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Socialist bloc against Brexit On the streets 23 March!

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**LABOUR:
OPPOSE
BREXIT!**



**Labour for a
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Goldman Sachs is reported to be calculating on the basis of a 90% probability of Brexit being delayed or not happening at all.

As we go to press on Thursday 7 March, the Tory-supporting *Daily Telegraph* says that Cabinet ministers now expect another defeat on 12 March.

In the Tories' drive to • end free movement between Britain and Europe • risk a new "hard border" in Ireland • raise new barriers between Britain and Europe • reverse decades of economic and social integration across frontiers,

— in that drive, almost their only asset now is "Brexit-weariness".

Almost their only asset is the sentiment: "it's rubbish, but I can no longer be bothered: let's just get Brexit over and done with, one way or another".

In fact, even a vote for May's deal on 12 March will not "get it over and done with". The Tories' vicious new Immigration Bill will remain to be fought over. The shape of things after the "transition period" —

during which, though officially Brexited, the UK will remain within EU rules — will remain to be fought over. The possibility of moving from that period of remaining within EU rules back into full EU members will remain to be fought over.

Saturday 23 March will be the next big demonstration for a new public vote and against Brexit. The Labour Party's move to supporting a new referendum should make the demonstration bigger than the 700,000 on 20 October.

Yet if the Tories and rebel Labour MPs oppose it, the new public vote will not pass. Only pressure on the streets will tip the balance.

Labour for a Socialist Europe, with others, is organising a left bloc on the demonstration: 11am at Grosvenor Square, to join the main march assembling in Park Lane from 12. Another Europe Is Possible, Open Labour, the rail union TSSA, the Green Party, and Left Unity are also part of the bloc.

Labour for a Socialist Europe will be there with its own placards: bit.ly/l4se-23



Lansman on Labour tragedy

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Paul Le Blanc on Bolshevism

Paul Le Blanc, author of *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party*, reviews Max Shachtman's *In Defence of Bolshevism*

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Chris Williamson and the left

Jim Denham and Ralph Peters take issue with Chris Williamson's claim that Labour has been "too apologetic" on antisemitism

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**Renew Labour
L4SE in left bloc on
23 March anti-
Brexit demo: 11am
Grosvenor Sq**

Labour: call a Special Conference!

The voice of doubt and denial on antisemitism



Antidoto

By Jim Denham

Chris Williamson MP told a meeting of Sheffield Momentum on 23 February that on antisemitism:

"We've backed off far too much, we've given too much ground, we've been too apologetic."

Whether Williamson is himself an antisemite, or merely monumentally insensitive and unconcerned about what Jewish people think about the Labour party, is conjecture. As a matter of record, he has form in supporting people who most definitely *are* antisemites:

He signed a petition defending the notorious holocaust-justifier Gilad Atzmon, tweeted the petition, then deleted the tweet, later writing an unconvincing apology.

He's also defended Cyril Chilson, an Atzmon-supporting antisemite who was expelled from Labour. He apparently lied about not knowing about the antisemitism that got Scott Nelson expelled, and then effectively revealed he was lying by insisting Nelson had apologised.

He has a taste for conspiracy theories and authoritarian regimes. He happily shared a platform with, and then tweeted praise for, Vanessa Beeley, a cheer-leader for Assad's regime in Syria (and another Atzmon fan and 9/11 "truther"). His uncritical support for Maduro's increasingly brutal regime in Venezuela has attracted rather less comment than it perhaps deserves.

With a track record like that it's hardly a surprise that Mr Williamson is a favourite of the *Morning Star's*.

The paper's initial reaction to the story was to carry a piece by one Bernadette Horton, a self-styled "ordinary" Labour party member who claims to now be "frightened" to use the words "Israel" or "Palestine" on social media for fear that "those words are being picked up in algorithms by the Labour compliance unit, and the next minute the suspension letter from the party lands on your doormat."

The next day, following Williamson's suspension from the party, the *Morning Star* quoted Jewish Voice for Labour's Mike Cushman (a long-standing anti-Israel campaigner and absolute anti-Zionist) calling it "madness" (the suspension, not what Williamson said) and its own editor Ben Chacko saying "Chris Williamson is an outstanding MP. The party and movement will be the poorer if MPs who couldn't care less whether their party is elected succeed in turfing him out."

Following that, the *Morning Star*, in effect, shouted "Over there!", with a front page attacking the *Yorkshire Post* (the paper that broke the Williamson story) for having carried columns by Patrick Mercer,

a Tory MP who once described an Israeli soldier as a "bloody Jew" and used other racist language (though not in the *Yorkshire Post*): what any of that has to do with what Williamson said, or why the *Morning Star* considered it worthy of front-page coverage, remains a mystery.

Nothing, you will note, about whether what Williamson said is acceptable or could be construed as either antisemitic in itself or apologetic for antisemitism.

But then, the *Morning Star* has a pretty poor track record when it comes to noticing antisemitism.

In June 2018 the paper published an article headlined "Rising antisemitism cannot be tackled without addressing Israel's crimes".

The article said: "No amount of protestations about the symptoms of rising antisemitism or anti-Israel sentiment in Britain and elsewhere will end the problem until its root cause — Israel's criminal behaviour — is dealt with."

Only when two longstanding Jewish Communist Party members and *Morning Star* supporters, Phil Katz and Mary Davis, wrote a letter of protest, did the paper seem to realise it had made a mistake — running a too explicit and clear-cut statement of what it really believes. The article was taken down from the paper's website and an apology printed.

Mary Davis, it should be noted, had previously written to the paper (in 2016) to protest at a regular column being given to Ken Livingstone immediately after his suspension from the Labour party:

The *Morning Star's* regression back to Stalinist absolute anti-Zionism and antisemitic conspiracy theorising seems to have gained pace since the arrival of current editor Ben Chacko in 2014. In fairness to him, it should be noted that in September 2012, under his predecessor, Richard Bagley, the paper published a piece attacking the Russian punk-anarchist band Pussy Riot, supporting their imprisonment at the hands of the Putin regime. The content of the article was pretty vile and, frankly, had no place in any self-respecting socialist (or even liberal) publication.

The article stated, with obvious approval, that the jailing of Pussy Riot "proves [that Russia]... cares for Christ as much as the French care about Auschwitz and this shocked the Europeans who apparently thought "hate laws" could only be applied to protect Jews and gays." It repeatedly and gratuitously brought Jews into the argument, defended Putin against media criticism, described Pussy Riot as "viragos" and supported the Orthodox Church's role in Russian society, even accusing Pussy Riot of "blasphemy." What the *Morning Star* and its then editor claimed to be unaware of was that the author of the piece was one Israel Shamir, who (despite his adopted name) is a notorious anti-

semite and holocaust denier. A brief Google search would have rendered this information.

Eventually, a mealy-mouthed apology was published.

But back to Williamson and antisemitism: eventually (in the editorial of 28 Feb) the *Morning Star* made its position clear on the substantive issue:

"The Labour Party does not have a widespread problem of antisemitism. If it did we would see a substantial proportion of its membership facing prosecutions for acts

of violence or intimidation against people, convictions for hate speech in person or on social media and an avalanche of evidence-backed instances referred to the party's disciplinary machinery... we would see police investigations and extensive monitoring by the security services."

So that's pretty conclusive, isn't it? Unless the cops and MI5 are involved, there can't be any antisemitism about.

John Harris, a left-reformist writer for the liberal Guardian, puts

the *Morning Star* and similar apologists for antisemitism to shame in a recent column (4 March):

"This awful tragedy [of the loss of Jewish people's trust in the Labour party] demands a cultural transformation, which ought to begin with something I always thought people on the left understood as a matter of instinct: that when faced with bigotry, you listen not to the voices of denial and doubt, but to the people on the receiving end of it."



SLN activists pose with print-offs saying "Post-Study Work Visa Now" in solidarity with a campaign in Edinburgh

Conference plans to reshape student movement

By Maisie Sanders

Students from eighteen campuses across the UK gathered in Sheffield for the Student Left Network's first national conference on 2-3 March to discuss reshaping the student movement.

Discussions included

- the Tiananmen Square uprising, with a Chinese student Marxist;
- fighting the far right and racism on campus, led by Kent Anti-Fascists
- campaigning against campus cuts, led by Owen Hurcum from Bangor university's campaign against the closure of the chemistry course and staff redundancies
- universities and mental health with Steff Farley from Loughborough Campus Care not Campus Cops; and
- divestment and the fossil fuel industry with Ella Wilkinson from Trinity St David's University of Wales Environmental Society.

Manish Khatri, a left candidate for NUS [National Union of Students] Vice President Higher Education, also led a workshop on international students' rights and the Post-Study Work Visa campaign. The Saturday night social raised over £100 for the Deliveroo strike fund.

The theme running through discussions throughout the weekend was the need to draw together and spread existing local campaigns

(for example on funding for mental health services, rent in halls, course closures and redundancies, excessive VC pay and student-worker solidarity), and build a national student left that can bring these struggles into student unions and NUS to force them to fight for their members.

The strategy-planning session agreed to launch a national speaker tour where SLN members will travel to campuses to convince hundreds more students to get involved with the project, speaking about the campaigns they are leading on their campus, building a national political voice against Tory attacks on education and students' living standards. That way we can put on the grassroots pressure necessary to win a mass, democratic NUS that mobilises its millions of members around radical political ideas.

The conference elected a national committee of thirteen to carry out this work, which includes student activists from UCL, KCL, Cambridge, Oxford, Oxford New College, Bangor, Sheffield, York and Manchester.

The democratic session on the Sunday voted to campaign against NUS's anti-democratic reforms and cuts to liberation campaigns and for a democratic, fighting NUS at this year's NUS National Conference, which will take place in Glasgow in April.

The Student Left Network voted to produce bulletins, hold cau-

ses and organise direct action against the NUS reforms, alongside pushing for a vote of no confidence in the Trustee Board and President Shakira Martin.

Part of this will mean campaigning for Student Left Network candidate and Workers' Liberty supporter Justine Canady for NUS President, as well as endorsing other candidates who pledge support for a democratic, fighting NUS.

The conference also voted to mobilise for the second national Youth Strike for Climate on 15 March and to circulate a guide to help school students use the walk-out to build lasting organisation in their schools and colleges.

Other motions, on linking up with the *Clarion* and Lambeth Union Free our Unions campaign, on organising a left-wing, pro-free movement student bloc on the 16 March anti-Brexit demonstration, and on antisemitism at the University of Essex, were remitted to the national committee due to lack of time.

Although small, with just under forty attending over the two days, the conference was a big step forward in rebuilding a national political struggle on the student left.

The Student Left Network should next organise a summer event for newly elected left-wing student union officers and other activists to plan for the year ahead.

Morning Star: sack Sandy Hale/ Alexander Norton!

By Mark Osborn

Workers' Liberty has published a dossier which deals with the actions of a poisonous, secretive clique, "Red London". This briefing (bit.ly/rl-do) is important reading for any labour movement activist concerned to uphold basic, decent norms and comradeship inside the labour movement.

"Red London" is a grouping organised around an anonymous Facebook page, known primarily for deploying unevicenced smears against people it politically opposes, rather than political argument. RL people also organise in the Labour Party, Momentum and in the RMT union. They are sympathetic to the *Morning Star* and some of them may also be Communist Party of Britain members.

The clique fragmented in late 2018 after some sort of dispute at a South London house party, and the fallout gave information about who is involved: bit.ly/2ScmCNC.

The central person mentioned in that fallout is Sandy Hale (pen name Alexander Norton). He is also on record in a photo of a group giving Red London's "vigilance salute", a gesture apparently designed to evoke Stalinists' brutal "vigilance" against Trotskyists during World War Two.

But the *Morning Star*, the daily paper which linked to the Communist Party of Britain and yet enjoys wide influence and circulation in the Labour left, still uses him as a



journalist. He is on record, on the Twitter page of the Stand Up To Racism campaign, as speaking "from" the *Morning Star* at a SUTR event in October 2018.

If the *Morning Star* wants to be taken seriously as a journal with the slightest respect for the truth, it cannot have as a journalist someone who has participated in a long record of anonymous and unevicenced smears. The *Morning Star* should sack Sandy Hale.

I had experience of "Red London" in October 2016 when an elaborately faked Facebook page was set up in my name. "Red London" also used their page to make a disgusting allegation of paedophilia against me. Anonymous and unevicenced, as always with RL. I went to the police who were sympathetic and helpful; they talked to an RMT official, Bill Paterson, about the matter. The allegation against me was quickly removed from the Red London page.

But similar smears against others followed. The hate continues. Last week, for example, I got an anonymous letter making repulsive and false allegations about another individual (a member of the AWL).

That letter is also now with the police.

The RL group is Stalinist. Some of them wear Stalin badges, or use Stalinist iconography on social media.

Broadly they are pro-Putin, pro-Brexit, English-nationalist, workerist, pro-PKK (Kurdish Stalinists); they despise all "liberation politics", which they regard as middle-class and decadent.

Unpleasant though these politics are, people with similar views exist throughout the labour movement. In fact in the Labour Leader's Office Seamus Milne and Andrew Murray have some similar views.

The need to warn the labour movement about the RL clique has nothing directly to do with their formal political positions. What is alarming about this organisation is its immoral behaviour. The practice of using vile and anonymous slanders against political opponents should be a concern for all those in our movement — from left and right — who are politically honest.

"Red London" hates the AWL, but they have also made many other allegations, slanders and smears against other groups and individuals on the left. They hate not only Trotskyists, but also anarchists and those who work in liberation campaigns (which "Red London" believe to be middle-class and decadent).

Bill Paterson is the one person on public record (in 2015) as associated with Red London. In 2016 he told the police he was no longer



connected to the Facebook page.

We have no evidence to dispute that claim. But we know that Paterson responded on his own Facebook page to the publication of this briefing with a picture of himself giving the cultish "Red London" "vigilance" salute.

Paterson should be investigated by the Labour Party and RMT.

The Labour Party should not

allow membership to those who use Red London-style abuse against political opponents. Labour movement organisations should not employ these people.

I suggest that anyone who has information about this group should publish it, also informing Workers' Liberty. Anyone who has had links with RL should publicly dissociate themselves.

A plus where the "MSM" put a minus?

By Ralph Peters

The last person who should make Chris Williamson's claim that "too much ground" has given to those complaining about antisemitism in the Labour Party is Williamson himself.

For the last two years Williamson has repeatedly spoken out in defence of people who have demonstrated antisemitism.

He tweeted: "Hands off Gilad Atzmon — sign the petition!"

He has defended people who portray the political battles in the Labour Party as run by Israeli government manipulation, with the "lobby" — people in the Jewish community — as its agent.

On occasion Williamson has expressed regret, for example for tweeting in support of Atzmon. But that has not led him to greater restraint.

Many in the Labour Party adopt a simplistic scheme of "taking sides" against the "centrists" and the "mainstream media": applying a plus where they put a minus. Williamson has played to that audience. Such carriers of those crude and simplistic politics as the SWP are his strongest advocates, egging him on.

Williamson has been presented by some as an unofficial, uncensored voice of the Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn. Williamson did a high profile tour around the country popularising the cause of mandatory selection. But on the evidence his status is self-proclaimed.

Williamson gets support on the basis that, day after day, the press talk about Labour's antisemitism problem. Little is said of the racism of the Tory government's "hostile environment" legislation.

Or the identification by Tory-defector Anna Soubry of Theresa

May's "problem with immigration". Or Baroness Warsi's claim that Islamophobia is rampant in the Tory Party.

The claim by Chuka Umunna's Independent Group that their split from Labour was largely because of their concern at antisemitism has been hard for many to believe.

There have been disturbing events in Wavertree CLP and elsewhere, and Luciana Berger was subjected to some genuinely dreadful treatment. Berger herself has some consistency in opposing left antisemitism. As early as 2005 she was pointing out Labour's and others' antisemitism when she resigned from the NUS Executive in protest at unchallenged antisemitic comments.

She also made a clear link then to Labour's accommodation to the growing demonisation of migrants and refugees. "I think the insensitivity surrounding all parties' approach to asylum and immigration has a lot to say for the rise in not only antisemitism but any form of racism".

But TIG are not a genuine protest movement against antisemitism or Brexit. Linked up already with some Tories, they are laying the ground for a centrist realignment to block Labour.

None of that makes Williamson right.

Those who support Williamson cite Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL) as a significant voice of the Jewish community. It isn't. Any more than is the reactionary, cranky, Jewish religious-fundamentalist and misogynist and anti-Israel Neturei Karta.

The concerns of the wider Jewish community have not been heard. And if the Labour Party does not listen, the Jewish community will be alienated more.

Bolsonaro's economist takes aim at workers

By Luiza Xavier

Brazil's newly-elected far-right president Jair Bolsonaro has famously admitted that he does not understand economics, but he doesn't think that understanding is a necessary qualification for being president. He was "running a political campaign and not studying for university entrance exams".

He stated that all economic policy would come from his adviser Paulo Guedes, a free-market economist and co-founder of Brazil's free-market think-tank, the "Millennium Institute" in Brazil.

Guedes is now Minister for the Economy in the Bolsonaro administration.

Guedes' ultra-free-market economic views have been often seen to contradict Bolsonaro's statist, protectionist and nationalist politics.

In his career as a federal deputy, Bolsonaro voted against privatisations, against breaking state monopolies, and for more privileges for the political class. Guedes' economic plan, on the other hand, heavily relies on privatisations, pension cuts, and decreased spending on the public sector.

Bolsonaro and Guedes have in

common their plans to slash workers' rights and prioritise profit over environmental and public welfare.

Guedes has promised to reduce the R\$300 billion fiscal deficit to nil in the next year. To do that, he will rely on the privatisation of the state electrical utility company Eletrobras, the privatisation of large chunks of Petrobras (the semi-public oil corporation), and on the pension cuts.

Those cuts will also end the "Abono Salarial", a benefit of one extra minimum month's salary given each year to regularised workers earning less than two minimum salaries a month.

Guedes also relies on cuts made to the state machinery, such as the scrapping of several ministries and the decentralisation of administrative roles to the state governments, and on further opening Brazil to international trade by lowering import taxes and obstacles to international capital.

If he can't make up R\$300 billion through "scrapping here and there", Guedes says he will "leave it for the politicians to solve it", but insists the three main sources of money should be the pension cuts, privatisations, and cutting jobs in the public sector.

The Brazilian federal government

currently has 148 state companies, which range from oil and utilities, to banking and hospital services. Paulo Guedes is in favour of privatising all of them, while Bolsonaro has stated publicly that only the state companies that are not generating profit are going to be privatised, and energy generation companies and the core of Petrobras will remain under state ownership.

Another key policy in Guedes' economic plan is the introduction of "green and yellow" work permits.

Currently, to work legally in Brazil you need a work permit — a document that looks a bit like a passport and needs to be signed every month by the employer, guaranteeing that the worker gets sick pay, holiday, benefits, payments into pensions etc. The green and yellow permit would be "voluntarily" chosen by workers, and would mean that they renounce all rights (aside from those set out in the constitution) in favour of individual negotiations with the employer.

The plans do not state how that would affect workers' ability to join a trade union and take industrial action, but it is likely that those rights would also be renounced by having a green and yellow permit.

Sanders gives an opening



Letters

KM [in his letter, *Solidarity* 497, arguing that socialists should not vote for Bernie Sanders if he wins the Democrat presidential nomination] fails to realise the extent to which the electoral system is corrupt in America.

Getting on the ballot is almost impossible if you are not a Democrat or Republican, and is done state-by-state. Third-party candidates would have to spend all their time and resources just getting on the ballot and may not even be on the ballot in all or most states.

Furthermore, being a Democratic candi-

date gives left-wing candidates a platform they will otherwise not have. Third party candidates, usually Green Party and libertarians, don't make it on national TV for debates or question times and are hardly covered in the papers.

The primary elections for the two main parties alone is given heavy press coverage and attention, giving someone like Sanders a huge platform despite little fame beforehand.

What more, Sanders standing against the average Clinton-type Democrat gives a clear example to the American public dividing the liberal Democrats from the actual "left".

Because there's no Labour Party and the trade union movement is low, being pro-Obama and pro-choice in America is enough

to be considered left-wing. Republicans are deplorable and the average Democrats are a lesser evil because they, in general, are on the liberal side of reproductive rights and LGBT rights, but many people see neither option as great.

I agree with KM that socialists should have advocated an abstention for Macron in the 2017 French presidential election, but Macron and Bernie are different cases.

Macron represents the status quo and is pushing attacks on the working class and immigrants. Bernie is something new in American politics and his program represents a push against big business and for a proper welfare state — a win for working class people.

Revolutionaries should want a fundamentally different party than the Democrats. And we should use Sanders and the movement around him to try to create something akin to a Labour Party in America. This may very well be in the horizons as Sanders has recently filed as a 2024 Senate candidate as an independent.

Sanders is far from perfect, and we should be clear on that, but revolutionaries should view Sanders as an opportunity for mass education of American people and use it to push forward socialist politics.

Justine Canady, South London

"The main thing" as alibi

A number of years ago, there was a famous ad campaign during the presidential campaign of the first, oh-so-honourable, George Bush of blessed memory.

Running in 1988 against the hapless former Massachusetts Governor, Michael Dukakis, the Republicans plastered the airwaves with the picture of an African American felon, Willie Horton, who had committed a series of grisly crimes while on a weekend furlough from jail.

It played blatantly to the stereotypical fears of blacks as criminals. But in case that race-baiting hammer blow was too subtle, it was soon followed by a series of ads known as the

"Revolving Door," depicting a variety of intimidating-looking black prisoners walking in and out of prison.

The Republicans were giddy. After all, no one in these ads explicitly made race an issue. So why, asked the pure as the driven snow Republicans — the party of Lincoln as they reminded us — would anyone question the subtext of these ads? Unless, that is, they wished to coddle criminals?

Back and forth it went. Was the issue criminal-enabling or racism? Of course, no one on the left could stomach the faux outrage of that rightwing proposition.

No, I'm not suggesting that Omar and

Tlaib are cynical operatives of this or any other ilk. They are real progressives, who casually traffic in antisemitic tropes.

My main problem is not with them. It is with a left amen corner that repeatedly shirks its obligation to enlighten those on our side of the political divide about the dangers of antisemitic adjacent remarks for fear of encouraging anti-Arab and anti-Muslim prejudice or of stifling dissent.

It's the alibi David Finkel (*Solidarity* 497) offers by "keeping the main thing the main thing." And since he has given them his main-thing pass, Tlaib and Omar have innocently repeated the charge of Jewish disloy-

alty at a recent gathering at a Washington DC bookstore.

I shouldn't need to remind my comrades that Jews lose their lives when the tropes of dual loyalty, evil-doers and puppet-masters are freely bandied about.

We don't have to make the choice between coddling AIPAC or accepting antisemitism as a legitimate means of challenging AIPAC.

The left, I suggest, is capable of a complex motor neuron response: we can actually point fingers with both hands and in two directions and at the same time.

Barry Finger, USA

Essence and dialectics

Consider the question, what is Marxism a science of? Capitalism? Class struggle? History?

In 1844 Marx is settling accounts with his philosophical inheritance, Aristotle and Hegel. The work is known as the *Paris Manuscripts*. It is not printed in his life time. Here's an interesting quote:

"The importance of Hegel's *Phenomenology* ... lies in the fact that Hegel conceives the self-creation of man as a process... that he therefore grasps the nature of labour and conceives the objective man... as the result of his own labour".

Marx builds on Hegel's insight into the historical process by uniting it with the work of Aristotle on history, and what would count as a science of history. This means looking for what distinguishes us from animality, the essence of our species, and uncovering from the accidental features of history those which demonstrate the "coming-into-being" of that human essence.

"Coming-into-being" simply means that reality, the physical, biological and social, is mostly composed of things which have an essence that goes through stages of development that are "lawful" solar systems, newts, atoms and societies, for example.

"Coming-into-being" is what dialectics meant to Marx, Hegel and Aristotle. It was not a way of structuring an argument but a property of real things, with essential natures and laws of development. like newts

and banking systems.

For Marx, the essence of our "species-being" is social labour. Marxism should be considered as the science of the genesis, maturation and fully-formed nature of that essence in the history of our species:

"Man can be distinguished from animals by consciousness, by religion or anything else you like. They themselves begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence... By producing their means of subsistence men are indirectly producing their actual material life". (*German Ideology*)

As our species progresses through these stages of development, it necessarily and naturally creates things which represent this essence, finding ever more advanced "forms" of social labour. Consider: division of labour, barter, money, states, demos and capital.

Communism is understood as the necessary and natural mature form of this development of social labour. Marx's study of the categories of bourgeois political economy (Adam Smith, David Ricardo etc) provide him with the means to explore and analyse this development in the concrete life-activity of men and women, classes and states. *Das Kapital* is the analysis of the highest form under class society and how socialism will grow out of it.

There are many things to add to this account. All these developments and creations

of the species have built in contradictions, for example between social labour and private property of the means of production. However private property is a necessary and natural development of human social labour.

It will in turn be a creative contradiction

that will give rise to higher forms of social labour and therefore achieve its mature form in the free association of producers — communism.

Paul Cooper, South London

Books, papers, and video

Mike Zubrowski's letter in the last issue of *Solidarity* makes a strong case for the importance of reading long texts.

I agree with the main thrust of what Mike writes, and would agree with it as a critique of my article if I had actually argued what he claims that I did. But I didn't.

My article argued that "We can not just rely on a text-heavy newspaper any more." I did not write that reading long texts is not important, nor that other media could replace newspapers.

Mike partly acknowledges this by stating that my article "implied" these things rather than claiming that it actually argued them. But this is not my article's implication; it is Mike's interpretation. Unfortunately, Mike misinterprets a specific point I made about reliance on text-heavy newspapers as a general opposition to long texts.

As someone who has written several books, it would be odd indeed if I were ar-

guing against reading long texts. But newspapers — which are designed to be read and thrown away in a short period of time — are not the most effective format for long texts.

More durable pamphlets, journals and books are better. Text-heaviness can also be usefully lightened by illustrations, readable layout, clear writing and division into chunks.

Moreover, I think that Mike is simply wrong to state that there are greater barriers to producing and distributing videos than to producing and distributing newspapers.

Two hundred thousand videos are uploaded to YouTube every day. A huge number of them are made by rank amateurs with basic equipment at practically no cost.

They are instantly visible to anyone in the world, and can be promoted and shared much more easily than a newspaper can.

Janine Booth, North London

Labour's antisemitism tragedy

Jon Lansman, chair of Momentum, spoke to *Solidarity*

You've said that the concern about antisemitism in the Labour Party is based on realities, not something contrived or invented. Why do you say that?

Because I've seen loads and loads of cases at the National Executive, and I know them to be real. I also know that those cases are very rarely to do with Israel-Palestine.

I also have plenty of evidence on my own social media, although I try not to look too much at that because it is so unpleasant. I follow the advice of many others who get abuse on social media, and try to ignore it.

In short: the evidence of my own eyes.

Are you surprised by this development?

I have been surprised at what appears to be a continuing and increasing problem. The whole debate is toxic for the Labour Party and for the left.

The fact that there are so many people who deny the problem, or say it's all inflated by people who are hostile to Jeremy Corbyn or to the Palestinians, or want to cover up for Israel — that draws more of the problem out into the open.

The surveys show that between 2.5% and 3% of the population in Britain are antisemites, and about 30% have one or more antisemitic prejudices. Those are the lowest figures in Europe, but that only means it may be worse elsewhere.

You would expect the percentages to be less in the Labour Party, but maybe not.

Doesn't the fact, as you mentioned, that so many people in the Labour Party say that the concern about antisemitism is all, or mostly, driven by people who are hostile to Jeremy Corbyn or to the Palestinians, or want to cover up for Israel, make a big difference here? Where other prejudices tend to get suppressed in the Labour Party because people know their expression will be condemned, antisemitic prejudice is more licensed.

Most people deny whatever prejudices they have. That is why we send people on training courses — to make them aware of the prejudices they have.

Some people have conscious prejudices. Most people have unconscious prejudices too.

The fact that concerns about antisemitism are dismissed in that way does make a difference.

Sometimes that problem is based on ignorance, sometimes on prejudice.



Momentum has put out videos about "Rothschild conspiracy" antisemitism

Momentum has done some work on this — released three or four videos, recommended Steve Cohen's book...

We intend to carry on that work. We are developing further educational and training materials. We're going to develop more videos. We see that as political education. We've been training our staff.

We kicked all this off with a statement against antisemitism which was seen as very strong.

We obviously are aware that there is opposition to this from amongst sections of our membership.

We've argued that open face-to-face debate is necessary too, and we think the narrowing of the channels for debate within Momentum make that necessary work harder...

There can be discussions in local groups. There has been no reduction in the level of discussion in local groups, though of course they go through periods of thriving and periods of doing less well.

We certainly have discussions at the national level too. But in the old regional structures you wouldn't have been able to have a discussion because it was very polarised.

There is a generational element here. The generation of people who are in their late 40s or older have a worse response. It's not a matter of age, but of different experiences.

We get a much better response among younger people. Younger people can be just as militant about Palestinian rights, but better on antisemitism.

You've done work with Standing Together, a left-wing Jewish-Arab peace group in Israel. Can that sort of work make a contribution here?

has happened with all the books we've published.

Yet sales money for our *Left Antisemitism* pamphlet currently stands just £6 below what we paid on the print bills for it. If we'd had the cash to do one larger initial print run rather than two smaller ones, we'd already be £200 or £300 ahead on that pamphlet.

Operating hand to mouth makes things slower (we'd wanted to get those two new pamphlets printed earlier) — and more expensive.

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Practical examples of Jews and Arabs in Israel-Palestine working together are absolutely beneficial in trying to find common ground in opposition to all forms of racism, including antisemitism.

They foster some recognition of permitting people to express national rights, of a more multicultural approach.

In spite of the fact that there is still extremely wide support for, at least lip-service paid to, "two states" as the best way of achieving peace in Israel-Palestine, there is in many circles in the Labour Party very little acceptance of the right of Israel to exist. That is a problem.

Acceptance doesn't have to be based on Zionist ideology as such. I'd say that we live in a post-Zionist age. Israel is a major military power and will carry on existing. To achieve peace, a two-states solution remains the best prospect.

At present, especially with Trump, there is little prospect of any peace solution.

Zionism is a word which means different things to different people. There are sections of the Labour Party who can only see Zionism as an ideology, and as a monolithic ideology.

In fact Zionism has always been a set of ideologies — Labour Zionism, General Zionism, religious Zionism, revisionist Zionism, binational Zionism...

Zionism acquired a majority in the British Jewish community only in 1939. And it only really took hold, I think, after the Six Day War of 1967.

That was when British Jews started visiting Israel more, emigrating more, having more relatives in Israel. When I was a kid in the 70s, I went to work on a kibbutz.

Labour Zionism was then dominant not only in Israel, but also in the British Jewish community, and the links to the kibbutzim were very important.

Israel has had a very big political shift since then. Israel is now a neoliberal country, and the roots of Labour Zionism have been more or less cut. Labour Zionism is actually stronger in Britain now. Not so strong in the USA, but you have more secular Jews there.

Today, 6 March, the Jewish Labour Movement (JLM) is meeting to discuss possibly beginning proceedings to disaffiliate from the Labour Party. [The vote was not to begin such proceedings]. What do you make of that?

I'm sorry not to be there at the meeting. I'm not a member, and I don't subscribe to all the views of the JLM, but they are the strongest voice for the Labour Party in the Jewish community.

I very much hope that they won't disaffiliate, and if they do, I would hope it won't be permanent.

We are now at the point that I'm aware of left-wing Jews — people who supported Jeremy Corbyn in both Labour leadership elections — who have decided to leave the Labour Party, or have already left. What's happened has affected left-wing Jews too.

Of course it's easier for Jews opposed to Corbyn's leadership and the Corbyn project to leave the Labour Party. I'm sorry that anyone is going to leave the Labour Party over antisemitism.

There's a distinction between Luciana Berger and the other MPs who left the Labour Party recently. Her rationale was antisemitism, and I think that wasn't really true of the others.

But it's a tragedy that anyone should leave the Labour Party over antisemitism.



Rallying Labour against Brexit

The 9 March conference of "Labour for a Socialist Europe" can pull together and organise a campaign inside the Labour Party against Brexit for the coming weeks and months.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has said that in the case of a new public vote, Labour would have to use its democratic procedures to decide which option to back (and he himself would back Remain). The best democratic procedure is a special conference. In any case, Labour needs a special conference to sort itself out.

"Labour for a Socialist Europe" should also have a campaign ready for an early general election (still possible if Theresa May cannot find a Brexit formula which will pass Parliament) and for May Euro-elections if they happen in Britain (which, legally, they should if there is a long Brexit delay).

In recent months of "Brexit endgame", there has been a strong mood within Labour of wanting to defer to the leadership on the issue.

The leadership's shift on the new public vote, its visible disarray over whether to back Remain in that new public vote, and the approach of 29 March, make openings to shift that mood in the coming weeks.

The 9 March conference should gear the campaign to reach beyond pushing motions in Labour Parties and such.

It should promote on-the-streets campaigning and the creation or growth of local groups on the model of Nottingham's Left Against Brexit/ AEIP.

It should mobilise for a visible and militant L4SE contingent on 23 March and on other street demonstrations.

Another wing of the campaign's activity should be face-to-face "singlejack" activity in workplaces, talking with workmates one-by-one with the "Labour for a Socialist Europe" petition (which will be revised to take into account Labour's shift on a new public vote).

The campaign should also organise to take the issues into the unions. There are difficulties there, because union procedures move slowly and time is short.

Longer-term, even if the government gets some sort of withdrawal agreement through Parliament, there will be much to do.

Already "Labour for a Socialist Europe" has been working with the Labour Campaign for Free Movement to oppose the Immigration Bill and support defence and extension of free movement.

It should seek also to make cross-Europe links with left and internationalist groups in other labour movements, and to push Labour on cross-Europe links.

Why Jews wanted Israel

These are the concluding sections of an article on "The Jewish Problem After Hitler", by Albert Glotzer (writing as Albert Gates), in the "Third Camp" Trotskyist journal *The New Internationalist* of September 1947 (eight months before the creation of Israel).

The article was written in response to an article on the same subject of July 1946 by Ernest Mandel, who would become the main writer of "Orthodox Trotskyism" over decades until his death in 1995. • bit.ly/mdel-46 • bit.ly/ag-47

By Albert Glotzer

For decades [before Hitler] the conditions of the Jews in Europe had steadily improved.

Centuries of oppression, persecution, discrimination and ghetto life seemed to disappear in the advance of capitalism and the expansion of its modern industrial system. While the position of the Jews had improved everywhere, it reached its height in the advanced capitalist countries.

In those nations, assimilation of Jews went on uninterrupted. So deep-going was this process that many Jews came to believe that the days of great trial for their people had ended.

Only in the most backward nation, Czarist Russia, did the Jews still face the problems of another age.

There the putrescent nobility and its camarilla still employed the "pogrom" as an instrument of state policy for the purpose of preserving their rule. But even the capitalist world was aghast at the treatment of the Jews in Russia.

For the most part, the Marxist movement regarded the occurrences in Czarist Russia as an "aberration" not characteristic of world capitalism...

Persecution of the Jews had, in any case, ceased to be an international practice, or, if it had not ceased entirely, at least the tendency was unmistakably toward an end of such persecution and for assimilation of large and ever-increasing numbers of Jews in the general national patterns of the countries in which they lived.

Given this general objective situation, one could understand the validity of the old Marxist position, most forcefully expressed in the old Russian and Polish revolutionary parties, the Bolsheviks as well as the Mensheviks, in favour of "assimilation" and against the revival, or survival of Jewish nationalism, which sought to reverse the process of history. In the eastern European movement, the Jewish Bund remained the strongest force which fought for the maintenance of "Jewish integrity," a Jewish national life, and a Jewish national culture.

Lenin, for example, opposed this part of the program of the Bund as reactionary, as an attempt to move backward on the Jewish question, at a time when everything pointed toward a progressive solution of the problem, particularly in view of the rise of the revolutionary socialist movement, the imminence of the revolution in Russia and the prospect of a not-too-distant world socialist victory.

The Jewish problem today is so different qualitatively from the past, that it is almost entirely a new one demanding new solutions. This much was already indicated by Trotsky shortly before his death when he forecast the extermination of the Jews during the war. Trotsky's prediction was nearly realised in the tragic extermination of from five to six million Jews in Europe.

As a measure of the difference of the modern Jewish problem, consider the tremendous revulsion of the whole world to the Czarist pogroms in the 1905 period and the relative indifference of a world accustomed to mass destruction of wealth and peoples to the scientific mass murder of the Jews in the Hitler era.

Then the world was horror-stricken; yes, even the bourgeois world was aghast at the cruel slaughter and persecution of the Russian Jews. Cruel slaughter and persecution! Lenin recorded the depth of these pogroms when he wrote:

"It is calculated that in 100 cities at that time 4,000 were killed and 10,000 were mutilated".

PLACES TO FLEE TO

But the Jews could flee Russia to havens of safety. There was the United States with free immigration [until 1921] and its vast areas of land.

There was western Europe – the centre of modern capitalist civilization. As a result, there was no mass movement to Palestine in those days and no amount of Zionist agitation could create one.

The Jews as a whole did not seek "national survival," a "Jewish state," a "homeland." They were content to be permitted to reside in the countries of their choice and to become full citizens of those lands on a free and equal basis with other inhabitants.

Is that era comparable to the present? All one has to do is to examine the real world of today to see how clearly different it is, how completely insecure is the position of the Jews now.

Is it an exaggeration to say, after more than ten years of Hitlerism in a decaying world characteristic for its social degeneration, that the existence of the Jews is as perilous in 1947 as it was in 1940? The virus of antisemitism has spread to all borders and has infected nations and peoples whose relative tolerance was conspicuous in former years.

The truth is that the Jews have no place in Europe to live. They cannot return to their old homes and resume their former occupations. They are for the most part, the few hundred thousand European Jews who are left, inhabitants of former concentration camps in an atmosphere polluted with the stink of crematoriums, dungeons and fresh-dug graves.

A person would have to be thick-skinned indeed not to feel the depths of despair which have seized hold of the Jewish population of the world, especially those who remain in Europe today.

Out of the cemetery in which the remnants of European Jews now temporarily reside has come a mass desire for emigration to Palestine, a desire which took almost spontaneous form.

Why Palestine? Why not the United States, Australia, South America, England or France? The principal reason, as [Mandel] himself admits, is that none of these countries will permit the entry of Jews or other displaced persons.

In these circumstances, the Jews have, in fact, only one place to turn to that offers them some realistic prospect of salvation, namely, Palestine.

Without going into a discussion now as to all the reasons why emigration to Palestine is justifiable, let me cite an important reason for it. More than one-third of the population of Palestine, who are Jews, want their fellow nationals to come there.

The weight of persecution has created a deep bond of solidarity between the European and Palestinian Jews. Palestine can ab-

sorb these several hundred thousand European Jews and offer them a haven in a world whose doors are closed to them. In a way it is an answer to the disgusting, hypocritical sympathies expressed for the Jews by the United States, Great Britain, Russia and the leading powers of the UN who are using the Jewish question as a political football in the new imperialist struggle for world domination.

To recognize the validity of these national aspirations for survival among Europe's Jews is not a violation of Marxist principles.

On the contrary, to deny them would reveal not only an obstinate misunderstanding of everything that Lenin wrote on the national question, but a failure to understand what has happened in Europe in the past twenty-five years.

Israel after 1948

This is an abridged extract from a resolution on "The Jewish Question and Israel" adopted by the Third-Camp Trotskyist Independent Socialist League in 1951. • bit.ly/jqi-isl

The politics from which the war in Palestine flowed, therefore, was – on the side of the Jews – their exercise of their right to self-determination; and – on the side of the Arab states – their aim of depriving the Jews of this right by force of arms.

The war itself was necessarily fought by the Jews independently of the UN and of any of the imperialists because of the policies of the latter. The Marxist position on this war was summed up as follows:

Defence of Israel against the Arab states' attack – military, material and moral support to its war but no political support to Zionism or the government. This pro-war position necessarily entailed also opposition to any intervention in the war by the big imperialist powers, and the demand in the US for no embargo on arms to Israel and for recognition.

The victory in war of the splinter state of Israel ensured its national existence and independence for this period but did not solve its problems. Without at all derogating the fact of Israel's independent status, it is still important to understand the following:

Merely military victory – especially with the maintenance of a Zionist-nationalist and implicitly expansionist perspective, on the one hand, and on the other hand the demands in some Arab circles for a "second round" of fighting for the overthrow of Israeli independence – can only result in a permanent state of Near Eastern "cold war" between Jews and Arabs, chronic national tensions, border incidents, and permanent national hatred.

Under these conditions, for a splinter state whose economic life is intertwined with that

of its Arab neighbours, its future can only be that of a state-wide ghetto in an Arab world. The leaders of Israel can make this future bearable only by dependence, and ever-increasing dependence, on one or the other of the predatory imperialisms, by becoming its outpost in its section of the world.

Both Russia and the US bloc seek to dominate Israel in this way, but in today's situation the strongest imperialist force operating to subjugate Israel and break it into this role is US imperialism, operating both through the general economic power of US wealth and specifically through control of the purse strings of Israel by Jewish capitalist elements in the US.

In the longer run, the only alternative for Israel, as against a chronic nightmare existence and becoming a puppet of outside imperialism, is the perspective of the integration of Israel into an Independent Near Eastern Union of States, genuinely free from all imperialist subordination and control.

As long as Jewish capital and Arab landlordism remain in control of these states this aim is not a practical possibility; the fight for its realisation requires the building of a revolutionary socialist movement in Israel and of revolutionary workers' and peasants' movements in the Arab countries.

It is the particular duty of the Israeli socialist movement to develop a program making for an alliance between Israel's working class and the Arab masses against their own exploiters and ruling classes.

The establishment of peace between Israel and the Arab countries is a vital necessity for the economic well-being and development of all the Middle Eastern countries. The road toward achieving such peace requires such an Israeli policy toward the Arab peoples as will create popular sentiment for peace among those peoples.

This is a necessary first step toward any permanent solution.

Pioneering work on Lenin and Bolshevism



Review

By Paul Le Blanc

This is an important work on Lenin and the Bolshevik tradition. While many have been profoundly impressed by the valuable work of Lars Lih in *Rediscovering Lenin* (2006), Max Shachtman was articulating and documenting many of the same points in the late 1930s, through the 1940s and 1950s, and into the early 1960s.

His defence of Bolshevism was articulated over and over, with facts and citations buttressed with brilliant turns of phrase, sometimes with entertaining (even hilarious) flourishes – and often with challenging, inspiring, illuminating insights.

“The Russian revolution of 1917, which Lenin led, [was] a socialist revolution that established a genuine workers’ government,” Shachtman argued in a 1957 letter to Socialist Party leader Norman Thomas, and in the years leading up to that revolution Lenin and his Bolshevik comrades were animated by the conviction that “socialism can and will be attained only by the fullest realization of democracy.”

Joseph Stalin’s dictatorship in the Soviet Union had not “carried out the ideal and principles of the socialist revolution to a logical conclusion” but had instead had “betrayed and destroyed it,” as he put it several years earlier, and “if we defend the Bolsheviks today, it is in the interest of historical objectivity but also because we remain loyal to the emancipating fight for socialism.”

The editor of this volume is Sean Matgamna, leader of a small British group associated with the publication *Workers’ Liberty*, whose perspectives are elaborated in a lengthy introduction. His group adheres to a theory that Shachtman developed upon breaking with Leon Trotsky in 1940, viewing the Soviet Union as a new form of class society, what Shachtman and his co-thinkers called *bureaucratic collectivism*. The importance of this volume, however, transcends such matters, and has more to do with Shachtman’s earlier convictions – which remained within him as a powerful residue through his later years.

Shachtman began his political life in the Young People’s Socialist League, youth group of the Socialist Party of America, in the glory days of Eugene V. Debs. As with many Eastern European immigrant youth of the time, he was inspired by the Russian Revolution, and he became a leader of the Young Communist League in the early 1920s, going on to help James P. Cannon create the International Labor Defense.

It defended the rights of all working-class and left-wing activists of that time, most notably the immigrant anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti. Cannon concluded, in the late 1920s, that the perspectives of Leon Trotsky represented a genuine alternative to the bureaucratic and authoritarian degeneration of the Communist movement. Shachtman joined with him, and both, handfulls of others, were expelled from the US Communist Party.

Shachtman began this phase of his political



Paul Le Blanc, author of *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* and other books, reviews *In Defence of Bolshevism*. This review previously appeared in *International Socialist Review* (US) no.112

life as one of the central leaders of the revolutionary socialist current associated with Trotsky, with whom he collaborated closely throughout the 1930s.

Among Shachtman’s contributions during the volatile Depression years was his editorship of the theoretical journal *New International*, and two of the articles in this volume date from that time. One is an incisively critical review of a memoir written by Angelica Balabanoff, who had played an important role in the early Communist International before joining the anti-Communist wing of the socialist movement. The other is a brilliant discussion of the relationship of two outstanding revolutionaries of the twentieth century, Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg.

The balance of the items in this volume are drawn from the period after Shachtman’s break with Trotsky, but deal mostly with matters around which he was in harmony with his former teacher.

Shachtman’s later political orientation evolved in a Social-Democratic direction, ending in a 1958 merger into the Socialist Party of America. He was a mentor to an important younger layer of US socialists, including Michael Harrington and Bayard Rustin. Such protégés had a powerful impact on social struggles and political thought on the left in the 1960s.

Shachtman never renounced his earlier pro-Bolshevik beliefs, but they were now refracted by a political evolution at odds with his earlier revolutionary standpoint. In *Left Americana* I recall:

“When one heard Shachtman explain himself [as I did in 1968], one heard passionately revolutionary syllables forming stolidly reformist words. Uncompromising notions of class struggle became inseparable from a commitment to the far-from-radical officialdom of the AFL-CIO and to its place in the Democratic Party, and the defence of socialism from Stalinist betrayal added up to an alignment with the U.S. government in the cause of Cold War anti-Communism — all with a Marxist flourish”.

Despite this evolution, the analysis, scholarship, and insights in Shachtman’s pro-Bolshevik essays are worth engaging with. In illuminating what actually happened in history, Shachtman was being true to the revolutionary cause – even while veering from it in his latter-day orientation.

In contrast to Shachtman, the former Communist educator Bertram D. Wolfe – who became an increasingly conservative

anti-Communist propagandist for the US State Department – devoted the last twenty-five years of his life to attacking and slandering the Bolshevik tradition. Shachtman’s critique of Wolfe’s influential work on Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin and the Bolshevik party – *Three Who Made a Revolution* – is presented in abridged form.

Missing from the substantial fragment is the apt characterisation of “Wolfe’s style... the polite mockery, the faint air of condescension, the misplaced irony, the elderly skepticism toward the Russian Revolution and its leaders which is so fashionable nowadays.”

But we do find in this book reference to Wolfe’s “innuendo, clouded allusions, grunts, grimaces, pursed lips, winks and nods” and a pointed suggestion that Wolfe was “just a little ... careless with his innuendos.”

Shachtman focuses attention on two sentences thrown out in passing – “just in passing!” Shachtman thunders – containing “more insight than can be found in any two chapters of Wolfe’s book.” Here are the sentences:

“Nineteen five and nineteen seventeen, the heroic years when the machine was unable to contain the flood of overflowing life, would bring Trotsky to the fore as the flaming tribune of the people, would show Lenin’s ability to rise above the confining structure of his dogmas, and would relegate Stalin, the machine-man, to the background. But no people can live forever at fever heat and when that day was over and Lenin was dead, the devoted machine-man’s day would come”.

“Then why the title *Three Who Made a Revolution*?” asks Shachtman. “The facts presented by Wolfe show this to be a falsification and the above quotation confirms it. The title he gives his book is therefore utterly misleading.” He concludes: “It would of course be very awkward to load a book with a title like ‘Two Who Made a Revolution and One who Made a Counter-Revolution’, but one merit it would have: it would be accurate.”

Stalinists insist on a continuity of Lenin and Stalin to enhance the latter’s authority, and anti-Communists do it to discredit Lenin.

Confronting widespread accusations of Lenin’s intolerance, Shachtman observed:

In Defence of Bolshevism

Max Shachtman



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“Nine times out of ten, Lenin’s ‘intolerance’ consisted, for the opponents, in the fact that he refused to accept their point of view on a question.” Pushing hard against the notion that Lenin’s Bolshevik organisation was authoritarian, he insisted that “the Bolshevik movement had, on the whole, more genuine democracy in its organisation, more freedom of opinion and expression, a freer and healthier internal life, than at least nine-tenths of the other socialist or trade-union organisations of Europe,” and that “the hideous monolithism of Stalin’s regime was entirely unknown – it was not even dreamed of – among the Bolsheviks. Political tendencies were formed without let or hindrance, and if they dissolved it was not under compulsion of any kind...”

“Lenin’s collected works, which were composed largely of open ‘inner-party’ polemics and the files of a dozen different factional papers and pamphlets provide inundating evidence of this rich, free and open party life.”

Debates on the left are contexts from which most items in this volume emerged. Pride of place is devoted to *Under the Banner of Marxism*. This is aimed at Ernest Erber, a prominent member of the Workers Party who in 1948 announced his withdrawal from revolutionary politics with a lengthy critique of Lenin’s theory of the state and of the Bolsheviks’ 1917 decision to take power. Shachtman employs bell, book, and candle – not to mention lightning and thunder, peppered with humour and passion – in defending both. Why did Leninism give way to Stalinism? Shachtman responds:

“Exactly ninety-nine per cent of the critics of Bolshevism answer the question this way, at bottom: The Russian workers lost power because they took power. Stalinism (the destruction of the Russian workers’ power) followed ineluctably from the seizure of power by the proletariat and Lenin’s refusal to surrender this power to the bourgeois democracy. Exactly ninety-nine per cent of the revolutionary Marxists answer the question in this way, at bottom: The Russian workers lost power because the workers of other countries failed to take power”.

Particularly fascinating is the substantial summary of a 1951 debate at the University of Chicago between Shachtman and Alexander Kerensky, exiled leader of the provisional government that Lenin and the Bolsheviks ousted in 1917. Kerensky, employing a quote from the anarchist Proudhon against Marx, claimed “Communism is nothing more than inequality, subjugation, and slavery,” characterising his 1917 struggle with the Bolsheviks as “not a fight between capitalism and socialism, but between freedom and slavery.” Kerensky concluded: “Stalin is the most able, most talented disciple of Lenin.” In contrast, Shachtman insisted:

“The road out of the blind alley into which society is being driven more and more, lies in the struggle for democracy. The struggle for democracy receives its clarity, purpose and guarantee in the struggle for socialism; the struggle for socialism lies in the hands of the working class – the beast of burden, the despised of the earth – whose will to victory was forever underlined by their first great revolution, the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia”.

Debate on Labour and antisemitism



Debate

OBLITERATING DISTINCTIONS

Sean Matgamna (*Solidarity 497*, 27 February 2019) writes as if it is a matter of blinding obviousness that advocacy of any version of the “right of return” policy for Palestinians is simply a “coded” way of saying: “destroy Israel, drive the Jews into the sea”.

Therefore, anyone who advocates this policy is a racist and its advocacy should not be compatible with Labour Party membership.

Sean’s argument functions here in precisely the way he criticises elsewhere: “to obliterate all distinctions and gradations.” As such it is more likely to lose listeners than to win converts.

The distinctions and gradations are many. It is simply not accurate to argue that any advocate of any version of “right of return” is a “racist”, and simply not operable to advocate, even implicitly, that anyone holding any version of the policy be expelled from the Labour Party.

Workers’ Liberty’s long-held position is that a “right of return” policy that presumes the collective resettlement of five to six million Palestinian refugees and their descendants in contemporary Israel, via the displacement of the contemporary Israeli-Jewish population if necessary, is a revanchist-nationalist policy that cannot be part of any democratic resolution to the current national conflict in the region.

But “right of return” means different things to different people. For the ideologues of absolute anti-Zionism, who got their political training on a 1970s and 80s far-left whose politics on the Middle East were substantially distorted by vicarious Arab nationalism, an emphasis on the “right of return” undoubtedly serves as a more palatable way to imply the conclusion of the “smash Israel”-type slogans they once would have raised explicitly.

But beneath and around them are other activists who support the policy simply because it is the near-unanimous one of all wings of the Palestinian national movement. Like the now widespread support for boycotts of Israel, support for it is a matter of reflexive instinct for leftists concerned to support the Palestinians.

Younger activists in particular have grown up in a world where Israel has been an increasingly brutal colonial power. Sean says Israel “often” tramples on Palestinian rights; it would be more accurate to say that a large part of contemporary Israeli polity is entirely bound up with an ever-expanding project of colonial subjugation, designed to snuff out the possibility of Palestinian nationhood. It is less a question of “often”; more one of “always”.

The barbarism of the Israeli state does excuse or justify supporting the counter-barbarism implicit in the programme of, for example, the clerical-fascist Hamas, but it is a necessary factor in understanding why sincere supporters of Palestinian rights, recoiling in horror and despair from an increasingly reactionary Israel and an increasingly bleak and hopeless situation, might draw conclusions that in fact have reactionary-revanchist implications.

Untangling these issues, and persuading those leftists that the elementary duty of solidarity with the Palestinians does not mean that the people of the nation currently oppressing must have their own national rights extirpated if the Palestinians are to have true

justice, will be a matter of patient explanation, not moralistic denunciation.

For the Palestinians themselves, “right of return” also has a range of meanings. For Yahya Sinwar of Hamas, it means, simply, “not conceding a single inch of the land of Palestine”, with all that implies for the fate of the Jews currently living there. But for others, it simply expresses a desire to live in the general environ of the place where their families are from and from where they fled or were driven out.

An understandable romantic-nationalist attachment to the “right of return” policy, keenly felt especially by the descendants of refugees who have grown up in social misery in refugee camps, is only likely to break up as part of the development of a substantial movement amongst both Israeli-Jews and Palestinians for a comprehensive policy of equal rights — that both peoples should have an equal right to their own state within the territory of historic Palestine and, ultimately, to free movement between those states.

Palestinians who have not yet adopted that policy, in conditions specifically engineered by revanchists and ultra-reactionaries on both sides to prevent its development, are not aspirant agents of genocide. To think of them as such can only serve to drive them into the arms, and strengthen the hand, of the revanchists and ultra-reactionaries, such as Hamas, who might very well be agents of genocide if given the capacity to be so.

Sean is right to say that the conflict in Israel/Palestine is “at root, a conflict of right against right”: that is to say, the rights of the two national peoples in the territory to their own states, which must be equal.

The brutality of history, most recently and centrally the Israeli occupation, has rendered that policy so remote as to seem utopian. If it is to be rescued from that position, and a movement built around it, some understanding of the “distinctions and gradations” within the other political conclusions different groups of people, for different reasons, have reached, will be required.

Sean’s argument is also imbalanced in another way. While “smash Israel” politics are the root of some contemporary left antisemitism, much of the antisemitism now expressed in the Labour Party has only a tenuous relationship to any concrete policy on Israel/Palestine and is expressed in a far more “primitive” form, via conspiracy theories about “Rothschild bankers” and “financial elites”.

What this primitive form of left antisemitism has in common with absolute-anti-Zionism is the conspiracy-theorist frame: in both, some Jewish element — either “bankers”, or “Zionists” — is taken to be hugely powerful and to exert a near-controlling influence on world affairs.

But many of the worst instances of antisemitism from Labour Party members recently, predominantly manifesting online rather than in meetings, do not take the form of cheerleading for Hamas and a desire to “drive the Jews into the sea”, but a recycling of these primitive, “socialism-of-fools”-type conspiracy-theory narratives. Whether some of the people recycling them have ever thought seriously enough about Israel/Palestine and the “right of return” to have a firm view is dubious.

And so, in a sense, Sean’s emphasis also underplays the problem. Vicarious-Arab-nationalist or vicarious-Islamist, “drive the Jews into the sea”-type cheerleading for Hamas has at least some relationship to material reality, in the sense of advocating an explicit policy linked to an agency it is hoped will

carry the policy out.

It can be confronted by polemic and debate which explains the implications of the policy and the political character of the agency. “Rothschild bankers” discourse festers in the murky sewer of social-media-fuelled conspiracy theory, and in some ways is even more toxic.

What is required to confront this discourse is not simply a campaign to persuade people of a two-states, equal-rights policy for Israel/Palestine, but a comprehensive political-educational drive for a rational, materialist, class-based analysis of the world, against quasi-mystical conspiracy-theorist thinking.

Daniel Randall



Palestinian refugees in Lebanon face severe discrimination

A HUGE SHIFT

Sean Matgamna’s article declares that everyone who holds a “right of return” position is, by definition, a biological racist: “By what standards do the descendants of the people who lived in that territory decades ago have the right to do that? There is no possible answer other than that they have the right genes [my emphasis].”

By this logic, everyone who supported Jewish settlement in Palestine 70 years ago, as well as everyone who supports the Jewish Law of Return now, must also be written off as a racist, a “gene-ist” in Sean’s awkward coinage. (I disagree with the discriminatory Law of Return, but not in these terms!)

If it makes one a full-on biological racist to say that the child of refugees, born in a refugee camp with no real place to call home, could claim their parents’ place of origin as their home, then what does Sean consider the 19th and 20th century Jews who wanted to “return” to Palestine based on centuries- or millenia-old lineage? What does he consider the principle that even now allows me to “return” to Israel?

It is a huge shift to go from saying — there is a conflict of rights, and full enactment of the right of return would risk making impossible a peace settlement based on consistent national self-determination — to saying — supporting the right of return by definition makes you a biological racist.

If we argue that there needs to be far more understanding and sensitivity for how op-

Sean Matgamna’s article in *Solidarity 497* can be found online at bit.ly/as-letter. It has caused some debate within *Workers’ Liberty* and beyond, and has been widely read online.

pressed and refugee Jews were pushed towards the conclusions of Zionism, then we need to apply something similar to the oppressed and refugee Palestinians. That is not to say the two questions are simply identical, but there is a relevant similarity.

Given (at least) hundreds of thousands of people living their entire lives in vast refugee camps, the issue cannot be treated as simple, easy or obvious. People who disagree with us cannot be simplistically, uniformly, and furiously denounced as genetic racists.

This obliteration of nuance and distinctions is not persuasive, politically serious, or sensitive to the human struggles going on here, and is totally out of kilter with the way we ask leftists to relate to Zionism.

Second: “As well as an educational drive in the party on this question — which includes a candid discussion of the politics of the leadership — the party should declare advocacy of the destruction of Israel, by Arab or Islamic states or whomever, incompatible with membership of the Labour Party. Encoded versions of that policy — via “right of return” for example — should not be tolerated in the labour movement...”

The AWL has rightly emphasised that the key is political education through discussion, and that disciplinary measures such as expulsion, while necessary in some cases, cannot be used against everyone who holds wrong or reactionary beliefs. But the call made here on the Labour Party cannot be sensibly interpreted as doing anything other than encouraging a disciplinary approach, up to and including expulsion, to anyone who backs the right of return.

In reality this would mean empowering the Compliance Unit to act against tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of members. Sean’s call is wrong both in principle and practically.

Ben Tausz

POLITICAL REASON

I would say that there is a reason why so many people know about the laws in Israel that discriminate against its Arab minority (the most discriminatory of which was only passed recently), and so few seem to talk about the laws that Syria and Lebanon have had for decades.

Those laws explicitly ban Palestinians from gaining citizenship from those countries despite them and their families having been born and spent their entire lives in these countries. In Lebanon for example, they are banned from certain jobs and from Lebanese schools and hospitals.

For a particular political reason, this is not considered apartheid, while Israel’s discrimination against its Arab citizens (which obviously pales in comparison with discrimination against other minorities in many Muslim countries) and its occupation of the West Bank is routinely classed as apartheid.

That political reason is the politics we should argue against.

Omar Raii

TONE-DEAF

The Corbyn surge has brought “along with it” (not deliberately by Corbyn but by accident) people educated in a one-state view on Israel-Palestine.

Of course there have always been people in the Labour Party of that view, but that was then and this is now. Then was a Blairite rump. And now is a mass party — a much more powerful instrument of political influence. There is a qualitative and quantitative change here and that is important

The one-state position is now entrenched, often in a degraded form, in all sorts of policies and orientations from BDS, to flag-waving, to shouting from the river to the sea, to clearly stated belief in the illegitimacy of the existence of Israel.

Is that agitation, as the article says, divorced from actual Palestinian solidarity? To a large extent it is. The one-state milieu is a separate one from the Rothschild conspiracy people, but it exists and is probably impossible to quantify because most Labour Party members are not active in the party except in social media forums.

The second main idea of the article is that much of the left, even those who claim to be for “two states”, are politically tone-deaf to Jewish people’s affinities with Israel — any Israel, as the article puts it.

This has been viscerally felt by Jewish people, and would be felt even if there wasn’t the “winding up” by right wing political forces which the article acknowledges.

The article is clear and sharp and effective in its solidarity with Jewish people.

Cathy Nugent

EXCEPTIONALISING

Part of our argument about left anti-semitism is the exceptionalisation of Israel when it comes to the national question.

Where other national conflicts are to be solved with regional and cultural autonomy, or where appropriate, national self-determination (i.e. the traditional Marxist answers to these questions) — Israelis are denied that right. Much of the left says that Israeli-Jews should, at best, be forced against their will to



Many people see the “Right of Return” in the terms of this cartoon

be made a minority in a pre-48 borders Palestinian state.

The “Right of Return” fits into this exceptionalising. The question — “should the ‘blood ancestors’ of people who are driven out of a territory have the right to ‘return’ to that territory no matter how circumstances in that territory have changed?” — is crucial. The left does not argue for a “right of return” for any other conflict.

The question is: why does the left think as it does?

Particularly for newer members of the Labour Party, it’s because of a lack of education, and just picking up the most dominant ideas in the movement, without thinking them through. But, for some, it is just straightforward hostility to Jews.

There are more people than before willing to listen to us. But it’s not dour, pessimistic, inward-looking etc. to soberly assess that we are often in the minority of the organised left on these questions.

I put a motion to my local Momentum group two and a bit years ago for a meeting to discuss antisemitism. That’s all the motion said, and the only people who voted for it were us.

It was voted down about 50-4 by Socialist Resistance, Workers Power, SWP, ex-SWP, and a large number of unaffiliated but serious activists.

And just recently a few of us were the only people in a room of 75 to challenge Chris Williamson.

Matt Kinsella

FLYING TOO CLOSE

Sean’s article flies too close to equating nationalism to racism, with no further interrogation needed.

A load of twenty-something liberals supporting the right of return because “that’s what you do” are not antisemites in the sense of racist hostility to Jews individually and collectively.

The distinction here is useful but the line has become considerably more blurred.

The anti-war movement brought supposedly-“Trotskyist” left antisemitism and regular racist antisemitism into an alliance and a generation of activists were educated in that alliance.

As well as the “We Are All Hezbollah” current, we saw the beginnings of the grip of conspiracy theories, which almost inevitably lead to antisemitic conspiracy theories.

The resurgence of conspiracy theories seems to have come in part from the parts of the “anti-globalisation” milieu and in part from the odd alliance between right libertarians and the left in the US anti-war movement.

It has been fuelled by the “don’t trust the MSM” [mainstream media] culture.

Confusingly the dominant form of anti-semitism on the left at the moment is not left antisemitism.

There is also some black-nationalist anti-semitism. That gets mixed up with quite genuine and understandable (on a personal rather than political level) anger and confusion among black Labour Party activists about why Labour talks about antisemitism all the time, but not other forms of racism.

The problem requires us to patiently explain both the peculiarities of antisemitism and the role of racism in maintaining not just white supremacy and colonialism but also division and false answers in our class.

Katy Dollar

A LOGICAL THREAD

The term absolute anti-Zionist (bit.ly/aa-z) is very helpful in explaining the problem with denying democratic legitimacy to any kind of Jewish nationalism or nation-state, or any sort Israel.

Sean’s argument that a logical thread connects the demand of “right of return” to “gene-ism” / racism is a specific point that is new to me but makes good sense, and it’s a point consistent with our general position.

Camila Bassi



TWO JOBS TO COVER

There are two jobs at the minute: analysis and education on antisemitism, and a much sharper polemic against those on the left who are destroying the Corbyn movement by refusing to take anti-semitism seriously and in the process peddling antisemitic myths

The two tasks are intertwined and not in contradiction. But JVL, LAW, Electronic intifada and Greenstein are not going to be reasoned out of there rotten politics. We need to make plain they are the problem.

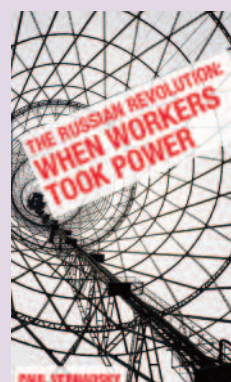
By and large the defence of Livingstone, Walker, Williamson, etc. given is that they are right. Even when they have formally apologised or rowed back.

Another question remains: how, without it looking like diversion and whataboutery, to give adequate weight to addressing the escalating racism faced by Britain’s black, Asian and other people, and link that fight to the fight against left antisemitism?

Luke Hardy



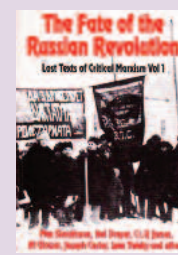
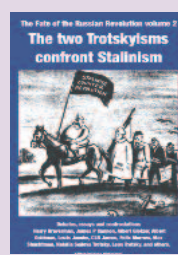
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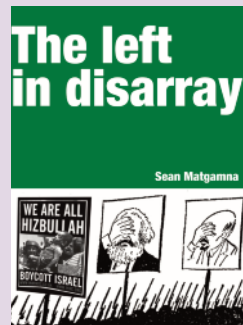
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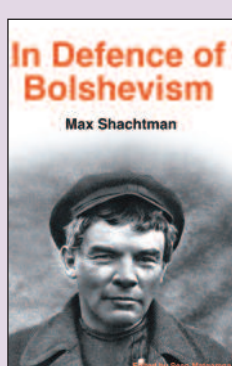


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Antisemitism, transphobia, and misogyny linked?

By Natalia Cassidy

In an article published online in December 2018, Joni Alizah Cohen seeks to find a link between the global rise in antisemitism and the rise in transmisogyny.

By “transmisogyny” she means the joint experience of transphobia (hostility to transgender people) and misogyny (hatred of women).

The article, “The Eradication of ‘Talmudic Abstractions’: Anti-Semitism, Transmisogyny and the National Socialist Project”, situates the contemporary rise in the far-right as stemming from National Socialist ideals and seeks to gain an understanding of the current situation through an analysis of those historical ideas.

Cohen’s analysis begins with an identification of homosexuality as defined in Nazi Germany, emphasising the differences between their understanding and our own contemporary understanding of the term. The Nazis saw homosexuality as a corruption of the male body

and psyche with different levels of extremity, the most acute form of homosexuality being embodied by those that in a contemporary context would be understood as trans women.

The core of Cohen’s argument rests on an analysis of the ideological logic of far-right antisemitism; based on Moishe Postone’s analysis, with an attempt to draw parallels to the logic of the far-right’s transmisogyny. This is done in quite an academically dense way and draws some questionable conclusion, but certainly holds some value in how we view the far-right’s “common logic” as an interconnected whole rather than a set of loosely related reactionary ideas.

Cohen sees the National Socialist antisemitism as coming from a “foreshortened critique of capital”: a fetishisation of that which is seen as concrete: industry and labour. This is counterposed to the “abstractions” of exchange value, money and finance: embodied in the National Socialist world by the Jews’ perceived role. In this way it is a one sided critique of capital, cri-

tiquing the perceived abstract whilst absolving the concrete value-forms of scrutiny.

Cohen here takes the short jump to an analysis not just of a fetishisation of the concrete and material in value-form but of its fetishisation more generally. Drawing on Maya Andrea Gonzalez and Jeanne Neton’s essay *The Logic of Gender* in an attempt to show the parallels between the far-right’s conception of gender and their antisemitism.

She argues that the dual-form of value (abstract and concrete) is equivalent to the dual-form of sex and gender, leading to the conclusion that the hatred for trans women stems from the abstract form that gender holds compared to the concrete form of biological sex: “the trans woman becomes the concrete manifestation of the abstraction and denaturalisation of gender.”

Where Cohen is perhaps most convincing is in her conclusions. Some of her earlier analysis which might be read as suggesting that transmisogyny and antisemitism have the same basis and therefore

are running parallel to one another. Here she explains that the basis of much of the modern far-right’s transmisogyny actually stems from antisemitism.

For the far-right, it is the Jews as “the abstraction par excellence” that are the creators of these abstractions and it is therefore the Jews that are behind “transgenderism” as a political project to undermine the dominance of the Aryan race. Anecdotally, it is clear that this holds some weight, much of the far-right’s thought today involves conspiratorial modes of thinking about trans people.

We have people speculating wildly through antisemitic dog-whistles about who it is that is responsible for Hollywood pushing the trans agenda down the throats of the population.

Cohen’s article, despite some arguably spurious analytical jumps here and there, offers some thoughtful conclusions about the nature of the contemporary far-right and how it relates to transmisogyny and antisemitism.

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, 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!

Mock-workerism and the Scottish Labour Party

By Ann Field

GMB Scottish Regional Secretary Gary Smith was accorded front page coverage in the 3 March 2019 *Herald on Sunday*.

Billed as an “Exclusive”, the article in fact consisted of some extracts from an interview with Smith conducted by one of the pro-independence paper’s resident right-wing journalists, Paul Hutcheon.

Hutcheon is still remembered for his notorious witch-hunting ‘articles’ about the Falkirk Labour selection contest and Grangemouth Ineos dispute of 2013 (although he has written no shortage of articles in a similar vein since then).

Smith used the interview with Hutcheon as an opportunity to denounce Scottish Labour Party leader Richard Leonard for his approach to Brexit and to the problem of antisemitism in the Labour Party.

But Smith went a lot further. He criticised Leonard for “riding on the coat-tails” of Corbyn, which was “a recipe for failure.” Scottish Labour had “nothing coherent or clear to say on the big issue of the day.” It did not “look like a government in waiting.”

At first sight it might appear as if some of what Smith said actually makes sense.

Leonard sails close to the *Morning Star* on Brexit. In a second referendum he would prefer a Labour ‘soft Brexit’ to Remain. So do many of those who hold elected or un-

elected positions around Leonard.

Leonard has also had little to say about antisemitism. (But the available evidence suggests that the dimensions of the problem in Scottish Labour are nowhere near those evident in England — which is not to deny that, beneath the surface, similar ways-of-thinking are apparent).

And Labour cannot be said to have turned the corner in Scotland. Its vote in the 2017 general election increased by just 10,000 in the whole of Scotland, and it stills comes third in the opinion polls, behind the Tories.

But what is Smith’s alternative?

Smith is a former member of the now defunct Militant tendency. Its members, especially its male ones, prided themselves only being the real voice of the real working class — as opposed to those “sects of the fringes of the labour movement” which were full of middle-class liberals.

Smith still operates within the same parameters.

But now, as anyone who knows him can testify, the objects of his proletarian ire are: opponents of fracking; supporters of nuclear disarmament; people who drink lattes; and Labour Party members who live in Islington (a particularly odious sub-category of the former category).

This is apparent from the *Sunday Herald* article itself: “Smith is pro-Trident and supports fracking, both of which he believes could be part

of a wider industrial strategy. He is also sceptical of the view that thousands of jobs are tied to the ‘green collar’ economy.”

The article quotes Smith: “Scottish Labour are trying to chase a green vote. That green vote will remain with the Green Party. It’s a middle-class guilt thing. We are rooted in the real world and not in some aspirational ‘jobs in Brigadoon with Scotch mist in the pay packet’ type stuff.”

With unintended irony, the article goes on to quote another of Smith’s criticisms of Scottish Labour: “It doesn’t speak to working people but talks at them.” (Says the man with a penchant for interminable tirades against “middle-class fads” — such as saving the planet from extinction.)

Smith claims to be disappointed with the level of engagement between the GMB and Scottish Labour: “On whether Leonard had engaged with the GMB since becoming leader, Smith said: ‘In truth, I’m disappointed about the quality of engagement.’”

But the truth is that the GMB in Scotland has no political strategy.

It does nothing to encourage GMB members in the Labour Party to become delegates to their CLPs, it provides no support for GMB members who are delegates, and it fails to take its places on Labour Party Local Campaign Forums.

Smith would be better off speaking to the Labour Party, instead of

talking at it from the platform of an interview with Paul Hutcheon.

PS: On 12th June 2016 the *Sunday Herald* published an “Exclusive” which consisted of an interview with Gary Smith by Paul Hutcheon.

The June 2016 “Exclusive” bears a remarkable similarity to the 2019 “Exclusive”:

Scottish Labour was “completely out of touch with the concerns of many of our members.” Scottish Labour “doesn’t know what it stands for” and its adoption of anti-Trident position “was a very big mistake (which) alienated a lot of small ‘c’ conservative working-class voters.”

PPS: On 27th November 2016 the *Sunday Herald* published an “Exclusive” which consisted of an interview with Gary Smith by Paul Hutcheon.

The November 2016 “Exclusive” bears a remarkable similarity to the 2019 “Exclusive”:

“I (Smith) said this to the Labour Party — too often they sound like a party of middle-class protest. They certainly don’t sound like a party seeking power. We look at the party’s position on Trident, on building defence ships, on energy. They just don’t sound credible and they don’t sound in touch with working-class people or communities.”

Recycling the same old right-wing Smithsonian soundbites and calling them “Exclusives”?

Deliveroo link-up

By Zack, Bristol Courier and treasurer of IWGB-affiliated Bristol Couriers' Network

On Tuesday 26 February Deliveroo couriers in Manchester struck from 11am onwards, demanding better pay and other demands.

They have the same core demands as in many places across the country — £5 per delivery, paid waiting time at £10/hour, £1 per extra mile travelled — plus some extra demands. They have been supported by Manchester IWW.

This was the second strike in a fortnight, following the Valentine's day strike which was part of a nationally co-ordinated strike, in turn inspired by a series of strikes in Bristol which had started to spread elsewhere. Couriers in Manchester and elsewhere need to keep up strikes, build sustainable organisation locally, and further co-ordinate nationally.

Anecdotally, it seems that Bristol might have won, at least partially, more of our demands. None of these can yet be confirmed. It seems that Deliveroo might have implemented a hiring freeze, at least partially, and a slight increase in average pay per drop.

This comes on top of pay "boosts" on — and for several days following — the last three strikes, a verbal guarantee of no victimisation, and claims that they are look-



ing into various other small improvements. None of these are big victories, and we will not be bought off by them. But it shows, as we know, that causing large costs to Deliveroo through strikes forces them to listen.

We've been in dialogue with the aide to Marvin Rees, Bristol's Labour Mayor, about support he can give us both in publicly pressuring Deliveroo, and in arrangements concerning motorcyclist use of loading bays.

Nottingham is planning a further strike later this month, following two as part of national strikes on

1 or 4 February. Both previous strikes had large turn out and caused significant impact, and won them an increase of the minimum pay per delivery up to its previous levels.

Progress has been made in linking together nationally, for example with a meeting planned which will occur as this paper goes to press. It has been called by IWGB, and will primarily involve IWGB members, but the invite has been extended to people beyond the IWGB, for example cities such as Manchester where we do not have any members.

There has been some discussion of "rolling strikes", where different cities plan to strike on different weeks. This will potentially heighten surprise, maintain a more continuous wave of strikes despite different timescales of escalation in different locations, and allow us to visit each others' picket lines. This fed into Nottingham's decision about timescale for their next strike. We will discuss this more in the national meeting.

We are continuing to build our strike fund, and a fundraiser at the Student Left Network national conference in Sheffield raised £123.21, taking us to over £2,000 raised altogether. In addition to this, an older IWGB couriers' strike fund is being rehabilitated.

We still need considerably more donations, as this can only properly support one strike in one city!



Advanced earlybird tickets for our summer school, Ideas for Freedom, are now available until 21 April: £30 waged, £17 low-waged and students, £7 unwaged.

Prices will increase in steps until the event, around 22-23 June.

The 22-23 June weekend agenda will include presentations and debates on issues around Brexit, antisemitism, climate change, 1919,

1989, and more. There'll be a walking tour on Thursday 20 June and an evening debate on Friday 21 June.

Venue: Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 2DB. Free creche. Overnight accommodation will also be available free.

www.workersliberty.org/ideas

Women against Stalinism

The next Workers' Liberty London forum is on Friday 15 March, 7:30pm at Betty Brunker Hall, 152 Lever St, London EC1V 8BG (near Old Street).

Urszula Lugowska, a Polish Trotskyist, and Jill Mountford, Workers' Liberty, will speak on the conditions and struggles of women under Stalinism, and the battles and regressions since then.

RMT women step forward

By a delegate

The Women's Conference of the rail union RMT on 1 and 2 March was hosted by Dover Shipping Branch and was themed around "women in maritime".

Jacqui Smith, Maritime Co-ordinator from the International Transport Workers' Federation, told us of ITF's recent battle to stop shipping companies using mandatory pregnancy testing before employing female workers.

The conference passed a motion to instruct RMT to develop an organising plan specifically aimed at recruiting women seafarers to the RMT, an initiative that is long overdue. Another resolution asked the RMT to carry out a survey of female seafarers' well-being and to produce a booklet aimed at reducing fatigue.

Internationally, women make up only around 2% of the maritime workforce. There is a particular need for women seafarers to collectively formulate demands within the women's structures of the RMT and then for the RMT to throw its entire weight behind their struggles.

The case of women seafarers illustrates the need for women's self-organisation to challenge discrimination within our class and ultimately make our union stronger. That need extends to every area where the RMT is organising.

Sadly, the bureaucracy and culture of the RMT is yet to fully embrace women's self-organisation. In a session about how to involve more women in the RMT, one woman said that she had resisted getting involved in "women's activities" for years because she didn't want to be labelled and restricted by her gender.

In 2018 we elected the first female President in our union's 100+ year history, Michelle Rodgers. Michelle is a huge advocate for women's participation now, but for many years Michelle herself did not want to get involved with RMT's women's structures for similar reasons.

That is an understandable personal choice, but I wonder how



much it stems from a culture where the unspoken assumption is that the issues we are expected to unite around are those that affect white, able-bodied men.

The RMT has no female officers and an all-male Executive. Women's issues and voices are too easily neglected and marginalised.

To counter this, at last year's AGM, Workers' Liberty and others championed changes to the RMT constitution that would give more power to the equalities committees. The RMT bureaucracy, helped by their supporters in the Communist Party of Britain, frustrated this proposal. Some argued that organising around equalities is "divisive".

We did win some changes, and women's participation is growing. With nearly 70 delegates, this was a big women's conference. However, it feels like we have a long way to go before the leadership and dominant culture of our union reflects and embraces the diversity of its working-class membership.

Nonetheless, this was the first Women's Conference since the limited gains won at last year's AGM, which gave the equalities committees the power to "organise activities", subject to a plan being approved by the union's Executive. This meant the conference had a new, can-do feel.

If ideas for activity were suggested, we were able to say we would "put them in the plan". Previously, we could only ask the union bureaucracy to do things for us; resolutions were carried out slowly, partially, or not at all.

Now the Women's Committee will be able to work with Women's Officers around the country to organise recruitment and workplace campaigns about sexual harassment, for example.

It will be a lot of hard work, and will require rank and file pressure and co-ordination, but in the next year we should start to see some real results.

Audio and e-reader versions

Many thanks to the volunteers who have enabled us to produce an audio version of the paper, at least experimentally. Links to the audio version on SoundCloud are at www.workersliberty.org/audio.

To be sent our experimental e-reader version of *Solidarity*, email awl@workersliberty.org.

This may be helpful for dyslexic readers. E-readers enable you to choose the font, type size, and line-spacing you prefer, in a completely uncluttered layout.

Please give feedback so that we can find out whether these efforts are worthwhile, and, if they are, improve them.

Remain and Rebel

A new 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

Rosa Luxemburg

A new pamphlet from Workers' Liberty, *The German Revolution: Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, has Rosa Luxemburg's major articles from 1918-9.

They span the time from when the German revolution of 1918-9 broke out, and she was released from jail on 8 November 1918, through to her murder on 15 January 1919 by a right-wing militia operating under the protection of the Social Democratic government.

56 pages A4. Cover price £5. With postage — non-UK £7, UK £6. Cheap rates for bulk orders: four for £18, ten for £40, twenty for £70. Buy online at bit.ly/rl-gr



Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 498 8 March 2019

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After 15 March: how to stop climate disaster



Climate

By Mike Zubrowski

Alan Simpson, environmental adviser to John McDonnell, wrote rightly in *Solidarity* 497 about the hope we can draw from the international school climate walkouts, the next one of which is on 15 March (bit.ly/15m-clim).

He rightly criticised almost all politicians, and most of the left, for failing to respond seriously to the climate emergency. However, I think the solutions he sketches also fall far short of what is needed.

Alan Simpson sees the key to tackling climate change as "decarbonisation, decentralisation and democratisation". He advocates local markets taking precedence over globalised ones, and using tax to direct markets.

While implicitly critical of "old-style nationalisation" and preferring "radical decentralisation", he also implicitly advocates "Green New Deal" style politics of "unlimited reconstruction finance."

Taking the best reading we can, I think it's fair to say that he's broadly advocating large public investments in decentralised, locally and democratically-run and per-

haps publicly-owned green energy sources.

But to tackle climate change, we must tackle head-on the power of the section of the ruling class most directly tied up with fossil fuels. To try to sidestep the power of the fossil-fuel giants by going round them and financing local green energy production in itself is unworkable. We cannot compete fossil energy out of existence on the market by financing and subsidising alternatives.

Even if that process were possible, it would not be at the necessary pace, and could not be democratically led by workers in the current or future energy sectors.

FUNDING

It certainly is not possible with the meagre funding that Labour's Green Transformation document commits towards this transformation (bit.ly/lab-env).

Technically, decentralised energy systems are less efficient and therefore environmentally worse than unified, integrated energy systems. Energy production on large scales, not just big hydroelectric, tidal and nuclear, but also large scale wind and solar power, are significantly more efficient.

Integrated and centralised plan-



ning of production, transportation, storage and distribution of energy systems, using computation to predict and manage interactions between the parts, is much more efficient than decentralised systems (see bit.ly/gmb-mz).

It's often unclear what exactly is meant by decentralised energy. It is even less clear how this would

apply to a large and dense population, such as for example London. In developed countries, energy use per individual is considerably lower in such densely packed populations than in more dispersed populations, and therefore large, dense cities are greener.

Local production and markets are also not necessarily greener than global production and markets. Of course transportation requires energy, and so currently contributes to climate change. This can be changed, but crucially it is not the only factor.

Production on a large scale is often more efficient not just for the ruling class's ability to extract wealth, but in terms of resources. In many cases, a smaller number of larger production sites for particular goods, necessarily requiring longer-distance transportation, might be more efficient.

Production of some commodities is also more energy and environmentally efficient in certain geographical locations than other. Growing certain plants in hotter more suitable climates and then transporting them to the UK sometimes produces less greenhouse gases than using greenhouses and other technologies to grow equivalent plants in the UK.

The environmental impact of freight must be taken into account when considering the production and distribution of goods, but so must other environmental factors.

Tackling fossil capital through expropriating the major energy companies under workers' control, and investing hugely in the fastest possible transition to green energy, is a much better aim. It would not only be much greener but much more democratic.



Protestors in Brisbane on 4 March against a new coal mine at Adani in Northern Queensland

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