



Workers of all lands, unite!  
Communist Party  
January 2024

# Unity!



**DEFY THE TORY ANTI UNION LAWS**

# JUST SAY NO

**Nick Wright**  
**STRIKES**

**T**HE YEAR 2024 kicks off with the prospect of a bare knuckle fight between the trade union movement and the Tory government.

The Tory's new Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act is an outright attack on workers' right to strike.

The ability of workers' to withdraw their labour is a basic human right fought for by workers since the Tolpuddle martyrs Dorset farm labourers who were transported to Australia for forming a union. It is long established in international law and enshrined in international treaties to which the United Kingdom is bound.

From the moment this new law was conceived by the government ministers have claimed that compelling public and essential service workers to meet minimum service levels is permitted by international law.

But international law allows them only in exceptional circumstances and subject to tightly regulated conditions.

Shaken by the widespread strikes of the last two years and by the massive public support for trade unions the Tories are desperate to shift public opinion against workers delivering public and essential services.

When workers vote to take strike action in sectors ranging from

education, health, public transport, fire and rescue services, nuclear de commissioning and border security they will be forced – by order of a so-called 'work notice' or risk sacking if they don't obey.

On top of this their union – if it doesn't comply then faces a crippling maximum £1 million fine.

In the face of this provocation Britain's unions have pledged to organise resistance and take action to make the law inoperable.

Welcoming the results of December's special TUC conference the Communist Party says the decisions taken mark a step forward for the labour movement which can be a platform for mass campaigns against both the anti-union laws and austerity.

Ben Chacko told the party's political committee that union commitments not to tell members to comply with work notices amounts to direct defiance of the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, and he welcomed the pledge to organise an emergency demonstration whenever a union or union member is first sanctioned or disciplined under the repressive law.

He called for campaigns to be built around the country to wrest commitments from employers never to issue a work notice — a provision of the new law which mandates named individuals to break strikes. Ben Chacko said local trades union

councils could take the lead in identifying relevant employers and co-ordinating campaigns.

And he backed calls at the TUC congress for a campaign for maximum, not minimum services — one which demands proper restorative funding for essential services including education, health and transport.

Such a campaign could help to counter Labour support for continuing Tory austerity by putting pressure on candidates at local level to sign up to union demands.

In the end it is workplace strength that determines whether workers can effectively defy the new law, meaning the development of an equivalent to the national shop stewards' movement of the 1970s — a task which now as then would depend on work by the most militant trade unionists including Communist Party members.

NICK WRIGHT IS EDITOR OF UNITY!

## Five dockers freed

Fifty odd years ago nationwide strike action freed five dockers imprisoned under the Tories anti union laws. Banged up in London's Pentonville prison the imprisoned workers freed when a hitherto unknown legal flunkey, the Official Solicitor, pitched up with a piece of paper that unlocked the prison gates. But the power that freed them was the working class acting for their own.



**CEASEFIRE NOW**  
**STOP THE WAR ON GAZA**

**NATIONAL MARCH FOR**  
**PALESTINE**

**Saturday 13 January**  
**12 noon, Central London**

**I**SRAEL HAS STEPPED up is bombardment of Palestinians in the Gaza strip in the face of world wide condemnation The brief seven day truce gave way to renewed bombing with Palestinians concentrated in the southern part of Gaza while the Israel steps up the forcible removal of Palestinians.

The end of the truce marks another dangerous escalation in their campaign of collective punishment against the Palestinian people. The displacement of over nearly two million citizens of Gaza (including one million in UNRWA shelters) alongside a rising death toll of more than 20,000 Palestinians, represents systemic ethnic cleansing by the Israeli Government.

While people across the world demanded an immediate ceasefire, the US stood alone at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in vetoing that course of action. The British Government, in abstaining at the UNSC, stands complicit with Israeli genocide. Not only diplomatically, but in permitting the large scale provision of military equipment to the Israeli military by way of export licences and financing by British banks.

Despite hypocritical words from the US the failure of a second UN resolution to call for a ceasefire is, in effect and veto by the main imperial powers gives the green light to the Israelis.

The important peace initiative by China has gone largely unreported in the Western media. The five point plan presented to a high level UN Security Council meeting on 29 November provided an immediate route to peace and to avoiding an escalation of military conflict in the Middle East region. The Chinese plan proposes an immediate ceasefire, protection of civilians, humanitarian assistance, enhanced diplomatic mediation and a political settlement based on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state – a prerequisite of a two state solution.

Continued overleaf

**INSIDE: ★ Arab Communists on Palestine ★ Look back at the Pentonville Five ★ Events ★ 2024 A year of struggle**



# NEWS & VIEWS

'A newspaper is not only a collective propagandist and collective agitator, but also a collective organiser. In this respect it can be compared to the scaffolding erected around a building in construction, which marks the contours of the structure, facilitates communication between the builders and permits them to distribute the work and to view the common results achieved by their organised labour' **VI Lenin** *The Press as a Collective Organiser*. 1923

## CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS RISE



SCOTLAND REPORTER  
STORM GERRIT

SCOTTISH COMMUNISTS have called for financial relief for communities and individuals affected by flooding.

Calling for investment in flood defences and the Environment Agency and a new comprehensive flood prevention plan for England and the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales the party said the establishment of a publicly owned scheme to provide flood insurance and new legislation to force private insurance companies to provide cover at a fixed, low cost were essential.

The party's Scottish secretary Tom Morrison said: "The damaging effects of

storms of this kind have been exacerbated by over a decade of Tory mismanagement and austerity and private ownership of the transport network. We have seen severe cuts to and underfunding of all public services, including on the Environment Agency and flood defences."

The party linked the latest flooding with climate change arguing that capitalism and Britain's ruling class have proven themselves unable and unwilling to address the unfolding climate catastrophe or its damaging effects.

These trends represent a real threat to the lives and wellbeing of working people across Britain.

Real efforts and a plan to tackle the causes of climate change and a green industrial revolution.

## 'GENOCIDAL' WAR COULD ESCALATE, COMMUNISTS WARN

UNITY NEWS TEAM  
GAZA

BRITAIN'S Communist Party has expressed its grave concern that Israel's 'inhumane, genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza' could escalate to a wider regional conflict.

This follows the formation of a new US-led military alliance – Operation Prosperity Guardian – in the Red Sea targeting the Yemeni Houthi movement, Israeli attacks on Lebanon and Syria, and the Israeli-US drive to war against Iran.

Communist Party international secretary Kevan Nelson told the party's Political Committee at the last weekend in December that these developments 'pose a serious threat to world peace'.

'The global wave of solidarity with the Palestinian people is an essential antidote to the threat of a wider war', he told the online meeting. In particular, he welcomed the South African government's application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to

find the state of Israel in breach of its obligations under the 1948 Genocide Convention by reason of its military onslaught against the Palestinian people.

For two decades, Israeli governments collaborated closely with the South African apartheid regime until shortly before the latter's downfall.

Kevan Nelson also contrasted the readiness of the British and US governments to condemn Russian attacks on Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure to their silence on Israeli war crimes in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Britain's Communists condemned the forced displacement of two million Gazan citizens under threat of Israeli bombardment as a strategy of 'ethnic cleansing' and urged government and 'people's' sanctions against British trade with Israel. The Communist Party political committee also congratulated Palestine Action campaigners against arms exports to Israel, including the jurors who recently acquitted activists accused of targeting Elbit Systems

## SAVE TRAIN BUILDING

Communist Party members are right in the thick of the fight for jobs and the whole train building industry as Alstom in Derby plans to asset strip, and slash 1300 jobs, which puts 15000 more jobs in the supply chain at risk.

Bill Greenshields said: "Its all part of the chaotic and crisis ridden world of monopoly capital, in which companies eat each other and spit out the gristly bits: in the process billions are made by those who come out on top, and those who fail are often bailed out to exploit another day. The losers are always the working class.

It's clear – production for a planned industrial strategy to meet the needs of the people – not the scramble for monopoly to meet the demands of capitalism.

The demand must be Protect our Jobs and Industry – take Alstom into public ownership for the people.

The local Derby People's Assembly group has launched a petition (details below) with the support of RMT - and now its backed by GMB and UNITE too, as well as Midlands TUC.

Its already had a very positive effect locally encouraging at least much stronger rhetoric and lobbying of government. But we have a very long way to go to build the sort of mass response we saw in Derby in 2011 when 10,000 people marched to defeat the plan to sack 1400 workers and give government contracts to Siemens in Germany instead of Bombardier (now owned by Alstom) in Derby. You can read the Bill Greenshield's full account at <http://tinyurl.com/y7xtv46c> And don't forget to sign the petition – this is not just a local issue – it would spell the end of train manufacture in Britain .



## JOIN THE RED BLOCK

It has become clear that that both Netanayu and the official Israeli opposition – despite a formal commitment by Western powers to a two state solution with an end to the occupation and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state – are determined to resist Palestinian self determination.

The Communist Party has called for a full mobilisation for the national Demonstration for Palestine organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and Stop The War in London for 13 January 2024. Transport details at <http://tinyurl.com/yje5twup>

See page 8 for the statement of Arab Communist parties.

## MAKE USE OF UNITY! IN 2024

Communist Party communications director Johnnie Hunter writes: *Unity!* is a useful tool in promoting communist politics to a wider audience. Produced at present around a monthly timetable its fits neatly into the Labour movement's calendar.

Special print issues – sometimes as a supplement in the *Morning Star* – are brought out for International Womens Day, May Day, big demonstrations, events like Tolpuddle, the TUC, the Scottish TUC and wales TUC and important union conferences.

At the same time it is available as a download pdf and in a digital version. Both these can be easily e mailed to your trusted friends and comrades and this is the way in which our message can reach an even bigger audience.

Party organisations should think about drawing up a circulation list and distributing *Unity!* on a regular basis.



## Now is the time to join the Communist Party.

The crisis of capitalism, the lingering crisis of health resulting from the mismanagement of the pandemic in which thousands of citizens died and the threat of war – all mean, it isn't business as usual.

Capitalist crisis means a frontal assault by the

ruling class on everything we hold dear and we have to fight like never before to block that offensive.

The Communist Party is a united party, growing throughout England, Scotland and Wales especially amongst young workers and union and women's movement activists.

If you want to join us, go here <https://members.comunistparty.org.uk/join-now>



# 2024 A YEAR OF STRUGGLE

'I want every morning to be a new year's day for me. Every day I want to reckon with myself, and every day I want to renew myself. No day set aside for rest. I choose my pauses myself, when I feel drunk with the intensity of life and I want to plunge into animality to draw from it new vigour. No spiritual time-serving. I would like every hour of my life to be new.'

**Antonio Gramsci** first published in *Avanti!*, Turin edition, from his column "Sotto la Mole," January 1, 1916.

## ROB GRIFFITHS NEW YEAR MESSAGE

### Freedom for the Palestinian people

Israel's war on the people of Gaza casts a long shadow over the dawn of a new year. From the outset, the Communist Party condemned the bombardment of Palestinian towns and villages, which soon turned into the wholesale mass slaughter of Palestinian civilians.

We also condemned the attack on Israeli civilians by Hamas which gave the Netanyahu government its excuse for the massacres in Gaza which followed. Of course, these events have happened in a much longer historical context, which is why the Communist Party - in step with our comrades in the Palestine, Israel and the Middle East - emphasises the demand not only for an unconditional ceasefire but also for the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state on pre-1967 borders, the liberation of all political prisoners and the right of return to their original homeland for all Palestinians.

The genocidal agenda of the Netanyahu regime is to destroy the basis for any such Palestinian state and to impose a single-state 'solution': a Greater Israel.

All Communist Party of Britain members and friends are urged to do everything they can to support the work of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Palestine Action and Medical Aid for Palestinians. In particular, we must intensify the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against economic, cultural and military links with Israel, putting the maximum pressure on the British, Scottish and Welsh governments and the Labour Party leadership. Go all out for the Palestine solidarity protests on January 6 and 13!

### The Holocaust: never forget!

Holocaust Memorial Day on January 28 should serve as a reminder to us all of where racism can lead when unchecked. As always, the main focus will be on the extermination of more than six million Jews at the hands of the Nazis and their helpers.

Although the other victims of genocidal mass murder should not be forgotten, the genocidal destruction of many of Europe's Jewish communities remains a crime unique in world history, in scale and method. Moreover, it was fuelled by old murderous myths and hatreds that persist to this day.

That is why the Communist Party can never tolerate antisemitism in any form. Our members must be on guard against the use of anti-Jewish formulations and images and challenge them wherever they arise.

This uncompromising approach strengthens the fight against racism, the far right and fascists. It also blunts the unscrupulous use of bogus charges of antisemitism to discredit the left - including the Communist Party - and the movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people (which includes many Jewish people in Israel, Britain and around the world).



### Learn from Lenin

The great revolutionary Vladimir Lenin died on January 21, 1924. Communists and socialists should use this Centenary Year to study and discuss his life and ideas. Leninist theory and practice has still much to teach us, as applied in a Marxist way to present-day conditions. In particular, Lenin's analysis of imperialism, the state, alliances, socialist revolution, the national question and the revolutionary party has much that is fresh and relevant for today.

For its part, the Communist Party of Britain and its newly-elected Executive Committee will be considering how to mark this centenary and strengthen the Leninist character of our growing party.

### Strike down the anti union laws

The Tory government's anti-strike Minimum Service Levels legislation is now in place. In order to frustrate this new law, Communists and all workers should draw inspiration not only from the recent and continuing strike wave, but also from the lessons of history.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, united mass defiance of anti-union laws defeated the Industrial Relations Act and freed dockers' leaders from Pentonville dockers. Key to that victory was Broad Left and Communist leadership in the trade union movement. Such leadership has to be built and earned again today, on the basis of fighting unity across and at every level of the unions.

Wherever they can be active in their union and local trades council, socialists and Communists must play their part in making the new Tory law unworkable through mass defiance and unity

The new edition of our pamphlet *The Fight of Our Lives* draws lessons from the current strike wave and puts the case clearly for greater militancy, unity and strengthening broad left alliances within and across unions.

An immediate priority is to mobilise for the 'Defend the Right to Strike' TUC demonstration in Cheltenham on January 27 and to intensify the struggle to commit an incoming Labour government to the repeal of all anti-strike, anti-union and anti-worker legislation.

### Mid-March Mobilisations

The middle weekends of March promise to be a busy time for Communists. On Saturday, March 9, together with comrades domiciled here from Iran, Iraq, India, Cyprus, Sudan and elsewhere, our party will be celebrating International Women's Day with a major event in London.

The following Saturday will see major mobilisations to mark International Anti-Racism Day, while on Sunday the CP executive will decamp from its weekend meeting at Ruskin House to join the Marx Oration at Highgate Cemetery, hosted jointly with the Marx Memorial Library. Let's make this the biggest commemoration yet!

### 75 not out ...

Mao Zedong proclaimed the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949. The Communist Party of Britain, our friends and allies will be organising events to celebrate the historic and contemporary achievements of the Chinese people and their ruling party. Watch this space ...

### Fly the Red Banner!

Local elections will be taking place in many communities across England on May 9. There is also the possibility that the General Election that must be held before the end of January 2025 will be held on that same day.

Communists will not be standing aside in either set of elections. Party organisations at local, district and national level are urged to consider urgently where they can field candidates who will fly the red banner of socialism and communism!

Last November, our party's 58th Congress decided that a Labour victory in the General Election would be preferable to the continuation of this racist, neoliberal, war-mongering Conservative regime. However, we also understand that, in itself, a Labour win guarantees nothing unless we continue to build a militant mass movement.

We will not be calling and campaigning for a Labour vote everywhere. Our Executive Committee may conclude that other left candidates should be supported instead. But most of all, we want to see more Communists standing, especially where the Labour alternative supports Starmer's purge of the left, privatisation, austerity, nuclear weapons and Israeli war crimes.

On every front, Communists and the left must come to the fore as champions of the working class, social progress, democratic rights, anti-racism, peace and a sustainable future for humanity!

### For Communist advance in 2024

ROBERT GRIFFITHS IS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

Lenin Poster by Robert Streader

## Groucho



PERHAPS, if you live near a university, you may have seen lamp post stickers asking whether you are a communist. No identifying logo and no name or address is apparent but for the incurably curious possessed of a smart phone a QR code takes you to the confusing world of schismatic trotskyism.

Socialist Appeal is one of the surviving fragments of the Revolutionary Socialist Group aka Militant which itself was one of the surviving fragments of the post war Revolutionary Communist Party, which was one of the surviving fragments of the pre-war Workers International League which had refused to merge with other fragments to form a single affiliate of Leon Trotsky's very own Fourth International before this body itself disintegrated in a series of splits, schisms, expulsions and further divisions.

According to one account the supranational Fourth International (original version) offered its franchise to the WIL because the RCP had fragmented into a series of warring factions.

If you think I have any of this wrong please do not tell me.

The feature of the main post war iteration of this lot - the aforementioned RSL aka the Militant Group - was its deep entry into the Labour Party on the pattern decreed in 1933 by Trotsky.

In its original pre-war version this followed a doomed bid to form a trotskyite faction inside the Balham Communist Party branch in South London - thwarted by the diminutivise but redoubtable Kay Beauchamp - who purged the lot of them.

In the post war repeat performance Militant sat out the Cold war in its social democratic bunker and achieved some success under a less vigilant internal Labour regime. Eventually it was driven out whereupon it repudiated its earlier 'principled' approach and declared itself the Socialist Party before splitting into three fragments over allegations of political degeneration.

Socialist Appeal today is that rump who remained loyal to Trotsky's injunction and deep enough to survive neither bothered or even much noticed by the Labour apparatus. Until, eventually, they were.

Reading the signs, surviving veteran leader Alan Woods - the most intelligent and theoretically proficient of trotskyist leaders - spotted that his ageing band of deep entryists would soon die out and turned to the student milieu as the one place where recruits might be found.

A radical rebranding exercise, carried out with a chutzpah unparalleled by the most brazen of internet hucksters has his outfit claiming now to be not just communists but the communists.

The New Year will see a relaunch of his student clean skins as a reincarnated 'Revolutionary' Communist Party with the *Socialist Appeal* newspaper renamed *The Communist* and a knock off hammer and sickle logo cleansed of its disreputable 4th International connotations.

The problem this project faces lies in the inquisitive nature of youth who when attracted by the revolutionary character of living communist politics find instead they are dealing with a political tradition that has traded on anti-communism and hostility to actual existing socialism for decades.

In as far as this outfit finds its way to some creative initiatives - and Socialist Appeal is far from being the most sectarian of its kind - the contrast with the schismatic sterility and implausibility of the trotskyist tradition in Britain will inevitably lead, as history shows us, to ideological confusion, tactical disagreement, strategic impasse, organisational confusion and disunity. At present the leadership is keeping shtum about materialism in sexual politics for fear this will open up irreconcilable divisions.



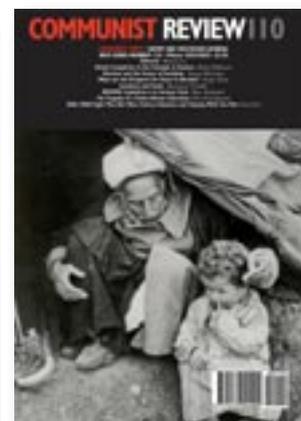
# POLITICS & ACTION

“What distinguishes bourgeois society from other class societies – from ancient society and from the social order of the Middle Ages? Precisely the fact that class domination does not rest on “acquired rights” but on real economic relations – the fact that wage labour is not a juridical relation, but purely an economic relation.”  
**Rosa Luxemburg** *Conquest of political power*

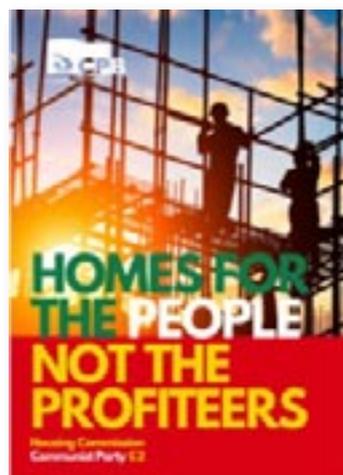
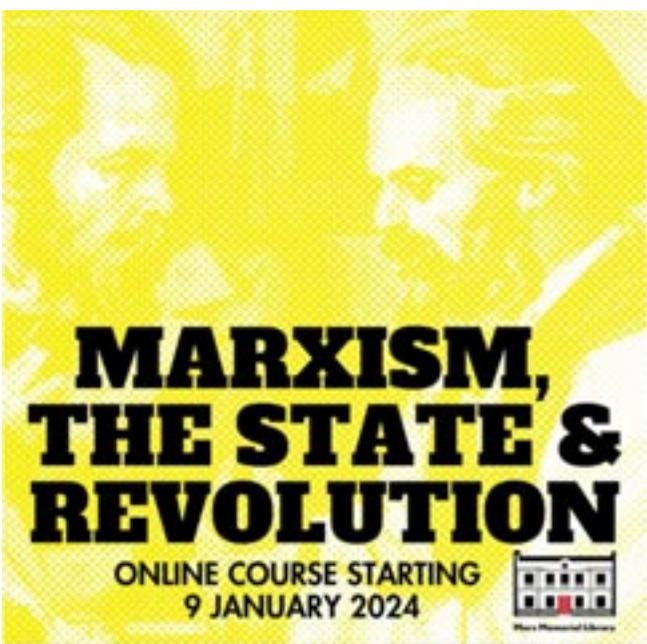


## Manifesto Press Spring 2024 programme

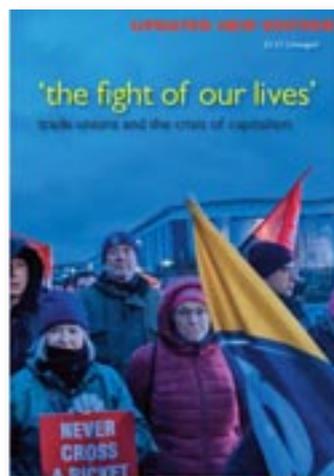
At the printers in January is *Class against Class* by Mike Squires, dealing with the critical period when the Communist Party was ‘bolshesivised’, built its workplace organisations and launched the *Daily Worker*.  
 Out for the TUC demonstration on 27 January is a reprint of Hugh Lanning and Richard Norton Taylor’s *The GCHQ Story* with new material  
 In advanced stages of preparation are the reminiscences of veteran *Morning Star* industrial reporter Roy Jones, the first volume of Andrew Murray’s three volume survey of Communist Party history *Empire and the Communist Party* and Jenny Clegg’s new book on China’s development.  
 Coming soon: Selected writings on marxism, art and revolution by Hans Hess  
**keep up to date at [www.manifestopress.coop](http://www.manifestopress.coop)**



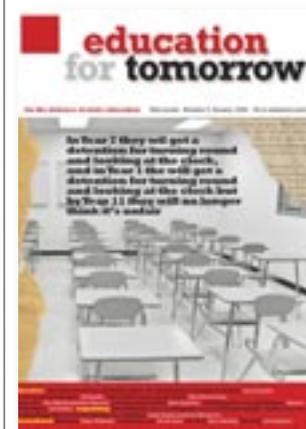
**Theory and discussion journal of the Communist Party Winter 2023/2024**  
 Editorial *Martin Levy*  
**British Complicity in the Triumph of Zionism** *Robert Wilkinson*  
**Marxism and the Future of Socialism** *Eugene McCartan*  
**What are the Prospects for Peace in Ukraine?** *Gregor Tassie*  
**Socialism and Youth** *MarxLenin P Valdés*  
**REVIEWS Capitalism is in Serious Crisis** *Marc Vandepitte*  
**The Tragedy of a Stolen African Liberation** *John Graversgaard*  
**SOUL FOOD Fight War, Not Wars: Poetry, Palestine and ‘Staying With’ the War** *Fran Lock*  
[www.communistparty.org.uk](http://www.communistparty.org.uk)



▲ **Homes for the people not profiteers**  
 Every human being wants, and needs, a roof over their head. We all want a place of safety, for ourselves and our loved ones. A good quality, affordable home is a basic human right – and one which is denied to millions of our fellow citizens.



▲ **An updated edition of the fight of our lives is now available in digital and print**  
 Author of the best-selling Manifesto Press book *Our Trade Unions* Nigel Flanagan says this pamphlet is clarity – in itself a massive achievement. It is recommended for all working class and trade union activists.  
[www.manifestopress.coop](http://www.manifestopress.coop)



**education for tomorrow**  
 for the defence of state education  
 New series Number 5 Autumn 2023

**Young Communist League WOMEN’S CONFERENCE**  
 Ruskin House 23 Coombe Road CR01BD  
 Saturday 9 March 2024

**National Assembly of Women**  
**Combatting the stereotype**  
**Weekend seminar for women**  
 1pm Saturday 27 to 1pm Sunday 28 January  
**NASWT Centre Birmingham**

Gail Cartmail, former Executive Head of Operation at UNITE;  
 Joanne Moorcroft, Unison NW Regional Convenor;  
 Lynn Collis, Director Royal College of Midwives;  
 Jane McGuire, bus driver & Shop Steward at Abellio London;  
 Hannah David, PCS & Chair of SW Region TUC;  
 Cecile Wright, TUC Joint Consultative Committee;  
 Alison Spencer-Scragg, UNITE National Officer for Equalities;  
 Annette Mansell-Green, Director of TU & Public Affairs British Dietetic Association.

The much subsidised all-in cost for the weekend (ensuite rooms, meals etc) is £60. Non residential attendees is £15 Saturday (includes lunch but not dinner) and £8 Sunday.  
 The NAW is subsidising this event from the Val Duncan Memorial Fund Places confirmed on receipt of payment. Cheques to NAW, 13 Wren Gardens, Hornchurch RM12 4DT. Bank transfer to NAW 60 83 01 20364894  
 Please email [megan@gn.apc.org](mailto:megan@gn.apc.org) to confirm payment.



▲ **Eye witness: China, Cuba and Venezuela**  
 A new Communist Party pamphlet launched at Congress featuring a compilation of our General Secretary Robert Griffiths’ articles on the revolutions in China, Cuba and Venezuela is now available on the Party shop  
<https://shop.communistparty.org.uk>



▲ **The Resurgence of Class Politics**  
 A new Party pamphlet launched at the Communist Party Congress featuring a compilation of articles and speeches on the political situation in Britain by general secretary Robert Griffiths’ articles is now available on the Party website

- Boarding school boys and British politics: the nationalisation of emotional austerity *Lucia Quadrini*
  - The rise of authoritarianism *Phil Beadle*
  - The inclusion room/prison system *Nina Morris-Evans*
  - August 1911 *Tom Shields & Holly Vallender*
  - Teaching about fascism *Steve Handford*
  - Teaching in the real world *Cartoon Wallman*
  - SEA Manifesto *Ian Duckett*
  - Daniel Kebede interviewed *Ben Chacko*
  - Union Lefts Workers summit
  - extract from *Troublemaking: why you should organise your workplace* *Lydia Hughes and Jamie Woodcock*
  - Nicaragua *Roger McKenzie*
  - London Recruits *Steve Marsling*
  - Palestine *Julia Simpkins*
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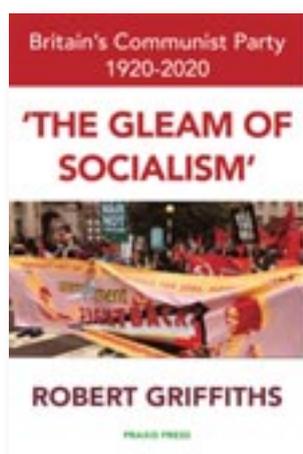
# TRUTH & LIES

“Nowadays, anyone who wishes to combat lies and ignorance and to write the truth must overcome at least five difficulties. He must have the courage to write the truth when truth is everywhere opposed; the keenness to recognize it, although it is everywhere concealed; the skill to manipulate it as a weapon; the judgment to select those in whose hands it will be effective; and the running to spread the truth among such persons.” **Bertolt Brecht** *Galileo*



## WHEN WORKERS DEFIED THE LAW AND BEAT THE GOVERNMENT

Nick Wright reviews Rob Griffiths' latest book



THE PRESENT revival of the Communist Party is a reflection of changes that are taking place in the minds of millions of workers as the decades of austerity and imperial war combined with climate catastrophe effect profound changes in politics and thought.

Where Bertolt Brecht wrote of a worker who reads Rob Griffiths is a worker who writes and this latest compilation – some of published earlier at the centenary of the Communist Party's foundation – will become essential reading for the new generation of young communists and a valuable refresher course for the veterans.

Rob Griffiths approaches his subject with a partisan spirit and from his standpoint as general secretary of the re-established

July 1972

THE PENTONVILLE FIVE were five dockers who were jailed for refusing to obey a court order to stop picketing the Chobham Farm container depot in Newham, East London during a strike at the site.

The government, confronted by an increasingly mobilised working class and in a losing fight with the miners were getting jumpy.

Acting for the employers the newly-minted National Industrial Relations Court issued an injunction banning further picketing.

The workers ignored it but pursued by company spies five dockers – Conny Clancy, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Vic Turner and Derek Watkins were arrested and imprisoned.

Immediately thousands of dockers went on strike. Fleet Street printers on national newspapers joined them. Building workers responded immediately to a call from their unofficial shop stewards committee, bus drivers, railway workers and miners stopped work and were joined by thousands more.

With a quarter of a million workers on strike and as walk outs spread the government began to panic.

A massive demonstration made up of thousands of striking workers converged on Pentonville Prison filling the surrounding streets.

When, under pressure from this mounting mass movement, the TUC decided to call a

Communist Party is able to draw on an extensive body of writing.

His insights are made especially valuable by his role in the battle to reassert basic marxist leninist principles both within the CPGB and in the changes wrought in the successor Communist Party of Britain.

Particularly refreshing is his demolition job on the swarm of anticommunist academics and turncoat party members who infest the genre.

His speciality – born of deep engagement, a sharp eye for detail and an encyclopaedic knowledge of the history, particularly of the Welsh working class movement – is in the correction of errors of omission and commission that disfigure so much of contemporary post communist studies.

The book includes valuable studies of outstanding communists: car workers leader 'Red Robbo', Welsh national poet TE Nicholas, miners leader Dai Dan Evans, Rhondda mayor Annie Powell, the late Morning Star editor John Haylett and pioneer nurses union leader Thora Silverthorne.

A fascinating picture of the life of Dora Cox is drawn from the Special Branch records of her trade union, solidarity and anti war work that encompassed most of the twentieth century.

It is in defence of the CPGB's leading ideologist Palme Dutt against the conclusions of his hostile biographer John Callaghan and in criticising the same author's tendentious

general srike unless the men were freed – the first since 1926 – Edward Heath's Tory government made a calculation that the dangers of allowing thgis movement to develop were too great and found a pretext to free the men.

An obscure functionary, the Official Solicitor, made an application for the imprisonment to be set aside on the grounds that the National Industrial Relations Court had insufficient grounds to deprive the men of their liberty and that the evidence of the private investigators was insufficient.

The five were carried from the prison gates on the shoulders of the strikers.

Bernie Steer told the crowd: "The five of us were put in by a political court, and it was the trade union movement that got us out.

"We're so overwhelmed with the support we've got from you, because without you we'd have rotted in there and make no mistake about it."

### Spooks

An insight into the role of the state security apparatus in this dispute emerges from the late Graham Stevenson's valuable archive. He wrote: *A measure of how sensitive were docks strikes is shown by the revelations that came when cabinet papers covering 1970 were released under the 30-year rule at the start of 2001. It seems that, throughout one dispute, Prime Minister Heath had been getting regular reports from MI5, based on information from agents, phone tapping and bugging. It included accounts of private meetings between leading*

and misleading history of the CPGB in the 1951-1968 period that Griffith's pen is at its sharpest.

The core issue is Callaghan's failure to understand the basis of reformism in imperialist super exploitation and Palme Dutt's unremitting focus on this factor as the material basis for class collaboration.

If the history of the Communist Party is bound up with the working class response to capitalist crisis it can only be understood in relation to the various crises of the international communist movement.

At the centre of each of these; 1956, 1968 and the late twentieth century destruction of European and Soviet socialism lies the question of power, who holds it and in whose interest.

In a sense these disputes were settled when the surrender of power by the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party led inevitably to the establishment of a particularly vicious capitalist regime and the complete dissolution of socialist relations of production both in the Soviet Union and in socialist Europe.

Rob Griffith's account sets inner party struggles throughout the post war period in the context of these international crises but crucially keeps a sharp focus on developments in British capitalism and the labour movement.

There is compelling detail in his account of the internal struggles inside the CPGB which

Communist Party officials and dockers' shop stewards and even internal discussions about the editorial line of the Morning Star.

After (leading London communist) Jack Dash retired from work in 1968, the mantle of leadership of the London docks, which Communists had been holding on and off for half a century, had been passed to Bernie Steer. MI5 knew that this had happened before the ban in Communists holding office in the TGWU had been lifted and it would take the cycle of elections within the union to resolve this from 1970.

We now know that a leading London docker, one Brian Nicolson, had been an MI5 informant MI5 at least as early as this dispute, providing information to the state on the tactical plans of the dockers and the union. Big chunks of the publicly released documentation were blacked out in released MI5 documents, including phrases around the name of Brian Nicholson. He was just one of a number of rank and file leaders – and not an especially significant one, in industrial terms, but his opinions are quoted in detail.

His information, especially his judgement on the role of Communists clearly informed the British State's tactics and strategy when it came to dock strikes. As far as the 1970 dispute went, the judgement of the state's spies, fed to the cabinet, was that introducing the 34,000 troops needed to break the strike would be feasible since the Communist Party had not had time to build an extensive support and solidarity network that might make this a political step too far.

**Our History:** <http://tinyurl.com/mspaa2az>  
**Spooks:** <http://tinyurl.com/ydwy52ux>

entailed expulsions, breakaways, crude administrative methods and pure chicanery. There is a brief and necessarily partial rendering of the processes which resulted in the reassembly of communist forces inside the framework of the Communist Party of Britain.

One of the most refreshing features of the book is the priority Rob Griffiths assigns to the national question and its relationship to the battle for democracy.

It will come as something of a surprise to the present generations of communists in Britain that it was the character and content and even the necessity of a party programme, but specifiably the British Road to Socialism that was the ground over which fierce battles were fought in the last years of the CPGB.

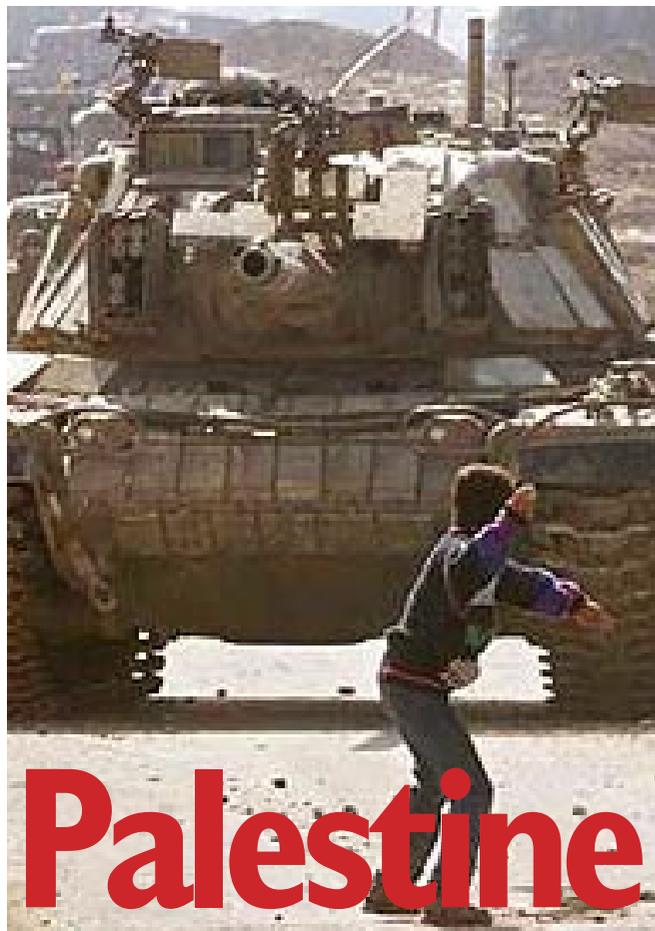
Born out of disunity the Communist Party of Britain – and formed on the basis of the then existing rules and programme of the CPGB – has provided the organisational basis for the reassembly and renewal of communist forces.

In despatching the academic critics of the British communist tradition Rob Griffiths conclusion cannot be contested: "The task of producing an alternative history of the post-war period must now fall to a team of better qualified authors, Party and non-Party. And a subject index, together with a record of Communist Party executive committee members, should accompany the fruits of their labours".



# INTERNATIONAL

'The continuation of the Zionist occupation, and the continuation of its crimes against the Palestinian people, with the support of American imperialism, NATO and the Arab reactionary forces, is the root of the suffering of the Palestinian people.' **Communist parties of the Arab countries.** December 2023



**The communist parties of the Arab countries (the Jordanian Communist Party, the Iraqi Communist Party, the Lebanese Communist Party, the Palestinian People's Party, the Communist Party of Egypt, the unified Syrian Communist Party, the Sudanese Communist Party, the Kuwaiti Progressive Movement, the Party of Progress and Socialism in Morocco, the Bahraini Progressive Tribune) held a meeting on Wednesday 20 December, 2023.**

**T**HE MEETING dealt with the continuation of the bloody and comprehensive Zionist aggression against the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian territories, especially the crimes of genocide in the besieged Gaza Strip, the objectives of this aggression, including plans to displace Palestinians and efforts to liquidate their national cause, and defining the tasks of joint action of these parties in order to continue to address the current serious risks of liquidating the Palestinian cause, the threat to the security and integrity of the region and our Arab peoples, and the great challenges that exist as a result of this.

The meeting of the communist parties in the Arab countries paid high tribute and appreciation to the heroic resistance in all the Occupied Palestinian territories, and to the legendary steadfastness of the Gaza Strip in the face of aggression and the unprecedented war of extermination to which the Palestinian people have been subjected since the seventh of last October, and more than 20 thousand martyrs, most of them children and women, have died so far.

The meeting reaffirmed the legitimate right of the Palestinian people and its national forces to resist the occupation and settler gangs, and to resort to all forms of struggle, including popular and armed resistance, to curb aggression, end the occupation, and take away full national and human rights, foremost of which is the right to liberate its homeland, return, self-determination, and the establishment of an independent national state with Jerusalem as its capital. The meeting also welcomed the mass Arab and international protest movements and activities, the overwhelming popular anger at the aggression and heinous crimes of the Zionist occupation,

and the unprecedented solidarity all over the world with the struggle of the Palestinian people and their legitimate and just human and national rights. The meeting also hailed the role of communist, leftist and progressive forces in these protest and solidarity movements.

After an extensive and in-depth discussion, the communist parties of the Arab countries participating in this meeting unanimously reaffirmed the following:

The state of silence of the international community regarding the Zionist American aggression against the Palestinian people, the genocide and various other war crimes that it has committed and continues to commit, its complete inability to shoulder its responsibilities and take practical and concrete measures to curb this aggression and its practices, which constitute a gross and flagrant violation of all international laws and charters, and its failure to help and rescue Palestinian civilians, has always been and continues to be a factor encouraging America and its ally, the Zionist occupation - the settlement occupation, the substitution and racism - to continue their aggression and their terrible crimes; it was a cover for all of that.

This is in addition to the continuing state of official Arab impotence (and complicity) that prevented the adoption of a unified Arab position, which rises to the level of dealing with the scale of the aggression and the massacres to which the Palestinian people are exposed and the risks to their national cause, and to the security and sovereignty of the Arab states, even to the extent of providing adequate humanitarian aid to the victims of the aggression in the Gaza Strip and ensuring its delivery to them.

In this context, the meeting expressed its condemnation of some political regimes' identification with the forces of Zionist-American aggression and cooperation with their military allies in the region. The continuation of the Zionist occupation, and the continuation of its crimes against the Palestinian people, with the support of American imperialism, NATO and the Arab reactionary forces, is the root of the suffering of the Palestinian people and the peoples of the region and their problems, and the source of insecurity and stability in them. As a result, conflicts continue, people are deprived of living in peace, and they will remain in danger of falling into a spiral of all-out war.

The international community (represented by the UN Security Council, the United Nations and its organizations and agencies) must bear its actual responsibilities in a concrete way to oblige the Zionist occupation to adhere to international laws and conventions, foremost among which is the "Fourth Geneva Conventions for the Protection of Civilians in the Occupied Territories and in Times of War and Armed Conflict," as well as guaranteeing the rights of the Palestinian people.

Also, some of our historical Friends countries are called upon to make more effective use of their regional and international standing to intervene and exert maximum international pressure to curb the practices of

the Zionist occupation and to support the legitimate national and human rights of the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, the meeting of the communist parties of the Arab countries calls on the UN Security Council, all UN bodies and international organizations, as well as all countries that are friends of our peoples and supporters of international peace and security, to intervene urgently and to start using their regional and international standing and all their capabilities, to speed up action and pressure to curb the Zionist-fascist aggression against the Palestinian people, a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire, the complete lifting of the blockade of the Gaza Strip and to ensure the arrival of supplies, needs and relief assistance to it. It is also necessary to put an end to the terrorist and racist practices of the Zionist occupation against the Palestinian people, its expansionist ambitions and its constant threats to the security, capabilities and national sovereignty of the peoples and states of the Arab region, including the repeated military assaults on Syria and Lebanon.

The meeting also addresses to the general public of communist and leftist parties, progressive and Democratic Forces, the Peoples, solidarity movements, supporters of national liberation, and all believers in the values of freedom and justice and free people all over the world, calling for the need to continue to take to the streets and squares, expand and escalate protest movements through all possible means, to put pressure on the governments of their countries and the international community, and to organize Popular Mobilization for the struggle against occupation and Zionist aggression.

Henceforth, the communist parties of the Arab countries participating in the meeting stressed the urgent tasks of their joint work and struggle, in accordance with the following current priorities:

**First:** to work on expanding and intensifying the political and militant movement, officially and popularly, by all possible means and forms, to put pressure on all levels - in the region and every country of the world in order to speed up:

A) confronting and curbing the Zionist - American war aggression against the Palestinian people and the campaign of genocide to which it is subjected and thwarting its goals, and obliging the Zionist occupation to a permanent and comprehensive cease-fire.

B) breaking the blockade imposed on the Palestinian people, foremost of which is the Gaza Strip, and securing the entry of all humanitarian supplies, assistance and basic needs for the Strip and all its institutions, and for the general besieged Palestinians.

C) move globally to expose the crimes of the Zionist occupation, which rise to the level of war crimes and crimes against humanity, end its impunity, demand the International Criminal Court to open an immediate investigation into these crimes, and prosecute and prosecute the leaders of the Zionist occupation and the leaders of the countries supporting its crimes.

**Second:** to provide all kinds of concrete support to the Palestinian people and their valiant resistance, politically, morally, materially, media, culturally and other possible types of support, and to strengthen the Palestinian national narrative in the face of the Zionist narrative and the disinformation machine of the American - Zionist - Western alliance all over the world... Etc. In addition to penetrating the political circles misleading or ambiguous positions, especially in Western Europe and America.

**Third:** to expand and escalate all forms of official, popular and institutional solidarity with the Palestinian people in each of the Arab countries, at the regional and world levels, and to constantly strive to put the Palestinian cause and the achievement of the national and human rights of the Palestinian people at the top of the agenda of coordination meetings of communist, leftist and progressive parties at all levels in the world.

**Fourth:** to exert every possible effort to press tirelessly to support the achievement and strengthening of Palestinian national unity, based on the unity of the Palestinian people, their steadfastness and resistance to the occupation, and the commitment to defend their national and Human Rights in full.

**Fifth:** affirming the right of the Palestinian people to resist, liberate their homeland, and obtain all their national rights, foremost of which are: their right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent, Fully sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and the return of all Palestinian refugees in accordance with UN Resolution 194 issued in 1948.

**Sixth:** to start organizing various activities and pressing events to expand and strengthen the comprehensive boycott of the Zionist occupation entity and all its products, institutions and media at all levels, withdraw investments from it and impose sanctions on it, as an entity of occupation, settlement and terrorism.

**Seventh:** to Resist Normalization with the Zionist occupation entity, and to demand the cancellation of the humiliating normalization agreements with it, permanently and not only in connection with the issue of aggression and ceasefire.

**Eighth:** the meeting condemns the expansion of the Zionist aggression against Lebanon and Syria and targeting their territories, and affirms their right to liberate the occupied territories in northern and eastern Syria, the Golan Heights, the Shab'a farms and the Kafar Shuba Hills in Lebanon, and condemns the continuation of economic sanctions and the unjust siege on the Syrian people. It also condemns all attempts to displace the Palestinian people to Egypt and Jordan and calls for addressing this dangerous criminal project.

**Ninth:** the meeting stressed the need to follow up on its outputs, put them into practice, continue coordination between its parties, and follow up on urgent work tasks at the level of common priority issues contained in this statement.

**Communist parties in Arab countries**  
20 December, 2023