

SCOTTISH LEFT REVIEW

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LAND STRUGGLES OF THE FUTURE • HOW TO WIN A LONGER WEEKEND
LESSONS FROM LITTLE IRELAND • CONDEMNED BY THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES

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Very knowledgeable and a great service for our union members.

What a great boost of confidence it was to know that Allan McDougall Solicitors and my trade union were there, on our side, when we had thought the system was going to walk all over us. A great big heartfelt thank you.

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EDITORIAL: IS DEVOLUTION GOING TO SEED?

Sometimes the elders of Scottish academia surprise you. This summer Sir John Curtice spoke to the BBC in front of a poster featuring artwork from *Al-Hadaf (The Purpose)*, a paper founded in 1969 by Palestinian revolutionary Ghassan Kanafani. When a fraction of the Left gathered recently to discuss 'Independence and the British State' ten years since the 2014 referendum and a quarter-century since devolution, Curtice's lecture to the Conter conference explained why deep-rooted constitutional issues are likely to remain the substance of Scottish politics, even as the SNP's vote-base begins to subside.

Earlier in the day, Professor David McCrone's speech seemed to be channelling a revolutionary muse. He remarked on why Scotland needs a new term to capture its current predicament where independence support remains around 50% but the referendum route looks as closed as the Radical Road. Forget impenetrable Caledonian antiszygies, he said. We need to talk about Caledonian zig-zagery. 'By this', he explained, 'I mean that progress is not continuous – and I'm not talking about retreat. It's like, is it not, hill-climbing? Often you have to zig zag to get round difficult obstacles rather than going vertical and risk falling off. It takes longer, sure,' he explained, 'but you get there more safely in the end.' I was surely not the only one in a roomful of socialists to hear echoes of Lenin's own endorsement of zigzagery in 'No Compromises?':

... to renounce in advance any change of tack, ... – is that not ridiculous in the extreme? Is it not like making a difficult ascent of an unexplored and hitherto inaccessible mountain and refusing in advance ever to move in zigzags, ever to retrace one's steps, or ever to abandon a course once selected, and to try others?

We should start seeing Scotland as a place, McCrone explained, where 'radical change is followed by pragmatic adjustment, as the state cedes just enough power to keep the Union intact for the time being, in a compromise which sows the seeds of the next phase of radical rebellion.' If Gordon Brown's 'Vow' and the Smith Commission were the compromises that kept the Union intact, then McCrone's explanation puts us somewhere in the radical seed-sowing stage. Meanwhile, pragmatists are mapping out their own paths.

A new report by former Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale and Stephen Noon, Yes Scotland chief strategist and now John Swinny's special advisor, argues that independence should come about only if it 'commands the clear and consistent support of a majority of people in Scotland'. Such pragmatism would set us on a path where 'constitutional change only happens when it reflects what the people want', and to find that out, the report suggests, we must rely above all on polls sampling the intentions of a segment of the public. Perhaps Curtice would adjudicate?

The problem with poll-based politics is that it treats the people as so many opinionated individuals rather than as a collective – active or passive, waking or asleep – that stirs into life in certain times and places. Many people regarded the 2014 referendum as one such moment of popular action, as Sarah Collins and Chris Stevens explain in our recent *Redgauntlet* podcast, 'What Is To Be Done?'. The task of radicals is not to reflect the stated desires of individuals back to them, but to grasp things by the roots, raise consciousness, and reveal the material realities that lead people to believe in alternatives and to struggle for them. The referendum campaign, for many

on the Scottish Left, brought the Scottish people to life more than anything had during the long years of Thatcher, Major, and Blair, when the civil society consensus emerged around a cautious devolution settlement that the establishment proudly called Scotland's 'settled will'.

If the prospect of such popular mobilisation seems unlikely in 2020s Scotland, it is partly owing to the suffocation of the struggle that developed in the wake of the 2008/9 crisis, opposed the austerity that followed, and was expressed across the country during the referendum campaign. In a similar way, the 1997 settlement that Dugdale and Noon explain was so exemplary was the result of a gradual deadening of the class-based demand that expressed itself a generation earlier as the radical hope for a workers' parliament. The new political life born in 2014 might become the radical meat that the grinders will gradually turn into constitutional square slice. But the work we do now will sow the seeds for McCrone's 'next phase of radical rebellion'.

This *Scottish Left Review* addresses how a quarter-century of devolution has dampened the political and economic power of those who are far removed from Scotland's governing classes. Robert Rae explains why the stalling of the Human Rights Bill means those who come to live and work here are denied the dignity of cultural rights. With the Commonwealth Games coming back to Glasgow, Dylan Brewerton-Harper shows how the last Games left its scars in places like Dalmarnock. Phil Fairlie looks at the social cost of the dilapidated prison estate, and Dave Watson considers what it would take to rebuild Scotland starting with its poorer communities. With the new Labour government reheating eighties narratives to justify austerity, as Liam Payne discovers, Kate Ramsden and Tom Morrison explain the class-based arguments that cut through to communities the far-right are seeking to infect. In the workplace, Ruby Alden-Gibson reports on public workers' victories in the battle with the Scottish Government over time itself. Fighting with the language of class, Chik Collins reminds us, is as vital now as ever.

This issue also explores the movements mobilising against the landowner class both here and overseas. Tara Wight reports on a resurgent land movement that is experimenting with new tactics of resistance. Olivia Oldham-Dorrington considers examples from New Zealand that can get the land reform movement back on track. Caillean Gallagher talks with Vijoo Krishnan about the united struggle of land and labour in the long march of the All India Kisan Sabha.

Meanwhile, we continue to march for freedom in Palestine and now in solidarity with Lebanon. Derek Newton reviews a book that documents the dedication and resolve that built the global Palestinian resistance, while Phil Chetwynd reminds us that the evil it is resisting emanates not just from Israel or the United States, but from Scotland too. Liam Turbett's story of a Brigadista nurse is an inspiration to those who dedicate their lives to 'the noble and justified struggle for freedom'. Perhaps Scotland's part in the future of that struggle will require a new turn, away from parliamentary possibilities and constitutional pragmatics towards less comfortable terrain. If images from a Marxist-Leninist pan-Arab Palestinian nationalist magazine can loom behind Scotland's foremost pronouncer of the public will, isn't it time we started to imagine a more radical backdrop for our politics – one that might unsettle the will of the Scottish people?

THE VANISHING RIGHT TO A CULTURAL LIFE

The Scottish Government has abandoned its Human Rights Bill, but as the causes of migration multiply the struggle for cultural rights continues, writes **Robert Rae**.

Once upon a time, the Scottish Government displayed an admirable independence of thought in the international arena. It was telling, then, that at a time when Israel was stretching the credibility of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to breaking point, the Government announced that its much-heralded incorporation of Human Rights into Scottish law was to be postponed. To be fair, the Cabinet Secretary responsible, Shirley-Anne Somerville, did come to Scotland's inaugural annual Human Rights Conference to explain to the assembled and disgruntled rights movement exactly why they had been marched to the top of the hill and then unceremoniously stood down. The rationale she offered was that more time was needed to work out the new legislation's tricky relationship to devolution. The suspicion in the room however was that there would have been plenty of time within the incorporation process to do that, and that the decision had more to do with the outcome of the recent general election. After losing two First Ministers in quick succession, both with a declared commitment to Human Rights, had there been a lessening of commitment at the top of the ruling party? Time will tell, but the comment by one of the leading university academics felt about right: if she had had her fiddle with her (she happens to be a talented player) the moment would have warranted a sad slow air.

The Scottish social movement that has developed over the last few years around Human Rights is led by a passionate group of law professors, which gives a clue as to how complex it can get. That a theatre and film maker like me has got wrapped up in it all indicates its breadth. I'm not an academic or a politician and spend much of my professional life creating and shaping frames in which stories can be communicated on stage or screen. This is a personal take on a developing story and its meaning.

By way of a simplified political analysis: as the Tories set about building a far-right identity around a willingness to denigrate and ignore human rights legislation whenever it got in the way, the Scottish Government set about cementing our difference by incorporating those rights and more into Scottish law. Bravo! The academics started to work out how to do it, the third sector responded enthusiastically to the potential difference it could make to the lives of the people they represented, and others with feet in both camps began to work out how to 'make rights real', both in terms of the responsibilities of those who would have a duty to uphold the new law, and the routes available to those who needed ways of ensuring their rights were upheld. Years of thought and planning and energy, encouraged and supported by the Government via Task Forces and Departments, was to have culminated in the Scottish Human Rights Bill, which, with cross party support, was to become the law of the land this year. Hence the widespread disappointment when it was unexpectedly dropped from the legislative programme. That disappointment now shows signs of turning into genuine anger, with murmurings of betrayal. Another defeat snatched from the jaws of victory.

The Rights We're Denied

The Bill was set to incorporate major UN Treaties, as well as conventions against all forms of discrimination against women and

racial discrimination, and provisions on the rights of persons with disabilities. It was to incorporate a new right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). The Bill to ensure that children enjoy their rights, as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), came into force in July this year. It was when this was moving through the required legal processes south of the border that tricky issues around devolved competencies emerged and provided a rationale for the proposed delay in legislation. From the breadth of the different intersectional concerns expressed in the various treaties and conventions, you can begin to appreciate the breadth of interests represented within the rights movement. With so many acronyms things get complicated, so along with over a hundred other organisations, we became members of the Human Rights Consortium Scotland. Check out their website for more details.

Who are we? We are an organisation called Art27 Scotland set up to explore cultural rights in practice (and theory). Our name comes from Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) which states that "everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits." ICESCR, which was incorporated into the Bill, recognises in Article 15 the right to "take part in cultural life". As artists often working in a community-based context, like colleagues in other sectors, we glimpsed an opportunity to create a fundamental shift in policy. We soon discovered an international dimension and joined a global movement. Cities such as Barcelona have adopted Cultural Rights as the basis for developing and implementing a new radical cultural policy (Fem Cultura) which led to a shift in distribution and focus of resources along the lines that socialists and radicals had long been advocating.

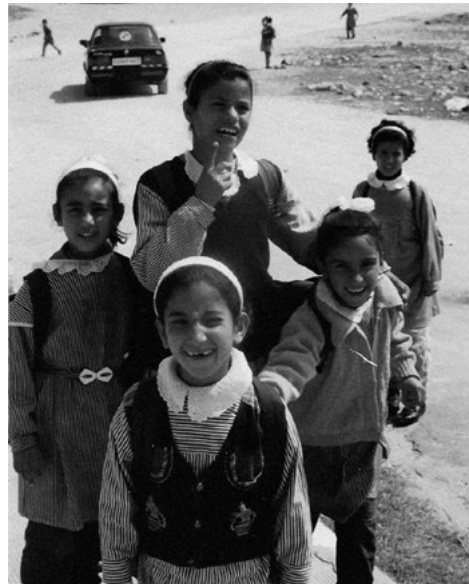
What Are Cultural Rights?

Culture includes our ways of life, the identities we choose, the meaning we give our lives, our language, traditions, rituals – the list goes on to touch upon most of the things that define our humanity – as well as how we express these in music, dance, theatre, literature, visual art, design, architecture, and film. This broad definition of culture may make it difficult to monitor and easy to sideline, but when a person's Cultural Rights are being denied, so are their rights to be valued as human and to be protected.

I've been working recently on a project with victims, survivors, and combatants in The Conflict along the border in the North of Ireland. In the play a British soldier describes how he was systematically taught to reduce the humanity of his enemy – which in this case was the Nationalist community – to the point where he regarded them as less than human and so was able to intimidate and ultimately kill them. It was only when a series of events led him to experience them as full human beings that he began to realise what he had become. Diagnosed with PTSD, he recalls that the most significant part of his journey was when he'd been assigned to accompany a group of disabled young people from Newry on their annual outing to watch Celtic play. His experience of their unguarded wel



LEFT: Dabke Dancers. Credit: author.



RIGHT: School children in Gaza. Credit: author.

come and their joy and excitement in the expression of their cultural identity shifted something inside him that couldn't be reversed.

I'm lucky enough to have visited Gaza before its destruction to meet the many artists working in the community. I'd regularly use one of the six door taxis that ferried people along the strip from city to city, stopping whenever there was room to let people in carrying shopping and even livestock. They were full of laughter and respectful curiosity. Memorable visits included a progressive deaf school run by a Swiss head teacher. The girls were immaculately turned out in their gingham summer dresses and shiny white socks. I talked into the night with actors struggling with the practical difficulties they faced in staging an Athol Fugard play. I met disabled activists working on a charter to enshrine Disabled Rights into a Palestinian constitution and joined workshops with music teachers struggling with children who hid under their desks whenever a car backfired. Despite all, people were warm, hospitable, and proud of their world-famous cuisine, just as anyone encountering the Palestinians in Scotland today will testify.

It is sad and shocking then to have to report on the recent experience of Gazan children here in Scotland, where despite having lost immediate family members, they report a common experience in schools of having to remove any expression of their culture in case it "upsets other pupils". One boy was removed from class when he began to explain that a song he had shared was from Palestine, some have been asked to remove Keffiyehs, one girl was stopped from collecting for Medical Aid for Palestine despite the fact that weeks before she had been fundraising for Ukrainian children, and another was stopped from decorating their pencil case with a map of Palestine, disturbingly reminiscent of the experiences of school children in the Occupied West Bank.

A Lesson from Little Ireland

Our ongoing collaboration with the Palestinian community is part of Art27's programme of work in Edinburgh's Southside where, by working with artists who share first languages, we engage through Arabic, Cantonese, Mandarin, Polish and English. Thanks to the mosque and the university, it is the most diverse area of what is officially Scotland's most diverse city, a place where, like in cities across the world, people connected digitally live simultaneously in two or more places. When researching for our intervention, locals told us that despite the diversity there was no place in which to share and experience each other's culture, and they wanted one. That became our mission, to create community by developing a space that was accessible to all, a place where they could express and share their culture. Opposition came from those determined to

protect the community spaces on behalf of traditional users and, when pushed, the idea of traditional users coalesced around a notion of working class. The people we engaged with were more than likely in the precarious gig economy, working as drivers or in hospitality, on the lower end of the wage scale and living in the kind of accommodation they could afford, so why were they not regarded as working class? The communities themselves identified racism as being the source of their exclusion.

Not so long ago there was an area of the Southside known as Little Ireland. It sat in the arches under the bridges that connect the Southside to Princes Street. Many of its dwellings had no light and minimal sanitation, however they provided Irish migrants with cheap accommodation as well as the comfort and security of being amongst one's own. When Gaelic speakers left home to find work in the cities, they gravitated to the poorer working-class areas that offered affordability as well as the company and guidance of people who shared their culture and spoke the same language. It is no different today. Diverse cultures have always been a part of working-class place-making. And as the causes of migration multiply, with climate change and war, the need for human beings to migrate to survive will not lessen. More and more of the world's population will live in cities and consequently those cities will become home for many different cultures. It comes as no surprise then that cities across the world are turning to the mutual respect expressed in cultural rights as a basis for stability founded in human dignity, and as an alternative to the rising tide of fascistic solutions, rhetorical or real. There is plenty of evidence to suggest that whatever barriers states erect, the ingenuity of those seeking safety will find a way through. Is the 'solution' then to allow one cultural group to annihilate another using murderous force to create what the powerful culture perceives as a safe homogenous state? History has shown us where that ends. Or is the alternative the mutual respect generated by knowledge and understanding of each other's culture? Surely recognising the right of all human beings to a cultural life offers a happier way forward.

ICESCR states in its preamble that it recognises the inherent dignity and inalienable rights of all members of the human family. It does feel reckless and disheartening at this moment in history to let slip an opportunity to incorporate ICESCR and the other Human Rights initiatives into Scottish law. Doing so would place "the inherent dignity of all members of the human family" at the heart of what it means to be a Scottish citizen. Isn't that the spirit of Burns? So, I live in hope that the cross-party consensus on incorporation remains steadfast, that party-political concerns are put aside so that the Scottish Human Rights Bill become law regardless of who wins the 2026 Holyrood election, and that the dignity of us all is affirmed.

WINNING THE DAYS

Ruby Alden-Gibson sets out the spate of victories that PCS members have won in the campaign for a shorter working week.

Two years ago, in the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic, I wrote a piece for *Scottish Left Review* on the opportunities that this unprecedented time created for the changing world of work and, in the context of this, the progress that PCS union was making on the 4-day week. In March 2020, practically overnight, workers across the UK started working from their homes, in ways that we had been told for years were just not possible. This ability to work from home, which many workers had never experienced nor been allowed, resulted in a challenge to the status quo. In amongst the tragedy and turmoil of the pandemic, opportunities were being created for doing things differently. Whilst new ways of working were implemented to stop the spread of Covid-19, they gave workers more flexibility about things like caring responsibilities, and enhanced their productivity, due to factors like shorter travel times and more efficient working. The collective realisation that work can be different acted as a catalyst for conversations to come into the mainstream about issues like the 4-day week and the right to disconnect from work. People everywhere realised work can be better, but trade unions have always known this.

Since then, PCS members working across the Scottish devolved administration have made significant gains in reducing their working time and increasing their flexibility in work. Workers have reduced their weekly hours from 42 and 37 to 35, crucially without loss of pay, and a public sector pilot of the 4-day, 32-hour week now is underway, involving PCS members in South of Scotland Enterprise and Accountant in Bankruptcy. Yet in the context of 25 years of devolution and a supposedly progressive Scottish Government, it is a damning indictment of government and employers that it took a global pandemic and the most monumental societal change in generations to get movement on these issues. What's worse, it wasn't just the pandemic that resulted in workers winning meaningful reductions in their working time. It also took the cost-of-living crisis, with the highest inflation since the 1970s, and the subsequent in-

dustrial action. Looking back on 25 years of devolution and ahead to the next 25, we must remember this. When the political will is there, change can happen. But as has been the case throughout history, change only will happen when there is organised working class power to keep demanding it.

Trade unions have always been at the forefront of winning reductions in working time. Australian stone masons first won the 8-hour day in 1856, and unions and campaigners fought for the five-day week throughout the 19th century. Even before the pandemic, unions such as ForSa and the Communication Workers Union were campaigning for working time reductions. For PCS members in the Scottish devolved sector, a 4-day, 28-hour week with no loss of pay or terms and conditions has been a pay claim element since the mid-2010s. Prior to the pandemic, we struggled to make gains on this front due to the lack of will from employers even to discuss it, and the challenge for members to imagine how it could possibly work. Although PCS members have always been strong in the conviction that working time can and should be reduced, years of austerity-driven cuts to the public sector and labour-saving technologies being introduced to solely benefit employers made it hard to imagine having a 4-day week with no loss of pay.

Post-Pandemic Possibilities

In the new world of work shaped and structured by the pandemic, PCS Scotland decided it was time to further our 4-day week agenda. In April 2021, activists and staff worked with the thinktank Autonomy to conduct a research project into the feasibility, desirability and impact of a shorter working week in the Scottish Government. The project placed workers at the heart of a discussion involving over 2300 people, and the results found a high degree of collective support and buy-in for a shorter working week. 87% were in favour of the Scottish Government exploring its introduction. 84% were



confident that they could adapt their current work processes to fit the demands of a 4-day week, and workers felt that the current flexi system and the successful implementation of home working had demonstrated the organisational ability to adapt to change. The project concluded that a shorter working week is not only desirable, it is possible.

The Autonomy report on the findings was widely covered in the press. This work gave PCS members and negotiators evidence and confidence that a shorter working week was realistic and achievable as it could benefit workers and employers alike. The report was used as a key tool for strategic negotiation with Scottish Government officials and in local negotiations with employers. It was also used to drive a campaign for a 4-day week. This resulted in future Scottish Government Pay policies introducing reductions in working time in the form of the ability to move to a 35-hour week and to trial a 4-day week, and the introduction of a public sector pilot of the 4-day, 32-hour week.

Although working from home during the pandemic improved flexibility and work-life balance for many workers, it also resulted in an extreme intensification of work. The introduction of Zoom and Microsoft Teams, and the need to work from a spare room or kitchen table without elsewhere to go, resulted in long, intense work periods without sufficient breaks and, too often, without proper equipment or the ability to 'switch off'. Prospect union led the demand for a 'Right to Disconnect', and together the civil service unions successfully lobbied the Scottish Government to include this in their pay policy. Creating a 'Right to Disconnect' agreement became part of the PCS pay claim and, during negotiations, employers quickly acquiesced to create a policy with us. But of course they did: it's a good 'wellbeing' policy and it doesn't cost a penny. As we moved through 2020 and 2021, gains were made on healthier and safer hybrid working practices and agreements were made on implementing the Right to Disconnect, but very little changed on the shorter working week. Then towards the end of 2021, the first signs of the cost-of-living crisis appeared, with economic forecasts of sky-rocketing inflation and CPI tipping over 5%, and progress on a changing world of work came to a halt.

The Strength To Win

In late 2022, in the face of continually rising inflation and after the wave of strike action from unions like the RMT and protests up and down the UK, PCS members turned out in record numbers to vote

for industrial action. Across the Scottish devolved civil service, justice, culture, environmental and skills and enterprise sectors, PCS members voted for industrial action to send a clear message to their employers and the government that they'd had enough. In response, the First Minister gave Scottish Government officials authority to negotiate with PCS to end the dispute. The format of this negotiation resulted in a sectoral pay offer that not only included pay and job security elements but offered working time reductions in the form of a wellbeing hour and, in the case of some employers, a move to a 35-hour week with no loss of pay. PCS members across the Scottish sector voted overwhelmingly to accept this offer, and successive pay offers have resulted in the vast majority of employers moving to a 35-hour week with no loss of pay this year, as well as the start of the long-awaited public sector pilot of the 4-day, 28-hour week.

One of the biggest gains in all of this came for our members in Security in the National Galleries of Scotland and the shift roster they have won. The implementation of the 35-hour week in the National Galleries has taken security shift staff from a 42-hour week to a 33.75-hour week with no loss of pay or terms and conditions. Anyone involved in trade unions knows that big wins like this come from hard fought battles, and it is testament to the workers who took industrial action in 2022 and to PCS representatives who negotiated this roster, that they achieved this progressive change to their working lives. This fight serves as a reminder that governments and employers don't make progressive changes benevolently. Only the power of the organised working class can do this.

PCS members have won a 35-hour week, a Right to Disconnect and the ability to work from home in hybrid format. Work continues to ensure that these changes have a positive and meaningful impact on workers' wellbeing. Our 4-day week campaign will continue, and the next steps will be informed by the results of the 4-day week pilot which we expect to be published at the start of 2025.

The Scottish Government states that there are huge fiscal challenges ahead. For the vast majority of working people, there have always been challenges, be it in their wallets or their workplaces. The next 12 months will be a crucial period. Our members, who have the experience, strength and skills to win, will be looking for more than just rhetoric from politicians. As we look to the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary election and the next stage of Scottish devolved power, let's not forget that real power lies not with our elected representatives but with the working class who elect them.

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PCS Scotland is the largest civil service union in the Scottish civil and public service related bodies. Our union members do the jobs it takes to keep Scotland running from our forests to our fisheries, our cultural heritage to our courts and justice systems and our civil service. We believe democracy in Scotland must extend beyond devolved power in Holyrood to every workplace and community in the nation.

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BREAKING THE CYCLE OF OVERCROWDED PRISONS

The disrepair of Scotland's prisons estate is failing prisoners, victims, and all of society. **Phil Fairlie** explains why it's time for a genuine debate about the purpose of prison in our country.

Scotland's Prison Officers are highly skilled workers doing remarkable work in very difficult circumstances. Prisons are at capacity across the estate, putting enormous pressure on those on the front-line of the justice system. The experience, knowledge and commitment they bring to their role is invaluable at the best of times and even more so during this unprecedented period when the prison system is under such intense pressure.

Despite the significant sums of money spent in the last two decades on the previously neglected prisons estate, some of Scotland's prisons are in desperate need of investment to make them fit for purpose. The money spent on the new women's estate, alongside Grampian, Low Moss, and several others, prove the possibility of vast improvements in some of the conditions in which staff work and prisoners are held. Other institutions, however, are in a state of disrepair. Our members who work in them can just about do the basics, but they cannot effectively work with and rehabilitate offenders who are being held in crumbling, overcrowded, antiquated infrastructure. It is simply impossible to undertake the vital one-to-one work which builds the confidence that can be the first step towards prisoner rehabilitation.

Overcrowding impacts on every aspect of prison life, but the effect on education, training and access to healthcare and other services is most profound. Overcrowding prevents officers from developing the constructive relationships that are so important to ending the cycle of reoffending and it causes major problems for prisoners' accessing rehabilitative programmes. This is completely counterproductive. It will cost society more in the long run, because most prisoners will be released at some point, and communities will be less safe if we don't start to tackle these fundamentals. If we continue as we are, we will repeatedly fail prisoners, victims and wider society.

The reality is that over 8300 prisoners are locked up in Scotland's jails. We imprison more people than almost anywhere else in Europe. Glasgow's Barlinnie alone is 35% above its design capac-

ity. The greater the overcrowding, the more tense prisons become, which means the risk of prison violence and repeat offending rises. To keep someone in jail costs £45,000 per prisoner per year. Burning through scarce money in an effort to stand still is neither sustainable nor desirable.

In an attempt to address the crisis, the Scottish Government has introduced the early release programme. I welcome this, but it can only ever be a short-term response and a first step to a longer-term solution. Just as the Violence Reduction Unit initiated a different and successful approach to knife crime twenty years ago, we need to rethink our approach to offending by dealing with the fundamental reasons why many end up in prison: trauma, poverty, addiction, relationship breakdown and poor mental health.

Of course, we could put prisoners through every education and rehabilitation programme you can think of, but if on release they have no home to go to, no job, no mental health support, and unaddressed addiction problems, then there is a very good chance they will return to their previous ways. We need a long term, sustainable and fully funded plan that spans multiple services, and links them up to avert a repeat of this crisis. We need it quickly, because POA members are exhausted. The stresses of the job are making them ill, and with a ludicrous retirement age of 68 it seems inevitable that many will not make it until then.

The overcrowding crisis is not new. It comes back in cycles. This cycle has been many years in the making but it has now come to a head. We need a genuine debate about the purpose of prison in this country, and a radical rethink of the sentencing policy. The direction of travel from here matters to everyone, inside and outside our prisons. The Prison Officers Association will work constructively with the Scottish and UK Governments. We will support practical and realistic solutions to end the crisis but as we have warned both governments, more of the same will not cut it and our members will not accept it.

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BUILDING THE LOCAL ECONOMY

To build Scotland back up from the bottom requires the development of community strength and the devolution of economic power below the Holyrood level, writes **Dave Watson**.

The Jimmy Reid Foundation, in line with Jimmy Reid's views about the role of community, has published several papers over the past decade making the case for building stronger communities. In a new report, 'Building the Local Economy', we focus on the economic problems many communities across Scotland face.

The paper argues that governments and councils focus too narrowly on retail operations when developing policies for the local economy. While the retail sector does need action on planning, funding and taxation, the problems pre-date online shopping and developed when global corporations captured the high street. The new UK Government has put growth at the heart of its economic strategy. All growth is local to somewhere, and governments must support the local economy to succeed at the Scottish and UK levels.

Governments must understand that the local economy should be viewed in the broader community context. The local economy is not simply a cold economic calculation based on population, employment and productivity. To function, it needs a healthy, supportive community. That requires investment in the social infrastructure that binds communities together. Suitable housing, which individuals and families can afford, underpins the local economy. Scotland's persistent health inequalities also undermine the local economy, along with a poor environment and inadequate transport links. We should support low-traffic neighbourhoods and the '15-minute city' concept, although these should be co-designed with the local community. Colleges can be anchor institutions working together with schools, and early years learning and public services should be organised in community hubs that facilitate joined-up provision.

The riots in England warn of what happens when community cohesion breaks down and people lose a shared identity, community pride and a stake in their neighbourhood. Many of the towns that suffered the worst rioting have been systematically abandoned for decades. When there is a lack of belonging, self-worth, sense of equity and democratic participation in communities facing hardships, the conditions develop in which extremist narratives take hold. While Scotland has thankfully avoided the rioting we have seen in England, many underlying factors apply to our most disadvantaged communities. We should not be complacent and should urgently help build stronger local communities that will reject the language of hate.

The paper is critical of the measures taken by all governments – City Deals, levelling up, town centre action plans, etc. They are all piecemeal initiatives and not consistently applied. They lack the broader perspective of what makes communities work, and they do not provide long-term consistent funding. All the while, core council funding is being cut. We argue that the identity of high streets

should be in the hands of communities, who should be empowered to find new uses for empty spaces that create a better high street. This means ensuring people make products and experiences locally according to their customs and traditions. There are examples of this across Scotland, such as the Community Ownership Hub in the Clyde Valley, but we need more.

We recommend a renewed focus on Community Wealth Building, supporting cooperatives and municipal enterprise. Governments must also move away from traditional economic indicators like Gross Value Added (GVA) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP). A Wellbeing Economy measures success in terms of the broader collection of outcomes that the economy can deliver for its people, recognising that economic growth should benefit the people who are part of that economy.

The solutions proposed in the paper include the devolution of revenue-raising powers. Communities need the ability to finance the essential support to the economy in a way common elsewhere in Europe. For countries where councils have equivalent responsibilities to Scotland, between 50% and 60% of income is raised locally compared to less than 20% in Scotland. Local election turnout is generally significantly higher in countries with greater devolved taxation. The paper sets out a new structure of local taxation to achieve this.

The paper also argues that we should build Scotland back up from the bottom, with the active involvement of local communities. Devolution has stopped at Holyrood, and local services have been centralised. We still have some of the largest basic council units in the world, a point recently highlighted in the Building a New Local Democracy in Scotland Declaration. A strong local economy needs a strong local democracy - a place where local people and businesses have a real say in how the community is organised and resources are allocated. Getting more people involved in the local governance of our lives will help to drive the local economy forward and empower communities to shape their own futures.

Building the Local Economy makes the case for a new approach to supporting Scotland's local economies. While we must address the challenges facing the high street, the local economy must be viewed in the broader community context. We need a holistic approach to the local economy that moves away from piecemeal initiatives and develops a long-term strategy to build stronger communities.

Building the Local Economy can be downloaded from the Reid Foundation website.

Jimmy Reid Memorial Lecture, Thursday 24 October 2024

The annual lecture will be given by Mick Lynch, the General Secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), on Thursday, 24 October 2024. The lecture will be held in the City Chambers, George Square, Glasgow, at 7:15 pm.



Further details about the lecture and how to acquire tickets can be found at:
<https://reidfoundation.scot/2024/09/jimmy-reid-memorial-lecture-2024/>

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THE STREET WORK OF SOCIALISM

A working class united in their trade unions and campaigning organisations needs to build towards collective extra-parliamentary action, write **Kate Ramsden** and **Tom Morrison**.

There was a definite air of cynicism during the final session of the Morning Star Conference on 15th September, as the gathering heard from two Labour MPs. Andy McDonald, MP for Middlesbrough and Thornaby East, spoke first about the Green Paper, 'Labour's New Deal for Working People'. He had worked with unions on the report that underpinned the paper, which includes many provisions that workers would support: sectoral collective bargaining, day one rights, inflation-proof pay-rises, an end to zero hours contracts and fire and re-hire. It also includes the repealing of anti-union legislation including the 2016 Trade Union Act. But Andy's warning to all of us on the Left and in the trade union movement to be watchful as the Green Paper is translated into law, seemed like a portent of doom.

Euan Stainbank, MP for Falkirk echoed the importance of 'making work pay' both to improve living standards and to fend off the rise of the far right. The input should have been uplifting, but the spectre of the new Labour Government's failure to lift the two child benefit cap – a move that could have taken 250,000 children out of poverty at one fell swoop – and the recent decision to means test winter fuel payments for pensioners, lay heavy on the atmosphere.

It seemed to be a microcosm of how the wider Left community in Scotland is feeling about the Labour Government at Westminster. So far there is little sign of progressive politics that in any way put the needs of the many first. The rhetoric at Labour conference, despite the avoidance of the language of austerity, suggests quite the opposite. It's almost as if no lessons have been learned from the Tory/Lib Dem austerity agenda of 2010.

You might think a party set up by the unions to champion the interests of the working classes would have an eye above all to equality and fairness and to ending the massively growing inequality of income and wealth in the sixth richest country in the world. You might think it would have moved away from the economic policies of its predecessors. But no sign of that.

So what does this mean for Scotland, at a time when the SNP government has fallen from grace to such an extent that it looks like a centre-right Scottish Labour Party may well gain power at the next Scottish elections in 2026? It can feel hard to be optimistic when we rejected a chance for a more equal, socially just society under Corbyn and now have to settle for the kind of Labour government that the vested interests in big business and the media will allow us to have. If ever there was a time when you might hope the working class would rise against the ruling class, you'd think it would be now. Instead we see the rise of the far right giving a populist narrative to the woes of the most marginalised in our society, feeding

on the hostile environment policy of the last government. The ruling class tactic of divide and rule is heavily in play. Racism is widespread, stoked by the rhetoric of the tabloid press and the likes of GB news. "They are taking money off the pensioners and giving it to these migrants". You hear it over and over.

So it is to the organised working class, the trade union movement, that we need to turn for the alternative with class politics at its core. Trade union councils carrying out street work report that when they are engaging with ordinary folk, they find some agreement with our economic arguments about the need for a redistribution of wealth and power. Almost everyone is enraged by the cut to winter fuel payments. Despite delegates voting against it at their own conference, Labour leaders seem oblivious to the widespread disgust. It is only exacerbated by politicians accepting freebies from the rich and powerful who will be looking for something in return. But there is no widespread socialist consciousness. Raising class consciousness is our fundamental task, otherwise Reform will be making significant inroads in the Scottish elections in 2026.

It is an easy win to raise the anti-racist case at trade union conferences, but we need to do the hard work of going beyond the conference hall and taking up these arguments in the workplace and the streets. A big responsibility lies with the lay activists in trades councils and local union branches to carry out this task and put forward the alternative. We need to show the links between campaigning in the workplace and developing the capacity of our communities to build a more just society.

Starmer's authoritarian Labour government is not going to challenge the fundamentals of Britain's capitalist economy. Neither would a Scottish Government led by Anas Sarwar or the SNP, as we have seen. The challenge needs to come from a militant, politicised trade union movement. A working class united in their trade unions and campaigning organisations needs to build towards collective extra-parliamentary action.

You wouldn't know it listening to the mainstream media but Starmer's government is built on sand. Only one in five of the electorate voted Labour. They are vulnerable to external pressures as big business only knows too well, hence their intense lobbying. But the threat from the far right is real and we need a bottom-up approach to counter it. That means talking to people on the streets and in workplaces about how we can raise living standards, divert funds from weapons manufacturing into crumbling public services, and tackle the disaster of climate change. To pay for it the superrich and the big corporations need to be squeezed, and their power curtailed. We need to stop talking to ourselves and get out there.

THE GHOSTS OF THE 2014 GAMES

With the Commonwealth Games set to return to Glasgow, **Dylan Brewerton-Harper** returns to some of the communities that were condemned last time it came to town.

It was revealed back in April that with the Australian state of Victoria withdrawing itself as host for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, a new host needed to be found – one with the infrastructure already in place to ensure the Games could go ahead at such short notice. No time for the usual years-long adjustment period of rapid building and drastic urban restructuring that cities come to expect when they're announced as hosts of major sporting events such as this.

All eyes on Glasgow. Ten years on from the 2014 Games hosted in Scotland's biggest city, it is poised to host it once again, after Commonwealth Games Scotland put the city forward as a last resort option.

I didn't live in Glasgow in 2014 to witness the impact of the Games firsthand, or in the seven years leading up to the event after the city was announced as host in 2007. Those years, as my recent research found, were fraught with the double-edged sword of 're-generation': investment in new infrastructure, housing, sports and leisure facilities paved the way for gentrification, social-urban engineering and cleansing, and a promised 'legacy' which saw communities dispossessed and displaced.

My research grew from a desire to understand the extent to which there was a 'haunted' quality to the post-industrial city, and specifically, in this instance, to Glasgow during the years between the city's announcement as host in 2007 and the event year of 2014. What I found was a shocking story of displacement and social engineering in the East End. This was quite widely publicised at the time, through a broad front of research by academics like Libby Porter and Neil Gray, campaigning by the Games Monitor and others, and documentary work by Liam Young, as well as a 2014 BBC production called 'Commonwealth City'. Together they painted a sobering picture of the Games' real legacy, and provided a reminder of capital's ability to create and destroy in one fell swoop. This is simply what we've come to expect in the neoliberal city.

Applying the theory of hauntology to these spaces, and tying it to a deeper understanding of demolition as a sociological and cultural phenomenon, I uncovered a decades-long history in Glasgow that persists to this day. In 1977, the Scottish historian and literary critic David Daiches wrote of the "curious betwixt-and-between position" that the city was in then, "poised between a half-demolished past and a beckoning but uncertain future". It was a city in flux, being made and re-made, moulded and morphed in dizzying fashion.

Maybe this is true of any major city, particularly those on water with such illustrious industrial and maritime histories as the Clyde's. Glasgow, like Liverpool, Bristol, Newcastle, and London, are in a constant state of metamorphosis. They have both absorbed

the flows of an increasingly globalised world, and made their mark in return through their exporting power.

Merely to walk around the city is to see for yourself how this curious position that Daiches recognised back in 1977 persists to this day. Glasgow's built environment – from its famous tenement housing, its rarified Victorian architecture and its industrial infrastructure, mixed with its vastly diminished-and-still-diminishing post-war high-rise social housing – can be understood as a palimpsest, or what theorist James Reader described as "a city constantly overwritten by new developments whose traces of the past linger painfully on". I use a geological term, 'superposition', to describe how Glasgow's urban landscape reflects layers of history and architecture that co-exist and overlap. The past within the present. This 'lingering' feeling, an affect, a sense, a shared socio-cultural experience, made Glasgow in my eyes a place that could be better understood through a hauntological lens.

Dalmarnock Condemned

The East End neighbourhood of Dalmarnock was chosen as the site for major redevelopment in the build-up to the 2014 Games. Once a thriving community of 50,000, with full employment, decent social housing and bustling high streets, it had degenerated under decades of neglect and dereliction following the de-industrialisation of the 1960s and 1970s. Images taken by Chris Leslie for his *Disappearing Glasgow* present the spectral quality of Dalmarnock before the Games redevelopment. The emptiness, the half-demolished tenement flats, the shuttered and derelict shop fronts. By 2007, its population had declined to around 2,000. As Leslie says, it was largely a ghost town.

A hauntological site is a place in which a linear experience of time is suspended, where expected futures are lost in the cacophony of broken promises. But one woman's story has endured from that time. Margaret Jaconelli had lived on Ardenlea Street in Dalmarnock since the 1970s with her husband Jack. They had done everything society had asked of them: working, saving, buying a house, raising two generations of their family there and eventually paying off their mortgage. They were denizens of the 'homeowning democracy'. And yet, the 'homeowning democracy' didn't want to give back. It would eventually turn on them.

In 2000, the Housing Association that owned their building decided it was to be demolished as part of a planned redevelopment of the area, a whole seven years before the Glasgow Games were announced. Their neighbours either left or were forced out, and



Wyndford Estate, Maryhill. Credit: author.

by 2002 they were the last residents not only of their street, but of the entire surrounding blocks. They were alone, and their building stood alone, as Leslie's apocalyptic images from the time show.

The Jaconellis were for one reason or another ineligible for rehousing, and so when they rebuffed both the first measly offer of £30,000 for their home and the increased offer of £90,000, they were served a Compulsory Purchase Order. After five years of court cases and appeals, eventually in March 2011 over a hundred police and sheriff officers evicted Margaret and her family at four in the morning – violently removing them from their home of 35 years, despite a strong showing of solidarity from local people and campaigners who tried to resist the police's violence.

Within a month of the eviction, the building was gone, the street was gone, and old Dalmarnock took its last dying breath. Dalmarnock had been 'condemned': both the place, and the people like Margaret and her family who still lived in the ruins.

The case of the Jaconellis tells us a lot about the larger forces of dispossession, displacement and social cleansing at work in neoliberal Glasgow. The drastic reordering of public space in the East End occurred in several stages. The first was a protracted, decades-long period of disinvestment, neglect and stigmatisation, in which an area and its people were condemned to the scrapheap of history and society. The second stage was the one that put the Jaconellis at the sharp end: forcible removal, dispossession, displacement and 'lawfare'. The third stage, principally achieved through the machinations of a poorly regulated private housing market, was the gentrification of the area to attract different, and more desirable, people and their money.

Dalmarnock perfectly exemplified this three-stage process. When the Games were over and the new housing stock was put on the market, promises about homes for the displaced residents to return to were predictably broken. By this point, Dalmarnock was one of the most deprived communities in the whole of Europe, and yet the 700 new homes were put on the market at between £75,000 and £200,000, despite the average cost in Dalmarnock being £54,000. On the first day of sales, all were snatched up – but only a third of them by people from the East End.

The plan had worked. A new Dalmarnock was born. The Jaconellis were never offered one of the new homes in the community they had called home for over 35 years. Dalmarnock represent-

ed the 'new urban frontier', in which the state, in lockstep with property developers and the larger forces of speculative capital, looked in Neil Gray and Gerry Moony's words to "secure their grip on all social life, regulating those individuals, groups and behaviours considered to be disorderly or incivil". Those groups deemed to be a threat to the new order are cleansed from public spaces, particularly when the eyes of the world are watching.

While there was talk of a 'legacy' for the people of Glasgow and particularly of the East End, what was actually left when the dust settled? As reports from the time suggested, the new facilities built for the Games didn't actually serve the community that was left after the event. David Stewart, then a youth organiser in Dalmarnock, noted that the membership fee for the new leisure centre was "astronomical", the spaces for hire for youth events were really expensive too, and while there was a new café, local people couldn't afford it. "It doesn't feel like it's been designed for Dalmarnock", he said. And that's because it wasn't. Well, certainly not for the old Dalmarnock. This was a 'new' Dalmarnock for a 'new' person. Who that 'new person' actually is isn't ever given voice to. Best not to say the quiet part out loud.

My year of research was a sobering reminder of the impermanence of the public and social realm under late capitalism. As Marx and Engels taught us a century and a half ago, capital's *modus operandi* is the "uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations", leaving people and places in a liminal state between past, present and future. People's homes and communities for decades were swept away in an instant for a two-week sporting event.

E.P. Thompson said the English working classes were "present at their own making". In post-industrial Glasgow, sections of the city's working class have been present at their own un-making, cleansed from a sanitised public and social realm and displaced to the peripheries of acceptability. These processes, although vehemently resisted until the last, seem almost inevitable and unstoppable – redolent of the 'capitalist realism' that Mark Fisher warned us about, in which the horizons of the thinkable are colonised by capital, leaving us unable to imagine anything better.

With the 2026 Glasgow Games being announced, are we to actually confront and atone for this recent history, or sleepwalk into another crisis? Time will tell.



*Dalmarnock, soon to be gone high rises next to half gone tenement, 2007.
Credit: Graeme Maclean, Creative Commons.*



*Glen Almond, land that should belong to the people.
Credit: Olivia Oldham-Dorrington*

AN AGENDA FOR NON-REFORMIST LAND REFORM

Now that land redistribution has stalled, **Olivia Oldham-Dorrington** looks at the kinds of reform that can happen when social movements and cross-class coalitions build the power to win it.

Since devolution, Scottish governments have pursued a land reform agenda intended to diversify landownership both in terms of the concentration of land and the types of landowners. These reforms have been seen around the world as a beacon of hope and an example of what might be possible when it comes to land relations elsewhere. Yet while 2.3% of Scottish land is now owned by communities, at the other end of the spectrum land is becoming increasingly concentrated. In 2012, 440 individuals owned 50% of rural Scotland; in 2024, this number has fallen to 433.

How can we make sense of this situation: progressive government, seemingly committed to a radical agenda of land reform, presiding over an increasing concentration of landed power?

What Does The Land Reform (Scotland) Bill Actually Do?

The Land Reform (Scotland) Bill 2024 is the latest phase of the land reform agenda to make its ponderous way through Holyrood. While earlier statutes have sought to provide communities with various rights and avenues by which they can acquire the land on which they live and work, the current Bill is more targeted towards existing owners of land.

The Bill contains several key reforms. First, it creates an obligation for large landowners to engage with their local communities to produce regularly-updated land management plans, and to consider reasonable requests from local community bodies to lease the land.

Second, the Bill effectively prevents off-market sales of large landholdings by creating two new mandatory mechanisms. The first requires notice of the sale to be given to a number of interested parties, giving community groups an additional opportunity to register an interest in the property. The other gives Scottish Ministers the power to determine that large landholdings must be sold in lots to different people, rather than as a whole to a single buyer. The responsible Minister can only decide to require the land to be ‘lotted’ if this would make the land more likely to be used in ways that might make a community more sustainable than if the land was sold as a whole.

Finally, the Bill also establishes a Land and Communities Commissioner, who would join the Scottish Land Commission, and it makes a number of changes to the laws pertaining to leasing land, particularly small landholdings and agricultural tenancies.*

While putting forward several legal and administrative innovations with regard to how land is sold, the Bill is a significant step down in ambition from the consultation document that preceded it in 2022, as well as from the recommendations of the Scottish Land Commission, leaving many activists and reformers disappointed. For instance, the Bill does not create any kind of public interest test for land transfers, something found in the land regulation of many other countries including France. It does not give the voluntary

Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement any kind of obligatory status, unlike the Brazilian constitutional requirement that land serve a social function. It does not cover any transfers of large landholdings made through inheritance, or the sale of shares in companies that own land. And it does not place restrictions on the ownership of large areas of land by entities not registered in Scotland, the UK, or even the EU.

As Andy Wightman puts it, “[t]his Bill is the least ambitious land reform bill ever introduced to the Scottish Parliament. It contains excessively bureaucratic, legalistic mechanisms to intervene in a vanishingly small number of instances with no prospect that much will change as a result.”

Reformist Land Reform Will Always Let Us Down

Although large landowners and their representatives have described the new Land Reform Bill as “radical”, “destructive” and “disproportionate”, it is nothing of the sort (and what is truly disproportionate is the ownership of 3,196,339 hectares of rural land by only 433 individuals). Rather, the Bill is the latest lukewarm instalment in a series of legislative acts that have failed to grapple with the fundamental issue at the heart of the Scottish landscape: ownership.

Amna Akbar, a legal scholar, has recently written about the concept of ‘non-reformist reforms’ as a way of understanding how law relates to emancipatory struggle. Akbar presents the law as a site of domination, exploitation, expropriation and the legitimation of all of these; and, simultaneously, of political, economic and social struggle. Reformist reforms to the legal order are designed to fix, and in doing so to shore up, existing systems and relations of power and domination. On the other hand, non-reformist reforms draw on social movements and cross-class coalitions to undermine these systems and relations, explicitly building towards alternative ways of organising and navigating the world. Ultimately, non-reformist reforms aim to radically redistribute social power.

The lens of non-reformist reform is useful for analysing both the current Land Reform Bill and the Scottish Government’s broader land agenda. It can help us to understand why these reforms—while symbolically significant, and transformational for many of those communities and individuals who have been able to make use of their provisions — have barely changed the dynamics of landownership in this country.

Scottish land reforms since 2003 have only ever made limited moves to curtail the rights of owners. The Land Rights and Responsibilities Statement, introduced in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016, expresses a normative belief in the responsibilities of owners, yet remains voluntary. It does not meaningfully limit the expansive legal and material rights of ownership. Furthermore, the reforms have maintained a focus on private, small-scale ownership as a key,

when it comes to community ownership, the reforms have not fundamentally challenged the nature of ownership rights themselves. As legal geographer Carol Rose writes, “[t]he limited commons is a recognizable version of a bounded and exclusive property, even if the boundaries encompass an entire community rather than a single individual... [T]hey are commons on the inside, but property on the outside.”

The intention for land reform in Scotland was to intervene in the balance of landed power and empower communities, but this promise has not been realised. The radical ambitions of the land reform movement have been co-opted by the state, legitimising the latter by providing it with a veneer of progressivism while threatening to dampen the radical fire at the heart of the movement. Reforms that could have been non-reformist, had they been the basis of an upwards ratcheting of demands and transformation, have instead served to repair the flawed system of landownership by mitigating the most extreme concerns of communities subjected to the whims of ‘bad landlords.’ In doing so, these reforms have entrenched the broader patterns of landownership. This is partly why we see such a disappointing lack of ambition now, rather than a meaningful deepening of transformative measures.

Land-Based Resistance In Aotearoa

So, what might a non-reformist approach to land reform look like? How can non-reformist, revolutionary ambitions be maintained in the face of the ever-present risk of co-option? Again, the theory of non-reformist reforms can give us useful tools to think with. The distinction between a reformist and a non-reformist reform is not always clear; according to André Gorz, whether a reform is non-reformist depends to some extent on the ability of a movement to continually ratchet its demands towards transformative ends. It also depends on how the reform is won—whether it is benevolently bestowed by existing holders of power, or won through explicit and active opposition by social movements to the status quo. Finally, non-reformist reforms must redistribute power away from capitalists and other political and social elites, towards those marginalised by existing structures of power.

To spark inspiration for what a non-reformist land reform that exemplifies these qualities might look like, we can look beyond Scotland’s borders. In 2015, the Indigenous-led campaign known as #ProtectIhumātao in Aotearoa New Zealand set out to stop a commercial housing development on ancestral land, which had been unjustly confiscated by the New Zealand Crown in 1863. The campaign vigorously opposed the development through various legal avenues, including domestic courts, appeals to Parliament, and even the United Nations. When these all failed, the land defenders moved onto the land, occupying it in order to thwart the progression of the development and to uphold *kaitiakitanga*—that is, the active stewardship and guardianship of the land. Ultimately, the campaign’s direct action forced the New Zealand government to purchase the contested land from the developers, and to begin a still-ongoing process, in partnership with the land defenders, to find a positive resolution.

We can understand the protection of Ihumātao as a kind of non-reformist reform in several ways. Firstly, the land defenders rejected the authority of the Crown to set the parameters of engagement and terms of debate with regard to the land, going beyond what was considered possible under existing legal logics. In doing so, they undermined existing systems of political and proprietary power. For example, the campaign sought to reclaim privately-owned property, which falls outside the Crown’s framework for determining the return of unfairly confiscated Indigenous land. Not only that, but they also contested the colonial-capitalist understanding of the land as privately-owned property, instead characterising it as an ancestral landscape that is the source of identity, relationships and wellbeing.

Secondly, the campaign won concessions from the New Zealand government through direct opposition, rather than conciliatory requests: laying bare the incompatibility of their demands with the status quo. As Pania Newton, one of the leaders of the campaign, put it, “Ihumātao has compromised... enough for the greater good.” #ProtectIhumātao was also grounded in the demands of *mana whenua*, the Indigenous people of the land, who are marginalised, excluded and expropriated by the dominant system of property relations. It foregrounded their vision of a different way of understanding, governing and relating to land.

Finally, the campaign has aligned itself with the broader movement for constitutional transformation in Aotearoa New Zealand that seeks to reorganise the distribution and arrangement of power between the Crown and Indigenous Māori. In this way, #ProtectIhumātao recognises that land is not just a question of land per se, but rather one of the very parameters of political, socioeconomic, and ecological authority. In other words, it is a constitutional question.

What Might Non-Reformist Land Reform Look Like For Scotland?

While the case of Ihumātao comes from a very different geographical, political and social landscape, it can provide important lessons for those on the Scottish left who hope to revitalise the land reform agenda and its radical roots. It demonstrates how, in order to avoid co-optation and stagnation, the land reform movement must continue to make explicit the incompatibility of its ultimate goals with the status quo of existing landed power and the property relations that constitute it. Advocates will be the first to acknowledge that the land reform process has not yet fulfilled its ambitions. The failure of land reform to change entrenched norms of property so far should not lead us to a conciliatory approach towards political and economic elites and the structures of power they control and benefit from.

Seeking social transformation through reform is inevitably challenging: all reforms, even non-reformist ones, can eventually be hollowed out and emptied of their radical potential if movements accept partial victories as successes rather than as steps in an ongoing struggle of transformation. To maintain their non-reformist nature, reforms must instead be understood as fissures in the legitimacy, authority and power of existing political and economic power.

Learning from the #ProtectIhumātao campaign also suggests the value of re-orienting the terms and framing of the debate towards those who have been historically and contemporarily dispossessed of and excluded from the land, rather than the landed few. In a recent article in this magazine, for instance, Tara Wight and Heather Urquhart discussed the lack of resonance of calls like ‘land to the tiller’ in a country where a vanishingly small percentage of people are actually landworkers. Scotland has, as we all know, one of the most unequal landownership distributions in the world; the majority of people are, effectively, landless. It may be worth considering, then, how a framing of ‘land to the landless’ might build cross-class popular power behind the movement.

Finally, the case of Ihumātao points to the importance of recognising the centrality of struggles over land to struggles over the very nature and locus of political and economic power—that is, of their constitutional nature. Land reform is about land, yes, but it is also about power. A truly non-reformist vision for land reform is one that boldly and openly aims to bring about a transformation in who has authority, how, where and over whom they can exercise it, and to what end.

* Those who are keen to dig into the details of these reforms are recommended to take a look through Malcolm Combes’ extensive review of the Bill, as well as Andy Wightman’s analysis.

LAND RESISTANCE: THE TACTICS OF TOMORROW

140 years after the Highland Land League drew up a list of its demands in Dingwall, the land justice movement is developing new strategies, writes **Tara Wight**.

In May's *Scottish Left Review*, I wrote with Heather Urquhart that the left in Scotland is disconnected from issues of land. I am pleased to say that I have been proved wrong, or at least shown that my perspective was woefully central-belt. On September 8th, Dingwall Community Centre was completely packed out when people gathered to commemorate the 140th anniversary of the Highland Land League's 'Dingwall Programme' and plan how to revive a movement for land justice in Scotland. This was perhaps the first political meeting I have ever organised where far more people showed up on the day than had signed up in advance. Almost all the folk attending were already actively engaged with land issues at a local or national level, and many work on the land themselves.

In 1884, the Napier Commission published a report which was meant to tackle the widespread problems of overcrowding and mass hunger caused by more than a century of clearances and dispossession in the Highlands and Islands. The report's recommendations completely failed to meet the needs and demands of affected communities, and it was rejected by the Highland Land League. The League gathered in Dingwall to compile a list of their own demands and plan a programme of coordinated political action.

While the context is very different 140 years later, with second homes and short-term lets posing more of a threat than sheep to Highland communities, there are some clear parallels. After endless government consultations pointing to predetermined answers, and with a meaningless land reform bill making its way through parliament, the enthusiastic turnout for our own Dingwall gathering showed that folk are clearly ready once again to take matters into their own hands.

The event was organised by the Landworkers' Alliance and the Scottish Crofting Federation, and named for the slogan of the Highland Land League, *Is Treasa tuath na tighearna* (the people are mightier than a laird). It brought together multiple generations of crofters, radical historians, and land activists to discuss current land issues and lay out our own demands for land in Scotland. The day began with a galvanising introduction to our history of land resistance from the archivist and activist Catherine MacPhee of Skye, followed by a morning of short talks and discussion. Participants touched on the increasing marketisation of the crofting system (Andrew Airnes), the ingrained power structures of the 'rewilding' agenda (Isla Macleod), and the need to address questions of racial justice in relation to land (Iain MacKinnon). Participants then joined workshops to develop a list of demands and begin planning action for land justice.

I led a workshop on tactics for movement building and direct action, rooted in a historical context. It was only when I researched the Highland Land League before the event that I realised just how diverse their tactics were. From rent strikes, boycotts and raids to targeted engagement with electoral politics, 19th-century comrades used eclectic but coordinated strategies to ensure they could not be ignored. I particularly enjoyed stories of communities ostracising

factors and land agents until they felt compelled to leave an area. They made me wonder why, even in close-knit rural communities, there seem to be no social consequences today for those who abuse the power that comes with owning land and wealth. We surely all know people who have been socially excluded for a lot less. Burning effigies of wealthy landowners was another historically popular move. Such moves might not always bring a clear material impact, but creatively channelling collective rage at aristocratic and corporate landlords must be good for general morale.

The workshop discussion reflected the calibre and experience of the historians and activists, as well as the lineage that connected some participants to folk who led land raids in the 19th century. In line with the historical traditions of the land movement, workshop participants came up with a wide array of different strategies to tackle land inequality today. These included political education and storytelling to engage the wider population with land struggles, attention-grabbing stunts and spectacles like hosting feasts of poached venison, developing alternative systems such as community energy projects, and – my personal favourite – coordinated occupations of second homes across Scotland. I found this last idea underlined several times in the notes I gathered at the end of the session. Clearly others shared my enthusiasm.

A recurring theme throughout the day's discussions was the importance of connecting urban communities with land issues and building a movement which speaks to the material needs of both Highland and Lowland Scotland. Prior to my workshop research, I knew a fair amount about resistance to clearances in the Highlands and Islands, but I was entirely unaware of the importance of the Highland diaspora in the Lowlands in lending strength and support to the Highland Land League. While many descendants of that diaspora have become disconnected from the land over the course of generations, urban and rural Scotland today share significant struggles related to access to housing, quality food, and functioning public spaces. Staggering inequality in terms of property ownership is evident in our cities, in our countryside, and everywhere in between.

In just one day we could only begin to explore how we might begin to link these struggles and build a connected movement, but I hope the conversation will continue and expand to incorporate more urban perspectives at the upcoming Glasgow Land Moot this winter. In Dingwall, we rounded off the day by collectively learning and singing *Òran nan Croitearan/The Crofters' Song*. The words by Niall MacLeòid describe his wish and belief that despite years of injustice, his people will get back their land. We parted with a promise that this meeting was only the beginning.

The Landworkers' Alliance and the Scottish Crofting Federation have further land justice events planned in Uist (2nd Oct), Skye (4th Oct) and Perthshire (date TBC). Scottish Histories of Resistance and the Galgael Trust are organising the Glasgow Land Moot 29th Nov – 1st Dec.

THE STRIKE THAT SHOOK THE EARTH

Vijoo Krishnan, General Secretary of India's 15-million strong Kisan Sabha, speaks to **Cailean Gallagher** about the biggest farmers' strike in history and the issue-based unity that underpins the movement.

There may be just a few people his age who have crisscrossed more of India and spoken with more of its people than Dr Vijoo Krishnan, central committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and General Secretary of the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), the All India Peasants' Union. Its fifteen million members work the land across the subcontinent, and its meetings, marches and rallies take its General Secretary everywhere as he plays his part in implementing collective decisions in the struggle.

When he's not travelling, Vijoo works from a small white office, where his desk faces a cluster of plaques above a tiled-off fireplace. 'With you in our hearts, Comrade Lenin, we build, we think, we breath, we live, and we fight! Revolutionary Greetings'. That one is from the Student Federation of India, AIKS's sister organisation, whose headquarters are ten steps away through a room packed with communists' collected works and portraits.

Vijoo left his work as a political economist and Department Head of Political Science at a prestigious college, to dedicate himself to the cause of the working masses and the Kisan Sabha. These last ten years the peasants' movement has rocked Indian society with marches, stoppages, and a general strike in 2020 that has been described as the biggest in history. The unity that this hartal (strike) created across the rural and urban working class bridged the divide between land and industry that Marxists have always grappled to connect in their struggle to build mass class power.

The Kisan Sabha started in 1936 as an all-India organisation. 'Initially it had all shades within the Indian National Congress, with Centrists, Socialists, and Communists: it represented the entire peasantry.' Gradually, it took up the radical slogan 'land to the tiller' and set about demanding land ownership for landless cultivators. Some initial leaders distanced themselves from AIKS, but despite various splits it kept its left edge sharp and remains the biggest organisation of farmers in India with a membership today of 15 million. An affiliated body, a federation of units, it reflects class differences that exist on the land. Some affiliates, for instance, are tenant farmer associations representing cultivators renting land from others. Vijoo explains the theory:

There was an argument that we shouldn't divide the peasantry; but people on the left fought against that, because there are class differences. Kisan Sabha has landless peasantry, small marginal peasantry, middle farmers, and also sections of the rich. Having only one organisation would be disadvantageous to the agricultural labourers. But there should be coordination, and unity of the working class and peasantry. That is what we have tried to build. That experience has helped us in our entire struggle.

When the 2020 struggle erupted, Prime Minister Narendra Modi made the charge that it was a Punjab-centric movement. But Kisan Sabha's all-India organisation and strong links with fraternal organisations like the All India Agricultural Workers' Union and Centre of Indian Trade Unions made sure the strike was country wide. Its federal constitution enables it to cohere into a unit with national direction and strategy. Every state has different issues which the po-

litical line must encompass. 'It cannot be only on the plane of ideas that you fight against corporate control, monopoly houses, and so on', Vijoo explains. 'The farmers will link with us only if we organically address the issues'. Kerala predominantly produces commercial crops – rubber, spices, coconut, cashew – whereas a state like Punjab produces mostly food grains. Interstate issues are inevitable, and so the council and central committee look at each case and reach resolutions through democratic discussion.

Peasant struggle takes place in the context of historic development, and Vijoo condensed a long history of so-called land reform that even now has left the concentration of land in few hands.

In certain states like Jammu Kashmir, Kerala, Bengal, and Tripura, land reforms took place through which feudal remnants could to a certain extent be overcome. But in many states, the ruling classes themselves subverted land reforms. When legislation to formally abolish feudal landlordism was brought, our organisation demanded that there should be confiscation of ceiling surplus land without any compensation, and redistribution to the landless, the tillers. But the ruling classes gave hefty compensation and left enough loopholes in the legislation so that land could be put under fake names. We call it Benami property. In some states, it is said that land was held in the name of landlords' pet buffaloes. That is how people were still able to own thousands of acres of land.

The most revolutionary assault against this reactionary wall was in the state of Telangana, where an armed peasants' struggle first against the feudal landlords and then against the Nizam's state managed to liberate thousands of acres. Is there still a debate, I asked, about the use of violence in land struggles? The violence in recent decades, Vijoo replied, has largely been against the farmers, and in states like Bihar feudal landlords have killed many who were fighting for land rights. 'Resistance has to be strengthened to counter such barbarity.'

So is the state the main target of the Kisan Sabha, or are landlords?

Both struggles are required. In many places you are unable to point and say, this is your oppressor. The erstwhile feudal landlords, who were the visible oppressors in villages before, today have diversified into different economic activities and divided their land among their extended family members. They have diversified into community convention centres, or into supermarkets, cinema halls, or petrol pumps. To pinpoint the oppressor is not easy; in States where the feudal landlords still hold sway, militant struggles are going on for land rights. In the last three decades, most of the struggles are for government surplus land, against land-grab by corporate companies, against land alienation by the big bourgeoisie of the land of tribals and traditional forest dwellers. The policies of the Indian ruling class are subverting even minimal land reforms, promoting indiscriminate land-grab and reversing the redistributive agenda.

Vijoo tells me that the AIKS is about to embark on a series of conventions to expose and identify landlords owning huge tracts of ceiling surplus land illegally, understand the main issues, and build the next phase of struggle. The details of this initiative, and of the priorities and demands that underpin it, are described in detail in the online version of this interview. It builds on the unprecedented success of the strike of 2020.

The Strike of 2020

Triggered by three laws that the government attempted to introduce in 2020, the strike followed years of government failure to uphold its own policies on land ceilings and surplus land rights in the face of corporate pressure to abandon minimum price guarantees. This WTO-backed slide towards liberalisation culminated in Modi's three-fold bills, first, to do away with government-controlled agricultural produce markets; second, to allow hoarding by big traders; and third, to enable contract farming which would allow companies to compel poor farmers to produce certain crops under unequal conditions. In response, at the peak of the pandemic, peasants took to the streets.

In joining the struggle, land workers demonstrated their awareness of their real material priorities, in response to the government's Machiavellian exploitation of the lockdown that it was enforcing.

Across the world there was a fear of the pandemic [Covid-19] virus, and yet, you see, these thousands and thousands of farmers sat on the street, not worried about death. Modi thought that with lockdown, people would remain indoors. Of course we faced many problems mobilising at this time. Some activists' families would call and say my father is taking part in the protests – what if he contracts Covid? But the farmers realised that their entire future was at stake, their families' future was at stake, if these acts were passed.

Many different groups came together, galvanised by social media, leaflets, and online webinars. Around the world people demonstrated a deep interest in the struggle. Noam Chomsky described it as a 'beacon of light in dark times'. SNP MP Martin Day called a Westminster debate in which the Indian government's response was roundly condemned. Jeremy Corbyn and Jean-Luc Mélenchon both expressed their solidarity.

It became known as the greatest strike of the century so far. At its core, however, was a march to Delhi joined by thousands of farmers. Were the protesters thinking of it as a strike? Who besides them was on strike? Was it a solidarity strike? 'Usually', Vijoo admitted, 'a strike is associated with the [industrial] working class, but here you had farmers and agricultural labourers also joining the working classes'.

What happened was that on November 26th, when we gave the call for the march to Delhi, the trade unions also gave a call for an all-India strike. And to those who were not marching, in the states not neighbouring Delhi, we gave the call for a rural strike. That is how it also became a grameen hartal – a rural strike.

The unions had an important issue too. The Modi government had taken the opportunity of the lockdown to attack all of the producing classes, workers and peasants. Along with the three [farm] laws, they brought forward four labour codes, against unionisation, promoting hire-and-fire, allowing 12 hour working days, and so on. Previously we would have engaged in kinds of solidarity action – maybe one of us would have given a solidarity speech – but it was difficult persuading farmers to take up working class issues. This movement changed everything and built a new worker-peasant paradigm of joint action.

The media claimed the march to Delhi was spontaneous, but AIKS and its sister organisations as well as different farmers' organisations had been consistently on the struggle front since 2014, organising joint programmes, and building issue-based unity. When the Land Acquisition Ordinance was introduced in December 2014, AIKS and other organisations formed an issue-based unity called Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (Land Rights Movement). It launched a struggle against indiscriminate land grabs and a campaign for land rights. When six farmers were shot dead in June 2017 for demanding a proper price for their garlic crop, 250 organisations formed yet another issue-based initiative, the All India Kisan Struggle Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), to demand fair prices that reflected production costs (remunerative pricing), and the waiving of farm loans (freedom from indebtedness).

There were tactical developments too: country-wide marches, including the Kisan Long March to Mumbai in 2018, as well as a Kisan Parliament, when, on the streets, two bits of legislation were drafted, one on remunerative pricing and the other on freedom from indebtedness. Drafts were discussed by the street assembly, before committees took new drafts across different states to incorporate regional changes. Parliamentarians then placed the agreed draft in parliament as a private members' bill. The very process of assembly and debate reflects the fact that across the country there are diverging priorities. Are there tensions between whose issues prevail, and who organises whom?

Differences do crop up. That's why we build issue-based unity, and in the course of continuous struggle, consensus builds on wider issues. For example, we have a phenomenon here where Dalit and Muslim dairy farmers, cattle traders and transporters are killed by Hindutva groups in the name of cow protection. When we first said we should raise our voice against that, a good number of organisations were not willing. But in the course of a year or so of struggle together, they were willing to take a stand against such attacks and killings in the name of the holy cow.

Some would like to see the movement as all-class unity against the corporates. I would describe it as a cross-class issue-based unity. The core of our organisation is the agricultural labourers, the landless tenants, the poor peasantry, and the marginal farmers. Some sections of the rich are part of it too, but the overwhelming numbers of our members are poorer. They are the core, but we focus on broadening unity, broadening consensus against the neoliberal economic policies and corporate loot.

So, I asked, where some argue for everyone against the corporates, you think the focus should be concentrated on the more marginal? 'Both are required', he corrected:

I'm not trying to pit one against the other. Over the last three decades of liberalisation, a section of the rural rich has benefited. Another has lost out, so we are trying to wean them away. We will not get them on all issues, as they are a vacillating class, but if they are willing to come with us against the ruling class policies and the anti-people government, then I think that is positive. Previously, there was consensus only around issues of pricing, subsidies, loans, irrigation, and related issues affecting the population. Now we have been able to bring the movement to a situation where we are campaigning directly to punish the BJP.

You can read the full interview online, which includes our discussion of the pay systems that peasants are demanding, the details of the martyrdom of the garlic growers, the defeats inflicted on Modi in 2014, AIKS's international connections and sources of support, and the forms of solidarity in Scotland and across the West that resonate in India.

A NURSE OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRIGADES

Liam Turbett shares the story of Chrissie Wallace, the only Scottish woman who did not make it home from the Spanish Civil War.

In the early months of 1938, a typhoid epidemic swept through the Catalan city of Vic. Among the victims was Chrissie Wallace, a young Glaswegian nurse. She was just 23 years old, and had travelled to Spain to assist the embattled Republic as it neared the second year of its brutal civil war. There was no shortage of tragic events in Spain in 1938, yet Chrissie's passing deeply affected those who knew her: the staff and patients of the hospital where she worked, the citizens of Vic, and the wider milieu of international volunteers in the region.

But the circumstances of the period – with the Nationalist victors in the civil war suppressing any memory of the anti-fascist struggle, and the rapid advent of the Second World War – meant her story was lost for more than 80 years, even to her own family. Thanks to the diligent efforts of a Catalan historical researcher, Chrissie's story has recently come to light. And, remarkably, her son – now in his late 80s – has also been able to learn of his mother's fate, after a lifetime of searching.

In July 1936, Spain was plunged into civil war. A military uprising, led by right-wing military figures under General Franco and backed by Hitler and Mussolini, sought to overthrow the country's elected socialist government. While the European democracies and the United States refused to intervene, enforcing an arms embargo under the guise of 'non-intervention', tens of thousands of volunteers on the political left answered the call of the besieged Republic, and journeyed to Spain in defence of democracy. The heroic contribution of the International Brigades, of whom over 500 came from Scotland, is rightly the subject of celebrations and remembrance to this day.

From the early days of the war, medical volunteers also travelled to Spain. Around 70 nurses are believed to have gone from Britain over the course of the war, alongside hundreds from elsewhere. Prior to the war, nursing roles in the country's hospitals had largely been fulfilled by nuns, many of whom had gone over to the side of Franco's Nationalists.

Chrissie had followed her husband, Simon (or Schmul) Bulka to Spain. Bulka, born in Poland to a Jewish family, was a medical doctor and a communist. He had lived in both London and Scotland at different times, and spent periods in Spain working at different field hospitals. In 1937, Chrissie and Simon had a son. They named him Walter, after the famed General Walter, a Polish Red Army commander who played a leading role in the International Brigade.

The following year, Simon was drawn back to Spain, and Chrissie followed. They arrived in the city of Vic, around half way between Barcelona and the Pyrenees, where an international hospital had been established to tend to the ever growing numbers of wounded from the front. It was here that Chrissie died.

On the day of her funeral, Vic came to a standstill. "Her passage intensely moved all of us who saw her," an onlooker would write many years later, having witnessed the funeral as a child. "The

body of the dead girl, dressed in white like a bride... was solemnly accompanied by hundreds of companions, with music, songs and flags, in the midst of the silence of the crowd that contemplated its passage. Never again have I seen a funeral as emotional as that one, so sad and beautiful. I still believe today that it was more than just a funeral. It was a true tribute to friendship, youth and beauty – and to their ideals."

Shortly after the funeral, a note appeared in a local newspaper from Simon Bulka, expressing his gratitude to the people of Vic for the send-off that Chrissie received. A touching write-up of the events was also contributed by a Republican soldier who was on leave in the town for a few days. He said, stirringly: "And a day will come when the son of this woman, this fallen mother, is asked where and how the one who gave him his being died. He will be able to answer with noble and justified pride that his mother died defending the freedom of the people".

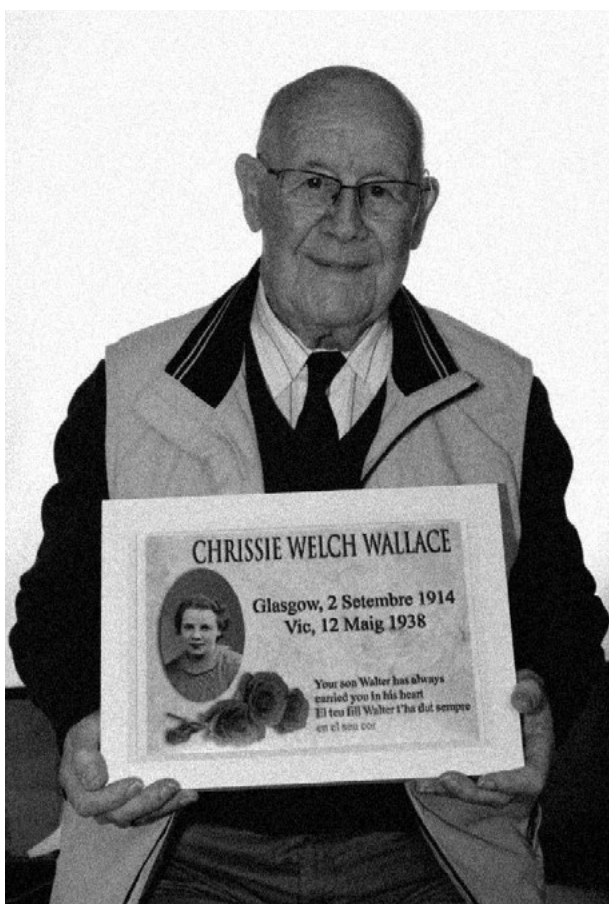
That day would eventually come, but not for another 85 years. Walter Bulka, living with relatives in Glasgow, had his first birthday just a few days before his mother died. Raised as Bill Wallace, the first major shock for him came when he was 15. On applying to join the Royal Navy, he discovered that the name on his birth certificate was Walter Bulka, with his father's address given as a hospital in Barcelona. Surprised to find out that his aunt and uncle were not actually his parents, he learned that his father had died in the Spanish Civil War, and that his mother had passed away soon after he was born – or so he was told.

Looking for Chrissie

How Bill Wallace came to be reunited with the story of his parents is a fascinating testament to the power of archival research and historical digging over many decades.

Manel Montero is a police officer in Vic. He was on duty one day when a young woman approached him and asked in English where she could find the grave of an Australian International Brigade soldier called Kevin Rebbeschi, who she believed was buried in the local cemetery. His interest piqued, Montero began investigating Kevin's story, publishing a book entitled *Looking for Kevin* in 2014. The publication was a success, provoking interest in Vic's links to the International Brigades, and the stories of those who passed through – and in some cases passed away – in the city. He continued looking into the identity of the other international volunteers buried in the same common graves, and was struck by the moving account of the funeral of a young nurse he encountered in local records. This story could easily have ended there, if not for a fortunate turn of events.

Based in Australia since the late 1950s, Bill Wallace did not give up searching for his parents, and while progress was sometimes slow, he eventually made some key breakthroughs. While trips to



TOP: A headstone in the cemetery in Vic, which includes Chrissie's name alongside other international volunteers buried there. Credit: Manel Montero.

BOTTOM: Chrissy's son Bill holding a copy of the plaque by her grave. Credit: Manel Montero.

the UK and Spain in the 1990s yielded little in the way of firm evidence about their fate, contact with academics led to the discovery that his father may have survived the Spanish Civil War, as records emerged of him as a prisoner in France during WWII, service with the British Army, and a marriage in post-war France. A link to Nice was established and, from there, a friend of Bill made a cold call to the only Bulka in the city's telephone directory. It was answered by his half-brother. Bill learned that their father had not only survived both the civil war and the Second World War, but had lived until 1998, just a few years before his sons would make contact, and later meet.

Bill set all of this out in 2004 in an article for the Koshier Koala, the newsletter of the Australian Jewish Genealogical Society. In a stroke of luck, the article has remained online since, waiting to be discovered 18 years later by the researcher in Vic, Manel Montero. After firing off an email to the Genealogical Society, within 24 hours he had heard back from Bill, with an "expression of gratitude from an 85 year old man" who had just learned the whereabouts of his mother. Bill sent on the one photograph that he has of his parents, taken in Paris in 1938, while Manel filled him in on all of the findings of his extensive research – a satisfying conclusion to a local history project.

The Politics Of Remembrance

The efforts of those in Vic to remember and bring to life the history of the civil war in the city, including the role of International Brigades there, is impressive. Recently, Montero collaborated on a play performed in the building that was once the international hospital where Chrissie worked, in which she featured as one of its characters. The story of Chrissie and Bill Wallace even made television news in Catalonia.

These acts of remembrance have doubtlessly been aided by a supportive political environment in Catalonia. The regional government has established a specific programme to record and locate the remains of international volunteers, with living relatives invited to give DNA samples to allow remains to be matched during excavations of mass graves. A list of 86 anti-fascist volunteers from the UK who it is believed died or disappeared in Catalonia was published by the Catalan Government earlier this year, as part of its commitments under Spain's Democratic Memory Law. This legislation was introduced nationally by the left coalition government in 2022 to address the "pact of forgetting" that underlay Spain's transition to democracy in the late 1970s, which saw decades of fascist suppression brushed under the carpet.

Recent efforts to place on record the horrors of Franco's dictatorship have been fiercely contested by the right. The conservative Popular Party have obstructed implementation of the Democratic Memory Law in regions where they govern, while the far-right Vox party have attempted to roll the clock back even further, bringing back street names associated with Franco-era figures.

In this context, it is all the more important that we remember the likes of Chrissie Wallace, the only Scottish woman who did not make it home from the Spanish Civil War – that "noble and justified struggle for freedom", to paraphrase the tribute paid by her fellow Brigadista all those years ago. Despite the great volumes that have been written about the war, including from a Scottish perspective, it is remarkable that new stories continue to come to light, allowing the conflict to be seen through a fresh lens of both people and place. That this has allowed a man in his 80s, living on the other side of the world, to discover his mother's final resting place is all the more astounding.

With thanks to Manel Montero for his research and translations of Catalan language material.

THE CLASH OF RHETORIC

Chik Collins reviews *Languages of Class Struggle: Communication and Mass Mobilisation in Britain and Ireland, 1842-1972* by John Foster (Praxis Press, 2024).

Serious historical studies of working class movements with a substantial focus on experience in Scotland will always be of deep interest to readers of *Scottish Left Review*. But John Foster's *Languages of Class Struggle* will be of much heightened interest. Why so?

First, because of the book's practical relevance for those who are committed in the present to the pursuit of radical social change. This commitment inevitably involves seeking to understand how working class movements have challenged the power of the capitalist state in the past, and how they can do so again.

Second, and connectedly, it is because the book presents a rich, historically grounded perspective on the kind of political practice that is able to prepare radicals in working class organisations, of both the workplace and the community, for the emergence of these moments of possibility, and to help them to exploit such moments when they do emerge.

In much of what has passed for 'critical' social science, the focus has not been on such moments of possibility for change. It has too often been on the apparently overwhelming forces of social reproduction which render anything beyond fairly marginal resistance unlikely if not all but impossible – and, by some accounts, even undesirable.

Foster, on the other hand, deploys a Marxist perspective that allows us, for sure, to understand the formidable barriers to the emergence of class conscious movements of working people. But that perspective allows us at the same time to grasp how the dynamic of capitalist development, and the struggles bound up with it, from time to time undermine those barriers, creating *moments of practical possibility* which can be harnessed.

Marx and Engels, in their political writings, were of course intensely interested in these moments. Indeed, as Foster demonstrates, Marx's and Engels' basic understanding of capitalism was profoundly shaped by the practical experience of those who participated in the 1842 General Strike.

However, Foster introduces a crucial extension to the Marxist theoretical perspective on how to understand these kinds of moments. This is the understanding of the role of language in social change developed in the early Soviet Union by the group around the psychologist L.S. Vygotsky, including A.N. Leontiev, and by members of the 'Bakhtin Circle', most importantly V.N. Vološinov, whose *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1929) is still astonishingly fresh.

This perspective illuminates the profound significance of the clash of rhetoric in the 'practical moments' of class struggle. In these moments, possibilities for significant change crystallise,

and are either amplified by class conscious leaders of working people's movements, or muted by the agencies and instruments of the ruling class (including, too often, of course, the official labour movement itself).

As Vološinov puts it: "A word in the mouth of a particular individual person is a product of the living interaction of social forces" (p.41). However, in critical moments radical leaders are able to express this interaction in ways which both undermine the ruling powers and enlarge the scope for radical change. The language of the leaders of the UCS 'work-in' is a well-known case in point.

In such moments, the expressions of movement leaders can become both "objective facts" and "a tremendous social force" (35), shaping wider understandings and commitments. In such moments, movements can become, in Marxist terms, class conscious.

Such moments are relatively rare and generally, in the UK at least, they have not endured for that long. But despite the attempts by some historians to write them out of existence altogether, they are both clearly identifiable and of very real significance. They are significant because such practical moments have typically required important concessions and other highly consequential changes to secure the re-stabilisation of capitalist domination. Such moments are immeasurably more important for the learning of those pursuing radical social change than any number of studies of 'domination as usual'.

Foster deploys the immense learning acquired over a lifetime of historical study to analyse five of these moments, including the 1842 General Strike. The 'work in' to defend shipbuilding on Clydeside in 1971-72 is compared with the 1919 mobilisation on Clydeside aimed at reducing the working week. Readers may be surprised to find that the later struggle is found to have been further reaching in the challenge it posed to the power of the capitalist state than the earlier struggle. In 1919, the concern of the majority of the workers was to defend the workshop control achieved over the war years, and the leaders sought to develop on this basis "an understanding of political economy that sought in the first instance to *limit the capitalist market*" (emphasis added). In 1971, however, leaders were able to attempt "a more profound reordering of meanings involving democracy, alienation and the role of the working class in carrying forward society's productive potential" (64-65).

Foster's analysis of the parallel 1919 strike in Belfast to reduce the working week reveals the "relatively fast development of class consciousness" within the city's working class. This required skilled handling of the issue of sectarian divisions: "Repeatedly, and using very much the same rhetorical devices," the strike's leaders "would



L. S. Vygotsky



V. N. Vološinov



The so-called Bakhtin Circle, with Volosinov in the middle, his hand on Bakhtin's shoulder.
Credit: Monoskop.

refer to sectarian conflict as a disabling division of the past, something blocking workers' advance, and point to the real enemies in class terms and the need for a solidarity that encompassed all workers, both in the north and elsewhere". The resulting movement, "for a period of up to two years was seen as a serious challenge by the region's rulers" (91-92), and it was one which ultimately elicited a brutal response.

Events 18 months later at British level, in August 1920, saw the Trades Union Congress and the Councils of Action – established by the labour movement to forestall further war – threaten a general strike to halt British military intervention against Soviet Russia. Remarkably, "previously committed right wingers and friends of the government ... actually supported the decision to proceed with preparations ... to usurp the powers of constitutional government" (98). They did so to seek to re-establish their leadership credentials with a growing body of, especially younger, activists, who had been radicalised both by the experience of war and by the painstaking and patient work of socialist campaigners in their local communities and workplaces in the preceding years. This work enabled leaders such as Robert Williams of the transport federation unapologetically to declare to a joint Labour Party-TUC conference in August 1920 that "it was better to make peace unconstitutionally than to go to war and kill in the name of the British constitution". The government of the day "speedily reversed course" in the face of a movement with a language increasingly posing some "fundamental issues of social system change" (12). The key priority of the capitalist state became, above all, to restore right wing leadership of the labour movement.

It is not possible here to do justice to these deeply researched historical studies. They draw on Foster's many years of experience in presenting such historical studies to students – overwhelmingly working class – at Paisley Tech/University (now part of the University of the West of Scotland), and also to labour movement and community activists across the UK and internationally. Unlike so much contemporary 'critical' scholarship, the case studies – albeit detailed and at times challenging – are both intelligible and accessible.

In each case, the political economy underlying the struggle is masterfully laid bare, before the living dynamics of the day to day struggle are presented and analysed. And in each case we find deepening confirmation of an initial conclusion first reached by Foster fully fifty years ago. In his study of 19th Century England, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (1974), Foster pointed to the

"perhaps surprising importance of language: of the forms in which the arguments were carried on" (124).

Why surprising? Perhaps because to many who have imbibed a caricature of Marxism-Leninism, language might seem all a bit too ephemeral – and philosophically 'ideal' – to be of such profound significance in shaping the actual 'material' development of society.

But Foster was onto the profound significance of language in processes of social change many years before other historians started to get excited about 'the linguistic turn'. Unlike most of the latter, his turn to language, via the early Soviet theorists, has deepened our ability to identify and to understand those practical moments when working class movements have challenged the power of the capitalist state, and to orientate us towards how we prepare for and connect to such moments of possibility when they arise anew – as they almost certainly will.

Seen in this light, *Languages of Class Struggle* can be seen to present, perhaps above all, a powerful argument about the nature of political practice for those meaningfully – practically and intelligently – committed to challenging the power of capital. For Foster, it means sustained and patient work, in communities and workplaces, building networks, capacities and understandings. Conducted on the required scale, such work can create a movement. When moments of practical possibility arrive, such a movement, with agile leadership, prepared for the inevitable rhetorical battle, might, in Marx's and Engels' terms, prove "capable of ridding itself of the muck of ages" and "fitted to found society anew".

The fact that this book is written by someone who has committed a near lifetime of activity (and almost 50 years as a community organiser living in Glasgow's Govan) to implementing and developing such political practice adds a depth of experience and authenticity to this book (especially for readers of SLR) which very few – even of Foster's diminishing generation – can match.

This is a book, then, which on many levels *deserves* to be discussed widely, and to be incorporated into educational courses at all levels and across varying contexts. Not everyone will agree with all of its arguments, of course. But those who are or can become motivated towards the pursuit of radical social change, and to challenging the power of the capitalist state in the process, will doubtless become better educated and prepared by engaging with its arguments in the constructive spirit which they merit.

Indeed, more consistently achieving such a spirit is a prerequisite for just about anything else the political left might practically achieve.

THE BLACK HOLE OF MISCALCULATION

Rachel Reeves' 'black hole' narrative echoes the Treasury shock doctrine that tipped Jim Callaghan's government into chaos, finds **Liam Payne**.

Since the UK general election, the Chancellor Rachel Reeves has painted a dark picture of British government finances. The fiscal calculations she has been provided by the Treasury reveal, she says, how low growth and seemingly uncontrollable inflation have turned national finances into a black hole, relentlessly sucking more and more resources into a bottomless nothing.

In 1976, a similar situation greeted the newly ascended Prime Minister, Jim Callaghan, and his precarious Labour Government. The infamous 'stagflation' of this period — just the latest manifestation of capitalism's recurring bouts of crises — had hit a chronically unstable British economy worse than most. With the value of the pound daily sliding to lower and lower exchange levels, and the Treasury rapidly using up currency reserves in a vain attempt to prop it up, the British Government was forced to turn to other Western states for support, and eventually the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It is true that the unstable British economy is in a shockingly bad situation. But the story of these real-world events fifty years ago is more informative about the present than the extra-terrestrial metaphor that Reeves is using to justify another round of austerity.

The Best and the Brightest

The British pound exchange rate had been steadily sliding in the early months of 1976. In March 1976, Bank of England and Treasury mandarins decided to artificially lower its rate even further through a reduction in interest rates and a sale of their reserves, making the supply of pounds to the market greater and further encouraging the downward trend. It was done in the erroneous belief that trade union wage demands — then as now chasing prices rather than setting them — were pushing up the costs of British exports and adversely affecting the country's balance of payments. Four days later, the pound fell by five cents against the dollar in a single hour.

Quite who made this disastrous decision has never been acknowledged, but the faceless men behind it caused the obviously shaky confidence in the currency to become a total aversion to it. The experts quickly had to change tactic and start using their depleted reserves to now buy pounds on currency markets, to try and revitalise confidence and its value. Between February and April 1976, the Bank of England used up approximately one third of its reserves with these machinations.

Even such flip-flopping failed to halt the slide indefinitely. This was eventually achieved in the middle of June that year, when the Government approached central banks of America, Germany, France, Canada, Switzerland and Japan to ask for a loan. They duly received around £3 billion, which was enough of a sign of 'confidence' in the British currency that money markets were temporarily assuaged. However, this loan had to be repaid in full within six months.

By the start of September, this restored confidence began again to ebb away, and the speculators returned with a vengeance. Sup-

posedly perturbed by a Labour party policy proposal around the nationalisation of leading banks and insurance companies, the pound resumed its downward march. Once more, civil servants poured petrol on the fire by announcing that the Bank of England was officially ending its support of the pound's exchange rate value, due to the further depleted reserves, initially caused by the March devaluation. By the end of September, the currency had reached a record low.

This coincided with the start of that year's Labour party conference in Blackpool, and Chancellor Denis Healey's scheduled meetings with the Commonwealth finance ministers and the IMF. On his way to the airport, Healey received updates that the pound was dropping in value almost every fifteen minutes. The Chancellor eventually decided to turn back and, in a later meeting with his Treasury advisers, made the fateful determination that the country would now approach the IMF for a loan.

Conservative Conversions

In Blackpool that day, Callaghan and his close advisers seized the moment to announce an ideological conversion that had been fermenting amongst the Labour right for a while. Ditching the post-war Keynesian consensus of demand management, full employment, trade union rights, and a fully functioning and expanded welfare state, Callaghan proclaimed that Britain had been living on 'borrowed time' and that the above social democratic menu of macro-economic policies no longer existed. These prescriptions for combatting recessions, Callaghan averred, merely added more inflation into the mix, eventually bringing greater unemployment. He and his advisers had taken the first steps on Britain's road to right-wing monetarist economic orthodoxy, and eventually Thatcherite neoliberal capitalism.

Later that year, the guru of neoliberalism, Milton Friedman, told a British TV programme: "The most hopeful sign I have seen in Britain was the talk which your Labour prime minister gave to the Labour conference at the end of September. That was, I think, one of the most remarkable talks — speeches — which any government leader has ever given."

The day after Callaghan's intervention, it was announced that Britain would be applying to the IMF for a loan of £2.3 billion, the largest amount ever requested from the organisation. The pound began to steady, and Healey made his way to Blackpool to make the case. Having been voted off the party's National Executive Committee the previous year for his right-wing politics, Healey was not allowed to address the conference from the rostrum and instead had to speak from the floor as a standard delegate. Booed on his arrival at the conference hall, Healey's speech followed a debate on the proposal to nationalise significant sectors of the UK finance industry. Having only the standard five minutes accorded to a delegate to make his case, the Chancellor gave a bizarre performance defending the Government's recent cuts and stringent pay policies, saying

these would form the basis of his negotiations with the IMF, all the while being continuously heckled by other delegates. Regardless, the Labour party conference had no power, real or imagined, to stop the Government's agenda.

A Cheque that May Bounce

In October, the IMF negotiating team arrived in London and Healey raised interest rates in an attempt to protect the pound for the duration of the talks. However, due to stalling on the part of the British Government, these talks didn't actually begin until the start of November. The Treasury informed the IMF that they projected the Public Sector Borrowing Requirement (PSBR) for the next two financial years to be £10.5 billion and £11.5 billion. This caused the IMF to propose state cuts of a total of £7 billion over the corresponding period. The Labour cabinet countered with a figure of £2 billion each financial year as the absolute maximum they and the labour movement would be able to stomach. The talks reached a virtual stalemate over this issue, but the advantage rested with the IMF: Britain needed to repay its loan from earlier in the year by the end of December.

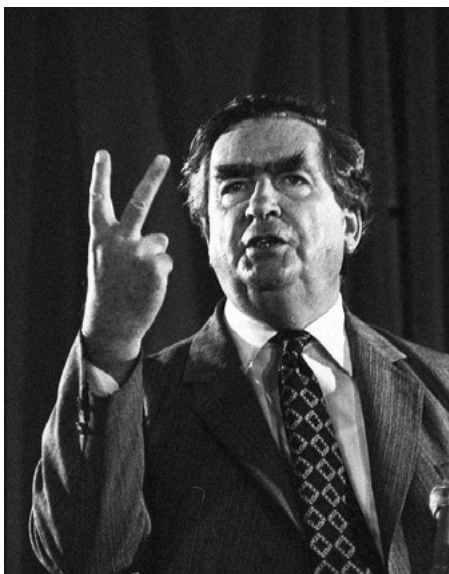
Secret discussions between select Government and Treasury representatives and the IMF team eventually resulted in an agreement to cut £2.5 billion in state spending over the next two financial years. When Callaghan brought this deal to the Labour cabinet, several prominent members objected and proposed alternative plans for the Government to pursue. Tony Benn made the left-wing case against cuts and for an alternative economic strategy. Citing the parallels with the infamous Labour Government of 1929-31, which cut state spending on welfare to try and maintain the gold standard of currency exchange, before quickly dropping it when the party split and its leader Ramsay MacDonald formed a 'National' Government with Liberals and Tories, Benn argued that the Government should immediately impose more stringent controls on currency exchange, capital movement and imports, which would shield the pound and allow Labour to then enact a socialist regeneration of the ailing British economy.

Healey restated his case to the cabinet the day after and was supported by Callaghan and Michael Foot. Cuts of £1 billion for the financial year of 77-78 and £1.5 billion for 78-79 were accepted by a vote of eighteen out of twenty-three cabinet ministers. The cuts focused on employment support measures, infrastructure investment, defence, housing, nationalised industries, and government subsidies to essentials. With the Conservative Party ideologically compromised by the whole affair, the terms passed the House of Commons vote, with Tory MPs abstaining. Alan Fisher, the head of the National Union of Public Employees, ominously stated: "In meeting the conditions made by the IMF, the Government have accepted a cheque that may bounce at the next general election."

Shock Doctrine

After the deal was signed and the terms announced the official PSBR figures were published for the financial year 1977-78. These showed a borrowing requirement of £5.6 billion, almost half the level the Treasury officials had given to the IMF as part of the negotiations.

Bernard Donoghue, one of the Government's closest advisers and firmly on the right of the Labour party, stated later:



Denis Healey. Still from It's Our Oil, Mike Thompson/BBC Radio 4.

The Treasury and the Bank of England wanted cuts. They were exaggerating everything. In 1976, I remember a Treasury friend said to me, 'Look, you can't manage the economy tightly over a long period. You only get a chance once every decade to get the economy under control. What you need is a crisis that frightens ministers into accepting [your ideas]. The bigger the crisis, the more you can frighten ministers. [It's] what we call the Treasury bounce.'

Even Denis Healey commented:

The figures were unreliable. I mean, *incredibly* so. If you look at the PSBR... [it was] billions out. [...] The big problem they always have in the Treasury is getting governments to control spending. So any excuse they can find for getting spending cut they will take. It wasn't so much a conspiracy against the government so much as an attempt to get the policies they believed in.

Around six months after the conclusion of the loan agreement, it became apparent to the Government that they in fact never needed it in the first place. They used less than half of the funds and paid it back in full well ahead of schedule. Healey again: "The whole thing was unnecessary. If I'd had the right figures, I needn't have gone to the IMF." Regardless, the cuts proceeded, and the pound staged a consistent recovery throughout 1977.

Fallout

But at what cost? The shock doctrine of the Treasury and Bank of England caused a Labour Government to denude itself of the ideological buttress of its post-war social democratic advances, namely Keynesian macroeconomics, and forced through cuts to public spending against the wishes of party members and to the direct material disadvantage of the party's core voting bloc, the working class. The trade union rank-and-file soon blanched at the pay policies enforced on it by a social contract with the Government that was blatantly one-sided: while the unions upheld their side of the bargain through holding back from industrial disputes, the government failed in return to enact or maintain various policies to increase the social wage, especially following the IMF bail-out. The labour movement splintered, and the 'winter of discontent' followed in 1978-79. At the next election, voters opted for the more convincing of the two monetarist options, right-wing Margaret Thatcher, and so Britain fell into four decades of a neoliberal nightmare from which it is still to awaken.

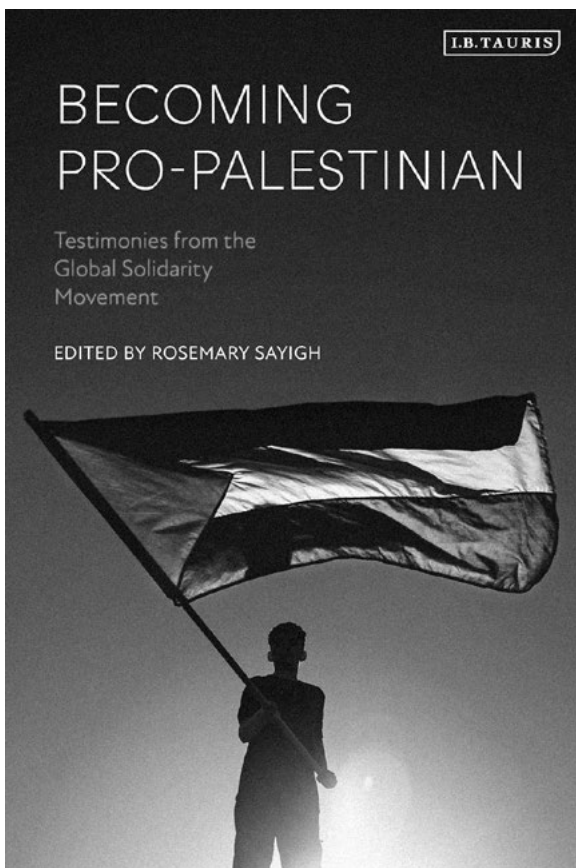
The current Labour Chancellor, much more at home with the prevailing economic orthodoxies than even the old right-winger Denis Healey, has been given similar doomsday economic forecasts by the Treasury department as those concocted out of thin air in 1976. Those resulted in what amounted, essentially, to an economic coup by a group of unelected reactionary ideologues, paving the way for a sea-change in British politics and the social fabric of the country, to its clear detriment. Quite where this latest iteration of such events will take us is up in the air at best – how much worse can things get? – but the warnings of 1976 should be borne in mind. The black hole seems an appropriate comparison.

Source: When the Lights Went Out: What Really Happened to Britain in the Seventies by Andy Beckett (Faber and Faber, 2009).

WE ARE EVERYWHERE

Derek Newton reviews *Becoming Pro-Palestinian: Testimonies from the Global Solidarity Movement*, edited by Rosemary Sayigh (I. B. Taurus, 2024).

What makes someone who isn't Palestinian become an active supporter of the Palestinian people's struggle for equal rights and self-determination? The question may seem redundant at a time when mass demonstrations around the world are calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, and the International Court of Justice has ruled that the Palestinian people have a plausible need for protection from genocide. Surely, the urge to become 'pro-Palestinian' is self-explanatory? Perhaps, perhaps not.



Published earlier this year, this volume of personal reflections, almost a *Who's Who* of an older generation of the international Palestine solidarity movement, offers over 40 different perspectives on the experience of being committed to Palestinian liberation, and stands as a timely reminder that 'it' [the Palestinian catastrophe] didn't start on the 7th October 2023.

Edited by Lebanon-based oral historian and anthropologist Rosemary Sayigh, and covering a period of some 60 years, this collection presents activist narratives from every continent. In doing so, it offers insights not only into the personal experiences that underlay and sustained a commitment to the Palestinian cause, but, at the same time, weaves a tapestry depicting the global politics of the

period and the alternative political movements within which that commitment was engendered and nurtured.

Some of these contributors grew up in countries and at a time when support for Palestine was taken for granted: Turkey, South Africa and Brazil in the 1990s, and India in the 1980s, for example. "We saw Palestine, in other words, as one of a network, social, national, and ideological, of popular struggles for justice." (Roger Heacock, France). This perspective is allied to a recognition of the contradiction between Western rhetoric about democracy, the rule of law and human rights and the support by Western governments for Israeli exceptionalism, impunity and lack of accountability.

There is a particularly vibrant account by university professor, M.H. Ilias, of the situation in the State of Kerala, South India, in the 1980s: "the question of Palestine was politically intimate not just to intellectual and activist circles but to ordinary people as well... Imagine student organisations using pictures of Yasser Arafat in posters, and quoting the words of Mahmoud Darwish and Ghasan Kanafani in pamphlets."

For others, 'becoming pro-Palestinian' was akin to a conversion experience, a personal crisis brought on by the shock of an unanticipated recognition. In this respect, the 1982 Sabra-Shatilla massacre stands out as a key event for many: "The Sabra-Shatila massacre exploded the myth that Palestinians were terrorists."

According to her own testimony, Singaporean-British doctor Ang Swee Chai, who went on to co-found Medical Aid for Palestinians, had been baptised in a fundamentalist, pro-Israeli church and was an active Christian Zionist when she first saw images of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Her account could have been written about recent events in Gaza: "There were pictures of wounded victims, many children, some dying, in partially bombed hospitals. Charred bodies were pulled out of bombed out buildings, including small children. My heart was torn apart watching the suffering."

Then again, for many contributors it was the experience of encountering and being with Palestinian people that gave them a qualitatively different understanding of the Palestinian predicament and the steadfastness (*sumud*) needed to deal with it: "many others peopled and enriched our existence as we got our full-bodied taste of the real Palestine, so different from the abstraction of the cause, so much more contradictory and yet so much more dynamic." As Scottish artist Jane Freere says of her time spent working with Palestinian refugees, "The whole experience of becoming deeply involved with the Palestinian people I worked with for Return of the Soul made such an impression on me that I did not want to leave. You cannot be a witness, a tear collector and then walk away, forget and move on."

From Empathy to Activism

How does empathy translate into political strategy and organisation? This question is especially germane for Jewish Israelis beginning not only to challenge 'Zionism' but to deal with their own personal relationship to it, their own implicatedness. In an early

chapter of the volume, Amira Hass, a well-known and highly-respected Israeli-born journalist, questions the premise of the book's title, *Becoming pro-Palestinian*: "even within a historical-political context – [the definition, 'pro-Palestinian'] takes national identity as a frame of reference." For her, there was never a time when she had to 'become' someone who challenged and opposed 'ongoing, structural injustice', injustice that originated with the founding of the state of which she is a citizen.

Ilan Pappé, by contrast, took a more tortuous "journey out of zionism" having been "the object of intense indoctrination in school, at home, and in the army." Despite having identified, through his research in the 1980s, the ethnic cleansing inherent in the creation of the state of Israel, it wasn't until 1992, amidst a number of personal crises, that he took "a huge leap out of the warm embrace of Zionist consensus". He talks movingly of "the personal repercussions incurred by the substitution of an ideology that was taken for granted by an unconditional commitment to the Palestinian cause."

This visceral connection to Zionism as something rooted in family and community sympathies and allegiances, may go some way to explaining why so few Israelis emerge from their military experience with the perspective of American-born IDF volunteer Rafi Silver: "what the army experience gave me was a real education in the Israeli/ Palestinian conflict: an education in lies, brutality, and inhumanity that I had never imagined possible. ... Suddenly I began to see the Other as a person just like me, instead of the enemy I had been taught about."

A significant number of these accounts centre on the experience of meeting and spending time with Palestinian refugees, especially in the Lebanese camps. Anyone wanting to understand the 'refugee issue' will appreciate the excellent summary of the situation and legal status of Palestinian refugees in the chapter written by Indonesian academic Dr Ryantori.

There is a particularly insightful and harrowing description of Lebanon in the 1980s by Dr Chris Giannou, a report based on his time working as a surgeon for the Palestine Red Crescent Society. In 1982 Israeli forces attacked the hospital he was working in, opposite the Ain el-Helweh refugee camp. Along with a number of colleagues, he was captured, imprisoned and subjected to brutality by Israeli forces before eventually being released. The parallels with the recent experience of doctors from al-Shifa, al-Ahli and other hospitals in Gaza is all too apparent, except that the whereabouts of the latter, in many cases, is still unknown.

A significant development in the discourse around Palestine occurred in the 1990s following the First Intifada. Beginning in 1987 in the Jabaliya refugee camp, the uprising spread to the West Bank and became a byword for popular resistance: "popular committees were flourishing, certainly attached to the various political factions, but deeply committed to the full panoply of rights, for youth, women, workers, farmers: in short, every section of a society." Palestinian women played a key role and attracted the attention, admiration and support of feminists from many other countries. Palestine "became a turning point for the feminist movement in Italy, divided between those with a prevailing internationalist and anti-colonial agenda and those who were more invested in gender issues, both with regard to Palestine and at home." (Elisabetta Donini, Italy)

For a time, the intifada and the emerging popular networks of resistance wrong-footed the PLO and left its leadership behind, only for Arafat and others to be co-opted into the Oslo process and what turned out to be the fruitless search for a two-state solution. Several writers express their regret about their optimism over Oslo and their failure to heed the warnings of Edward Said and Haider Abdel Shafi.

Oslo and the so-called 'peace process' have shaped Palestinian politics ever since, and have also impacted elements of the solidarity movement. It's in the post-Oslo context that the movement began to analyse and understand more deeply the systematic character of Israel's settler-colonial project, and to identify it as implementing an apartheid regime. This analysis emerged publicly and

internationally at the 2001 Durban 'World Conference Against Racism', where South African activists drew on arguments originally proposed by Israeli scholar and Fatah member Uri Davis. For many South Africans, though, the identification of Israel as an apartheid state was already well-established: "To us, Israel looked like apartheid and Israel felt like apartheid, and its victims sounded and felt like Black South Africans. We who lived as Black people under apartheid know it when we see it, we know what it feels like on our bodies, what it tastes like in our bloodied mouths." (Naeem Jeenah, South Africa). It's this analysis that underpins the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

The Long Narrative War

The past twenty five years have seen a sharpening of perspective among the Palestine solidarity movement, expressed very clearly by Ilan Pappé in his summary of the position that he has arrived at both personally and professionally: "Viewing Zionism as a settler colonial movement, informed by what Wolfe called the logic of the elimination of the native, framing Israel as an Apartheid state (again not pretending to be the first one who did it), and describing Israeli policies against the Gaza Strip since 2006 as an incremental genocide was now part of my daily, professional, and activist, discourse. It produced other understandings such as total disbelief in the validity and morality of a two states solution, full commitment to the BDS campaign, and above all a clear, and a very rewarding, stance towards the future that was not there before."

In the meantime, Israel has moved further to the right or rather has followed more ruthlessly and more openly the logic of its settler-colonial project. In this, it has been aided by transformations in the ideological character of global politics, and the stance towards Israel of the so-called 'international community'. In India, for example, the growth of the nationalist Hindutva movement under Narendra Modi, and India's drift towards adopting neo-liberal and US-friendly economic policies, has given rise to a rapprochement with Israel at a governmental level. The BJP has begun to characterise Palestine as a 'Muslim issue'. This shift away from the policies associated with the Congress Party is underpinned by Israel's role in mediating the sale of US arms that would otherwise be unavailable to India as a nuclear-armed state. Something similar has occurred through the negotiation of the so-called Abraham Accords between Israel and the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco, negotiations that were underwritten by arms deals.

While the Palestinian position has been weakened by these developments between states, international support for Palestine at a grassroots level has continued to grow, albeit unevenly. Spikes in support have generally been in response to Israel's egregious military assaults on Gaza: Operation Cast Lead (2008-09); Operation Protective Edge (2014); Operation Guardian of the Walls (2021). This points to a contradiction in Israel's sources of power: the more it deploys its hard, military power, the more it loses in terms of its soft, ideological power. It's this loss of control over the narrative (of victimhood, of being the world's most moral army) which lies at the heart of Israel's concerted 'hasbara' and its deployment of accusations aimed at delegitimising its critics, a strategy that was deliberately cultivated by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs following the surge in support for Palestine in 2014. Perhaps we should see Israel's threats, real though they are, not as a sign of strength but as a sign of weakness.

This volume, rich as it is in insights into the struggle for Palestinian freedom, does not provide much material for understanding the immediate origins of the current crisis. Its account stops somewhere in the earlier part of this century. However, if and when the time ever comes to write a history of the Palestinian cause up to the present, this book will be an important source. We should be grateful to those who have lived it and shared their experiences so eloquently with us.

WHY HARRIS CAN'T GIVE NETENYAHU THE BOOT

Have Palestinians anything to look forward to in the event of Kamala Harris winning the White House? **Phil Chetwynd** looks at the ties that bind the US and Israel in this particular 'axis of evil'.

It is an extraordinary fact that despite the horrifying carnage currently taking place in Gaza and Lebanon, and the several International Human Rights rulings against Israel, the leaders of the Western world cannot bring themselves to place anything but the mildest of sanctions on Netanyahu and his fascist allies. Time and again, envoys and negotiators have been sent out to secure a peace that Netanyahu proceeds to scupper. Why then is the US unable to break its links with a genocidal, apartheid state?

The first port of call in answering this question is the power of the US arms industry. The US accounts for more than 40% of the planet's weapons exports, despite making up less than 5% of the world population. \$100 to \$200 billion U.S. dollars are pocketed in arms sales each year, and that number is gradually increasing year on year. 80% of Israeli arms come from US.

The US is promoting the sale of American ammunition to Israel while pretending to seek a cease-fire in Gaza. It provides Israel with \$3.8 bn. (£3 bn.) in annual military aid under a 10-year agreement that is intended to allow its ally to maintain what it calls a "qualitative military edge" over neighbouring countries. Little is said, of course, about the use of these weapons on the people of Palestine. This locks Israel into a ten year cycle of purchasing arms from the US arms giants, as part of the 'deal' is that recipient countries must buy new parts, spares etc. from the US. The US arms magnates therefore have a tidy income guaranteed over the period of any arms deal such as this. If Kamala really wanted to give Netanyahu the boot she'd have an awful lot to answer for amongst the warmongers of the US arms industry.

Hardly surprising then that the top two contributors to the Harris campaign are leading arms production companies Lockheed Martin (\$1,444,579) and Northrop Grumman (\$1,270,361). Interestingly, contributions to the Harris campaign from the arms industry outstrip those to Trump by over \$500,000.¹ Let's hope they know which way the wind is blowing!

The intricate process of political lobbying in the United States is another key feature of the reason why Harris can't dump Netanyahu. This involves the passage of funds from large lobbying organisations and industrial corporations to individual party candidates who are seen to be the likeliest to represent the needs of these lobbies and corporations in Congress. One of the largest lobbying organisations is the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

AIPAC's stated purpose is to "lobby the Congress of the United States on issues and legislation related to Israel". AIPAC regularly meets with members of Congress and holds events where it can share its views. The New York Times has described AIPAC as "a ma-

ajor force in shaping United States policy in the Middle East" that is able to push numerous bills through Congress.² Typically, these pass by unanimous votes.³

It is of some interest that Joe Biden himself has been the largest recipient of bribes from supporters of Israel. That "Genocide Joe" describes himself as a 'Christian Zionist' who has previously complained that Israel wasn't killing enough Palestinian women and children is also of some note.⁴ His political career has been supported by Israel to the tune of \$6,000,000. In summary, Mr. Biden received the most money from Israel and he has been Israel's most reliable comrade in arms over the years.

A curious feature of US lobbying law is that if individual members of the public offer \$1 apiece to voters to vote or not vote for a candidate, doing so would be a Federal crime! But foreign governments such as Israel are allowed to pay a US politician such as Biden millions of dollars to do their bidding as long as their instructions are left at the level of 'doing their bidding' rather than passing particular legislation!

The UK is no less complicit in the Israeli attempt to wipe out the Palestinian people than Kamala and AIPAC. According to reports from the UK government, in 2022, the UK issued arms export licenses to Israel valued at approximately £215 million. The Israeli firms Elbit Systems, Raytheon and the British firm BAE are arms firms that have several factories across Scotland.

Direct action has proved a particularly potent form of protest against the Israeli war machine in Scotland. Palestine Action has led the way here with campaigns against Elbit systems in Edinburgh. In addition to targeting specific facilities, Palestine Action has worked to mobilise local support in Scotland, engaging with community groups, activists, and political representatives to build a broader coalition against the arms trade with Israel. Unions have also come out strongly against Scottish involvement in the arms trade to Israel. Parts of UNITE and Unison have both been involved both at official and grass roots levels in campaigns to rid Scotland of Israeli arms companies.

The bottom line, however, is that continuing pressure on the Westminster government will be required to halt the UK's complicity in Israeli war crimes. The call must be NO MORE ARMS FOR GENOCIDE.

¹ Opensecrets.org

² David K. Shipler (July 6, 1987). 'On Middle East Policy, A Major Influence', The New York Times.

³ Mark Landler (February 3, 2014). "Potent Pro-Israel Group Finds Its Momentum Blunted", The New York Times.

⁴ Brittany Bernstein (May 8th, 2021) "Biden Once Called for Israel to Defend Itself, Including Killing Women and Children", The National Review.



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**“IS TREASA TUATH
NA TIGHEARNA”**

HIGHLAND LAND LEAGUE SLOGAN