



& Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 515 5 September 2019 50p/£1

Labour: fight Johnson with anti-Brexit, pro-worker policies



POUNDSHOP MUSSOLINI!

For now, Britain's would-be tinpot dictator, Boris Johnson, has been checked. But Brexit will be fought over in a general election in the next weeks and months.

This time round the Labour Party must campaign vigorously and with conviction for Remain. If the leadership does not do

that, the rank and file in the local Labour Parties must take matters into their own hands and do it. We must raise a loud voice in favour of European unity. Anything less will be a betrayal of working-class internationalism and of all the workers of Europe, including the British.

More on page 5



Hong Kong students strike

Chen Ying reports from Hong Kong

Page 3



Labour's left against Brexit

Laura Parker, Lloyd Russell-Moyle, Paul Mason, and others

Page 6

The UYGHURS Strangers in Their Own Land

China and the Uyghurs

A history of oppression

Page 13

Renew Labour

The left and the coup

Pages 8-9

Hong Kong moves to student boycott

By Chen Ying

As Hong Kong citizens seek to recover from a horrific weekend of escalated police violence against tenacious protesters, 2 September marked the start of the academic year, with a two-week boycott of lectures declared by student unions in all major universities, widely supported by secondary students boycotting lessons in dozens of schools.

Organisers of the successful city-wide strike on 5 August are planning their next strike to link up with the students.

31 August is the fifth anniversary of the Chinese National People's Congress Standing Committee's decision to deny Hong Kong the right to freely elect its Chief Executive by genuine universal suffrage [bit.ly/nofree16].

This decision triggered the Occupy Central Umbrella movement in 2014, which was eventually defeated after 79 days.

The organisers of the one million and two million-strong marches in June and the 1.7 million march in August, the Civic Human Rights Front, had their application for a march and rally on 31 August denied by the police. The repeated denial of the right of assembly by the police to many marches, on alleged grounds of public safety, is the most recent attempt by the Government to curb the rising tide of protests.

Together with widely publicised drills of military police across the border in Shenzhen and the leaked discussion in the Executive Council about using Emergency Powers, this white terror of intimidation has infuriated many sectors of Hong Kong society, not just the core of the protest movement.

The inevitable explosive clashes between protestors and police occurred last weekend, right across many parts of the city, gravely disrupting the airport and many MTR [metro] stations. The police claimed

over 100 petrol bombs were thrown, and on several occasions policemen resorted to a recently purchased water cannon as well as using live warning rounds.

The MTR management are accused of colluding with the police in denying protestors access to trains whilst transporting the riot police. The police charged into an MTR station chasing demonstrators and beating passengers indiscriminately. With six protest-related suicides, over 1100 now arrested, and thousands of people injured or suffering from the effects of tear gas released in hot and confined streets and even underground stations, further escalation in September, leading up to the PRC National Day of 1 October looks very likely.

Many have wondered why the Chief Executive has not conceded to even one of the five demands posed by the movement.

Even various members of the pro-Beijing camp have stated in public that they would support the complete withdrawal of the Extraordinary Bill and some form of public inquiry.

FACE DOWN
Instead, the administration seems determined to face down the protests with brute force.

A Reuters exclusive released on 30 August [reut.rs/2PBBloC], with three independent and credible sources, claims that Carrie Lam's proposal to meet the protest movement's demands have been flatly turned down by Beijing. A further exclusive on September claims that she "has caused unforgivable havoc" by igniting the political crisis engulfing the city and would quit if she had a choice, according to an audio recording of remarks she made last week to a group of businesspeople. [reut.rs/2PCEjsT].

This has confirmed what many have suspected, that Beijing has long since been calling the shots and Lam is a mere puppet.

The fluidity and tenacity of the protest movement has surprised the Government, who presumed

that as in 2014 they merely had to create divisions between the millions of "peaceful, rational and non-violent" and the minority of several thousand street militants, and just pick off the leaders. Citing a saying by Bruce Lee "to be water", the seemingly leaderless protest movement has adopted fluid and versatile tactics to constantly wrong-foot the police, deploying social media to share information, discuss and validate tactics and achieve cohesion and unity of action. There is an unspoken unity of purpose and solidarity between the militant and pacifist wings of the movement.

Many citizens are providing water, food, vehicle transport, first aid and overnight shelter to the largely young militants, like a 21st century urban version of how units of the PLA fought their guerrilla war of resistance against Japanese troops in China in World War 2 supported by the peasant population.

Beijing is leaning on corporate Hong Kong to toe the line. Cathay Pacific Airways was forced to sack staff engaged with the protests, leading to industrial unrest and the resignation of its expat Chief Executive. Bankers, businessmen and the property developer tycoons were being lined up to support the Government. But this has had limited effect in curtailing the protest movement.

Tourism, especially from mainlanders, has taken a nosedive and the Hong Kong economy, heavily integrated into the Chinese economy, already adversely affected by the current economic war between USA and China, is forecast to go into recession. This will put further pressure on Beijing.

It seems prepared for a long drawn-out struggle to grind down the protestors, without a Tiananmen-style military clampdown. A military intervention would be a desperate decision by a beleaguered regime threatened with its own survival, and we seem not yet to have reached that point.



Women members of the RMT rail union have protested to Cathay Pacific airline about its sacking of Rebecca Sy and others for supporting the Hong Kong democracy protests. Over thirty women members of the UK transport trade union put their names to a letter initiated by Becky Crocker (above, right) which declared that "We are appalled that Cathay Pacific is using its power to terminate workers' livelihoods as a tool to silence political opposition and spread fear amongst its workforce." The letter was handed in at Hong Kong airport by Janine Booth (above, left), who happened to be travelling through returning from holiday. A copy was also given to a flight attendant, who was delighted to receive this expression of solidarity.

As in 1989, there are deep-rooted struggles between interest groups and factions within the party, as well as tensions between the political centre and the provinces in a country the size of China, where the number of Party members (over 90 million) is equivalent to the entire population of many countries.

PRECARIOUS
Xi may appear to be the dictator with absolute powers to purge his opponents and an unlimited number of presidential terms of office but his position is precarious.

The regime's legitimacy is based on sharing the spoils of economic success to prop up the party membership, but the structural problems of the economy and the inevitable slowing down of GDP expansion is putting the regime under pressure. Xi has few cards to

play against a very aggressive and protectionist USA.

The fear of a Soviet Union-style disintegration haunts the CCP more than the scenario of a revolutionary working class opposition. However, the acute pressures of a volatile Hong Kong may be precisely such a catalyst to the regime's demise.

Hong Kong's working class, though its organisations have traditionally been mainly loyal to Beijing, is a class with the capacity of bringing Hong Kong to a halt through a city-wide strike. It holds the key to what will happen next.

The protest movement must endeavour to reach out and build links to draw in more local workers into the struggle, particularly those in the transport and banking industries.

Heathrow and the toy-drone plan



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

"Heathrow Pause", an independent splinter from — and loudly distanced by — Extinction Rebellion, is planning an attempted shut-down of Heathrow airport using toy drones on 13 September.

They demand "that the Government places an immediate moratorium upon all aviation expansion", as well as chiming in with XR's three general demands.

Aeroplanes are extremely polluting, and every serious environmentalist supports a moratorium on aviation expansion and opposes Heathrow's third runway.

We call for a rapid expansion of affordable, efficient and high-speed electrically-powered trains to substitute this.

This will be won through building a mass movement, through winning the labour movement — in particular in Unite, GMB and Balpa, who represent aviation workers; and in other transport unions; and the Labour Party — to fight for such politics. Unite and Labour both currently support con-

struction of Heathrow's third runway.

On Monday 2 September, Ryanair members of the British Airline Pilots' Association, Balpa, began a three-day strike, following a two-day strike in August, over maternity pay, pensions, and other issues. Environmental activists should support these and any future strikes — particularly in Stansted, the hub of Ryanair's UK activity — and try to bring an environmental angle to the table.

That this has not happened is a symptom of the political and organisational weakness of the environmental and labour movements.

Bold actions by a small number of individuals cannot short-cut the necessary work, but "Heathrow Pause" epitomises the shortcut approach.

Hopefully, the action will bring prominence to campaigns against airport expansion. The activists will hand themselves in to the police and "know that we face significant prison sentences for our actions." The action is, I believe, unlikely to, in itself, cause a widespread change in opinion.

Bold, courageous and sometimes risky actions climate actions are necessary, and should be generally supported for pushing the horizons

of the climate movement, even given this or that limitation. Extinction Rebellion's previous actions are a cause for celebration, for this reason.

But activism with a halfway decent strategy, pursued over some years, will have significantly bigger impact than this one-off stunt followed by years in prison.

The labour movement must gear up to fight for any — likely severe — sentencing to be quashed, without withholding necessary criticisms.

Amazon fires threaten the Earth



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Fires are sweeping the Amazon rainforest. They are facilitated by global warming to date and also fuel future climatic catastrophe.

They have been driven by deforestation and sparked further deforestation. Brazil's president Bolsonaro and politicians internationally have responded with empty words and little action.

August saw a spike in fires across the world's largest rainforest. In 2019 so far Brazil's space agency has recorded over 40,000.

There are fires in the Amazon all year round, and August is generally the beginning of "fire season", but this year's rate of fires is nonetheless particularly high.

There are no adequate records to establish whether this year is record-breaking, and there is reason to believe the rate may have been higher in the early 2000s. But, on the scale of decades and centuries, there has been a continual and alarming increase.

The Amazon is home to rich ecosystems and many indigenous communities, destroyed and expelled by fires, contributing to biodiversity loss. On 19 August, smoke from Amazonian fires plunged São Paulo — more than a thousand miles away — into a hazy darkness. Resulting air pollution has increased respiratory problems.

These fires stoke global climate change. Trees and plants capture carbon dioxide, converting it into plant matter as they grow. Through

this, forests can act as "carbon sinks", removing CO2 from the atmosphere and storing it within their ecosystems.

The Amazon performs approximately one quarter of the total carbon removal of forests around the world, and holds the equivalent of a decade's greenhouse gas emissions. On top of that, rainforests play crucial roles in regulating shorter-term global weather patterns. Fires, and deforestation more widely, undermine the Amazon's ability to perform these functions. Even the healthiest rainforest takes some time to reclaim cleared land, advancing complex ecosystems onto degraded earth.

Scientists fear destruction of the Amazon could push it over a tipping point into a vicious cycle of forest dieback through which rainforest converts into savanna. Over several decades this process could release hundreds of billions of tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere.

CAUSES

Rainforest is generally too wet for large fires to spread far and fast. Increased temperatures and droughts due to global warming encourage a spread.

However, to pin all the fault on climatic heating would be to let those directly behind these flames off the hook. Such fires are started by humans. They are not wildfires as are seen in California.

Fire is a comparatively low cost — and often illegal — method for clearing rainforest, to use the land for crops or cattle for a few years, until this has degraded the soil too much, and yet more rainforest must be cleared. These fires can



then grow out of control, spreading most easily — and visibly for the space agency — on already cleared or partly cleared land, including logging areas, they do spread into the rainforest proper.

The international drive by the food and agriculture industry for more and cheaper production has been encouraged by Bolsonaro, his anti-environmental rhetoric and action, and his steps to impede conservation projects. Four of the five Brazilian states with recorded large increases in fires this year are governed by Bolsonaro's allies.

Bolsonaro has rightly been criticised by political leaders internationally for his policies and insufficient response. Under that

pressure appeared to shift, committing to use Brazilian armed forces to fight the fires. Little concrete has yet come from that.

He has rejected offers of international aid, in the same speech saying that people living in the Amazon basin should be allowed "to develop along with the rest of the country" by exploiting its "incalculable wealth... of natural resources".

The foreign aid is limited not just by its small scale — only tens of millions of dollars — but through failing to address the causes of the problem: deforestation, and, to a lesser extent, global climate change.

The labour movement internationally must step up our solidarity

with Brazilian activists, workers and communities resisting Bolsonaro, our push for bold environmentalism to curb the worst climatic heating. We should campaign to strengthen trade restrictions on goods derived from rainforest-cleared land, and businesses profiting from this, taking food industries into social control to develop greener alternatives.

This should be coupled with programmes for vast global redistribution of wealth, and solidarity with international labour movements, towards equitable and democratic economies world-wide rather than short-term pursuit of cheap goods and exports for the profit of a few.

A premier for all seasons

By Hugh Edwards

The former provincial lawyer, Giuseppe Conte is once again premier-designate of another Italian government. He has already set out his rhetorical stall for his second term of office.

Without a blush he describes himself as "The Premier of the New", while a little over a year ago, as he assumed the same role in the Lega Nazionale — 5 Star government, he presented himself as the "Minister of Change".

Up to a week ago he would have happily continued to serve La Lega of Interior Minister Matteo Salvini. Witness his ready signature to the Minister's draconian security laws licensing the mass drowning of refugees in the Mediterranean and the summary gaoing of peaceful protesters.

Then Salvini — in the grip of his

Bonapartist illusions ("I am asking the Italian people to invest me with full powers") — dumped Conte. He called for a vote of no confidence after Conte's request that Salvini should come before parliament to explain why he, in the company of a notorious veteran neo-Nazi, had not so long ago been in Moscow arranging a billion euro energy deal with the Russians from which the Lega would pocket a 65 million euro sweetener.

Democratic Party secretary Nicola Zingaretti, a man of the so called "progressive" wing of the Italian bourgeoisie, assured Salvini that he too wanted new elections. Zingaretti opposed those within his party, notably the factions around Matteo Renzi (premier 2014-6), who wanted to form a new coalition government with Luigi Di Maio and Five Star.

But then Conte went on the at-

tack against Salvini, announced a decision to resign, and offered himself as a candidate to serve in a new government led by the DP.

As opinion polls showed acclaim for this unexpected puncturing of the Salvini bubble, the pressure on the DP leader and those who surrounded him became impossible to resist, especially from Sergio Mattarella, the country's president and from the representatives of big capital and the chancelleries of Europe.

SIGHTS

Di Maio had picked out the then literally unknown Conte as premier for the Lega — 5 Star coalition.

Di Maio assuming Conte would be biddable for his benefactor. But Conte had set his sights higher than mere "office boy". Conte has pointedly refused Di Maio any position

of authority on his new ship of state.

Di Maio had one last card to play — a vote (3 September) via Five Star's online platform Rousseau on the new government proposal.

The brainchild of Davide Casaleggio and the comic Beppe Grillo, this platform renders real membership of Five Star, the numbers actually participating, and the validity of the exercise impossible to evaluate. Those around Casaleggio are totally opposed to the stitch-up with the DP. However, the result (4 Sep) was 79.3% for the DP coalition.

Such is the cultural and moral temper of Italy's prospective new government. It is a committee of the business affairs of capital populated by charlatans, armed each against each in a war driven on by the logic of clan warfare and ruthless personal ambition.

The rise of a nobody like Conte is

the perfect lesson in what the Italians call "trasformismo".

The script for the next act is already written. The reactionary Right of Salvini and Meloni will go for demagogic denunciation of "trasformismo" against the new government, and announce that they will rouse the masses in the streets.

The government will suppress all calls for action against the reactionaries, further implicating the already feeble and compromised Italian left as aiders and abettors of careerism. A rising racist surge has suffered a setback, but one not inflicted by a class-conscious proletariat.

The decision by Salvini to turn to the masses could allow him pose before the people as the only champion of real opposition to the crime of "trasformismo".

The coup: not Johnson's fault?



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Johnson's coup is all the fault of the anti-Brexit MPs, according to the *Morning Star's* editorial on 29 August:

"It comes in circumstances that have been created by anti-Brexit MPs and the House of Commons. They have had three years to agree a way to honour the people's vote to leave the EU. Moreover, the vast majority of those MPs were elected on pledges to do just that.

"Instead, they have tried every parliamentary trick in the book – in this case Erskine May's Parliamentary Practice – to block and delay any kind of exit from the EU. Moreover, the vast majority of those MP's were elected on pledges to do just that. Their

wealthy supporters outside parliament have tried using the courts and launching public campaigns to the same end.

"Now Johnson has decided to take them on with a trick or two of his own.

"Had more MPs been honest about their full intention, their own protestations about prorogation being a 'constitutional outrage' might at least have the ring of sincerity. As it is, they are the squawkings of a bunch of unscrupulous plotters who are now being played at their own disreputable game".

It's not difficult to detect more than a hint of admiration for Johnson and his "trick or two" against anti-Brexit MPs in the *Morning Star's* comment. That tone of admiration was repeated in the weekend edition, which described the coup as "a muscular move" that "adds to the conviction held by mounting millions of electors that the gap between Parliament and the people is becoming the defining feature of our politics".

The *Morning Star* claims to be opposed to

prorogation (it could – in theory – be used "to impose reactionary policies") and to want Johnson removed by means of a general election. But that election should result in "a government committed to a radical socialist agenda [that requires] our release from the straitjacket of the anti-democratic EU..."

A 31 August statement from the Communist Party of Britain (the group behind the *Morning Star*) revealed that they positively support no-deal, and oppose all attempts even to delay it.

"The Party does not support any movement in the House of Commons or the courts to delay or block Britain's exit from the EU or to rearrange parliamentary business in a way that maximises the opportunity for Brexit to be sabotaged. ...

"A significant majority of MPs have rejected all options for an EU exit over the past three years. PM Boris Johnson's prorogation of the Westminster parliament is, more than anything else, a direct outcome of this relent-

less anti-democratic activity. Nevertheless, the Communist Party recognises that the proroguing of parliament risks playing into the hands of those who seek to create a constitutional crisis...

"However, the Communist Party also asserts that the prorogation of parliament is not the key issue in this political crisis of British state-monopoly capitalism. What must be won is the potential for a left-led government to implement a progressive programme unfettered by the neoliberal restraints of the EU and the machinations of the profit-grabbing monopolies whose interests it represents.

"Therefore, the EU referendum decision must now be honoured on October 31 2019, with or without a new or revised agreement with the EU..."

The mask has well and truly slipped: in essence, these people support what Johnson and Cummings are doing.

Unfair on the Morning Star



Letters

I was catching up on a backlog of reading material, and I was genuinely shocked to read in Sean Matgamna's piece *The Willman Affair (Solidarity 509)* that the *Morning Star* daily newspaper "actively foments antisemitism."

This is a completely disgraceful comment and, as any reader or the *Star* will know fine well, is completely untrue. Sean should either provide some examples of "antisemitism" in the *Star*, "actively fomented" or otherwise, or withdraw that comment completely.

Even Jim Denham, who seems to have a weekly column dedicated to sarcastic sniping at the *Star*, admits in *Solidarity* 503 that a *Star's* editorial position on the subject included the words: "What appears to be undeniable is that no action has yet been taken against some individual party members whose comments about Jews or Israel are reprehensible, whether born of ignorance, prejudice or both." (9.4.2019).

It is perfectly possible to hold the view that the antisemitism campaign whipped up by the right wing in the Labour Party and the Jewish Labour Movement is wholly exaggerated and aimed primarily at getting rid of Jeremy Corbyn as leader and fully accept there may be some antisemites in the Labour Party who if unwilling or unable to reflect and change should be removed.

There have been a number of excellent articles in *Solidarity* which have carefully and sensitively explained how opposition or even hostility to the actions of the State of Israel or to the State itself can either lead into antisemitism or be genuinely perceived as such.

Sean's comment falls well below that standard. It is nasty, sectarian, offensive and untrue.

Andrew Northall, Kettering

Johnson's move really a coup?



Letters

I'm a little uncomfortable with calling Johnson's move a coup.

The Austria 1933 reference on our Workers' Liberty leaflet makes it pretty clear we are talking about more than just a vernacular use of the word to describe a bit of a stitch-up.

We are very critical of people who call right wingers fascists or Israel apartheid, and I think we are right to insist on precise language in such matters. I don't think Johnson is planning to permanently shut down parliament or bring about a dictatorship.

Presumably he is trying to scare and bully parliament into accepting a slightly polished version of May's deal. Or failing that, crash out of the EU, never mind the consequences, and try to get a Tory landslide for Boris.

We should focus more on the principles: opposition to nationalism; freedom of movement; against borders; for working class unity and struggle.

Matt Dunn, Brighton

Solidarity 516 will be out on 11 September

With this issue we return to our usual weekly schedule after the variations of July-August, so the next regular issue will be out on 11 September.

That'll be *Solidarity* 516. Or at least, probably it will. With events moving so fast, we may produce special extra issues — in the form of pdfs to be printed off from our website — in addition, and the numbering will be modified accordingly.

Reaching the £10k mark

Our fund drive reached £10,100 this week. We had donations of £50 and £100 from readers, and two spare-coin jars donated to the fund drive turned out to total a tidy £90.

We are working to raise another £14,900 by 9 December.

A picture of why we need the money is given by the facts on the Government's "special advisers" ("spads"), political praetorian guards for ministers.

On the last official count there were about 100 of them, paid £8.1 million in total (an average of £81,000 each) from public funds, and of course the public purse also pays for their offices, phones, computers, etc.

The activists and organisers of Solidarity and Workers' Liberty do not need to be paid £81,000 to do our work, but we do need money to sustain and equip our office, print and distribute leaflets, send speakers to meetings, and so on.

Public funds pay for Johnson's front-line political operatives, money donated to the Conservative Party by the rich and big business (£5.2 million in 2019 Q 2) pays for another phalanx, and then they have other regiments in think-tanks, lobbying organi-



Dominic Cummings gets a share of £8.1m a year

sations, and the right-wing media, agitating, organising, and (in their terms) "educating" for them.

It's down to us to beat them, and we have nowhere else to draw on for funds other than the standing order contributions, one-off donations, and spare-coin jars of socialists.

• www.workersliberty.org/donate

How Labour Should Fight and Win Elections

Workers' Liberty London forum

Thursday 19 September, 7:30pm, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JR

Hear from Seema Syeda, involved in the current anti-Brexit and anti-coup movement, and Jill Mountford, activist from the 1987 Labour campaign in Wallasey.

bit.ly/elec-s19



Make Labour fight against Brexit!

So far, so good! — as we go to press, on Wednesday 4 September. Britain's pound-shop Mussolini, the lying public-school bully-boy prime minister Boris Johnson, has been decisively beaten in two House of Commons votes.

There will be almost surely a request to the European Union for an extension of the leaving date to 31 January 2020. Johnson does not have enough support in the House of Commons to carry out his threat to get round the decision by calling an instant general election.

Johnson tried to override parliamentary democracy by shutting down Parliament, hoping that would give him space to get "no deal" by pushing Parliament aside like a tin-pot dictator. He has been checked.

The fight against Brexit is far from won. But it goes on. It can be won.

All in all, British politics is even more of a shambles than before the victories in Parliament.

The Tory party may be experiencing a major split. The parliamentary Tory party has already split. If the Brexit party stands, as it threatens to, in every constituency, the consequences for the Tory party are incalculable. If instead Farage goes in with Johnson, as he says he will if Johnson fights an election for "no deal", that too will disrupt the Tory party.

The general election that is likely once the old deadline for British withdrawal, 31 October, has passed, will be the most important general election for many decades.

The Labour leadership pledges to fight that general election on a platform that includes a new public vote on Brexit with a Remain option. Against the wishes of the leadership, Labour has been cornered by events into being de facto anti-Brexit — against no deal, and against all available deals. That is good.

The vicious media campaign against Jeremy Corbyn ensures that he is doing very badly in opinion polls. But in the 1979 general election Margaret Thatcher as Tory leader was doing badly in the polls and Labour prime minister James Callaghan very well.

That did not presage the results of the general election then (unfortunately). Likewise the result of an election in the next months is not set in advance.

Not since the disputes over Free Trade over a century ago has an issue divided Britain as Brexit does now. An incompetent lightweight Tory prime minister, David Cameron, called a referendum he didn't have to call on Britain's relation to the EU.

The Brexitists, including Boris Johnson, lied and misrepresented the issues and prospects for a UK outside the European Union. The campaign against Brexit was lamentably bad.

The then-new leadership of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn and his allies, ran a campaign against Brexit which was uncertain and scarcely audible, and so much so that it contributed to the result.

The historical perspective in which the Eu-

ropean Union had come into existence over decades — state conflicts in Europe that triggered two world wars, in the second of which sixty million people perished — went more or less unvoiced, unheard, and unexamined in the campaign. That was Labour's fault. (Who could expect the "official" Tory and big business campaign to explain such things?)

The Brexitists won by a million votes, 17 million against 16 million. Opinion has shifted heavily since then, as the realities of Brexit have become clearer. The majority for Brexit was very small for such a gigantic decision.

LAST

Though people had voted with little knowledge of what exactly they were voting for — the Brexiters outlined no actual Brexit formula, still less a "no-deal" one — the big political parties accepted the result as if it were the last word in democracy.

The Theresa May government worked for a negotiated British withdrawal, a form of "soft Brexit".

Insurmountable opposition to the withdrawal deal negotiated with the rest of the EU was generated by Tory MPs' objections to the "Irish backstop".

If Britain withdrew from the EU, the border between the 26 and the Six Counties of Ireland would be the UK-EU border — the only UK-EU land border.

In the years since the IRA ceasefire of 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, that border has more or less vanished as a physical barrier. Recreating a hard border would bring great economic disruption and might well bring back a serious level of Republican militarism.

A decisive majority in the Six Counties had voted against Brexit, though the hard-core Unionists voted for it. Brexit would bring a new partition of Ireland against the will of the majority on both sides of the border.

Nothing showed the decadence of British politics more clearly than the "discussion" which now developed on the Irish border. All the experts on such things, across the world, testified that a border that divided the UK from the EU could not but be a hard one.

The EU stood against a new hard border. British politicians were satisfied to talk airily of finding a "technological" solution. But they could not say what that would be. It was a fiction. But discussion in Britain went on as if that fiction could become truth. Much of it simply lacked a grip on the realities involved.

Three times Tory MPs imposed Commons defeat on May's agreement with the EU, swearing that they would never agree to the clause on Ireland.

Those who said a "people's vote" on the matter was the only democratic recourse were damned as opposing the will of the majority in the 2016 referendum.

continued page 6

Migrant rights crucial

By Laura Parker

This democratic system is very far from perfect, but we need to defend the democracy we have so we can win more.

A crucial part of that fight is migrants' rights. Tomorrow we'll be rallying outside the Home Office to defend and extend free movement. We must make that demand central to this movement.

This struggle has been extraordinary.

There's real anger across the country and there's been an extraordinary political response across the left and beyond. We need to find ways to keep the battle going.

We must stop No Deal and then go forward to elect a radical Labour government

Part of that radicalism needs to be stopping Brexit as a step in transforming Britain and Europe.

• Laura Parker was a Labour candidate in the May 2019 Euro-election, and is national coordinator of Momentum

Going on the streets has changed things

By Paul Mason

A lot of people have been mesmerised by the speed and decisiveness of the Johnson regime — and of course there's a legitimate worry that by resisting his moves we're playing into his hands in an election.

But what that misses is the total blindness of elite technocrats like Cummings and Johnson to mass action.

By going on the street we've changed the situation. A few of us decided to call people onto the streets at a few hours notice and we got something like five or ten thousand people. By doing that we created a radical moment. We gave confidence to people who have up to now been mainly organised by People's Vote.

We created a space in which Lexiteers who have been fighting us for three years could come on board, some of them at least, and we gave the whole movement a left and broadly labour movement character, but allowing others to find a space in it.

On the demos I've seen really impressive young people and I've seen people I haven't seen since the Poll Tax movement, all learning or relearning about the power of mass action to challenge elites.

We've already made the overhead cost of calling an election and the overheads of No Deal higher. The Tory party is disintegrating. I think most mainstream journalists couldn't factor that in — yesterday you could almost see their jaws dropping when we arrived outside Downing Street with a thousand people and a megaphone.

Now everyone in the labour movement needs a twin track. We need to support our MPs to defeat No Deal in Parliament. But we also need to develop the cultural vibe we've

felt in the last few days, as an investment for an election. Even more than techniques and money and getting people mobilised, it's about creating an atmosphere that Labour is creating a hegemonic offer, to lead the nation in resistance to this power grab and to the catastrophe of No Deal.

People need to get ready for a discussion of priorities for the first hundred days, which will be as much about democracy and stabilisation as they will be redistribution and economic policies.

Our watchword should be to get out on the doorstep with working-class people who are very pissed off with all kinds of things, sometimes with austerity, sometimes with migration, sometimes with Europe, but we need to listen, engage and offer a better argument.

• Paul Mason is a journalist, film-maker, and author: paulmason.org

“Boris Johnson's attack on democracy is not illegal. Strikes to stop it are. What does that tell you about the law?” — from the Free Our Unions campaign statement calling for workers to organise against Johnson's coup: bit.ly/2IBGMFh

Defending democracy

By Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP

50 MPs have signed the letter stating quite clearly that we will refuse to leave the chamber or will set up an alternative parliament in the event of Parliament being prorogued and a no deal Brexit being forced through.

At the moment it is very clear that there are still parliamentary options open to us. This week we can push for new legislation that can prevent a no deal Brexit. There will be a few days after that where a no confidence vote in the government could be held.

And it is possible of course that a general election could be called. We will only support

a general election on certain terms. A general election on Boris Johnson's terms could facilitate no deal and we cannot accept that.

If these parliamentary options are exhausted and the democratically elected parliament is denied the ability to block a no deal Brexit, which nobody voted for and would be an absolute disaster, then we are very serious.

We will either sit in Parliament, refuse to leave and carry on parliamentary business; or we will form an alternative parliament.

• Lloyd Russell-Moyle is the Labour MP for Brighton Kemptown



Part of the 4,000 strong protest in Sheffield on 31 August

Make Labour fight Brexit

from page 5

That was sacred! That was the only possibility that was “democratic”.

One, two, and three years have passed, during which the 2016 referendum result has aged and been discredited by the stage-by-stage revelations of what Brexit would actually mean. But the basic doctrine of living parliamentary democracy, that no parliament can bind its successors, was ignored by those determined to treat the 2016 result as a fetish.

Unless there is some unpredictable earthquake in Parliament that allows Johnson to pre-empt the putting-back of the Brexit deadline to 31 January, a new date will be set for the Brexit deadline, and Brexit will be fought over in a general election before then.

This time round the Labour Party must campaign vigorously and with conviction for

Remain. If the leadership does not do that, the rank and file in the local Labour Parties must take matters into their own hands and do it. We must raise a loud voice in favour of European unity.

Anything less will be a betrayal of working-class internationalism and of all the workers of Europe, including the British. Brexitists in the Labour Party and in the labour movement are, on this, downright reactionary!

We can and should fight the capitalist and bureaucratic rules and structures of the European Union — but in alliance with the workers and the labour movements of Europe.

Narrow-minded British or English nationalism is poison to our labour movement, and should be fought against as the poison it is.

Block No Deal, stop Brexit!



**Stop Brexit:
Labour for a
Socialist Europe**

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

It produced independent pro-Labour, anti-Brexit publicity for the Euro-elections in May 2019, and bundles of leaflets totalling some 50,000 were taken and used by local Labour campaigns and by individuals.

It has also been active in the effort to get anti-Brexit, pro-free-movement policy motions to the Labour Party scheduled for 21-25 September.

<https://labourforasocialisteurope.org/>

1919

strikes, struggles
and soviets



A Workers' Liberty pamphlet January 2019 £4.12 (concessions)

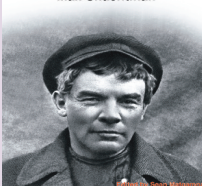
SOCIALISM
MAKES
SENSE



An unfriendly dialogue
Sean Matgamna

In Defence of
Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



WHY
SOCIALIST
FEMINISM?



WOMEN IN
WORKERS'
LIBERTY

The Fate of the
Russian Revolution

Lost Texts of Critical Marxism Vol 1



Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, CLR James,
Al Glicker, Joseph Carter, Leon Trotsky and others
Edited by Sean Matgamna

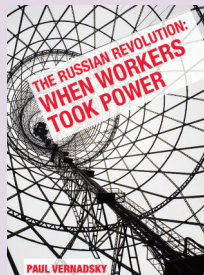
The Fate of the Russian Revolution volume 2
The two Trotskyisms
confront Stalinism



Debates, essays and contributions

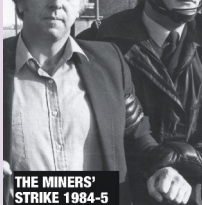
The left
in disarray

Sean Matgamna



PAUL VERNADSKY

CLASS AGAINST
CLASS



THE MINERS'
STRIKE 1984-5

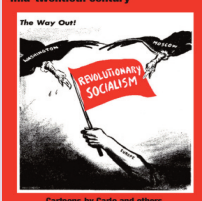
Democracy, direct action
and socialism



A debate on fundamentalism
Michael Foot
and Sean Matgamna

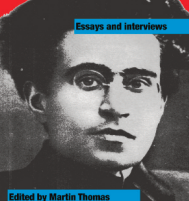
In an era of wars
and revolutions

American socialist cartoons of the
mid-twentieth century



Cartoons by Carlo and others

GRAMSCI
IN CONTEXT



Essays and interviews

Edited by Martin Thomas

HOW
SOLIDARITY
CAN
CHANGE
THE
WORLD



A handbook of socialist politics

Can socialism
make
sense?

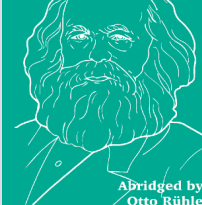


An
unfriendly
dialogue

Sean Matgamna

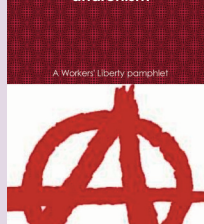
Capital

Karl Marx



Abridged by
Otto Rühle

Working-class politics and
anarchism



A Workers' Liberty pamphlet

www.workersliberty.org/books



Battle for democracy

By Colin Foster

Parliament does not decide when it does or doesn't sit. The Queen, on the advice of the Prime Minister, does that.

Parliament does not decide what Bills can or cannot be debated. The government largely does that, with some small rights of input from the official Opposition.

Only in situations where the government does not have a majority, and where the governing party is in the process of splitting, like now, does that open up more.

It looks like the Johnson government will not dare go through with it, but it is possible for a government simply to refuse to recognise a law passed through Parliament. Michael Gove, on behalf of the government, pointedly refused to accept that the government would be bound by the Brexit date-delay Bill now going through the Commons.

Parliament does not choose the government. Boris Johnson could not have won a vote in Parliament to become prime minister. He became prime minister only because the Tory party voted for him.

The rule that the Queen appoints the prime minister seems only ceremonial and formal, and it is in fact so when one party has a clear majority in parliament. In other cases, it could be used to thwart a left-wing Labour government.

In 1975, Australia, with a very similar parliamentary system to Britain, saw a "coup" when the Queen's representative, the Governor-General, unilaterally dismissed the Labor government and put the conservatives in as a caretaker government until a general election (which Labor lost). Exactly the same process is no longer possible in Britain, but something similar could be done.

If Theresa May had not miscalculated when calling a general election in 2017, and the Tories still had their parliamentary majority, probably the Tories could push through a "no deal" Brexit now, claiming the authority of the 2016 referendum although no-one, no-one at all, voted for "no deal" then.

The electorate would have no chance to call the Tories to account for that until their five

years were up. The electorate has no power to call MPs to account before their five years are up, even if they change party and politics.

The Tories no longer have a majority in the House of Lords. But an entirely unelected majority in the House of Lords has the power, if it wishes, to scupper legislation like the anti-no-deal Bill put through the Commons.

Boris Johnson's poundshop-Mussolini act has dramatised some of the ways in which Britain's parliamentary democracy falls miles below a democracy which really lets the populace decide.

In 1934 a big fascist street demonstration amidst dire economic crisis made the labour movement fear for the life of France's parliamentary democracy. In fact six years later that democracy would be extinguished by the parliament voting "full powers" to Marshal Pétain, who did a deal with the Nazis.

TROTSKY

Britain is not, or not yet, in a 1930s crisis, and Johnson is a poundshop Mussolini, not a real one. But what Leon Trotsky wrote about that crisis is timely today.

"We are firm partisans of a Workers' and Peasants' State, which will take the power from the exploiters... As long as the majority of the working class continues on the basis of bourgeois democracy, we are ready to defend it with all our forces against violent attacks from the Bonapartist and fascist bourgeoisie..."

"Down with the Senate [equivalent of House of Lords], which is elected by limited suffrage and which renders the power of universal suffrage a mere illusion!"

"Down with the presidency of the republic [equivalent of the monarchy, though elected] which serves as a hidden point of concentration for the forces of militarism and reaction!"

"A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers [so the elected assembly chooses the ministers, chooses when it meets and doesn't meet, chooses what it debates]. Members would be elected for two years, by universal suffrage at eighteen years of age, with no discrimination of sex or nationality."

"Deputies would be elected on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, and would receive the salary of a skilled worker."

"This is the only measure that would lead the masses forward instead of pushing them backward. A more generous democracy would facilitate the struggle for workers' power."

The same approach should inform the labour movement today.

Democracy also includes what the "classic" bourgeois democrats of the French and American revolutions called "the right of rebellion" — the right of the people to rise up against their governments.

That right is crippled today in Britain by laws, mostly dating from Thatcher's day, which outlaw strikes and industrial action except in the most hemmed-about circumstances.

Labour Party conference has voted unanimously for the repeal of all those anti-union laws, and to establish the right to strike and take solidarity action. But the Labour leaders still won't commit a Labour government to carry out that repeal.

We must force them to make that commitment.

Price of no-deal? £110 billion

Appearing before a parliamentary committee on 4 September, Bank of England governor Mark Carney said the economic hit of "no deal" Brexit might not be as bad as he previously thought.

He had previously reckoned it as £160 billion, 8% of GDP. He now said £110 billion, 5.5% of GDP. He also said that prices of imported food would rise by 5% or 6%. Two-thirds of Britain's food is imported.

Some of the economic hit will be to profits. But the Tories would make sure that most of it was to wages, benefits, and public services.

Storm on the streets

By Cathy Nugent

To chants like “No one voted for Boris” and “Stop the coup” hundreds of thousands marched in cities across the UK in the days following prime minister Boris Johnson’s announcement on 28 August of a shutdown of Parliament for five weeks from a date to be decided by him between 9 and 12 September.

The central co-ordinating work was done by Another Europe is Possible, working with other left anti-Brexit campaigners including Labour for a Socialist Europe and the Labour Campaign for Free Movement. There were around 80 demonstrations on Saturday 31st.

On Friday 30 August, 200 people attended a lively protest in Darlington. 400 were on the protest in Leicester with Labour and trade union speakers. UCU members marched with placards and drums.

In Calderdale, a comrade reports: “On Thursday the Labour Party mailing list publicised a demonstration and a lot of activists shared details of the event on social media. There were over 100 people attending outside Todmorden Town Hall on Friday, the majority of whom were Labour members.

“It was lively and got a generally good response from the passing traffic. It is planned to carry on every day at 5pm this coming week.”

On Saturday 31 August, London had enough protesters to fill Parliament Street and Whitehall from Trafalgar Square down to Westminster. After speeches from John McDonnell and others, the static protest became



a march.

Protesters marched to Waterloo Bridge and sat down, blocking the bridge. More speeches were heard in an “open mic” session.

The protesters then headed to Piccadilly, stopped traffic there, and back to Trafalgar Square. Another contingent went up the Mall to Buckingham Palace, and a longer walk around London and back to Trafalgar Square followed.

It seems that three people have been arrested. They are being supported by organisers.

5,000 attended a rally organised by Another Europe is Possible in George Square, Glasgow. Jeremy Corbyn spoke.

Up to 2,000 attended one of the biggest left rallies in Birmingham for many years. There, several of the speakers said the issue was no longer Brexit but democracy and the need for a general election. The vast majority of peo-



ple out on the streets have made it clear that they want to stop Brexit and defend freedom of movement.

The 1,000 in Manchester (in pouring rain) were largely Remainers, according to our reports, with some from the Labour Party.

Some thousands turned out in Nottingham for a rally organised by Another Europe is Possible. 2,000 attended a rally at Newcastle’s Grey’s Monument.

Then there were 500 in Cambridge, 200 in Northampton (called by the NEU) and 200 in Tonbridge (called by the local Labour Party chair).

In Sheffield around 4,000 came to the rally called by the local Labour MPs. It was the largest protest in the city for many years. The platform started with good labour movement speakers. After a change of chair, Angela Smith, the former Labour MP who defected to Change UK, was called. When she rhetor-



ically asked the crowd, as speakers do, “what do we want?”, she got the answering chorus: “A by-election”.

There were 4,000 in Leeds, too, with some Labour banners, but only one trade union banner, from the NEU. Speakers included Labour MPs and a UCU rep. There was a small breakaway march at the end of the rally.

On Monday 2 September, a protest outside Downing Street was well timed to drown out Boris Johnson’s speech after the Shadow Cabinet meeting. Around 500 people turned out for the protest, and it was followed by an open assembly.

The #StopTheCoup coalition are calling for protests at 5.30pm each day across the country, and a wave of civil disobedience.

• www.stopthecoup.org.uk. Twitter @stopthecoup_uk

The left and the coup: side

By Rhodri Evans

In our Antidoto column we dissect the claim of the Communist Party of Britain (*Morning Star*) that Boris Johnson’s shutdown of Parliament was really the fault of the anti-Brexiteers in Parliament.

Other left groups and papers which have backed Brexit have been less off-the-wall, but maybe more confusing.

Socialist Worker essentially calls on its readers to shout other slogans so loudly as to drown out all thoughts about Brexit.

It writes: “There was fury at Johnson [at the anti-coup protests]. Beyond that people came with a range of views.

“A substantial number had EU flags or anti-Brexit placards. But others were focused on fighting the Tories and getting Johnson out”.

The sly suggestion that anti-Brexiteers don’t care about fighting the Tories was just a device to indicate that those who do want to fight the Tories shouldn’t care about Brexit. After quoting an anti-Brexit voice, *Socialist Worker* approvingly cited another protester:

“Health worker Annette said, ‘I don’t really care what you think about Brexit. For me I think this is our chance to get the Tories out and to end their rule. We have to stop Universal Credit and the attacks on EU nationals’.”

As if the shutdown of Parliament is actually a good thing? Because it generates “fury” and thus a “chance to get the Tories out”?

Socialist Worker did not call for resistance to Johnson’s ploy to override Parliament as such. Instead it said:

“Neither the EU nor the British parliament are examples of the democracy we should fight for”.

Maybe SW was comparing Parliament unfavourably to the democracy of workers’ councils, with delegates recallable at any time, with an end to the privileges of officials, and with the merger of legislative and executive. Or just to a better parliamentary system, in which for a start the parliament and not an unelected monarch decides when it does or does not sit.

I don’t know, because SW did not explain to readers what democracy it *would* fight for. The reference to a higher democracy served in the article only to “prove” that today’s limited democracy is *not* to be fought for against Johnson.

What then? In another article SW said that protests must be “for driving the Tories out and for a general election”.

OK. But how does SW square its call for a general election — to today’s Parliament, not to future workers’ councils — with the line that the ability of that Parliament to control the executive is not worth fighting for?

And now that Johnson looks like going for an election, does it think “job done”? That getting an election, somehow, has been the big issue, while opposing Johnson’s suspension of Parliament was not a big enough issue to bother about (it’s just parliament, not workers’ democracy), and the best attitude to Brexit is “don’t care”?

In an early general election Brexit will be central. That’ll be the “real” Brexit looming up, the Tory-right “no deal” Brexit, not the “left Brexit” which *Socialist Worker* fantasised about in 2016.

Will *Socialist Worker* recommend that Labour follow SW’s example and say in the election that it “doesn’t really care” about Brexit?

Tory minister Priti Patel is keen to “end free movement” on the dot of 31 October (procedural difficulties may stop her being quite that brutal). SW did call for defence of existing freedoms of movement across borders, though not explaining how that fits with the “don’t care about Brexit” line. Other left groups did not.

Like SW, the Socialist Party argued that protests should not mention Brexit. They should only demand that Johnson call a general election. (So, again, it’s “job done” now?) The SP did say what it wants Labour to advocate in that general election... a hard Brexit!

“Jeremy Corbyn and the trade union

movement need to urgently launch a mass campaign to demand an immediate general election...

“Labour could win by a landslide, provided that it adopted a fighting socialist programme...”

“A pledge to renegotiate Brexit in the interests of the working class — refusing to accept the EU’s pro-privatisation, pro-austerity laws — would form an important part of such an approach”.

NO DEAL

Johnson’s “no deal” Brexit would take Britain out of the scope of all EU rules, including the budgetary rules and the “competition” rules. But EU rules do not drive privatisation and austerity in Britain, and quitting them will not reverse privatisation or austerity.

The record over decades has been of British governments pushing the EU to more privatisation and pro-austerity rules, and the EU, if anything, pushing Britain into some limited social safeguards which Johnson will want to trash.

So far as Corbyn’s “better Brexit” is clear at all, it would take Britain out of EU rules to a much smaller degree than Johnson’s. It would keep the UK in the Customs Union, or at least a Customs Union, and at least partly within the Single Market.

Tories' Brexit targets migrants

By Colin Foster

New Home Secretary Priti Patel wants to end free movement from the European Union into Britain overnight on 31 October.

She has pulled back, according to reports in *The Independent* and *The Guardian*, only because lawyers warned her that moves “to end freedom of movement without a vote from MPs could see ministers taken to court — with a 70 per cent chance of them losing their case”.

Under all variants of EU withdrawal with a deal, free movement would continue for some two years of the “transition period”. The Tories introduced an Immigration Bill in January to empower the government to make more restrictive rules.

Though the details were not in the Bill, the Tories talked of easy entry for people coming to jobs on over £30,000, and no more than 12-month work permits for people coming to other jobs, with a compulsory 12-month gap between permit periods.

As the government floundered, the Bill was shelved, and has not progressed, so the Tories have no legislation to end freedom of movement. Patel wanted to do it just by decree, and surely if she gets a chance will have drastic restrictions in place very soon.

For now the Home Office website still tells EU citizens that with a no-deal Brexit: “The government is proposing to end free movement, but this is still subject to approval by Parliament. Once free movement has ended, if you’re a citizen of any other EU or EEA country, or Switzerland, you’ll still be able to



enter the UK without a visa but only for up to three months”. For longer stays, EU citizens will have to apply for “temporary leave to remain”, and three months in advance.

The Tories also plan a meaner and more brutal regime for asylum-seekers. Already Britain is admitting fewer asylum-seekers than any other large EU country.

The *Guardian* reports (1 September) that the Tories plan to allow “no new applications after 1 November from asylum-seeking children to be reunited with relatives living in the UK”.

The UK is currently obliged to consider those applications under the EU’s Dublin Regulation.

The Tories also plan a squeeze on the 3.6 million EU citizens already living in Britain. They have to apply for “settled status”. According to the Home Office, about one million applications have been processed so far.

On the most recent figures (for July 2019), 42% of them are granted only “pre-settled status”, because the Home Office makes claims (disputed by many applicants) that they have not been in the UK continuously

for five years. Their status remains precarious, and they can get settled status only by applying again years later and meanwhile not leaving the UK for any long period (even if they have good family-emergency, work, or study reasons to do so).

Free movement with the EU has been in operation for decades, and has brought great benefits both to EU citizens and to British citizens wanting to work, study, or retire in the EU.

Brexit means regression. Defend free movement! Open the borders!

-stepping the issues

It’s another question what can be “renegotiated” now. In any case, the Socialist Party is in the odd position of demanding that Labour should, for an early general election, change its policy to be more like Johnson’s. (And at the same time, within the next few weeks, become fully socialist... If you’re going for fantasy politics, why not go large?)

Like SW, but with less argument, the SP considers the defence of parliamentary democracy not really an issue.

“Boris Johnson... is using his position to overrule elected MPs. This is one more indication of how big-business politicians are prepared to push aside all their talk of ‘democracy’ when it suits their interests to do so”.

For the SP Johnson is just giving “one more” example of what’s routine, and what he is pushing aside is just “talk”, not substance. It is not even talk of real democracy, but only talk of “democracy” in scare-quotes, i.e. of something called “democracy” which isn’t really that.

Like SW, the SP gives no hint to its readers of what it proposes as a better democracy, or why it thinks that better democracy is so near to hand that the existing limited version is of no consequence.

And it makes its main call for a general election — i.e. the exercise of this same “democracy”, the overriding of which merits

only the comment that it shows you what big-business politicians always do.

Socialist Alternative, a group which recently split from the SP, has much the same line as the SP, with two variations.

SAlt says: “No to a Tory Brexit – deal or no deal”. The SP, as we’ve seen, suggests it wants a different sort of Brexit from Johnson. But it ends up (inadvertently, I guess) actually arguing for Labour to make its Brexit formula more like Johnson’s than it currently is. And it doesn’t, unless I’ve missed it, have a specific “slogan”, “no to a Tory Brexit”.

Rather, it tends to suggest that it surely wants Brexit, but would wish Labour to propose a better version.

QUIRK

SAlt’s other quirk is: “the demand shouldn’t be ‘no suspension of parliament’. It should be, Johnson and the Tories out, general election now!...”

To get a general election, Parliament has to vote for it. One of Johnson’s motives in suspending Parliament was to reduce the risk (to him) of a vote of no confidence and a general election called in a context not of his choosing. To counterpose “general election now” against “no suspension of Parliament” makes no sense.

Counterfire, a 2010 split from the SWP, is mostly not visible as a political group, but is

of some importance as the “ghost in the machine” of the People’s Assembly, a grouping funded by Unite and other unions which has considerable skills and resources for calling demonstrations.

It has been probably the most Brexiter of the Trotskisant left, but on this occasion started with a website article by Chris Nineham very different from the SW/SP line that the proper response to the coup and Brexit is to talk about other things instead.

“The Government’s attempt to suspend parliament for six weeks represents the biggest attack on democracy since before universal suffrage was won in 1928.

“Faced with this attack on democracy, the whole of the left urgently needs to unite and get back onto the offensive. Parliament has shown its limitations more clearly than ever in the last few years, and much more thoroughgoing democracy is needed.

“But arbitrary rule by Boris Johnson is clearly not the answer to that problem. We need a clear and militant defence of parliamentary democracy including mass rallies and protests”.

A few days later, though, it had shifted. “Johnson’s reasoning is quite simple: yes, he has shut down Parliament, but he is doing so to finally overhaul the undemocratic stitch-up in Parliament that has prevented the will of the people, expressed in the Brexit

referendum, from being carried out.”

And Counterfire thought Johnson has a point: “It would be easy to underestimate the appeal of such a simple message. For it is not just over Brexit that MPs have appeared to be out of touch with the public...”

“This is why it would be a basic mistake for the left, especially the Jeremy Corbyn-led Labour Party, to take up the cause of merely defending Parliament or worse being seen to do so in order to overturn the 2016 referendum result”.

No-one on the left is “merely defending Parliament”. On the contrary, as we’ve seen, much of the left is saying “don’t bother about that aspect of things”.

Counterfire’s new alternative was more like the SWP’s or the SP’s: “calling for system change and a revamping of all the country’s institutions”.

And again, the talk of a grand new system and grand new institutions was not serious, but rather a device to evade the immediate issue. Counterfire didn’t bother to explain what different system and different institutions it was demanding.

Nor to explain why getting them is so near to hand that Johnson’s “biggest attack on [existing] democracy” fades into insignificance.

More on why ISO collapsed

By Martin Thomas

At the “Socialism Sydney 2019” event organised by Socialist Alternative Australia (SAIt) I was able to talk with some people about the collapse and disappearance, in March-April this year, of the International Socialist Organization USA.

The ISO was the biggest group outside Australia with which SAIt had links. With maybe 900 members, the ISO was, and had been for a while, the most active revolutionary socialist group in the USA. Its political history could be traced back (with twists and shifts along the way) to the Workers’ Party of Max Shachtman (from 1940).

Revolutionary socialist groups often suffer splits, setbacks, periods of decline. But for a relatively sizeable, active and well-placed group, with some political tradition, to collapse completely, is a first — an unprecedented turn, which calls for investigation and discussion.

Mick Armstrong was a founder of SAIt in 1995, when the ISO-Aus (the Australian group linked to the SWP-UK) expelled him and other former ISO-Aus leaders in a fight over the SWP early-1990s turn to a more bombastic orientation. He was at the ISO-USA convention in February (which led in to the collapse) and has attended other ISO meetings.

SAIt, he said, had had some differences with the ISO, but mostly he gave me a picture of the old ISO leadership (in office largely unchanged since the early 80s) losing energy and will.

Ahmed Shawki, the best-known leader, had been out of action through ill-health. The ISO leaders were uncertain about and divided on the rise of the Bernie Sanders movement and of the DSA (Democratic Socialists of America, formerly a not-very-active left social-democratic group, now over 50,000 strong). Alan Maass and Todd Chretien were the “right”, Joel Geier the “left”.

At the convention — before anyone was talking of collapse, and in fact while new ISO leaders were talking about a turn to more activity — the old leaders did not even stand for re-election. When the storm over the ISO’s handling of a rape charge some years back broke, after the convention, the

old leaders just resigned.

The convention, said Mick, was a mess. The ISO, he thought, had been affected by ideas circling round “identity politics”: some political debates, for example, would be stalled by claims that to argue further would be inconsiderate of so-and-so’s mental health.

Sadia Schneider, a younger SAIt leader, said to me that the collapse came from the ISO leaders dealing poorly with the rape charge. (But why ever should that lead to giving up on the whole project of building a revolutionary socialist organisation, rather than to changing procedures, replacing officials?)

The rise of the DSA had thrown the ISO into disarray. (But why should that make the ISO dissolve itself, rather than get into difficult debate or even split?)

More relevantly to my mind, Sadia said that the ISO-USA had been short on political education. It had tended to “movementism” and light-on-theory activism. It lacked political leaders intermediate between the top few and its local activists. The organisation was dispersed, with concentrations in Chicago and New York but lots of small groups scattered in other cities across the wide expanses of the USA.

My best guess is that the ISO decayed because it relied more and more on reactive, catch-penny politics, and neglected the task of investigating and developing its political tradition.

As Rosa Luxemburg put it in an article on the 1905 revolution, “the extent to which the party rises to the occasion” at a challenge “depends in the greatest degree on... the extent to which it was already [before the big upheavals] successful in putting together a solid central core of politically well-trained worker activists with clear goals”.

A lot about the ISO we still don’t know. I learned something from Mick and Sadia. It’s a pity that SAIt, who maybe have more information about the ISO than anyone outside the vortex of its collapse, do not discuss the collapse in writing.

A 14-page feature on “Rebuilding the revolutionary left today” in the current issue of the SAIt paper *Red Flag* doesn’t even mention the collapse.

Solidarity-US says “not dissolving”

From Solidarity-US national committee

U.K.-based organisation Alliance for Workers’ Liberty recently reported our convention’s motion to “to set up a committee to explore converting it from an organisation into an educational centre” as a kind of “dissolution,” and implied that we are “too small, weak, elderly, and divided to function as an organisation.”

This characterisation is speculative and inaccurate. There was no motion to dissolve Solidarity or fundamentally alter its organisational structure at the convention.

In the 2019 National Convention, Dan La Botz and other members organised a discussion around developing an educational center for revolutionary socialism in the U.S. as a potential avenue of framing the future of Solidarity. Around twenty comrades, including some in the current National Committee, participated and contributed to some preliminary ideas.

These discussions excited many (especially younger) members, and eventually, Dan introduced the motion “to set up an exploratory committee to investigate whether Solidarity should transform itself from a membership organisation into an educational centre. This investigation should be a priority for the incoming NC.” This motion was passed at the convention.

The NC is working on next steps to organise this discussion of an educational centre with the broader membership. We emphasize that this project is not the committee’s sole responsibility — we hope that the membership, especially our at-large members, can take greater leadership and role in directing and thinking more about this project.

Dan La Botz recently drafted a document that frames these ideas. We will post more information about this initiative soon, but members with any idea, questions, or concerns can feel free to email the NC at soli-nc2019@lists.riseup.net

Promise Li, Plainsboro NJ, on behalf of the National Committee

No alteration? That’s deceiving ourselves

By Thano Paris

I wish to go on record publicly as a former member of the last National Committee, a participant in the last convention, and someone with over 10+ years experience with Solidarity.

On 6 August the current NC issued a statement signed by Promise Li denying a report by AWL that at our last convention there was a motion to “motion to dissolve Solidarity or fundamentally alter its organisational structure at the convention”.

I believe this statement from the NC to be categorically false. Frankly, the leadership, which includes many comrades I respect, is in a very powerful way engaged in deceiving itself, the membership as a whole, and the broader left.

To suggest that Solidarity cease functioning as a membership organisation — which it has done since 1986, with close to over 200 members — is by its very nature a very substantive breach in its organisational structure.

Solidarity has never in its history been simply or mainly a magazine, a web site or a yearly Summer School event. It has for most of its history been a political organisation which sought to foster collaboration among members to intervene within social movements. The organisation is in fact being dissolved.

The changes which are being projected as part of this proposal to cease functioning as a membership organisation are part of that process. There have been clear calls within the group to dissolve Solidarity, and the individuals who have made such calls support this proposal.

Solidarity is in no way immune or insu-

lated from the broader political and social pressures that have influenced the ISO and other organisations. The pressure to adapt politically to the enormous growth of DSA and a resurgent wing within the Democratic Party is having an impact on our organisation.

Internal dynamics relating to challenges of generational renewal among the leadership, a partial break in continuity in terms of labour work due to comrades retiring, a break down in branch functioning and tendency toward the “at-large-ification” of the membership are also taking their toll.

Revolutionaries must above all be self critical and searchingly honest. This latest NC statement manifestly fails on these accounts.

It should also have been reported that the last convention affirmed a dual approach to the 2020 elections of members participating in both the Bernie Sanders campaign and the potential Green Party campaign of Howie Hawkins.

The support for Bernie Sanders within Solidarity effectively surpasses and outweighs that of any other candidate. There is very minimal support within the organisation for any open support and organising for any sort of left alternative to either Trump or a centrist neoliberal Democrat.

Despite the challenges which do exist and are in fact real around mounting such a campaign the decisive majority of members are not seriously contemplating how to approach it. They might privately vote for a Green candidate but publicly any efforts that they make will be in support of Sanders and or other DSA type left Democrats.

I see this as a further step away from class independence, and opposition to the capitalist Democratic Party.

Alliance for Workers’ Liberty conference is 7-8 December

By Cathy Nugent

Workers’ Liberty’s annual conference, where we will debate and decide our political stances and plans, strengthen our networks and elect our National Committee and other committees, will take place on 7-8 December in London.

This year our National Committee has commissioned the following documents: “Leading the fight for a new regrouped internationalist left” (assessing the longer term political results of the 2008 clash including Brexit), “Perspectives on Israel-Palestine”, “Marxists and climate change”, “Feminism today”, and “How to tackle Universal Credit”.

According to our constitution any comrade can table a document as well as amendments to documents. So far, one comrade has tabled a motion on “Secular Education and the Hijab.”

We will also be hearing short reports from areas of work and an update on the work we have been doing to improve our arrangements and processes for safeguarding and welfare.

All our members are expected to attend and have a vote on the policies and we invite supportive comrades and friends to observe and speak in debate. Please email office@workersliberty.org to find out more.

Violence in Lewisham Momentum

By Mark Osborn

A further series of unpleasant attacks on left activists aligned with Workers' Liberty took place at the Lewisham Momentum meeting held on Wednesday 14 August.

The most serious incident at this Momentum meeting was that Bill Jefferies of Ladywell ward, Lewisham Deptford CLP, physically attacked me. He hit me on the chin and grabbed my throat in the hall outside the meeting room as the meeting was breaking up. He is 10cm taller and 40kg heavier than me.

I'm okay, as always. But my chin still hurts and there's a mark on my neck.

The witnesses to this incident were Tom Harris and Rob Robertson. Robertson, despite standing three metres away, watching closely, claims to have seen nothing. Robertson is Jefferies' friend and also, like Jefferies, is an ex-member of Workers' Power.

The political issue between Jefferies and myself was that he claimed that a political friend of mine, Jill Mountford, is a manager who has supported cuts in connection with the Besson Street building project. I repeatedly asked him for evidence. Since he has no evidence (he's invented the allegation, no evidence exists), and he is hysterical and a fool, he chose to attack me instead of answering.

At the end of the meeting I was approached by a man I didn't know who told me, "Why don't you fuck off? I know you, I've seen you, you're a fucking troublemaker. Just fuck off. Fuck off." He was also incoherent and hysterical. I asked for his name. He told me to "Fuck off".

The only thing I had said in the meeting (my contribution lasted a minute) was, essentially this: Did the speaker vote for an anti-trans rights motion in Tottenham CLP? Did the speaker support "left" antisemites like Ken Livingstone? Did the speaker agree that it was disgraceful that councillors who voted for cuts should be considered as left wing?

The speaker was someone called Noah



Tucker, a councillor from Haringey (apparently he is ex-Straight Left, that is, a hard-line Stalinist, and an ex-Cabinet member). Instead of answering any of my questions Tucker said, demagogically, that what was disgraceful was that (and apparently he was talking about me) some people supported imperialism rather than the oppressed.

Very demagogic and tiresome. But he was

whipping up the small meeting (25 people) against me. Lots of applause.

I asked Tucker after the meeting if he had voted for an anti-trans rights motion which had been put to Tottenham CLP. He said he was not going to answer my question.

The meeting was chaired by trade union bureaucrat Bill Patterson, despite the fact that Patterson was not elected onto the Lewisham

Momentum Committee at the last AGM and the elected Chair was in the room for most of the meeting. Patterson is a Stalinist buffoon who sets the tone in Lewisham Momentum; he was trying reasonably hard to stop me speaking.

Momentum nationally should not allow Patterson to continue to run the local group in this way. Lewisham Momentum is now a small, poisonous sect.

We need a left which is open and takes ideas and political debate seriously, which is willing to answer questions which are seriously posed. It is not "troublemaking" to ask political questions and expect serious, honest, clear replies.

We need a left which is opposed to antisemitism, is for trans rights, and which opposes council cuts — including those voted for by pseudo-left councillors.

We need a left that understands that physical violence in the labour movement is never justified.

Outside the meeting room, as the meeting dispersed, a comrade from the AWL was handing out the text of the Tottenham CLP anti-trans rights motion. One of the audience picked up the comrade's copies of the AWL's paper, *Solidarity*, and made an attempt to tear them up, until I intervened and told her not to.

Conclusions:

Momentum — nationally and in Lewisham — should suspend Jefferies and investigate the incident;

The Labour Party should do similarly;

Momentum should prevent Patterson running the local Momentum group and ensure that its elected officers run the group and its meetings.

• The text of the trans rights motion involved in this incident is online at bit.ly/lew-vi

Why I did not go to the police

By Mark Osborn

Our basic response to disputes in the labour movement, including the stupid instance of violence against me outside a recent Momentum meeting, is not to run to the police.

The police are not a neutral force, they are not honest arbiters. We want to educate our movement not to rely on the superficially impartial bourgeois state. The state is hostile; we don't believe the state has a role in this.

Disputes in the labour movement should be sorted out by the labour movement.

I have filed complaints to multiple Labour Party organisations and to Momentum (nationally, locally, and to Laura Parker and Jon Lansman) about the Jefferies attack.

Of course in this case none of the individuals or committees I have approached has done anything to investigate the case. That's not a big surprise. Neither Momentum nor the national Labour Party (despite their significant resources) cares much about a person like me. No matter — we need to campaign and insist they do the right thing.

We want to demand the movement relies on itself, alone. And the movement needs to learn to clean up its own messes, and sort out its own problems.

I suspect there's been some miseducation on this question because, starting in 2016, when I reported disgusting slanders (anonymous and unevicenced) against myself which were posted on the Red London Facebook page, activists associated with the AWL have reported various incidents to the police.

The difference between doing that and going to the Met about this incident is that in the case of anonymous abuse on the internet there are no labour movement routes or mechanisms to use.

And Red London is not a labour movement organisation, the people that edit that page are Red-Brown scum (despite the fact that they are probably union members).

Any working class militant dislikes the cops, and is suspicious of them, perfectly reasonably. By trotting along to the local station whenever something unpleasant happens we will discredit ourselves and mis-educate those who are watching what

we do (essentially we will be reinforcing the bourgeois myth of state neutrality).

That the bourgeois state has no right to sort out disputes in the labour movement is a principle, not a tactical matter.

We shouldn't do it even when we think we'll get what we want.

But in this case "getting what we want" (presumably having Jefferies interviewed, charged and convicted) would not even happen. The police would take some notes then probably do nothing. Jefferies should be "convicted" following Labour Party and Momentum investigations.

While we demand action on this from the official movement we will continue to campaign to warm activists of the threat posed by Jefferies and the unpleasant culture that exists in Lewisham Momentum.

To the Labour Party members who say we must go to the police we argue the case, above. To the Labour officials who say they can do nothing until the police act we say they are making excuses for their lack of action.

A crime number is not necessary for the Labour Party to deal with a complaint.

Ágnes Heller 1929-2019

By John Cunningham

With the death of Ágnes Heller on 19 July an era in Hungarian politics has come to an end.

She was one of the last links to the Hungarian Marxist György Lukács and the so-called Budapest School of the 1960s, which consisted of a number of his former students, including Heller's husband Ferenc Feher.

Born to a Jewish family in Budapest, Heller survived the Holocaust. Her father – an inspirational figure who helped many Jews to survive – perished in the final months of the war. After 1945 she enrolled at university and joined the Hungarian Communist Party in 1947 after hearing Lukács give a lecture. She quickly established herself as an independent voice within the party and was frowned on by the rigidly Stalinist leadership.

In 1955 she took up a teaching post at the University of Budapest. The Hungarian revolution of 1956, which she referred to as the “greatest event in my life”, confirmed the gap, in her eyes, between actual Marxism and what the “Marxists” of the Hungarian CP did when they came to power.

At a conference in Berlin she called for the founding of a new and qualitatively different form of socialism. For that heresy she was expelled from the party and thrown out of her job at the university. Lukács appointed her

his assistant, but even that afforded no protection, and in 1958 she was packed off to teach in a middle school.

In 1964 Heller participated in the formation of the Budapest School under the guidance of Lukács. Some say this name was foisted on them by a journalist and Heller, Ferenc Feher, György Markus, András Hegedus, Mihály Vajda and a few others were probably never more than a loose grouping of like-minded thinkers.

Their goal was a “Renaissance of Marxism.” They studied the early works of Marx and the most important work of their mentor: György Lukács’ *History and Class Consciousness*, originally published in 1923.

Life was hard for a small group of Marxist intellectuals in Hungary after 1956. Isolated, persecuted and harassed by party officials, and with the workers’ movement suppressed after 1956, Heller and her colleagues began a slow drift away from Marxism, a process not helped by the death of Lukács in 1971.

They began to question the centrality of class within a Marxist critique of capitalist society and in this they showed the influence of some “New Left” thinking coming from the West. Likewise, they became increasingly critical of the Bolshevik revolution, often using the term “Jacobinism” to describe it.

Heller also participated in the Korčula conferences in Yugoslavia where, in the more re-



laxed political atmosphere of the mid and late 1960s, leftist philosophers from Eastern and Central Europe would gather to discuss a different vision of Marxism.

The suppression of the “Prague Spring” (the reforms associated with Alexander Dubček in neighbouring Czechoslovakia in 1968) prompted a strong protest from Heller and her colleagues. That resulted in more pressure on them.

Denounced as “anarchists of the new left”, they were again expelled from their posts. Their doubts about the validity of Marxism

grew at the same time as their position in Hungary became more insecure. Around 1976 the Budapest School simply folded and the individual adherents went their separate ways.

Heller and Feher moved to Australia and taught in Melbourne and later in the USA. Markus also went to Australia (to Sydney). Heller returned to Hungary in 1989, and in her final years was a vocal opponent of Victor Orbán.

In my nine years in Hungary I heard her speak once, in the lakeside town of Keszthely. The venue was packed and it was obvious that she was well-known even in this small countryside town.

Of course she spoke in Hungarian. Since I had then been in the country less than a year, it was hard to follow her. At that time I knew little about her. I had expected to hear a Marxist speak but what she said would not have been out of place in a Lib-Dem conference. I tried to arrange a meeting with her in Budapest, but it fell through.

She published many books over the years – a body of work with which I can only claim a limited acquaintance. I can recommend some of her early works, written while she was still a Marxist, such as *Everyday Life* (1968) and *Renaissance Man* (published in 1976 but written earlier).

Socialist Party split still unclear

By Pete Boggs

The first issue of the monthly newspaper of the new Socialist Alternative group (a splinter from the Socialist Party) is now out.

Unfortunately it has little to mark it out politically from *The Socialist*, paper of the Socialist Party. The editorial on Boris Johnson is completely evasive on the question of Brexit. The only real difference is that Socialist Alternative have realised, correctly, that it is embarrassing for them to talk about “Lexit” after all that has happened, especially when their main selling point is that they are more hip and trendy than the Socialist Party.

They do hint at their position on Brexit: “if

Labour equivocates or adopts a Remain position Corbyn would lose votes to the Brexit Party and Tories, while gaining insufficiently few from the Greens and Lib Dems”. They oppose a “Tory Brexit”, but cannot seem to put forward what a better Brexit might look like or how it might come about.

Socialist Alternative belong to the majority-CWI (Committee for a Workers’ International, what was the SP’s international network), which held a special meeting of the International Executive Committee in Belgium from 12 to 16 August, and has published a declaration (see bit.ly/CWI-maj).

The International-Secretariat-CWI (now being used as the factional body of the Socialist Party and its international supporters) has

published the document it passed at the meeting where the opposition in the Socialist Party were expelled (see bit.ly/CWI-IS).

Neither document offers much in the way of new information.

Socialist Alternative and the CWI majority have been given an opportunity to rethink the stale and formulaic politics of the Militant tradition, which they should not squander. It is good that they have made broadly convincing criticisms of the antidemocratic regime of the CWI and the prehistoric opposition to the politics of liberation.

However, Taaffe and his cronies did not become bureaucratic dinosaurs overnight, and their political rot goes much deeper than these two issues.



London Young Labour shuts down debate

By Simon Duffy

In the winter of 2018, the left – backed by Momentum – took over London Young Labour from the right wing of the party. The largest lecture theatre at UCL, with a capacity of 400, was full, with members spilling out onto the floor.

This summer’s policy conference, on 24 August, had about 40 people. As if deliberately to minimise attendance, the conference had been called at three weeks’ notice, at the height of summer.

We were told off by a member of the committee for handing out leaflets unless we showed “politeness” by “asking the committee first, so we can check if it has offensive

material”. The incendiary material in question was advertising an emergency motion against the government’s planned crack-down on immigration after Brexit.

Last year’s conference agreed to work with the Labour Campaign for Free Movement, but they refused us “permission” after we had asked.

Other victims of this righteous purge of A5 paper grenades included a conference building the case for a socialist Europe, and a leaflet advocating a repeal of the Thatcherite trade union laws with quotes from the President of the RMT and the General Secretary of the FBU.

Some of us submitted for debate a motion calling for LYL to oppose Brexit outright, and to challenge the Labour leadership to back

Remain and the defence of free movement. The room prioritised the motion for debate. The organisers knew it would almost certainly have passed.

They had already made efforts to prevent motions (except those they had whipped for) being heard – like allowing only one and a half hours for all debate, and then letting preceding sessions to overrun. By the time the democratic session arrived, there were only 50 minutes left.

But the earlier motions were, though important, self-evidently uncontroversial. No one volunteered to speak against any of the first five motions.

So the Chairs organised to make sure that anyone could raise totally mundane “points of clarification” purely to keep the conversa-

tion lasting as long as possible.

Those included one giggly attendee asking “What is 8chan?”, to which another attendee responded by reading out a Wikipedia page.

Other tactics to waste time included reading out entire motions before they be voted on. The result was that no policy of controversy was voted on or even discussed.

The only upside of this is that so few people will be needed to turn this committee around next time that it might just be do-able.

•Abridged with thanks from The Clarion, bit.ly/lyl-24aug. For a report on the March LYL conference under this leadership, see bit.ly/lyl-31mar

Uyghurs: a history of oppression



Review

By Bill Davies

The book *The Uyghurs: Strangers in their Own Land* was published in 2010, so it predates by six years the intense escalation in repression by the Chinese State against the Uyghurs and other national minorities in Xinjiang.

In Xinjiang, a region in the northwest of China which is known to most Uyghur people as East Turkestan, recent years have brought indoctrination-internment camps and intensified intrusive surveillance on a mass scale.

But the ongoing, unresolved and undiminished conflict between the Uyghur people and the Chinese state over many decades goes back further. The author, Gardner Bovingdon, a US academic, argues that the conflict is one of competing nationalisms – Han-Chinese (the majority and dominant ethnic-national people in China) vs Uyghur – rather than, as has been suggested elsewhere, one of competing ideologies (e.g. Islamism vs authoritarian Chinese “Communism”).

Both Uyghurs and Han-Chinese claim that the territory (East Turkestan or Xinjiang) is historically their country. As with many other places around the world, the competing claims each carry their own mythologised or semi-mythologised histories. There are claims of – and some evidence of – ancient Uyghur kingdoms and Chinese rule there hundreds of years ago.

Bovingdon outlines the competing historical narratives and mentions the short-lived independent Xinjiang / East Turkestan states of 1864-77, 1933-34 and 1944-49 (the latter two were only in a small part of the territory). He is sceptical about some of the historical claims on both sides.

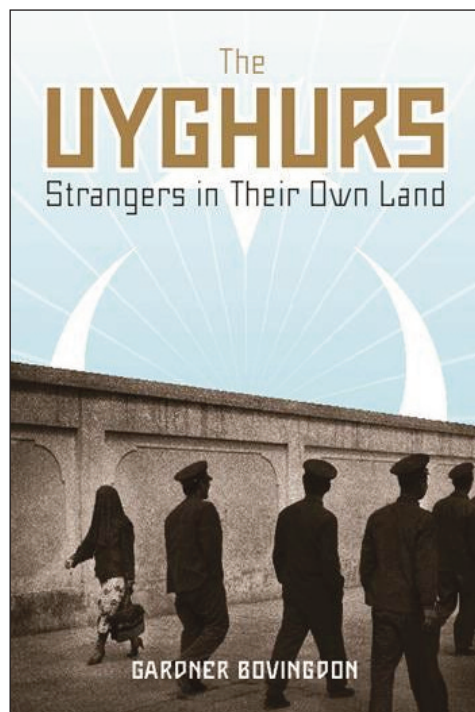
Nevertheless, two solidly distinct national identities have emerged from history, one oppressing the other.

Mao's China rejected self-determination for minority nations in favour of a system of “minzu regional autonomy”. “Minzu” is the Chinese word for the various ethnic and national groups which are considered to form an ethnically diverse but unified Chinese nation.

This “autonomy”, in Xinjiang (and elsewhere in China), does not mean a democratic, self-governing territory federated with other territories within a larger state. Rather, it describes a fragmented government administration at regional (Xinjiang), sub-regional, and local level, with nominal “autonomy” (in effect patronage and hand-picked representatives) for various different ethnic-national groups (minzu). Over decades the system failed to reflect the demographic reality of Xinjiang as a Uyghur-majority region.

The Uyghurs are no longer a majority, thanks to a decades-long campaign by the Chinese state to encourage Han-Chinese migration to Xinjiang. However, Uyghurs are still the largest single ethnic group comprising more than 40% of the population.

On top of all the “autonomy” is a highly centralised Chinese state policing, intimidating and carefully selecting local and regional state representatives, including those from Uyghur and other minority ethnic groups.



This “autonomy” was ostensibly aimed at promoting “minzu solidarity” – by offering a little (undemocratic, hand-picked) representation to each ethnic group. Most of the top governing roles are occupied by Han-Chinese. The fundamental absence of democracy, of free elections, of the freedom to speak and campaign politically, and of any system of regions voluntarily giving their consent to a central authority, means that there cannot be genuine autonomy in Xinjiang.

The Chinese state has tried for decades to suppress expressions of national self-assertion, culture and other distinctive Uyghur traits such as, for many, the Muslim religion. There has been an ongoing campaign of censorship and harassment aimed at silencing and suppressing any separatist (“splittist”) feeling, to prevent this escalating to the level of political organisation around demands for independence.

Bovingdon notes that this has not been successful and that most Uyghurs hold proudly to their belief in their own nationhood and the just cause of national independence. Although public political activity is heavily repressed, Uyghurs have been able to communicate and collectivise their ongoing national aspirations through small acts of defiance such as the telling of implicitly political jokes in the Uyghur language and the inclusion of allegorical political lyrics in Uyghur songs.

Since 2010, China has taken the repression to another level and is attempting full-scale, enforced indoctrination as well as an intrusive level of surveillance aimed at wiping out even small-scale expressions of Uyghur national and cultural pride and distinction.

The everyday resistance has not won concessions or more lenient treatment from China, but, as Bovingdon says, “the various forms of resistance have... strengthen[ed] and ke[pt] in circulation the idea that Uyghurs are fundamentally distinct from Hans...”

The following now seems like an all-too-bold statement:

“It is safe to predict that party-state will not eliminate everyday resistance even if it succeeds in blanketing the airwaves of Xinjiang with its own messages, blocking unwanted messages from outside with jammers, arresting writers, burning books, silencing singers and confiscating tapes. Uyghurs have en-

gaged in everyday resistance, even when they had no opportunity or did not dare take part in open and organised resistance... Under conditions of extreme repression, it may be the only index of the depth and breadth of Uyghur discontent.”

The Chinese state has clearly identified small-scale assertions of national and cultural identity as a problem and is currently engaged in its most brutally determined push to eliminate them in a series of actions which Uyghur activists and academics around the world have termed “cultural genocide”.

There has also been organised collective action and violent resistance. Bovingdon identifies the following distinct periods:

- From 1979 to 1989 there was an easing of state control and there were large peaceful protests over both political and economic issues.

- From 1989 to 2001 (Tiananmen Square onwards) the regime became more repressive and large demonstrations were banned. There were more small-scale riots and violent attacks.

- From 2001 onwards, there was even more repression and a significant decline in the number of protest actions.

For the most part, the Chinese authorities either ignored the protestors’ demands or punished them by deliberately making matters worse.

“When protestors called for greater religious freedom, Ürümcı stepped up the repression of religious belief among students and officials, zero tolerance for private religious instruction... When demonstrators called for increased representation by Uyghur, Qazaq, and other non-Han officials, officials and their advisers pushed for more Han cadres to preserve stability...”

“When students asked for greater respect for Uyghur culture, the government chose to phase out bilingual education...”

China makes claims that it has improved the lives of Uyghurs and other non-Han minorities in Xinjiang, yet it has deliberately pursued policies to do exactly the opposite, in order to dis-incentivise any collective action or protest at all.

“Viewed against a backdrop of increasing protest and violence in China proper and evidence of a pervasive wealth gap between Hans and Uyghurs in Xinjiang, the falling protest numbers indicate the success of the party-state’s actions to root out organizations and deter would-be protestors into quiescence – in short, not to resolve Uyghurs’ grievances but to deprive them of the resources and opportunities to articulate them publicly.”

Bovingdon surveys Uyghur organisations in the diaspora over the decades. They have played an important role in cohering a sense of nationhood for the Uyghurs in exile, but remain weak in relation to China, never gaining a place “at the table”. China’s only way of relating to the Uyghur organisations has been to denounce and malign them as terrorist organisations.

The plight of the Uyghurs and other oppressed peoples can’t be resolved outside of international struggles asserting global standards for human rights and national self-determination.

In the epilogue, Bovingdon describes the inter-ethnic violence escalating from a rumoured incident in 2009 among workers at the Xuri toy factory of several Uyghur men raping two Han women, although the rumour was later repudiated by one of the

women said to have been involved. On 25 June there was a violent attack by Han workers against Uyghur workers — it was a factory with tied accommodation, workers living in dormitories.

“Armed with crude weapons such as iron bars and long knives, the Han workers attacked the occupants indiscriminately. Two Uyghurs were killed and several hundred were injured, according to official reports, whereas Uyghur expatriates claimed the casualties were much higher.”

On 5 July, there was an Uyghur protest in Ürümcı, numbering hundreds, against the government’s handling of what happened. The protest was peaceful for three hours, according to all (including official Chinese) accounts. The state then heavily repressed the demonstration, with both riot police and armed paramilitary police (People’s Armed Police — PAP). There were clashes and violent attacks throughout the city.

It seems that there were significantly more casualties among Hans than Uyghurs. Initial figures given were 156 dead, 123 Han Chinese and 33 Uyghurs. The official reports then stopped counting the ethnic breakdown of casualties. Official final figures were 197 killed and 1721 injured.

There were continued violent reprisals, including killings, over the next few days, with more PAP drafted in from 6 July. “On July 7, bands of Han Chinese roaming the streets with homemade weapons carried out revenge killings. No casualty figures were made available.”

The details are contested, but the events show such high levels of discontent among Uyghurs at their experience of Chinese rule they were willing to risk reprisals. And that the reprisals came swiftly and brutally. China still refuses to recognise any legitimate grievance against national oppression.

The Chinese state imposed intense control of communications, including shutting down mobile phone and internet services, in order to monopolise and manage information about the July 2009 protest and violence, and to prevent any other version of events being presented.

More articles online

THE BOLSHEVIKS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION WORK

The founding of the “Red International of Labour Unions”, in 1920, is sometimes considered a mistake, with no result other than to provide a signboard for the later Stalinist splinter “red unions”. Paul Vernadsky argues that a new book shows that RILU had strengths in building collaboration between communists and revolutionary syndicalists. bit.ly/rilu-pv

THE “BOLSHEVISATION” OF THE KPD, 1924-5

The “Bolshevisation” campaign can be seen in hindsight to have been a pivotal step in the reduction of Communist Parties to frontier-guards for the USSR, readily manipulated from Moscow. The most important Communist Party outside the USSR, the German CP (KPD), was central in the campaign. bit.ly/bols-kpd

Where we stand

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More online at www.workersliberty.org



Workers' Liberty



@workersliberty



Rail workers strike again against DOO

From the Off the Rails blog

Guards on South Western Railway are striking again from 30 August – 2 September, as their fight against the imposition of Driver Only Operation (DOO) goes on.

Company figures expected that 40% of services would be cancelled on Friday 30 August and Monday 2 September, with up to 50% of services cancelled at the weekend. Union activists believe these figures could be conservative.

As guards prepared for the strike, the news that SWR's parent company First had received £32 million from the government, in compensation for the impact of anti-DOO strikes. This means that taxpayers have subsidised a private company to minimise the impact of industrial action, significantly

weighting the scales against workers.

On Merseyrail, RMT has suspended strikes due for 24 August, 3 September, and 5 September, after bosses made a revised offer. The new proposal does represent progress, most significantly in moving away from Merseyrail's previous position of retaining guards' jobs at the expenses of cuts in other areas, including cleaners' jobs.

But questions remain over the detail of the deal, and whether guards will retain control of opening and closing doors. We've been here before on other companies, namely South Western and Northern, when a deal touted as providing a "guard guarantee" was reached, leading to the suspension of strikes, only to find that, freed from the pressure of industrial ac-

tion, bosses' interpretation of the deal turned out to be little more than a soft form of DOO, leading to strikes being reinstated.

Merseyrail is the company where strikes have been strongest, bolstered by near unanimous support from Aslef driver members refusing to cross RMT picket lines. Those strikes were demobilised for months while dodgy deals, trading cleaners' jobs for guards' jobs, were brought back to the RMT NEC.

Now, having finally made the decision, under the pressure of Merseyrail workers' mass meetings, to reinstate action, suspending strikes merely to "continue talks" about a new deal is a significant risk.

If the details of the new proposal are not ironed out to workers' satisfaction – i.e., a firm commitment to retain safety-

critical guards' jobs, with control of the doors – the further strikes planned for 30 September, 2 October, and 4 October must go ahead.

TUBE STRIKES SUSPENDED

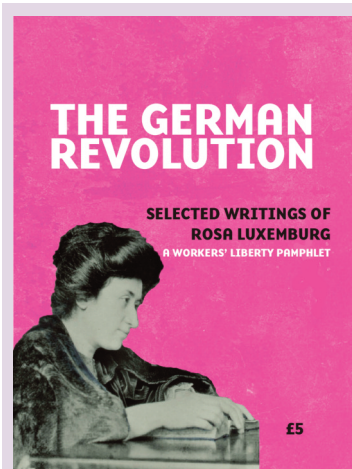
Tube union RMT suspended strikes planned by drivers on London Underground's Central and Victoria Lines on 3-4 September, after bosses made a number of concessions.

The issues at the heart of the dispute include authoritarian management culture on both lines, and driver numbers on the Central Line particularly.

The union remains in dispute and activists say strikes should be reinstated if management renege on agreements.

Audio of *Solidarity*

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

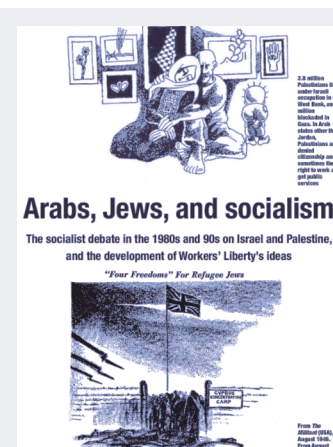


Our pamphlet, *The German Revolution*, has Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.

They span from when the 1918-9 German revolution began, and her release from jail, through to her murder by a Social Democratic government protected right-wing militia.

Paul Vernadsky's introduction tells the story of the German revolution and discusses findings of recent scholarship on it.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage — non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders. Buy online at bit.ly/r1-gr



Arabs Jews and Socialism: The socialist debate in the 1980s and 90s on Israel and Palestine, and the development of Workers' Liberty's ideas.

We recently reprinted this pamphlet, with an additional introduction by Sean Matgamna. £5 cover price, £6.20 including postage.



A pamphlet from Workers' Liberty summarises our arguments on Brexit, Europe, international solidarity, free movement, immigration, and how to build socialist politics cross-borders.

40 pages A4. Cover price £4. With postage — non-UK £6, UK £5. Cheap rates for bulk orders: four for £15, ten for £35, twenty for £60.

• Buy online at bit.ly/r-rebel

PCS says: join coup protests

By John Moloney, Assistant General Secretary, PCS (personal capacity)

PCS nationally has made a clear statement against Johnson's coup, and is encouraging members to join protests.

Our National Executive Committee (NEC) meets this week [starting 2 Sep], and will discuss the unfolding situation in more detail. Our conference policy on Brexit is to remain neutral on the question itself, which the NEC can't overturn, but obviously we will need to think about how we respond, particularly as it's PCS members' labour that will be relied upon to a large extent to "deliver Brexit".

It maybe during the NEC meeting itself that a general election is

announced. We would then need to decide how the union will intervene into that. We have a conference policy in favour of a Corbyn-led government, but the NEC would need to flesh that policy out and decide whether we'll be putting resources into campaigning for that, mobilising members to canvas, encouraging people to join Labour to get involved with the election campaign, and so on.

The Trades Union Congress is also meeting this week [8-11 Sep], and I hope they'd respond to events with some urgency as well.

PCS members are also fighting a number of industrial battles, many involving strikes. In Stockport, Universal Credit centre workers struck from 27-28 August, demanding additional jobs and more manageable workloads. IT workers at the

Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency also began a month-long strike on 22 August, resisting overbearing bosses who've been making unilateral changes to working practises.

Outsourced cleaners and catering staff at the Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) are continuing an indefinite strike for living wages, supported by full strike pay from the union. Other workers, such as post room staff, security workers, and reception workers are also involved in that dispute. Cleaners at HMRC offices in Bootle and Liverpool will be striking again.

Outsourced workers at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office are also in dispute, with talks between the union and the employer still ongoing.

Post workers to ballot for strike

By Gerry Bates

Postal workers' union CWU is planning a strike ballot of around 100,000 workers in Royal Mail, with the vote due to run from 17 September to 8 October.

The union also balloted Royal Mail workers last year, succeeding in meeting the thresholds of the anti-union laws, but strikes were called off after bosses agreed to a number of concessions, including a reduction in the working week from 39 to 35 hours. CWU now says the company is not abiding by this agreement.

A postal worker told *Solidarity*: "There are other issues in the background to the dispute as well. There's widespread bullying and harassment from managers, especially towards union reps. That's prompted unofficial walkouts at various delivery offices across the country, which have become as frequent as one a week.

"Royal Mail is also planning to restructure how it runs the delivery part of the business. As a delivery worker, I deliver letters and parcels



of all sizes. But Royal Mail may now recategorise items depending on size, so larger parcels will be assigned to a specialist delivery driver.

"That's not dissimilar from how work was organised pre-privatisation, but the fear now is that this restructure will be used as a pretext to cut jobs. The risk is that this restructure will be railroaded through without proper consultation, so the dispute is also about the issue of job security.

"The plan is to dump Parcel

Force with all the larger packets, further separate Parcel Force from Royal Mail, and turn Parcel Force into a company comparable with DPD or Yodel and with similar business practices.

"Also, it turns out that all but one of the executive management who negotiated the deal with union two years ago have been removed since then.

"The build-up of pressure from these issues has forced the union leadership to act."

Plans for TUC congress

By Sacha Ismail

At the time of writing discussions are taking place among labour movement anti-coup people about activities at the 2019 TUC Congress (8-11 September, in Brighton).

They're working on emergency motions (not straightforward as they can only be submitted by national unions), a lobby or demonstration, and an unofficial fringe meeting.

One issue delegates will discuss is the right to strike. Like the bulk of its constituent unions, the TUC has policy for repeal of the anti-

union laws but it is dormant. In line with the Labour leadership's stance, most workers' rights motions submitted this year talk only about collective bargaining.

But a strong motion from the Fire Brigades Union modelled on the demands of the Free Our Unions campaign (bit.ly/2k00AC2) is on the order paper. On 10 September the FBU is holding an official fringe meeting alongside Free Our Unions (bit.ly/2jYsKNN), with speakers including FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, UCU general secretary Jo Grady and an outsourced PCS striker from BEIS.

The UCU has also submitted a motion to the Congress supporting

the school student climate strikes and arguing for the TUC to call a "30-minute workday solidarity stoppage" alongside them on 20 September.

There will be a number of debates on responses to climate change, including calls from the Bakers' Union for public ownership of energy and from the FBU for public ownership of the banks and finance.

There are some distinctly less left-wing contributions from Unite and the GMB on the same issue.

• More including all motions and official fringe meetings at tuc.org.uk/congress2019



South Yorkshire couriers strike

On Friday 30 August, Deliveroo couriers went on strike for 2 hours at peak time in Sheffield, at the same time as a Deliveroo strike in Australia – the two strikes shared the same central demand.

Organised through the South Yorkshire Couriers' Network (SYCN), which had been set up in late July with the assistance of the local branch of Workers' Liberty and the support of activists in the IWGB trade union, the couriers have set their sights on tackling unfair parking charges and Deliveroo's global pay cut.

Issued a few days before the formation of SYCN, Deliveroo's new pay policy abolishes the previous £4.25-per-delivery minimum. The company claims that this is compensated by higher pay for drivers who select longer or more arduous deliveries, but its real effect is to cut earnings and make the Deliveroo pay system more opaque. Deliveries which previously would have fetched £4.25 are now being made for as little as £3. The same abolition of the minimum rate has sparked protests in other countries. On 30 August, there was a 2-hour strike in Geelong, Australia. Sheffield drivers sent messages of solidarity to their Australian brothers and sisters. The following day, a pay strike took place among Deliveroo couriers in France.

The Sheffield strike was a test of strength for the new union. Following the pattern of French strikes, the couriers split into teams to patrol restaurant districts and encourage other couriers to join the strike. Feverish preparation and a spirit of unity meant that the union passed the test, effectively shutting down takeaway trade on payday Friday.

Orders backed up across town and some kitchens stopped production; and strikers recruited several new hires to the SYCN.

Mick Cash re-elected in RMT

By Ollie Moore

Mick Cash was re-elected general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers (RMT), seeing off a challenge from Sean Hoyle, the union's former national president. Cash won 9,312 votes to Hoyle's 6,372, representing a turnout of 20% of the RMT's membership.

Hoyle's insurgent, grassroots campaign did well to garner a sizeable vote against an incumbent candidate backed by almost the entirety of the union's officialdom. It articulated a more radical, democratic, and militant vision for the union than Cash's "business-as-

usual", "steady-pair-of-hands" pitch, emphasising rank-and-file leadership and the empowerment of the union's equalities committees. Hoyle also committed not to take the full general secretary salary of over £90,000, promising to donate £30,000 back to the union's fighting fund.

The energy of the Hoyle campaign must now be channelled into an ongoing effort to fight for democratic transformation within the union, by consolidating into a rank-and-file network.

An embryonic "Campaign for a Fighting, Democratic Union" within RMT, which came together prior to the national presidential election in 2018, can help progress such efforts.



Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 515 5 September 2019 50p/£1

Plans for climate action on 20 September



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

As record-breaking Hurricane Dorian tears across the Bahamas, destroying tens of thousands of homes and slotting into the longest recorded streak of category 5 Atlantic hurricanes — and as flames continue to devour chunks of the Amazon rainforest — workers, students and environmental activists worldwide are gearing up for a “climate strike” on Friday 20 September.

Alongside the school student action, UCU, BFAWU, IWGB and other unions are offering vocal support for actions on 20 Sep, although little concrete is yet to materialise from the unions centrally. TUC congress, 8-11 September, looks set to pass UCU's motion calling for a 30-minute work stoppage.

These are good starts, and activists should continue to argue for activity from their unions and the movement as a whole. But the bulk of the initiative this month will come from local workplaces, schools and campuses.

As a start, talk to colleagues and distribute leaflets, pass motions in your union branch, call workplace meetings.

Talk about scheduling live dis-

putes around other issues on 20 September, pressuring employers to shut work or allow walk-outs without docking pay. There are smaller but significant actions you may be able to pull off: 30 minute work-stoppages; lunchtime rallies, demonstrations or photoshoots.

Youth climate strikers, and their monthly walk-outs, have helped to raise the profile and urgency of climate change. This movement includes strong left-wing currents, and school students have called on workers to join them on this coming walk-out.

Capitalism, with the unquenchable thirst for ever-greater profit by corporations and their bosses, is the social force driving environmental devastation and the fossil economy.

As workers, we perform the labour which creates capital and profit, and recreates society. Through organising at work, unionising at the point of production, through the disruptive power of strikes, we are able to wield colossal leverage.

We can use this to shift capitalism, to force environmental concessions and changes. Ultimately, this power could allow us to remake society to be democratically, rationally and cooperatively organised in the interest of humanity and the environmental globally, rather than an irrational pursuit of wealth by competing elements of a small ruling class.



To get there from here, we need to organise now in our workplaces for both better conditions and around environmental issues, building the strength and spreading the ideas necessary for further actions. We need to fight for a socialist environmentalism programme of demands, in the workplace and Labour party.

CONFIDENCE

This month's climate strike provides a starting point for such working-class climate organisation.

The confidence and co-ordination of the UK's trade union movement, further shackled by anti-union legislation, means there will likely be few actual explicitly climate-orientated strikes. The situation will be likely similar else-

where.

But students and union activists can get co-ordinated and support organising in large — or environmentally strategic — workplaces nearby. UK Student Climate Network, the main organisation associated with the climate strikes in the UK, is calling for “community climate assemblies”, organising meetings on a city-wide basis to plan for 20 September (bit.ly/SCN-events). If there is one planned nearby, go along, if there isn't yet, organise it!

Through these meetings, help to build and link-up actions, and argue for more radical politics. We need a socialist vision of a Green New Deal, but crucially, people need to organise at work, as workers.

A lot of individuals drawn in

this climate activism have little, no, or no good experiences of workplace organising. Faced with this, many are tempted to go for easier-seeming routes of just trying to make big city-wide demonstrations, calling in sick to work if necessary, but not organising at work alongside colleagues. Frequently, too, environmentalists do not recognise the centrality of workers' organising. It is down to socialist environmentalists make the case for organising at work, and bring confidence and ideas for doing so.

After 20 September, we need to building for bigger, stronger, more disruptive monthly actions monthly, and campaigns over workplace environmental issues.

Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7 ☐

Six months (22 issues) £22 waged ☐, £11 unwaged ☐

One year (44 issues) £44 waged ☐, £22 unwaged ☐

European rate: 6 months £30 ☐ One year £55 ☐

Subscribe online at www.workersliberty.org/sub

Or send your name, address and postcode with payment to AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG

Or subscribe with a standing order: £5 a month to subscribe to Solidarity or pay us more to make an ongoing contribution to our work

To: (your bank) (address)

Account name (your name)

Account number Sort code

Please make payments as follows to the debit of my account:
Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-83-01)

Amount: £.....

To be paid on the day of (month) 20.... (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.

This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date Signature

Contact us



020 7394 8923



solidarity@workersliberty.org



Write to us: 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG

Solidarity production team: Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent, Martin Thomas (editor), and Mike Zubrowski

Printed by Reach Plc