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workers'
government

Solidarity

AND WORKERS' LIBERTY

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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Solidarity against anti-LGBT drive in Russia and worldwide



EQUALITY

NOW! **See page 5**

ALSO INSIDE: WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production. Society is shaped by the capitalists' relentless drive to increase their wealth. Capitalism causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class has one weapon: solidarity.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty aims to build solidarity through struggle so that the working class can overthrow capitalism. We want socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for the labour movement to break with "social partnership" and assert working-class interests militantly against the bosses.

Our priority is to work in the workplaces and trade unions, supporting workers' struggles, producing workplace bulletins, helping organise rank-and-file groups.

We are also active among students and in many campaigns and alliances.

We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Working-class solidarity in international politics: equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
- Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.
- If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

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Syria: over 2 million refugees

By Gerry Bates

The UN high commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) has asked EU states to take 30,000 refugees from Syria.

Up to the end of January, the UK had refused to take any. Home Secretary Theresa May insisted that Tory immigration targets were more important than Syrian lives.

Prompted by pressure from Labour, the government has now agreed to take just 500 refugees. It remains outside the UN scheme which has seen states such as Germany take in 10,000.

The refugee crisis in Syria is becoming even more acute as the exodus from the civil war fast outpaces neighbouring states' capacity to provide for them. 2.1 million refugees have registered with UN agencies, and hundreds of thousands more are estimated to be



Syrian refugees need more than tokenistic help

living without access to aid.

The week-long "Geneva II" talks on Syria ended on 21 January, with a (predictable) failure to reach any agreement between the government and the opposition.

After coming under severe pressure to attend, and following a fractious debate, the National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces

dropped its precondition that Assad step down before it agreed to talks.

Meanwhile, the Syrian government continued to insist that it was not going "to hand over power to anyone" and the main problem was with "terrorism" — regime short-hand for those who oppose Assad.

A further date has been scheduled for 10 February. There has as yet been no

commitment to attend from the Syrian government.

Some small progress was made on local ceasefires to allow some aid to get through.

However, UN aid chief Valeria Amos said that no aid has arrived to relieve the people of Homs, who in some areas of the city have been under siege by Assad's troops for 18 months.

Racing towards inequality

By Gilles Séguin

If you think that the economic crisis afflicts us like a curse from heaven, you should read *Capital in the 21st century*, the latest book by Thomas Piketty.

Not for the answers it offers, which are tame.

Piketty, who is very close to the Socialist Party [French equivalent of the Labour Party], and was the economic adviser of Ségolène Royal [SP presidential candidate in 2007], limits himself to wanting to regulate capitalism by way of a world-wide progressive tax on capital. This is a "useful utopia", he says, a way to "surpass" capitalism, not to overthrow it.

But his book is worthwhile as an eloquent summary of present-day capitalism and its tendencies.

The pay of top managers has reached levels previously unknown. It is a society of super-managers rather than of superstars: sports people, actors, and artists represent less than 5% of the top 0.1% of incomes.

Inequalities are even greater if we look at the distribution of capital and its revenues. In France, "capital has changed character: it

was landed property, it has become real-estate, industrial, and financial property". The capitalists have adapted.

In countries like France, the 50% poorest own less than 5% of assets. "For this half of the population, the very notion of assets and of capital is relatively abstract. For millions of people, their assets are reduced to a few weeks' worth of wages in a bank account, a car, and some furniture".

At the other end of the scale, the richest 10% own 60% of assets, 70% in the USA.

Piketty sees a tendency to return to a level of inequality similar to that of the 19th century or of the Belle Epoque [the period before World War 1], when the richest 10% owned 90% of assets.

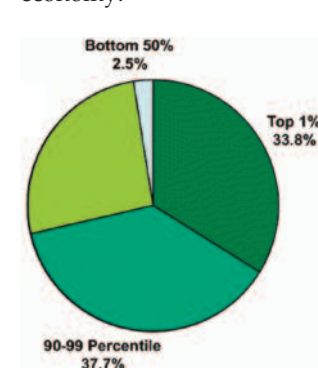
This monopolisation of assets by the richest proceeds through the relative reduction of the assets of the middle class, since the poorest have practically no assets, and a downturn in middle-class revenues.

That middle class, which emerged through the crises of the 20th century and the boom after World War 2, was, for Piketty, "the major innovation of the 20th century". In Europe today, it represents about 40% of the

adult population (so, 20 million people in France) and owns 35% of assets.

But its glory days are behind it. The big question is which way the middle class will turn if its economic situation worsens further: towards the working class and toward the overthrow of capitalism, or in reactionary and populist directions. Piketty, however, is far from counting on a social revolution.

The reduction of inequalities through economic growth is for Piketty an illusion linked to the specific economic period of the two world wars, the 30 years' boom after World War 2, the presence of the USSR - a period of massive destruction of capital and of direct state intervention in the economy.



The top 10% in USA own over 70% of wealth

He explains that the 21st century will see an average rate of growth of about 1% in the "mature" capitalist countries, and the emerging economies stabilising themselves around that rate of growth once their demography has stabilised and they have caught up economically.

In a period of weak economic growth, inheritance will be more important in the formation of private fortunes, and thus in the maintenance and increase of inequalities. As for the poorest 50%, they inherit nothing and have every chance of remaining poor.

The question of public debt is also, for Piketty, "a question of distribution of wealth". For "the world of the wealthy is rich; it is the states that are poor". "Europe is simultaneously the continent with the largest private fortunes in the world, and the one which has greatest difficulty in resolving its public debt crisis".

Besides tax loopholes, Piketty estimates that capital hidden away in tax havens amounts to 10% of world GDP.

● Review article translated from the French Marxist journal *Convergences Révolutionnaires*.

Labour: reject the Collins report!

By Colin Foster

Ray Collins's proposals for the Labour Party special conference on 1 March seem to, or even do, change little immediately. But they contain a time-bomb designed to change things radically, and for the worse, in five years' time.

Delegates on 1 March should vote against unless they are sure about the changes and have had time to discuss them properly, rather than voting for unless they are totally sure they understand the case against.

In fact there is no chance of proper time to discuss the changes. As we write, Collins's text has still not been published, less than four weeks before the conference. The platform will not allow amendments, or voting in parts. The conference is only two hours, and much of that assigned to setpiece platform speeches. So there will be little debate, and even that probably unbalanced.

Over the last seven months, since Ed Miliband declared his plan to make trade unionists' Labour Party affiliation "opt-in"

rather than "opt-out", most union leaders have opposed the idea. The danger now is that they will soften their opposition and back Collins in the name of "unity".

Collins's time bomb says that from 2019 the Labour Party should accept affiliation fees from unions only in proportion to the number of members for whom those unions have sent details to the Labour Party as having ticked a box saying that they want part of their political levy to go to Labour.

Probably that will reduce the union-affiliation numbers considerably below the current 2.7 million. Collins expects so. He and others clearly want that, so that after 2019 they can reduce the unions' voting power within the party. That is what it is all about.

The requirement for members to tick a box — i.e., that all who fail or forget to express a choice should be counted as "opting out", rather than those who want to "opt out" of the union's collective decision to affiliate having to say so — is presented as democratic.

But what would we think, in unions, if members had to tick a box to say they



Oppose his report

want to vote in union elections, and only got a ballot paper if they had previously ticked a box?

Or if members had to tick a box to say that they, individually, wanted to support the union's political campaigns on the NHS or the Living Wage, and political fund money could be spent on those campaigns only if it could be attributed to individuals who had ticked a box?

Or if members had to tick a box to say that they, individually, wanted to take part in union ballots on strikes, and could be balloted and strike only if they

had previously ticked that box?

Box-tickers will pay no extra in union dues. But the incentive to tick the box will be small even for solid Labour supporters. The only gain of substance for the individual from ticking the box is that she or he will not lose their current right to vote in Labour leadership elections. But the next Labour leadership poll could be ten years away.

And if no candidate can stand for Labour leader unless nominated by 15% of Labour MPs — which Collins is also reported to propose — then the leader-

ship poll is likely to be small contest anyway. The sweetener of removing the MPs' overweighted votes in leadership polls is a small thing by comparison.

The best information as of now is that on 1 March rule changes will be put only on primaries and on leadership elections, not on affiliation procedures. So a later rule change will be necessary on affiliation procedures.

Even if Collins wins on 1 March, unions and CLPs should oppose that rule change when it comes forward. We should combat any resurgence of the mood of defeatism which prevailed in July 2013 — "the Labour-union link is going to be broken, there's no way of stopping it, it's really not even worth campaigning on the issue".

Collins's complicated proposals, which will create great administrative difficulties and damage to Labour finances, are designed only to create a lever for reducing the union vote in the Labour Party. Talk of the proposals increasing the involvement of individual trade unionists is hypocritical. The proposals will allow some individual trade unionists to keep the right

they have now, of voting for Labour leader; remove that right from others; and remove from all trade unionists the right to have their basic representative organisations, the unions, exercising control in a party which claims to be "Labour".

The unions do not always vote left-wing. Far from it: in long tracts of Labour's history, the union block vote was a prop for the old Labour right wing. But the union vote in the Labour Party institutionalises openings, in times of working-class political ferment, for workers to use their basic organisations to sway Labour, through a range of channels from Labour annual conference to trade-union delegacies to local Labour Parties.

That is why the new Labour right wing wants to curtail the union vote. That is why we should oppose the Collins report; and, if it is passed, fight each inch of way over the next five years to stop its time-bomb being exploded.

• defendthelink.wordpress.com

Students will rally on 6 February against police crackdown

By Ed Maltby

A national student meeting hosted by Birmingham Defend Education on 29 January was attended by around two hundred activists from all over the country. It was called by anti-cuts groups involved in student occupations last term.

The meeting agreed a number of demands to orient the student movement and around which local groups can agitate. These include free education with living grants, the writing off of student debt, and support for better pay and conditions for higher education workers.

Responding to the wave of repression on universities last term, during which dozens of students were arrested and universities were granted injunctions to prevent freedom of assembly, the meeting called for no disciplinaries as a result of the protests and demanded that police should not be called on to campuses without permission from elected student representatives.

The meeting agreed to call for local actions in support of these demands around and after the national strike on Thursday 6 February.

At the demonstration afterwards, the need to fight for democratic universities and against state repression was brutally underscored yet again.

At the end of the march, around 100 students peacefully entered the University of Birmingham's Great Hall. Upon leaving, the students were kettled in a courtyard outside the Aston Webb Building for between two and four hours, without access to food or water.

When students were finally allowed to leave in pairs, West Midlands Police forced all students to present their personal details. Some refused to do so, and were subsequently arrested. In a recent High Court judgement, this action was found to be in breach of human rights legislation.

14 were arrested, and all of those arrested who were Birmingham students have been suspended from the university.

After being held for over 24 hours, they received draconian bail conditions which include an order to live and sleep at their home address every night and not to meet publicly in groups of 10 or more people without police consent.

• Defend the right to protest: anti-cuts.com

EDL frustrated in Slough

By Ira Berkovic

Around 200 supporters of the far-right English Defence League held a march and rally in Slough, Berkshire on Saturday 1 February, but were only able to do so thanks to heavy police protection.

Similar, if not slightly greater, numbers of anti-fascist activists, along with significant numbers of local people, mobilised to oppose them.

Berkshire Anti-Fascists, linked to the national Anti-Fascist Network (AFN), had done hard work in the build-up to the EDL's march leafletting local communities and raising awareness of the event.

There were some tensions in the high street protest between those who wanted to remain behind police lines and merely heckle the EDL as they marched past, and more militant anti-fascists (mainly mobilised by AFN-affiliated groups from

around southern England, including Brighton Anti-Fascists, London Anti-Fascists, and South London Anti-Fascists), who wanted to attempt to occupy the high street to block the EDL's march.

The anti-fascist mobilisation did not have sufficient numbers to challenge the police for control of the streets. However EDL's march was delayed for some time.

Although some local people were understandably frightened and frustrated by the disruption caused in the town centre the overwhelming response of local people, including many from the Asian community, was one of immense hostility to the EDL.

This was the EDL's first national demonstration of 2014. They mobilised less than half the numbers they managed for their Tower Hamlets demonstration in September 2013, and with internal tensions and splits



EDL trapped

disrupting their organisation, the future does not look bright.

Some of the credit for that must go to the Anti-Fascist Network and its affiliated groups.

If AFN groups can build links with local labour movements and working-class community organisations, they could play an important role in further accelerating the decline of the EDL in the months ahead.

Marxism in the 1960s and 70s

Letters



Jelle Versieren's generous review of Antonio Gramsci's *working-class revolutionary (Solidarity 311)* offers a wealth of background information and context-setting.

A central assessment, however, seems to me skewed. He writes that the "new wave of energy" in the intellectual affairs of the left over the whole long period from 1956 (Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin, and the consequent turmoil in the Communist Parties) through the turmoil of the late 1960s and early 1970s to the early 1980s (when "Eurocommunism" mutated into a drift towards plain bourgeois liberalism) produced two main "paradigms" for social investigation, "Gramscian" and "Althusserian".

There has been, I submit, much that does not fit into the box of either "paradigm".

In the mid-1960s, about halfway through Versieren's "new wave" period, ferment in the Communist Party student section in France — unprecedented since the rise of Stalinism, and, as it would turn out, without comparable sequel too — saw a clash between "Italians" and "Chinese".

The "Italians" admired the Italian Communist Party's approach, which they saw as more open and flexible than the French. In 1968 the Italian CP would condemn the Russian-led invasion of Czechoslovakia sharply, while the French CP mumbled only about its "surprise and disapproval". In the Italian approach, the "Italians" saw a democratic spirit and a creative initiative which they took to be derived from the writings of Gramsci.

A volume of Gramsci's "selected works" translated into French had been published in 1959; the *Prison Notebooks* would appear in French translation between 1978 and 1996.

The "Chinese" admired the militant-sounding talk of the Chinese Communist Party, and the (in fact reactionary and destructive) "Cultural Revolution". Philosophically, they admired Althusser. Some of their chief leaders had been Al-

thusser's students.

The "Italians" were crushed. In later years some of them turned in the editorial office of the social-democratic daily *Libération*. The "Chinese" split from the CP in 1966 to form the UJCM, which, with the other "Maoist" groups which came out of it, was briefly a big force on the French left.

So: "Gramscians" on one side, "Althusserians" on the other. But both currents ran into the sand very quickly.

Althusser's ideas remain a force in a sub-section of US academia. In Latin America, they were very influential for a few years thanks to a popularisation by Martha Harnecker.

In Britain, *New Left Review* had a very brief enthusiasm for Althusser. At the end of 1971 the Althusserians round Ben Brewster quit the NLR editorial board (on the grounds that it criticised Chinese government policy and rejected the doctrine of "socialism in one country") and NLR soon published a sharp critique of Althusser by Norman Geras. The Althusserians published a short-lived magazine, *Theoretical Practice*, and then scattered, some of them like Paul Hirst becoming well-known social-democratic academics.

And there was a third current in the 1960s challenging the orthodoxies of the old Communist Parties. It was the Trotskyists. Since the mid-1940s they had been marginalised into tiny circles, but they had held on, educated themselves, and trained activists. In France, a sizeable group expelled from the Communist Party student organisation in 1965 formed the Jeunesses Communistes Révolutionnaires, and Trotskyist groups grew elsewhere. This third current of thought has informed not only activism but also Marxist research over the last 40-odd years.

In 1974 French Trotskyists (renamed LCR) published a book entitled, unambiguously, *Against Althusser*. In a later edition of that book (1999), Daniel Bensaid looked back:

"Antoine Artous and I studied [Althusser's books] *Pour Marx* and *Lire Le Capital* passionately in the winter holidays of 1965-6, in the little schoolhouse at Gages where Antoine's mother was the teacher...

"Our conclusion was definitive: we were definitely not Althusserians. The reasons for our stance were in the first place political. Althusser seemed 'in the last instance' to offer a sophisticated cover for the leadership of the [Communist] Party...

"We also had theoretical reasons. Animated by a will for battle which was not shy of voluntarism, we had the feeling [in Althusser's writings] of a horrible burying of the subject in the structure.

"In the enthusiasm of the moment there were plenty of misunderstandings and approximations. But in hindsight, I do not regret our attitude. Politically, Althusserianism has aged badly. It has, above all, nourished through its ambiguities two disastrous illusions: by sustaining long beyond it made sense the idea of a possible return to the right road of the Communist Party, and by encouraging a Maoism haunted by Stalinist nostalgia".

The Trotskyists knew that there were, as Jelle Versieren puts it, "many Gramscis". There was no one "Gramscian paradigm", but there was much to learn from Gramsci. Jean-Marie Vincent, for example, wrote in 1962 a long and appreciative review of the 1959 volume of selected translations into French from Gramsci.

More generally, the Trotskyists tended to see themselves as "Hegelian"-leaning Marxists. Vincent also studied and wrote about the "Frankfurt School". Across the world, it was likely to be Trotskyists who studied Korsch, Lukacs, Benjamin, Sartre. The small Trotskyist milieu had few people who ventured to write about philosophy as such, but the few who did were also "Hegelian"-leaning: Roman Rosdolsky in his *Making of Marx's Capital*, some of the ideas of which were well summarised in Ernest Mandel's *The Formation of the Economic Ideas of Karl Marx*; C L R James and Raya Dunayevskaya, who would influence the Italian "workerists" or "autonomists", or at least their forerunners.

Bensaid's *Marx For Our Times* (French original 1995), a wide-ranging review of philosophical questions, scarcely mentions Althusser in its index; Gramsci is there, but also Benjamin, Hegel, and the Analytical Marxists.

Other than on the margins, the Trotskyists understood that Marxist social research is not an enterprise ruled over monarchically by a "philosophy", and they had no "party line" on philosophy.

Lucio Colletti's influence would diminish almost to zero after his personal collapse in the later 1970s, which in old age took him as far as becoming an MP for Berlusconi's party. But in 1974 he would describe "Trotsky's analyses of the USSR in *The Revolution Betrayed* [as] exemplary", praise Trotsky because he "insisted that the determinant force in any real socialist revolution would be the industrial working class", and declare that "I am quite willing to be called a Trotskyist". His pre-collapse writings were influential for a while, and in my view still more illuminating than all the texts of "Hegelian Marxism".

In any case, there was a third current, anti-"Althusserian", appreciative of Gramsci, but philosophically pluralist, appreciative of other writers too, and insistent on separating out a "Gramscianism" quite different from that of the Italian Communist Party.

Anderson's account of Gramsci must be read, I think, as part of that third current. Anderson was finding a way out from both his earlier left social-democratic version of "Gramscianism" and his period of enthusiasm for a "Western Marxism" comprising mostly writings philosophically abstruse enough to enable their writers to stay in the ambit of the Communist Parties or avoid sharp clashes with Stalinism.

Other writers before Anderson had shown that Gramsci's real thought had been different from the Italian Communist Party's processed version. Anderson probed for the weaknesses in Gramsci's fragmentary prison writings which had enabled the PCI to do its processing.

He pushed beyond examining Gramsci's general philosophical approach to measuring Gramsci's substantive statements against the realities of capitalist society in his day, and especially against the political realities of late 20th century bourgeois democracy.

Martin Thomas

It is anti-imperialist!

Yes, as Luke Hardy says (*Solidarity 311*), the rights of the Russian-speaking minority in Ukraine should be respected. For example, Russian should be recognised as an official language.

Luke is also right that the leadership of the opposition in Ukraine is bourgeois and, much of it, right-wing.

He could legitimately add that the EU and the USA are fishing in troubled waters.

But I think he's wrong to deny the anti-imperialist dimension of the struggle.

A book by an Ukrainian dissident, Ivan Dzyuba, translated into English in the 1970s, recounts how in Lenin's day the Bolsheviks deliberately promoted "Ukrainisation" in Ukraine to counteract the fact that "the people had lived for 450 years under colonial oppression (Polish for over 150 years, Russian for about 300)".

Stalin reversed that policy and "Russified" even more brutally than the Tsars.

Revolt against Russification was especially strong in western Ukraine. "The western regions (with [a few] exceptions) had never been part of the Tsarist empire... When the Soviet authorities seized this region [in World War 2], they met with a widespread popular resistance.

"Until the early 1950s, this part of Ukraine was in fact governed as an occupied enemy territory, with a massive military and police presence..."

It is not just history. Russia is trying to dominate Ukraine now. Whatever you think of the EU, the trade links between Ukraine and the EU whose breaking-off sparked the current upheavals do not involve comparable political domination.

Socialists can win Ukrainians away from the right-wing leaders of the opposition only on the basis of clearly siding with Ukrainian rights.

Rhodri Evans,
London

New book rediscovers US socialist cartoons from the mid-20th century

A few bold strokes by an artist can convey an idea more vividly and fix it more firmly in the viewer's mind than an editorial or an article would.

The cartoons collected in a new book depict US politics, workers' struggles, America's "Jim Crow" racism, Roosevelt's "New Deal" and Harry Truman's "Fair Deal", and Stalinism in its era of greatest prestige and triumph, as revolutionary socialists saw them at the time.

You can buy online here - price includes postage and packaging.
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<http://www.workersliberty.org/socialistcartoons>
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Against anti-LGBT repression, equality now!

On the 7 February, the Winter Olympics will begin in the Russian city of Sochi. The competition, which will be attended by athletes and sports fans from hundreds of countries across the world, will be overshadowed by the rise of homophobia and the persecution of LGBT people in Russia.

This repression has taken both legal forms, proscribing the rights of LGBT people to demonstrate and agitate for their rights, as well as informal, "popular" forms, such as the harassment and assault of individuals by violent gangs.

Homophobic laws are not new to Russia. Homosexuality was banned under the Stalinist USSR from 1932, and while the ban was formally lifted in 1993, providing information about LGBT issues has been illegal in many regions for some time.

The situation has markedly worsened in the last year. In June 2013, the Duma (parliament) voted through an amendment to Federal Law prohibiting the distribution of "information which propagandises a denial of traditional family values and non-traditional sexual relations." Advocates of the law claim they are protecting children from homosexual "propaganda". In reality they have made it illegal for LGBT people to campaign publicly for their rights, to protest against homophobia or even to discuss LGBT issues in the public sphere.

To organise a Gay Pride march, to hand out a leaflet or even to write a blog about LGBT rights could result in prosecution and a fine of up to one million rubles.

These legal restrictions reinforce a blanket of silence and fear beneath which violent attacks on LGBT individuals thrive. Emboldened by the government's measures and the rise in homophobic popular feeling, violent gangs have begun to seek out, target and brutally attack people they suspect of being gay.

Just as national legislators justify legal restrictions in the name of protecting children and the sanctity of family, and by associating non-heterosexual relations with child abuse, so these gangs call themselves "Parents of Russia" and "Occupy Paedophilia".

Their day-to-day activity consists of anonymously meeting LGBT people on gay dating websites, arranging meetings with them, then filming themselves savagely beating their victim.

Violently homophobic groups like this are present in many



Protesters demand an end to homophobic repression in Russia. New laws make demonstrations for LGBT rights illegal.

Russian cities, and the number of people assaulted and killed for their sexuality has sharply increased.

Russia is not the only country to have seen new waves of anti-LGBT repression.

In India, the Supreme Court recently ruled that a colonial-era anti-sodomy law was still legal, potentially paving the way for the criminalisation of India's LGBT community. The law, introduced by the British in 1860, would render sexually active LGBT people "unapprehended felons". Though the government claims it is seeking to overrule the law, the actions of the Supreme Court has appalled many Indians.

In Uganda, parliament passed a bill in December 2013 which makes homosexuality punishable by life imprisonment. The bill, if it gains the signature of Ugandan president Yoweri Museveni, will significantly increase the criminalisation of Uganda's already persecuted LGBT community, and even makes failure to report suspected homosexual acts an imprisonable offence.

As in Russia, "official" state homophobia works in tandem with populist anti-gay strands in civil society. Support for the law has been fostered by Ugandan newspapers and magazines, which also publish the names and addresses of public figures they allege to be gay. In 2010, one Ugandan magazine, *Rolling Stone*, published a list of a hundred people they claimed were LGBT, accompanied by their home addresses and a suggestion they be executed.

In Nigeria, too, and elsewhere, governments are using homophobic legislation as a means of scapegoating and whipping up hatred against LGBT minorities. They often do so in concert with religious and nationalist forces which blame anyone who deviates from the conservative family ideal for the problems of society.

In the coming weeks, when the eyes of the world will be on the Russian Olympics, socialists must demand freedom, dignity and equality for all people, regardless of their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Help us raise £12,000 by October

The Workers' Liberty website plays a crucial role in what we do as an organisation. Not only does it carry news updates, political commentary and events listings, but it also hosts a huge archive of articles and documents from the history of our tendency, and of the Marxist movement as a whole. To get the most out of the website, we need it to function as best it can. Workers' Liberty is paying an activist to work part-time on our website. In order to keep it up and running, and to keep paying our website designer, we need money.

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment from your bank to: AWL, sort code: 08-60-01, account: 20047674, Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB). Or send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL"). Or donate online at workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

This week we have raised £1170. Includes profit from book sales and increased regular payments.

Grand total: £1440.



Capital without proletarians

Colin Foster reviews 'Playtime', a video installation by Isaac Julien. Victoria Miro Gallery, 16 Wharf Rd, London N1 7RW

Of the six segments of film comprising Isaac Julien's 'Playtime' video installation, the most ostentatiously playful and fictional is also the most literal and documentary.

It is a parody of the adulatory celebrity interview, with the actress Maggie Cheung portraying an extravagantly gushing interviewer. The interviewee, Simon de Pury, one of the world's most famous art auctioneers, is however playing himself.

When a wealthy person commissions him to sell an artwork, says de Pury, it is like entrusting her or his children. The anxiety is immense. The preparation of the auction is like walking a tightrope without a net.

But then, when the sale is cashed in, the elation!

All the tension, the love of and the doubts and fears about one's own creation, and the catharsis, of art, here transform into tension and catharsis in the cash nexus.

Another segment, 'The Art Dealer', pursues the same theme. What is the exciting question? Whether it will be this artwork, or that, which realises huge financial gains for its owner.

Julien has named the installation 'Playtime', and describes it as about capital. The segment 'The Hedge Fund Manager' also portrays the circuits of capital as a game of gambling and exulting in gain. Those who lose as the "players" in the market win are portrayed in two segments.

In 'Dubai', an immigrant worker, employed as a maid, weeps about her servile status, her loneliness, her separation from her children. In 'Reykjavik', more enigmatically, an artist stomps around grim-faced because the credit crunch has stopped him completing his "dream" of refurbishing a large industrial space to be his home.

The installation is shown on seven screens, but in straightforward sequence. It is set up so it's impossible to see all seven screens from any point in the room, but not, as far as I could make out, in a way that symbolises and conveys unseen processes running alongside the surface show of capitalist playtime.

The unseen processes of capital are, instead, symbolised rather naively by repeated shots of big computer server warehouses, as if the mysteries of capital were to do with the complexities of information technology rather than the inversions of commodity fetishism.

COUNTERPOINT

The seven-screen installation is bright, snappy, beautiful. The accompanying two-screen installation, entitled 'Kapital' and billed as "creating an intellectual framework for Playtime", is a solemn, dispirited counterpoint.

'Kapital' is made from film of a seminar on 'Choreographing Capital' which Julien organised with the Marxist political economist David Harvey at the Hayward Gallery in 2012. Having the film, rather than, say, a transcript of the seminar, as counterpoint, focuses us on the visual qualities.

This is class time, not play time. The audience sits in genteel, respectful "ah yes, very interesting" mode. Almost no-one takes notes. No-one protests, interjects, laughs, or winces.

In front of the audience, Julien and Harvey sit in deep armchairs. (All the figures in 'Playtime' are striding around, or perched as for concentration and work). Julien solemnly reads a list of questions to Harvey from prior notes, nodding sagely as Harvey replies.

Then high-ranking professors opine from the audience. Colin McCabe — once a fiery young academic, ousted from the Cambridge University English faculty in 1981 for his "structuralism", but now snug in an "eminent scholar" persona — shrugs that socialism is "less of an option now than ever". Stuart Hall, the patriarch for the Communist Party's journal *Marxism Today* in the 1980s, wearily asserts that the proletariat has gone, shoved aside by new identities of race and gender.

Harvey's responses are reasonable but mild-mannered. The film's showing of them allows them slight drama or passion, not enough to make us look in what Marx called the "hidden abode" of capital where we can "force the secret of profit-making".

Both in 'Kapital' and in 'Playtime', we remain in what Marx called



'Horizon', from 'Playtime'

the "sphere of exchange of commodities", where "alone rule Freedom, Equality, Property, and Bentham". Or, now, not the sober Bentham, but a more exuberant, self-elated "player".

Or, as Hegel put it, "The creation of bourgeois society is the achievement of the modern world which has for the first time given all determinations of the Idea their due... The whole sphere of bourgeois society is the territory of mediation where there is free play for every idiosyncrasy, every talent, every accident of birth and fortune, and where waves of every passion gush forth, regulated only by reason glinting through them..."

Again, a difference: for Hegel, the "reason glinting through" was supplied by the state; here, it is the market.

The one worker in the story, the maid in Dubai, is not a proletarian, employed by capital to produce for the market, but a domestic servant. This capitalist playground is one with the workers who build the attractions faded out.

Julien, it seems, has drifted to fading out his own background. He is from Caribbean-origin working-class East London. At school (so he recounts) he came across a teacher "who, during life drawing, started explaining dialectical materialism... All my teachers were middle-class and they were also of the left. So we were having these conversations about Marx, about Trotsky, about socialism".

At the age of 15, in 1975, he came across the small revolutionary left group Big Flame, whose politics were half-Maoist, half-anarchist. He met activists like Alan Hayling, who after a high-flying degree at Cambridge was then a line worker at the same Ford factory as Julien's dad. Like other groups of such politics across Europe, Big Flame faded in the late 70s and early 80s. Hayling became the driving force in the failed *News on Sunday* attempt in 1987 to create a mass-circulation socialist newspaper as a commercial operation, without any activist organisation behind it; and, later, Head of Documentaries at the BBC.

Julien also had the "Healyites" delivering their daily paper *Newsline* to his home every day. The "Healyites", ex-Trotskyist and still calling themselves Trotskyist, had spiralled into a screeching, blustering sect, sustaining their paper on lucrative links with governments like Gaddafi's.

"I myself", writes Julien, "preferred the more anarchistic groups, and the East End saw a lot of circling around the Trotskyists. But I flirted with any organisation that seemed interested in me".

By 1985 Big Flame had disappeared, and the "Healyites" had imploded: maybe Julien took that to be the end of revolutionary socialist activism. Yet the proletariat did not cease to exist when the fantasies about it of the soft-Maoists and the "Healyites" collapsed.

Capital is not just about winners and losers in the market. It is about the confiscation by capital of the tension and catharsis of human creativity, a confiscation which Julien sets out to criticise but ends up partly complicit in.



"Glam" wrestler Adrian Street returns to the mine work

All that melts in

Bruce Robinson reviews 'All that is solid melts into air', an exhibition by Jeremy Deller, Manchester Art Gallery and touring.

Jeremy Deller is a populist artist in the best sense of the word.

His 2012 retrospective was entitled 'Joy in People' and his works are often concerned with everyday life and the things people do with their leisure.

They sometimes involve their direct participation as with his procession through Manchester and his recreation of the Battle of Orgreave during the miners' strike. He has been described as a social cartographer and shows a deep interest in working class culture and history expressed through his use of the style and materials of trade union banners to transmit his 21st century messages.

His latest exhibition is a collection that reflects on the impact of the Industrial Revolution in Britain and asks what remains of it



ere he once worked

is solid into air

today in a “post-industrial” economy. The cataclysmic impact of the early 19th century changes and the growth of cities is captured in John Martin’s painting of the ‘The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah’, Martin being a sanitary reformer and early observer of the “metabolic rift”, who worried that London would drown in its own excrement and planned a new sewerage system and the transportation of London’s waste to the fields of Kent.

Deller also presents some rare early depictions of industrial workers: photos of women ironworkers who loaded coal and broke up ironstone, some weary in their working clothes, others posing for the new medium of photography; oils of the workforce at Crawshay steelworks, with portraits of the whole industrial hierarchy from the owners via the labour aristocrat mechanic down to a range of workers, each distinguished by their clothes and tools.

Deller also presents broadsides (printed



Left, old work: woman iron worker; right, new work: Amazon warehouse



lyrics to songs sold cheaply) covering topics ranging from opposition to the “Salford Bastille” via songs of chasing lovers to a prediction of how life would be in 1973 (“Everyone will be rich. There’ll be no need to beg”).

There is also material relating to the eight month long Preston lockout of 1853 — a major dispute of which Marx commented “Lock-out vs. Turn-out, is the great lawsuit now pending in the industrial districts, and bayonets are likely to give judgement in the case.”

The factory regime is set out in a poster outlining the tyrannical system of rules imposed by fines and the sack at one of the affected mills. A cartoon by one of the workers shows the employers’ reliance on “knobsticks” (scabs) to break the workers.

TIME

What has survived of the industrial past in the “air” of the 2010s?

Employers still try to take control of every second of the worker’s work time. A two-faced clock from a water powered Macclesfield silk mill (1810) contrasts the real movement of time with the time on the other face, driven by the power mechanism of the mill, for which the mill was producing. This second measure of time was used to calculate wages and force the workers to make up the time when there was insufficient water pressure.

This is placed next to the wrist-worn electronic device used by Amazon warehouse workers which monitors their high speed of work, enforced by a system of sanctions, and orders them what to “pick” next. A picture of the Amazon workhouse bears a certain resemblance to the engravings of an early mill — a uniform landscape of a relentless industrial architecture.

Resistance is possible — on entering we are faced by an 1890s Wearside engineering banner with the slogan “Scotia leads the way with a twelve o’clock Saturday” — but

Deller has put this next to one of his own banners carrying a text message to zero hours workers telling them they’re not required — “Hello, Today you have day off”.

On the walls are the family trees going back to the 1840s of three musicians from industrial areas: Noddy Holder from the Black Country, Bryan Ferry from County Durham and Shaun Ryder from Salford. Each is shown to be descended from generations working in the industries of their region.

Deller here returns to a favourite theme of his: the link between Britain’s industrial past and its contemporary musical culture. He once famously arranged for a brass band to play acid house anthems and in this exhibition he finds a direct link between the heavy metal music of Black Sabbath and Judas Priest and the “metal-bashing” industries of the West Midlands.

But the family trees also pose a different question: is pop celebrity, at least for the

lucky few, the contemporary substitute for traditional industrial work, all that remains once the “solid” has gone and a way of breaking the “curse” of generations? That question appears again in the exhibition in a video of Deller’s about the wrestler Adrian Street.

Street came from a Welsh mining background and went down the pit but was determined to leave for something better despite the derision of his father and his workmates. He makes a name as an all-in wrestler with a difference — with long bleached blonde hair, flamboyant and glittery “glam” costumes, a camp sensibility, a bodybuilder’s physique and an ambiguous sexuality. This was a conscious contrast to the stereotypical 70s notion of masculinity expected of wrestlers — Street speaks of his “challenging homophobia”.

A central image of the exhibition is of Street returning to the pit where he worked in 1973 dressed in his wrestling finery with a feather fan, fur-trimmed cape and knee-length boots, wearing a European Championship belt and standing opposite his father who is dressed in his working clothes with his miner’s lamp illuminated and an uneasy smile. In the background we can make out four other miners with blackened faces behind the gate of the pit cage. Street is preening himself and explains on the video that this was his way of giving the finger to his dad and the others who said he would never make anything of himself.

Deller sees the picture as Street “enlightening the coal serfs as to how the world would look in a post-industrial UK” encapsulating Britain’s “uneasy transition from being a centre of heavy industry to a producer of entertainment and services...” But, although Street comes across as a sympathetic character who “basically reinvented himself for the late twentieth century”, the question is also left open as to whether such individualistic solutions and a flight to celebrity are all that is left as an alternative to contemporary service industry drudgery such as that offered by Amazon now that “solid” industrial work has left Britain.

‘All that is solid melts into air’ is currently on show in Nottingham, moving to the University of Warwick and Newcastle later in the year.



Depicting the impact of capitalist change in the 19th century, John Martin’s ‘The Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah’

The business of folk

By Luke Hardy

Hollywood has a long history of taking a real person and creating fictionalised versions. 'Citizen Kane', 'Sunset Boulevard', and 'The Godfather' all did this. The Coen Brothers did it themselves in 'Barton Fink' and they have done it again in their new film — 'Inside Llewyn Davis'.

Llewyn Davis, a former merchant seaman, is a folk singer on the Greenwich Village scene in the New York of the early 60s. Dave Van Ronk was a real folk singer who also used to be a merchant seaman. There are a couple of nods to some other similarities but one of the great strengths of the movie is that Llewyn Davis is a completely fleshed out character believable in his own right.

Llewyn Davis, played brilliantly by Oscar Isaac, has some undoubted talent but his career is going nowhere. He lives on friends' and relatives' sofas until he wears out his welcome. The film makes plain from the beginning folk is a business — the sleazy owner of the Gaslight Club where the folk acts play, Davis's hapless agent, and record company execs, are all in it to make money.

The problem for Llewyn is not political commitment but that he is far too self-absorbed and diffident for politics. His bluesy and downbeat style is not commercial enough. "I don't see a lot of money in this" he is told at one point. Jean, Llewyn's ex-of-sorts (played by Carey Mulligan), and her boyfriend and singing partner Jim (played by Justin Timberlake), are much more popular down the Gaslight with their folk pop harmonies.

The subject matter of petty indignities and compromises



being forced on slightly deluded or self-important characters is not a new one for the Coen Brothers. 'Barton Fink', 'The Big Lebowski' and 'A Serious Man' all deal with that. However 'Inside Llewyn Davis' reaches levels of realism and lyricism seldom seen in their work.

Davis exists in a world of musicians who have day jobs or have to scrimp and cadge to survive. One singer is a drafted soldier, and Davis considers giving up and going back to sea

at one point. Problems such as contraception and trying to obtain a then illegal abortion have to be dealt with.

Even with its realist elements it is also a extremely beautiful movie. The winter scapes of New York, Chicago and the highway between, are filmed with the kind of visual poetry that recalls 'Fargo' and 'Miller's Crossing'. Despite this beauty the directors avoid the clichés of period-set movies. Apart from the cars and phones this could be a film about contemporary musicians struggling to get by. The similarities of modern hipster fashion to the Village scenes fashion make this even more the case.

Some critics have complained that whilst it is a very handsome movie with excellent performances, the main character is just too cynical to carry the audience's sympathy and interest. I disagree. There are several subtle moments of acting and direction that give much more depth, mainly surrounding his relationship with his ex-singing partner, an off screen ex-girlfriend and his family. Llewyn's interaction with his sister Joy (played by Jeanine Serralles) is extremely well played.

Some on the left have criticised the movie for lacking portrayal of the politics that influenced the folk scene at the time. Indeed, other than a passing reference to Shachtmanites, there is no politics with a capital P in the movie.

However the whole movie is about the commodification of art and how that affects the artist. Llewyn is as much alienated from the music he creates as he would be from the work he does back on a ship. In only one scene with Llewyn's father, when the business of folk doesn't intervene, does he seem to connect with the music once more.

P.S. The music is magnificent.

Fighting privatisation, defying the law

Solidarity continues our series of our extracts from Janine Booth's new book, *Plundering London Underground: New Labour, private capital and public transport 1997-2010*.

By the beginning of 2001, the government and Tube bosses were pressing ahead with preparations for the Public-Private Partnership, and recently-elected London Mayor Ken Livingstone, elected on a platform of opposing the PPP, was tacking towards compromise. But Tube trade unions, RMT and ASLEF had balloted members for action, and members of both unions voted Yes.

But before the first strike was due to take place, the government announced that the disagreements about PPP were resolved.

Talks that had been "delicate" on 26 January and "on the verge of collapse" on 29 January¹ produced a deal on 2 February. The deal was widely presented as a climb-down by [Deputy Prime Minister John] Prescott², and saw him allow [Transport Commissioner Bob] Kiley access to all documentation and invite him to "take the lead in working up proposals for modifying the PPP".

Kiley dropped his proposal to raise finance through bonds, saying that it was "not an issue" any more. Livingstone declared that the PPP, a "massively difficult, divisive issue ... has been resolved and everyone in London will be delighted ... This is an excellent deal, this is what Londoners need." Livingstone claimed that, "Once the unions have seen the outline of this deal they will realise their worries about safety have been resolved."

But they were not reassured, and ASLEF confirmed that its strike remained on, and explained that:

"Our dispute is ... about the situation as currently exists on the Tube following the separation into different sections of the Underground last year in readiness for PPP. LU has not answered our questions. The strike is still on³."

RMT's strike, though, had fallen foul of the law. Legislation by the previous Conservative government had required unions to give employers the names of all members balloted for industrial action. New Labour replaced this with a requirement to provide "such information in the union's possession as would help the employer to make plans and bring information to the attention of his employees".

The trade union movement had broadly welcomed this change, believing that it made the process simpler and less

invasive of members' privacy. For this dispute, as for previous disputes, RMT notified London Underground that it was balloting its members "in all categories and workplaces". London Transport applied to the court for an injunction barring the strike, claiming that the union should have given it more detailed information than this. Justice Gibbs granted the injunction, ruling that RMT should have told LUL the number of its members in each of London Underground's hundreds of work locations and grades.

[London Underground's present-day Managing Director] Mike Brown told me that the London Transport Board went to the courts because "we were in an impossible position. If we didn't try to keep running the place, someone would say to us that all your arguments, anything they ever listened to us about, was all gone, and they would just bring someone else in." But the union and its members saw the move as an attack on their rights. RMT General Secretary Jimmy Knapp condemned the ruling as having "stood the law on its head and made it harder, not easier to conduct a legal ballot".⁴ One RMT activist explained how anger turned into defiance:

"We had a mandate to strike, and for the courts to say that our democratic wishes weren't valid and were illegal was a total disgrace. So we organised on the ground to keep the action on despite edicts from the courts. I remember standing on the platforms as drivers were coming through saying we were taking strike action alongside ASLEF, we're not going to be abiding by the courts, and saying the same to station staff. We went round spreading the word."

Tubeworker asked rhetorically: "What choice have we got? If we buckle under, and call off the strikes because the courts tell us to, then we are effectively conceding that going on strike is illegal."⁵ But while the London Transport workers' representative on RMT's national Executive, John Leach, voted to press ahead with the action, all but one of the other Executive members voted to call it off. Knapp rushed a letter to members telling them to attend work as normal while ASLEF was striking. Why did Leach want to defy the law?

"Me and Bob Crow and then-President Phil Boston were in the High Court, being told we were going to be in contempt of court: it was a really highly-charged moment. In the evening I was at a mass meeting at the Hackney Empire and was called on stage to give a speech. I knew that regardless of any of these court judgments, the members were just going to walk out. I've never known a mood quite like it. So I said

that the judge could stuff his injunction. I had to go back in front of that judge the next morning!"

London Transport had not applied for a similar injunction against ASLEF, so ASLEF's strike went ahead officially. Thousands of RMT members joined it unofficially, with pickets wearing the armbands of both unions. With trade union head offices feeling unable to officially endorse unofficial strikes, bulletins produced by Underground workers took on a new significance. *Tubeworker* published three issues during the week of the strike. It explained why workers felt confident enough to defy the law: "If we have to go 'unofficial', then if thousands stay away from work, there is no way that management can victimise us all — who would run their railway?"⁶ Mike Brown told me that the company's management did not even discuss taking disciplinary action against unofficial strikers, and that he and some other directors understood the workers' actions:

I always knew there was going to be some serious dispute on this issue. I think I knew the strength of feeling about this. It was a genuinely-held, real concern for what the future of the place was going to be.

Nine-tenths of trains were cancelled on the strike day. London Underground management confessed that "The strike has really bitten hard."⁷ I wrote at the time that, "All the people who came up to our station said that they fully supported us. Nobody could be found for the TV vox pop interviews or the radio phone-ins to slag off the strike."⁸

The Evening Standard admitted that: "Despite the inconvenience, many commuters were broadly supportive of ASLEF's action", quoting passenger Toni Adams: "I sympathise with the action if the drivers are thinking of public safety, so I'm prepared to put up with it."⁹

Notes

1. *Evening Standard*, 26 January and 29 January 2001.
2. eg. *The Guardian*, 3 February 2001; *The Times*, 3 February 2001; *Evening Standard*, 2 February 2001.
3. *Evening Standard*, 2 February 2001.
4. Letter, Jimmy Knapp to RMT members, 9 February 2001.
5. *Tubeworker*, 3 January 2001.
6. *Tubeworker*, 31 January 2001, 3 February 2001.
7. *Evening Standard*, 5 February 2001.
8. *Action for Solidarity*, 9 February 2001.
9. *Evening Standard*, 5 February 2001.

Hegemony is not in the DNA

By Martin Thomas

The main theses of Leo Panitch's and Sam Gindin's book *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*, an important new work which Paul Hampton reviewed recently in *Solidarity*, are restatements of what the authors have argued in many articles. They are, I think, plain fact and important fact.

The forty-odd years of turbulence since the end in the early 1970s of the 1950s-60s "golden age" of West European, Japanese, and American capitalism have not brought a relative decline of the USA and a rise of inter-imperialist rivalries.

They have brought the extension of global capitalist markets and global capitalist interpenetration.

That has not been a process of the pushing-aside or marginalising of states by markets, but of new active roles, and in many cases new capacities for capitalist states.

US hegemony has been a lynchpin. It not disappeared or declined, but remains strong.

The forty years have not been a time of permanent crisis or permanent depression, leavened only by "speculative" or "artificial" booms. They have included long periods of profit-rate recovery and capitalist expansion, as shaky and contradiction-ridden as capitalist expansions always are, but also as real as capitalist expansions often are.

In 2002 I wrote (*Workers' Liberty* 2/3): "The unremarked surprise of the 13 years since 1989 is that the web of international regulatory institutions built up on the US side of the Cold War, and mostly lynchpinned by the USA — IMF, WTO, G7, World Bank, NATO, European Union — has proved strong and flexible enough to integrate vast new territories", despite follies, pauperisations, and shocks.

Even more surprising now. The EU has by some measures been through its worse and most discreditable period ever. Despite that, Latvia has just joined the euro, Lithuania wants to do so soon, Croatia has joined the EU, Serbia is a hopeful candidate, and Turkey's EU membership application talks restarted in November 2013. In Ukraine there have been mass demonstrations in favour of Ukraine moving towards the EU.

As Panitch and Gindin rightly explain, EU development is not the development of an alternative pole to the USA, but the development, encouraged from the start by the USA, of an integrating mechanism within a US-hegemonised world order.

All that is true.

I worry, however, that in working their researches up into a book Panitch and Gindin tend too much to "rationalise", to read back events as having turned out as they did because previously-established capacities and qualities of the US state ensured that they had to happen that way.

They are careful at points to stress contradictions, fumbings, and cross-currents in the progress of US power. Yet they sum up the process in these words: "The ambitious project for the making of global capitalism, imbricated in the American empire and first articulated during World War II, was realised in the last two decades of the twentieth century".

What does "imbricated" mean here? Their text hesitates to endorse Toni Negri's and Michael Hardt's claim that "Empire" is driven by the unique "network power" that the US constitution gives to the US state as a manager of global capitalism. But in a footnote Panitch and Gindin give a modified version of that claim: "the remarkable informal imperial 'carrying power' of the American constitution".

I worry here about the danger of falling victim to the always-tempting illusion of success, that it comes from the successful entity always having the DNA of success within it.

In the heyday of the British Empire, its rulers, when they wished, as they often did, to distance themselves from crude racism, would explain the empire in terms of Britain having a special facility at "good government".

In reality, the British ruling class appeared to have that capacity for governing, and developed nuanced methods and flexibility and an eye to the long term, because it had great power. The capacity arose with and from the success. What also arose, in large part, from the success, was the greater stability and security of the British state, which also enhanced its capacity.

None of that saved the British ruling class from carrying

through debacles like the partition of India or its ignominious collapse in Palestine, or atrocities like its campaign against the "Mau Mau" in Kenya.

Is there not the same with the US state? That it seems to have special capacities because it has such power and stability? Rather than the power and stability being essentially a "realisation" of some given-in-advance capacities?

The US has one of the most complicated tax codes in the world. Panitch and Gindin note that almost all the top international law firms are American. That fact also reflects the enormous drain on productive effort in the USA from its army of lawyers and its much higher rate of jailing people than other countries'. Legal liability costs for businesses in the USA are the highest in the world, and over two-and-a-half times higher than in Europe. The US has a quarter of all the world's prisoners, and jails people at a higher rate than any other country, almost ten times the rate of the Netherlands or Germany, for example.

PORK-BARRELLING

Because the US has a sort of gang system for politics rather than proper political parties, US legislation is specially susceptible to pork-barrelling by special interests.

The American Society of Civil Engineers compiles a "report card" each year on the country's physical infrastructure. "Since 1998, the grades have been near failing, averaging only Ds ['poor', on an A-to-F scale], due to delayed maintenance and underinvestment across most categories".

Although the USA has most of the world's richest universities, the average performance of its education system, so far as figures allow us to tell, is clearly below the OECD (34 richer countries) average. Although it has the world's most skilled medical centres, on average its enormous level of health spending produces, so a January 2013 report found, a poor outcome: "a large and widening 'mortality gap' among adults over 50 compared with other high-income nations". Exceptionally great inequality like the USA's, as Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett have shown, has regressive effects even within the ambits of capitalist development.

Not in Engels's day, but today, the USA also sees much of its surplus product sucked away in military spending.

Large, hugely-resourced, constantly reinvigorated by waves of immigration, geographically gifted with a large default sphere of influence, enjoying feedback advantages of centrality in a global economy where those advantages are important (as Saskia Sassen demonstrated in *The Global City*), the US has prevailed. We should not read back from that fact the conclusion that it prevails as a "realisation" of its "DNA".

Connected is the fact the Cold War scarcely figures in Panitch's and Gindin's narrative.

They draw a pretty straight line from the more confident, expansive, liberal-internationalist variants of US ruling-class

thinking in the 1940s to the feathered-out global capitalism of today, with little attention to the other variants of the 1940s (which included schemes to chop up Germany into half-a-dozen states, all forcibly deindustrialised) and the way US policy was determined over much of the interim by Cold War imperatives.

We now know that Stalinism would suffer internal collapse in the late 1980s. Stalinism now looks like a sideshow. No-one knew that for sure in advance. At times like those after the USSR launched its Sputnik satellite in 1957, things looked very different to everyone, including the US ruling class.

Even if the US's rulers had been able to foresee that Stalinism would suffer internal collapse after a due span of decades — and they could not have done that in abstraction from the actual and unpredictable struggles which brought down Stalinism — they lived in the meantime. They planned for periods in which Stalinism was dynamic.

Panitch and Gindin say that the US defeat in Vietnam was not followed by a "domino effect". The effect was not as large as the most anxious US strategists, or those most concerned to colour things so as to sustain support for the infamous US war in Vietnam, said. But in fact there was some "domino effect" — a continued advance of Stalinism in the decade after the point, about 1969, when it became clear that the US would win no clear victory in Vietnam.

We now know that the revolt of the peoples of Afghanistan would so shake the USSR as eventually to bring down the whole Stalinist structure. We now know that the revolt of the people of Poland in 1980-1 could only be partially quelled by the military coup of 1981, and that the internal rotting of East Europe's governments had gone far.

None of that was obvious in advance. None of it was even fixedly true in advance, in abstraction from the struggles in Afghanistan and Poland and elsewhere that made it true.

Fading the Cold War out of the story fades out a number of things. It fades out the expedient-to-block-Stalinism character of such things as the Marshall Plan. It fades out the reasons why the US sponsored the most drastic land reforms in history in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, reforms which played a part in those countries' subsequent industrial rise. It fades out a large dimension of why so many governments turned to seek deals with the USA after the collapse of Stalinism. It fades out a large dimension of why so many governments and politicians came to think that an arrangement with the USA was now the only game in town, and why the USA became more willing and even keen to "let go" previous Cold War allies like Marcos in the Philippines (1986), Suharto in Indonesia (1998), the military in Chile (1990), or Stroessner in Paraguay (1989).

All these things then tend to be read as just consequences of the capacities of the US state, or of the progressive working-out of the "project" which was "imbricated" in it from way back.

New journal of Marxist discussion

The first issue of a new journal of international discussion among revolutionary socialists, *Marxist Revival*, has gone to the printers.

The journal is produced by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) and the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency. The first issue also includes a long contribution from the Turkish revolutionary socialist group Marksist Tutum, and a survey from Workers' Liberty Australia of the revolutionary left in Australia.

The journal declares that "it will not be just an open forum. The two organisations initiating it, the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, have their own ideas, close on many issues but not identical: we will promote the ideas we have in common, debate the issues on which we disagree..."

"Marxist Revival will be open for disputations, polemics, and divergent views: we invite both groups and individual activists who disagree with IRMT and AWL, yet are interested in international discussion among revolutionary Marxists, to contribute."

"There are almost no other such journals of international Marxist discussion. Arguably today, in the era of the internet, mass air travel, and English as a global lingua franca, activist Marxist debates are more separated off into national silos than they were a hundred years ago, when the technical difficulties were a hundred times greater."

"Yet our foes, the ruling classes of the world, have globalised themselves more than ever".

To get a copy, send £2 plus £1.20 postage via www.workersliberty.org/payment.



No short-term fix for energy crisis

A development worker in the renewable energy industry spoke to *Solidarity* about renewable technology and energy policy.

The old ways of thinking can't last forever. Reliance on fossil fuels, particularly imported coal and gas, leave us exposed to the whims of markets.

There is a need to arrive at a better way to address our energy needs, both on an environmental level and a societal level in terms of dethroning the "Big Six" energy companies. But there's also a need to refine, develop, and test the credentials of renewable technology. It's still a fragile sector.

I work in anaerobic digestion (AD). AD is a very well understood process, and has been understood since the 1600s. It's very much like fermentation of alcohol, and is in effect a replication of the natural processes that occur in a cow's stomach. In terms of usage, it has been dabbled with on a small scale in agriculture, but more as an expensive plaything of scientifically and technically-minded farmers who like the idea of self-sufficiency. It has been used on a larger scale by water companies in sewage treatment for a number of decades, but only recently has it began to gather pace with the rise in awareness of issues of climate change and the need to push for change. It's developed recently as treatment for food waste.

SUSTAINABLE SOLUTION

There's no comparison between the amount of energy generated by an average anaerobic digestion facility and the average gas or coal power station is a gross mismatch, but AD has a much more organic fit to societal needs.

Regardless of its energy potential, AD is a sustainable solution for dealing with food waste. The products that are derived lend themselves perfectly to agriculture, which, as an instrumental pillar of food production, lends itself back to the idea of fuelling a population.

An average-sized AD plant (at around 2.5 Megawatts) is capable of powering the needs of about 5,000 homes. It's important to remember that it's fuelled by waste, rather than a finite and expensive resource that we do not have enough of.

The gas derived from AD is typically burned on site to create electricity for sale to the National Grid. There are wider uses for the heat this process creates, through sale of hot water to neighbouring businesses. Direct export of derived gas to the National Gas Grid is also becoming a reality, so there is a real growing potential for engagement with social energy needs.

The "dash for gas" is a short-termist plug. It isn't a solution, it's a sticking plaster. There is frustration in the renewables industry about the expansion of processes like fracking, although generally the consensus is for a diverse energy mix.

I believe a degree of pragmatism is required when assessing things like fracking. All opportunities need to be examined on their merits, and the consequences, based around genuine sustainability, considered. But the danger with fracking is that considerations outside the intrinsic merits, or otherwise, of the technology are forcing it through as a reac-



tionary means of solving short-term energy deficits.

Momentum has been lost on the back of the recession within the renewables sector. Major infrastructure projects are expensive, and frankly renewables are not a quick win with regards investment. One upside of that, though, is that the previous wave of "greenwash" has receded somewhat and allowed development and progress under the radar.

The industry is having to think about where it places its investment. It seems there is more of a focus on best practice and what will be sustainable in the long run. This has served AD well, as it has potential to be a key long-term contributor. It has its roots firmly in the waste sector and is very pragmatic, which has to an extent protected it from venture capitalists looking for a quick buck.

PUBLIC SECTOR

Policy is required to drive the sector as it develops, creating rewards for best practice and balancing the book on large scale projects. There really aren't ways around this at the moment.

For AD and other waste-based technologies, the disincentive of huge hikes in landfill tax have brought the public sector towards environmental best practice — which, although it creates a tight spot for cash-strapped authorities in the short term, is driving best practice in the long term.

Changes in policy could undermine entire projects. For instance, the recent "degression" applied to the Feed-In-Tariff

[a government scheme to incentivise households and businesses to generate their own electricity], which is a crucial revenue stream that many projects are built around. Because of the use of AD in the existing water industry, the incentives are susceptible to overuse by the big water firms, which are such a saturating drain on the funds that subsidies are beginning to be reined back in, taking them away from those projects they were designed to encourage.

This is also true of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI), which has only just been released, and will also be true of any upcoming support for Biogas-to-Grid. The former, due to nervousness about saturation, has been limited to very small-scale projects, but even so small amendments to the way in which large plants run by the big companies operate can qualify them under this subsidy, thereby jeopardising it.

There's a developing game of cat and mouse wit between government and the big firms with regards to subsidy.

Policy need to guarantee a certain level of subsidy to where it's actually needed. Mainstream politics is by its nature fickle, so there need to be guarantees to allow a project to develop, especially given the timeframes involved in developing a site.

The current Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, seems completely disconnected from the nuances of the industry. It would greatly benefit the waste sector for a ministerial role that commands such power to be filled by somebody with an experience and technical understanding of it, rather than simply as a career reward.

As the technical processes themselves are quite autonomous, even a large plant will only require five or six people to operate, but this means a diversity of workload. At sites that focus more on the composting side of things (so, plant waste rather than food), the work can be quite hands-on and waste itself is engaged by the workers. In general the industry is well-regulated with respect to health and safety, but the risks are there. Vaccinations are offered for free in these types of post, and protective equipment is obviously provided.

There are a lot of minimum-wage posts, but the company I work for does have one facility in London where the London Living Wage has been introduced. There is union organisation at some facilities.

Managing-for-the-sake-of-managing

My Life at Work



Jack Murrow is a library worker in a large university.

The bulk of what I do is shelving, so it's essentially a manual job, unlike the work of the library assistants and senior library assistants above me who are more desk-and office-based.

The library was recently restructured and my position was created on Grade 1 of the national payscale — before this the lowest grades at been Grade 2s. I think there has been more of a shift to part-time work; whether this is due to higher education funding cuts I couldn't say; my university is pretty healthy financially.

I am quite atomised from the rest of the workforce, as someone who works part-time and weekends and does manual work separate from my colleagues.

The atmosphere is not bad — management are generally okay, although there is a tendency, I think more and more common in the public sector, to manage-for-the-sake-of-managing. This can involve calling people up on minor things and creating loads of paperwork so you can show how you "dealt with the issue" when you go for a promotion in the future. All our workplace jargon refers to "customers" which still feels jarring in a university environment.

Across the uni there are three recognised unions, Unison, Unite, and UCU. The GMB also has members. Since our national pay dispute started, we've been having joint-union meetings which will hopefully start to discuss broader workplace issues. There's also a Living Wage campaign which all

the unions support.

Our density is very low across the whole workplace. There are so many different sites, schools, and jobs that it sometimes feels we have very few issues in common. The pay campaign is the one issue which obviously affects us all, which is why we're trying to get as much mileage as we can out of it. My branch is relatively open (although we have "open branch committee" meetings rather than all members meetings, a common occurrence in my union or so I'm told), and we've got a handful of newish people putting themselves forward for reps training.

Any chance of changing the culture to one of a union workplace will only come through building up our base of reps, so at least we're taking steps in the right direction.

• "My Life At Work" series: bit.ly/mlaw-series

Teachers' network agrees election challenge

By an NUT activist

The Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC), the rank-and-file network in the National Union of Teachers (NUT), held its latest conference in Leicester on 1 February.

It agreed that LANAC should support candidates in the forthcoming elections for General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary of the NUT. These candidates will seek nominations based on principles agreed by LANAC,

including the need for a serious fight on pay, pensions, and workload, a focus on organising in workplaces, developing and supporting reps, and a commitment to take on paid positions on a teachers' salary.

The LANAC conference also decided that the candidates for these elections should be Martin Powell Davies of Lewisham for General Secretary and Patrick Murphy of Leeds for Deputy General Secretary. That proposal was made by Eleanor Davies

from Lewisham and Gemma Short of Rotherham and was overwhelmingly supported.

All delegates agreed that the immediate priority now is to build for the March strike, but that it could not hope to win significant concessions unless it was followed by a campaign of action.

The other important business at the conference was a revised set of aims for LANAC, including a lay-led union with all negotiations in the hands of elected reps and members,

a collective organising approach including by the development of academy chain "branches", and for the collective defence of victimised school reps.

LANAC will, for the first time, have its own base at NUT Conference in Brighton at Easter, where the future of the national campaign will be decided.

That conference, and the imminent elections, offer a huge opportunity for LANAC to build.

• Abridged from bit.ly/lanac-report

Win at "free school"

Patrick Murphy, National Union of Teachers Executive (pc)

Teachers at a London "free school" have won a hugely important victory in a dispute with their employers.

"STEM 6" Academy in Islington, a school for 16-19 year olds, was refusing to recognise unions and imposing what were effectively zero-hours contracts on staff. Teachers at the school asked to be balanced by the National Union of Teachers (NUT) after their employers said there would be "legal consequences" if they failed to sign a new contract before Christmas.

Included the contract was a paragraph which stated: "The school reserves the right to temporarily lay you off from work without normal contractual pay or to reduce your normal working hours and reduce your pay proportionately. The school will give you as much notice as it can reasonably give of its need to take such action."

NUT members decided to ballot for strikes and named an extensive calendar of planned strikes, starting on Thursday 30 January.

When the school first received formal notice of the action from the NUT on 23 January, they sent the following reply:

"We confirm we are not



prepared to recognise you on a voluntary basis and this will remain to be our decision whether or not industrial action is taken. We are within our rights to make this decision."

Faced with the reality of the strike, they issued a very different statement on 29 January:

"Just to confirm that we are willing to recognise the NUT and make a commitment to enter into meaningful negotiations about the terms and conditions about the contract and to install a local and national representative within the Academy..."

The NUT locally has made clear that any recognition agreement should apply to all staff unions and not just teachers or the NUT. On that basis the strike action was suspended. A decision on further action will depend on the progress achieved in the forthcoming negotiations.

Islington NUT assistant secretary Ken Muller said: "This is a very significant success, not just for the NUT but for everyone concerned about union rights."



Leicester teachers fight back

By Ian Leaver, City Of Leicester NUT Division Secretary (pc)

Teachers at Gateway Sixth Form College in Leicester are in dispute over classroom observation policy.

The dispute has been running since last September, but has recently resulted in National Union of Teachers (NUT) members striking for five days in a two-week period.

Notice of a further nine days of action in February has been given. This action has been supported by all 61 members of the union, with up to 45 NUT members from the college on the picket line each morning.

Attempts to reach a resolution have been thwarted by management's refusal to accept a maximum number of three observations or that teachers should know the time

and date of an observation in advance. Members of the union are open to negotiating a new policy so long as those key factors are guaranteed.

On Wednesday 29 January over 40 teachers lobbied the governors and appealed to them to intervene to help resolve this dispute. Teachers have also leafleted students to ensure that they are clear about the cause of the dispute.

As the dispute continues, NUT members at Gateway are really concerned about the impact on students' learning, but remain resolute that management have to understand their concern.

Messages of support are welcomed, and should be emailed to the school reps at alan@leicesternut.org.uk and lorraine@leicesternut.org.uk

• More: leicesternut.org.uk

Higher education walks out, more action to come

University staff in the UCU union staged a two-hour strike on 28 January in protest against the government's pay offer of only 1% increase.

The strike was the second of three stoppages planned by the union. Student activists joined workers on picket lines at a number of campuses, although some students at Warwick organised "student lectures" to fill in for striking staff. The UCU urged students concerned about missing lectures to lobby management to resolve the dispute, rather than undermining workers' protests.

A day-long strike will follow on 6 February.

Edinburgh lecturers plan indefinite strikes

By Ollie Moore

Members of the Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) at Edinburgh College have announced an escalated programme of strikes, beginning with a strike on 6 February followed by two days the following week, and three days each week after that.

Their union is offering strike pay at a rate of 50% of normal salary for all strikes after 6 February.

The lecturers' strike ballot returned a 92% majority for strikes, and the escalating programme of action was unanimously agreed by the local EIS branch committee.

The immediate background to the dispute is workers' rejection of a 3% pay offer, but union activists say the strike is about a wider range of issues relating to pay and conditions resulting from the merger of Stevenson College, Jewel

and Esk College, and Edinburgh's Telford College which formed the institution in October 2012.

Management's pay offer came with significant strings attached, including the abolition of a maximum level of contact hours guaranteed under previous terms. Penny Gower, EIS branch secretary, said:

"If we are unsuccessful in our attempt to stop management from abolishing our class contact maximum, lecturers are left facing potential 56-hour working weeks, including 35 hours' class contact and their associated hours of preparation and marking at times of management's choosing.

"The education service we provide would suffer."

The workers have launched an online petition to build support for their dispute: chn.ge/1bn-SNNA

• For more information, see the EIS branch's website: bit.ly/1fEN9LI

Yorkshire ambulance staff take action

Members of Unite in Yorkshire Ambulance service struck on 1 and 3 February in a dispute over issues including rotas and meal breaks.

Unite is also still in dispute over the Trust's decision to derecognise it last year. Unison, the majority union in the service, has also rejected the terms and conditions package, on a 70% vote from members.

The branch has threatened to ballot for action if

the Trust don't back down on the proposals. After many staff were down banded last year and Unison failed to put up any fight against this, union members made sure that their dissatisfaction was heard and the branch officers were forced to reject a package they had spent months negotiating.

This rank and file pressure needs to be more organised and to link up with Unite activists.



All out to save Tube jobs!

By a London Underground worker

London Underground workers began the first of two strikes this month on Tuesday 4 February, as part of their "Every Job Matters" campaign to stop job cuts and ticket office closures.

Members of the RMT and TSSA will strike from 9pm on Tuesday 4 February until 8.59pm on Thursday 6 February, with the strike expected to cause significant disruption to the Tube.

An overtime ban launched by station staff on 17 January has already begun to bite, with major stations including Finsbury Park forced to close early due to staff shortages.

The 4-6 February strike will be followed by another 48-hour walkout on 11-13 February, and supplemented by 12 hours of "revenue action", from 9.30 to 11.30am and 6.30 to

8.30pm on 7, 10, and 14 February. The "revenue action" will involve station staff refusing to issue or check tickets and, wherever safe to do so, opening the gates to allow free travel for passengers.

The dispute aims to stop London Underground bosses' "Fit for the Future" plan, which would see staffing levels reduced by nearly 1,000 posts, as well as closing every ticket office on the entire network. If implemented, it would also mean significant attacks on Tube workers' terms and conditions.

Hands Off London Transport (HOLT), the public campaign to fight the cuts and support Tube workers' action, plans a number of solidarity actions around the strikes, including picket lines support. Student supporters of HOLT plan a "party on the Tube" at 6.30pm on 7 February, coinciding with the first "revenue action".

That kind of solidarity,



which can link Tube workers' industrial fight to a wider political battle for the future of public transport in London, will be essential to the success of the dispute.

So too will effective picketing of workplaces, and the transformation of the RMT's existing "strike committee" into a gen-

uinely representative body built widely amongst different branches and grades, and broadened out to involve TSSA members.

The announcement two sets of strike dates, supplemented by creative actions short of strikes, is a big step forward from a previous pattern of irregular one-day strikes. This should be

built on by announcing an ongoing calendar of escalating actions.

Some RMT branches, including Central Line East, have committed to using branch reserves as hardship funds during the strikes, to make sure lower-paid workers can afford to take sustained action. Other branches should fol-

low their lead.

The recent announcement that London Underground plans to sell space in stations to retailers like Amazon, Tesco, Asda, and Waitrose to run "pick-up points" for online shoppers gives an indication of what's at stake in the dispute: management's vision of a destaffed, automated Tube, run to maximise the potential for profit, versus unions' vision of a well-funded, publicly-owned Tube run to provide a safe and efficient service for passengers.

A win for Tube unions will be a win for all working-class people in the capital and beyond.

- The rank-and-file bulletin *Tubeworker* is holding regular meetings throughout the dispute. For details, and for regular updates, see workersliberty.org/twblog
- handsofflondontransport.wordpress.com



Spanish pro-choice march

Thousands of Spaniards protested on 1 February against a draft law to restrict access to abortion. The law would limit abortion to cases of rape and instances where the health of the mother was at serious risk. The current law, brought in the Socialist government in 2010, gives women the right to abort up to the 14th week of pregnancy. <http://europeanprochoicenetwork.wordpress.com>

No victimisation of 3 Cosas workers

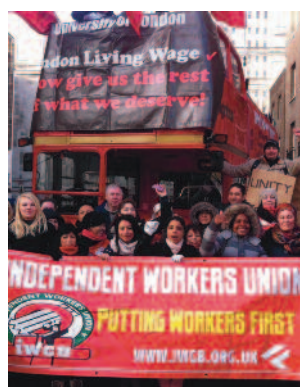
By Michéal MacEoin

On 27, 28 and 29 January, outsourced workers at the University of London took strike action for equal sick pay, holidays and pensions.

They were also demanding that the employer recognise the IWGB and offer protection against job losses at the Garden Halls of residence near King's Cross.

Despite the University claiming that the action had "minimal impact", the strike was solid and gained strong support from students and wider activists.

On all three mornings, picket lines caused considerable disruption to deliveries to Senate House. There were reports of directly-employed staff working off-site or from home in order to respect the picket lines.



On the second day, workers boarded a vintage open-top bus draped in banners bearing the demands of the strike.

It visited a number of sites including the halls, the Royal Opera House where IWGB cleaners have just been granted the Living Wage, and Parliament, where the strikers were met by left-wing Labour MPs

John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn.

The final visit was to the Islington office of Cofely GDF-Suez, the company which has recently taken over the outsourced contract at University of London from Balfour Beatty Workplace.

Two University of London cleaners are facing possible victimisation for their involvement in the 27-29 January strikes to win equal sick pay, holidays, and pensions (part of the ongoing "3 Cosas" campaign).

In a letter signed by "cleaning services manager" Sharon Bracey (who is, somewhat obscenely, also a rep for Unison, a union with very few members amongst University of London cleaners but which retains official recognition with management), the workers are summoned to a

meeting to discuss their involvement in the strike at a time when they had allegedly booked on to work.

Although the letter says the "fact-finding meeting" is not a disciplinary, it states that it is "part of the company's disciplinary process". ("The company" refers to Cofely-GDF Suez, the company which recently took over the contract for outsourced cleaning services from Balfour Beatty Workplace.)

The workers' union, the IWGB, has said it will not tolerate any victimisation of its members for their involvement in the strike.

- The 3 Cosas Campaign and National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts are co-organising a speaker tour to build support.
- More: daniel.cooper@ulu.lon.ac.uk