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# Workers power

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## The return of Donald Trump: the sequel is always worse

### EDITORIAL

Donald Trump's election has caused dismay, not only at home but among the liberal and social democratic governments, parties and their media worldwide.

How, they ask, could a 'potty mouthed' ignoramus, who encouraged fascist mobs to run amok on Capitol Hill after the 2020 election, be about to assume the presidency? Surely American democracy itself must be tottering.

At home the number one victims on Trump's list are the 11.7 million 'illegal' immigrants. He has promised to carry out 'the largest domestic deportation operation in American History.' He will order the military to start with one million deportations on 'day one', with special detention camps built to hold them till they can be sent back to their countries of origin.

Legal migrants are to be targeted too. He promises to 'ramp up ideological screening for people legally applying to come into the country'. He threatens to expand his first term 'Muslim ban' to 'block more people from certain countries from entering the US'.

Even if there is much bluff and bluster in this, it will require a powerful united front of resistance, in which all communities—and the trade unions—defend all those targeted in this vile racist plan.

But if liberals worldwide are dismayed, hard right populist leaders are delighted. The chorus stretches from Hungary's 'illiberal democrat' Viktor Orban to Argentina's 'anarcho-capitalist' Javier Milei, with Narendra Modi, Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Benjamin Netanyahu in between. All see Trump as one of them.

Vladimir Putin, the great disrupter of America's purported 'rules based order', also recognises a kindred spirit in Trump. The president-elect has several times praised the murderous Putin as a 'strong leader' and claimed he could end the war in Ukraine 'within 24 hours'.

Putin hopes that Trump will let him keep the one-fifth of the country he now occupies. He knows Trump is no enthusiast for Nato or the USA's European allies, who he repeatedly accuses as freeloaders.



■ **Debate:** Anti\*Capitalist Resistance and the Ecosocialist manifesto, a critique, p5



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China presents a knottier problem for Trump. During his first term Trump imposed import tariffs of 25% against the world's second-largest economy; in his 2024 campaign Trump suggested they could be raised to 60% or even higher. He also promised to block advanced technology exports from the US or Europe, to obstruct China's target of being the global AI leader by 2030.

China is already experiencing an economic downturn, with falling property prices, soaring local government debt and rising unemployment among young people. Severe restrictions on China's exports could lead to serious social unrest.

All this could strengthen Trump's hand in wringing a deal out of Xi. What is sure is that such a trade war will not benefit those US workers who voted for him, fondly imagining it would bring manufacturing jobs. In fact it will just increase the price of imports. Trump's 'first buddy' Elon Musk may have another problem, since Tesla, produced in a giant factory in Shanghai, has just exported its millionth electric car.

On 20 January Trump will erupt into a world where centrist governments have been toppling to rightwingers. In France and Germany, Macron and Scholz cannot get their budgets passed, while Britain's capitalist class have turned on Rachel Reeves and Kier Starmer over tax rises. Far right parties look set to gain.

### Rivalry leads to war

The background to all this is the deepening inter-imperialist rivalry between the US, Russia, China and the fractious EU. America First means aggressively using its still enormous economic and military power to put both rivals like China and allies like Europe on rations.

With the Great Climate Change Denier in the White House we will see the break-up of the feeble attempts to pay compensation to countries devastated by the emissions of the developed world. This was already visible at COP29. The appointment of anti-vaxxers and covid deniers to the Federal Health authorities will also spell disaster in any future pandemics.

The break-up of multilateralism for unilateralism is already encouraging regional powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India and Pakistan to attempt to do the same to one another. The result will be growing economic disruption and wars, which will eventually blow back on the US.

Passivity in the face of this will encourage destruction on an even bigger scale. Instead we need class consciousness, independence from all wings of the ruling class and intransigent opposition to all the emerging imperialist camps. This means revolutionary workers' parties, linked together in a new, Fifth International.

## FARM LABOUR

**Last month 10,000 farmers and supporters protested against Labour's plans to introduce inheritance tax on farms, ending a decades-long exemption which has transformed farmland into a notorious tax-avoidance scheme, and driving up prices into the bargain.**

The powerful farming lobby ensured the protest received disproportionate news coverage, but this only guaranteed that the totally reactionary and self-interested motives of the big landowners leading the protest were amply demonstrated.

Former Top Gear presenter Jeremy Clarkson (net worth £60 million) ranted that 'communist' Labour had a sinister plan to 'ethnically cleanse the countryside of farmers' in order to make way for 'new towns for immigrants and net zero wind farms'. Tory peer Andrew Lloyd Webber (net worth £659 million), let the media know that he was marching for small farmers who would be forced to sell up to 'foreigners and outsiders'.

Tory leader Kemi Badenoch pledged to reverse the measure, but Nigel Farage, whose Brexit project has done considerable damage to farming, was present but considered too divisive to speak.

### Special pleading

Disputes around how many farms will be forced to pay the tax centre on different calculations around the abolition of Agricultural Property Relief (APR), which farmers benefit from, and the Business Property Relief, which is afforded to all businesses. The Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that less than 500 farms (2%) would be affected and that 'simple tax planning' would avoid much of this, leaving 'land much more lightly taxed than most other assets'.

This simple fact underlines the rank privilege at play. Inheritance tax (IHT) will now be payable at half the standard 40% rate on estates worth more than £1 million. Personal exemptions permit up to £3 million to be passed on. Estates passed on seven years before death incur no tax at all. The tax will be payable over 10 years, interest free—another privilege not applied to any other business. Added to this, the vast majority of landed estates are exempt from death duties under 'conservation' rules subsidising their palaces at public expense.

Worst of all this demagogic campaign by big landowners has served to obscure the parlous financial state of much of British farming.

Nearly half of British farms are smaller than fifty acres. The majority of farmers are owners now rather than tenants, but farming income is utterly dependent on state subsidies, formerly from the EU. Official figures show just 7% of claims for APR accounted for 40% of the total IHT relief, while 2% accounted for nearly 25%.

Socialists support taxes on the wealthy in order to fund universal public services and infrastructure which benefits both town and country. Rich landowners who live jet set lifestyles and bank land to dodge taxes are the real menace to farming and rural communities, not migrant workers slaving away on the harvests.

However, the income crisis for the majority of farmers is real. It is underpinned by decades of government policy promoting

cheap imported food, while the supermarket monopolies dictate prices to farmers.

Socialists stand for the nationalisation of the great landed estates, with the land shared out among those who work it. We stand for the establishment of democratically controlled cooperatives and marketing boards to regulate quality and prices in the interests of producers and consumers.

The farm protest shows the rich will defend their wealth even against a pro-business, austerity Labour government, no matter how minor the measures. The trade union movement should encourage small farmers and tenants to break their unity with the big landlords in the National Farmers Union and ally with the TUC on mutual issues of social and climate justice. ■

By Andy Yorke

## LIVING IN SIN



**The Most Reverend Justin Welby has become the first archbishop of Canterbury to resign, if not the first to have his tenure forcibly terminated. The UK's top bishop fell on his crozier in the wake of the Makin Report into prolific abuser John Smyth.**

More heads may now roll in a long-running scandal which has brining the disreputable establishment's role at the heart of the British establishment into a very uncomfortable spotlight.

The first known incident of Smyth's abuse, a sexualised approach to a 14-year old boy while driving him in his car, took place in 1971. This incident was the first of many, with over 115 known victims and likely many more who have not been identified. His unfettered access to vulnerable young men enabled his abuse to continue right up to his death in 2018, spanning over four decades.

His crimes were known as far back as 1982 when the Ruston Report found that Smyth physically, psychologically and sexually abused children aged under 18. This report was shared with the most senior members of the Church.

Smyth's actions violated the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 (Section 47) for causing actual bodily harm, and his sexual abuse likely breached Section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956. Tragically, one child died at a camp, leading to Smyth being tried for manslaughter. Though acquitted, he died before further investigations could proceed.

The Church not only knew about the

abuse being inflicted on vulnerable people in their care, but that it was illegal and they had a legal duty to report it to the relevant authorities. David Cleric, co-author of the Runston Report, stated that he 'thought it would do the work of God immense damage if this were public'. The Church prioritised its own reputation over the lives and wellbeing of children entrusted to its care.

No effort was made to contact or help victims. Instead the Church facilitated Smyth's move to Zimbabwe in 1984, and subsequently to South Africa in 2001, providing him with financial support and references. He continued to prey on boys and young men with impunity; the evidence suggests his abusive practices persisted until his death in 2018.

### Too little too late

The Church of England issued a statement admitting to the cover up: 'from July 2013, the Church of England knew, at the highest level, about the abuse that took place in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The Archbishop of Canterbury's personal Chaplain and the Bishop of Ely were all made aware of the abuse, and Justin Welby became aware of the abuse alleged against John Smyth in around August 2013.'

The Makin Report added: 'it is clear that many senior members did know of the abuse, including ordained people and those with positions of authority and responsibility. We must reach the conclusion that this constituted a cover-up of the abuse... Our firm conclusion is that a serious crime was covered up.'

Speaking before his resignation on 12 November, Welby claimed the abuse could not happen today thanks to modern safeguarding practices. Who is expected to believe this? Safeguarding practices are only as 'safe' as the people practicing them. We now know that at least 10 bishops and a further 30 more junior clergy knew about Smyth's abuses, and every single one of them refused to act. How many more abuses continue to be carried out behind closed doors? How many other monsters are there that the Church calls men of god?

The church today has become almost synonymous with abuse, but it is important to remember that this is just one example of those in power abusing their position for control. The institutionalised nature of the abuse and cover up is echoed across society, and many more scandals.

It is the structure of allowing an ideology to influence and control people that is the breeding ground for abuse. Monsters like Smyth are not the cause but a symptom of the patriarchal structures forced on the population, and such abuses will continue until the failing institutions are brought down.

Only 685,000 people attended church weekly in 2023, yet 26 unelected Bishops sit in the House of Lords. Britain by most international standards is a predominantly non-religious society, but its lawmakers include the clergy of a dying religion. Even were the bishops fit and proper people to be debating the law of the land, which they patently are not, these privileges for a disgraced institution is an offence to democracy and ought to be ended forthwith. ■

By Rose Tedeschi

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## BUDGET 2024

# Labour faces budget backlash and blackmail as bosses plead poverty

The bosses are threatening to pay for takes hikes by cutting jobs and hours. This blackmail is easily dealt with: Can't pay? Open the books to inspection and prove it



Reeves promises the City 'never again' in her Mansion House speech

GETTY

**After an initially muted response to Labour's first budget, the bosses are off the leash. At the annual CBI conference, employers launched into a diatribe against Chancellor Rachel Reeves' modest raid on corporate profits by raising employers' NI contributions and the minimum wage.**

CBI director Rain Newton-Smith claimed that firms were 'caught off guard' by these increases and demanded that 'tax rises like this must never again simply be done to business'.

Next up was CBI chair, Rupert Soames, who asserted that businesses are being 'milked as the cash cow' which 'makes employing people, particularly the young, part-time and low paid, much more expensive'. For good measure he denounced the Employment Rights Bill as an 'adventure playground for lawyers'.

Put simply, these are threats to lay off low paid workers and redirect investment elsewhere if the bosses are (gently) squeezed for a share in repairing the damage done by 14 years of Tory assault on public services and the damage caused by severing relations with the UK's largest trading partner.

From the boardroom to the barnyard next as Labour faces early opposition from Britain's influential but normally quiescent farming lobby. The NFU, and hard-pressed farmers like multi-millionaire TV presenter Jeremy Clarkson, whipped up a storm in a hen house over plans to abolish a tax break on agricultural land (see page 2).

## 'Never again'

In response to this cacophony of self-interested squawking, Reeves rashly promised, 'businesses can be certain that we're never going to have to do a budget like that again'. She insisted that it was an emergency measure made necessary by 'the Tories' dreadful mishandling of the nation's finances, which resulted in a £22bn black hole, which is now plugged.

A downpayment on this future generosity was

banked by a promise that the public sector would have to 'live within its means'. The means, of course, being whatever the government and the rich decide they can afford.

Labour hopes that a growth miracle will bail it out of future squabbles with the bosses. But if it doesn't, it will have to raise taxes. How else will it find the money to blow 2.5% of GDP on the military or stomp up the massive guarantees and subsidies big business will demand to secure investments in green technology and infrastructure?

Labour's general attitude to political economy is that 'a rising tide lifts all boats'. That's why they march in lockstep with the bosses in the never-ending pursuit of growth. That's why social welfare and public services are reduced to the level afforded by the share of profits the capitalists are willing to surrender – no matter how much benefit claimants, parents and the elderly may suffer.

The idea of seizing control of the decisive levers of the economy so that a government can actually have some control over what grows, where, and in whose interests is an offence to the vast majority of ex-lawyers, SPADs and Councillors packing the Labour benches.

Labour's central political problem is that it campaigned on the basis of restoring public finance and addressing the dysfunctional state of public services, while promising not to raise taxes 'on working people' (VAT, NI, income tax) or, in general, on the unearned wealth and super-profits of the rich.

The party's electoral tactic led it, and obliges it to remain on the terrain of a relatively small number of voters in constituencies threatened by Reform. This resulted in winning one of the largest majorities on the lowest share of the vote in modern history. This narrow and unstable social base, coupled with the failure to make the case for soaking the rich, is the root of Labour's economic woes.

Reeves and Starmer's decision to plug the gap

with revenue-generating measures that raise trivial sums but anger well-organised lobbies leaves the Labour government subject to powerful pressures that it is not well placed to withstand.

The poverty of Labour's ambition is exposed by a series of crises across the public services: in healthcare, housing, social care, prisons, water and transport. Local councils are bankrupt. Schools and other public infrastructure are literally collapsing thanks to decades of under-investment. Likewise Britain's environmental commitments are hanging by a thread, dependent on private investors taking the bait.

The national economy is plagued by systemic problems like high unemployment, an aging and sick workforce, low investment and therefore productivity, and a layer of super-exploited precarious workers, many of them migrants, living from job to job.

All this is daunting enough before we consider the danger of an economic downturn, whether triggered by one of Donald Trump's trade wars or by Reeves' promise to relax regulation on the most parasitic and risky investment banking, which she now claims 'went too far' after 2008.

The promised £70bn additional public investment will not come close to meeting these challenges. Promises to raise no more taxes in the lifetime of this parliament, if kept, would mean an era of austerity, stagnation and decline, increasing poverty and degrading workers' living standards. This is what the mantra of 'partnership with business' looks like in practice.

## Resist

After 14 years of the Tories, workers can't take the pain which Starmer, Reeves and their capitalist partners want to inflict. In the class struggle Labour will always side with the bosses in their role as representatives of the British state, which fundamentally serves capitalist interests. Labour have gone as far as they intend to go.

To make them go further, to have a hope of stemming the decline of living standards and public services will require workers' resistance on a mass scale. The strike wave of 2022-23 marked a reawakening of union militancy, but these disputes were deliberately restrained by the timid strategy of the bureaucrats, preventing them from combining into a national political struggle.

With rank and file organisation in the unions still embryonic or non-existent, the vast majority of striking workers were powerless to prevent these sell-outs. Workers must quickly learn the lessons of these struggles.

Union activists also need to confront the bosses every time they announce cuts or closures, using the excuse that they cannot afford higher wage bills or meet environmentally necessary quotas, as in the case of the car industry. They should demand the bosses open their books and prove it.

If they are really broke, then Labour must be forced to nationalise them without compensation and place them under workers' control. Union leaders, including left-talking ones like Sharon Graham, should be told to place these demands on Labour or make way for those who would.

The limits of Labour's programme reveal the need for the working class to have its own political instrument, a party with a revolutionary programme in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as its foundation. Such a party is urgently needed to defend the working class from the ceaseless attacks of the capitalists and prepare the class for its historic task, the overthrow of private property and production for profit and its replacement by an international socialist society. Its construction is the most urgent task facing revolutionaries today. ■

By George Banks

## SOLIDARITY

## Antizionist Jews get organised

**Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza has provoked a sharp turn to antizionist ideas amongst Jewish people, who have played a prominent role alongside Palestinians in the global solidarity movement.**

While there has been a long tradition of Jewish opposition to the formation and maintenance of a Jewish state on the land of historic Palestine (particularly in the socialist and communist left), this is now becoming a mass phenomenon.

For many years, the idea that the Jewish communities outside Israel were united in their support for Israel has been a common trope. However, as the portrayal of Israel as 'the only democracy in the Middle East' becomes increasingly untenable thanks to the atrocities live-streamed in real time on social media, opposition is mounting.

Driven by the disgust of young Jewish workers against the horrors being committed by Israel, thousands have joined the 'Jewish bloc' in the Palestine solidarity movement, which in Britain has become a staple feature of the weekly demonstrations against the genocide. Led by organisations including Naa'mod and Jewish Voice, these have taken their place in the front ranks of the movement, providing a counterweight to the myth that all Jews are Zionists, and the slander that antizionism is antisemitic.

This is mirrored by a growth of antizionist sentiment in the US (Jewish Voice for Peace), Germany (Jüdische Stimme), and even Israel itself. Many of these organisations are united around the International Jewish Antizionist Network. These organisations have the potential to provide a counterweight to pro-Zionist propagandists for Israel like the Board of Deputies of British Jews, which is allowed to present itself as representing the opinions of the whole Jewish community.

## Antizionism is not antisemitism

All this poses a real threat to the Israeli state and its imperialist backers, who marshal 'official' Jewish opinion in support of their financial and political backing for Israel. The increasing visibility of an antizionist Jewish movement undermines the attempt to paint the Palestinian solidarity movement as terrorist sympathisers and 'Jew-haters'. These are fundamental ideological props for Israel, allowing Western governments to outsource the ideological justification for their imperialist pro-Zionism to 'official' Jewish public opinion.

It is therefore vital that Jewish antizionists continue organising to expose this propaganda and demonstrate their solidarity with the Palestinian liberation struggle. This will be a difficult campaign, as it means fighting not only the legal repression of the imperialist states, but the ideological and moral pressure applied by Zionist propaganda within Jewish communities.

These barriers can be partly overcome by deepening and extending the solidarity between antizionist Jewish organisations and activists throughout the world, sharing their methods and experience and uniting in common action. The international labour movement also has an important role to play, supporting the movement in their trade unions and political organisations, and providing a platform to dissenting and critical Jewish voices.

They can play a vital role not only in exposing the bogus antisemitism accusations aimed at the Gaza movement but in overcoming its divisions, both on a national and international level. Our governments, backing Israel's crimes, fear this embryonic unity, as was shown last April when Berlin police broke up the Palestine Conference, arresting and deporting Palestinian, Jewish, German and international activists. ■

By Alex Rutherford



## COP29

# Capitalism cannot solve the climate crisis



**The COP29 climate conference held in Baku, Azerbaijan's capital—the original oil city—once again demonstrated the total inability of capitalism to solve the climate crisis.**

On the one hand we have rising temperatures and increasingly severe environmental impacts, and on the other we have new technologies and enormous scientific and human resources. But our economic system cannot match the solution to the problem unless there's profit to be made.

In addition, imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism, where a small number of powerful states dominate and exploit the rest, has an enormous effect. In general these nations are the great

historic polluters, but they refused to listen to the pleas of the great majority of countries already being hit by climate catastrophe.

COP29, the 'finance COP' designed precisely to help these countries, nearly collapsed under the weight of these contradictions. Finally, 33 hours after the deadline and multiple walkouts, countries of the Global South accepted what the representative from India dismissed as 'a paltry sum'.

It promised less than a quarter of the funding required to deal with the effects of climate change and fund the transition to renewable energy. The African Group of Negotiators described the final pledge as 'too little, too late'.

## THE RAIN IN SPAIN

## Floods unleash storm of protest

**On 29 October Southeastern Spain, especially the province of Valencia, was hit by a devastating flood disaster. The masses of water were unimaginable, with up to 490 litres of rainfall per square metre—as much as usually falls in a year.**

In some buildings the water was up to the first floor. Cars were piled up by the water pressure and some are still blocking roads, with some areas initially inaccessible to rescue workers.

Many were stuck in their cars for days; others were locked in their homes. Some spent the night on rooftops and were cut off from all communication while waiting for help. The destruction led to the collapse of roads and highways, mobile communications and telephone connections.

As many as 150,000 people had no electricity. In an industrial area not far from Valencia's port, where about 20,000 people work, all 1,400 warehouses were flooded, with workers on the ground floor unable to save themselves. More than 200 people have died; almost 80 are missing; many have lost everything.

Almost two weeks after the disaster, many streets in the more than 60 hard-hit municipalities in Valencia were still covered with stinking mud. Garbage and broken furniture are piling up. In the meantime, the search for victims is concentrated on underground car parks and other flooded subterranean facilities. Almost one million people are affected, the largest natural disaster ever to occur in modern Spain.

Solidarity has been enormous. Many people donated food, money and home cooked meals. Thousands could be seen on the streets, on the way to the villages, armed with brooms and rubber boots to help clean up.

But there is considerable criticism of the state's

disaster management. In many cases the regional government issued severe weather warnings and stay at home requests far too late. Valencia's Prime Minister Carlos Mazón is a member of the right wing conservative Partido Popular. One of his first acts in office was to abolish the emergency unit, which had only recently been introduced to respond to natural disasters, citing 'unnecessary costs'. Meanwhile, right wing extremist coalition partner Vox denies climate change.

### Popular outrage

Instead of organising the necessary aid Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez of the social democratic Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE), Mazón and King Felipe VI visited Paiporta, one of the worst-affected villages, the following Sunday. They were greeted by angry residents and volunteers with fistfuls of mud and shouts of 'murderer!', 'resign!' and 'grab a shovel and lend a hand!'. The anger of local residents is more than understandable.

The first aid package announced by Sánchez, a week after the disaster, is too late and completely inadequate. While it contains some important relief measures, such as financial support for the repair of damaged apartments or the purchase of new furniture, it is centrally concerned with saving companies.

It includes tax exemptions and aid for large companies, paid for with public money. The regional government's demand was €31bn, but Madrid has provided only €10.6bn so far. Long-term adaptations to climate change will also be necessary, costing many billions more.

Much criticism has also been directed at companies that did not warn their workers in time or forced them to work. Employees of Intidex, one of Spain's largest fast fashion companies, did not notice the weather warnings because they are not

### Climate injustice

The year 2023 was the hottest on record, a dubious honour that 2024 is likely to surpass. Despite the Paris Agreement of 2015, which aimed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees celsius above pre-industrial levels, temperatures have already exceeded this critical threshold. The effects are most acutely felt in the Global South, where countries are on the frontline of climate-induced disasters, but the bulk of carbon emissions have been generated in the Global North.

Each country's delegation, of course, represented its own short-term economic interests. One of the most contentious points at COP29 was the opposition from Saudi Arabia and other fossil fuel exporters to any measures aimed at transitioning away from carbon. In a scandal now overshadowed by the main business of the conference, the chief executive of Azerbaijan's COP29 team, Elnur Soltanov, was filmed discussing 'investment opportunities' in the state oil and gas company with a man posing as a potential investor.

It is widely accepted that \$1.3 trillion annually is required by the Global South, however, the deal commits the Global North to providing just \$300 billion per year. Much of this is expected to be in loans rather than grants—some is even supposed to be generated from private investors—further exacerbating the indebtedness of the Global South and the stranglehold of financial institutions and wealthy nations.

Panama's lead negotiator Juan Carlos Monterrey Gomez aptly described these amounts as 'outrageous, evil, and remorseless,' stating, 'They offer crumbs while we bury the dead.'

While the final deal acknowledges the need for the \$1.3 trillion figure, those countries that signed up will only be committed to providing £300 billion. How long the second most polluting and richest country in the world, the US, will stay committed is up to climate denier Donald Trump.

This glaring shortfall has led organisations like WaterAid and Greenpeace to describe the agreement as 'a death sentence for millions' and 'woefully inadequate,' respectively. Even the \$300 billion cannot be relied upon, as the wealthy countries have failed to honour their 2009

commitment to provide \$100 billion per year.

### Rising climate-scepticism

Many of the leaders of the imperialist states were conspicuously absent from the conference: the US, France, Russia and China all declined to send their heads of state, as did India. The elephant in the room at COP29 was Trump's electoral victory, and the likelihood that he will once again withdraw from the Paris Agreement.

His climate-scepticism, matched by Argentina's Javier Milei and other right wing populist leaders, reflects the fact that the costs of climate change are being forced not only onto the Global South but also onto the working and middle classes in the Global North. The backlash has fed into the rise of the populist right.

It is worth noting that a number of European right-wing leaders such as Hungary's Victor Orban and Italy's Giorgia Meloni attended the conference, but with their own agenda. Italy is focused on preventing an increase in migration resulting from environmental degradation. Meanwhile Orban is eyeing up the growing markets in 'electric vehicle development and electricity storage'.

The inability of COP29 to secure adequate funding and meaningful commitments underscores a larger issue: the capitalist system is inherently incapable of solving the climate crisis. The global working class, through their unions and parties, must lead small farmers, peasants and the rural and urban poor in a struggle to take hold of the economic and industrial levers that can achieve a truly just transition, not only to save but also to change the world.

But the outcomes of COP29 demonstrate how hard we must also fight under the current system for every inadequate measure, and then fight to defend it against not just the incursions of the market but also rising nationalism and climate-scepticism. The struggle for socialism is inexorably bound up with the struggle for climate justice and we cannot have one without the other. ■

*By Rebecca Anderson*

allowed to use their mobile phones while working.

Other companies did not send workers home early enough or even insisted that workers come to work despite heavy rain warnings. The commute thus became fatal for many. When young people shouted at Mercadona boss Juan Roig that he had sent his workers to their deaths, because he forced them to work despite severe weather warnings, he responded with insults.

The response from the unions has been pathetic—a ten minute strike, and that's it! The leaderships of the three largest unions, UGT, CCOO and USO (Unión General de Trabajadores, Comisiones Obreras, Unión Sindical Obrera), do not want a real struggle, but rather to work with those who are responsible for the disaster.

On 9 November 130,000 demonstrated in Valencia. Twenty social and trade union organisations called on the regional government to stand in front of the legislature so they could be held accountable. Symbolically the protesters wrote 'Mazón, resign!' with mud on the city's town hall.

One poster, for example, read, 'Fewer bullfights, more civilian emergency aid!' and in some places protesters shouted, 'Long live the struggle of the working class!'. A demonstration also took place in Madrid the following weekend. In Barcelona and Castellón, there were protests demanding Carlos Mazón's resignation the week before.

Floods like this are becoming increasingly common. Whereas this phenomenon used to occur every 15 years, today it occurs every 5 years. These have also become larger in recent years and no longer remain locally limited. Meanwhile, the far right Vox party talks about 'environmental fanaticism' and the PP embraces this to a large extent. Economic interests are placed above the protection of the population and the climate.

Events like these not only provide opportunities to expose the climate deniers and push back against the far right, they also, as can be seen, generate political action against the criminal capitalist governments that have done nothing to prepare for the inevitable disasters. Socialists, ecologists and trade unionists must seize these moments, providing leadership to the spontaneous

outbursts, to force the politicians and bosses to pay for urgent support and long term changes.

### What would it take?

Most immediately accommodation for all people must be provided. Vacant houses or hotels should be used for this purpose. Rents and other expenses must be suspended, and paid leave provided until work can resume. It will take time and financial resources for the population to rebuild their lives and recover from the shock and tragedy. Emergency payments for salvage work and reconstruction must be increased considerably.

Those responsible such as Mazón, Sánchez and Mercadona boss Juan Roig must be held accountable. An independent investigation, under the control of the aggrieved workers, is needed to reveal errors and name omissions.

Disaster management must be properly resourced, requiring many specialized, well-trained and equipped full-time staff and massive investment, as well as efficient flood protection, together with a climate protection programme worthy of its name. This means a large-scale restructuring that prepares the water infrastructure for new hazards.

The entire built environment must become more resilient—a turnaround in energy, transport and construction is necessary, among other things. A plan must be drawn up that restructures all sectors, with the goal of ecologically sustainable development under the control of the wage-dependent masses.

The billions that are required must be taken from the climate profiteers and not the working class. Building on the recent protests, anger against the corporations and governments must be channelled into a rediscovery of the class struggle.

Last but not least, we must fight internationally for a socialist revolution, because only by overcoming capitalism and introducing democratic planning can the ecological catastrophe still perhaps be averted or at least mitigated. ■

*By Frieda Koppler*





ANTI\*CAPITALIST RESISTANCE

## Ecosocialism: a Trotskyist critique

A review of *Ecosocialist Revolution: A Manifesto*,  
Anti\*Capitalist Resistance, July 2024.

**The Ecosocialism 2024 conference will take place on 7 December at London South Bank University. Anti\*Capitalist Resistance, a British observer organisation to the Fourth International (USFI), is the driving force behind the conference. And therefore, it is likely that the ideas in the ACR's recent pamphlet *Ecosocialist revolution: a manifesto* will be prominent at it.**

The comrades are to be congratulated for organising the conference, without which there would be virtually no gathering of ecologists and socialists in Britain this year. This is despite the fact that we have just witnessed the two hottest years in history and the passing of the recognised tipping point of 1.5C of global temperatures above the pre-industrial average. At the same time, COP 29 and the Plastic Waste conference have demonstrated the uselessness of expecting the great pollution producing states to reform themselves. An urgent call to arms to the forces who can take action is therefore necessary.

The manifesto, which was adopted by an ACR conference in June, demands an 'alternative to the destruction of capital... based on the collective democratic power of producers and consumers... in a sustainable relationship to other life forms and the environment'. It calls this new society 'ecosocialism'.

The pamphlet provides a number of useful facts, e.g. carbon capture and storage technology (CCS) would take 340 years to remove the CO<sub>2</sub> emitted in seven years by just one oil company. It clearly illustrates the interlocking threat to the environment posed by capitalism, e.g. the covid pandemic, pollution, drought and famine, and the breaching of six of the nine 'planetary boundaries' whose destructive feedback loops threaten disaster for humanity and the natural world as we know it.

The manifesto also gives a useful summary of how capitalist political economy, driven by the profit motive, is inherently destructive of the environment and incapable of the rational, co-operative planning needed to tackle the climate crisis. It critiques the inadequacies of 'green capitalism', its 'New Deals' and the cynical lies behind 'greenwashing', exposing the utopian idea that the world can transition to a 'clean, green' economy while preserving the colonial relations of exploitation that plunder the global south to prop up living standards in the north.

### Reform and revolution

The climate crisis means that the choice of 'socialism or barbarism' is posed more acutely than ever since it was first posed by Rosa Luxemburg in the midst of the horrors of WW1.

The manifesto clearly denounces reforms and illustrates the need to transform the relations of production bequeathed to us by capitalism.

The manifesto correctly critiques the reformism of the Labour party and trade union leaders, who are 'integrated into capitalism' and 'seek to reform it' but are themselves 'reformed' and turned into 'neutered organisations obedient to capital'.

The limits imposed by the straitjacket of capitalism and the world's division into rival nation states dominated by imperialist powers have been amply demonstrated by the farcical degeneration of the COP process.

In noting their rejection of 'the old productivism of 20th century Stalinism and Social Democracy', that is, production for production's sake, the manifesto goes on to observe that we cannot 'simply lay hold of the readymade economic machinery and use it for socialism'.

This is the basis for the need for democratic socialist planning to be based on real workers' democracy embodied in a workers' state, to avoid the disaster of the bureaucratic planning in the USSR and other states like Cuba or North Korea where capitalism has been suppressed, but the working class deprived of political power by a bureaucratic caste.

There is a critique of so-called 'degrowth theory' which argues that the developed world (and the world in general) produces and consumes too much and sustainability can only be achieved and maintained by shrinking our economies, but, as Fourth International theorist Michael Löwy points out, this 'does not define what kind of society will replace the present system' and tends to 'ignore the issue of capitalism'.

The manifesto is right to observe that the foundations of the entire capitalist economy are geared towards accumulating profit for competing capitalists and their blocs and nations. This is the basis of overaccumulation, waste, want and economic crisis. The socialised economy (i.e. one based on common ownership of the means of production and the suppression of the law of value), will have to start with the forces of production, and their methods of organisation and integration, bequeathed to us by capitalism.

The manifesto asserts that we cannot 'simply lay hold of the readymade economic machinery and use it for socialism'. This is a revision of Marx's famous observation that the working class cannot 'simply lay hold of the readymade state machinery and wield it for its own purposes'.

The working class and the oppressed will have to start the building of socialism with the 'readymade economic machinery': the factories, banks,

the supermarkets chains that they can take from the capitalists. They cannot invent completely new forces of production. For huge swathes of humanity, billions of people living without adequate housing, energy, jobs, sanitation, medicine, etc., the urgent need is for growth, an increase in the useful products they need.

Of course, the working class will rapidly transform the forces of production during a period of transition, starting with the most destructive parts of those forces, like fossil fuels and single use plastics. But they cannot simply dismantle them; after all, the working class, or more abstractly, human labour, is one of the forces of production. The problem lies with the relations of production, the rule of a tiny handful of property owners, who exploit for their profit the mass of propertyless labourers.

Since the capitalists cannot give up their control without a fight, and in any case, since capitalism cannot abandon or suppress the logic of competition and accumulation, 'reform' whether led by market-mechanisms or otherwise, is rendered utopian when faced with the scale of the task posed by climate breakdown.

### State and revolution

But, if the existing relations of production undoubtedly have to be transformed, that is inconceivable without a struggle to control them. As Marx pointed out after the first experience of working class power in the Paris commune, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes."

The manifesto devotes considerable attention to the need for a 'new form' of democracy, bridging the artificial gap between 'politics', 'the economy' and social life.

So, while the comrades emphasise the centrality of the working class and the trade unions to a struggle for a radically different model of social relations, and pose the need for an 'ecosocialist International to unite revolutionary forces globally as part of a strategy to combat international capitalism', the reader searches in vain for a strategy—an interlinked system of slogans, tactics and organisations of struggle—by which this 'ecosocialist revolution' is to be carried out.

While they rightly give short shrift to the undemocratic concept of Citizens' Assemblies, promoted by Extinction Rebellion, they insert in its place the idea of 'forums... rooted in our communities and workplaces [that] need political power... to socialise property and take over businesses and banks'.

It continues: 'We favour a mass movement coordinated internationally that struggles for immediate reforms but also looks to a different kind of world.'

But it is the relationship between that future model of organisation and the present organisation of the class struggle that is filled with a void.

How can we ensure that the ideas that win out in such forums go beyond reforming capitalism? How can they be organised to prevent them becoming bureaucratic obstacles to the movement? And how are the forums to impose their will against the state machinery that would fight, arms in hand, to defend the capitalists' property and wealth?

It does go on to note:

'The capitalist state (in our case Parliament or the devolved legislatures) as it exists is incapable of implementing the transformative anticapitalist plan required' and that, 'we need a new kind political power, based on a mass popular participatory democracy that we are fighting for in the existing social movements and workers' struggles... We challenge the 'sovereignty' of Parliament and seek to replace it with more direct democracy in workplaces and communities.'

But the capitalist state is not just parliament. Marxists argue that in the final analysis the state consists of 'special bodies of armed men' (Engels), which need to be confronted in a forcible revolution. This analysis presents all revolutionaries who wish to overthrow this rule and replace it with the rule of the working class, through what revolutionary communists

call workers' councils (soviets), but which this manifesto prefers to call 'democratic forums', with the fundamental question: how can we take the working class from today's struggles to the 'smashing of the state'?

This question is not only not answered, it is not even posed.

This is illustrated most clearly as we come to the end of the document, where an 'Emergency Plan' to address the climate crisis is outlined.

This consists of a list of measures that the future 'movement' should fight for, such as 'socialisation of the land', 'a universal basic income' and 'higher wages and better social security for everyone', and notes that these would only be possible 'when large parts of the economy have been socialised, removed from the private sector and begun to be organised under a plan for society based on participatory democracy.'

What kind of government could carry out such measures? How would it overcome the resistance of the capitalists and their state? Extinction Rebellion has failed to persuade the bosses to surrender their control over environmental policy to 'Citizens' Assemblies'—how will the working class get them to surrender control to 'participatory democracy'?

What is missing is a transitional programme of interlocking demands—for rank and file control of the unions, workers' control of production, etc.—leaving the maximum demand for 'political power' completely disconnected from the day-to-day struggle for reforms within the system.

It is exactly this question, how to lead the working class to the overthrow of capitalist property relations, that the manifesto does not answer.

So, while the manifesto acknowledges the need for a 'revolution' to get rid of capitalism, it does so formalistically, in the abstract, without demonstrating the why and the how.

Instead, we are left with an abstract call for forums, that can be the basis of a future post-capitalist government. But the whole history of such bodies shows that a) they emerge out of, and must be argued for within, the immediate need to organise struggles TODAY, and b) that they do not themselves, spontaneously, take on the tasks of the revolutionary insurrection, the expropriation of the capitalists, and the suppression of the counter-revolution. For that, a revolutionary communist party and International, and a workers' militia is needed.

In the meantime, we are encouraged to make do with the struggle for radical reforms. In their own words, since the fight to keep the average global temperature below 1.5C is 'already effectively missed' now we must fight to keep it 'below 2C'. Unfortunately 1.5C was not a figure plucked from mid-air; it is a tipping point after which feedback loops turbocharge climate change.

In short, we don't have time for eco-reformism. The fact that revolutionary forces are today too small to lead the struggle to stop the destruction of the planet should only intensify our efforts to develop a concrete programme of action among the working class and the oppressed people of the global south.

That programme should present a strategy for overcoming the bureaucratic obstacles of the reformist organisations, and the military and political resistance of the state. At its heart must be the call for organisations of workers' control that can lead to workers' councils, militia and the planned economy necessary to confront the climate crisis and put an end to the war, oppression and anarchy of capitalism. It is necessary for revolutionaries to say all of this now, to link the full revolutionary strategy with immediate questions, because it is in the struggles of today that the forms of working class power tomorrow are generated. That is the actuality of the revolution.

Marxists, more exactly, centrists, who obscure the sharp edge of their revolutionary programme in favour of reforms, simply because they are not already popular in the ecological movement, do not help, but hinder this struggle. ■



## WOMEN

## Action against femicide

Almost 85,000 women and girls were deliberately killed in 2023—233 per day. Last year's UN report triggered widespread outrage, but the latest statistics, published in November 2024, show little has changed.

More than half of the murders of women take place in the victims' partner or family environment, i.e. in the private sphere. The perpetrators are their husbands, partners, fathers, brothers or supposed friends. The motives range from jealousy and separation anxiety to revenge and the restoration of family 'honour'. The media still downplay these murders as 'family drama', 'acts of jealousy' or 'domestics'. To counteract this, the term 'femicide' is used today, which focuses on the specifically anti-woman violence behind the acts.

### Turkey

In October, a 19-year-old man murdered and beheaded two young women in Istanbul. In response, hundreds of activists took to the streets. They not only hold the perpetrators individually responsible, but also the patriarchy and president Erdogan and his government. Islamist brotherhoods and parts of the governing alliance have repeatedly called for the abolition of laws to protect women from violence.

By September, women's rights organisations had already counted 295 femicides and 184 suspicious deaths in Turkey in 2024. Two thirds of the perpetrators stated that they had killed the women because they wanted to separate or because they had rejected a partnership or marriage.

In 2021, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women. They alleged that this convention promotes homosexuality and undermines so-called 'traditional family values'. This justification makes it clear what role the bourgeois family, consisting of father, mother and children, plays in violence against women.

### South Africa

The links between violence against women and the class system are clearly evident in South Africa, where femicide rates are five times higher than the global average.

More than half of South African women live below the poverty line in the townships, many people live in confined spaces under precarious conditions. They have little chance of buying their way out of financial hardship and dependence on the family.

However, it is important to note that domestic violence is not only a working class issue: risk factors such as stress, change and dependence can also occur in middle-class families. However, the wealthier a man is, the more easily he can avoid prosecution.

### India

India was shaken by the rape and murder of a young medical student at her workplace in August. For years, doctors, 60% of whom are women, have complained about understaffing and a lack of security. In response, more than a million doctors struck to enforce their demands against the government.

It is our task as a revolutionary left to deprive femicides of the economic breeding ground by advocating social improvements and welfare programmes as well as the socialisation of domestic work. This can only be ensured by workers' control over the production and distribution of resources. At the same time, we must organise self-defence wherever necessary, as police across the world systematically fail to prevent violence against women. Such violence is endemic to the capitalist system and can therefore only be overcome by a global, proletarian women's movement that can pave the way for a future free from femicide. ■

By Sani Meier, REVOLUTION



## UKRAINE

## The prospect of an imperialist peace

Donald Trump has promised to end the war, but a great power partition will plant the depth charge of future wars

**Since the Ukrainian incursion into Russia's Kursk region stalled in early October, followed by Putin's forces advancing in the east and south, it is clear that Ukraine will be unable to radically change the situation on the battlefield to its advantage.**

The victory of Donald Trump in the US elections means there is likely to be no substantial increase in arms from abroad after his inauguration on 20 January. Ukraine is running out of resources, including military personnel, while Russia can maintain its offensive with the arrival of North Korean soldiers, despite a huge cost in casualties. In fact, there has been no serious attempt by Ukraine to recover its territory since the counter-offensives of 2023, even the Kursk incursion was rather a means to relieve Russian pressure on the Donetsk front, and provide a bargaining chip in future ceasefire negotiations.

At the same time, Russia's annexations in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson have consolidated Putin's rule at home, with public opposition effectively crushed. This has not always been the case throughout the war, but in the short-term Putin's regime is relatively stable and a victory either on the battlefield or at the negotiating table would further strengthen him.

However, even a peace on the victor's terms would eventually allow for an accounting of the human and economic losses suffered by Russians. Then there will be the cost of rebuilding and integrating the devastated 'conquests'—unless they are merely turned into a giant militarised zone. In addition, there are the ballooning costs of the arms race with the West, whose resources are greater than Russia's.

### The West's war

While the US, Britain and France have allowed Ukraine's use of longer-range weapons on Russian

soil, this will not fundamentally alter the course of the war. If the West really wanted Ukraine to win militarily, it would need to intervene directly. This it has never come near to doing, not only because this would change the character of the war into an inter-imperialist one, which it hitherto has not been, but because to the Western imperialists Ukraine is quite simply not worth starting a world war over, devastating Europe, diverting the US from its 'pivot to the East', i.e. to ramping up tensions with China.

More fundamentally, the war aims of the Western allies have been ambiguous and fluid, reflecting the internal divisions and domestic policy concerns much more than any concerted strategy to confront Russia's aggression towards Ukraine.

Instead the West's strategy was limited to incremental increases in support, driven by diplomatic, rather than military objectives. This was guaranteed to bleed Ukraine to the point of a negotiated peace, or permanent frozen conflict. Far from being motivated by concern for national self-determination, the war has been used to expand Nato further and increase militarisation on its border with Russia, raising the likelihood of an inter-imperialist conflagration while at the same time reducing public spending, whipping up nationalism and attacking civil rights at home. Socialists must consistently denounce Nato and its reactionary war aims.

However, simply noting the imperialist self-interest of the West in arming Ukraine and taking advantage of Russia's invasion to mount their own 'proxy war' does not excuse those on the left who take a neutral stance between the sides in Ukraine and who call for a peace at any price. The price, of course, will be paid by the workers, youth and small farmers who are fighting to defend their country—the people of an oppressed semi-colony—not by the imperialist great powers who are ripping it apart.

Moreover, the new US government does not want to maintain the war and the cost it brings. This is not simply election demagoguery by Trump, as some Ukrainians and their Western supporters desperately hope, but it corresponds to a basic geostrategic orientation of the incoming administration. Biden and the leaders of Britain, Germany and France cannot bind a future Trump administration, nor are most European states either willing or able to provide a substitute for US weapons and dollars.

### The prospects for 'peace'

Given the increasing military pressure on Ukraine at the front and the reported unwillingness of civilians (seeing the fruitlessness of the war and the attacks on their rights by Zelensky) to accept further conscription, things will get much worse in the New Year. A ceasefire, imposed by an agreement between Trump and Putin, is almost inevitable.

It will be impossible for Ukraine to oppose this, since Zelensky and his government have tied themselves to the US and Nato to such an extent that refusing its terms would just lead to losing more and more territory and the prospect of an even worse deal in the end.

Nevertheless, any such deal, whatever its form (it may just start with a temporary ceasefire or armistice), would have a thoroughly reactionary character. It would lead de facto to a partition of Ukraine, with one part occupied by Russia as a colonial territory and the other drifting into subservience to the US and the EU.

Partition would not only increase the national oppression of the undisputed Ukrainian parts under Russian rule, but also violate the self-determination of the Russophone population of the Donbas and Crimea. Large proportions of the population have either fled to the west or been deported to the east. It would also strengthen Russia in the brutally annexed north Caucasus, like Chechnya, and other countries in its sphere of influence, Georgia and Belarus.

It would lead to the permanent loss of several millions of the Ukrainian population or, worse still, to many thousands being driven back from the EU while others become cheap, legally insecure labourers. The economic and natural resources of the country will be further divided up between the West and Russia. Already during the war, Western companies have taken over much of Ukraine's economy, the agrarian sector in particular.

In the event of a reactionary 'peace deal', it is certain that the new cold war will only change its form. This is why the working class movement needs to denounce the imperialist peace from the beginning and oppose it as a further tightening of the national, social and economic oppression of Ukraine. The successor regimes will be far from democracies. It will certainly not be any step towards solving the underlying national questions, nor will it lessen the inter-imperialist tensions.

Whether Zelensky's government can survive this is a different, but secondary question, though Klitschko and the opposition in the Ukrainian parliament will hardly be in a position to mount a successful rejectionist alternative. The Ukrainian bourgeoisie will go along with this and they may even ally themselves to Trump, rather than the EU, or be blackmailed into such an alliance, with the US offering to 'secure' what is left of the Ukrainian state as part of the deal. An acceleration of the arms race by the US, the EU and Russia will certainly accompany the 'peace'.

### No to a robber's deal

In short an imperialist peace in Ukraine will only lay the explosive charges for a future war or wars even more destructive than this one. That is why the international workers' movement, including class conscious workers in Russia, must denounce such a 'deal' as a robber's peace. Putin's grasp will weaken as the true and terrible costs of this war become clear.

Ukrainian workers should refuse to endorse the validity of this peace, demand the imperialist powers that fomented and encouraged this war pay for reconstruction. The Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs must be forced to pay for the enormous costs of reconstruction of homes and infrastructure. Workers in both Russia and Ukraine need to fight for workers' governments, and for a socialist federation of the states of the whole region. ■

By Dave Stockton



## BOOK REVIEW

## The voices of revolutionary women, from Vietnam to El Salvador

*She Who Struggles: Revolutionary Women Who Shaped the World* edited by Marral Shamshiri and Sorcha Thomson, Pluto Press, 2023, 228 pages, £16.99

BY URSULA KEMPE

**This accessible book is based on personal testimonies and interviews, written autobiographies and historical sources. It covers the period from the nineteenth-century to the present day, examining the experiences of women revolutionaries who struggled against colonialism and imperialism.**

The book features women from Palestine, Vietnam, Iran, Pakistan, El Salvador, Cuba, South Africa, Ghana and Mali. What it does valuably is to shine a light on women who have been largely ignored in favour of male leaders like Castro, Che Guevara, Mao, Lenin, Yasser Arafat and Nelson Mandela. An important thread which runs through the book is the way in which time after time the struggle for women's rights was subordinated to the struggle for national liberation, just as all too often women were subservient to men in 'normal' everyday life.

Some of the women accepted this view, believing that their very participation in the armed struggle sufficiently demonstrated that the fight for women's freedom was part of the liberation movement as a whole. Many thought that in the throes of the battle the 'woman question' (the revolutionary programme to achieve the liberation of women) was a 'diversion' (p.180).

Proponents of the Stalinist stages theory argued that the revolution must first achieve national liberation, then address social oppression, religious persecution, ethnic discrimination, etc. and finally, if we are fortunate, overthrow the bourgeoisie. We only need to look at the vast inequalities in South Africa today, where the ANC did not have the political programme or will to proceed towards the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. Trotsky called such a programme permanent revolution.

The political organisations to which many of the women featured in this book belonged

were Stalinists or Maoists. Their tactics included underground guerrilla sabotage, bombings, hijackings, bank robberies, police assassinations and even 'terrorist' attacks. These tactics are typical of Stalinist and Maoist currents, particularly in countries subjugated by imperialism where few democratic freedoms have been won.

The book highlights the bravery of women revolutionaries who took up these struggles, such as Sara in Kurdistan (imprisoned and tortured) and Marziyeh in Iran (murdered in the street by secret police in 1974).

The sixth chapter on Vietnam and Iran makes clear the blind spots on the Iranian left in relation to women's oppression. Sadly these attitudes can still be found today.

In an interview Pakistani socialist feminist Ismat Shahjahan, a member of Women's Democratic Front, says that struggles against imperialism, colonialism and women's oppression are all feminist 'because half of humanity is formed by women' and we need to bring together 'struggles of women along class and national lines'.

What this leaves out is the need for working class and national liberation movements to take up women's demands, as well as women joining their ranks.

In a similar vein, in the Indian street-play of 1979 *Aurat/Woman* by Safdar Hashmi, a member of the Indian Communist Party, bourgeois notions of woman's roles are criticised. It proclaims, 'without women, there would be no reproduction, no labour-power and thus no capitalism'. While perhaps intended as a call to

arms and a proud assertion of the importance of women's role in reproduction, this could reinforce rather than undermine a gendered division of labour.

In many semi-colonies the lack of democracy, military dictatorships, religious and ethnic persecution, illiteracy, limited rights to land, and social and cultural oppression make the work of socialists far more difficult. Many of the socialist feminists mentioned in this book have tried in difficult circumstances to struggle for women's rights. For example, in India large numbers of women are raped and even killed when they have to go away from their homes to try to find a place to go to the toilet.

Another country explored in the book is Mali (former colony, French Soudan). Activist Aoua Keita describes how decades ago she joined a Pan-Africanist Party to fight for women's rights and improved healthcare. Tensions were apparent between women activists and the trade unions, as well as the male-led national liberation movement, who consistently undermined the women's movement in 1959-60.

This included their opposition to women campaigning against polygamy (men having several wives). Even some women were concerned about getting rid of polygamy, as they were afraid they would have no economic support and nowhere to live.

Not mentioned in this chapter on Mali is the subject of female genital mutilation (FGM), a practice that is common and has been for at least five decades. The country has no law against it and an estimated 9 out of ten women have undergone this painful, dangerous and life-altering procedure.

This well-researched collection of essays and interviews sheds light on the struggles

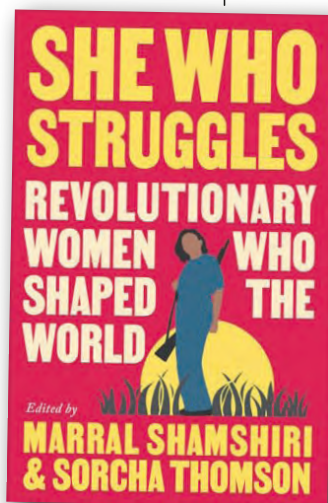
of socialist feminists who tried to integrate the struggle for women's rights in the more general struggles for national liberation from imperialism. Despite the limitations of the political organisations these women supported, they risked privations, sexism, and sometimes torture, imprisonment and death to struggle against colonialism and imperialism. Many also actively solidarised with national liberation struggles in other countries.

We learn from this book that much remains to free women and other oppressed groups from exploitation, violence and discrimination. In the semi-colonial world there are clear links between colonialism, and gender-based and sexual oppression, with many discriminatory laws and practices originating in colonialism and the import of Christianity.

To ignore the burning need for women's liberation in the struggle for national liberation and socialism weakens and divides those movements in the name of a shallow 'unity' and commitment to a failed schema for the stages of revolutionary struggle.

But neither should we be complacent here in the 'enlightened' West that attitudes and behaviour towards women activists or action to fight for their causes are that much better. Look at the scandals of sexual harassment and exclusion in the GMB, TSSA and RMT, not to mention the Labour Party and many others, including the far left. Nor has the labour movement taken up the social and economic issues of women as forcefully as they should.

An international revolutionary movement needs to be built with a programme that addresses the needs of all the oppressed, from the right to self-determination to the individual right to bodily autonomy, and links these to the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system. A programme that ignores these burning democratic questions and instead demands the oppressed wait for socialism will never reach its goal. ■



## ARTS REVIEW

## Working in the shadows

*Hard Graft: Work, Health and Rights*, Wellcome Collection, London.

BY AGNES FINNIE

**This very interesting and sometimes shocking exhibition displays a variety of artistic media, from installations to sculptures and magazines. Its subject is the effects of work on the human body. It focuses on marginalised workers with few citizenship or employment rights. The show is organised around three workplaces: the plantation, the street, and the home.**

The plantation exhibit looks at slave plantations and contemporary versions which, although not worked on by enslaved people, have few safeguards.

For example, the photographs of tea gardens in Bangladesh by Fazia Rabbi Fatiq show the injuries suffered by workers who earn £1.13 a day: an eye damaged by chemicals, a hand crushed by a machine. The workers have no right to own land.

Among the post-plantation works is a beautiful embroidery on a large mosquito net by Vivian Caccini, *Mosquito Shrine*, 2018. Mosquitos travelled on slave ships to Brazil in the 16th century, thriving in plantation conditions, then spreading disease across the Americas, a process made worse by deforestation.

The exhibition by Forensic Architecture, a video, sets out the many ways in which petrochemical companies in a mainly Black district of Louisiana have poisoned the earth, ruined the health of Black communities and erased traces of enslaved people's burial grounds.

One of the most impressive works in the section on street work – selling food, collecting rubbish, cleaning streets, sex work, etc. – is a video *Lxs Rifadxs de la Basura*, *Waste Superheroes*, by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). It features the testimonies of 'volunteer' rubbish collectors, both male and female, in Mexico City.

These workers are paid no wages at all and rely on tips; they are not allowed to ask for money. They have to deal with needles, and animal poo which must be separated from their 'doggie bags'. Just watching makes the viewer so angry – but then again, there is plenty in this exhibition to be angry about.

Also in the street section is a chapel/monument to sex workers, its setting chosen because sex workers have sometimes sought refuge in churches to protest, or just to get off the streets.

The final section, the home, documents various struggles for wages for housework. This last section includes a sculpture of a Caribbean washerwoman



whose hands are damaged by harsh cleaning products and decades of hard work.

One piece of work, *Our Journey*, 2019, documents the testimony of migrant domestic workers (in fact slaves) in the UK. The women give emotional testimonies. They are effectively kept as prisoners, paid next to nothing, spat on and physically abused, without enough time to sleep properly.

One woman was allowed to go outside for only two hours a month. Some managed to escape, one wearing pyjamas and a coat. However, when they approach the authorities they are seen as trafficked people, not as workers with rights. They are sent back to the poverty they came from, without any justice or wages.

Many important issues are raised in this exhibition, workers' (lack of) rights being the most

obvious. All migrants and asylum seekers should have the right to work in proper jobs upon arrival, to join a trade union of their choice, and to be paid the same wages as other workers.

In countries previously colonised or where slavery existed, inequalities are even more severe. Corruption and crippling international debts leave many simply eking out an existence. These debts must be cancelled as part of reparations for the exploitation and slavery by European powers. Modern-day slavery must end.

All forms of work should be recognised as labour and paid for. Bosses and governments should provide free child-care and laundry facilities, as well as good quality neighbourhood canteens so that necessary domestic labour, such as cleaning, cooking and caring, can be massively reduced. ■



## Lebanon ceasefire allows Israel time to finish its genocide in Gaza

Before Trump's inauguration brings new pressure for a ceasefire in the new year, Israel will attempt to complete the ethnic cleansing of northern Gaza

On 26 November, Joe Biden claimed the credit for the ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah. Mike Waltz, president-elect Donald Trump's nominated national security adviser, immediately retorted, 'everyone is coming to the table because of President Trump,' adding, 'his resounding victory sent a clear message to the rest of the world that chaos won't be tolerated.'

What is clear is that the moment US imperialism is no longer divided by electoral considerations, and speaks with a united voice, Israel obeys. It was one thing to allow, even encourage Israel to degrade Hezbollah as an Iranian asset, but when it turned to the Gaza-fication of Lebanon, potentially wrecking the North American and European powers' strategic plans for the Middle East, the US was obliged to assert red lines that it is unwilling or unable to enforce in Gaza.

Certainly, Biden was right in calling it a 'devastating' conflict, though of course nowhere near as devastating as the one under way in Gaza. In Lebanon over 3,000 civilians have been killed and well over a million forcibly displaced, 886,000 within Lebanon and 540,000 to Syria.

Some 99,000 housing units have been partially or fully destroyed at an estimated cost of \$2.8 billion, according to the World Bank. The same report estimated damage to the country's agriculture at \$1.1 billion owing to the lost harvest, the destruction of crops and driving out of the farmers. The IDF has destroyed 39 villages south of the Litani.

The ceasefire agreement is meant to see an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanese territory and an end to their airstrikes, while Hezbollah is to move its fighters north of the Litani. The Lebanese Army and Unifil (the UN Force in Lebanon) are to occupy the 20km zone between the border and the river.

It should not be forgotten that the intensified war started when Israel's Mossad managed to insert explosives into pagers and walkie-talkies, indiscriminately killing and injuring men, women and children, not just Hezbollah fighters. For good measure the IDF assassinated a number of the organisation's top figures, including Hassan Nasrallah, its leader since 1992.

But its successes were all early ones. Hezbollah rocket attacks continued and hit Tel Aviv and Haifa deep inside Israel, with the Iron Dome unable to stop all of them. The ground invasion proved much less successful. The IDF suffered serious casualties and the prospect of getting into a costly quagmire loomed. Billed as designed to 'finish them off', Netanyahu has had to be satisfied with only 'significantly degrading' them.

The expansion of the war onto Lebanese territory was fellow war criminal Yoav Gallant's idea; Netanyahu always wanted to focus on



Gaza and the West Bank. Now he has dismissed Gallant from his cabinet, he can dismiss the project as solely Gallant's and return to his primary objective: the genocide of the Palestinians and the ethnic cleansing of northern Gaza in preparation for resettlement.

### The genocide goes on

In Gaza Israel is plainly some distance from its stated aim of 'destroying Hamas'. True, Israel's war in Gaza still retains the backing of Genocide Joe. Between 7 October 2023 and 30 September 2024 Washington provided Israel with \$17.9 billion in military aid, a record amount, on top of the annual military subsidy it provides.

The main damage has been done to Israel's undeserved reputation as 'the only democracy in the Middle East'. Western claims to represent a 'rules-based order' have been exposed as meaning, 'rules for our enemies, but not for us or our allies'. The US quickly dismissed the arrest warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant issued by the International Criminal Court and used its veto at the UN to prevent the Security Council calling for a ceasefire in Gaza.

On 25 November, Save the Children reported that since 6 October 2024, when Israeli forces declared northern Gaza a closed military zone, 130,000 children under the age of 10 have been trapped for 50 days without access to aid workers, food, clean water or medical supplies, despite warnings of famine.

Trump has several times indicated he wants the war in Gaza ended by the time he is sworn

in on 20 January. If this is in fact what Trump is pressing for, then Netanyahu may use the time to 'clear' the 400,000 people still in north. However, any ceasefire that does not include substantial territorial gains and control of Gaza will sharpen conflict inside the Israeli war cabinet.

### Resistance

The 22nd national demonstration for Gaza in London saw diminishing numbers on the streets—despite the claims of organisers that 'hundreds of thousands' continue to turn out. At the same time the labour movement, above all the Labour-affiliated trade unions, remain conspicuously and disgracefully absent.

Rank and file activists in the unions need to step up their efforts to demand their unions honour their own formal commitment to BDS, and, more importantly, their obligation to the Palestinian trade unions who have appealed for direct action to cut the oxygen of western military, economic and diplomatic support upon which its genocide and occupation depend.

We should throw the labour movement's resources into demanding the government take action to enforce an immediate ceasefire, including the withdrawal of all IDF forces from Gaza and the unimpeded access to aid. In addition, we must demand the immediate cessation of all arms supplies to, and investment in Israel. ■

By Dave Stockton

### ALEPPO LIBERATED

## Down with Assad's dictatorship! Victory to the Syrian revolution!

At the end of November, Syrian opposition fighters, predominantly from the Islamist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), together with remaining units of the Free Syrian Army, captured Aleppo, Syria's second city, with government ground forces beating a hasty retreat. Rebels tore down statues and other symbols of Bashar al-Assad's brutal rule.

There are reports they have also advanced towards Hama, the country's third city, and the town of Kafr Nabl, both places well known in the past for their opposition to the Assad regime.

In the civil war, Russian air power was crucial in crushing the pro-democracy forces. Hezbollah and Iranian ground forces also intervened to support the tottering Ba'athist state. Today, it is clear that the severe damage wrought to Hezbollah and Iran by Israeli attacks, plus Russia's prolonged war in Ukraine, has created a window of opportunity for the HTS forces.

Though the HTS was once affiliated to Al-Qaeda, it broke with them in 2017-18 and has since waged a war against them. It has been pursuing what it calls 'Syrianisation', based on establishing a civilian administration that provides services and connects to humanitarian organisations in Idlib.

It coordinates with the Free Syrian Army, which is not an Islamist force. None of this stops Stalinist organs like Britain's *Morning Star* from claiming that HTS is still tied to Al-Qaeda or that Assad and Putin's regimes form part of some sort of anti-imperialist camp.

What attitude should genuine socialists take to this flare up in the Syrian civil war? Certainly, there is no reason to wish to see HTS replace Assad with any sort of Islamic regime. But if their coalition forces bring down the regime and are able to force the withdrawal of Russian imperialism's murderous air forces, this could allow Syria's refugees to return and the struggle for democracy, workers' rights, and socialism to resume.

A potential problem is the role of Syria's Kurds in Rojava, who are regularly attacked by Türkiye because of their links to the PKK. Since 2014, the US has provided air support for the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) as part of the fight against the Islamic State group (IS). The YPG stood aside from the Syrian revolution and the BBC reports that they may attack the HTS, objectively allying with Assad.

These destructive contradictions can only be finally and permanently overcome by a leadership which is founded on proletarian internationalism. The fight for equal democratic rights for oppressed nationalities, women, workers, all religions can become stepping stones to a socialist Syria within a federation of socialist states of the Middle East.

Meanwhile all progressive forces living in both the 'Eastern' and 'Western' imperialist camps must fight for the withdrawal of their states' forces from the region and the end of the fearful genocide in Gaza. ■

By Dave Stockton