

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

#321 March/April 2023

£2.50

Putin out-victory to Ukraine

Paul Nowak

Maria Exall

Cost of Living crisis

Richard Lapper

Lula returns

Ann Pettifor

Austerity Britain

Dr John Puntis

NHS – SOS

Pete Duncan,

Ukrainian activists

Ukraine Must Win

Plus

Film & Book reviews

& Regulars

ISSN - 0968 7866 ISSUE



770968 786018



www.chartist.org.uk

CHARTIST

For democratic socialism

Editorial Policy

The editorial policy of CHARTIST is to promote debate amongst people active in radical politics about the contemporary relevance of democratic socialism across the spectrum of politics, economics, science, philosophy, art, interpersonal relations – in short, the whole realm of social life.

Our concern is with both democracy and socialism. The history of the last century has made it abundantly clear that the mass of the population of the advanced capitalist countries will have no interest in any form of socialism which is not thoroughly democratic in its principles, its practices, its morality and its ideals. Yet the consequences of this deep attachment to democracy – one of the greatest advances of our epoch – are seldom reflected in the discussion and debates amongst active socialists.

CHARTIST is not a party publication. It brings together people who are interested in socialism, some of whom are active the Labour Party and the trade union movement. It is concerned to deepen and extend a dialogue with all other socialists and with activists from other movements involved in the struggle to find democratic alternatives to the oppression, exploitation and injustices of capitalism and class society

Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the EB

Editorial Board

CHARTIST is published six times a year by the Chartist Collective. This issue was produced by an Editorial Board consisting of Duncan Bowie (Reviews), Andrew Coates, Peter Chalk, Patricia d'Ardenne, Mike Davis (Editor), Nigel Doggett, Don Flynn, Roger Gillham, Hassan Hoque, Peter Kenyon, Dave Lister, Sheila Osmanovic, Patrick Mulcahy, Julie Ward, Karen Constantine, Robbie Scott, Steve Carver (Website Editor), Mary Southcott and Victor Anderson. Production: Ferdousur Rehman

Contacts

Published by Chartist Publications
PO Box 52751 London EC2P 2XF
tel: 0845 456 4977

Printed by People For Print Ltd, Unit 10, Riverside Park,
Sheaf Gardens, Sheffield S2 4BB – Tel 0114 272 0915.
Email: info@peopleforprint.co.uk

Website: www.chartist.org.uk
Email: editor@chartist.org.uk
Twitter: @Chartist48

Newsletter online: to join, email
webeditor@chartist.org.uk

Contributions and letters deadline for **CHARTIST #322** **10 April 2023**

Chartist welcomes articles of 800 or 1500 words, and letters in electronic format only to: editor@chartist.org.uk

Receive Chartist's online newsletter: send your email address to news@chartistmagazine.org.uk

Chartist Advert Rates:

Inside Full page £200; 1/2 page £125; 1/4 page £75; 1/8 page £40; 1/16 page £25; small box 5x2cm £15 single sheet insert £50

We are also interested in advert swaps with other publications. To place an advert, please email: editor@chartist.org.uk

Chartist Subscriptions

Please adjust all PayPal payments and Standing Orders to match the new 2023 rates.

All subscriptions go towards the magazine and website; most production work is done by unpaid volunteers.

For many years Chartist held its cover price and subscription prices hardly changed but from 2023 we had to increase these to cover steep rises in printing costs and postage.

Chartist still represents fantastic value compared with other publications: New Statesman £4.99 each; Red Pepper £24 for 4 issues or supporters from £60.

A Supporter sub provides us with extra income to develop Chartist and enables participation and voting rights at our AGM.

New annual prices from January 2023 for 6 issues plus supplements:-

Supporter minimum £45 (many pay more) Ordinary £25

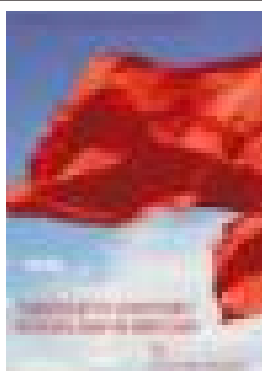
Concessions for under-25/student/unemployed: Supporter £24 Standard £12

Other special rates are available in cases of hardship.

For Institutions and Overseas rates see website chartist.org.uk/subscribe

It's easier (and avoids PayPal charges) if you pay via bank transfer or regular standing order.

Bank and other details available from subscriptions@chartist.org.uk



Chartist - Our History (51-100) Twentieth Century Socialism in Britain

Duncan Bowie
Published by Socialist History Society

£5 plus £1.50 p&p from
The Secretary, SHS
53 Fladgate Road
London E11 1LX
Also on Chartist website

FEATURES



Fair pay for workers – Page 8



Ukraine needs active solidarity – Page 15



NHS on its knees – Page 12

8

COST OF LIVING WITH TORIES
Paul Nowak says strikes are necessary for workers protection

9

AUSTERITY UNNECESSARY
Ann Pettifor demolishes government case for spending cuts big business bonuses

10

BIODIVERSITY TARGETS CON
Unmet targets from Cops are fundamentally dishonest says Victor Anderson

12

2NHS SOS
Dr John Puntis diagnoses the NHS crisis while government is in denial

13

MATERNITY CARE CRISIS
Karen Constantine says maternity services at breaking point

14

LABOUR'S NEW DEAL FOR WORKERS
Time to stand up for worker's rights says Maria Exall

15

UKRAINE ONE YEAR ON -SPECIAL
Christopher Ford on solidarity; Olesia Briazgunova on Ukrainian trades unions; Mick Antoniwon return visit with relief convoy; Ivanna Khrapko on realities of war; Maria Alyokhina/Pussy Riot on save the children

16

UKRAINE MUST WIN
Pete Duncan on a year of Russian aggression and why Putin must be stopped

19

ASYLUM SEEKERS
Whether Ukrainian, Syrian or Afghan all refugees should be welcome says Don Flynn

20

LULU RETURNS
Richard Lapper looks at the challenges facing the new government in Brazil

22

XENOPHOBIA
Mike Davis reviews Makari on the origins and fear of strangers

23

DOMESTIC ABUSE
Apsana Begum MP on rooting out domestic violence

Subscribe to **CHARTIST**:
£25 ordinary subscription
£45 supporter subscription
(6 issues)

Visit
www.chartist.org.uk/subscribe
for details



Cover by Martin Rowson

CHARTIST
FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM
Number 321 March/April 2023

REGULARS

4 **OUR INTERNATIONAL HISTORY**
Francois Babeuf and equality

6 **POINTS & CROSSINGS**
Paul Salvesson on the fraud of Levelling Up

7 **GREENWATCH**
Dave Toke on renewables and taxing super profits

24 **YOUTHVIEW**
Caitlin Barr on International Women's Day & action against sexual violence

25 **FILM REVIEW**
Patrick Mulcahy on Blue Jean

26 **BOOK REVIEWS**
Mike Davis on Bolsonaro; Glyn Ford on ILP & Black nationalism; Mary Southcott on Erdogan's Turkey; Duncan Bowie on Young Stalin and White Mosque; Conrad Landin on Senior Money; Gardner Thompson on Mugabe's Legacy

32 **WESTMINSTER VIEW**
Kate Osborne MP on Tories broken Britain

Our international history 1

This is the first in a new series of Chartist columns on international socialist theoreticians, following on from the Our History series of a hundred columns on British radicals and socialists which completed last year

Socialism and Communism in the French revolution: Babeuf, the first Revolutionary Communist

The Girondins and Jacobins were neither socialist or communist. The Girondins supported a constitutional monarchy while the Jacobins believed in a highly centralised and authoritarian republican government. Members of the two competing groups were from an aristocratic or professional background and included lawyers such as Robespierre and radical priests such as the Abbe Thiers and aristocrats such as Mirabeau. They defended the rights of property owners. The sans-culottes were more plebian and there were leftist groupings within clubs such as the Cordeliers, with enragés such as Jean-Francois Varlet and Jacques Roux, and in the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, the latter led by Pauline Leon and Claire Lacombe. Olympe de Gouges, author of *De la Declaration des droits de la femme et de la citoyenne*, was actually a monarchist. Some radicals argued for a more equal distribution of wealth, and envisaged Rousseau's social contract as advocating a collectivist organisation of society, but without adopting the more communistic utopian ideas of earlier French writers. The insurrectionists of 1794, led by Jacques Hebert, who were of the professional class rather than of plebian origin, also lacked any explicit socialist or communistic programme. The one group of revolutionaries who are seen as communistic, were the followers of the journalist and pamphleteer, Francois' Noel Babeuf (commonly known as Gracchus), who led the insurrectionist attempt in 1796 known as 'The Conspiracy of Equals', which sought to replace the Directory with a communistic revolutionary dictatorship. The difference from early insurrectionary attempts was that the Babeufians published a political manifesto, which not only argued for a different form of democracy but also advocated the abolition of private property. The insurrection failed and after a trial, Babeuf and his comrades, like the Hebertistes and numerous Girondins and Jacobins before them, were sent to the guillotine.

"EQUALITY! The first wish of nature, the first need of man, the first bond of all legitimate association! People of France! You were not more blessed than the other nations that vegetate on this unfortunate globe! Everywhere and at all times the poor human race, delivered over to more or less deft cannibals, served as a plaything for all ambitions, as prey for all tyrannies. Everywhere and at all times men were lulled with beautiful words; at no time and in no place

was the thing itself ever obtained along with the word. From time immemorial they hypocritically repeat to us: all men are equal; and from time immemorial the most degrading and monstrous inequality insolently weighs upon the human race. As long as there have been human societies the most beautiful of humanity's privileges has been recognized without contradiction, but was only once put in practice: equality was nothing but a beautiful and sterile legal fiction. And now that it is called for with an even stronger voice the answer us: be quiet, you wretches! Real equality is nothing but a chimera; be satisfied with conditional equality; you're all equal before the law. What more do you want, filthy rabble? Legislators, rulers, rich landowners, it is now your turn to listen.

Are we not all equal? This principle remains uncontested, because unless seriously touched by insanity, one can't seriously say it is night when it is day.

Well then! We aspire to live and die equal, the way we were born: we want real equality or death; this is what we need.

And we'll have this real equality, at whatever the cost. Woe on those who stand between it and us! Woe on those who resist a wish so firmly expressed.

The French Revolution is nothing but the precursor of another revolution, one that will be greater, more solemn, and which will be the last.

What do we need besides equality of rights?

We need not only that equality of rights written into the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen; we want it in our midst, under the roofs of our houses. We consent to every-

thing for it, to make a clean slate so that we hold to it alone. Let all the arts perish, if need be, as long as real equality remains!"

Further reading:

Buonarotti., Filippo *Babeuf's Conspiracy for Equality* (1975 reprint of 1836 edition)

Belfort Bax, Ernest *The Last Episode of the French Revolution* (1911)

Rose, R B *The Enrages. Socialists of the French Revolution?* (Melbourne University Press 1965)

Rose, R B *Gracchus Babeuf, The First Revolutionary Communist* (Edward Arnold 1978)

Birchall. Ian *The Spectre of Babeuf* (Haymarket 1997)



Russia Out- solidarity with Ukraine

Ukrainian people have been subjected to a year of bombardment, terror, death and destruction by Vladimir Putin's military and mercenary forces. This is the largest and longest war in Europe since 1945, Bosnia-Serbia in the early 1990s notwithstanding. It is imperative the labour movement acts in solidarity with the people of Ukraine to expel the occupying Russian imperial forces and secure national liberation.

In this issue **Pete Duncan** provides an overview of the conflict and explains why appeasement of Putin or talk of peace now is no solution. This outlook is echoed by a range of Ukrainian activists from trade unions and by **Christopher Ford** and **Mick Antoniw** of the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. They argue for military and humanitarian aid now to help turn the tide against Russian aggression and occupation. An Early Day Motion launched by Labour's Clive Lewis MP with support from John McDonnell and others argues for sending Ukraine all unused military equipment instead of government policy to sell off these armaments. The Ukrainians need more than warm words.

Of course we want peace, but not on terms accepting Russia's occupation or land grab. It must be a just peace respecting the territorial borders of the Ukraine.

Away from the hot war in Ukraine Rishi Sunak's Tories like to parrot that our high inflation is caused either by the war or by 'irresponsible' workers. New TUC general secretary **Paul Nowak** demolishes the argument that public sector wages cause price rises. He shows how workers have seen their incomes fall for the last twelve years and that we are now at breaking point. The Tories hide behind pay review bodies which they themselves control. Of course, they can offer more to help incomes at least keep pace with price inflation. They choose not to. **Dave Toke** highlights the enormous £30 billion profits of oil giants Shell and BP and gas giant Centrica, giving the lie to Tory arguments. Instead impose serious windfall taxes and redistribute the income to freeze energy prices.

Maria Exall makes the case for Labour's front bench to campaign vigorously for its New Deal for Workers and enhancement of trade union rights. **Kate Osborne MP** argues, as the winter of defiance enters the spring of sustained strikes that we need to intensify campaigns to stop the government introducing yet more draconian anti-union laws. Strikes show Britain is broken, particularly our public services run down by years of austerity while the government hides behind Covid and the Ukraine war to plead fiscal rectitude with further cuts to living standards. **Ann Pettifor** provides an economic counterblast to our government of millionaires who wring the same hands that clapped nurses, transport workers and other essential staff during Covid.

Dr John Puntis shows that of all our sick services our NHS has been most weakened. He explains why years of neglect, failure to recruit, retain and train doctors, nurses, ambulance and ancillary staff, compounded by Brexit has left the service teetering on the edge. Patients suffer, queues lengthen, staff burn-out. No wonder nurses are taking strike action through the Royal College of Nursing for the first time in their 100 year plus history. Meanwhile, private health providers are given open doors to move in. **Karen Constantine** highlights the dire predicament of maternity services, where midwives are overworked and undervalued and babies die unnecessarily.

Women face the brunt of much of this crisis. **Apsana Begum MP** stresses that the pandemic produced a rise in domestic abuse against women while support services like Women's Aid struggle to provide sufficient support. **Caitlin Barr** reminds us that International Women's Day should be both a time for celebration and also to organise against patriarchal oppression, particularly highlighted by the appalling sexual assaults perpetrated by police officers.

In reporting the recent Montreal Cop 15 **Victor Anderson** explains how biodiversity targets turn into lies as measures required to meet them are quietly shelved. **Richard Lapper** analyses the return of Lulu da Silva to the presidency in Brazil. In the wake of Bolsonaro's right wing populist regime, this time round it will be harder for Lulu to implement wealth redistribution or protect the Amazon rainforest, a key climate goal.

Democracy, social justice and Internationalism should be at the heart of Labour's offer to the people. Progress towards our socialist goals of equality and freedom from want and oppression would be manifest in a commitment to stronger links with Europe, to free movement as a basic human right and sanctuary to those fleeing war, repression and poverty. That is why, as **Don Flynn** argues, we should make no distinction between asylum provision for Ukrainians, Syrians, Afghans and others.

Labour's front bench should also be in the front line with calls for military support for Ukraine. Of course, there are wars in Yemen, Sudan, occupied Palestine and many other parts of the world. We should be championing all the victims in these conflicts and providing asylum.

To beat this latest iteration of right-wing, narrow-minded, class-war Toryism, Labour needs unity allied with clear vision and progressive policies. The recent decision to bar ex-leader Jeremy Corbyn from standing again will do Labour no favours. It should be lifted. Opinion polls may look good but without an army of enthusiastic supporters campaigning will be weak and any successes built on quicksand. But Momentum and the Labour Left should beware of backing any independent candidacy; this would be a suicide pact that would strengthen the Labour right further.

**We
want peace, but
not by accepting
Russia's land
grabbing terms**

The sick joke of Levelling-Up

Paul Salvesson on Oldham's Coliseum closure and the decline of town shops

Labour's victory in the West Lancashire by-election was hardly unexpected. The best the Tories could come up in response was to say that the 10% swing wasn't as much as they'd expected. There were some big local issues which highlight the sick joke that the Government's 'levelling-up' agenda has become. In particular, the Department for Transport's rejection of plans for a rail link to Skelmersdale, now the biggest town in the West Lancashire constituency. Skelmersdale (or 'Skem') was one of the 1960s new towns, built in the days when the car was king and planning was built around assumptions that universal car ownership was just a matter of time. So the railway that ran through the centre of the planned town was allowed to close and get built on. A community that grew to a population of over 40,000, mostly re-housed Liverpool families, was left stranded with only a slow bus service to get them into the city for jobs (if you were lucky) and to see friends and relatives.

In a positive display of partnership working, Conservative-controlled Lancashire County Council worked with Labour's West Lancashire Borough Council and Liverpool City Region, with its Labour mayor Steve Rotherham, to come up with a plan to get Skelmersdale back on the rail network, with a short link to the existing electrified Merseyrail network at Kirkby. It looked like a scheme tailor-made for the Government's 'levelling-up' policy: getting people into jobs, offering an alternative to the car, and deliverable. Yet it was rejected as being 'poor value for money'. Instead, a bus link has been provided to get people to the station at Kirkby. Experience has shown that these bus links, for relatively short journeys, are seldom well-used. People wanting to get to Liverpool city centre would use a direct train service, but taking a bus to then get a train is more problematic. Those that can would probably carry on driving to the nearest station.

The decision probably cost the Tories little more than a handful of votes – their supporters in Skelmersdale are a virtually extinct species. But it highlights the nonsense of civil servants in London



having responsibility for a decision that should be made within the region. Meanwhile, about 30 miles to the east, the people of Oldham have been informed by the London-based Arts Council of England that all of their funding for the highly-respected Oldham Coliseum theatre is to cease. This means the theatre, which has worked hard to make itself inclusive and accessible to everyone in Oldham and beyond, will close down. The decision to stop funding the Oldham theatre is all the more perverse when the Arts Council has recognised regional imbalances yet still gone ahead with its plans that will see the end of one of the North's most successful theatres.

About half way between Oldham and Skelmersdale is my home town of Bolton. Fortunately, we've an excellent theatre which is, so far, managing to survive. We've got good rail links. Unfortunately, the fine town centre, dominated by the 150 years-old town hall, is crumbling, with empty shops and worse to come. A few weeks ago Marks and Spencer announced it was closing its town centre store because of 'changing shopper needs' or some such bullshit. This comes on top of the general decline of the town centre which has seen Woolworth's, Debenhams and dozens of small shops disappear and much-heralded

development plans run into the sand. Marks and Spencer was the last remaining 'quality' store of any size in the town centre. Not to worry, there's another Marks and Spencer, along with multiplex cinemas and all the big name chains, three miles away at Middlebrook – a large retail development which is poorly accessible by public transport - but has a huge free car park. The Tory-controlled Bolton Council has said it has been 'in talks' with the company to persuade them to stay but I suspect it would take a sizeable financial inducement to get them to reverse the decision. Not our problem? Well, yes, it is: it will accelerate the town centre's decline with other shops and cafes that benefit from people coming into town to visit M&S becoming vulnerable. And, oh yes, Bolton's bid for 'levelling-up' funds to regenerate the town centre was recently turned down.

What all this adds up to is the absurdity of decisions that affect the lifeblood of communities being made by civil servants in London. The North needs strong, well-resourced and democratically-accountable regional government that can work with local authorities and the private sector to support new railways, arts facilities, town centres and much more. It would be nice if Keir Starmer and his team showed some more signs of recognising this. **C**



For Paul's website see www.lancashirelocalism.com

Tories scamming consumers

Electricity bills would be falling more quickly than they are doing if it was not for deliberate Government action to divert funds away from consumers reports **David Toke**

Back in November the Government introduced a windfall tax on renewable energy and nuclear generators. They did this on the grounds that many non-fossil generators are selling their electricity generation at very high market prices which match the sky-high price of electricity from gas powered plant. The only generators who are not being taxed in this way are smaller generators and also renewable energy generators operating on fairly recently issued fixed price contracts (which means they only receive a stated price for each unit of power that is generated). These recently started schemes will be paid much lower prices. But the bulk of renewable generators and all nuclear generators are being paid prices that are well in excess of their costs and 'normal' profit levels.

The Government responded to this by imposing a windfall profits tax on the larger schemes which means 45% of the excess profits above a certain price (£75) per MWh are taken by the Government through the windfall tax. Which is the point. This money is not being returned to hard-pressed energy consumers through reduced electricity prices. It has been estimated that the Government will earn around £14 billion over around five years under this windfall tax. That represents about £500 per energy consumer which is not actually being paid to energy consumers but is instead going to the Treasury. Now of course the Government needs revenue, but at the moment with average energy prices that the consumer has to pay being £2500 per year, consumers need every little bit as well.

The windfall tax is unpopular with the non-fossil electricity generators. They say that the 45% windfall tax is higher than what oil and gas companies have to pay in windfall tax (35%) and that these taxes will harm investment in new plant. Now I do not believe that investment in new renewable generation will be affected. That is for the simple reason that almost all new large scale renewable energy is funded out of fixed price contracts which are not affected by windfall profits,



© David Mirzoeff / Greenpeace

and for which there are many investors queuing up to fund. Besides which the windfall tax still leaves the generators making a lot more money than they have done in 'normal' times! But it is still true that the non-fossil generators are being charged higher windfall taxes than the oil companies. That should be remedied by increasing the windfall tax on the oil companies, like Shell and BP making record profits! Moreover, the money should go to the energy consumers, not the Treasury. This will have the effect of reducing the difference between electricity and gas prices, thus making heat pumps a more attractive investment for homeowners.

What the current energy price crisis does clearly demonstrate is that renewable energy funded by fixed price contracts is a much better option to protect energy consumers' interests compared with very expensive fossil fuels or nuclear power. New wind and solar farms are by far the cheapest options for new schemes by several miles. The strange thing is that the Government is not doing more to issue more fixed price contracts for new wind and solar farms than they are doing. Indeed the Government, despite recent pronouncements that it is loosening restrictions on onshore windfarms, is in fact still keeping a lot of these restrictions in

place. It is being very slow in issuing new licenses for new offshore windfarms as well.

A report has been published recently by the campaign and research company 100percentrenewableuk which says that the Government can save huge amounts of money by aiming for 100 per cent renewable energy (RE) (energy not just electricity) for the UK. The report says that a 100 per cent RE solution for the UK will save over £100 billion by 2050 compared to the Government strategy for net zero which includes nuclear power and carbon capture and storage. The report was done by expert modellers from LUT University in Finland. The modellers also included (in the 100 per cent RE model) the costs of inter-annual storage and equipment needed to provide power when there is not enough renewable energy on hand. This includes green fuels made by generation from wind power which is then stored. When there is not enough wind the carbon neutral fuel is then used to produce power from standard gas generators to cover periods when there is not enough wind or sun. More details can be seen at the website 100percentrenewableuk.org. A seminar is being held in Conway Hall in London on April 22nd to discuss the issues surrounding the report. **C**

Dr David Toke, is Reader in Energy Politics, University of Aberdeen. His latest book is Nuclear Power in Stagnation A Cultural Approach to Failed Expansion

End the pay squeeze

Unions are leading the fight for a better Britain says **Paul Nowak** while calling on the Tories to ditch anti-union plans and start negotiations

This is a critical moment for trade unions and working people. We face the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. The economy is on the verge of recession. And after a decade of neglect our public services are falling apart – with the NHS now on life support. But rather than supporting workers through these tough times, the government is cutting public spending and attacking our hard-won rights.

The TUC's number one priority is to help working people through the economic emergency. Inflation has surged to a 40-year high as food and energy bills have rocketed. Mortgages and rents are increasing. Millions of families are struggling to make ends meet – with food banks unable to meet demand.

Workplace by workplace, negotiation by negotiation, unions are addressing these challenges head on. Across the private sector, we've secured some impressive pay deals, including double digit settlements for Luton airport workers, BT engineers, Cadbury's staff, B&Q warehouse workers and others. From refuse collectors and construction workers to bus drivers, unions are winning for their members. But elsewhere Britain faces an acute pay crisis.

Last year, average earnings shrunk by nearly £80 a month, with key workers in the public sector £180 worse off. But the problems facing working people have been much longer in the making: workers are grappling with the longest pay squeeze in over two centuries. On average, UK workers have lost £20,000 since 2008 as a result of pay not keeping up with inflation. All this is happening as the rich get richer, CEOs trouser massive packages, and profits and dividends shoot through the roof.

That's why the TUC is calling for an urgent support package for working people. Instead of removing the cap on bankers' bonuses, we want the government to boost benefits, pensions and pay, starting with a £15 minimum wage. And rather than falsely invoking the prospect of a wage-price spiral, ministers should deliver an inflation-proof rise for public sector workers – funded



Paul Nowak (centre) marching with teachers

by equalising capital gains tax and income tax. At the very least they should stop hiding behind pay review bodies and start meaningful negotiations to settle wage disputes.

In the long run trade unions want to build a new economy that rewards work not wealth. We're calling for a New Deal for workers with stronger rights and a clamp-down on exploitation. We're campaigning for fair pay agreements for sectors such as social care. And we're demanding an industrial strategy worthy of the name, to deliver the productivity increases we need to fund higher pay. Labour has pledged to deliver this agenda in full should it win the next general election – and we want a constructive dialogue to deliver the political change workers need.

Our second priority is to push back against attacks on our rights – including the EU Retained Law Bill that endangers paid holidays, equal rights for part-timers and many other protections. But our main focus is the government's Anti-Right to Strike Bill. It's brutal, counter-productive legislation that will let bosses sack workers taking part in democratic strike action – wrong, unworkable, and almost certainly illegal. The Tories have gone from clapping keyworkers to sacking them. Their legislation is designed to undermine workers' bargaining power and make it harder for unions to stand up for fair pay – a desperate act by a government that has run out of ideas.

But we're fighting back. At the

beginning of February, the TUC held our "Protect the Right to Strike" Day of Action, coinciding with industrial action by hundreds of thousands of teachers, lecturers, civil servants and train drivers. We're working with peers to delay and dilute the Bill and exploring how to defeat it in the courts, highlighting how the UK has breached its obligations under international law. In the meantime, the TUC stands shoulder to shoulder with striking workers by coordinating industrial action, building public support, and providing practical assistance through our new Solidarity Hub.

Our third priority is simply to build a stronger, more representative, more diverse trade union movement – something that is fundamental to our fight for better pay, rights and services. As well as putting more resources into organising, we must recruit the younger workers and private sector workers; we need to grow. Above all, we must become a genuinely inclusive movement: stamping out sexual harassment; putting equality at the heart of everything we do and leading the fight for racial justice. With a government that will stop at nothing to divide working people, trade unions must promote unity. Black or white, we must speak up for today's working class in all its diversity. That's the best way to build a stronger, more resilient movement, defeat this rotten government, and shape a fairer, more equal country. **C**



Paul Nowak is General Secretary, TUC

Austerity – nothing changes

Ann Pettifor explains how the Tories have broken Britain

It's settled then: austerity was, and will continue to be, hugely damaging to the British economy. The economists that called austerity "expansionary fiscal consolidation" – as if to fool us all – have been discredited, and laughed out of court. That is in part because, due to austerity, the British economy has lost around £400 billions of GDP compared with what we were forecasted to expect by the OBR in 2010. Compared to pre-1979 trends, GDP has fallen short by £2 trillion or nearly half. At the same time those with wealth have seen their wealth treble by £7 trillion – as the TUC's senior economist, Geoff Tily explains in a 2023 report: From the Doom Loop to an Economy for Work, not Wealth.

Thanks to the Great Financial Crisis which was then exacerbated by austerity – advocated initially, albeit tentatively by Labour's Alastair Darling and then by George Osborne – public debt rose from 56.6% of GDP in July, 2009 (i.e. after the financial crisis) to 90 per cent of GDP in 2013. This rising public debt can be attributed to the 2010 Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government's determination to worsen the crisis by making the biggest cuts to state spending since the Second World War. They planned the loss of 900,000 public sector jobs between 2011 and 2018. As a result, the unemployment rate remained above 7 per cent after 2009 – including youth unemployment and long-term unemployment – and both absolute and relative poverty increased. Now one in four British children live in poverty.

All that Britain's (and the EU's) austerity achieved was to further enrich the already-rich: the 1%. Workers (the 99%) have lost out badly both in terms of income but also public services, no doubt as intended. Average real wages for British workers are not expected to return to their 2008 level until the end of the 2020s!

We now live within an economy designed to serve the interests of the wealthy – not workers – as the TUC argues.

Having noted those facts we must not fall into the trap of arguing that public deficits and public debt do not matter. The fact is high



levels of public debt are a consequence of economic policy failure, not a cause. British government debt has risen because the economy was plunged into a slump by the Great Financial Crisis, and then gradually weakened by austerity. At times of economic weakness, when unemployment is high and employment is low-paid and insecure, tax revenues fall, as night follows day causing public deficits and debt to rise. Public debt rises because of a) financial crises b) the resulting fall in revenues and c) the rise in welfare spending on e.g. unemployment benefits.

Follows 'is the operative word here because tax revenues do not finance economic activity (investment, employment, income). Instead tax revenues are a consequence of economic activity. When employment, investment and incomes are low, tax revenues fall, naturally. When the economy enjoys full, skilled and well-paid employment, tax revenues rise and the government budget is restored to balance.

When politicians of both the left and right tell us that to pay for this or that public service, they will, and they must, raise this or that tax, they are deliberately misleading the public. Taxes do not pay for services and infrastructure. Credit or borrowing pays for the initial

investment in both the social and physical infrastructure of the economy. Those services and that infrastructure investment creates jobs. Employment generates income – wages, salaries, sales income and profits – for the individual, households and for firms. That income generates tax revenues for government. Higher paid incomes generate higher tax revenues. To raise government income, there is no need to raise taxes (except for re-distribution reasons, from the rich).

To raise government income and balance the Budget, governments should create, and stimulate the creation of well-paid, skilled jobs. It is tax revenues from well-paid employment that ultimately "balances the nation's books."

In a debate on the austerity of the 1930s Keynes, in a radio interview, famously responded in this way to the Conservative, Sir Josiah Stamp, ex-Director of the Bank of England:

"But Stamp you will never balance the Budget through measures which reduce the national income....it is the decline in national income which is upsetting the Budget."

That is why it is an economic imperative for the Sunak government to increase the pay of public sector workers, reverse the long-



Ann Pettifor is Council Member, Progressive Economy Forum (PEF) and Director Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME)

Her latest book is *The Case for The Green New Deal* (Verso, 2019)

annpettifor.com

term decline in real pay, and restore balance to the public finances. If government fails to do so, real incomes relative to inflation will continue to fall; families will snap their purses shut; firms will make losses; tax revenues will fall; private debt will rise, and the economy will continue to scrape along the bottom of OECD country tables.

There is one more point about government borrowing that both Labour and Conservative governments choose to ignore: the bond market – that thing so feared by the Clinton administration – is heavily dependent on government borrowing – i.e. bonds – for the capital gains made by bondholders in the City of London and on Wall St.

That is because government bonds (debt) often described as ‘short-term paper’ are used as the safest, and most valued form of col-

lateral for big Wall St and City of London institutions. These include asset managers such as Blackrock and Blackstone, private equity firms and hedge funds. They use highly valued government bonds much as we would use our home or car or gold jewellery as collateral to borrow against. The difference is this: they use it to borrow billions in the globalised economy. As John Dizard of the Financial Times explained in 2021:

‘Short-term paper from the highest-rated government issuers, such as the US Treasury or the German government, can be lent and re-lent multiple times after its purchase. This “collateral reuse” is a form of leverage that turns borrowing by trusted governments into liquidity for the world monetary system.

Or to put it more plainly: borrowing by trusted governments is transformed (multiple times) into

new money for the globalised private financial system, known as the ‘shadow banking’ sector.

There is another important dimension to government debt: a dimension of supreme importance to citizens – both here, in the EU and the US.

Pension funds invest in government bonds (debt) because, unlike cash, bonds generate interest every month or year – providing income that helps pay for future pension pay-outs. Without the income pension funds gain from holding the ‘safe asset’ that is government debt, many pensioners would be bereft in their old age.

It is high time the left rejected the ideology of the right and the far-right: that rising government debt, not the failing economy, is the problem: and that austerity is the answer to balancing the Budget. Nothing could be further from the macroeconomic truth. **C**

Biodiversity: when targets become lies

Victor Anderson exposes the ‘double life’ we are expected to lead in the face of planetary disaster

Great rejoicing followed the biodiversity agreement arrived at just before Christmas. For example, The Times editorial began: “The agreement in Montreal by 195 countries to protect wildlife and ecosystems, with 30 per cent of Earth’s lands and oceans protected by 2030, is a rare piece of good news in gloomy times.” The Environment section of the European Commission tweeted: “The new global #Biodiversity Agreement will ensure that nature keeps sustaining communities & economies for the next decades.” Many NGOs also joined in the cheering.

Fundamentally the EU’s word “ensure” is a lie. It’s always easier for governments to announce targets, much easier than announcing or actually implementing measures to achieve them. It’s not that target setting is wrong, but it can be an easy media win giving the impression that far more is being achieved than is really the case.

This has recently become partic-

ularly problematic for the two key problems of the global environment: the climate crisis and biodiversity loss. In both cases, the gap between targets and achievements has reached the point at which targets are now functioning as lies, and the combination of those targets has come to constitute a Big Lie. This is a Big Lie about the state and future of the planet, something we really cannot afford to be misled or lied to about.

The same process as happened in Montreal before Christmas, a Conference of the Parties of the Convention on Biological Diversity, happened in 2010, when government representatives meeting in Japan agreed an earlier set of targets, known as the Aichi Targets, supposed to be achieved by 2020. The meeting in Montreal was originally supposed to be held in 2020 to review how that turned out, but got postponed twice because of Covid.

In December 2022 representatives did meet to discuss what had happened. The UN published what it called “a final report card” on the

subject. Summarising it, The Guardian reported (15.9.20): “The world has failed to meet a single target to stem the destruction of wildlife and life-sustaining ecosystems in the last decade, according to a devastating new report from the UN on the state of nature.” The UN report itself said: “At the global level none of the 20 targets have been fully achieved, though six targets have been partially achieved.”

Since none of the targets set in 2010 were achieved, that should surely raise question marks about the new set of targets announced in 2022. Perhaps the 2022 conference should have started off by examining the reasons for the failure of the earlier set of targets before moving on to negotiate a whole new set.

It is a similar story with climate. In 2015 in Paris, at the Conference of the Parties for the Climate Change Convention, government representatives agreed a declaration which included the goal of limiting global warming to “well below 2, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels.”



That declaration led to rejoicing in some quarters, where this was hailed as an important achievement.

Now in 2023 it is clear that although staying below 1.5 is still theoretically possible, if a highly unlikely set of policies and circumstances were to be combined, for all practical purposes it is dead. This was acknowledged in a powerful analysis in *The Economist* in November 2022. According to the UN Environment Programme, the world is currently on course on the basis of existing policies for a rise in average global temperature of around 2.8 degrees by 2100, i.e. almost double the 1.5 degrees target.

These dramatic failures should make us wonder about the biodiversity agreement reached in Montreal. Undoubtedly many diplomats, scientists, and campaigners who contributed to the ambitious new agreement and its targets did so with the best intentions and were pleased with what their work had achieved. It is only natural that a certain amount of wishful thinking entered into their welcome for the conference's outcome.

But there is also a more cynical side to all this. Politicians aren't worried by long-run targets set for dates after they will have left office. Even when there are targets they might be held responsible for, there are always plenty of reasons that might be given as to why events prevented them from being achieved, ranging at present from

Brexit to Covid to Ukraine. There are always predecessors and/or foreigners and/or opposition politicians who can be blamed. And there are always other agreements to be kept to: trade deals are legally enforceable, environmental agreements are not, and so it's not difficult to see which will win out. Setting targets is so much easier than delivering the changes necessary to achieve them.

The conclusion could be drawn that target setting is used by politicians in unscrupulous ways. Although that's true, there is more involved here. It is important to ask the further question: what role do these targets actually play? They might of course play the role of guiding policy, but the repeated failures to achieve them suggest they also play another and in practice more important role, one of hiding reality.

It isn't only politicians seeking votes who benefit. Most of the public likes target setting and finds it reassuring. We all like to feel that things are OK and will be OK for our children and grandchildren. We like to feel that our "leaders" are looking after us, and that the planet is in good hands, despite evidence to the contrary. Anything different from that either points the finger at ourselves as having some share of responsibility, or points to the need for serious policy and economic changes that might actually affect our way of life if they are on a big enough scale to make a difference.

So we live this double life: a diet

of worrying news reports about how badly the planet is doing, with numerous consequences now following from climate breakdown and decline in the natural world; and at the same time, calming stories about how we now have such a wonderful set of international agreements that the trends that have been going in the wrong direction will henceforth turn around and make everything OK.

NGO leaderships are also very often part of this "calming consensus". Their comms and marketing departments tell them the public don't like bad news and that pessimism causes people to turn off. Their lobbyists tell them politicians like to hear more positive messages. Businesses tell them to focus on the opportunities rather than the problems. All of this has some validity but it is also very dangerous. It's very much like drinking a drink that calms the nerves and makes everything look much rosier than it really is. Now and then that can be OK but it can also become addictive.

It is at this point – a point we have already gone beyond – that a consensus builds up, amongst politicians, public, and NGOs, and with economists and the media making their contributions too, that fundamentally misleads as to the state and prospects for our planet and the life on it. As a result, changes that need to be made don't get made because they don't appear to be urgent or necessary.

That's the point at which targets turn into lies. **C**

Victor Anderson is a member of Chartist EB. He edited 'Debating Nature's Value' (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018)

Thanks to Rupert Read for comments on an earlier version of this article

Crisis, what crisis?

Going private may suit the rich but is not an option for most. **John Puntis** says the government is wilfully in denial on the NHS they have run down over 13 years. It's time to pay staff a decent wage and invest

Many working in the NHS as well as those who depend on its services see the current situation as being one of crisis. Lack of community care prevents patients from being discharged from hospital and beds being freed to take both acutely ill patients and those needing planned procedures. Ambulances are unable to move patients into rammed A&Es, and wait outside, unavailable to answer emergency calls. The government presents this as no more than "an extraordinarily difficult time". Speaking to parliament, Steve Barclay, Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, blamed this on flu, Covid, strep. A infection, staff sickness and delayed discharges.

Widespread strikes in the health sector including unprecedented action by the Royal College of Nursing are a testimony to the extreme pressure on staff from both intolerable working conditions and the cost of living crisis. Real terms wages have fallen by around 20% since the Conservative government took power. That poor staffing is bad for patients is well recognised and is often the first reason given by those taking industrial action in explaining their decision. Instead of responding positively to pay demands and recognising the considerable public support for health workers, the government has turned to legislation that will make it more difficult for staff to strike, with the threat of sacking for those who do.

Vacancy rates and a long-term absence of any workforce plan undermines the claim that this legislation is about a new-found interest in maintaining safe services. A recent survey indicates that with the current 133,000 unfilled posts things are likely to get even worse, with four in 10 doctors and dentists saying they are likely to quit over 'intolerable' pressures. Meanwhile, the number of working age people claiming disability support has doubled post-pandemic. Record numbers of people are taking early retirement, most commonly because of ill health. Nine million people are



now 'economically inactive', with 27% giving long term sickness as the reason. All of this shows that the UK cannot afford the NHS to fail.

Ambulance crisis

Ambulance chiefs keep repeating that services are stretched beyond the limit. Patients are literally dying in the back of ambulances, while in 2021 it was estimated that up to 160,000 were coming to harm because of delays. In the same year, the West Midlands Ambulance Service acknowledged that it was causing catastrophic harm to patients. Last December, response times across England were the worst on record. One medical college president observed that pressure on the NHS was now so severe that it was breaking its 'basic agreement' with the public to treat the sickest in a timely way, commenting 'the true barrier to tackling this crisis is political unwillingness; the current situation is breaking the workforce and breaking our hearts'.

Criminal inaction by government is causing huge numbers of unnecessary deaths. In 2021, the Royal College of Emergency Medicine published an estimate of the number of deaths across the UK associated with crowding and long waiting times in Emergency Departments (EDs) of 300-500/week. The authors analysed Hospital Episode Statistics and Office of National Statistics data in England. Studies elsewhere have previously shown that delay in moving patients from the ED to a ward increased the risk

of death. Conversely, risk decreased when movement of patients was speeded up. Such an estimate therefore seems entirely plausible given that the ED is simply not equipped to provide the ongoing treatment and levels of nursing care needed.

The study demonstrated a steady rise in death by 30 days for patients who remained in the ED for more than five hours from their time of arrival. One extra death occurred for every 82 patients delayed for more than six to eight hours. The data was published only after peer review and the methodology used in reaching the conclusions is clearly set out. Importantly, other experts agree the figure is perfectly reasonable, and may indeed be an underestimate. A repeat analysis using more recent data came up with an estimated 530 deaths a week.

While of huge potential significance, this type of study cannot absolutely prove delayed admission causes deaths, meaning the conclusions are open to challenge. Representatives of NHS England, however, cannot get away with simply stating: "It does not recognise those figures". A more serious response is required and they should show where they think the paper is wrong and share their analysis for consideration and response. This is a process that is essential if policy decisions are to become more science based and therefore effective in terms of protecting patients.

NHS crisis

When Secretary of State for Health, Jeremy Hunt liked to present himself as a champion of patient safety. Against this, campaigners point out that on his watch we find missed targets, lengthening waits, crumbling hospitals, false solutions, funding boosts that vanished under scrutiny and blame apportioned to everyone but himself. Later becoming chair of the Commons Select Committee on Health, he concluded in a recent 2022 report that: "We now face the greatest workforce crisis in history in the NHS and in social care, with still no idea of the number of additional doctors, nurses and other pro-



Dr John Puntis is co-chair Keep Our NHS Public

professionals we actually need”, adding that this was putting patients at risk of serious harm.

The report also stated: “It is unacceptable that some NHS nurses are struggling to feed their families, pay their rent and travel to work”, suggesting they be given a pay rise to match inflation. For Hunt, now chancellor, this has been conveniently forgotten, with the Treasury being cited as the main block on progress in pay talks. Meanwhile, the House of Lords Public Services Committee opined that: “The state of emergency healthcare is a national emergency. The substantial delays that patients face when trying to access emergency health services create . . . an unprecedented clinical risk”.

Downward spiral

Responding to current performance statistics, the Health Foundation commented: “these figures show a gridlocked health and care system struggling to meet the needs of patients... in October 2022, hospital waiting lists hit a record high of 7.2 million, with nearly 411,000 waiting over a year. More than 1 in 10 people with a serious condition such as a stroke or chest pain waited over 105 minutes for an ambulance in November, while nearly 38,000 people spent more than 12 hours on trolleys in A&E”. In addition, 39% of urgent cancer referrals waited longer than the target two months to receive their first treatment.

The Department of Health and Social Care commissioned a report from the King’s Fund to help it understand how this situation had arisen. The thinktank helpfully concluded that a “decade of neglect” by Conservative administrations has weakened the NHS to the point that it cannot tackle the huge backlog of care. Specifically, years of denying funding and failing to address its growing workforce crisis have left it with too few staff, too little equipment and too many outdated buildings.

It is no surprise that a Tory party in power for 13 years is reluctant to admit the NHS is in crisis as this would mean taking responsibility for the mess. The pining for a more privately funded system is neither fair nor makes economic sense. Recent promises of improvement represent only a sticking plaster. The government should reflect on the fact that the vast majority of the public still support the core principles of a public service. The NHS itself has not failed, but has been failed by politicians, and politicians deserve to pay a political price. **C**

Maternity failings

As deaths and financial costs rise **Karen Constantine** says it’s time for a nationwide public inquiry

A recent Telegraph report revealed the scale and cost of maternity care problems in the UK when it published details of a medical negligence scheme costing the NHS £90 billion. This is money set aside to meet the costs of the rising tide of claims. The figure is all the more staggering when you consider this sum is 70% of the total liability for negligence claims across the NHS.

How can these costs be so high? Birth can be dangerous (which is why Bevan and successive Labour Governments have always invested in maternity services). Errors in childbirth can result in such severe brain injuries, settlements have to fund a lifetime of 24/7 care.

The Tories have not only failed to deal with the crisis in maternity care, but have actively stoked chronic staff shortages. The historic midwives strike in 2014, the first in the Royal College of Midwives 120-year existence, was provoked in part by the Government’s proposals to terminate nursing and midwifery bursaries. The RCM warned the Government that this was a fundamental mistake which would worsen significant staffing shortages evident at that time.

Staff shortages in midwifery are now so acute that delivery suites are all too often unsafe and women and babies are receiving substandard care. 80 of the NHS’s 193 maternity services are rated as inadequate or requiring improvement. This means they are not meeting basic safety standards.

Staffing levels are so low that they even mitigate against the training of vitally needed trainee midwives, as there is reduced capacity for critical clinical supervision. This has led to midwives training courses being abandoned half way through.

A recent survey of midwives by the RCM paints a stark picture of chronic workforce shortages and challenges with maternity services often only functioning safely because of staff working long and additional hours, often unpaid. It also shows a service haemorrhaging midwives at an alarming rate. The cost of training has skyrocketed to



£47,712 for a three-year course plus a further preceptorship year to fully qualify. These costs are higher in cities such as London, reflecting the higher cost of living.

With staff clearly overworked and too few completing training, persistent maternity scandals are little surprise. The Kirkup Review, led by the expert Dr Bill Kirkup in East Kent, examined more than 200 cases. The recent report concluded that there were 45 avoidable baby deaths, plus injuries to babies and mothers.

In 2015, The Morecombe Bay report into maternity care published the failures that led to the deaths of 11 babies.

In 2022 the Shropshire maternity scandal detailed 300 babies dead or brain-damaged due to inadequate care.

NHS England is now facing its largest investigation as more than 1,500 families have submitted their concerns, after the deaths of dozens more babies at Nottingham University Hospital.

Maternity care in the U.K. is in decline. Babies born in the UK are twice as likely to die compared to babies born in Denmark or Finland.

Whilst all NHS services are under pressure, no patients are more vulnerable - or voiceless - than new born babies. With so many deaths and injuries and a maternity service that appears to be in terminal decline, a full public inquiry is warranted. The death toll is growing. The cost of litigation is heavy and cannot compensate for the loss and injury. It’s these most vulnerable babies and their families that are paying the highest price for Conservative failings. **C**



Karen Constantine is Kent County Councillor for Ramsgate and a member of Chartist EB

Put Labour's New Deal centre-stage

Maria Exall says labour market reform holds the key to a transformative Labour Government

To succeed in the next General Election Labour must learn the lessons from the current strike wave. Our dysfunctional labour market and the harsh realities of our contemporary world of work mean there is mass public support for the strikes. We are way beyond the ghosts of the 70s and 80s that, in the past, have forced Labour on the defensive on rights at work. Labour should go on the offensive on progressive labour market reform and union rights and show the electorate how it is prepared to support fair pay and justice in the workplace when it is in Government. This will be a vote winner.

The issues that are writ large in the current wave of strike action have informed Labour's New Deal for working people. The New Deal is the summary of the policies negotiated between the affiliated Unions and the Party which we believe are necessary to bring about radical change in the workplace. Presented at 2021 Labour Party Conference and agreed in 2022 it contains improvements to individual and collective rights that would bring about a sea change in the balance of power at work. The New Deal has a far-reaching agenda but a necessary one to address the concerns that have been expressed in the strikes.

The strike actions we have seen in the last few months are evidence of a wages crisis. Yes, it's about inflation and the cost of living, global energy shocks and Brexit, but the level of pay for millions of workers has been going down for years. UNISON estimates that nurses have on average lost 20-25% of the value of their salaries since 2010. These strikes are indeed an 'enough is enough' moment about the current state of the world of work.

In the public sector 12 years of Tory funding cuts and outsourcing have meant that health workers, teachers and civil servants and others have been consistently working much harder for less. Performance management, increasing workloads, zero hours contracts and reliance on casualised labour and the consequences of the pandemic mean services are at breaking point.

It's not just the public sector. The strikes at Royal Mail by members of my own Union the CWU are about



UNITE bus drivers in Abellio have recorded a 100% plus increase in membership and 18% pay rise

resisting the comprehensive gification of the postal sector and maintaining a decent service to the public. Transport workers on the rail, at the ports and in bus companies are all striking to keep up their living standards but also to regain decent terms and conditions eroded by the market fundamentalist 'race to the bottom' of their employers.

If Labour wants to win the next General Election with a mandate for radical change in the world of work it has to address all these concerns. The Party should make clear its support for the hundreds of thousands of people taking collective action to improve their working lives. It is this collective action that our movement and our Party was built upon. We should recognise the resonance of the justice of the strikers demands amongst millions of other working people who have similar experiences at work.

The Union members taking action in the last few months are those in the most organised part of our economy. The density of union membership has to be high to meet the absurd thresholds of the anti-union laws. In many areas the strikes have led to increased union membership. Bus drivers in Abellio in London UNITE have recorded a 100% plus increase in membership along with an 18% pay

rise. Teachers have been joining the NEU in droves since the first strike days were announced.

Midlands GMB have used the historic first strike in Amazon in the UK to recruit a quarter of the workforce in the Coventry mega site. They are taking further action and organising a new layer of activists and reps.

Under Labour's New Deal trade unions will gain rights of access to the workplace to recruit and organise and there would be a real opportunity to increase unionisation in emerging parts of the economy. Under sectoral collective bargaining plans sectors as diverse as logistics and the care sector will see Unions given bargaining rights which will drive up pay and terms and conditions.

Many of the current troubles in our society stem from inequality and injustices in the labour market. The Unions and the Labour Party together can transform our society by tackling this. The wave of strike action in the last few months has reaffirmed the importance of the promises in the New Deal for working people. If we centre these asks in our offer to the electorate, we will have a convincing win which can be the platform for a radical and transformative Labour Government. **C**



Maria Exall is TUC President and chair of Labour Unions
www.labourunion.org.uk/newdeal

Keep up the solidarity

Christopher Ford on the urgent need for military and humanitarian aid

After 365-plus days of resistance and with an intensified Russian assault underway against Ukraine, it is crucial we do not waver in our solidarity over the coming period.

There is now an attempt by a minority in the Labour Movement to have us concede ground, to talk of 'war fatigue' or the false and chauvinist claims that a solution to the cost-of-living crisis is to halt aid to Ukraine.

We have shown that as a movement we can struggle against the cost-of-living crisis and also support the Ukrainian people. During recent strikes members of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine came and stood on PCS and GMB picket lines. Testimony to the spirit of international solidarity between our movements.

Our movement cannot afford a repeat of past errors of how we respond to rising authoritarianism. Let us recall how in 1935 the pacifist Labour leader George Lansbury opposed

action against the Italian attack on Abyssinia. In 1936 the Labour Conference stood by the policy of non-intervention, denying aid to the Spanish Republic. It was a painful struggle to reorientate the Labour Party to meet the challenge of the authoritarian regime. As Aneurin Bevin argued at that time: 'Is it not obvious to everyone that if the arms continue to pour into the rebels [fascists] in Spain, our Spanish comrades will be slaughtered in the hundreds of thousands'.

Without military aid to Ukraine that is what we would see happen. We have already seen what Putin's armies are capable of doing, with nearly eight million having fled the country and a total of 13.3 million people displaced.

We see so no sign Russia is preparing for peace but, on the contrary, it is undertaking new offensives. The conditions for peace will only be created by Ukrainians being enabled to liberate their whole country – this is the view of the vast majority of Ukrainians.

It is imperative that we see an

increase in the humanitarian and military aid to help Ukraine win this war as soon as possible. The Tory government's ad hoc announcements and lack of a clear action plan of systematic support for Ukraine cannot continue.

That is why we must support the demands for the provision of all the surplus military equipment – the 79 Challenger tanks, Scimitar and Warrior vehicles, Typhoon fighter aircraft. There is no justification for delay – the escalation had already happened when Russia invaded! (Labour's Clive Lewis is seeking more support for an Early Day Motion on this).

The struggle of the Ukrainian people is also one where they wish to see social and democratic progress for their country. We have a role to play in helping them realise that aspiration to ensure a progressive reconstruction – as is Labour Party policy. A reconstruction and not plunder of global capital. This is an essential aspect of our solidarity as much as it is to help the resistance defeat the invasion. **C**

Christopher Ford
is Secretary
Ukraine
Solidarity
Campaign

Unions on the front line

Olesia Briazgunova says its painful organising in war conditions

The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) has been working in the traditional way of defending workers' rights and in a new way by providing aid for people affected by the war since the full-scale invasion. For example, the KVPU helps its members and workers in miner's towns and settlements near the battle zones, because there is a problem of shortages in the supply of goods and food. Our health care workers experience military attacks with many of their homes and family members lost. As trade unionists we do all we can to stop the attacks. We have only one option: victory against Russia. Russia will not stop committing genocide in Ukraine.

We are thankful for the parliamentary motion calling for more weapons from the UK to people fighting for their homeland and peace.

The price we are paying is very high. The son of our trade union leader

was killed in action recently. Recently we were informed that Oleksandr Kozbur a member of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine, was killed in action in January, 2023. It is very painful. Eighty of our members have been killed in action. A lot of our servicemen and women are missing. Of course we want all our members back home soon.

This is why we also need help with tactical medicines. We are grateful for help to our refugees. There will possibly be a new wave, especially of women and children, afraid of a new attack from Russian forces at the end of February. One of the important directions of our activities is aid to hospitals and medical workers, because the Russians have been taking away medical supplies and looting hospitals since the first weeks of the full-scale war and during occupation. Additionally they have attacked our hospitals. Our union provided help to hospitals in Kharkiv, Donetsk and

other parts of the eastern region. The KVPU helped the maternity hospital in Chernihiv that was deliberately targeted with pregnant women being forced to stay in basements.

Equipment is needed in every region, especially because of wounded soldiers coming west for treatment. We are grateful for generators from different countries. Our lack of medical equipment and medicines will be a priority.

The social dialogue we had before the war is now not at the same level. It is harder to negotiate and in time of war we have restrictions on our activities. We are trying to persuade the government that liberalisation of labour legislation can have disastrous consequences for workers. We hope the government will listen to European partners and trade unions and ensure implementation of international labour standards and European directives. **C**



Olesia Briazgunova is international secretary of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions Ukraine (KVPU)

Ukraine: A year of war and Resistance

Pete Duncan surveys a year of the biggest war on mainland Europe since World War II and looks forward to the defeat of Putin's imperialist forces

One year after Putin mounted his full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 neither side is on the road to victory. Around 100,000 Russian soldiers have died, and probably a similar number of Ukrainian fighters. Tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands, of Ukrainian civilians have been killed, and the physical damage to Ukraine is immense.

In the first stage of the war, when the Russians attacked Ukraine from the north, east and south, they made considerable inroads. The Ukrainians were not fully prepared, as President Volodymyr Zelens'kiy played down American and British warnings of an imminent attack. But the Russians failed in their major objective, to capture Kyiv. A combination of poor planning and coordination on the Russian side and the bravery of the Ukrainian defenders forced an early Russian retreat on this front.

Russian forces also failed to capture Kharkiv, the first capital of Soviet Ukraine and the country's second largest city, despite inflicting enormous damage. The Kremlin then prioritised the eastern fronts, advancing in the Donbas and the southern fronts, pushing north from Crimea through Kherson and Zaporizhzhie oblasts. Here they had more success. Under pressure, Zelens'kiy offered to abandon Ukraine's long-hoped-for aspirations to join NATO and adopt a neutral, non-aligned status.

That was not enough for Putin, who wanted to bring Ukraine to its knees. His generals wanted to secure a land corridor from the Donbas, which borders the Russian Federation proper, along the Black Sea coast to Crimea, seeking to resolve the supply difficulties facing the peninsula since the Russian occupation in 2014. Missile attacks on the port of Odesa suggested that the Russians aimed to advance further westwards through Odesa to link up with their troops which have been occupying Transdnistria in Moldova since 1992.

But that was not to be. The heroic Ukrainian resistance held up the Russian advance in the Donbas.



The battle for Mariupol, which had resisted incorporation into Putin's puppet Donetsk People's Republic since 2014, was the bloodiest and most vicious in the war so far. The Ukrainian commanders forbade their troops to surrender as from underneath the Azovstal steel plant they resisted the Russian advance. The Ukrainians do not publish the numbers of their military casualties, but hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers will have died before the survivors were finally ordered to surrender in May.

With the fall of Mariupol, the Russians had won their land corridor to Crimea, but in the meantime Ukraine persuaded its supporters in Europe, America and Canada to supply more modern weapons to Ukraine, especially advanced missiles. From late August, the Ukrainian army began its counteroffensive in the east and the south. They recaptured territory in several areas.

Putin responded to the Ukrainian successes by appointing General Sergei Surovkin as head of Russia's armed forces in Ukraine. He already had a record of massive destruction of civilian homes in

Chechnia and Syria, and indeed was apparently responsible for the only three deaths in the August 1991 coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. Russia began large-scale missile, artillery and bombing attacks on civilian infrastructure across Ukraine, targeting particularly electricity networks.

In September, Putin implicitly recognized the military difficulties he was in by announcing a 'partial mobilization'. A few days later, the Russian occupying forces organized fake referenda in the Luhans'k, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhie and Kherson regions. Following these, Putin annexed all four into the Russian Federation, although in reality Russia did not control large parts of the last three of these oblasts.

Annexation allowed Putin to claim that Ukrainian attacks in these regions were attacks on Russia itself, which meant, Putin implied, that he would be justified in using nuclear weapons. Further, since under Russian law conscripts cannot be sent abroad in peacetime, and Putin maintained the fiction that this was a 'special military operation', not a war, it would now be possible to send conscripts into these regions.

In parts of the Donbas, Ukrainian troops met stiff resistance from the Wagner Group of mercenaries, owned by Putin's crony oligarch Evgenii Prigozhin, and augmented by prisoners released from prison into his corps. These clashes have led to large numbers of deaths on both sides. (How Prigozhin, already with several atrocities to his name, was able to persuade HM Treasury in 2020 to set aside UK sanctions against him so he could begin legal proceedings against the founder of Bellingcat is another story.)

Putin's annexations proved hollow. In early November Ukrainian troops advanced in the south and liberated the city of Kherson. Over winter both sides strengthened their lines of defence and there was less movement of the front lines. Surovkin's brutal tactics failed to allow Russian advances and he was removed in January. General Valerii Gerasimov, chief of the General Staff, took over direct command of all Russian forces in

Peter J S Duncan is the author of *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (2014) and co-edited with Elisabeth Schimpfössl *Socialism, Capitalism and Alternatives* (UCL Press, 2019). He is an honorary associate professor at the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Ukraine. While Surovikin's tactics failed militarily, they have inflicted misery on Ukrainians this winter. Even if their homes have not been blown up, they have frequently been without heating, electricity and water. Soldiers in the trenches have to contend with frostbite as well as enemy fire.

Despite appearances and some changes in his rhetoric, Putin has not changed his aims since February last year. Before then, Russia demanded that NATO declare that Ukraine would never become a member. NATO could not do this; in 2008 it had promised Ukraine membership. After the Georgia-Russia war later that year, however, it became clear that NATO could not (or would not) defend Ukraine against Russia, and the idea was put on ice. In 2022 Boris Johnson could tell Putin in all honesty that Ukraine would not become a member in the foreseeable future. Ukraine did not even acquire candidate status in the EU until several months into the 'special military operation' in 2022.

While Russia did have genuine fears about the enlargement of NATO in 1999 and 2004, Putin has used these fears to mask his real concerns about Ukraine, Russia's principal brotherly Eastern Slavonic neighbour. Since Putin's election as president in 2000, Ukraine has had four changes of government: twice by revolution, in 2004-5 and 2013-4, and twice when an incumbent presi-

dent was defeated by his opponent in free elections. Given the historical close relations between Russia and Ukraine, this is a frightening model for Putin.

The Ukrainians have risen twice against the lying propaganda, electoral fraud, authoritarian methods and repression which Putin has ruled by in Russia. Several Russian politicians in exile have made Kyiv their headquarters. Putin still needs not only to control those parts of Ukraine he has formally annexed, but also remove what he calls the 'Nazi' government in Kyiv and impose a puppet regime on Ukraine.

The Ukrainians are willing to fight, not only to restore the situation before 24 February but to regain those parts of the Donbas which have been under Russian control since 2014, and Crimea too. Their arms factories are targets for Russian missiles. So long as Western states supply them with modern weapons in adequate quantities, they will be able to carry on fighting. They have a large reserve of manpower and womanpower.

The war is likely to last for a long time. Russia is investing heavily in its war industries, moving over to an arms economy. Thus, they can increase arms production, although their equipment will continue to be inferior to that of the Ukrainians. Putin has probably mobilized a million men, more than has been officially claimed, and most of them are being trained before being sent to

the front. Their morale is lower than that of the Ukrainians, however, as, unlike the Ukrainians, they are losing the feeling that they are fighting for the defence of their fatherland. Their morale gets lower the nearer they get to the front and see what they're up against.

It would be optimistic to expect change to come from inside Russia. Probably more than a million men have left to escape mobilization. Those who have stayed or returned and openly opposed the war, such as Il'ia Iashin, Aleksei Naval'nyi and Aleksei Gorinov have received long prison sentences. Vladimir Kara-Murza awaits trial. Even the top elites are afraid to move against Putin.

Putin's victory would mean a defeat for freedom and democracy in Europe and around the world. For Ukraine to carry on fighting against the expected Russian offensives and to recapture lost territory, it needs many more Western weapons, including fighter aircraft.

Without these, after more years of war, they may be forced into a messy compromise with Russia which would allow Moscow to claim a victory. Alternatively, it might mean a complete victory for Putin, in charge in Kyiv and threatening other countries. Just as socialists supported armed struggle against Nazism, so today we must advocate sending Ukraine all the weapons it needs. **C**

Mama don't watch TV

Maria Alyokhina of Pussy Riot speaks out against Putin's war

When the Russian military began their current offensive against Ukraine in the early hours of the morning on February 24th Russian musician and anti-war activist Maria Alyokhina posted on Facebook:

"I'm watching the onset of war from the apartment surrounded by cops... I am against the war unleashed by Putin... I'm against sending children to slaughter in the name of my country"

No stranger to the Russian penal system, Maria has experienced the bleak inside of prisons.

Pussy Riot have been trying to alert the world to Putin's increasing authoritarianism for over a decade using music as the medi-

um. "Now it is forbidden to call war a war, and people die in it. In a month, our country has become fascist in the eyes of the whole world", she posted on April 2nd having been detained again.

In April 2022 Maria escaped house arrest and left Russia disguised as a food courier. She has subsequently been on tour with fellow band members, appearing in venues all over Europe as part of their 'anti-war' tour Riot Days. The show begins and ends with an appeal to donate money to the Ohmatdit Children's Hospital in Kyiv which treats victims of Putin's aggression.

Maria says, "... in each of these countries, on every platform, in every interview we called for a complete embargo of Russian oil



Maria Alyokhina, Pussy Riot founder, activist and political prisoner, campaigns for prisoner rights with Zona Prava. She is a Lennon Ono Grant and Hannah Arendt Prize recipient

and gas, we talked about the war that Putin and his gang unleashed and Western money, for which the bloody slaughter is being carried out. We wrote a new anti-war song. This is our word of solidarity with Ukraine. We hate this war, we believe Putin, his army and propagandists should be tried before international tribunal as war criminals."

Pussy Riot's anti-war song, "Mama, don't watch TV", is based on the words of a captured Russian conscript soldier who, in a telephone conversation with his mother, said "there are no Nazis here, don't watch TV". The song highlights Putin's domestic propaganda machine which dominates state TV. **C**

Kyiv revisited one year on

Mick Antoniw on returning to Ukraine with an aid convoy

February 2022 I was in Ukraine as part of a progressive delegation of trade unionists and politicians. Russia was threatening Ukraine with invasion. We had gone to express our solidarity with the Ukrainian trade union movement and to express our opposition to Russian warmongering.

On February, two days before the invasion we were advised to leave urgently. An attack was imminent. I was shocked and a bit in disbelief. Despite all the noise from Putin I could not believe that an actual invasion of an independent, democratic and sovereign nation could happen. I was wrong.

Exactly one year on, I will be

back in Ukraine, in the same hotel in Kyiv, this time to deliver medical and other equipment to my comrades in the Ukrainian Miners Union and their members in various military battalions. This time supporting the defence of Ukraine and its independence from Russian Fascism. Countless war crimes have been committed with impunity by the Russian forces. Putin's imperial ambitions thwarted, what he cannot control or occupy, he destroys. Rape, looting, torture, liquidations, deportation are part of this new fascism that threatens peace in Europe and internationally.

Despite all this, all the evidence, there are those on the far right and on the infantile left who are in

denial about the true nature of Putin's Russia and its imperial ambitions. Blinkered, and in essence totally reactionary, they form an unholy alliance, deluded in the belief that it is possible to negotiate with fascism and whose faux pacifism has more in common with a desire for Ukrainian capitulation.

I know where I stand as a socialist, I want peace for Ukraine. I want an end to the war. But I know it will only be achieved by building solidarity with the Ukrainian people and providing them with the means to defend their freedom and expel Russian forces from Ukraine. Only then can we really build the peace. Slava Ukraina. **C**



Mick Antoniw is a Labour member of the Welsh Senedd

After shock comes resistance

Ivanna Khrapko on shock and denial turning into Trade Union Lifeline

When I try to remember my life before 24 February 2022 it almost feels like another life, something that happened eons ago. Neither our life nor we will ever be the same.

When Russia unleashed its bloody unjust aggression, turning their hybrid war of eight years against Ukraine into a full-scale conventional war, many of us were stunned. I was among those who believed that logic would still prevail and all the threats were just a show of force as a part of diplomacy. I was wrong.

After a couple of days of shock and denial, I was overwhelmed by indignation. I was disgusted by how Russia uses anti-imperialistic rhetoric and plays victim just to cover its imperialistic colonial war of conquest and genocide. That is why we had no choice but to act. The aggressor kills and tortures countless people, razes entire peaceful villages and cities to the ground and makes millions homeless.

Everyone was compelled to do



something. We as a union movement used our grassroots organization experience and with our long-standing partners, started creating a humanitarian network called Trade Union Lifeline. We started providing any aid or assistance we could to those in need. Also, a big part of our work was informational effort as we tried to make voices of ordinary workers heard. This was very important in order to fight lies spread by the Russian propaganda machine.

After several months passed,

Ivanna Khrapko, Chairwoman of the Youth network of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine and head of information, education and international cooperation department of the State Employees Union of Ukraine

we were able to resume our educational activities in order to help the labor movement adjust to war time reality and to stay on track with new labor legislation introduced by the government.

Russia is waging war not just to annihilate Ukraine. It is also a war of autocracy hiding behind lies against democracy, human rights, including labor rights and freedom itself as we know it. That is why it is our common duty as free people to do everything in our power to help the defense of the values we all hold dear. **C**

Why a distinction between Ukrainian and Syrian refugees?

Before politics gets any more cynical, we need to be clearer on the reasons why the country should grant refugee status to anyone in need of protection argues **Don Flynn**

The relationship between far right activism and the political stance of a centre-right government has come under scrutiny in the wake of the anti-refugee riot in Knowsley, a district of Liverpool, in early February.

Home secretary Suella Braverman made a clumsy attempt to put distance between her own provocative posture on issues connected with immigration, deploring the violence of the rioters outside a hotel accommodating asylum seekers, but still managing to allude to a possible trigger for the action that did not reflect well on the hotel dwellers.

In a response posted on Twitter shortly after the incident she wrote “alleged behaviour of some asylum-seekers is never an excuse for violence and intimidation.” Groups supporting the refugees condemned her phrasing, describing the foregrounding of the riot as a response to “alleged behaviour” as thinly disguised victim blaming.

Braverman has been pulled up for her language on other occasions. Her description of efforts on the part of the asylum seekers to cross the Channel on small boats as an ‘invasion’ led to a recent confrontation with 83-year-old Holocaust survivor Joan Salter who asked the home secretary why she felt the need to use words such as “swarms” and “invasion” when talking about immigration. Braverman responded by saying she wouldn’t say sorry for “the language that I’ve used” to “demonstrate the scale of the problem”.

Accounting for the fact of immigration presents problems for a government with the complexion of Rishi Sunak’s Conservatives. The movement of people across national frontiers has accelerated under the awning of a global and economic system which his political current has championed for decades. Global markets have made labour mobile and flexible and, at the same time, have destabilised states in developing regions, promoting authoritarianism and increasing the sorts of



A Syrian child in a refugees market - a victim of double standards?

social tension which triggers refugee flight. Welcome to neoliberal global capitalism.

When the structure of global power relations requires the appropriate concession, governments will enact policies which facilitate the movement of people even when their core ideology proclaims this to be undesirable.

We have examples of this today in the establishment of channels which facilitate the provision of safe havens for some groups of people – the Ukrainians, Hong Kongers and, to a lesser extent, Afghans being cases in point. But if the individual in need of humanitarian protection comes from a country or region where the conflict does not register as a matter of critical concern to the UK state, then they will be condemned to hardship on the scale we have been used to seeing on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Balkan refugee trails or the ‘jungle’ encampments dotted along the Channel coast.

In these circumstances refugee, and other aspects of immigration policy, have to be considered as pre-eminently political projects rather than matters of humanitarian response as presented in the ideals of international law. As such they are replete with contradictions, with politicians being required to justify one response with reasons that make no sense when considered against another group. Appeals

made for generosity on the part of the public towards Ukrainians are the opposite of what is said about Syrians or Somalis, who are condemned as being unworthy of sympathetic consideration. If flight from the perils of war and persecution are what gets one group recognition as refugees then it is perverse to withhold that from others in the same situation.

The root problem behind all this is the fact that successive governments, both Labour between 1997 and 2010 and the Conservatives since, have pulled back from refugee protection as the response of a bloc of nations which have agreed to adhere to common standards of human rights and have instead tried to reinvent this as a set of policies that function as a subset of measures which aim to project national interest onto the agenda. Sunak’s government, with its residual commitment to a specifically British set of human rights, is an extreme example of this approach.

Labour, if it had any gumption, would be working hard to develop a position which recovers the central idea that we give safe haven to people who need it. Not because there’s an instrumental benefit to the country from doing so, but because the world will remain a safe place for tyrants and a dangerous place for human beings if we don’t buckle down and meet our moral obligations on these matters. **C**

Don Flynn is ex Director of Migrants Rights Network and Chartist Managing Editor

Lula's return

Richard Lapper says Lula da Silva will find enacting progressive policies harder this time round following Bolsonaro's regime and economic crisis

The electoral triumph four months ago of Brazil's Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has marked one of the most extraordinary turnarounds in contemporary politics. Back in the 2000s, Lula, as Brazil's president is commonly known, presided over eight years of steady expansion, rising prosperity and social and environmental reform. When he left office in 2010 the former trade union leader was lauded both at home and abroad, famously being praised by Barack Obama as "the most popular politician on earth".

But his designated successor, Dilma Rousseff, presided over a dismal six-year period, with growth turning to recession and the entire political class discredited by a huge corruption scandal. Rousseff was impeached in 2016 and within two years Lula himself was in prison. The election in 2018 of Jair Bolsonaro, a maverick former army captain and right-wing populist, seemed to mark a complete shift in the Brazilian political climate.

Fast forward four years though and the political pendulum has swung back. Lula's convictions on corruption charges were annulled early in 2020, leaving him free to re-enter politics and at the end of October 2022, the crowds were out in force on São Paulo's Avenida Paulista to acclaim the return of Latin America's most prominent left-wing leader.

Hopes for the new administration are high. But it will not be easy. Now aged 77, and a survivor of throat cancer, Lula is beginning his new mandate in much more difficult circumstances than those he faced 20 years ago.

Back in the 2000s economic trends were moving in Brazil's favour. Lula was helped by a sharp rise in commodity prices triggered by China's entry into the world trading system. Brazil is a competitive producer of soya beans, sugar, coffee and other farm products, one of the world's biggest producers of many metals - particularly iron ore and since the discovery in 2006 of new oil fields offshore from Rio de Janeiro has become a major oil power.

China's demand for all these



Brazilian President Lula returns to lead a divided country

things grew like topsy in the 2000s. Brazil saw its exports boom and the country - which had struggled to pay its foreign debts in the 1980s - started to build up its reserves. Having been something of a basket case twenty years before, suddenly Brazil was being seen as a new economic power, one of the so-called Brics (along with Russia, India, China and South Africa) whose emergence seemed to be changing the international economy.

The international outlook now is far less positive. China is growing more slowly. The world economy has been hit by the war in the Ukraine.

At home too there are pressures. Bolsonaro spent heavily first to offset the impact of the Covid pandemic and then in an unsuccessful effort to bribe voters and essentially buy last year's election. Brazil's fiscal deficit is running at about 8 per cent of GDP, so Lula's government has relatively little room for manoeuvre.

The main problem though is that Brazil is both a more conservative and a more divided country than it was at the beginning of the century. Lula won October's election by only a few hundred thousand votes. Bolsonaro - who has been nursing his wounds in Florida since the beginning of the year - performed far better than opinion polls had

predicted. In congress, Lula's PT (Workers Party) and its left-wing allies won only about one-fifth of the seats. Several of Bolsonaro's most controversial ministers won seats in congress. His far-right Liberal Party won more seats than any other. To approve legislation, Lula will need the support of a group of unpredictable and self-serving centre-right politicians who in the last two years were allied with Bolsonaro.

Support for the outgoing president and his brand of right-wing populism is also evident at the grass roots. Bolsonaro won in 14 of Brazil's 27 states. Lula was dominant in the poorer north-east but in the wealthier south and south-east and in the agricultural heartlands of the centre-west Bolsonaro swept the board. As one local commentator put it Lula's presidential success was like "a left-wing island in a right-wing sea".

Brazil's business groups, middle class and even many working class people remain hugely suspicious of Lula and his left-wing Workers' Party. The big conservative farming, evangelical and security interest groups - the so-called beef, bible and bullets lobbies that as I point out in my book (see opposite) played such a big role in Bolsonaro's election victory of 2018 - remain hugely powerful.

True, a military coup seems unlikely, not least because Brazil's US and European allies would be completely opposed, but Lula cannot take the loyalty of the military and police force for granted and will need to tread carefully. At the beginning of January, for example, policemen in Brasilia simply stood aside when Bolsonaro's demonstrators invaded and vandalised congress and the supreme court buildings in Brasília, Brazil's modernist capital.

Many of the protesters come from the small towns and cities of Brazil's interior states - what Brazilians call the interiorzão or outback - that is similar in some respects to the red-neck territories of the US where Donald Trump enjoys such strong support.

Just as it does in the US, religion plays a big role in Brazil. Socially conservative evangelical churches that rail against liberal social poli-



Richard Lapper is a writer on Latin America with 25 years at the Financial Times. His latest book on Bolsonaro is reviewed here

cies such as gay marriage and sex education in schools are influential. And their numbers are growing. Back in 1980 when Lula's Workers' Party was formed, about 7 percent of Brazilians were Protestant. By 2010 the number had increased to more than 20 per cent. Now roughly one in three are members of these churches.

Brazilian farmers tend to be very conservative too. In the vast territories of Amazon many people survive by cutting down rainforest, selling or burning the wood and then using the cleared land for pasture. Many also prospect - illegally - for gold on land that is theoretically protected by the state but in practice it is like the wild west.

During his first two terms in office, Lula was able to defend the rainforest. By 2012 the amount of deforested land had fallen to 4,400 square kms, down from 27,700 square kms in 2004. Over the last ten years though, the rate has been climbing again, increasing back to 11,568 square kms in the 12 months to 31 July 2021. Under Bolsonaro, funding for the government agencies responsible for previous successes was reduced and staff demotivated. Bolsonaro's ministers and pro-Bolsonaro state governors offered tacit support for clearances. "The Bolsonaro regime was a forest-burning machine," said Marcio Astrini, executive secretary of the Climate Observatory, an NGO.

But here perhaps there is some early cause for optimism as the new administration begins its work. Partly that is because Lula's government enjoys strong international support because the battle in the Amazon is so central to the effort to tackle global warming. Within days of taking office, Lula had revived the \$630m Amazon fund set up in 2008 but frozen by Bolsonaro for the past four years. Germany's centre-left leader Olaf Scholz has already announced additional new contributions. Joe Biden, the US president, may well follow suit. And there have been some good signs.

Funding for agencies such as the environment ministry's Ibama agency (that polices deforestation) and the Chico Mendes Institute (that looks after national parks) has been increased by nearly 60 per cent. Late last month, Ibama agents combined with police units to force out thousands of illegal miners from the Amazonian territories of the Yanomami, one of the country's largest indigenous groups. It represented quite a change. As the interim president of the agency put it: "It's been difficult, but Ibama is back." **C**

Right-wing populism Latin-style

Mike Davis
on the rise
of
Bolsonaro

Beef, Bible & Bullets-Brazil in the Age of Bolsonaro
Richard Lapper, Manchester University Press £20

Jair Bolsonaro symbolises Brazil's unique brand of right-wing populism. His four years as president from 2018-2022 was marked by violent invective against minorities, especially LGBT+ and indigenous people. unparalleled despoilation of the Amazon rainforest, attacks on trade unions and worker's rights and a maverick attitude to health and welfare provision.

One of the major reasons behind his fall was his failure to deal effectively with the Covid-19 pandemic, his denial of its seriousness, slowness to back a vaccination programme and flirtation with crack-pot remedies like chloroquine. This all resulted in Brazil having one of the highest death rates in the world.

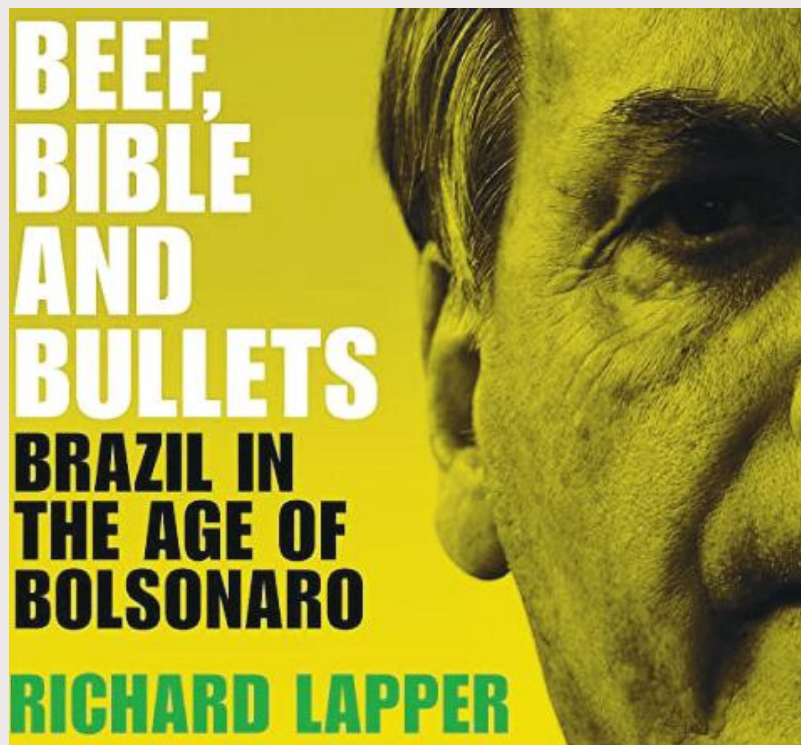
Richard Lapper with years of experience reporting on Latin America and living in Brazil, gets inside to tell the story of how this former army captain rose to the Presidency of South America's most populous state. Powered by wealthy agribusiness, a growing evangelical movement and an unchained military and police force, Bolsonaro sought to trash the work of his predecessors--Lula and Dilma Rousseff.

Lapper explains how the Beef

lobby of rich corporations; the socially conservative evangelical movement (the Bible lobby) and the partially disaffected forces of the military (the Bullets lobby), combined to provide the power base for Bolsonaro's ascendancy. Thanks to one of his three sons, who form a close network around him, Bolsonaro also proved an adept user of social media.

There is plenty on the historical background. Lapper reminds us Brazil was under military dictatorship for more than 20 years and is therefore no stranger to authoritarian rule. This was followed by the more measured initially social democratic then more right-ward leaning years of Cardoso, ushering in nearly twenty years of Worker's Party rule. Then came the 'Car wash scandal' and economic failures of Dilma Rousseff's government with years of corruption investigations and trials leading to Lula's imprisonment (on charges later annulled). Bolsonaro exploited it to the maximum. Since his narrow defeat in the October 2022 presidential election, he is now himself facing corruption and other potential litigation charges.

This is an engrossing read explaining and assessing the significance of Brazil's Trump. It's a must read for anyone who wants to know more about the deeper trends in Brazilian politics and the dangers and prospects for the future.



Understanding our fear of others

Mike Davis
on a brilliant
expose of
inhumanity

Of Fear and Strangers - A History of Xenophobia
George Makari
Yale £20

Why do we fear strangers? This is the question at the heart of Makari's brilliant study. Readers may think the term xenophobia goes back centuries. In fact, it originates in the late 19C. The author, a Lebanese émigré psychiatrist, lived through the civil war in Lebanon with 100,000 dead. For him modern Beirut is a warning: this is what happens when neighbours transform into strangers, strangers turn into enemies and society dissolves into a bath of fear and hatred.

In an historical analysis, ranging through numerous disciplines from economics, psychology, science, sociology and philosophy, Makari seeks to discover the reasons why xenophobia propels humans to the point of inhumanity and egregious crimes like the Nazi Holocaust. He takes us back to classical Greece and Rome and onward to Europe and North America and western colonial expansion justified as benevolent efforts to bestow civilisation on the east.

He reminds us of the first modern western empire—Spain. Preceded by seven centuries of Moorish rule, where Christians and Jews coexisted until Ferdinand and Isabella emerged to declare Spain Catholic and expel over 300,000 Arabs and 250,000 Jews. The Inquisition tested converts based on rooting out the other, creating an us and them, a hatred of aliens to bind the new Spain together. The 'discovery' of the Americas and black and brown peoples unleashed mass murder in the new world. The birth of slavery, the demonisation of slaves as subhuman forced labour killed millions while epidemics did the rest. Bartolome de Las Casas, a central figure in emerging modern ethics, exposed the violence against strangers. In turn he nurtured the early modern principles of egalitarianism and tolerance.

Makari takes us through the Enlightenment, John Locke, uni-

versalism, the American Declaration of Independence —'all are created equal— a self-evident truth' as counterweights.

A decade after its invention xenophobia became a powerful tool tied to science and race, it defined who was primitive oriental and an easterner and who was a civilised occidental westerner. In this upside down world primitive hosts were mistreating the civilised immigrants. This served to exonerate the settler/colonist/missionary/trader from any crimes. The term was first used against the Boxers, the

drill down to the origins of xenophobia. Studies in the US, his adopted home, figure centrally. Is this fear learned behaviour in the Pavlovian sense of conditioned reflex or an irrational feeling? More the former he argues. Along with fascinating reports of social experiments he explores the term 'stereotype', snatched from the world of printing by Walter Lippmann, with altered meaning to be used as an explanation of any generalisation about ethnicity, gender or nationality.

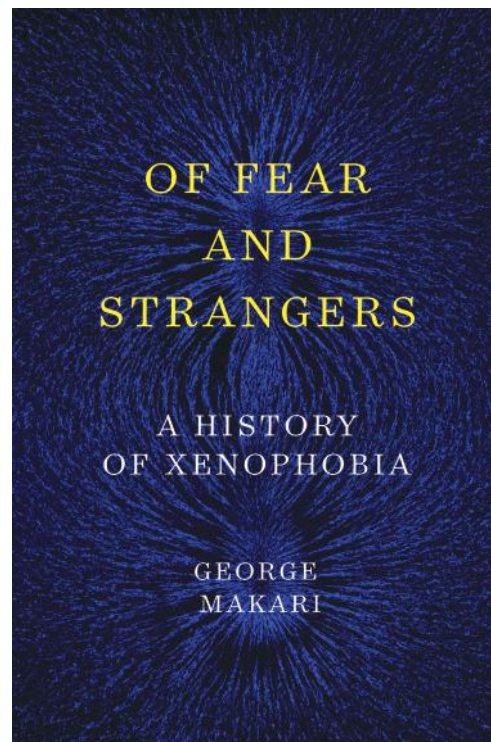
Behaviourism created a powerful model for understanding intense fear that could latch onto a stranger. He analyses Richard Wright's *Native Son* while echoing James Baldwin's view that something was missing. Behaviourism may explain how some xenophobes are formed by the flight or fight reactions, linked to the stranger, but more was at work. Namely ideas, imagined fantasies, desires and beliefs.

Therefore cognitive relations needed to be understood. William James's celebrated designation of the world as a 'great, blooming, buzzing confusion' meant stereotypes helped people make sense of this overwhelming environment by simplifying, flattening and generalising.

With a power to parrot the truth, stereotypes were hard to dislodge. These 'cartoons in the head' were amplified by the birth of film, radio and photography. This prompts a foray into the world of Hollywood movies with DW Griffiths' *The Birth of a Nation* and later *Gone with the Wind*, foremost amongst many reinforcing racist stereotypes, justifying Jim Crow laws and the 1930 Hays Code which forbade depictions of interracial love.

Makari explains that stereotypes did not address a critical element, namely the emotions. This prompts analysis of the Harlem Renaissance with its rejection of degraded and debased stereotypes such as Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom.

The Second World War struggle against fascism was the spur to a different kind of film and literature, one not pandering to anti-



rebellious Chinese, resisting the British occupiers. Rapidly the term was inverted.

Barbarism was due to the inability to comprehend each other. Also, a cover for dispossession—the native American, Africans, all women.

Makari tracks the growth of nationalism, nations bounded by a set of remembrances or even shared amnesias, alongside wilful acts of communal marginalisation.

Along the way, drawing on his psychological approach, he provides pen portraits of all the writers referenced, giving the book a greater depth while enhancing our understanding of the gestation of their thinking.

He draws on behaviourism to

semitic and anti-black stereotypes. Films like *The Brotherhood of Man* and *Don't be a Sucker* attacked racial and nationalist stereotypes, stressing human features that united rather than divided different peoples.

Makara then segues to Europe, picking up the concept of projection, the complex ambiguous realities that emanate from our own minds, to further explore xenophobia. Drawing on psychoanalysis, primarily Freud and Melanie Klein, with ideas of self-hatred, paranoia and sexual repression, he further probes the concept. The Frankfurt school of Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer and Walter Benjamin and others shed more light, focusing on fascism - 'that group regression from civility to tribal barbarism'. These Marxist influenced intellectuals alighted on the concept of the

authoritarian personality - a mix of Marxism and psychoanalysis. The idea of harsh parental authority yielding submissive masochistic followers, all too willing to follow charismatic leaders who found relief in sadistic attacks on the outsider. However, Adorno's Marxist lens did not correlate to class. Dockers and fat cats equally succumbed to prejudice. Marx was wrong - it was all about authoritarianism, childhood and reproduction.

Searching further for greater understanding, phenomenology and existentialism—Sartre, de Beauvoir, Foucault and Fanon - enter the frame.

No study would be complete without contemporary reference. Brexit and the Trump presidency emerged from and prompted new waves of xenophobia. These were presaged in 1989 with the col-

lapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union. The end of the Cold War- global othering - opened the door to multiple xenophobias.

He concludes that xenophobia is not just a fear of culture or identity loss nor a product of economic distress. It takes different forms. Mild xenophobia- 'other anxiety' can be modified by social meeting, mixing and integration. Overt xenophobia is harder to dislodge. Socialist appeals to working class unity or liberal espousals of human rights while valuable are not enough. A new humanistic value system is required.

This is an eloquent and monumental study of the fears that drive hatred, prejudice, violence and war. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the roots and realities of modern xenophobia and how to combat it.

My experience is far from unique

Cost of living crisis is also a domestic abuse crisis says **Apsana Begum MP**

Every week, two women in the UK are killed by a current or ex-partner, and 49% of those women are killed less than a month after separation. This is unacceptable and preventable.

Yet there continues to be a downward spiral in charging, prosecution and convictions for domestic abusers. The number of charges related to domestic abuse has halved since 2015. In the most recently available data period, from 1 July to 30 September 2022, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) said it received 17,874 referrals from police on domestic abuse cases and the proportion of cases that were charged was 76.5%.

For many trapped with an abuser, the new year is far from peaceful. The funding crisis in support for those experiencing domestic abuse is putting many at risk and means that too many are unable to access these vital services. This is particularly the case for Black, minority ethnic and migrant women. In my constituency surgeries, I continue to be alarmed by those who arrive to see me about housing or other issues and then reveal that they need support to survive domestic abuse.

Victims of domestic abuse and

coercive control also experience more hardship in trying to manage on already-limited incomes, especially where they are subjected to economic abuse by a controlling partner. Research by Women's Aid has found that many women who face domestic abuse already experience economic control and that this financial disadvantage means these women face further barriers when trying to leave, recover and rebuild their lives after abuse. It is very clear that the cost-of-living crisis is also a domestic abuse crisis.

Action is urgently needed. The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Domestic Violence and Abuse, which I am honoured to chair, continues to examine several key issues and policy areas where change is needed to support survivors. These include assessing how the criminal justice system all too often fails domestic abuse survivors, and the practice of abusers misusing the court system to maintain power and control over their former or current partners - a method sometimes called 'vexatious' or 'abusive' litigation, in other words stalking by way of the courts.

I am also working with MPs from all parties calling for a duty of care to be placed on employers and political parties to ensure that survivors

of domestic abuse are not exposed to further harassment in their roles. This must recognise that post-separation control and harassment is a form of domestic abuse itself and can occur long after a relationship or marriage is over. I have also tabled two cross-party parliamentary motions (Early Day Motion 560 Domestic Abuse and public life and Early Day Motion 562 Domestic Abuse and workplaces) and led a parliamentary debate drawing on my own experiences as a survivor of domestic abuse - highlighting that I still feel that I am prevented from being able to participate fully in public life as a result.

I am very conscious that my experiences are far from unique. I have been contacted by women and survivors from all over the country and I feel a tremendous duty towards them.

Domestic abuse has been hidden for far too long, despite it having serious health consequences for individuals and our society, but after everything I have been through and whatever the future holds, I am determined to raise awareness and campaign for a society where individuals experiencing domestic abuse feel confident that they will be believed, listened to, and given the support they need. **C**



Apsana Begum is Chair of the APPG on domestic violence & abuse and Labour MP for Poplar & Limehouse

Male violence epidemic

Caitlin Barr says International Women's Day should be a time to celebrate, mourn and organise

On 8 March countless people of all genders celebrate International Women's Day. Despite its neoliberal slant now, with slogans championing female CEOs, it finds its roots in labour movements of the early 20th century in Europe and North America, with the first recorded instance being organised by the Socialist Party of America in February of 1909, before being picked up by the Soviet Union as a national holiday in 1917. It is now a chance for people to focus on issues that face marginalised genders, with many taking to the streets to protest, but it has become a largely sociocultural event focused on celebrating the idea of 'womanhood'.

Corporations jump on the chance to manufacture products with a feminist slant and market them to predominantly young female buyers, with only some giving a fraction of the profits they earn back to charities aiming to uplift women and other marginalised genders.

It is a similar story with institutions which tweet out their support for International Women's Day without reflecting on their own complicity in the subjugation of and violence against women. Last year, the Metropolitan Police tweeted this message on March 8th: "I know there are thousands of strong women who will be keeping the public safe in London for generations to come." In 2021, just five days before International Women's Day, serving Met Police officer Wayne Couzens kidnapped, raped and murdered Sarah Everard. Five officers were found to have shared offensive messages with Couzens before the murder. Many serving officers provided character references for Couzens during his trial.

Just nine months earlier, two Met Police officers had been charged with misconduct after taking selfies at the crime scene of the murders of sisters Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman. Last month, serial rapist David Carrick, who was a serving Met Police officer while he committed crimes against twelve women over two decades, was sentenced to 36 life sentences. He was only sacked by the Met the day after he pleaded guilty.

The 'bad apples' at the heart of the system supposedly there to keep



us safe are rotten to their core.

As we celebrate International Women's Day 2023, we are undergoing a male violence epidemic. Young men and boys are watching and taking tips from Andrew Tate, a violent misogynist with human trafficking charges levelled against him. Last month, Epsom College Head Emma Pattinson and her daughter were shot by her husband, George Pattinson, in a murder suicide, with the Daily Mail questioning whether his motive was her high-flying job. As this is being written, police are still searching for Nicola Bulley, who they believe fell in a river despite the insistence of many experts and people who were close to her suggesting this is unlikely and that there may have been foul play involved.

Women are unsafe as a result of male violence, whether in the classroom, streets, their homes, at the park enjoying the summer, walking their dogs, or in their workplaces.

We need change, both on a structural and interpersonal level. We need to throw out our entire policing system, which fails women both in its complicity in crimes involving serving officers, with victims being ridiculed and disbelieved while their perpetrators patrol the streets, and their failures in handling cases

involving violence against women, in which these victims are shamed, mocked and insufficiently supported.

We need to be out in the streets demanding accountability until we can bring the whole system down. We need to talk not just to girls and women about how to keep themselves safe, but to boys and men about how to take responsibility for their actions and hold accountable those who are threatening the safety of others.

We need everyone to be active bystanders in situations where women are being made to feel unsafe, because the police cannot be trusted to help us. More than ever, we need to work in communities to tackle these issues at their root, and when male violence threatens to do damage.

By next year's International Women's Day, if statistics continue on a similar trend, at least 104 women will have lost their lives to a current or ex-partner (refuge.org.uk/the-facts). We have a duty to do whatever we can to stop this from happening when the systems in place to 'protect' us fail to do so. This International Women's Day, we celebrate – but we also mourn. And we organise. **C**



Caitlin Barr is a recent graduate and activist, Exeter University

Sectioned in the 1980s

Patrick Mulcahy
on *Blue Jean*

There are a lot of parallels between the 1980s and the last decade. The country curdled under a Conservative government. Strikes tested the sympathy of those who supported them. Whole industries were decimated by wilful acts. The Labour Party lost the trust of the voting public. Moreover, there was an attack on morality. Today it is the so-called 'War on Woke', limitations on the right to protest and fear of individuals transitioning from one gender to another. Back in the 1980s, Section 28 of the Local Government Act prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in schools, a consequence of moral outrage expressed by influencers such as Mary Whitehouse. The British drama 'Blue Jean', written and directed by Georgia Oakley, transports the audience to Northeast England in 1988 and the introduction of Section 28, one more reason why gays and lesbians working in education and other public institutions concealed their sexuality. I worked for a government department in the 1980s and gay colleagues never spoke openly about their lives. Instead, as a unit, we immersed ourselves in the application of rules and rarely socialised together outside of work.

Oakley's film tells the story of a netball coach, Jean Newman (Rosy McEwen) whose work and life collide when a new pupil, Lois (Lucy Halliday) spots her in a lesbian bar. Lois' sexuality becomes the subject of speculation amongst the netball team, in particular Siobhan (Lydia Page) whose position as Jean's favourite is under threat. The tension between the two girls leads to a situation in which Jean is forced to take sides.

'OK, who knows what fight or flight means?' Jean asks her class, a question that appears to have little to do with netball and more to do with the central dilemma in the film. Will Jean fight prejudice or flee from it. Jean watches Lois admiringly as she kicks a football in the playground by herself. However, there were no women's football teams in the 1980s. Girls like Lois were forced to play netball, a non-contact sport.

News reports on Jean's car radio and later on television tell



Rosy McEwen in *Blue Jean*

us about Section 28 and the protests against it – Black Rod and several colleagues expelling three women who absented into the chamber of the Houses of Parliament. 'I wouldn't want to meet them in a dark alley,' groans one of Jean's male colleagues. The staff support the sentiment behind government legislation. Jean herself tries to remain invisible, avoiding Friday night drinks at which another colleague tries to set her up with a man.

The early scenes in school are all shot with a fixed camera. When Jean enters a basement bar, joining her friends for a drink, the camera is handheld, the movement free. It is one of the film's subtle techniques to show Jean at her most comfortable, though Oakley is less subtle when she shows Jean's proficiency with a pool cue. Jean has a girlfriend, Viv (Kerrie Hayes), who is both tough and fragile, sensitive to being excluded from parts of Jean's life. When Viv phones her at school, Jean puts the phone down. Viv objects when Jean asks her to leave, after Jean's sister requests that her young son spends the night. Jean is heavily judged. Her sister displays a photograph of Jean in her wedding dress, an unwelcome souvenir from Jean's failed heterosexual marriage.

We learn little about Viv other than she lives in a shared flat with other lesbians and rides a motorbike. In the film, she represents Jean's lesbian consciousness.

The film builds to a dilemma.

How do you deal with a teenage girl, in this case Siobhan, who is deliberately provocative and milks the censorious attitude towards gay women? Disappointingly, Oakley's film flees from this question, instead examining how Jean should respond after making the wrong choice.

'Blue Jean' reeks with authenticity, a real achievement since its writer-director was only two years old when Section 28 was enacted into law. It is a triumph of research, production design and naturalistic acting. There are elements of romanticism – the steamed-up bathroom as Jean dyes her hair. The crass Saturday night television show, 'Blind Date', hosted by Cilla Black, reminds us how vulgar heteronormality can be. The film has a crowd-rousing moment, when Jean outs herself in her sister's house, silencing a male guest who complains about the cost of his divorce. 'You women don't know how lucky you are,' he tells her before Jean throws the words back at him. She is divorced and has a house. However, it isn't a triumphant moment. There is despair in Jean's laughter.

Ultimately, Oakley provides an optimistic ending. Jean is resilient, in spite of her flaws. She is no corruptor of vulnerable minds. Oakley refuses to present her as a victim, rather as part of society, with a role to play.

'Blue Jean' is on release.

The ILP and African Nationalism

Glyn Ford
on Black
Radicalism

Making the Revolution Global: Black Radicalism and the British Socialist Movement Before Decolonisation
Theo Williams
Verso £20

The trigger was World War I. London pressed subject peoples into battle, transporting them around the globe to fight others' wars, and then demonstrated their fallibility as one of the victors, yet with Washington the sole winners. All capped off by the ill-starred success of the Russian revolution and its neighbours failures in the same enterprise. The myth of Imperial infallibility was broken. The consequence was to fire up in periphery anti-colonialism and back home mass Parties of the Left. It is the conjuncture and clash between black radicalism and socialism in Britain that forms the essence of *Making the Revolution Global*. The ground was stoney. In Britain there was a lot of 'national' in socialism. Harry Quelch representing the British Socialist Party - which later that year merged into the newly formed Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) - at the Second Comintern Congress went on record, 'the rank-and-file British worker would consider it treasonable to help the enslaved nations in their uprisings against British rule'. Lenin did not agree. In contrast, he argued it was essential in winning the class war for the forces of the European proletariat to conjoin with anticolonial forces in the overthrow of capitalism-imperialism.

The bathwater went first. Lenin's deterioration to death between mid-1922 and January 1924 provided the space for Stalin to steal control of the Party. For all the welcome of a reinforced call for immediate national independence for the colonies, the class against class 'Third Period' that labelled the non-communist Left 'social fascists' - dictated to the leadership of the fifty Parties at Comintern's Sixth Congress in 1928 - saw CPGB's membership decimated and its influence destroyed. Now it was the turn of the baby. Comintern's policy spun on a six-

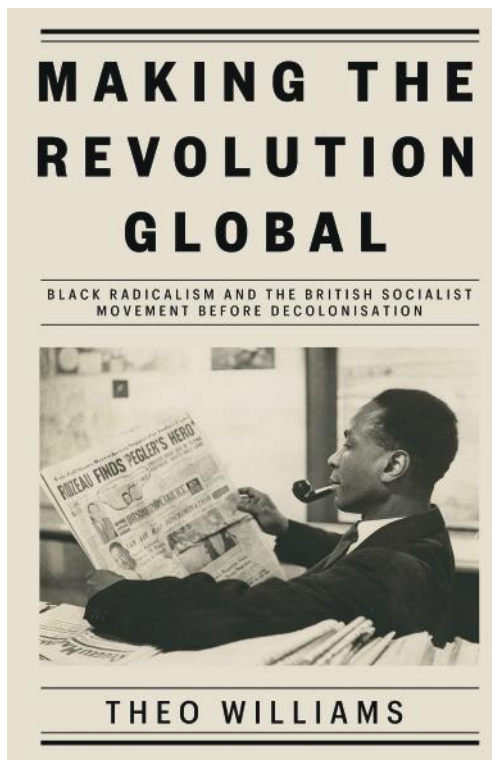
pence with Hitler as German Chancellor and the new demand for Popular Fronts across Europe, whose recruits were to stretch way beyond putative 'social fascists' to the far shores of politics amongst progressive members of Conservative Parties. This political hotchpotch was to form the vanguard in the fight against fascism.

The British Empire - and French - was safe as 'democratic imperialism' was coined. Leninism followed its author. Anti-imperialism and anti-fascism were torn asunder, with the fight against imperialism to follow the victory over fascism, now a separate enemy and no longer

In the fever and fret of the age they were looking for assistance, not leadership. They found refuge in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) after its recent divorce from the Labour Party. *Making the Revolution Global* skilfully maps and charts its course through a welter of organisations and acronyms, factions and conflicts to deliver its verdict. There was a resonance between the thinking of the two. If anti-imperialism was the soft underbelly in the fight against fascism, the ILP thought the same mode about Spain's civil war. Victory would follow the revolution not proceed it. The two groups fed off each other for a short decade in a deeply symbiotic relationship that went to the heart of ILP thinking.

1945 saw black radicals in Britain demanding an independent African federation, while the ILP's concord was a United Socialist States of Europe. Together, even as the ILP vanished into history and the African Federation proved stillborn, for Williams the end of Empire and racism catalysed by this relationship were two of the Left's greatest victories. It was therefore no surprise that when the Fifth Pan-African Congress met in Manchester in October 1945 the opening speech demanding a 'battle for complete political independence' came neither from Harry Pollitt (General Secretary of the CPGB), nor George Hall - Labour's scarcely visible Colonial Secretary - but rather from John McNair, the ILP General Secretary.

Some cavilled that they should have used their leverage with Labour. This hope met its retrospective and final disillusionment in 1947 when Richard Crossman, Michael Foot and Ian Mikardo published *Keep Left*. This Tribune challenge to Attlee's government was an Imperial argument that 'benign' exploitation of Empire would enable Britain to forge an independent path between Washington and Moscow. Again Black hopes were to be sacrificed on the altar of Foreign Policy, only this time these interests were those of Britain rather than the Soviet Union.



the morbid symptom of imperial rivalry. Colonial freedom was now in the gift of London, to be awaited - at the right time - and not fought for. The main black radical actors in this and subsequent dramas in Britain saw centre stage CLR James and George Padmore, while lurking in the wings were three future Presidents, Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana), Jomo Kenyatta (Kenya) and Hastings Banda (Malawi). Sacrificed on the altar of Soviet Foreign Policy they were left marooned by the CPGB. Padmore left its straitjacket orthodoxy to retain his Marxist-Leninism, not disavow it.

At war at home and in Syria

Mary Southcott
on Erdogan's Turkey

Erdogan's War
Gonul Tol
Hurst £39

There are books which bring together all you need to know about a particular region. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was chosen by Jonny Dymond, who reported from Turkey, as the person to watch in 2023, in the BBC Radio 4 correspondents New Year programme. I remember Erdogan's talk in Oxford during the time Turkey was the model for the Arab Spring when he denied being a moderate Muslim. "I am a Muslim and I am a Democrat". No longer.

The founding director of the Middle East Institute's Turkey Programme, Gonul Tol's book details the way things have descended since: Islamist, Turkish Nationalist, Prime Minister and President for two decades. Some would say this was how to lose your country (Ece Temelkuran); or how not to stop fascism (Paul Mason). The chapter headings will probably be enough for many readers: Strategy Towards Hegemony; Turns to Islam; The Syrian Gambit: Assad Must Go; From Religion to Nationalism; Attacking Kurds Trumps Toppling Assad; Erdogan's Nationalist Gamble Backfires and Syrians Must Go.

The book's full title is "A Strongman's Struggle at Home and In Syria" or how Erdogan used the war to get around his domestic problems. That interface between Turkey and northern Syria has received the world's attention given the tens of thousands of people who have died in the two February earthquakes. She dedicates her book to the two-year old Syrian Kurdish refugee, Alan Kurdi, who was on the front of our newspapers, dead on the beach in September 2015. Gonul Tol says rightly that we owe 20 million children an apology, even before the earthquakes.

The book came out in 2022. However, the British Turkish

writer, Elif Shafak

in her recent Financial Times' long essay brought it up to date: "The earthquake and its painful aftermath have also proved Golding (Lord of the Flies) right. His description of self-absorbed and self-serving human nature fits perfectly the state of politics and those who are in power in my motherland, Turkey."

Many neglected Turkey as long as it was in NATO and on our side. What Perry Anderson calls the Eastern Question in The New Old World remains with us. But Turkey has caused problems dur-

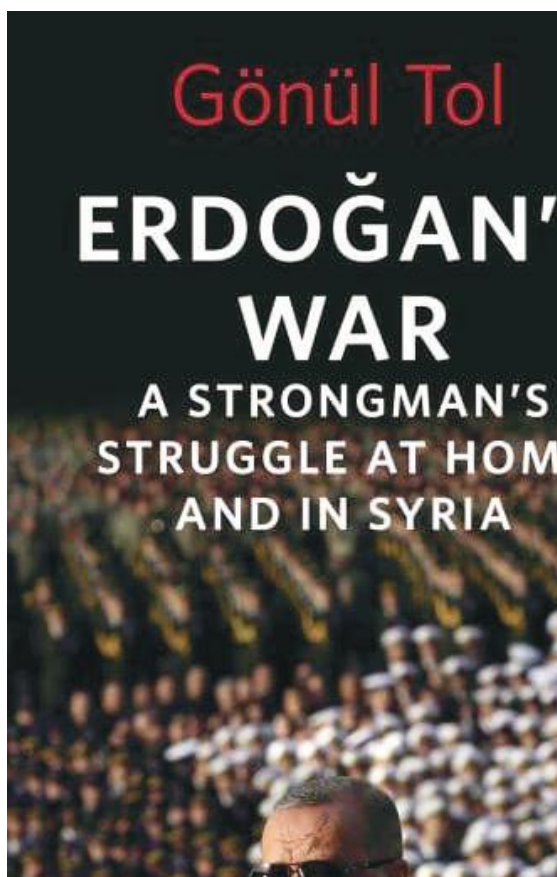
the state of play between Turkey and the EU, could have made that vital difference.

On 14 May, if early elections go ahead after so many earthquake deaths, Erdogan will have ruled Turkey, some say as a Sultan, for twenty remarkable years. His first foreign minister, Yasar Yakis, not an AKP (Justice & Development Party) member, describes this book as "a sharp and penetrating analysis of Turkey's transformation under Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and of foreign policy's role in that process. A very well written and engaging book that covers everything you need to know to understand today's Turkey." Yakis was a member of the Greek Turkish Forum on which I was an Observer when they discussed Cyprus.

I agree with him about the book but there is much more, including a List of Abbreviations: the Islamic State in Syria and in Iraq; the People's Democratic Party, just about to be outlawed, with many of its members in prison; the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP, Grey Wolves to many of us, in coalition with AKP in the elections), and more familiar in the West, the Kurdish PKK and Peshmerga forces who worked with the US in northern Syria.

Erdogan has in the year Türkiye, (its new spelling authorised by the UN in 2022 to distinguish it from the farmyard animal) celebrates its century to decide what it wants to be, an advocate of democracy, a power fanning the flames of civil war or an occupier (as in Cyprus and northern Syria). This book helps us understand that choice.

The US based Foundation for Defence of Democracies has just published the idea that after the Turkish Elections, the Biden administration will want to stop war in the Eastern Mediterranean and suggests that a Cyprus settlement would be a start. The Greek Cypriots have just chosen the wrong person for this project because most, giving up hope, seem willing to settle for partition in the south of island. However perhaps Biden will read this book.



ing the Ukraine/Russian war trying to mediate or being on both sides. It helped move the grain out of the ports on the Black Sea, but it vetoed the entry of Finland and more so Sweden into NATO membership because of their acceptance of refugees from Turkey.

Do people remember the current Leader of the House, Penny Mordaunt, on the Sunday before the UK voted Brexit, saying how many Turks, 80 Million (it is now 86), would arrive on our shores if we voted Remain? In a narrow context, voters' ignorance about

Stalin's path to revolution

Duncan Bowie
on the
Young Stalin

Stalin: Passage to Revolution
Ronald Suny
Princeton University Press £35

This is Suny's magnum opus, the product of decades of scholarly research. Suny is an American academic of Armenian descent, who is one of the leading writers on Armenia and Georgian history, the nationalities question in the Soviet Union and Stalinism. He demonstrates a wide knowledge of Russian, Georgian primary sources. The book, which only takes the narrative to October 1917, has 700 pages of text and a further 150 pages of notes, bibliography and index. It took me most of a week to read, and as a hardback is hardly portable or light reading.

There are previous studies of Stalin's youth and early political career, most notably by Simon Sebag Montefiore, whom Suny in a historiographical discussion at the end of the book dismisses as a 'popular historian'.

What surprised me most in reading this new study was the amount of detail of every stage of Stalin's early life, based on the memoirs and reminiscences of the hundreds of individuals who crossed paths with him. Suny is careful in his use of hagiographical sources which sought to enhance Stalinist myths. He is also critical of those authors who have sought to cast the early Stalin as

a bandit or terrorist, without glossing over a number of incidents which could be categorised as violent or otherwise unpleasant. Stalin grew up in a violent world, especially in his youth in Georgia.

What Suny does best is set Stalin's early career within context. The development of Russian social democracy is covered in detail, even when Stalin was on the margin of political developments – he was after all in exile for much of the period, though being in exile with other exiles, often of different political persuasion, allowed more time for writing and ideological development,

even in the most primitive of living conditions. Suny is especially good on the fluctuating relationships between Mensheviks and Bolsheviks as well as on the differences within both factional groups. Stalin was largely a loyal follower of Lenin, and though not always agreeing with Lenin, generally followed Lenin's tactical shifts, being known at one time as the 'Georgian Lenin'. Like Lenin, he was a pragmatist. But Suny also demonstrates Stalin's inde-

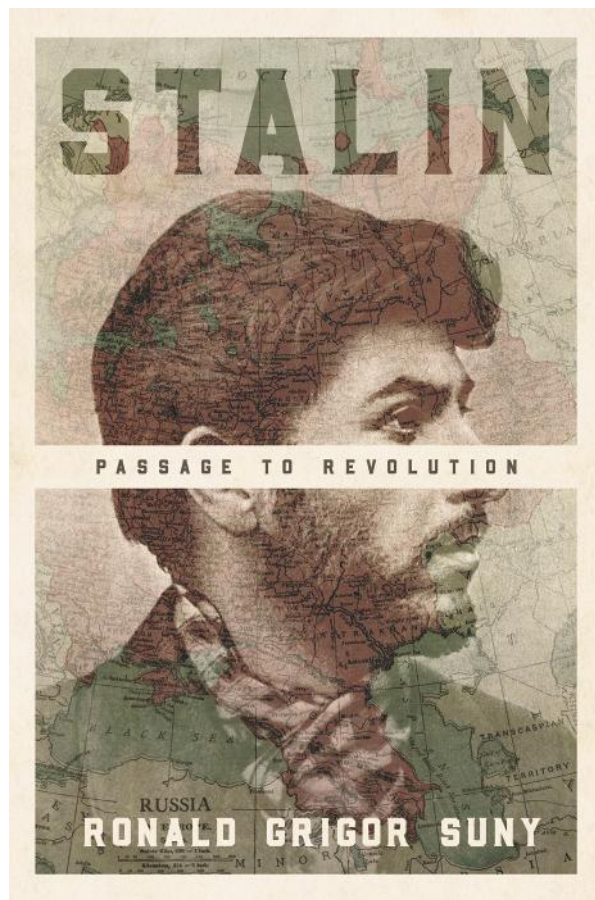
central focus as is the case with Montefiore.

However, as a comprehensive study of Stalin's 'passage to revolution', it is unsurpassable, as long as it is recognised that it is not seeking to explain Stalin's 'passage to autocrat', which would require a detailed study of the post-revolutionary period and Stalin's struggle to be the dominant individual within the Soviet government. Other authors have sought to provide that narrative and analysis and it would take Suny at least two more massive tomes, which at the age of 82 is probably beyond him.

I was fortunate to attend Suny's recent lecture at which he was presented with the 2021 Deutscher memorial prize for the book. Suny sought to explain the complexities of Stalin's Marxism. The lecture was part of the Historical Materialism conference, dominated by Leninist and Trotskyist students whose perspective was largely theoretical and at times rather philosophical, who could have done well to have listened more carefully to the lecture before expounding their own narrow and often obscure ideological positions. Such contributions demonstrate an inability to listen to differing views or different methodological approaches to historical

study.

One final point. The biography gives much new information on the roles of other Bolsheviks and Mensheviks in the pre-1917 period. While so many writers focus on Stalin and Lenin, and we have single biographies of Martov and Tsereteli, surely it is about time we had a biography in English of major activists in the revolutionary period such as Lev Kamenev, the Armenian and Stepan Shaumian and the Georgians Noe Zhordania and Nicolai Chkheidze. Despite thousands of volumes on Russia's revolutionary years, there remain serious gaps in the literature.



pendent theoretical capacity and in one chapter provides a detailed exposition of Stalin's writings on Marxism and nationalism, which is of course an area off study in which Suny is himself pre-eminent.

Suny rightly avoids the temptation of trying, as some authors have done, to explain Stalin's later career as autocrat and oppressor, the new Russian tsar, from an analysis of Stalin's upbringing and youthful experience. He is critical of the more psychological biographies of Robert Tucker and Stephen Kotkin. Though not ignoring Stalin's private life, it is not his

**Conrad
Landin**
on London
wealth

A Flaneur among the Plutocrats

Serious Money: Walking Plutocratic London
Caroline Knowles
Allen Lane £25

As the cost of surviving crisis sweeps the nation, it's tempting to think that it's those in the most need who deserve the most sympathy. But we should all spare a thought for Mikhail Fridman, the Ukrainian-born oligarch who bought Athlone House, one of London's biggest residential properties, for £65 million in 2016. "It's a kind of talent to spend money beautifully," Fridman, whose fortune is estimated to be £12 billion, once told the Financial Times. "I don't have it."

Even with weeks of rehearsal, most of us could never grasp the concept of spending money "beautifully" - particularly as once we've paid for food, shelter and - if we're lucky - central heating - we're unlikely to have much of it left. Yet our bafflement proves the point Caroline Knowles wants to make: that in spite of the huge amassment of wealth in London, we know precious little about it or its hoarders.

Knowles's remedy is walking: through the streets of Shoreditch, the City, Mayfair, St James's, Kensington, Belgravia and Chelsea - before crossing the river to examine Richmond and Virginia Water. "Walking exposes politics, like a sediment in the landscape," she observes.

Her strolls take her to interviewees identified only by typographical names such as "Quant" or "Cake" - to reassure her secretive interviewees and maintain her own professionalism as a sociologist. This does, however, somewhat detract from her stated aim of demystifying London's plutocrats - though perhaps it's also a check on humanising a class of people who often behave very strangely indeed.

Take "Legacy", for instance, a honcho at one of London's "private offices" - companies which invest cash on behalf of super-rich

families and trusts - who says it's not about making money, but "the art of business". Or the basement excavators of Kensington, who leave diggers buried under-ground because it's cheaper to buy them out rather than extract them from among the townhouses.

In the narrative's most compelling moments, walking can unravel the inner world of London's most wealthy. We see how in Kensington, the "haves" use neighbourhood "patrols" to cast a vigilant eye on the urban behaviour of the vulgar "have yachts". And in the Surrey enclave

And given that *Serious Money* purports to look for solutions, it is surprising that for all her observations about the Crown Estate, Knowles limits her Regent's Park walk to the Nash terraces to its south. If she had ventured a little east, she would have found two plots of social housing which tell a different story. The council-owned blocks of the Regent's Park Estate were built on land purchased from the Crown in the 1960s, at a time when local government still maintained the ambition to expand democratic accountability of housing. The adjacent Cumberland

Market, historically a Crown Estate scheme, was sold to Peabody in 2011 after a ferocious tenants' campaign saw off the threat of full private ownership and evictions. Both are proof that plutocratic power can be successfully challenged, and that central London still includes thriving working class communities which exist to support each other and not just the elite.

Knowles is nonetheless right to interrogate the desire for a social "mix" voiced by numerous interviewees. In reality, she contends, this is rooted in the need for a serving class and vibrant neighbourhoods. She skewers too the sweeping nostalgia for a time before London's prime real estate was controlled by investment portfolios. These "elite white histories built on racist thinking" obscure the fact that "this was always dirty money" - from the profits of imperialism and slavery.

In spite of their obscene fortunes, few of *Serious Money's* subjects could be described as happy. Perhaps that's partly because, as Knowles puts it, serious money is "actually perpetually fragile". As the late Mark Fisher said, it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. But an understanding of our current system's grotesque excesses and its delicate basis can challenge its cultural hegemony. *Serious Money* is not a manual for fighting back - but we can't possibly produce one without this sort of serious groundwork.



of Virginia Water, walking has been made all but impossible.

Yet some walks seem tangential to the narrative - such as rushed journeys between appointments which are then followed with segments of pure interview. Others are too selective to truly capture the spirit of a neighbourhood. Knowles is, of course, fully justified in discussing how Saudi money bankrolled the London Central Mosque. But in isolation, it suggests it purely services the elite - rather than the working-class Bengali and Somali communities of south Camden too.

Coups, conspiracies, and the conceits of power

Gardner Thompson
on
Zimbabwe

Mugabe's Legacy
David Moore
Hurst £22

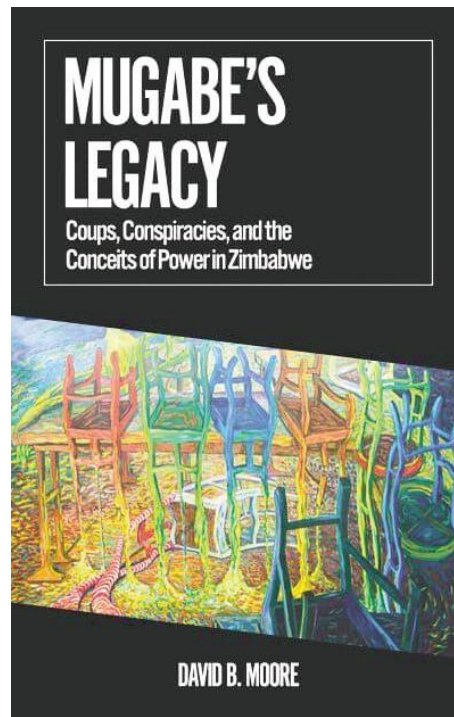
David Moore, former Professor of Development Studies at Johannesburg University, meticulously charts Robert Mugabe's calculated rise to prominence before Zimbabwe's independence in 1980, and his ruthless retention of power for the 37 years following. Each decade was marked by brutality, the victims including around 20,000 Ndebele 'cockroaches' in the 1980s; trades unionists and students in the 1990s; and political opponents in the MDC, along with the urban poor, and others, thereafter. The hallmark of this regime of securocrats/kleptocrats continues to be the interplay of factional politics and guns.

Though his treatment of the November 2017 'coup' is exhaustive, Moore advises us to see it as merely 'a blip', one case of 'coercion-based change'. When the 95-year-old Mugabe was ousted, nothing else changed. The soldiers 'only wanted the appearance of enthusiastic consent for a day or so'. At moments like this, Moore is witheringly concise.

Moore takes us back to Mugabe's activities during the liberation struggle against the illegal Rhodesian Front (RF) government, as shaping what was to follow. The lasting patterns of conceit and lies, and of overcoming opponents by force and/or 'divide and rule', were set then. Rivals were to be removed: in Mugabe's own words of 1977, 'we see the axe on high, ready to fall on dissenters seen as coup-plotting traitors'. In revealing depth, Moore uncovers Mugabe's emergence in the context of guerilla factions and the involvement of the Front-Line States. He highlights tensions between soldiers and their political leaders at that time; rivalries with individuals such as Herbert Chitepo and Josiah Tongorara; and the first of a series of 'generational challenges'. And he expertly probes issues of 'political tribalism', beyond the Shona/Ndebele division. Moore acknowledges that the alliances, identities, ideologies,

and lasting culture of state power in Zimbabwe were not the creation of one person alone. Even so, Mugabe's vanity, character and initiatives made his own significant mark on the 'disordered creation' that was Zimbabwe.

Moore might have examined, also, Mugabe's uncomprehending incompetence in managing the economy and his personal failure to adopt a strategy for growth. And there are two further lenses through which any individual impact might be assessed.



Zimbabwe's new rulers faced 'humiliation', to use Moore's telling word, at having to imitate 'Western' forms of democracy. ZANU-PF danced to that tune – and will do again in January 2023 – but, as Moore points out, no elections in Zimbabwe have been free of 'coercion and chicanery'. Yet when he refers to 'men like Mugabe', he offers no examples. In comparable East African states formerly under British rule, we find that during the fifty years following independence, no general election in Kenya, Uganda or Tanzania saw the loss of power by an incumbent president standing for a further term. Next year, Yoweri Museveni in Uganda will match Mugabe's 37 years: an

alternative model of how to extend presidential terms and interfere with elections.

Nearer home, moreover, Moore does not explore the long-term impact of 90 years of white settler colonialism: especially, Ian Smith's 'glorious years' after UDI. To the excesses of that white minority regime may surely be attributed, in part, the character of its successor black political-military elite. The triumphalism of Mugabe and ZANU-PF, clinging to state power and the access to wealth it granted, incorporated contempt for critics which was worthy of white extremists in the RF. As early as 1981, the publicity secretary of ZANU-PF declared that 'before the middle of next year, it will be impossible for any other party to operate on the ground'. Comprehensive control of the media, coercive laws, a flexible constitution, violence as a political tool ZANU-PF inherited much from the regime it replaced.

Mugabe did have a personal legacy. He more than any other individual (not Joshua Nkomo, for example: Robespierre, not Danton) ended white rule and negotiated a (partial) settlement at Lancaster House. It was he who, belatedly releasing the 'war veterans and 'nationalising' land from 2000, broke the remnants of the white settler colonial state. To be sure, his flawed character flavoured and shaped his years as president. But Zimbabwe today is, at heart, the impersonal 'disordered creation' of colonialism, war, revolution, and postcolonial African politics.

An immersive investigation, dense with detail, contemporary commentary, and personal anecdotes, *Mugabe's Legacy* is a fascinating read for those who have a sure grasp of the narrative and the who's who of individuals involved. Its thoroughness warrants 50 of its 250 pages as notes; the Introduction alone has 135 references. The general reader may find some writing discursive, and conclusions opaque. However, the scholar knows what he does not know: and the extraordinarily well-informed David Moore appears to concede that there are more questions than answers.

Mennonite travels

**Duncan
Bowie**
on curious
religious
encounters

The White Mosque
Sofia Samatar
Hurst £17.99

This is an unusual book. It is a personal travelogue and memoir combined with a study of a Christian religious group who travelled from the southern Ukraine to central Asia in the 1880's, finally settling in a village outside the ancient city of Khiva. The group were German Mennonites, spiritual descendants of the anabaptists of the radical reformation, who had sought sanctuary in Tsarist Russia from oppression within Prussia.

The anabaptists were pacifists, refusing to serve in national armies. They were agriculturalists, living pre-industrial and pre-technological lifestyles similar to the Amish and Moravian brethren. The flight to the Muslim khanates of Samarkand and Khiva was prompted by the Russian tsar removing their privileges, primarily their exemption from military service. Sofia Samatar was herself from a Mennonite family – her mother being a Swiss Mennonite missionary who had served in Somalia in the 1960's. Her father being a converted Somali Muslim. For Samatar, the book was based on her pilgrimage to understand her own heritage, as a member of a tour organised by American Mennonites, but also comprises a reflection on her own history and identity as a mixed race Mennonite, with a father from a Muslim background.

The reason I was attracted to reading this book is that in 2019, just before the pandemic I also

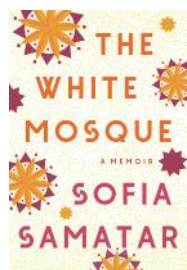
undertook a guided tour of the Uzbek cities along the Silk Road – Tashkent, Samarkand, Bokhara and Khiva, and was intrigued to find that there was a Mennonite museum in Khiva, which had just opened, funded by American and Canadian Mennonites, which must have been about the same time as Samatar's journey.

The narrative of Samatar's journey was very familiar. She visited the same mosques and madrassas and mausoleums as we did and no doubt stayed in the same modern hotels and used the same buses, toilets and refreshment stops. It is however the narrative of the Mennonite trek which is more interesting. In the Crimea, the Mennonites established successful agricultural settlements, and after numerous raids by Crimean tartars, the Nogai, which as non-resisters led to repeated raids with the Nogai taking everything they had, they eventually cohabited with the Tartars who adopted some of the Mennonite agricultural practices.

With the ending of Tsarist tolerance, most of the Crimean Mennonites migrated to the US and Canada, while only a small group, following prophesies of the apocalypse, sought to find a new Eden in the East to await the second coming of Christ as set out in the revelations of the prophet Daniel. Several of the trekkers wrote their memoirs, and more recent Mennonites, who are clearly obsessed with their own history, have published detailed reconstructions so every incident along the trek and every personal rivalry and theological dispute is recorded

time and time again, with lists of each group of families in each wagon train being meticulously noted.

Expelled from Russian Tashkent, the Mennonites not allowed to settle in the Khanate of Bokhara, sought to establish a community in No Mans, only to be driven out before finally being welcomed by the Emir of Khiva, a Muslim tyrant with a harem of 100 wives and a harem of boys as well. When driven out by the Bolsheviks, the Emir took his boys while abandoning his wives. The Mennonites settled in the village of Ak Metchet, the 'white mosque' of the book's title being the Mennonite church. Their skills in carpentry were however of service to the Emir and Mennonites provided the ornate floors in the Emir's palace. Samara also relates the stories of later visitors to the Mennonite settlements, including the Swiss traveller, Ella Maillart, who included chapters on the Mennonites in her book *Turkestan Solo* in 1934, and the black American poet Langston Hughes, who visited the area in the early 1930's and included a detailed narrative of his journey in his autobiography, *I Wonder as I Wander*, originally published in 1956 - both memoirs are worth reading. In the late 1930's the Mennonite settlements were broken up by Stalin's forced collectivisation, with some survivors being exiled again – this time to the mountains of Kyrgyzstan. Samatar's book is a fascinating narrative, with an intriguing history of one of the most curious Christian/Muslim encoun-



Printer ad

Contempt for working people



Kate Osborne is Labour MP for Jarrow

Kate Osborne says the Tories are on a mission to take power from the people

What kind of society gives employers the right to demand workers do work they don't want or face the sack, and forces unions to make their members break their own strikes or face injunctions and fines and be liable for damages?

We're witnessing the most authoritarian assaults on workers' and trade union rights in peacetime, with unprecedented power being handed to a single minister to crush the right of unions to protect their members.

The Tories are on a mission to take power away from the people. They're not just turning the clock back on workers' and trade union rights, but on the rights of the vast majority in this country.

Right to strike, right to protest, right to vote, and chunks of human rights laws scrapped with the Retained EU Law Bill. As I said in Parliament during the second reading of the [anti]-Strikes Bill, each of these power grabs commit political violence on our communities.

By rushing the Bill through the House of Commons, with barely any scrutiny or assessment of the dangerous impact it will have, Grant Shapps has shown not only a reckless disregard for parliamentary process, but also for the consequences of enabling employers to sack emergency workers, without any recourse to law, for refusing to cross picket lines, in services already on their knees because of the staffing crises.

I voted against the Bill, but the government forced it through. I'm sure it will be amended in the

Lords and defeated in the courts by union-backed legal challenges, but the

i n f l a m m a t o r y rhetoric from ministers and Tory MPs during the debate

has done nothing

ing



to help workers who are desperate for a pay rise.

Instead of inflaming the situation by attacking workers even more, the government should start dealing with the causes of increased strike action: low wages, people in fuel and food poverty and cuts to public services. With rising inflation - food costs now up by 16 per cent and 39 per cent of kids in my constituency of Jarrow in poverty - I worry about what comes next if workers do not get a pay rise. And that is why so many are saying enough is enough. They need a pay rise not a P45.

But ministers are intent on trashing the few freedoms of all those workers who have been on the picket lines over the past and coming weeks, while continually lying about unions not providing minimum service levels (MSLs).

MSLs on strike days already exist of course, yet they don't most days in the NHS, with waiting times way above any targets.

None of this is the fault of hard-working NHS staff. Minimum service levels would exist if this government hadn't asset stripped, underfunded and privatised our core services over decades. Their destruction of our NHS is leading to so many avoidable deaths.

We have to start calling it what it is - social murder. People are dying because of this government's deliberate destruction of our NHS, while profiteering by private providers is rampant.

Private patients up 34 per cent. People paying for hip operations up 184 per cent, for knee ops up 153 per cent, for cataract surgery up 42 per cent. Bupa has 150,000 new customers, while US owned Cleveland & HCA Healthcare are opening new UK hospitals. This is a two-tier health service, aiding the deliberate destruction of our NHS - it has to stop. Meanwhile, hundreds of 1950s-born women are dying without any compensation for the pension losses they've suffered as a result of the maladministration by the Department for Work and Pensions.

They were robbed of tens of thousands of pounds of hard-earned and planned for state pension, throwing many of them into deep poverty and unnecessary hardship, with one in four now struggling to pay the bills and single women suffering the most.

It's not just the WASPI women of course, though the injustice done to them is deep. Almost a fifth of pensioners are now living in poverty because the Tories have cut pensions and over a million pensioner households are missing out on pension credit.

Absolutely shameful at any time, but during a cost of living crisis, it's wilful impoverishment of the people to whom we owe security, prosperity and respect.

Not a day goes by without the Tories showing the contempt in which they hold working people and our communities. **C**

Subscribe to CHARTIST at
www.chartist.org.uk

