondissement of Paris who were hit by a police car, for all the victims of police violence, for the people maimed in the protests. The guilty parties must be punished, and the victims and their families must be compensated.

"We must put an end to preventive detention and release the young people imprisoned as a result of the demonstrations of recent nights. Let's not forget that all the responsibility for these events lies with the government.

"Public transport must be re-established in the neighbourhoods, and any state of emergency or curfew must be rejected.

"The police must be disarmed immediately.

"And Darmanin must resign." □



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Four days in west Ukraine

By Sacha Ismail

Between 2 and 5 July I was in west-ern Ukraine (Lviv, Novovolynsk and nearby), delivering trade union aid and meeting labour movement and left activists with the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (USC).

What I saw and the conversations and discussions we had underscored the urgency of defending Ukraine against Russian imperialism and defending its working class and labour movement against both Russia and the Zelenskyy government. At the same time, some things surprised me.

Why and how we went

Alongside political campaigning, USC has organised various forms of practical aid. This includes fundraising to deliver vehicles – eight so far – to various unions to pass on to their members in the army (people in the Ukrainian diaspora are apparently doing similar, usually without the union connection). The vehicle we drove to Ukraine in, a 4x4 pick-up truck, was bought in response to a request by the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU), the more militant of the country's two federations. It went via KVPU members to the brigade they are serving in, the 80th Air Assault. The back was full of equipment and supplies, including fire-fighting gear for the rescuers' section of KVPU miners' union NGPU.

In addition to money USC crowd-funded, we got sizeable donations from unions including GMB and ASLEF. The person I drove with, Chris Ford, did a huge amount of logistical work to make it all possible.

We got the Eurotunnel on Friday 30 June and drove to Antwerp; on 1 July to Dresden; on 2 July through southern Poland to the Ukrainian border. It took us more than four hours to get over; the military-related nature of our visit seemed to speed things up in some respects, but then we ran into the bureaucracy of customs. Although the customs officer was helpful, they couldn't find the right forms, the email didn't work, they couldn't get hold of their manager and so on for a long time... It was almost 5am when we finally got to our hotel in Lviv, and we were meeting people from KVPU to hand over the truck at 9am.

On the way back it was worse: our bus got through quicker, but then Polish border guards took a Ukrainian woman and her kid off the bus and held them for three and a half hours. We never found out why; and it was surprising, since in general Ukrainians seem to move over the border relatively freely (though non-refugees can't live in Poland). In total it took us over six hours to get through, so our planned

time in Kraków was reduced to meeting someone from Polish left party Razem for half an hour before we rushed to the airport.

Lviv

Lviv is the largest city in western Ukraine, the most "purely" Ukrainian part of the country. However it was the countryside that was traditionally Ukrainian in this way; until after World War 2 Lviv had a Polish majority (Polish name Lwow). It was once part of the Austro-Hungarian empire (German name Lemberg). Although the vast majority of people in the city are now Ukrainian, its history is still marked in various ways, including central-Europe-reminiscent architecture (it's very old-worldly beautiful) and the prevalence of a version of Catholicism.

A lot of the lefties we met were from the east of Ukraine; several said that for all its size and cosmopolitan heritage Lviv is rather conservative.

As soon as we got there we were stopped by a police roadblock, and struck by the ubiquitous metal anti-tank spikes – albeit many of them now moved out of the way. Lviv is pretty much the safest part of the country. Yet the day we left the Russians bombed the city again, destroying a block, injuring nine and killing four. A comrade we had spent the evening before with messaged to say they felt scared in Lviv for the first time.

Workers

The two young guys working for the KVPU took us to the local office of its education union, and we met three school teacher activists, members of the union's Lviv council, for a short meeting, alongside a doctor who we'd spend most of the day with.

The three teachers, Halyna, Nataliia and Nadia, told us about the very difficult situation in Ukraine's schools. In addition to the hundreds that have been destroyed or damaged, many – including in Lviv – have to support large numbers of internally-displaced children, many of them traumatised or with a variety of difficult needs. And Ukrainian children who have fled abroad are still doing their Ukrainian school work as well; teachers are helping them largely in their own time, and without any extra money.

We told them about the moves by school workers in the NEU and education workers in UCU to set up solidarity networks. They would be keen, they said, to get stronger links with teachers and their unions in the UK – partly to help raise money and support for their schools, but also just to learn about what the education system and trade unions are like in a very different country.



The vehicle delivered to the KVPU member in the army

The doctor at the meeting, Mahomed, drove us to his home town, Novovolynsk, about two hours from Lviv – where he is secretary of the KVPU health union at the local hospital. With translation from Denys, an activist in socialist organisation Sotsialnyi Rukh, he told us his life story.

Mahomed was born in rural Dagestan and, against the wishes of his village elders, came to Ukraine in the 70s to study medicine. (He is in touch with friends and family back home, who are apparently divided over Russia's attack on Ukraine.) He described healthcare in the Soviet Union: free and socialised on paper, but heavily rationed for the majority and usually requiring payment due to pervasive corruption. He became a doctor to promote a different set of values, he said, and the same values led him to become a trade union activist.

I asked Mahomed what he thought about socialism and was surprised by his answer. He said he thought socialism was a good idea, but that the Soviet rulers didn't actually believe in it; he wished their system had been replaced by a more meaningful version of socialism with democracy and – he stressed this – open borders, instead of the chaos of private capitalism.

Mahomed told us that, in the midst of the war, Ukraine's economically Thatcherite government is closing down numerous hospitals, particular in small towns. Volyn, the region of Novovolynsk, is one of few places where they have so far managed to block this, with the campaign ongoing.

He took us round the hospital – for which, at the request of the union, USC is now running an [appeal](#). We met a va-

riety of staff (all apparently employed by the hospital, with no outsourcing) and some patients.

We were joined by two miners from nearby Mine No 9, site last October of a [strike](#) against corruption (illegal under martial law). The NGPU branch secretary, Serhiy, had recovered at the hospital after being wounded at the front. They took us to the mine, where we met other workers and Serhiy inscribed an NGPU flag to take to Durham Miners' Gala.

The startling thing about both hospital and mine was the antique equipment and facilities. Both are predominantly using machines from the 1980s, or earlier. The mine in particular looked to us like a film set; one room we thought was dilapidated and out of use turned out to be showers. Workers at both confirmed there had been very little investment for decades, even before Covid and the Russian invasion.

Mine No 9, and Ukraine's mines generally, face near-future closure, and there is little discussion about what might replace them in terms of jobs.

On the second day we met socialist and feminist political activists, and I'll write about that next time. □



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Hugo Blanco 1934-2023

By Tom Harrison

Peruvian revolutionary socialist Hugo Blanco, who died in Sweden last month, needs to be recognised as a significant figure in the history of the Trotskyist movement.

He became a Trotskyist as a student in Argentina in the 1950s, then returned to Peru. Sixty years ago, [connected](#) to the international trend led by the Socialist Workers Party in the USA, he played a major role in the peasant movement in La Convencion province in the Cuzco region of Peru. The majority of the peasantry there and elsewhere in the country laboured under semi-feudal conditions. Belonging to the indigenous population, their situation was further compounded by national oppression.

In his book about this struggle, *Land or Death*, Blanco summed up their situation thus:

"The Indian is an oppressed nationality. Although the wall separating the Indians from the mestizos (those of mixed Spanish and Indian ancestry) and the whites is not as solid as in the case of the Afro-Americans and the whites in the United States, their humiliation and oppression is worse. Their language, their music, their manner of dress, their tastes and their customs are ridiculed, suppressed and denigrated."

The indigenous people of Peru at that time were denied voting rights through illiteracy disqualification and deprived of ownership of their ancestral lands – a process begun in the Spanish colonial period and still continuing into the 1960s. Blanco regarded it of the utmost importance for revolutionaries to learn

the main indigenous language – Quechua – if they were to have a serious chance of leading the struggle.

Blanco and his comrades set about organising peasant unions and occupying haciendas. Their movement would soon be met with severe repression from the state, leading them to form a guerrilla group to defend themselves.

Blanco would always argue that such armed resistance needed to develop as a consequence of class struggle. In that he diverged from the Guevarist current prevalent in Latin America at the time, whose devotees sought to "follow the Cuban example" of achieving revolution via a small guerrilla band unconnected to existing mass movements.

Nevertheless, the strength of state repression he faced would lead to Blanco's arrest and attempts to impose the death penalty. Mass demonstrations in Peru averted that and he was released in 1970 following the "progressive" military coup led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado.

Velasco's government was intent on carrying out a Bismarckian-style "revolution from above" to defuse the social situation. Among other things, it enacted a substantial land reform. That was welcomed by the Castro regime, although Blanco, refusing to be associated with it, described it as "half hearted". Such criticism led him to be exiled to Chile in 1971.

Subsequently, Blanco spent many years either in exile or returning to Peru. He made a hair-raising escape from Chile after the coup there in 1973. After another return to Peru, he had to go into exile again when he was caught between death threats from both the



reactionary Fujimori regime and the Pol-Pot-like Maoist Sendero Luminoso movement.

In his later years Blanco's health deteriorated, partly due to the beatings he'd received during captivity. He still remained sympathetic to orthodox Trotskyism (though the SWP-USA had collapsed into Castroism after 1979), and for a time drew inspiration from the Zapatista movement in Mexico. His main preoccupation became the struggle for indigenous rights and their relation to environmental depredation, and he expressed that through the *Lucha*

Indigena (Indigenous Struggle) newspaper he published.

The photograph of Blanco dressed in traditional indigenous costume side by side with Greta Thunberg must have pride of place in the homes of his two daughters, who live in Sweden.

Hugo Blanco died on 23 June, but so far obituaries seem thin on the ground. This class fighter needs to be remembered. I strongly recommend reading his book, *Land or Death, The Peasant Struggle in Peru*. Readers might also consider *Hugo Blanco: A Revolutionary Through Life* by Derek Wall. □

Some "affirmative action" still thrives

By John Reimann

Contrary to what is being reported, the Republican-controlled US Supreme Court has not prohibited affirmative action. It has only prohibited affirmative action that does not benefit white people.

For example, the Republican majority on the court allowed "legacy" admissions. That means that if your daddy (and it probably was your daddy) went to Harvard (and your grandpa also probably preceded him there), then it's fine for you to have a leg up. But since legacies inevitably favor those who were priv-

ileged in the past – meaning white people – then this means that pro-white affirmative action is permissible.

The court hides behind the pretence that society is colour-blind. That is a lie.

For example, the University of Pennsylvania Law School studied racial disparities in criminal cases. They reported: "Black, White and Latinx indigent defendants in San Francisco have substantially different experiences during the criminal adjudication process. Specifically, defendants of colour are more likely to be held in custody during their cases, which tend to take longer than the cases of

White defendants. Their felony charges are less likely to be reduced, and misdemeanor charges more likely to be increased during the plea bargaining process, meaning that they are convicted of more serious crimes than similarly situated White defendants.

Variance

"In addition... Latinx defendants plead guilty to a smaller fraction of the charges they are booked for than Black or White defendants. After examining multiple potential causes of these differences, we find that the majority of the variance can be explained by two factors: the initial booking de-

cisions made by officers of the San Francisco Police Department and racial differences in previous contact with the criminal justice system in San Francisco County."

Note that while poverty is of course a factor, indigent white defendants are treated differently from indigent defendants of colour. So, this form of "affirmative action" – in favor of whites – is perfectly okay with the Supreme Court, just so long as nobody openly says what they are doing.

What is true in the criminal (in)justice system is true in the education system and in employment. The one exception the Supreme Court granted

was for the military. They are allowed to continue practising affirmative action. Why? Because it's recognized that diversity strengthens the military as a whole.

But if that's true for the military, it's true for schools too – diversity in the universities strengthens the student body, helps all students learn. But it's not so vital for the interests of US capitalism as is a strong and loyal military. So therefore it can fall by the wayside in the interests of pleasing the Republicans' racist base. □

• Taken from John Reimann's "Oakland Socialist" blog: bit.ly/leg-a

The left and a famous cartoonist



Book review

By Simon Nelson

The Ruling Clawss, by A. Redfield, was originally published by the *Daily Worker* (US) in 1935. It is now re-published as *The Ruling Clawss: The Socialist Cartoons of Syd Hoff*. Hoff was unknown to me. But after a career as a cartoonist for the *New Yorker* and Hearst publications from the 1930s he found fame in the USA as a children's author and illustrator, with *Danny and the Dinosaur* (1958) selling more than ten million copies.

The cartoons in *The Ruling Clawss* are from 1933-35. They appeared in the *Daily Worker* as a single panel strip poking fun at the wealthy and ruling class during the depression and New Deal.

By then Communist Party USA was coming out of its ultra-left "Third Period" into the era of the "Popular Front" (ally with "progressive" capitalists against fascism). The cartoons work through broad brush strokes against the selfishness and greed of the US ruling class, still doing well in the Depression era.

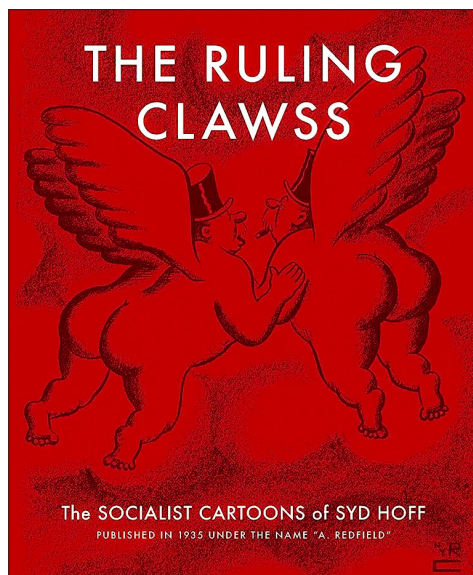
They are not the same sort of thing as the later, more biting and politically intricate cartoons of Trotskyist cartoonists like Carlo and Laura, who would come to address a left in disarray over supporting or not the Russian Stalinist state. Those are available in the book from Workers' Liberty *In an era of war*

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and revolutions. Hoff's cartoons were firmly in a populist mould, satirising greedy individual capitalists rather than the whole system.

At the same time as Hoff was writing as A. Redfield in the *Daily Worker*, he had a regular strip published in the *New Yorker*, satirical but not biting against the follies of the rich and a commentary on tenement life for much of New York city's workers.

Hoff was born in 1912, into a middle-class Jewish family in the Bronx, New York. By 1930 Hoff had his first drawing in the *New Yorker*. In 1931 he was politically activated by the Scottsboro Boys trial: nine black men accused, falsely, of raping two white women in Alabama. He joined the John Reed Club (a CP front group) and started to produce work as A. Redfield for the *Daily Worker* and the CP-linked magazine *New Masses*. After attending Camp Unity, an event affiliated to the CPUSA, he joined in 1935. The same year, this compilation of his cartoons was published by the CP. He was now a part of the *Daily Worker* staff and art director of *New Pioneer*, a youth magazine backed by the CP.



"... we who turn the wheels of industry ..."



"In a way, I'm glad I did it. This place would be absolutely intolerable if I were innocent."
(*New Yorker*, Dec 1, 1951)

By 1939 Hoff was trying his hand at gag-writing, and at getting more books published. He had remained active in the Cartoonist Guild, supporting their campaigns for better pay, and a member of the CP. Hoff had gone on to create (in 1939) his most successful syndicated cartoon, *Tuffy*, about a little girl doing humorous things, which the press magnate William Hearst would declare to be vital for national morale



"Isn't the machine age marvelous, Honey? All papa does is talk into the dictaphone and presto—a hundred men are laid off!"

during World War Two.

The *Daily Worker* published his first children's book, *Mr His, A Children's Story for Anybody*, in 1939, with the byline A. Redfield. But by 1940 his output as A. Redfield was lessening (whether because he became disillusioned about the 1939-41 Stalin-Hitler pact, we can't tell: more below). His next children's book, *Muscles and Brains* (1940), was through an ordinary commercial publisher. His cartoon output during the war included a lot of patriotic propaganda.

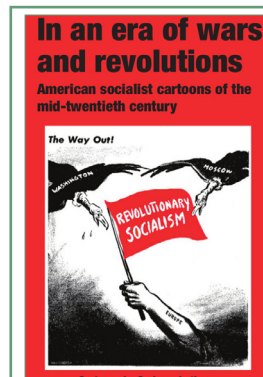
In 1951, however, he appeared at a march to ban the atom bomb and was photographed next to arch-Stalinist Corliss Lamont. He was questioned by the FBI and gave a voluntary statement about his work as A. Redfield. In the McCarthy era of persecution of the left, then opening, in contrast to the current



"Give him a nickel, sweetheart. After all, you made a couple of million on the war."

US far-right agitation to purge libraries and schools, children's writers were largely left alone. Children's books were seen as unserious and unimportant for blacklisting. But Syd Hoff seems to have dropped all political activity or affiliation after that. In an [autobiography](#) available on a commemorative website, and written in 1987, he made no mention of his A. Redfield work or support for the CP. Hoff died in 2004. In a 2000 letter to the academic [Philip Nel](#), who has written an introduction to the 2023 book, Hoff was still at pains to ask that his CP past not be made public, believing it would harm him as a children's author. Given the populist character of the cartoons, in tune with the CP's Popular Front era, it is hard to discern exactly what Hoff was quite so concerned about.

We can only guess at Hoff's view of Stalinist repression in the USSR, and the total destruction of the workers' democracy of 1917, by the time he had got involved. We are left with one tid-bit on [Philip Nel's website](#) which tells us of a Hoff cartoon from 1939, "The locomotive of history", showing a train leaving behind all those now-ex members of the CP who did not support the Hitler-Stalin pact. Like many other people who decided to hide their views during the repressive McCarthy era, Hoff ended up using his great talents to paint up, if only implicitly, a state that was worse-than-McCarthyite but with a red gloss. □



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Connolly and the 1916 Rising, part 2

Introduction



Connolly politically unexpurgated

By Sean Matgamna

In *War is Hell* (page 12) James Connolly offers a prize example of the [running with the hare and riding with the hounds](#) he got into during World War One.

He paints a true picture of the horrors of war for all its participants. He seems to be against all imperialist war. It reads like speeches that could have been and were made by any socialist

before 1914. Indeed, war is hell. We are against war.

But Connolly, you notice, applies this idea to Irishmen in the British Army and to the British Empire. He is himself, by then, an active propagandist for Germany, an active supporter of the German Empire, an advocate for the idea of the progressive character of its war on the British Empire.

The idea that there can't be a civilised war, that all war is necessarily hell, was used early in the war by Connolly as defender of the German Empire and defender of German anti-civilian actions in Belgium: all war is hell and therefore it was unjust propaganda to focus on

Germany's horrors in Belgium (then unique of their sort).

General socialist opposition to war and what it brings was used one-sidedly and as a weapon on one imperial side; and then used later to show that Connolly was anti-imperialist and anti-war, when he was actively on the side of German imperialism and its war.

The piece titled here (more accurately) *The German, not the British Empire* (though Connolly's own headline was slightly different) speaks for itself. It is nonsensical, and also simply untrue. As well as ruling a large part of Poland, Germany had colonies in Africa. And, if Connolly's claim about the difference



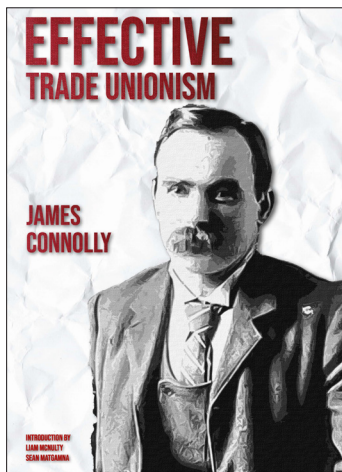
of technique between the two empires were true, what difference would that make? □

• This is the second instalment of James Connolly's writings which prepared for the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin against British rule, and which offered his arguments for his new alignment with the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Part of our long-running series on Connolly: workersliberty.org/connolly

Watch and wait

By James Connolly

*Watch and Wait, boys, watch and wait,
Let it be your motto, ever,
Foolish zeal, unguarded hate,
Often baulks a brave endeavour.
God ordains, boys, God ordains
That we pine a little longer,*



Aiming to replace capitalism with socialism, James Connolly's organising and ideas evolved considerably. One idea he clung to from the turn of the century to his death was industrial unionism, workers' solidarity across grades and trades, and sympathetic strikes. That is how he saw his work in the Irish Transport Union. 64 pages £5 □ workersliberty.org/publications

*Ere we burst the galling chains,
Ere we crush the brutal wronger.*

Did ever you read and ponder over these lines of Gavan Duffy? They were written at a time in Irish history wonderfully similar to the present. At a time of unrest and longing for struggle, tempered by preachings of caution.

It was in the days of the Young Irelanders. Eloquent voices had been preaching of the glories of the sword and eulogising the rights of nations to take back their own with armed hand; sweet singers had been wedding the hope of Irish patriots to deathless verse in heroic measures; the hearts of the young men of the Irish race were swelling with the passions of hatred for oppression and ambition for freedom, and the Great Famine was lashing the most stolid into willingness to try any adventure that held out hope of food for the perishing millions.

Ireland seemed, even to the most cautious and calculating foreign observer, to be on the point of great endeavours.

Instead of the great adventure Ireland witnessed the most sordid, squalid, meanest fiasco in all her history. Fintan Lalor, in one of those biting sentences of his which seem to crystallise a whole volume of history, says:

The soul of this country seems to sink where that of another would soar.

To tell how that fiasco took its place in Irish history instead of a Great Adventure like unto that of Tone and Emmet, would be to give point and corroboration to the above analysis of the character of the soul of Ireland.

It is a hard tale to tell, and a harder one to understand, unless your own soul is attuned in harmony with the passions of the actors in that great squalid tragedy of our history.

As your soul is attuned in sympathy to one side or the other, so one side or the other is comprehensible to you – and the other an unsolved and insoluble problem.

As in all revolutionary movements there came a point when all agreed that force would have to settle the differences between Ireland and the British Empire. But immediately there arose a cleavage between the revolutionists who desired to strike, and the tacticians who counselled greater preparedness and the desirability of "putting the Government plainly in the wrong".

It was the clash between the outlook of revolutionists, and the outlook of politicians manoeuvring for a political advantage, and yet both sides were earnestly revolutionary.

You can grasp that fact if you study carefully the verse at the beginning of these notes. There is not a sentiment in them that at first glance would not be endorsed by every true nationalist, and yet practically every true nationalist deplores the fact that the counsel there given was taken by the Irish people at the time.

As a counsel of caution they ring true. As a historical fact it was such counsel that permitted John Mitchel to be carried off safely in chains, and stuck a dagger to the heart of the Irish insurrection of 1848.

The literature of the '48 Insurrection was beautiful; the story of the Insurrection itself reads like the book of a badly written burlesque.

Another poem of a similar character to that quoted above written at the same time and for the same purpose, viz: to restrain the revolutionary spirit of the people, is we think one of the finest revolutionary songs in the English language.

It breathes revolutionary feeling and democratic spirit in every line, yet the sum total of its effects at the time was to tighten the hold of the enemy upon this country, and to hold the people in leash until the opportune moment was passed.

Yet its author, M.J. Barry, with peculiar logic declared afterwards that as the Irish people

had failed to make even a decent fight in 1848 he considered the cause of Ireland hopeless, and would thereafter accept the English connection with all its consequences.

The song in question is by its own merits worthy of a place in any nationalist or Labour Concert programme, but we do not remember hearing it sung at any such in Ireland, although it is a favourite in revolutionary circles elsewhere. Here it is:

I
*Bide your time, the morn is breaking,
Bright with Freedom's blessed ray –*

*Millions, from their trance awaking,
Soon shall stand in firm array.
Man shall fetter man no longer,
Liberty shall march sublime;
Every moment makes you stronger,
Firm, unshrinking, bide your time.*

II
Bide your time – one false step taken

*Perils all you yet have done;
Undismayed, erect, unshaken –
Watch and wait, and all is won.
'Tis not by a rash endeavour
Men or states to greatness climb –*

*Would you win your rights forever
Calm and thoughtful, bide your time.*

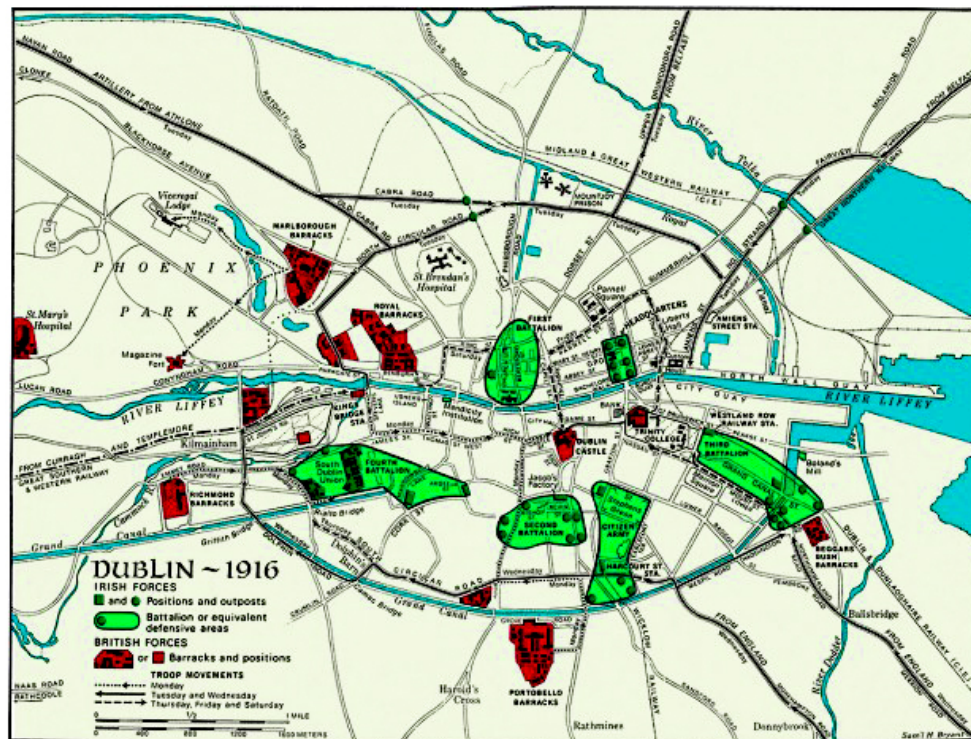
III
Bide your time – your worst

The German, not the British Empire

By James Connolly

Nothing warms the cockles of my old heart so much as when some British Socialist kind-heartedly approves of my attitude – approves of it “except,” “but,” and “only for.” Especially am I pleased when I learn from his letter that he has only read one copy of the *Workers’ Republic*, is only just arrived in Ireland, but nevertheless understands our position thoroughly, and is only filled with pity for the “sweet innocence” that inspires our little mistakes in such matters as a desire to vindicate the character of the enemies of the British capitalist Government.

Perhaps after he has been here as many years as he has been days he will begin to understand that the instinct of the slave to take sides with whoever is the enemy of his own particular slave-driver is a healthy instinct, and makes for freedom. That every Socialist who knows what he is talking about must be in favour of freedom of the seas, must desire that private property shall be immune from capture at sea during war,



must realise that as long as any one nation dominates the water highways

of the world neither peace nor free industrial development is possible for

the world. If the capitalists of other nations desire the freedom of the seas for selfish reasons of their own that does not affect the matter. Every Socialist anxiously awaits and prays for that full development of the capitalist system which can alone make Socialism possible, but can only come into being by virtue of the efforts of the capitalists inspired by selfish reasons.

The German Empire is a homogeneous Empire of self-governing peoples; the British Empire is a heterogeneous collection in which a very small number of self-governing communities connive at the subjugation, by force, of a vast number of despotically ruled subject populations.

We do not wish to be ruled by either empire, but we certainly believe that the first named contains in germ more of the possibilities of freedom and civilisation than the latter. □

• *Workers’ Republic*, 18 March 1916, there titled The German or the British Empire?

→ from page 10

transgression

Were to strike, and strike in vain;

He, whose arm would smite oppression,
Must not need to smite again!
Danger makes the brave man steady –

Rashness is the coward’s crime
Be for Freedom’s battle ready,
When it comes – but, bide your time.

You will perhaps wonder at our statement that a certain section of the revolutionists of 1848 resolved not to strike, unless and until they saw an opportunity of “putting England in the wrong”. The idea that this left it to the Government to choose the time, the place, and the circumstances for the fight doubtless did occur to them but was not allowed to alter their purpose. They grandly declared that they would not be driven before their time.

Eventually the Government, having leisurely made all its preparations – and preparations made by a government with untold millions at its disposal can always outmatch a thousand to one the preparations made illegally by a few thousand poverty stricken men and women – having made all its preparations the Government issued orders for the arrest of the Young Ire-

land leaders. They took to the country, and issued the call for insurrection. Smith O’Brien was the chief, and in the course of his peregrinations he arrived at the village of Killaule. Here it was reported that a body of Dragoons were approaching with a warrant for his apprehension. Instantly the people prepared to fight. They barricaded one end of the village and as the dragoons rode in at the other end the people raised barricades behind them. The soldiers were trapped, and Stephens was about to fire upon the officer in command, when Smith O’Brien ordered him to lower his rifle. Then upon being assured by the English officer that he had no warrant for Smith O’Brien’s arrest that gentleman ordered the people to clear a passage for the soldiers who thereupon rode safely away.

You see it would not put the government in the wrong to fire upon the army unless the army fired first, and government outraged their own constitution.

Now do you understand what we have meant when we said that Irish rebels had a constitutional frame of mind – wanted to conduct revolutions according to constitutional procedure?

They wanted to establish it as a fact in history that they

were driven into rebellion against their wills. And regarded it as a disgraceful thing that they should be accused of eagerly seeking revolution, and as longing for a chance to begin the fight for freedom.

We do not know if there are any such to-day amongst us. If there are they are a danger. Ireland needs no legal excuses for revolution. The presence of English government in this country, be that government bad or good, is at all times provocation and outrage enough. It is not native, it rests upon no sanction but force, and it holds the interests of a foreign empire to be superior to the well-being of the Irish people.

But once again the old clash of opinions arises. Is the time here, or is it not? Who knows? Perhaps the writer of these Notes on the Front is wrong.

Perhaps the writer of the following poem is right. At any rate, like its predecessors that we have already quoted, it is beautifully written, and worthy of a place. Read:

The Watching Hour
A steel grey dawn is in the sky,
Above the watchers on each hill;
And you who live and you who die
Shall preach a race unconquered still.
Tho’ lingering wait may often

tire,
And idle critic’s words may gall;
Keep watch upon the signal fire,
Whose burning blaze is Ireland’s call.
A soldier knows how to obey,
To ‘wait the word with arms girth;
Nor lag behind nor chide delay;
Disciplined strength gives Freedom birth.
And you whose ardent souls now chide
The hand that holds you from the fray,
Remember that a nation’s pride
A nation’s life hangs on the day.
Then watch beneath the steel grey sky,
Beside the watchers on each hill,
Till you who live and you who die,
May prove a race unconquered still.

– Patrick Hogan

So we have given the other side a look in this time. This being the blessed Christmas season we do this in order to show our kindly Christmas feelings to our erring brothers. We have been given to understand that some of them do not appreciate our suggestions at their proper value, and even a few, a very few, are a little irritated, and say that we

are not playing the game fair.

Well, all we can say is that our allegiance is not to the game, nor to the players of the game, but to Ireland and the cause of Freedom. To some people the Game has become more important than the Cause, and they as the players of the Game more important than either. It is not a new frame of mind in Ireland, witness the incident of Smith O’Brien who made the question of “Insurrection or no Insurrection” turn upon whether an officer had or had not a warrant for his arrest, but there are few who share it. And these few can safely be ignored.

The needs of our time call for a frank recognition of the fact that our slogan must be
All for the Cause
and
The Cause over All.

Shall we see another year and Ireland patiently bearing her chains?

To all slaves in Revolt we wish A Merry Christmas!

• *Workers’ Republic*, 25 December 1915, there titled Notes On The Front

War in Hell is found on page 12

War is hell

By James Connolly

O'Rourke (London) – Thanks, comrade. We are more proud of the comradeship of toilers like yourself than you can well imagine. It is such loyalty as yours that keeps us hopeful of our class and country.

Cú Chulainn (Dundalk) – No! We do not believe that war is glorious, inspiring, or regenerating. We believe it to be hateful, damnable, and damning. And the present war upon Germany we believe to be a hell-inspired outrage. Any person, whether English, German, or Irish, who sings the praises of war is, in our opinion, a blithering idiot. But when a nation has been robbed it should strike back to recover her lost property. Ireland has been robbed of her freedom, and to recover it should strike swiftly and relentlessly, and in such a fashion as

will put the fear of God in the hearts of all who connived at the robbery or its continuance. But do not let us have any more maudlin trash about the "glories of war", or the "regenerative influence of war", or the "sacred mission of the soldier", or the "fertilising of all earth with the heroic blood of her children", etc, etc. We are sick of it, the world is sick of it. And when combined with the cant about "patience", and "waiting", and the "folly of rashness", and the "wisdom of caution", and all the other phrases that are to be heard from the Irish eulogists of war we confess it gives us a feeling like sea-sickness – nausea.

No, friend! War is hell, but if freedom is on the farther side shall even hell be allowed to daunt us.

• *Workers' Republic*, 25 December 1915, there titled Correspondents

NEU: 5-7 July strikes strong

By David Pendleton

Teachers in the National Education Union (NEU) struck again in England on 5 and 7 July, in their dispute over pay and funding. The strikes were mostly solid, and there were well-supported demonstrations and rallies, including one in London which drew thousands, from the city and across the south east of England.

Speakers in London included the leaders of the school leadership unions NAHT and ASCL, who are balloting their members for action in the autumn term, alongside the NEU, and Labour MPs John McDonnell and Kim Johnson.

Carol Monaghan MP (SNP) usefully reiterated the SNP's commitment not to issue "work notices" under the Tories' new Minimum Service legislation, i.e. not to use the law to stop strikes.

St Mungo's strikers and others also spoke.

NEU activists are now working to ensure large turnouts and positive votes



in the support-staff ballot (ends 11 August) and the teachers' re-ballot (ends 28 July).

If the ballots are successful, the union should set a significant and escalating calendar of strikes alongside the demonstration at Tory party conference on 3 October.

The pace of this action must not be dictated by the leadership unions or other unions. There are always objections about the timing of strikes in schools: every time has arguable downsides. However, the autumn term is the best time for sustained strikes and escalation. □



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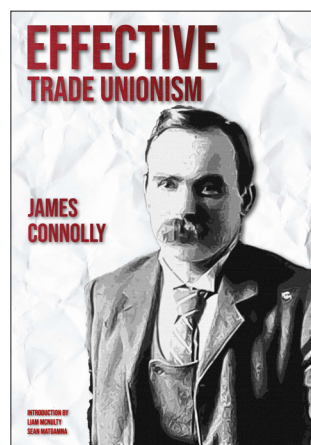
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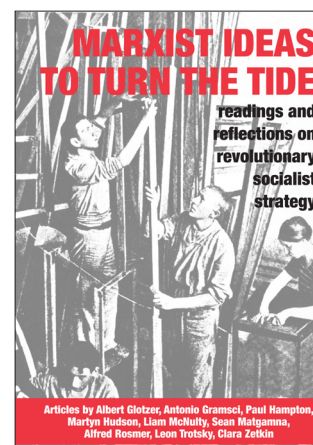
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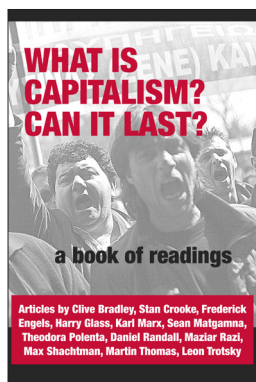
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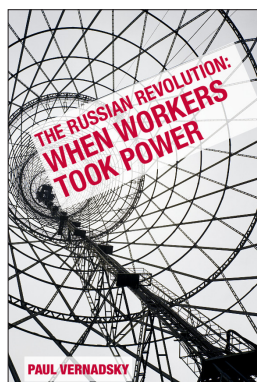
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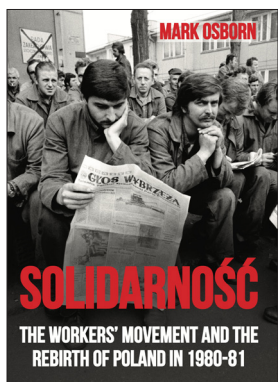
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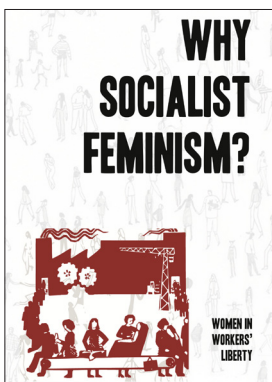
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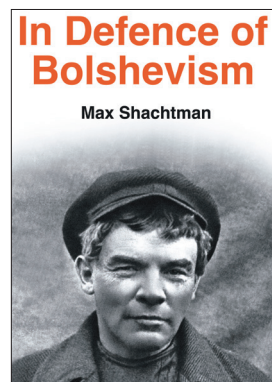
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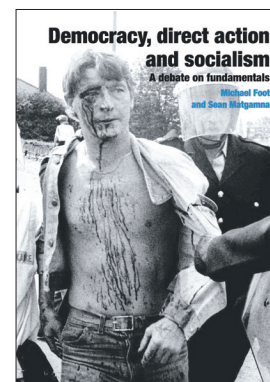
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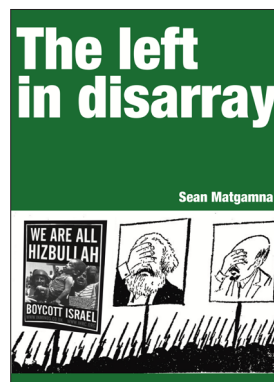
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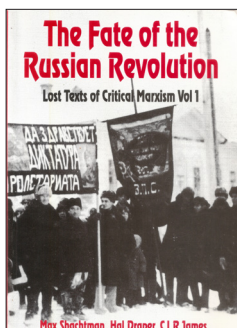
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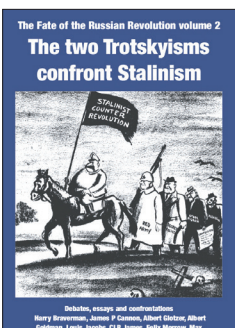
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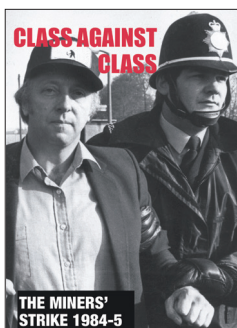
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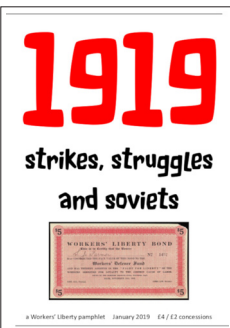
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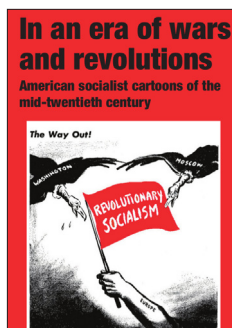
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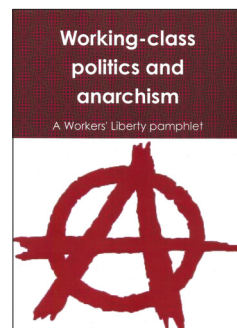
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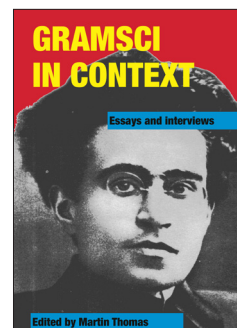
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Local government: after the ballot setback



By Cy Grove

The results of Unison's 23 May-4 July industrial action ballot for school and council workers covered by the National Joint Council (NJC) negotiations for local government were not good, despite 82,000 members voting for action (75%). The national turnout was 31.5%.

In many local elections councillors get elected on similar turnout, but the Trade Union Act 2016 blocks pro-strike majority votes for action by insisting on a 50% minimum turnout.

Members were balloted for industrial action on a pay offer of £1,925 (£2,352 for London members), below inflation for all pay grades.

The ballot was disaggregated to myriad different employers covered by NJC terms and conditions.

Data available indicates that most branches got over a 30% but only two of the branches with over 1,000 members, Lambeth, and Knowsley, beat the

50% turnout. In total the 50% threshold was beaten in over 700 employers, mostly schools and mostly relatively small numbers of members in each.

Of the 345,000 members balloted, Unison has a strike mandate for around 10,000 members, 2.9% of the overall membership that were balloted.

Many branches got over 40% turnout, but still short of the required 50%.

The result is very disappointing, though a clear improvement on the 2022 pay ballot, where the average turnout was only 14%.

Activists report that the reasons for low turnout were general pessimism from many workplace reps and not having enough activists on the ground campaigning and promoting the ballot.

The quality of data that branches hold is poor, with a lot out of date and incorrect so that members did not receive ballot papers.

That was a problem in the 2022 pay ballot too, but the bureaucracy did not put resources into supporting branches to cleanse their data. The materials produced by Unison nationally for the ballot were poor, and branches got very little regional support.

Members are also reporting that they had difficulty getting replacement bal-

lots via the ballot helpline, with replacement ballots being sent out in batches and not daily. Some councils may have missed the threshold just because of failure to replace ballots quickly.

Scotland in 2022 showed that action even by small numbers of workers – bin workers in Edinburgh, plus the threat of school strikes in several but not all councils – could get an improved pay offer across local government.

Activists plan to work with Time for Real Change (the left caucus which has a narrow majority on Unison's National Executive, despite the full-time apparatus being right-dominated) and pressure the NJC to quickly re-ballot all branches that achieved a turnout of 40%.

The two large councils, five small councils and hundreds of schools which have a mandate for strike action should organise with the NEU to co-ordinate strikes in September and maximise impact, while Unison uses this profile to boost the turnout in those councils and schools being re-balloted.

We also want a campaign over the summer to prepare for autumn action and re-ballots to raise the profile, enthuse activists, and improve the data that Unison branches hold, to bring

that 50% threshold within reach. □



Royal Mail deal approved

Communication Workers' Union (CWU) members in Royal Mail have approved the union leaders' deal with Royal Mail by 75.8% to 24.2%, on a 67.1% turnout. *Solidarity* backed a "no" vote, and believes that "no" would not have won if not for union leaders winding down action for months before bringing the deal to members. Reporting the vote, union general secretary Dave Ward said that "if the company carries on [as it has done], then it's going to end in disaster". Better, it should end in renewed resistance, in whatever form possible! The bosses are likely to exploit every weakness in the deal to the maximum. □

Universities: risk of a shoddy deal

By a UCU member

With universities now into graduation season, the University and College Union

(UCU) marking and assessment boycott is continuing. In some institutions, management have used scab markers or averaging of marks, overrid-

ing basic academic standards to make sure students would graduate on time. In others, they have issued provisional certificates in place of actual

degrees. The agenda of employers' organisation UCEA was laid plain when student journalists at Aberdeen obtained WhatsApp messages from their VC (UCEA's chair), saying that pay deductions should be arranged to cause staff "pain".

Labour leader Keir Starmer, meanwhile, openly undermined the dispute, saying in a Radio 4 interview that he was "very uncomfortable" that staff weren't doing the marking, and that he would tell them to do it. In response, the majority of the National Labour Students' Committee wrote in an open letter that they were "appalled" by his comments, saying: "As the historic party of the labour movement, it's beyond necessary for us to show unwavering support to workers fighting for a better deal. Labour should be unequivocally supporting UCU members trying to make a better, more sustainable HE sector".

The UCU leadership, however, caused consternation in other unions when General Secretary Jo Grady wrote unilaterally to UCEA offering a "final opportunity" for talks.

The move was backed by a vote at Higher Education Committee in which Grady's supporters lined up with the right, but had not been discussed with the Unison leadership, which is currently balloting for further strikes. UCEA has accepted, but it is far from clear whether they will now move on the fundamental issue of pay.

To keep up the pressure, UCU needs to commit to a summer re-ballot that will make autumn term strike action possible. The current mandate ends on 30 September. There is, however, a real risk that the leadership will prefer to cut a shoddy deal than fight on. □

Doctors demand pay redress

By Rhodri Evans

Junior doctors in England will stage the biggest doctors' strike ever seen in this country on 13-17 July (ending 7am 18 July). This will be followed by consultants ("senior" doctors in hospitals) striking on 20-21 July. They will organise "Christmas Day" emergency cover.

The doctors have called on the government to talk through the official conciliation service ACAS, and ACAS has volunteered that it's up for that, but the Tories refuse talks unless the doctors first cancel their strikes.

In Scotland the BMA junior doctors' committee is recommending acceptance of what BMA deputy chair Emma Runswick calls a "massive

improved offer", and so has called off strikes planned for 12-15 July.

The new offer gives a 12.4% rise from April 2023; a promise of rises in 2024-5, 2025-6, and 2026-7 beating inflation (with reference to both CPI and RPI) and giving "credible progress towards pay restoration".

The junior doctors' fundamental demand is restoration of a 35% erosion of real wages since 2008.

The Scottish offer also promises contract reform to improve conditions, and a review of the pay system.

Tory Chancellor Jeremy Hunt, speaking to an audience of City plutocrats at the Mansion House of 10 July, doubled down on what he called "responsible decisions

on public finances, including public sector pay".

Labour leader Keir Starmer is so intimidated by the Tories' "responsible finance" talk that he refuses to back the junior doctors, or even a call for teachers to get the 6.5% rise reportedly proposed by the Pay Review Body.

The cost to the government budget of such rises is about [£350 million](#) for teachers, about [£300 million](#) for junior doctors.

Larger amounts for better rises would still be "rounding errors" in total government spending of about £1,200 billion a year.

The Tories' real drive is to use the economic turmoil to drive down workers' part of what is produced, in favour of the bosses' part. □

More online

Amazon strike

Report from the 11 July picket line
bit.ly/amz-s

Orkney's model fight

"Anti-imperialist"?
bit.ly/orkney-m

What we stand for

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

• workersliberty.org/join-awl

Help us raise £35,000 by 16 July!

As we come into the home straight some welcome boosts from Eddie, MJ and others now put our total at £32,037. With Ideas for Freedom coming up on 15-16

July we should surpass our target. □

• Donate at workersliberty.org/fund

First bout of management double-speak



Diary of a trackworker

By Matt Shaw

Matt Shaw is soon retiring as a trackworker, and will be writing some "diary" columns of reminiscences.

I had never really thought about an outdoors job. I'd been in store or warehouse work since leaving school at 17.

Now aged 21 and having problems with the people I worked with, I saw an advert for rail men. This was a time when the possibility of women on the track side was not even thought of.

Specifically the ad promised a technical side to the job, which appealed to me. At the interview the talk was of relays and track circuits and all that sort of thing. Obviously I would have to do training, which takes time, but the job sounded about right for me. That was my first introduction to management double-speak.

It all started going wrong on day one. I had received a date and time to start but no address was listed, so I assumed

that it would be in the building where I'd had my interview.

Nope. I found out that a lot of the depots are on old railway land, often in places inaccessible by public transport, and some not even listed on street guides.

Having negotiated my way to my home depot I was told to wait in the mess room while "somebody" found out who we were and what jobs we had. I say we, as another guy started on the same day with similar problems. Nothing happened and we were told to come back in the morning.

The following day was still a muddle, with no one wanting to take responsibility for getting us organised. Eventually it emerged that we couldn't go out "on track" without having an induction, a three day course in York. As British Rail was recruiting heavily, that took place in a 200-seat hall where the idea of asking questions was heavily frowned on.

The first great unwritten law of the rail industry then was job and knock. Once the task for the day was done, off you went, irrespective of what time it was. Back in the hall, anybody asking a question was seen as keeping us there unnecessarily.

After our "induction" we were as-

signed to a gang, what would be called a team in modern parlance, and went out into the big wild world of... digging.

We became experts in which end of the shovel to use, how to use a pick, and how to manoeuvre huge lumps of concrete with iron bars. That wasn't the track itself, but concrete bases for mechanical points, signals, cable routes, and the metal cabinets that housed the technical stuff which we weren't allowed to see, let alone work on.

Literally miles and miles of concrete ducting had to be laid by hand, after being carted to site by hand, and levelled and back-filled by hand. And heaven help you if it wasn't straight.

What they hadn't told us at the interviews was that the "old guard" kept the relatively easy jobs for themselves – running small wires, terminating cables, fitting out the equipment cabinets for themselves – while leaving the "grunt" work to the fresh meat.

It was a bit of a shock to me as I'd done no heavy manual labour ever and was badly out of condition.

But the weirdest thing was the people. The railway seemed to attract a set of characters that Walt Disney on hard drugs would have thought impossible. More on that next time. □

The gleaners and society



Kino Eye

By John Cunningham

Gleaning is the ancient practice of going into a field after the harvest and picking up any fruit, cereal or root crops left behind. Its most famous representation is the painting by Jean-Francois Millet, "The Gleaners", which he completed in 1857.

What the painting represented was "updated", as it were, by French director Agnès Varda in 2000 with her documentary *The Gleaners and I*. Shot in various locations in France, including the suburbs of Paris, film shows modern day gleaners doing very much what their ancestors have done for hundreds of years. They explain in their own words why they do what they do: it is partly tradition, also a boost to the larder.

It is not an activity necessarily confined to the poor or those who live in the countryside. One of Varda's in-



terviewees is a French chef who features in the Michelin Guide. She films gleaners sifting through the leftovers of Parisian market stalls. In one of the most interesting sections of the film she talks with modern day gleaners

who lift edible items from supermarket waste bins ("skipping").

Although those foodstuffs are "waste", the supermarkets try to stop them, even to the extent of hiring security guards. □

PCS leaders push for “pause”

By a PCS member

The National Executive (NEC) of the civil service union PCS will meet on 12-13 July. It will decide whether to effectively kill the national dispute for guarantees on job security and a 10% fully consolidated award for 2022, with a national underpin of £15 per hour.

The PCS leadership called off all strikes for those urgently needed improvements because, on 2 June, the Government published a poor “package of measures”, including:

- A promise of talks about job security and pay coherence.
- A restatement of the government’s previously announced civil service pay policy for 2023-24, a policy that will see many members once again receiving

below inflation increases.

- Allowing civil service delegated bargaining units a restricted discretion to pay an unconsolidated lump sum of up to £1,500, which the Government is not funding, and which therefore might result in job loss.

None of this weak package was conditional on PCS calling off its action, but the leadership did so anyway.

Some employers have so far refused to pay the lump sum, stating that they cannot afford to. Most have decided to pay the lump sum, but only on a pro rata, i.e., reduced, basis to the tens of thousands of part time staff, overwhelmingly female and often lowly paid.

The leadership will ask the NEC to agree “pause” action for months, except in those areas where the management refuse to pay the lump sum, to allow time for the promised talks and to see the results of



2023-24 pay negotiations with employers, for which they are refusing to submit a unifying national pay claim.

They will also ask the NEC to ballot members to “endorse the NEC Strategy”. It is a strategy to terminate the dispute without putting that issue explicitly to members, and without proposing an honest balance sheet. □

Build for Tube strikes, and follow up!



Tubeworker

The RMT union has called a week of selective strikes from 23 July in the ongoing London Underground dispute over jobs, pensions, and conditions, with workers in different functions striking at different times. Aslef has also named strikes on 26 and 28 July, the days RMT train drivers will be striking.

If successful, selective action could mean that the job is shut down, or nearly shut down, for an entire week,

but with no individual worker having to strike for more than 48 hours. RMT needs to ensure comprehensive information gets out across the job explaining the tactic, and ensuring all members are fully up-to-date on the latest attacks from the company.

The week of action is a meaningful escalation from previous strikes. The last strike, where RMT and Aslef struck together for the first time in the current dispute, was four months ago, for 24 hours on 15 March. Prior to that, RMT had not struck since November, and not for more than 24 hours since March 2022; Aslef had not struck at all.

The escalation has all been from the bosses, with wave after wave of cuts and restructures announced. The latest attacks include plans to reform the Customer Service Manager grade on stations, making CSMs reapply for a new role, with no guarantee of protected earnings if they fail (or if they simply decide they don’t want a job with even more obligatory managerial responsibility). On top of this, LUL has also announced plans for a new attendance policy, which would give bosses greatly increased powers to manage us out of our jobs on so-called medical capability grounds. Plans for “Trains Modernisation”, which will see train drivers work longer shifts, and job cuts in the Asset Performance Directorate – again, with no guarantee of protected earnings for displaced staff – are also ongoing.

Winning this fight means forcing climb-downs and reversals on major cuts schemes from a determined employer, driven in part by a politically-motivated funding agreement with a Tory government determined to deliver a punishment beating to a well-unionised, public-sector workforce employed by a company administered by a Labour-controlled municipal authority. There was never any possibility that sporadic 24-hour strikes would be anything other than token protests. The July week of action is closer to the kind of action we should have been taking months ago – although, as something of a strategic experiment, not without risks. We need to keep all-out strikes in our arsenal as well.

Our unions must call assemblies of reps for early August immediately, so they’re named and in the diary before the upcoming strikes, so we can discuss the strikes’ effectiveness and plan our next steps. The worst thing we could do would be to take our foot off the pedal and give the employers another four months of peace. □

control and others 25 and 27 July, Fleet, Engineering, stations and trains 26 and 28 July. Aslef drivers also strike 26 and 28 July.

25-27 July: Society of Radiographers (SoR) strikes at 43 NHS trusts

Also many local strikes: especially at universities. See bit.ly/ro-up

Ballots

15 May-28 July: Teachers in England (NEU) re-ballot for action over pay. Nasuwt reballot 5 June-10 July, NAHT 15 May-31 July. ASCL 19 June-31 July.

19 June-31 August: Junior doctors in England (BMA) re-ballot

23 June-11 August: School support staff in England (NEU) ballot for strikes on funding

Until 14 July: Amazon workers in Rugeley (GMB) ballot for industrial action

July: (to be announced) Junior doctors in Scotland ballot on pay offer

Strikes

From 20 April: Higher Education workers (UCU) marking and assessment boycott

From 27 June: Workers at St Mungo’s homeless charity (Unite) on indefinite strike

From 3 July: Brighton university workers (UCU) strike against redundancies

10, 13, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25 and 28 July: First Manchester bus workers (Unite) strike

11-13 July: Workers at Amazon’s BHX4 facility (GMB) strike over pay

13-18 July: Junior doctors in England and Wales (BMA) strike

18-21 and 24-29 July: Outsourced security workers at University College London (IWGB) strike

20-21 July: NHS consultants (BMA) strike

20, 22, and 29 July: Rail workers at multiple TOCs (RMT) strike

23-28 July: London Underground workers (RMT) strike – track access controllers and others 23 July, service

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Beijing sets bounties on activists

By Pete Radcliff

On Monday 3 July the Beijing-controlled Hong Kong authorities announced that charges of collusion with foreign powers, subversion and secession were to be brought on a further eight activists not yet in prison nor even in Hong Kong. They accompanied those charges with an unprecedented offer of a bounty of one million HKD (over £100,000) per activist for anyone who can organise their capture overseas.

Amongst those threatened are Christopher Mung Siu-Tat, formerly an official of the now forcibly dissolved independent Hong Kong union confederation HKCTU, and Nathan Law, one of the original student protest leaders, also now in the UK.

Within two days the TUC issued a statement expressed its concern about these charges and the bounties offered. GMB National President, Barbara Plant condemned this "blatant abuse of power" under the National Security Law. Other unions are known to be considering similar expressions of solidarity.

The Chinese regime has a history of pursuing critics overseas. Between October and December 2015, five workers at Hong Kong Causeway Bay Books disappeared. One, the owner of the bookshop, Gui Minhai, disappeared while on holiday in Thailand. Eventually he appeared in Ningbo, near Shanghai, where after a number of imprisonments and disputed charges, he was sentenced to ten years in prison for "illegal business operations" – publishing books in Hong Kong critical of Xi.

The kidnapping and detention of these critics of the Chinese regime was the backdrop to the street protests that broke out in 2019 after the in-

troduction of the Extradition Bill.

Now even if those on whom bounties have been offered never travel again to Hong Kong, if they just go to a country with criminal elements or police under Chinese state influence, they could find themselves kidnapped as the Causeway Bay bookshop workers were and put on trial.

Yet for many of those charged, like Christopher Mung and Nathan Law, their political work involves a lot of visits overseas.

The clampdown has continued within Hong Kong. Four activists in Hong Kong have been charged with "acts of seditious intent" and "conspiracy to collude with foreign forces" by providing support to democracy activists now overseas.

Defending the arrests, Regina Ip, convenor of the Hong Kong Executive Council, accused democracy activists of holding "tea parties... designed to brainwash and confuse politicians and to encourage them to condemn and sanction China."

With now hundreds of thousands of Hong Kongers overseas – by February over 144,000 Hong Kongers had moved to the UK – Xi's government has become increasingly concerned about oppositional activity organised beyond reach of their surveillance and repression.

Whilst paranoid talk of "brainwashing tea parties" may appear laughable, it does show that the HK/Chinese regime is scared of international solidarity. Which is why we should organise more of it. □

• Labour Solidarity with Hong Kong has come together with other groups to form an umbrella Workers Against the CCP solidarity campaign. More: [@labsolidarityhk](https://labsolidarityhk.org)



To rebuild services: tax the rich!

By Rhodri Evans

On Monday 10 July Tory chancellor Jeremy Hunt, alongside Bank of England chief Andrew Bailey, assured City plutocrats at a Mansion House dinner that he would hold a hard line against public sector wage claims.

He said that was to damp inflation.

In fact, conceding to the school workers, the doctors, the rail and Tube workers, and others, would cost a tiny part of the government's budget.

Even if it led to a bigger government deficit, its effect on inflation would be impossible to calculate, and small anyway.

And that effect could be reduced to zero, even notionally, by covering the rises from increased taxes on the rich. A 1% annual wealth tax on net assets over £10m, with other wealth-type taxes could raise [£37 billion](#) a year, vastly more than the wage-rise cost.

Or if the government rowed back on Brexit, back towards free movement of people and trade between the UK and the EU, that would swamp the budget disturbances.

The Tories are really worried about the "risk" (to them) of workers' victories which will encourage more confidence, bigger pay wins next year, and more demands to repair the NHS.

They want to use the post-lockdowns economic turmoil to shift the balance of forces in the bosses' favour and to boost future profits. They

want to get a post-Brexit Britain with lower "social overhead costs" than the EU.

Capitalists and their close associates, top managers and so on, are doing well out of the post-lockdown period, with luxury-industry sales booming and share prices remaining high. The government is paying about £9 billion a month in interest on its IOUs (bonds) held by the wealthy. That's enough to increase NHS spending by over 70%.

The government really is worried about inflation. It wants predictability for capitalists. It wants the pound not to lose value relative to other currencies.

But counter-inflation policies under capitalism are generally as painful for the working class as the inflation itself, sometimes more so.

- Rebuild the NHS
- Restore real wages and benefits, and protect them in future by cost-of-living escalator clauses giving monthly rises in line with price inflation
- Tax the rich! □

Ideas for Freedom 15-16 July

A weekend of socialist discussion and debate at Camden School for Girls. Tickets and more info at bit.ly/iff23 □



Solidarity

For a workers' government

ISRAEL OUT OF THE WEST BANK!

By Martin Thomas

Benjamin Netanyahu's far-bright-heavy Israeli government must have got assurances, direct or indirect, in advance of its 3-4 July assault on Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon, and the Arab states, all made only token protest.

The far-right government trusts in its military strength to keep a lid on the Palestinians until opportunity comes to annex the West Bank more fully.

The government is moving again on plans to curb Israel's courts as a check on the government. Protests on this issue within Israel are intensifying.

Those like the Jewish-Arab movement Standing Together who see that it's centrally about curbing the scope of the courts to check government abuses against Palestinians, about how the occupation rots Israeli democracy, are in a minority within the protests. The outlook is bleak. But hope rests with that minority, and its ability to expand.

The West Bank and Gaza are caught in dead-end politics. Polls show Hamas with more support even in the West Bank

than the corrupt Fatah and its Palestinian Authority, although only 32% there describe themselves as "religious".

93% of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians (and 93% of Israeli Jews, too) [claim](#) all the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean for their community. Many would support a two-states settlement as a concession, but most now think it too improbable.

For now, despair curdles into rhetorical extremism on both sides, anti-liberatory on both sides, unrealistic on the Palestinian side. Around two-thirds of Palestinians in both the West Bank and Gaza now tell pollsters that Israel [will not survive](#) to 2048.

In the Jenin operation – during which Palestinian militia people were on their home ground and had every incentive to hit back – there was [just one](#) Israeli casualty, maybe accidental from Israeli fire. The military balance is overwhelming.

Help from outside? Iran to develop nuclear weapons and use them to replace Israel with radioactive ruins? Hoping for that reckless "revenge" is the opposite of liberation.

Palestinians in Israel are the only group currently strongly

(60%) for two states. With groups like Standing Together, they are pivotal to breaking the political impasse.

They are well placed to link up with the 160,000 West Bank Palestinians now working in Israel, and the 40,000 working in the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank. (These are the [largest numbers](#) since 2002. 27,000 Gaza workers also have Israeli work permits). Linking democratic and social revolt in Israel is central.

The Tories are now legislating to ban by law boycotts by local authorities of anywhere (with some possible exceptions, but not for Israel or the occupied territories). Labour [must oppose](#) that.

But "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" against Israel, which has become a [reflex response](#) in the Western left, remains counterproductive. It is useless for winning immediate concessions; it slots into reckless-revenge thinking and blanket hostility to Israelis and to Jews with any reflex identification to Israel. Some pro-BDS people have even [failed to demand](#) that Hezbollah in Iraq release Israeli leftist [Elizabeth Tsurokov](#), whose life is in danger as long as she is held by them. □

The ideas that Starmer wants to ban