

## COLD WINTER OF REACTION

It is not just the weather that is rubbish. An icy wind of political reaction is blowing all over Britain and Europe. Everyone can see that on the job, the fighting mood of last year has given way to resignation. Inflation is supposed to be down, but the end of the month is only getting harder. Many are looking at their meagre payslip wondering how a few percentage points can even come close to making up for the worsening conditions. The NHS, schools, rail, housing are still crumbling, but no one is talking about that any more. Instead, Labour and the Tories both promise to attack working people and are having a pissing contest over who can better brutalise and deport migrants.

The truth is that the trade unions are weaker and more discredited than before last year's strike wave. In many workplaces, bosses are taking advantage by pushing speed-up, increased workloads, unsafe conditions and redundancies. If you are unhappy, you can shut up or leave, and if you have a meltdown, the union rep can give you a hug.

If that weren't enough, Israel's murderous blitzkrieg on Gaza has only added to the gloom. While hundreds of thousands have joined protests, in workplaces this war is fuelling a climate not of resistance but of division and repression. Standing up against genocide means risking your job and being branded an anti-Semite. Opposing Hamas means to risk being seen as a supporter of Israel. Since no trade union or Labour leader is willing to take a serious stance for Palestine (tepid speeches for peace on Saturdays do not count), there is a profound sense of powerlessness. No wonder many at work prefer to just avoid the subject. "Keep calm, carry on and everyone for themselves." Welcome to Britain's cold winter of reaction.

### Defeat of strike wave looms large

Stumbling in this icy storm are the various "socialist" groups, each as disoriented as the next. Have you ever tried to make sense of what is going on in Britain by reading the newspapers of the far left? Good luck. The *Morning Star*, *Socialist Worker*, the *Socialist*, *Socialist Appeal* etc all have their own campaign of self-delusion about the current political context, clueless about the task of socialists and mindlessly running around.

To understand the current climate of reaction and the disorientation of the left, one must look to the strike wave. The surge of

### REFORMISTS IN SWIMSUITS



trade union struggles in the autumn and winter of 2022-23 represented the first real opportunity in decades to turn the tide in favour of the working class. With the Tories hanging by a thread, a real offensive by the trade unions could have swept away this rotten government and put Keir Starmer and his clique of Blairites in a chokehold. The strike wave had the potential to halt the destruction of living standards, reverse the war on public services and bring back the organised working class as a real political force.

But this is obviously not what happened. From beginning to end, the strikes were dragged out, undermined and led to defeat. The Tories did not even have to do much. The leaders of the unions themselves, by refusing to organise a real confrontation with the ruling class, were able to demoralise their members and quash the movement. Because of this betrayal, the workers movement, the only force which can fix "broken Britain", was taken out of the political equation, opening the door to reaction. (For a full analysis of this defeat, read "Strike wave faces defeat: leaders to blame—How to rebuild union power", *Workers Hammer* no 250, Summer 2023.)

All the far-left organisations spent the

strike wave cheering the same "left" union leaders, like Mick Lynch or Sharon Graham, who were leading the movement astray. And since then, none of them has been able to tell the simple truth: *the strike wave was defeated, betrayed by its own leaders*. Without this understanding, it is impossible to orient working-class militants or make sense of what is going on in Britain.

### Gaza protests and the left

With no serious lessons drawn, these "socialist" groups stood disarmed as the bloody war on Gaza erupted. They threw themselves into pro-Palestinian activism, mistaking the huge outpouring on the streets for a turn to the left. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP) thinks this is akin to the Vietnam War. Socialist Appeal is running around screaming about "communism" and "intifada until victory". The Socialist Party thinks that the sacking of Suella Braverman is a gain, while everybody knows she orchestrated it to jump out of Sunak's sinking ship. After a summer of stagnation, the pro-Palestinian movement acted like a sugar rush for the left.

What is happening in Gaza is not the Tet Offensive but ethnic cleansing of an

entire people. So, while hundreds of thousands have come out in justified anger, the protests are dominated by liberal outrage and a sense of powerlessness. After the ceasefire (which was the main demand of these marches), the demonstrations and the opposition inside Labour are a shadow of their former selves. For those who remain on the streets, demoralisation sets in.

Had the strike wave been successful, the workers movement would be playing a leading role in the struggle for Palestine, making it harder for the Tories and Labour to support genocide. But because of its defeat, the unions barely play any role. Now, everyone on the left is calling for working-class actions against arms shipments to Israel. But such needed actions face the exact same obstacle as the strike wave: trade union leaders who either openly support British imperialism and Israel or make tepid speeches while refusing to cross the government's red lines. In both cases, the result is the same: the leadership of the unions props up British imperialism.

The task of socialists in the pro-Palestine movement is to attack its liberal illusions, wage war on the pro-Zionist union leaders and fight to reorient the movement in a revolutionary direction. But is this what the left does? Is it saying what needs to be said against the left-Labourites and union leaders? No! Their statements and interventions are all identical in opportunistically tailing the movement. We urge our readers to look at how we fight for a Marxist pole in the Palestinian liberation movement (pages 12 and 9) and see for themselves.

### Left out in the cold

As Britain is going through a winter of reaction, the left is in swimsuits. From the defeat of the strikes to the pro-Palestine marches, it jumps from blunder to defeat with no compass or sense of the current situation and what to do.

The gold star for delusion probably goes to Socialist Appeal, which will soon rebrand itself as the Revolutionary Communist Party. Why? Because "ever-larger layers are looking towards Marxism, revolution, and communism" (*Socialist Appeal*, 17 November). Oh boy... It is one thing to see that the growing crisis of the world order is leading some youth towards more radical ideas. It is another to proclaim the march of communism to be on an unstoppable rise,

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Debate between Spartacist League & Bolshevik Tendency

Ukraine war: What strategy for Marxists?..... p 6

# For united class-struggle defence!

The need for united defence of the left and workers movement against repression by the state and the employers is urgently posed. Demonstrators who oppose Israel's



## Partisan Defence Committee

slaughter of the Palestinians have been arrested for "hate crimes". The Tories are gunning for the unions: emboldened by the defeat of the strike wave, they are going forward with sinister legislation forcing the unions to scab on their own strikes. Added to that, they have imposed sweeping new laws to crush climate protests under which you can be thrown in prison for such activity as obstructing the highway. Things will likely get worse: the country is going to hell and everybody knows the crooked British ruling class is just getting started.

Several left groups have been suppressed for pro-Palestine activity, including Socialist Appeal, Socialist Alternative, the CPGB-ML and FRFI. But when it comes to defending themselves against attack, the left stands divided. Each group organises its own defence, on its own turf, mobilising only its own forces and never collaborating or actively seeking to involve each other in common defence work. Divided we fall!

The Spartacist League has a crazy idea: why don't all the socialist groups get together in a room and plan to *unite* over defence work? Instead of the "business as

usual" sectarian practice of the left, we're proposing that, despite the many political issues that divide us, we should unite to organise protest, publicity and fundraising for the purpose of defence of pro-Palestinian and Just Stop Oil demonstrators.

Such a united-front defence campaign could be a step towards a broader platform for defence work that would reach across the whole workers movement. Its policy must be to place all our faith in the class struggle and none in capitalist politicians, courts or bosses. Uniting all the forces on the left is particularly urgent to defend unions against any penalties or victimisations resulting from the anti-union laws. A common front for defence of the unions and their members is not just a nice idea—there is no other way! The alternative is to place our faith in the TUC to mount a real struggle, which is pure fantasy.

The need for a broad-based defence organisation was clearly shown in 2022 in response to the mass sacking of 800 P&O ferry workers. It was shown during last year's strike wave in which union members were often instructed by their leadership to cross another union's picket lines. A united-front defence organisation would seek to mobilise all union members to defend workers who face victimisation for honouring a picket line, a basic principle of the class struggle.

It was for the purpose of non-sectarian defence that the Spartacist League founded the Partisan Defence Committee,

## Defend CPGB-ML against Zionist witch hunt!

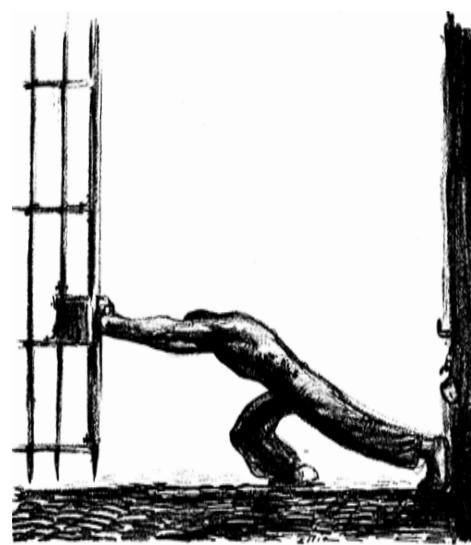
*The SL/B sent the following letter to the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist) on 26 November, the day after four of its members were arrested at a Palestine solidarity demonstration in London. They were released, but under bail conditions severely restricting their right to protest.*

Dear Comrades,

The arrests of your supporters at yesterday's demonstration is an outrage. We in the Spartacist League/Britain stand in solidarity with them and would very much like to take part in their defence. We believe

that it is in the interests of the entire left and the workers movement to protest these arrests and to oppose all state repression against pro-Palestinian demonstrators. As a Trotskyist organisation we obviously have political differences with the CPGB-ML. But we firmly believe in united-front defence of the left and the workers movement. United defence is particularly urgent in today's reactionary climate where pro-Palestinian demonstrators are facing outrageous charges and severe penalties.

Comradely greetings,  
Eibhlin McDonald



Labor Defender

Drawing on cover of first issue of *Labor Defender* (January 1926), journal of Communist-led International Labor Defense in US.

a class-struggle legal and social defence organisation (aptly described as "the Spartacist League in search of a united front"). But our own forces are tiny. It is only through

joint action, uniting broader forces, that we can mobilise union power for defence of the oppressed and exploited when faced with sacking, imprisonment or other forms of victimisation. The example we look to is the International Labor Defense (ILD) that was set up in the 1920s by founders of American communism. James P Cannon, who led the ILD's campaign to save anarchist workers Sacco and Vanzetti from execution in the US, described the policy of class-struggle defence that we support, saying:

"It puts all faith in the power of the masses and no faith whatever in the justice of the courts. While favoring all possible legal proceedings, it calls for agitation, publicity, demonstrations—organized protest on a national and international scale. It calls for unity and solidarity of all workers on this burning issue, regardless of conflicting views on other questions."

—"Who Can Save Sacco and Vanzetti?"  
(*Notebook of an Agitator*, 1958)

We welcome proposals from any group on the left for common defence work. Contact the SL at [workershammer@btconnect.com](mailto:workershammer@btconnect.com) or the Partisan Defence Committee at [pdclondon@btconnect.com](mailto:pdclondon@btconnect.com).

## Free all Just Stop Oil activists!

A vast campaign of repression is underway against Just Stop Oil activists. In November alone, police made at least 630 arrests of climate protesters, with dozens facing draconian jail sentences. For climbing the QE2 bridge, Morgan Trowland got three years and Marcus Decker two years and seven months. Trowland was released, but Decker is still behind bars and, in a sinister move, is now facing the threat of deportation. Activists including Phoebe Plummer, 22, Ella Ward, 20, Ruby Hammill, 19, have been in and out of prison and are still facing draconian sentences. There are dozens more and the list is growing every week. In a letter sent to the group, we wrote: "We believe all charges should be dropped and all Just Stop Oil prisoners should be freed!"

We certainly have fundamental disagreements with the aims and methods of Just Stop Oil. But their supporters are being thrown in jail under the most anti-democratic provisions, which will be used against the socialist and workers movement. So, whatever our disagreements, it is urgent to take a stand!

Donations to the legal defence of Just Stop Oil can be made through the Climate Action Support Pathway (at [mycasp.com](http://mycasp.com)). The Partisan Defence Committee has donated £250 and urges our readers to also contribute. But while donating money is a good start, what is needed is a serious campaign of actions and protests, uniting broad forces, to free those imprisoned and put a stop to this brutal campaign.

## Lift ban on Celtic Green Brigade!

*The following is a 12 December letter sent by the Partisan Defence Committee to the Board of Directors of the Celtic football club in Glasgow.*

The Celtic board's withdrawal of season tickets from supporters of the Green Brigade for what you call "unacceptable behaviour" is a blatant act of political censorship and victimisation. Everyone

knows that the behaviour you object to is their flying of flags and banners at football matches in solidarity with Palestinians being slaughtered in Gaza by Israeli forces, which are backed to the hilt by the British government. We demand that the Green Brigade's tickets be reinstated immediately and that they be compensated for all games they were barred from.

## WORKERS HAMMER

Marxist newspaper of the Spartacist League/Britain  
section of the International Communist League (Fourth Internationalist)

EDITOR: Vincent David • MANAGING EDITOR: R Braxton  
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Spartacist Publications, PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY  
Email: [workershammer@btconnect.com](mailto:workershammer@btconnect.com)  
Subscriptions: £5 for 4 issues, Europe outside Britain & Ireland £7, rest of world £9

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily express the editorial viewpoint.  
The closing date for news in this issue is 19 December 2023.  
Printed by Reach Printing Services (trade union) ISSN 0267-8721



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the Partisan Defence  
Committee!





# NEU lefts up close: opportunism and adventurism

The strike wave came and went. Did the NEU #saveourschools? No. If anything, conditions are worse. Management piles on the workload: more meetings, more marking, more cover work, more observations, more scrutiny overall. There's more of everything *except* real funding. And that pay rise? It's already been eaten up by inflation and rents that keep rising.

The most important outcome of the NEU strike is that the strength of the union has been sapped. Where strike action galvanised hundreds of thousands, now no one talks politics. A mood of resignation prevails in the face of management's onslaught. Yes it's terrible, yes we're angry, but what can we do? And management knows this mood best since they saw more and more members turn from strikers to scabs as the strike dragged into the summer. Rampant scabbing then has given them free rein to run roughshod now. That workers feel they have zero power at work is the surest sign that the first teachers strike in decades was driven into the ground. To understand why and how, it is necessary to begin with an understanding of what was, and is, needed to fight for schools.

## What it will take to fight for schools

A few hours in a state school will educate anyone about the social decay pervading Britain. After learning nothing online for over a year, students are struggling mentally, socially and academically. Behaviour is terrible. Grades are tumbling; literacy and numeracy have taken a dive. Classes keep getting bigger. Teachers are quitting in droves. To top it all off, hundreds of schools might literally collapse.

Management has one solution: crack the whip. More sanctions to make the kids behave better, ignoring the social circumstances causing poor behaviour. Instead of making provisions for growing challenges in learning, teachers must somehow become social workers without training or resources. It's not about good or bad management; the job of management is to implement cuts, which mean layoffs and speed-up. Thus management objectively works against the interests of teachers and students. Organising the fightback at work must start with kicking management out of the union.

Lack of funding is a symptom of the broader problem: general deterioration of social and economic life of the country. The real reason for the crisis in schools is that the British state and economy are run by Etonian dynasties from the City of London to Westminster. They have no interest in providing even a basic education for working-class kids considered surplus in an economy run on finance, not industry.

It's quite simple: the whole country is

going to hell and schools are going right along with it. Saving schools boils down to changing the entire course of this country: more wages, more funding, more schools, more housing. It means taking on capitalism and the ruling class itself.

## Socialists and the NEU's losing strategy

When the strike wave began in 2022, the Tories were in shambles and support for the unions was massive. To win, the NEU needed to take on the government, but its strategy flew in the face of organising a real fight. It consisted of isolated strike days and a handful of national marches that felt more like parades than class struggle. Scabbing was the norm, so schools stayed open; workers from other unions waved hello as they crossed the pickets to go to work, under instruction from their leaders. There were no common strike funds, so the union played right into the Tories' strategy of attrition: members began feeling the pinch and scabbed on their own strike. As a result, the strike dragged into the summer and ended in defeat. The parting gift from ex-NEU leaders Courtney and Boustead was the recommendation to accept a real terms pay cut born of their strategy. From start to finish, the union leadership stood as an obstacle to winning the strike.

The task for socialists was to oppose the strategy of the leadership and fight for one based on challenging the entire system that

maintains schools in a constant state of deprivation; it was to point to a fundamentally different road. But this was not done by the socialist left in the NEU, composed of supporters of the Socialist Workers Party (who basically run the Islington branch and have seats on the London and National executives), the Socialist Party (which has representation on the National Executive) and other groups like Socialist Appeal and Socialist Alternative. Despite all they said about fighting capitalism and bringing down the Tories in their press, their work on the ground consisted in covering for the NEU tops, either pushing them to the left or pleading to escalate when defeat was certain. In both cases, they fundamentally *accepted* the strategy of the leadership. Marxists characterise these trends as opportunism and adventurism, which are in fact two sides of the same coin. Let us elaborate.

## Lefts cover for NEU tops

Opportunism is an adaptation to existing conditions; for example, calling for more strike days without organising a fight against the losing strategy of the leadership, fuelling illusions that five or ten more days of strikes would be enough to win. On the ground, the lefts did photo-ops on picket lines, holding their papers, ignoring the open schools behind them, *refusing* to say "never cross a picket line". They happily organised rallies for the bureaucracy featuring Corbyn. When militants challenged local leaders and the lefts about the need for

strike funds to build the strike and opposed the union means-testing its membership for a meagre £40/day, they were told to suck it up and carry on. The lefts did not lift a finger to conduct fundraising drives to support striking teachers against the leadership leaving them hanging. Instead, the socialist left covered for the NEU tops.

The result was a defeat and the emergence of a divide between the mass of teachers alienated by the union's losing strategy and ready to give up, and a tiny minority of isolated militants who wanted to carry on. This is the only meaning of the results of the contract vote.

## Adventurism, from the strike to Palestine

When union leaders recommended 6.5 per cent, the lefts organised the "Educators Say No!" group (mainly a WhatsApp echo chamber), which criticised the tops for pushing a rotten contract. But its entire premise was to reject the offer and carry on doing more of the same, with drastically reduced numbers. This is the definition of insanity; at that point, the game was lost. What was needed was a temporary retreat to rebuild the union by recruiting more members, building strike funds, kicking management out and, most of all, fighting for a *socialist leadership* prepared to take on the entire system. This is still posed.

The frenzy of the lefts to carry on despite widespread demoralisation is known as

*continued on page 10*

# Class-struggle fighter elected in US dockers union

*The left in Britain almost universally believes that it is impossible for socialists to fight for a socialist leadership of the trade unions. Instead, they build all sorts of openly reformist coalitions (see article above) and support left-talking bureaucrats, because supposedly that is the only thing possible now.*

*Well, serious socialists might want to have a look across the pond. We print below the platform of Emily Turnbull, a class-struggle fighter recently elected to the executive board of International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 10 in the San Francisco Bay Area.*

This country is going to hell and working people need to fight. I am running to continue the fight I began over the contract.

The ILWU should:

- **Not** have signed the contract and fought for better.
- **Oppose** tiers — bring Bs and Casuals into full union membership and steady men back to the hall — and fight for a shorter workweek with no loss in pay.
- **Fight** for Black Liberation.
- **Oppose** U.S. military operations, whether involving Ukraine, Israel or China.
- **Oppose** the Democrats and the Republicans.
- **Build** a workers party that aims to put working people in charge of the U.S. from top to bottom.

I will only support candidates who stand on this program and I urge others to do the same.



Emily Turnbull

E Turnbull



# Mass public sector strikes in Quebec

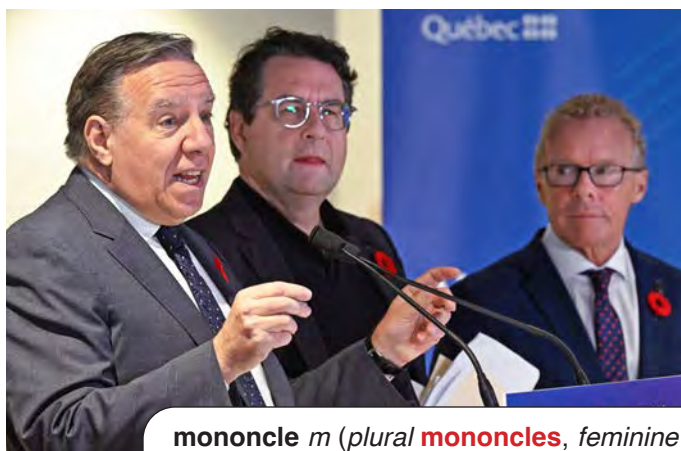
# The unions must break the dictatorship of *mononcles*!

We print below a translation of a supplement to *République ouvrière* (20 September 2023), newspaper of our comrades of the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada. Several public sector strikes have taken place since its publication.

## RÉPUBLIQUE OUVRIÈRE

“We’ve run up against a brick wall”, says the Common Front of unionised public sector workers (*Info-négo*, 11 September). “Working conditions are appalling” was how Magali Picard, president of the Quebec Federation of Labour (FTQ), summarised it. Yes, indeed: overcrowded classrooms, overflowing A&E departments, lack of nurseries, waiting lists everywhere, low wages, compulsory overtime.... Everyone knows it: the whole edifice of public services that came out of the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s-70s is falling apart and, if nothing changes, it will only get worse. The “solutions” offered by Quebec premier François Legault and his ministers, who all look like they stepped out of an Elvis Graton film, consist in further increasing workloads and cutting spending while trying to divert attention by whipping up collective hysteria against vulnerable groups like immigrants and trans people. As for the parliamentary “opposition”, it couldn’t be more pathetic and, as things stand, nothing and no one is offering a serious alternative.

The 600,000 members of the Common Front, the FIQ healthcare union federation and the FAE teachers union have demonstrated their will to fight, and the population as a whole can and must be mobilised in support of their cause. Wage increases of 20 per cent, defence of pensions, improvements in working conditions are all minimal, eminently just demands, and mobilising the largest Common Front in 50 years



Alamy

Three *mononcles*, from left: Quebec premier François Legault, his education minister Bernard Drainville and labour minister Jean Boulet.

**mononcle** *m* (plural **mononcles**, feminine **matante**)

1. (*Quebec*) **uncle**

Synonyms: *oncle, tonton*

2. (*Quebec, slang, derogatory*) An older man with a conservative or prejudiced mindset or who behaves offensively.

is certainly a good starting point. But how do we *win* this battle? Even though the CAQ [governing Coalition Avenir Quebec] is currently lurching from one crisis to the next, Legault’s anti-working-class, anti-union government will give up nothing unless it faces losing everything. So the Common Front’s current fight must aim at nothing less than turning the tide and *breaking* this reactionary government!

To start with, it is necessary to recognise that the government on the one hand and the workers on the other have antagonistic interests. The interest of the Legault government is to make Quebec’s economic and social machinery work in accordance with its programme of more “autonomy” in the framework of Canadian federalism and the imperialist world system. Its *interest*, therefore, is to cut wages and all expenditure that affects its deficit and credit rating. The interest of workers is to defend their living and working conditions and to obtain free, quality public services for the whole population.

The unions are now balloting for strikes, which is obviously essential—but the question posed is what strategy is needed to counter the government’s weapons? The government’s main argument against the unions is that Quebec hasn’t got the money. “There comes a point when you have to be reasonable”, complained François Legault, accusing unions of wanting “Labatt Blue [a popular beer] for everyone”. Wielding the straw-man arguments of budget deficits and tax increases in an attempt to rally the population against public sector workers is a tactic as old as the hills. And it’s a tactic *that works* because the response of the workers movement to date has always been in the same framework of what is in the interest of the “Québécois state”. In that way, the union leaders yield the battlefield to the employer in advance, limiting their strategy to what is achievable within the government’s budget-

ary constraints, suggesting merely a better allocation of resources, reversing tax cuts or acting more “ethically”: “If the government wants to be a good employer, as it claims, that has to be reflected in its pay offers” (*Info-négo*, 11 September).

But even achieving the basic objectives of the Common Front poses the need to *break* with this logic. In other words, there will be no real improvements in working conditions in the public sector short of an all-out fight *against* the interests of Legault and the Québécois capitalist class that he represents. And with a unionisation rate of 40 per cent in Quebec, one of the highest in the world, and 85 per cent in the public sector, it should not be too hard for the working class to impose its will. However, for more than 40 years, public sector unions have gone instead from one defeat to the next, and that bodes nothing good for 2023 either. The main cause of this state of affairs is the principle of “concertation” [social dialogue] that all the union leaders bow to.

This strategy of “concertation” is rooted in the belief that the Québécois nation as a whole—workers and bosses—shares common interests. But while the creation of a Quebec state was indeed an elementary defensive measure against the oppression of all Québécois by the anglophone imperialist rulers, that does *not* mean that the fundamental contradiction between workers and bosses has disappeared. Regardless of which party is in power, the Quebec “state” (in reality a province of the Canadian oppressor state) remains the instrument of the employers, never of the workers; if that were not the case, the public services crisis would have been sorted long ago!

The Covid-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the world economic crisis continue to have a devastating impact on the population, in Quebec as elsewhere. We are living in an increasingly unstable period, in which neoliberal globalisation, dominated

by the US, has begun to crumble. That means that attacks on the working class will be intensified worldwide, while the great powers and their lackeys jockey for position and look to make workers and the poorest foot the bill. So, reviving a workers movement that knows how to defend itself is vital *here and now*. To win, however, the workers movement requires a leadership based on the understanding that the interests of the working class and those of the bosses are *irreconcilable*.

### The real lessons of the Quiet Revolution

Clearly, the concept of “concertation” did not fall from the sky. After 200 years of humiliating national oppression at the hands of the Anglo-American exploiters, supported by the Catholic Church, the Québécois nation was able to rise and make giant strides thanks to the reforms overseen by the Quebec governments of the 1960s and 1970s. But the real driving force behind those upheavals *was the working class*. If the Quiet Revolution did not lead to the national and social liberation that it promised, it’s precisely because the workers movement was subordinated to the bourgeois elites and nationalist political parties, who obstructed the progressive advances of the Quiet Revolution at every step.

Relying on the power of Québécois workers to force concessions from the anglophone imperialists, those in government at the same time held the movement back because they had no intention of ever challenging the fundamental cause of Quebec’s national oppression *and* the exploitation of workers: the world imperialist system.

The weakening of the national liberation struggle and the decay of public services both have their origin in the defeats suffered by the Quebec working class at the hands of the Québécois nationalist elites. The attacks on public sector unions by the Lévesque government in 1982-83 were the turning point. But the defeat of the unions in that period, which foreshadowed all subsequent ones, was first and foremost a result of the union leaders’ political support, open or implicit, to the Parti Québécois (PQ) in the 1970s and 1980s. That support was the very origin of the unions’ policy of “concertation”. This Québécois nationalist party of the bosses claimed to be “favourably inclined towards workers” precisely in order to shackle and control the Quebec working class. That was an essential plank of the PQ’s “sovereignty-association” strategy, which ultimately achieved only the loss of two independence referendums and the imposition of neoliberal austerity on the working class! With their political support to the PQ, the union leaders of that time did nothing but *sabotage* the national and social liberation struggle and therefore bear full responsibility for the appalling conditions today!



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What was needed instead was a party of the working class fighting to wrest the leadership of the national and social liberation struggle from the hands of the nationalist establishment represented by the PQ (and Jean Lesage's Liberal Party before that). But the Marxist left during the Quiet Revolution never rose to the task of providing such an alternative—either shooting itself in the foot by denying the progressive character of the struggle for Quebec independence (like the Communist Party or the Maoists) or capitulating to the union bureaucracy, like most of the Trotskyists, or both at once. And the Quebec left today, be they federalist (Fightback or the Communist Party-*Clarté*) or nationalist (the nationalist wing of the Communist Party of Quebec, or *l'aut' journal*), do essentially the same thing.

At the end of the day, the actual outcome of the Quiet Revolution is that the “Québécois state” remains a *province* subordinated to Canadian and American imperialism. It is not the “state of all the Québécois”; it is the instrument of the simpering, cheap Québécois bourgeoisie, subordinated to the federal government, which will lick the boots of Wall Street a million times over before lifting a finger to liberate Quebec. By preaching “concertation” with *this*, the current union leaders and their supporters in the left continue to chain workers not only to Legault and “their own” bosses but also to the capitalist oppressors in English Canada and the United States!

### For the revival of the union movement!

The union leaders' central complaint against the Legault government in the current negotiations is that it doesn't respect its employees and doesn't negotiate “in good faith”. But the state, as boss, just like any other employer in a capitalist system,

seeks to get as much as possible out of the labour power of its workers at the lowest possible cost. It's not a question of morality or ill will but a question of *economic interests*, pure and simple.

It's up to the union movement to ensure its interests are respected: for massive wage increases, decent working conditions, health and safety, etc. It is necessary to *counter* the power of the bosses—their economic blackmail, their slanders and threat of repression—with the brute force of the workers movement, with the weapons of the working class: strikes, occupations, mass picket lines, etc. But these elementary tactics of trade union struggle will only be effective if they are wielded as weapons in the war between the working class and the capitalists, and not to win the “respect” and “consideration” of this anti-union government! In short, if the current Common Front is to win the battle, it must aim to *break* the government!

Another argument used by union leaders in the negotiations is that workers made sacrifices in the pandemic, so they should now be compensated for their efforts. But *who* was it that made workers swallow such sacrifices if not these same union bureaucracies? Indeed, buying the moral argument of “saving lives” made by government leaders like Trudeau and Legault (who wanted above all to get through the crisis at the lowest possible economic and social cost), they acted as an adjunct to the government, imposing lockdowns and longer working hours on their members. The results have been devastating: job losses, inflation, a housing crisis, a mental health crisis, collapsing healthcare and education systems—and unions in disarray. This fresh betrayal by the union leaders in the pandemic has contributed in no small measure to the current disaster.

Rejecting the moral blackmail of governments all over the world, there was another



Giroux/CSN

**March 1972: Common Front rally in Montreal. Two months later, Quebec general strike posed question of workers power pointblank.**

road possible for the workers movement in the pandemic. That was for the working class to mobilise in action for what was *necessary* for workers and the population as a whole: more healthcare, more schools, more high-quality (and well-ventilated) buildings, more housing. And that is still what is necessary today! To the hypocritical argument that public sector strikes put lives at risk or sabotage children's education, we must respond by mobilising all the workers' allies for better healthcare and quality education accessible to all!

The solution is crystal-clear: the momentum of the workers movement must be restored; it must be revived through *breaking* with the pro-capitalist leaderships *now*. To really begin to turn the tide, defend public services, get more quality, affordable housing, and to once again advance the struggle for women's liberation and for national independence, it is necessary to rally the most conscious union militants and form them

into a revolutionary opposition to the existing bureaucracies. It is necessary to build a new leadership which fights not only to achieve the national and social liberation promised by the Quiet Revolution but at the same time to defend the most basic gains *right now!* That is the perspective that the Trotskyist League in Quebec and Canada puts forward as we struggle to build a revolutionary party that fights for a workers republic. In the absence of such an alternative, it is clear that things will only get worse.

### Return to “fighting unionism”?

The entire Quebec left is also being put to the test. But in terms of the strategies they put forward, it's rather pathetic. The largest Marxist group in Quebec at present, Fightback, explicitly *rejects* the struggle for a revolutionary leadership of the unions on the pretext that the left is “too small” (“Fightback's Perspectives 2023”, marxist.ca,

*continued on page 11*

# Savage anti-gay witch hunt of TV presenters

*The following Spartacist League statement was issued on 22 July 2023.*

BBC presenter Huw Edwards had his life, his career and his mental health shattered in a monstrous media frenzy detonated by the *Sun*. He was pilloried for allegedly paying money to a younger man for photos “of a sexual nature”. The young man's lawyers refuted the *Sun*'s allegations as “rubbish”. But still the media, including the BBC, ramped up the hysteria. Edwards was investigated by the police and, even though he had not violated this country's draconian laws criminalising teenage sex, he was suspended and placed under investigation by the BBC.

Edwards is the second high-profile victim of an anti-gay crusade in recent months: ITV presenter Phillip Schofield “lost everything”—his job, his career and his sanity due to a relentless media witch hunt. Like Edwards, Schofield is a handsome, wealthy, gay man in his early 60s. According to moralists this makes him a sexual predator out to corrupt the country's young men. His crime? He had a consensual affair with a young male colleague, who we are supposed to believe couldn't possibly have consented. The whole gruesome spectacle is an outrage.

As socialists we unequivocally defend Edwards and Schofield. Sexual activity between individuals is nobody's business but their own as long as there is effective

## Labourite puritans paralysed

consent. The state has no business regulating people's sex lives. And the bosses have no business investigating the private lives of workers. We are opposed to the strategy of the feminist #MeToo movement which appeals to the bosses and the state to enforce puritanical laws in the workplace. We insist workers should go to the union, *not* the company, to fight abuses of power, sexual harassment, racial and all forms of discrimination at work.

Every defender of LGBTQ rights knows that the crushing of these celebrities is part of a broader anti-gay and anti-trans backlash. Liberal spokespeople for these campaigns have objected to these homophobic witch hunts, but their protest is half-hearted. Peter Tatchell noted that the trashing of Schofield had “more than a whiff of homophobia”. Owen Jones condemned the *Sun* for trying to destroy Huw Edwards by making “false claims of illegality involving a minor”. But neither Tatchell nor Jones is willing to say it's nobody's business if a wealthy man in his 60s has sex with a young man. Jones wrote that Edwards did nothing illegal, but the BBC “should investigate any other relevant allegations”. He is

trying to claim the same moral ground that was used to snare Edwards and Schofield and so his defence of them is hamstrung by his acceptance of the bourgeoisie's moral codes. Jones upholds the employer's right to police the private sexual behaviour of the workforce and the draconian laws that can have you thrown in jail or placed on the sex offender's register for having sex under 16 or exchanging sex pics under 18. This is what comes of liberal campaigners for LGBTQ rights having spent decades restricting the struggle to what is compatible with bourgeois respectability, abandoning the goal of gay liberation and embracing conservative “family values”.

The reformist left is shamelessly puritanical. *Socialist Worker* (30 May) published a letter on Schofield which rightly proclaims “no to homophobia” but also denounces “the rich and powerful flaunting the rules and engaging in unethical practices”. The “rules” that these socialists regard as sacrosanct are set by the exploiting class! To be consistent in their embrace of Victorian moral values, the SWP should condemn Oscar Wilde who “flaunted the rules” of bourgeois morality and was con-

victed for the very “unethical” activity of paying rent boys for sex.

We revolutionaries vehemently oppose the moral codes of the ruling class because they are chains forged by the bourgeoisie to shackle the proletariat. Sexual morality, racial prejudice and servility to the monarchy are weapons the ruling class uses to drum up reaction and keep the working class obedient and subservient to their class rule. Every concession to bourgeois morality by reformists and union leaders opens the door for the bosses to mobilise the most backward prejudices to divide and weaken the working class and obstructs the struggle for social liberation from their masters.

It is no coincidence that these weekly sex scandals are happening in the wake of the defeat and betrayal of the public sector strikes at the hands of the slavishly pro-capitalist union leaders. This will add to the increasingly reactionary climate and increase genuine fears among sexual minorities. The struggles in defence of immigrants, racial minorities, for the rights of women and other oppressed sexual groups must go hand-in-hand with the struggle for social and economic emancipation of the working class. All these struggles must be united under a single banner fighting for socialism in unyielding opposition to liberalism and Labour reformism. ■



# Ukraine war: What stra

With the war in Ukraine nearing the two-year mark, the Spartacist League/Britain debated the Bolshevik Tendency (BT) at Birkbeck, University of London, on 11 November in order to clarify what constitutes a revolutionary answer to the conflict. The event drew a few dozen people, mostly members and supporters of the SL/B, the BT, the International Bolshevik Tendency (which parted ways with the BT some years ago) and the Platypus clot. To anyone interested in what Marxists should actually *do* to advance a revolutionary programme in the war—or anything else—it's clear the Spartacists won the debate hands-down.

In his presentation for the SL/B (printed below, edited for publication), *Workers Hammer* editor Vincent David defended a proletarian revolutionary orientation, motivating why Ukrainian and Russian workers should turn the guns against their own rulers and how Marxists fight against the obstacles to mobilising workers against imperialism. Speaking first and defending the BT's support to Russia, Tom Riley let the cat out of the bag: "Unfortunately, it's very unlikely that NATO will suffer defeat at the hands of an insurgent, class-conscious Russian/Ukrainian workers movement, which we would all like to see, I'm sure." So revolution sounds nice, but we won't fight for it now. That actually settled the debate. (Readers can watch the entire debate on YouTube and read Riley's presentation at bolshevihtendency.org.)

Comrade David put several direct challenges to the BT. Failing to respond to any of them, Riley and his supporters tried to shift the terrain to decades-old political differences and supposed ICL "bureaucratism". This only exposed the BT, which evaluates a revolutionary organisation not by its capacity to guide working-class struggle in key events but by its ability to wield formalistic "Marxism" divorced from class struggle, and how internal political disputes were handled half a century ago.

Discussions at the event and afterwards at the pub marked a break from the ICL's former practice of avoiding debate with the BT (and others). Our purpose is to further political discussion with the goal of regrouping the forces for international revolution, which currently are tiny and isolated. This course was laid out at the ICL's Eighth International Conference last summer, where our development of a Trotskyist programme for today required critically re-evaluating our history (see *Spartacist* [English edition] no 68, September 2023). The BT are clearly outraged by our insistence that we study this history only insofar as it helps to build a revolutionary international in the here and now. As far as the debate goes, that really says it all.

\* \* \*

Tom, like many others, sees in our recent correction only material for the past. He is not wrong that a lot of our articles [on Ukraine] from 2014 were closer to his position, so I'm not going to defend them

today. But I think what he hasn't grasped is the real nature of our position and what was really wrong with these articles back in 2014. It's a sentence he didn't quote that said, well, there's no revolutionary party in Ukraine and Russia, so no revolutionary perspective is possible [referring to "U.S. Imperialism Behind Bloody Repression in Ukraine", *Workers Vanguard* no 1046, 16 May 2014]. That's something you echoed in



Ukrainian soldiers near Bakhmut, February 2023.

your presentation, so that's what I'll answer.

The essential starting point for Marxists regarding the war in Ukraine must be that it is the imperialist system itself—defined today as the US-dominated liberal order—that is responsible for the conflict. Therefore, while this debate is titled "Ukraine war: What strategy for Marxists?", really the question is: what strategy to defeat imperialism?

In the Ukraine war, we, the Spartacist League, are not neutral: we call on Ukrainian and Russian workers and soldiers to fraternise, turn their guns against their own ruling class, with the aim of transforming this reactionary war between nations into a civil war against the ruling classes. And in the West, our modest forces have fought for the workers movement to take action against the imperialist governments. And we have waged a constant struggle against the pro-imperialist leaders of the workers movement, as well as against the pacifist deceivers, with the aim of building an anti-imperialist and revolutionary leadership of the working class.

So, for us, the cornerstone of a strategy to defeat imperialism rests entirely on putting forward an independent path of struggle for the proletariat against the imperial-

ists and against all bourgeois forces in order to advance the struggle for working-class power. That's what my presentation will be about, and what I think you haven't heard so far. In contrast, for the Bolshevik Tendency, their strategy to defeat imperialism rests on supporting a victory of the Russian army in Ukraine. So what I will demonstrate in this presentation is that this position is reactionary and a complete obstacle to building a

sphere of influence. Therefore, this is a war about which gang of thugs, that of the White House or that of the Kremlin, will exploit and dominate Ukraine. In the name of fighting imperialism, the BT is simply supporting one gang of thugs against the other.

Second, the fact that this war is a proxy war between Russia and the US does not mean that Marxists simply support Russia. The US backs all sorts of regimes throughout the world, and Marxists do not simply support any of its opponents. Also, the BT blurs the line between a proxy war and an imperialist war against Russia. For the BT, this is a secondary difference, a nuance. But for anyone who thinks, there is obviously a fundamental difference between NATO supplying weapons to Ukraine and NATO bombing Russian cities and invading Russia. To think otherwise is totally disorienting. The day the United States, the UK and NATO declare war on Russia, it will fundamentally change the character of the war from a regional conflict over who controls Ukraine to a full-scale imperialist war to crush Russia. Believe me, when this happens it will not be necessary to go to panels on "decolonising Russia". It will be very obvious to everyone.

Thirdly, what appears like a strong argument for the BT is when they say that a defeat of Ukraine would be a blow to the imperialists, and since revolutionaries are for blows against imperialism, we must support Russia. This is a method which consists in putting a plus where the Foreign Office puts a minus. The advantage with this method is that you don't need to think to actually use it. The disadvantage, however, is that it has nothing to do with the living reality of the class struggle, therefore nothing to do with Marxism. It is simply not true that any blow whatsoever to the imperialists automatically advances the interests of the working class.

In contrast, here is how Marxists must approach the question. The defining feature of our epoch, and the context in which the Ukraine war takes place, is the decline of US hegemony. A growing number of forces are seeking to take advantage of this decline. So the entire question for Marxists, the entire question of our epoch, is whether this decline happens through a spiral of crises, reaction and wars, just as we're starting to see, or will this decline further the interests of the working class, that is, advance the cause of socialism. This latter option is not a given. It requires the mobilisation of the proletariat as an independent fighting force, armed with a revolutionary leadership.

That is what the simplistic method and geopolitical practice of the BT disappears. The Marxist programme is based not on blindly supporting "blows" to imperialism but on the understanding that the only way to deal a decisive and progressive blow to imperialism is through workers revolution. Therefore, a Marxist approach to the Ukraine war, and a Marxist strategy against imperialism, must be based on furthering the class struggle, on strengthening the unity of

working-class and revolutionary opposition to NATO and US imperialism. And I will also demonstrate how the BT's approach to the war completely capitulates to the pro-imperialist leaders of the working class.

## Character of the war and Marxist method

Let's start with the character of the war, that is, what it's about. The BT's position is based on the fact that since Russia is not imperialist, and since Ukraine is supported by the imperialist powers, Russia is waging a just war of national defence against imperialism and that a defeat for Ukraine would be a defeat for the imperialists. On a superficial level, this could sound logical. Except that this entire edifice shatters at the first contact with reality.

First, the current war is *not* about dismembering or Balkanising Russia. Everyone knows that Russia is not fighting for its national sovereignty against an imperialist invasion. This war is *not* about who will control *Russia*. It is about *who will control Ukraine*. On the one side, the Ukrainian government is fighting to keep Ukraine under the boot of NATO, the European Union and the United States. On the other side, Russia is fighting to bring Ukraine into its own



## tegy for Marxists?

the international proletariat and on advancing the struggle for socialist revolution.

But all of this is completely alien to the BT. Because the BT's strategy to combat imperialism relies not on the revolutionary struggle of the working class but on Russia winning in Ukraine. To better understand how this position is completely anti-Marxist, and frankly chauvinist, one simply has to think about what supporting Russia means in the real world. This is something the BT's articles, which are full of theoretical abstractions and quotes and which barely mention the working class, never spell out. So let me do it for them.

### Reactionary character of pro-Russia position

According to the BT's position, the task of Ukrainian workers is to support the Russian army and do everything to facilitate the invasion of their own country. In other words, Ukrainian workers are supposed to welcome their own national oppression at the hands of the Russian oligarchs. The national oppression of Ukraine is in no way in the interest of the international working class. Ukrainian workers will never accept this position, which only contributes to discrediting communism in Ukraine and pushes workers into the arms of Zelensky, the wretched Ukrainian nationalists and the imperialist powers.

So what about Russian workers? The BT's position tells them that they must support the war effort of the Russian government. This means that the BT denounces the most class-conscious workers in Russia, who want to oppose the war and the predatory aims of the Russian oligarchs. And indeed, when workers in Belarus refused to move arms shipments, the BT denounced this.

Furthermore, according to the BT's line, communists should attack Putin for not having committed enough resources to the invasion of Ukraine. This totally aligns the BT with Russian nationalists who believe that Ukraine *is* Russia, or that Ukraine does not even exist! The BT's position completely echoes this. One of their key arguments, which you quoted, is that "revolutionaries" recognise (and I quote) that "Russia's right to self-defense includes the right to sever Ukraine's NATO connection". So for the BT, Russia has not only a "right" to invade its neighbour, but the conquest of Ukraine is a progressive cause! This is simply Great Russian chauvinism. It means educating Russian workers in this spirit.

It is when you leave the sphere of abstractions and geopolitics and actually try to apply the simplistic thinking of the BT to living reality that you can fully realise its completely reactionary implications. What Russian workers must understand is precisely that whatever short-term blow a Russian victory would inflict on US policy, it is not worth the price of Russia becoming the oppressor of Ukraine!

The subjugation of Ukraine will not help in any way to free Russia from imperialist

encirclement. It will only help bolster the authority of Zelensky and his imperialist masters, who can fraudulently present themselves as the defenders of small nations. More broadly, it spreads nationalist poison in the entire region, further binding workers to their exploiters, be they Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Lithuanian, etc, thus creating new obstacles to the unity of the working class and to workers revolution. At the end of the day, the one force which will benefit from this is the *imperialist powers themselves*, who will be able to use this carnival of reac-

imperialism and for political revolution to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracy. This is the only way to weaken imperialism and strengthen the position of the proletariat internationally. The further the international socialist revolution progresses, the better protected is China. The weaker the international proletariat is, the more it is subordinated to its exploiters, the more vulnerable is China. This is the simple truth which was repudiated by Stalinism and the doctrine of "socialism in one country". The position of the BT is actually cut from the same cloth.



SL/B's Vincent David (left) debates BT's Tom Riley (right).

tion to strengthen their position in the region.

The way to deal a decisive blow against imperialism in Eastern Europe is through building a common revolutionary front of Ukrainian and Russian workers against their common enemy, the imperialists, and against their respective capitalist classes. If Ukrainian workers defend Russian minorities, fraternise with Russian conscripts and oppose NATO and the US, this will deliver a much greater blow to the Russian capitalists than any of Zelensky's counteroffensives. If Russian workers take a stand against the oligarchs' war and against Russian chauvinism and seek revolutionary unity with the Ukrainian workers, this will deliver a much greater blow to NATO and the imperialists than any Russian counteroffensive.

*That* is the communist strategy to defeat imperialism. *That* is the orientation we are pursuing. If you think in these terms, it becomes obvious that the BT's position is a total obstacle to the unity of the working class and to any revolutionary perspective!

### Who will defend China: the Kremlin or the working class?

There is another argument used by the BT, which is that a Russian victory would help to defend China, the other deformed workers states and neocolonies against imperialism. I think you called it a basic understanding. I would call this actually a total revision of basic Trotskyism.

Trotsky taught us that the only way to defend workers states like China is by fighting for workers revolutions to overthrow

As we have seen, support to Russia divides and weakens the proletariat in Eastern Europe and beyond, creating new obstacles to workers revolution. And the BT's strategy to defend China is not based on the independent mobilisation of Chinese workers against Stalinism and imperialism, nor on the struggle of the workers movement internationally for socialism, but on the military successes of the Russian bourgeoisie in Ukraine. This is the same method which led Stalin to place the fate of the defence of the USSR on the British trade union leaders, on the Guomindang and later on the imperialist powers themselves, with disastrous results.

In the last analysis, the method of the BT is much closer to the advocates of the "multipolar world" who promote the BRICS, Xi Jinping and Putin as anti-imperialist forces. The BT might say they oppose Putin or Xi. But just like the advocates of BRICS, they do not view the struggle against imperialism from the standpoint of an independent proletarian road of struggle. And without this crucial element, whatever criticism of Putin you have, you end up as a left critic of him, in a typical Pabloite manner.

### Workers in the West: BT has nothing to offer

Now I want to bring the debate here, to Britain. Since the beginning of the Ukraine war, the leadership of the working class, from the Labour Party to the trade unions, has played a key role in lining up the workers movement behind the interests of British imperialism. The same

has been happening in Germany, France, the US. There can be no talk of a Marxist strategy in the Ukraine war or in any war, like in Palestine today, without a ruthless struggle against the pro-imperialist leaders of the workers movement—who Lenin called the social-chauvinists—as well as against the pacifist deceivers and those "leftists" who maintain unity with the social-chauvinists—who Lenin called the opportunists and the centrists.

And it is in this field, even more than in Ukraine, that the political bankruptcy of the BT becomes even more evident. Since the outbreak of the war, the BT has not published a single article attacking the leaders of the working class in Britain for their support to British imperialism! Britain was shaken by a strike wave last year, and the BT has not written a single article on this. While the burning task for communists was to drive a wedge between the working class and the pro-imperialist programme of its leaders, which is what led the strike wave to defeat, the BT stood by and did *nothing!*

Just contrast this with us. The ICL's initial declaration on the war in Ukraine attacked frontally all social-chauvinist leaders and pacifists. Our comrades in Germany have been in the forefront of the fight against the pro-NATO and EU supporters in the German left.

And here, despite our modest size, the SL/B threw all its energy into declaring war on the social-chauvinist leaders of the workers movement. We organised a protest against the monarchy and against the union leaders cancelling strikes when the Queen croaked. We launched a campaign to build picket lines against the union leaders sabotaging them. We intervened at the last TUC Congress against the union bureaucrats voting support for more arms to Ukraine and denounced the social-chauvinists *and* the impotent pacifist opposition of the Stop the War Coalition.

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Number 68, September 2023

Available on the ICL website: [spartacist.org](http://spartacist.org)



# Palestinian...

(continued from page 12)

from the time British imperialism decided to back the Zionist project. Today the U.S. and Israel secure their interests in the Middle East by violating the national rights of the Palestinian people and fostering a permanent state of hostility between Jews and Muslims. The combination of a militarized population and imperialist backing gives the Israeli state its strength and appearance of invincibility.

However, this structure is brittle and is maintained only by a siege mentality fostered by the ruling class. The weak point is precisely that it is a militarized theocratic state ruled by an ever more extreme clique of corrupt fanatics. Israeli working people face conscription, religious regimentation and brutal working and living conditions. Resistance to any of this is labeled as betrayal of Jews. This situation creates deep racial, social and political fissures in Israel, which must be exploited to break the Zionist state and liberate Palestinians.

The Hamas strategy of *jihad* does none of this and plays only to Israel's strengths. By targeting Israeli civilians, they have succeeded only in rallying all Israelis behind the hated Netanyahu government, guaranteeing that the whole society will be united behind the bloody military response against Gaza. A military confrontation under these conditions will bring defeat and untold death to the Palestinian people. There can be no victory without breaking the link between the Jewish working people and their rulers, and this cannot be done without recognizing the democratic right of the Israeli Jewish people to live as a nation in Israel/Palestine.

Islamists and Palestinian nationalists are always caught between either directing their fight against the entire Jewish people in Israel or accepting cohabitation with the Zionist state. Both are dead ends. The key is to drive a wedge between the Israeli people and the theocratic state. This can only be done with a Marxist military and political strategy, based on the understanding that the interrelated class and national conflicts cannot be resolved within the bounds of private property. Only from this starting point is it possible to elaborate a program corresponding to the interests of both Palestinians and the Israeli working class.

Taking the question of the land, Palestinians justly want restitution for the historical crime carried out against them. Within existing social structures, this is impossible to reconcile with the right of Jewish people to keep the land they have often lived on for generations. But Israel, like all capitalist societies, is extremely unequal. Most land and property is controlled by a tiny fraction of the population while the majority struggles to get by. By targeting this parasitical layer for expropriation, it is possible to both start bringing justice to Palestinians and improve the conditions of Jewish working people.

On the military level, it is necessary to exert the maximum pressure on the IDF to show Israeli society that Palestinian oppression comes at an unbearable cost. Blindly launching rockets on Israeli cities only increases the troops' willingness to fight. Instead, the entire Palestinian population must be mobilized to oppose every inch of territorial encroachment and to break the siege of Gaza and the West Bank.

But armed resistance alone cannot bring victory: it must be combined with a per-



Abed/Getty

spective of class struggle inside Israel. This requires struggles for the economic liberation of workers, against racial discrimination of Arabs and non-white Jews and for the separation of religion and state. These *must* be connected to breaking the main obstacle standing in the way of any social progress: Israel's oppression of Palestinians. The overarching task of revolutionaries in Israel is precisely to fight for the workers movement to take up the cause of Palestinian liberation, in struggle against the Zionist labor leaders.

Crucially, the class struggle in the cities must also be brought inside the Israeli army, with a perspective to split it. The IDF is overwhelmingly composed of conscripts who are forced to serve. If military service is no longer seen as vital for the survival of

the onslaught against Gaza. Thus, the liberation of Palestinians requires a strategy to confront and defeat imperialism in the Middle East, and ultimately worldwide. But nationalists are utterly incapable of doing so, placing their faith in the UN and the "international community" or relying on the Arab states to push back against the U.S.

The UN is a den of thieves dominated by the U.S. and the "great" powers, who are themselves responsible for the carving up of Palestine and its continued oppression. The consensus among imperialists is thoroughly pro-Israel. Even if they broker a cease-fire or peace deal, it would necessarily reflect their interest, which is to maintain the Zionist state as their outpost



the Jewish people, if the cost of oppressing Palestinian people becomes too great and if conflict within Israel reaches a boiling point, the Israeli army can and will crack.

More than 75 years of brutal history have completely intertwined the fates of Israeli Jews and Palestinians. The liberation of Palestine requires the breakup of the Zionist state, which is impossible without the liberation of the Israeli working class. In turn, the economic, democratic and social advancement of Israeli workers, and even their continued existence in the Middle East, requires the end of Palestine's oppression, which is the very foundation of the Zionist state.

## How to defeat imperialism

Israel is backed by the U.S. and all the other imperialist powers, as seen once again with their unconditional support of



Getty

**Israeli bombardment of Gaza City.**  
**Above: Biden meets Netanyahu in Tel Aviv on 18 October to back ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.**

*class* against all imperialist and capitalist powers. What is needed is an alliance of workers and peasants throughout the Middle East to throw out the U.S. imperialists and liberate the entire region. This includes Israeli Jewish workers who have no interest in continuing to be used as pawns for the U.S. Furthermore, fighters for Palestine must build an international front with American, British, French and German working-class organizations to stop arms shipments to Israel. These workers are the ones handling this cargo. And it is their struggles which are the surest way to weaken imperialism and advance the cause of Palestinian liberation.

But we can see that these most reliable allies are the ones rejected by the pan-Islamists and nationalists. In allying with the Arab rulers, they ally with the exploiters of the Arab masses. And American and European workers, including Jewish workers, will never be won to a struggle waged under the Islamic banner and for the destruction of all Israelis.

## Socialist cheerleaders for Hamas

Following the Hamas offensive against Israel on October 7, pro-Israeli media have unleashed a massive propaganda campaign to justify Israel's bloody military retaliation and whitewash Palestinian oppression. To counter this, so-called communists and socialists from the Socialist Workers Party in Britain to the Communist Party of Greece have swept under the rug the criminal targeting of civilians by Hamas in the name of Palestine's right to defend itself.

Not only does this drag the name of communism in the mud by associating it with the crimes of Hamas, but it also accepts that the Palestinian people will continue to be led by these fanatic Islamist butchers. They know full well that Hamas will not bring about Palestinian freedom yet remain silent on the issue out of empty liberal solidarity.

The entire Hamas strategy is to provoke a strong Israeli reaction, effectively strapping a suicide vest on all of Gaza. It is necessary to unequivocally stand in defense of Gaza against the bloody retaliation by Israel while at the same time opposing this disastrous strategy.

Some leftists such as Left Voice, U.S. section of the Trotskyist Fraction, whisper at the end of their article that "we are on the side of the resistance of the Palestinian people, without suggesting that we share the strategy and methods of Hamas, whose goal is to establish a theocratic state" (7 October). That said, nothing they write is



# Liberal outrage won't stop Gaza massacre

The SL/B issued the following statement on 20 October 2023.

Israel is raining death and fire on Gaza, murdering children and innocents by the thousands. In the Western world, individuals and groups who dare to stand up against this ethnic cleansing are being banned and arrested. Pro-Palestine demonstrations have been made illegal in France and Germany, in the latter with the support of the established left. While the world seems to be going mad, many feel powerless.

What to do? Those of us in imperialist countries who want to fight are told that the way to resist is to refuse to be silenced. To post on social media, to denounce, to be outraged. Many on the left have made it their main task to “speak up” about the oppression of Palestinians. Talk about the number of dead and the biases and hypocrisy of the media, remind people of the horrors of the Nakba, the deadly occupation of the West Bank and its illegal Israeli settlements. The more outrage, the better. And meanwhile, we are just supposed to continue watching news coverage of the horrors, with the hope that the world comes to its senses.

Let's get real for a second: liberal outrage, social media posts, calling out the BBC and writing long descriptions of the very real horrors suffered by Palestinians won't change a damn thing. Joe Biden, Rishi Sunak, Olaf Scholz, Emmanuel Macron and all the imperialist robbers of the “international community” lording over the world and helping Israel in its murderous enterprise will not suddenly come to reason because the “good people” showed that genocide is taking place.

The imperialist rulers know full well what is going on and have decided to draw a red line: anyone who refuses to fully support Israel's carpet-bombing of Gaza risks being branded as an anti-Semite or terrorist sympathiser. Those who want to fight for Palestine must drop all illusions in the imperialist governments and the UN, which have made clear where they stand. What is needed is not liberal outrage or keeping “our” governments accountable to “international law” (which they always violate anyway—remember Iraq). **What is needed is working-class actions against imperialism!**

aimed at breaking the hold of nationalism and Islamism on the Palestinian liberation struggle. They like most of the left take on the role of liberal cheerleaders, who cannot be critical of oppressed groups even as they are being led toward the abyss.

The role of the pseudo-socialist left is all the more despicable given the Palestinians' desperate and ever-growing need of a viable road for liberation. Events are rapidly moving toward a level of carnage and reaction unseen in decades. If socialists do not fight for a revolutionary solution to the conflict, the growing desperation of

The organised working class is the only force that can really defeat the murderous policy of the imperialists and take a real step towards stopping the current massacre. Trade unions must take concrete action to stop arms shipments to Israel. Armaments



London, 28 October. Liberal politics dominating mass marches show no way to fight imperialism and liberate Palestine.

are built by workers, they are transported by rail and truck and are loaded in ports on ships, all manned by workers. The unions must also take actions (not just offer words) against the repression of pro-Palestinian groups and demonstrations. Strikes must be prepared and launched against the endorsement of ethnic cleansing by “our” imperialist governments. One solid strike against the government would help Palestine a thousand times more than any liberal truth-seeker tweeting about the bias of the BBC.

But the trade union leaders have done *none of this*. In Britain, they have now started issuing tepid statements condemning violence and death on both sides. Some go further and condemn the occupation and bombing of Gaza. But what have they done to initiate *real* trade union action against this? You guessed it...nothing.

The reason is quite simple: it's because the workers movement is led by peo-

ple who support imperialism. And since opposing Israel and supporting Palestine's liberation is a red line for the ruling class, they refuse to cross it. The task for socialists is to fight to win over the workers movement to the cause of Palestinian lib-

ple who support imperialism. And since

opposing Israel and supporting Palestine's liberation is a red line for the ruling class, they refuse to cross it. The task for socialists is to fight to win over the workers movement to the cause of Palestinian lib-

eration, and for a *break* with all supporters of the Zionist state and imperialism. But to do this, one must understand how the labour movement works.

## How the British labour movement supports Zionism

What we are witnessing is a perfect example of how British labour politics has worked since the Second World War. It all starts in the Oval Office in Washington, DC, which is where the British ruling class gets its instructions from. And on 7 October, they were clear: full support to Israel.

The Tories then forward the memo to the leadership of the Labour Party, which is told to toe the line. Upon receiving this, Labour Party leader Sir Keir Starmer has two things on his mind: the opinion of the City of London (which is really Washington's opinion) and avoiding at all costs the fate of the last party leader. Keir is determined not to slip up on this one: he declares his support to the “right” of Israel to starve 2.3 million Palestinians to death (11 October LBC interview).

The message is then received by the leaders of the trade unions. They have poured millions into Labour's coffers, and Starmer is their only hope to have a seat at the future government's table. The last TUC Congress saw an outpouring of support for Starmer and it even endorsed NATO's war in Ukraine as a bonus, thanks to the support of Sharon Graham's Unite, among others.

So the union leaders respond to the instructions: they will keep their organisations on a tight leash. They cannot come out openly for Israel but they can bury the question, or maybe say a few empty

words against civilian deaths on both sides. No more than that.

Then there are the “lefts” in the trade unions, who can sometimes cause a bit of trouble. (As for the “lefts” in the Labour Party, they are now totally irrelevant, eg Zarah Sultana.) There are a few such types in unions like the RMT, the NEU, the UCU, etc. But as long as they bark but don't bite—that is, as long as they keep this imperialist, pro-Israel edifice of class collaboration intact—they are completely harmless. In fact, they give a reddish colouration to the whole thing. And they all end up voting Labour anyway.

It is around those “lefts” that the so-called socialists and “revolutionary” groups gravitate. Their entire activity in the trade union movement consists in supporting—sometimes fully, sometimes critically—this or that militant who talks of class struggle but at the same time maintains unity with the open agents of Israel.

It is this unity, this political bloc, of socialists and working-class leaders with the ruling class itself which prevents any action against British imperialism and against Israel's current onslaught.

## The task for Marxists

Real socialists and those who want to fight for Palestinian liberation in Britain must reject liberal outrage and wage a ruthless struggle inside the workers movement. The task is to build an anti-imperialist pole against the current leaders. *No unity with the supporters of imperialism and the Zionist state!* Such unity means unity with the murderers of Palestinians.

It is precisely the support to Israel by union leaders that divides the working class. As does support to the Hamas butchers, anti-Jewish bigotry and the refusal to recognise the right of Israeli Jews to live as a nation. (See our full position on the current conflict: “Only Death and Defeat with Hamas—A Revolutionary Road for Palestinian Liberation”, *Spartacist* supplement, 10 October, on page 12.)

Communist work in the trade unions must be directed at pushing forward working-class action against the support of “our own” imperialist government to Israel and in defence of Palestinians. And it must aim to expose the current leaders of the unions, particularly the “left” ones, and unveil how their political bloc with the ruling class makes them agents of the imperialists in the workers movement.

It must also be directed against the self-proclaimed communists who support people like Eddie Dempsey in the RMT, who supports Mick Lynch, who supports Keir Starmer. Against the “socialists” in the NEU (read: Socialist Workers Party) who lawyer for the NEU leadership, which

*continued on page 10*

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## Debate...

(continued from page 7)

Almost the entire left in this country supports and campaigns for Sharon Graham, the leader of Unite, lauding her as a “militant” while she is a staunch supporter of British imperialism and arms for Ukraine. We have intervened in almost all Trotskyist groups, denouncing them for their support to this social-chauvinist as a betrayal which obstructs working-class action against British imperialism.

Over the last year and a half, we have written a dozen articles exposing how the support of trade union leaders and Labourites to British imperialism, and in particular to Ukraine and now to Israel, is precisely what obstructs both working-class action against the war but also the most minimal economic struggles. We have tirelessly mobilised our small forces in the trade unions to fight for a new leadership of the working class: one that opposes imperialism and organises the day-to-day struggle of our class as part of a broader strategy for workers power.

So, comrades of the Bolshevik Tendency: What have you been doing in the last two years to advance working-class and anti-imperialist struggles in this country? What have you been doing to advance the most crucial task of revolutionaries—that is, to split the working class from its social-chauvinist and pacifist leaders and expose their centrist conciliators? Because even with a position for Russia you could do some of this. If the BT, despite its support to Russia, was fighting like hell against the Sharon Grahams, the Dave Wards and the Mick Lynches and for an anti-imperialist pole in the workers movement, we would have had a couple of united fronts already and we would now have a very different conversation.

But the reality is that you have done none of this. In this way, you are not so different from all the other groups in this country who claim to be for communism, against NATO, against impe-



Mattsson/reportdigital.co.uk

**Unite's Sharon Graham, NATO stooge hailed as militant by reformist left.**

rialism—for or against Ukraine—but who all agree on one thing: unity with the social-chauvinist and pro-imperialist leaders of the working class! To wage war on such unity is the utmost duty of revolutionaries. That is what Lenin hammered throughout World War I. You say that the Ukraine war was a litmus test for Trotskyists? *That* is the litmus test! That is what the Spartacist League is doing, and that is what the BT refuses to do.

The other reality, to come full circle, is that your position for a victory to Russia completely undermines this struggle, even if you were to engage in it. For the simple reason that your position means supporting the Russian ruling class's subjugation of Ukraine. And any class-conscious worker who wants to fight British imperialism also understands that Russia's war is not progressive and wants to have nothing to do with it, and rightly so. That is the other way in which your position divides the international working class.

### Marxism: guide to action

Lastly, and I will conclude on this, while the BT capitulates to Russian national-

ism, I do not believe this is the motivation behind your support to Russia. I believe you have arrived at this wrong position because of a wrong method. Because you do not view Marxism as a guide for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat but rather as sterile and abstract doctrine or formulas and geopolitics.

Now, I'm not trying to be demagogic here. It is true. Your organisation split from the International Bolshevik Tendency (IBT), before the current war, on a purely analytical question of whether Russia is imperialist, with the IBT believing it is and the BT believing it isn't. You have thus revealed to the entire world that for you the condition for unity or split in the communist movement was agreement over an analytical description, *not* over what to fight for, what to do.

Your articles on the war in Ukraine follow this method. They are constructed as a succession of quotes from multiple geopolitical sources or socialist groups, in which you comment on their analysis and you observe their refusal to side with Russia. For you, the analysis is decisive and generates the programme. But for Marxists the programme, that is, what do you fight for and how, drives the analysis. Indeed, in all your articles, never do you make

the case as to why and how your position advances the struggle of the working class for its emancipation. But you see, comrades, that is the entire purpose of Marxism: to offer an independent path of struggle for the proletariat.

Today, there is a new war raging in Palestine. And we can talk about 1948, but here's the thing: you have not even written a thing on the war going on now! You have instead posted a few pictures of yourselves at demonstrations, carrying slogans that are correct in themselves but are totally acceptable to any left-liberal, Palestinian nationalist or social democrat who leads and takes part in these marches. This is not serious. You have to guide the struggle against the current illusions. “Down with Zionist terror” doesn't combat anything in these marches.

Marxism is a guide to struggle, not for readers circles comparing analyses. You will notice that throughout my presentation, it is on this basis that I exposed your position in the war. That is, that it is a capitulation to the various misleaders of the working class, Ukrainian and Russian nationalists, social-chauvinists, Labourite pacifists, etc and is thus an obstacle to pushing forward the struggles of the working class against world imperialism. ■



no credit

**BT support to Russia echoes Michel Pablo (at right, with Ernest Mandel), who liquidated struggle for Trotskyist leadership in favour of tailing non-revolutionary forces.**

## Outrage...

(continued from page 9)

lawyers for Starmer. And against those “socialists” who claim to be for Palestine and against imperialism but who campaign for pro-imperialist Unite leader Sharon Graham (read: *Socialist Appeal*, Socialist Party, Socialist Alternative), or give a platform to people like John McDonnell, left Labour MP who supports NATO and arms shipments to Ukraine.

Those who claim to be for Palestine and against arms shipments to Israel but refuse to denounce and break from the open social-chauvinists are duping the working class. **No unity with the conciliators!**

The task of building an anti-imperialist pole in the trade unions must also include unmasking those on the left who call for the imperialist powers to broker “peace” and a “ceasefire”. This is what Jeremy Corbyn has been promoting and, as events are unfolding, this is becoming a more popular position. Such a position gives the appearance of siding with Palestinians. But a ceasefire solves nothing: it means the continuation of Palestinian oppression and the conditions that led to this crisis in the first place.

There will be no just peace as long as Palestinians are oppressed. And Palestinians will remain oppressed as long as the

Zionist state exists. Only a revolutionary solution, that is, the alliance of the Israeli Jewish working class with the Palestinian people against imperialism and their Zionist minions, can bring a lasting peace.

This is the position that socialists must fight for inside the workers movement, as well as inside the movement for Palestinian liberation. Socialists in other organisations must stop and think about the course of their group. If the intervention of socialists at this critical moment is not directed at making the trade union and Palestinian movement revolutionary, at combating and replacing the pro-imperialist and liberal leaders of such movements with Marxists, then it is not socialist!

Only Leninism can rebuild the British trade union movement. As VI Lenin wrote over a century ago:

“Unity with the social-chauvinists means unity with one's ‘own’ national bourgeoisie, which exploits other nations; it means splitting the international proletariat. This does not mean that a break with the opportunists is immediately possible everywhere; it means only that historically this break is imminent; that it is necessary and inevitable for the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat; that history, which has led us from ‘peaceful’ capitalism to imperialist capitalism, has paved the way for this break.”

—“Opportunism and the collapse of the Second International” (January 1916) ■

## NEU...

(continued from page 3)

adventurism, the essence of which is to forge blindly ahead, going around the leadership instead of challenging it on a fundamental basis. As the February indicative ballot approaches, the lefts cheer for more strike action, drawing no lessons from the defeat of the strike. The lefts' adventurism is a mirror of opportunism in that both are defined by their attitude to the obstacles: where opportunism adapts, adventurism ignores their existence and wishes them away.

Nowhere is this clearer than on Palestine, with the lefts pushing all kinds of workplace actions like school walk-outs. Yes, teachers must stand in defence of Palestine. But as things stand, will the NEU defend members if they face discipline for disrupting education, for “anti-Semitism”, for contravening the anti-Muslim Prevent programme? *No*. This amounts to asking teachers to put their jobs on the line without the backing of the union. If members stand up for Palestine, they are left in the lurch, just like during the strike. Despite the socialist groups talking about Palestinian liberation, their actions on the ground do not challenge the leaders who prevent a real show of strength for Palestine.

Indeed there are two parallel universes.

On Saturdays, NEU leader Daniel Kebede gives speeches in central London about the plight of Palestinian children and branch leaders unfurl their union banners for photo-ops at the mass demonstrations. But Monday to Friday, the union issues advice parroting the Education Act of the British state that kids must be “offered a balanced presentation of conflicting views”. There can be no balanced presentation of Zionism and the oppression of Palestine!

The union's hypocrisy is explained by the fact that the NEU itself accepts Prevent; that is, it accepts that teachers act as ideological minions of the British ruling class—the very architect of Palestinian oppression. To defend Palestine without being labelled an “extremist” or an “anti-Semite” requires opposing policies like Prevent and “British values” that gag teachers and students alike. Doing so would mean confronting the British state, which the union leadership has demonstrated it will not do. Yet the lefts in the NEU are silent about the hypocrisy of the union, adapting to its acceptance of Prevent when the fight for Palestinian liberation demands that this gag order be lifted urgently!

From the strike to Palestine, the lefts in the NEU are defined by their refusal to challenge the union leadership and provide a different course of action based on going up against the entire system, the only way to #saveourschools. ■



# Reaction...

(continued from page 1)

ignoring the political obstacles to communist consciousness in the working class.

That said, when we challenge Socialist Appeal members on their refusal to oppose the union bureaucracy and fight for a socialist leadership of the trade unions, their standard response is that workers' consciousness is too backward so we must support "left" reformist bureaucrats as a "step" (like NATO-lover Sharon Graham of Unite). So, on the one hand Alan Woods proclaims that the masses are turning to communism and on the other the working class is supposedly too dumb for communist politics. Go figure.

But Socialist Appeal's ultraleft act is only one way to wrongly respond to the new period. The Socialist Party is desperately promoting TUSC, an openly reformist

"broad church" electoral coalition, to revive the Corbyn movement, oblivious to the fact that Corbynism already proved its bankruptcy precisely because of its reformist "broad church" programme.

As for the SWP, now liquidated into pro-Palestine activism, their strategy consists in building "rank-and-file committees" in whatever moves, usually composed of WhatsApp groups that are echo chambers of their own supporters disconnected from the working class (see article, page 3). Socialist Alternative is running around like a headless chicken, pasting a socialist label on identity politics. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has no perspective of doing work inside the unions and Labour Party, thereby condemning themselves to the margins of society. Who knows what the CPB is doing, so enmeshed is it in the discredited RMT leadership.

We could go on. Various left groups

have their own false responses to the winter of reaction. Most are disconnected from reality. Others simply adapt to it. But none seeks to provide a way out of the crisis of the left, which is an expression of the crisis of the leadership of the proletariat.

We Spartacists are often accused of being obsessed with the question of leadership. Damn right we are! Because whatever rank-and-file committee you build, whatever courageous actions you do, as long as the working class is led by pro-capitalist scoundrels, and as long as there isn't a real socialist opposition in the unions whose goal is to sack the rotten misleaders, there can be no serious talk of working-class actions against British imperialism, or of any significant progress for the workers movement. That is the lesson from the Corbyn movement to the strike wave.

What to do now? Militants in socialist groups must stop running around and seri-

ously think about the disastrous course of the past period. Get out of your sectarian castle and seriously engage with workers and the rest of the left. As for militants in the trade unions, now is not the time for idiotic, adventurist offensives. The task is to rebuild the unions into fighting weapons (not on WhatsApp but in the real world). New members must be recruited and educated. Strike funds must be replenished or created. Various unions in the same workplace must be merged into one. Everything that strengthens the union at work is worth a thousand times more than whatever paper resolution the same few militants pass at some branch meeting. That is how we will prepare the next counteroffensive.

But every step, however modest, will have to come as the result of a ruthless struggle against the leaders of the trade unions. And that's what the rest of the left cannot stomach. ■

# Quebec...

(continued from page 5)

21 April). Instead, Fightback is agitating inside the unions for a return to the "fighting unionism" of the 1970s, accusing the more conservative bureaucrats of "business unionism" while giving support to the "left" union leaders who echo their perspective, such as the Montreal Central Council of the Confederation of National Unions.

Obviously, a bit of the fighting spirit of May 1972 would not hurt! But in itself, the policy of "fighting unionism" offers no prospect of victory because in essence it simply cheers on "pure" trade union militancy. The idea that it is possible to win more piecemeal gains for workers with simple "shop floor" trade union militancy is a dead end: the bosses are organised up to the highest levels of the state, they have leaders, they have the police and armies if necessary and they will always attempt to take back with the right hand whatever they give with the left. To win, workers need organisers who know how to counter the bosses' manoeuvres, a general staff that understands that you need to enter every battle with the aim of winning the war—all things that narrow, disorganised "fighting unionism" is not capable of providing.

Even a small communist organisation must stand in intransigent opposition to the treacherous workers leaders—right and "left"—and demonstrate the necessity of a revolutionary leadership now, otherwise it can only help to further subordinate the workers to the pro-capitalist bureaucracies. Fighting unionism fizzled out in the 1970s precisely because it did *not* represent an alternative to the bourgeois-nationalist union bureaucracies, nor to the leadership of the national liberation movement as a whole. There is no need to replay this film.

## Québec Solidaire—sham opposition

At the parliamentary level, Québec Solidaire (QS) claims to support public sector workers and in general to oppose the private sector in education and health, priding itself on having put forward the housing and cost-of-living problems. According to Gabriel Nadeau-Dubois, the CAQ is "inconsistent" and doesn't understand "real world" problems. Fine, but while a fight to the finish between the government and the unions is in the offing, while the task of the hour is precisely to get rid of this anti-union gov-



Senturk/Alamy

Striking public sector workers rally in Montreal, 23 November.

ernment, QS just bangs on about the obvious and whines that Mr Legault is out of touch or not charitable enough. In other words, looking to QS to win anything concrete is like trying to put out a forest fire with water balloons.

While the left wing of QS might like the party to go out into the streets and be more "anti-capitalist", the reality is that a party of the Montreal middle class like QS has no serious weapons with which to fight the Quebec bosses who stand behind the CAQ. Like the union leaders, QS's "opposition" consists fundamentally in seeking to regenerate the present day "Québécois state". But every advance of the working class, even the most partial reforms, necessarily collides with the interests of the capitalist class and can only be won in opposition to it.

QS's entire programme, based on the lie that it is possible to reconcile those interests by administering the state, constitutes an obstacle to the independent mobilisation of the workers against the bosses, the only way to advance their fundamental interests. The basic lesson of the Quiet Revolution is precisely that if the workers movement is chained to a party that does not represent its interests but those of a different class (in the case of QS, the small bosses, Montreal's Rosemont and Plateau *bobos* [yuppies] and the soup kitchens), it will run straight into a wall.

## A socialist programme to get out of the crisis

So, how do we turn things around *now*? The best and only way to get Quebec out

of its slump is to organise a real struggle against the *monocles* who govern Quebec! The aim of the Common Front strikes must not be simply to bring Legault back to the negotiating table in order to get a few more percentage points, but rather to organise a real *confrontation* that would mobilise the whole of Quebec society against this government which is the obstacle to any social progress! There's no shortage of reasons and there is true potential to rally millions of people behind a real fight for quality education and healthcare.

That includes an intransigent struggle to advance the condition of women. The issues of labour shortages, long working hours and compulsory overtime all point to the reality of women's oppression in the capitalist system: replicating her role in the nuclear family—caring for children, the elderly and everyone else—the government treats the woman employee as the lowest of its serv-

ants. Necessary and vital measures—such as banning all forms of compulsory overtime for healthcare workers, organising mass hiring and training of new immigrants and the unemployed under union control, taking over and expropriating the private clinics and schools, demanding a shorter working week (with no loss in pay) and massive investment in infrastructure and services—are, or should be, basic goals of the trade union movement. But what is the immediate obstacle to drastically increasing investment in public services and halting the decline in the status of women? It is the reactionary Legault government! The key to even beginning to tackle these questions lies precisely in the need to shatter the CAQ government.

The whole problem, however, is that the union bureaucrats (who make plenty of nice speeches in defence of women and public services) *refuse* to organise the struggle with this goal in mind because they *accept* that it is the bosses who rule. In order to win, the workers movement must reject the politics of "concertation" and the leaders who promote them and equip itself with a new, revolutionary leadership which can fight for the immediate interests of the workers, male and female, as it fights at the same time for the general interest of the whole working class in Quebec and worldwide. Its rallying cry must be: For a workers republic in Quebec! For international socialism!

**Down with "concertation" with the government—kick out the CAQ monocles! Public services must belong to the workers: seize them! For a revolutionary leadership of the trade unions! No confidence in the capitalist and nationalist parties—CAQ, PLQ, PQ, QS—for an anti-imperialist workers party that fights for independence and socialism! ■**

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# Throw the Zionists out of Labour & TUC!

The following is an SL/B statement issued on 9 November 2023.

The Zionist war machine is massacring Palestinians in Gaza with the full backing of the American and British governments. As for Keir Starmer and the leadership of the Labour Party, they are toeing the line, defending Israel's "right" to raze the Gaza strip and murder an entire people. The trade union leaders? At best they have issued timid "criticisms", at worst, they support him. This is intolerable.

Support to Zionism and the right of Israel to oppress Palestinians is a red line for the (Protestant, anti-Jewish) British ruling class. For Starmer and his clique, support to Zionism is their loyalty oath to the British establishment, the necessary political passport to be admitted to their ranks. Corbyn and his supporters were purged from Labour and slandered as "anti-Semites" precisely because they crossed this line.

The only force which can actually put a stop to the current massacre is the working class. But the British workers cannot take a single step in this direction as long as they are led by Zionists like Starmer and his trade union backers! Hell, this unholy alliance with Zionists is just as much an obstacle to the fight for higher wages, a better NHS, decent schools and affordable housing. The struggle of the working class in Britain and the cause of Palestinian free-



Black/Alamy



Alamy



GMB

Angela Rayner, her Labour boss Sir Keir Starmer, GMB leader Gary Smith

dom are linked by their common enemy. Now is the time for a real fight to throw the pro-establishment leaders out of the labour movement!

But most people are trying to pressure Starmer to come out for a "ceasefire", as opposed to "humanitarian pauses". This is just a debate over how long to pause during the slaughter. The point is not to get a short break from the *blitzkrieg* but for Labour and the TUC to stand for the **liberation of Palestine!** But again, this obviously will not happen as long as Labour and the TUC are led by Zionists!

### Anti-Zionism isn't anti-Jewish

Let's be clear, the charge of "anti-Semitism" against opponents of Zionism is the most disgusting lie. Zionism is an ideology which claims that all Jews have a religious right to steal the land of Palestinians.

To oppose Zionism means to oppose *that*. It does *not* mean opposing the right of Israeli Jews to live in Palestine.

If the Labour Party and trade unions were led by fighters for the working class, as opposed to the current gang of spineless careerists and knighted yuppies, they would say: the freedom of the Jewish population of Israel, not least of all the liberation of the Jewish working class, depends on the liberation of Palestine. The cause of anti-Zionism is also the cause of the Jewish working class!

### Don't quit, fight! For a rank-and-file revolt!

In response to Starmer's open proclamations of Israel's right to massacre and starve the people of Gaza some 50 Labour councillors have quit the party. This may help their chances of re-election,

but it does nothing to break the stranglehold of Zionism on the party. Quitting at this point only means carrying out Starmer's purge for him. If you are going to go down, go down fighting. Go down with a chance to win!

But the attitude of pretty much the whole left is "Starmer's hold on the party is too strong", "the left is too weak" and "for now, these are the union leaders we have, we have to pressure them to fight". All this amounts to the same thing:

refusing to put up a fight against the Zionists in the labour movement.

Don't expect anything from the Labour lefts. Sultana, McDonnell & Co won't break the rules. They have shown that they would rather let themselves be purged by the right wing than do anything to confront the Zionists head-on. Just look at Corbyn.

What is needed is simple. An upsurge of the rank and file, both in the Party and in the trade unions, could toss out the Zionists in an instant, rules be damned. For this to happen, the red line must be crossed. Anyone, and any group claiming to stand for Palestine, must fight for this. For a real fight to remove the obstacles to working-class actions in defence of Palestine!

**Send the Zionists where they belong: to the Tories and Lib Dems!**  
**Not #ceasefire but #ZionistsOutOfLabour** ■

## Only death and defeat with Hamas

# A revolutionary road for Palestinian liberation

Printed below is a Spartacist (English edition) supplement issued on 10 October 2023, shortly after Israel began its genocidal war on Gaza.

Let's get two things straight. First, Palestinians face brutal national oppression

and indiscriminate murder by the state of Israel—they have every right to defend themselves, including through force. Second, the targeted murder of Israeli civilians by Hamas and its allies is a despicable crime which is totally counterproductive

for Palestinian liberation. With Gaza now facing starvation and mass murder at the hands of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the international workers movement must urgently oppose this onslaught. But to advance and triumph, the struggle for Pal-

estinian liberation needs a totally different road from everything on offer, whether Islamism or secular nationalism. What is needed is not empty sentiments of empathy from the cabal of left liberals and fake socialists but a revolutionary road for Palestinian liberation.

### How to defeat the Zionist state

To defeat one's enemy, one must exploit its weaknesses and neutralize its strengths. The resilience of the state of Israel comes from the fact that the millions of Jewish people living within its borders see it as the only way to defend themselves in a hostile region. As long as this is the case, Israelis will fight to the death to defend the Zionist state. This was all part of the plan

*continued on page 8*