

# REBEL WORKER

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

Sydney, Australia

Vol.44 No.1 (242) May - June 2026

Paper of the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network 50c

**Iran War sparks Fuel Crisis & Soaring Cost of Living!  
Time to drop the Curtains on EBA “Stripper  
Performances” with Fake Pay Rises! Organise on-the-  
job for a united Transport Workers & Others Direct  
Action Campaign to Achieve the “Real Demands!”**



A billboard in Tehran depicting the Strait of Hormuz with a slogan “Forever in Iran’s hand”

**IRAN WAR P.2; NSW RAILWAY NEWS P.3; SYDNEY BUSES  
NEWS P.5; VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS P.7; BRITAIN TODAY  
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CLASS STRUGGLE, SARAGOSSA BOUND: A CHRONICLE  
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Rebel Worker is the bimonthly Paper of the A.S.N. for the propagation of anarcho-syndicalism in Australia. Unless otherwise stated, signed Articles do not necessarily represent the position of the A.S.N. As a whole. Any contributions, criticisms, letters or Comments are welcome.

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## Trump & Israel War with Iran

The Iranian people have faced horrendous bombing by both the USA and Israel. At least a thousand have died in this carpet bombing by late April, where civilian lives have not been spared. This includes the bombing of a school by US forces, that killed 168 people, 100 of them children. ---- It is not just Iran that is being attacked. Lebanon has been viciously bombed by Israel, with incursions and occupations by Israeli troops, forcing nearly 700,000 to flee. The Israel state seems to have the same game plan as for Gaza-bomb southern Lebanon, Dahieh, and parts of the Beka into uninhabited devastation, and ethnically cleanse it.

During the course of the bombing in, The USA and Israel between them have eradicated many leaders of the reactionary theocratic regime, including Ayatollah Ali Khomeini, the former President Mahmoud

Ahmadinejad, and many leading lights of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard, including its commander, Hossein Salami. We in the ACG shed no tears for the deaths of these hangmen, as over the years they have been responsible for the killing of thousands of Iranians.

**Iran has responded by widespread**



rocket and drone attacks throughout the region and its blockade of the Straits of Hormuz. Iran's close ally, the equally reactionary Hezbollah in Lebanon, has also become involved in the conflict, triggering the Israeli invasion.

All of this follows the mass popular unrest in Iran in December 2025, sparked by the worsening economic situation and crippling price rises, and by increasing disenchantment

**with the mullahs' authoritarian regime.**

**In response the regime slaughtered thousands of people in January, and is continuing its execution of opponents of the regime.**

The attacks on Iran by the USA and Israel have nothing to do with any decision to attempt to liberate the

Iranian masses from the theocratic regime, that was never the intention either of Trump or Netanyahu. Their intention was to destroy or weaken Iran as a regional power. In fact, these attacks has legitimised the regime in part, especially on the global level, and much of the rotting traditional left has been enthusiastic in giving more priority to the murder of Iranians by the Americans and Zionists, than they have to the murder of Iranians by Khomeini and his executioners.

**See page 10**

### ASN APPEAL

**The Anarcho-Syndicalist Network requires suitable cost effective permanent premises. A\$750,000 is urgently sought to buy premises for the proposed Rebel Worker-Anarcho-Syndicalist Network Media Centre.**

**Please make out Cheques to Black Cat Media & send to P.O. Box 92 Broadway 2007 NSW.**

## N.S.W. RAILWAY NEWS

### Iran War & the Cost of Living Crisis

Some of the most important news lately has been the growing fuel crisis associated with the Trump/Israel war on Iran. Apart from sparking a spike in the cost of living it has also contributed to an increase in demand for public transport and the number of commuters. The CPI is up from 3.7% as of the 12 months to March to now 4.6%. According to

Deloitte Access Economics, we are likely to see a further increase to between 6.5% to 7.5% in the coming months, depending on the price of barrels of oil.

The sudden spike in the cost of living highlights again the bankruptcy of enterprise bargaining with the union bosses' and management's "negotiations racket", its fake pay rises and nasties concealed in the EBA document clauses. It also emphasises the importance of establishing grass roots committees on the job across

rail, bus and tram sectors to network and to send delegations to agitate for common action to wage the campaign of direct action which can get the goods! Achieve the "real demands and settle accounts" such as apart from hefty pay rises to cope with the increasing cost of living, putting some sanity into the job! With securing greatly reduced shift lengths such as say 8 hours shifts without loss in pay in the railways. In the lead up to Xmas.

## The Metros Privatisation Conspiracy

The decision of the NSW O'Farrell Govt. in 2012 for the North West Rail Link between Epping to Chatswood to be run as a privatised Metro now Sydney Metro North West with its subsequent extension to the CBD and Sydenham opened in 19/8/2024, must be seen as the thin edge of the push to privatise much of

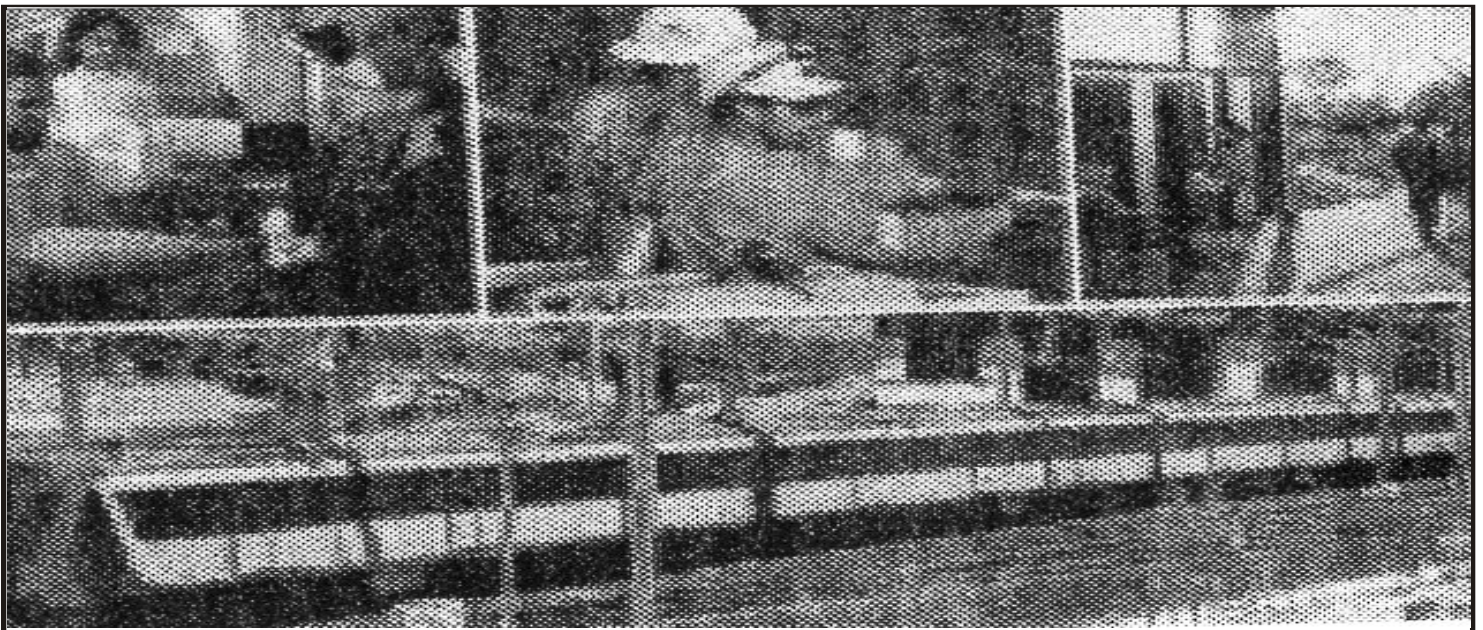
key proponent for railway privatisation, Rod Staples.

### Some points.

(1) As part of the construction of the North West line as a Metro, the 15 km tunnel between Epping and Chatswood was deliberately

older cities in other countries, heavy rail was not extended into these cities CBDs. Unlike in Sydney where heavy rail extended into the CBD.

(3) As part of the selling of the Metro by the O'Farrell Govt. bogus propaganda was spread that heavy rail double decker trains could not provide



the Sydney railway system via Metros. Power driving this push was also former NSW Liberal Premier and Grandfather of Sydney's Tollway System Nick Greiner and former Secretary of Transport for NSW and

modified so as to be 40 centimeters too narrow for City Rail now Sydney Trains rolling stock. It had non standardised dimensions.

(2) Where the single decker Metro style trains were introduced in much

services every 5 minutes which the Metro services can provide. However per google search the Paris Regional Express Network is able to provide heavy rail Double Decker trains frequencies of every 2 minutes during

peaks. It has progressively moved to replace its single decker carriages with double deckers. Other rail operators in various countries have followed this example.

(4) Other bogus propaganda by the Govt. and the North West Link project team in support of the Metro was the claim that single decker Metro trains have the same capacity to carry passengers as double decker trains. However, this calculation is based on 4 passengers per meter and therefore very cramped for the 37 km trips from Chatswood to Epping and then an extra 10km for the trip to the CBD say. However, double decker trains have 100% more seating than single deckers. Therefore more suited for commuter comfort on long rail trips.

(5) Alex Claassens, former RTBU NSW Secretary would have had advance warning of the O'Farrell Govt. decision to have the North West Rail link to be a privatised Metro via his secret weekly meetings with the NSW Transport Minister. Obviously he okayed the plan with the Minister. Just like with the privatisation of State Transit Authority buses in Newcastle and Sydney. The members were kept in the dark on the Metro decision and no industrial campaign was organised to oppose it and the associated Sydney railways privatisation conspiracy. Similar to the skulduggery by the current ALP flunky unelected RTBU NSW Secretary Toby Warnes with his caving into the conversion of the Bankstown line to a Metro.

An obvious hidden agenda of the Privatised Metro is to divide the railway workforce and weaken the effectiveness of industrial campaigns particularly during the "smoke and mirrors" performances of enterprise bargaining. Facilitating strike breaking using the pretext of separate EBA's for different "enterprises". With the EBA industrial campaigns set up to fail particularly using various legalistic pretexts.

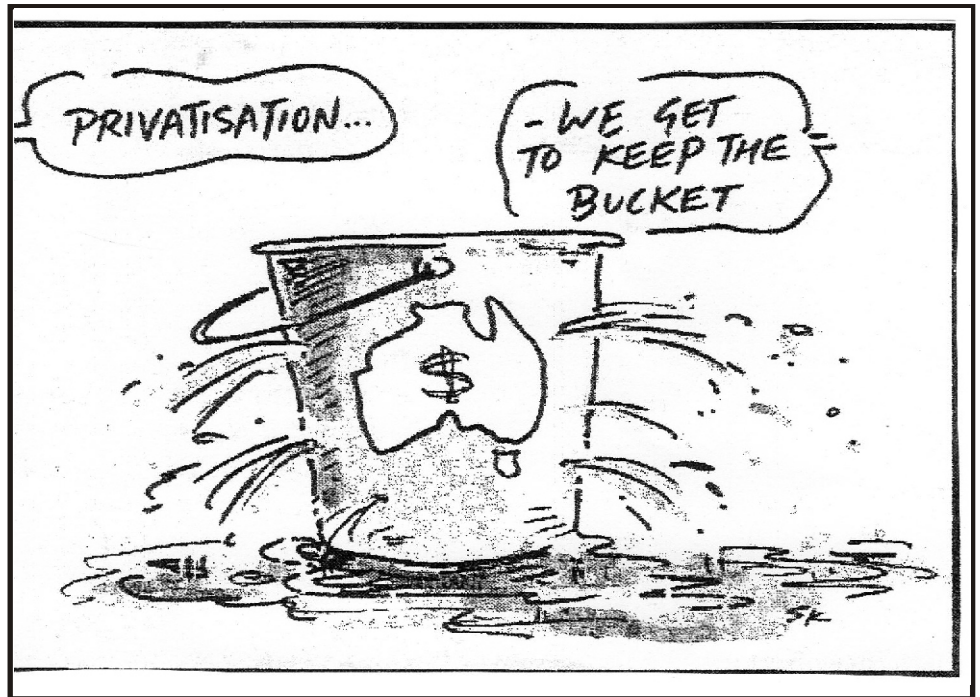
*By Railway Ronny*

*Thanks to Sydney Eco Transit*

## Comment:

It can be said that the Metro is a mixture of old and new thinking. Twenty first century engineering, builds the track corridor, but then we buy new rolling stock from the late nineteenth century design. Then in an effort to break the railway culture (a Liberal Party and ALP view) bolt on automation (driverless) trains

future of Greater Sydney development. Plans that I became aware of in the mid late 1990's was to build a new heavy rail corridor from central to the Northwest (Richmond) via St James, Wynyard, North Sydney, Chatswood, Epping (now built) and from Richmond to St Mary's. A new line south from St Mary's to Leppington via Badgery's



and it will be operated by the private sector, and more unwanted equipment that can malfunction, and to confuse the whole operation, platform doors. The overcrowding, the delays due to computer errors, poorly trained staff, overcrowding at Chatswood. With the solution to move the people crush, before the Metro line extensions to the CBD and then to Sydenham. Does all this sound familiar? Yes, its a lift from that now famous BBC comedy of the 1980's "YES MINISTER" bumbling civil servants and out of touch politicians.

## Metros & The Dumping of Government Heavy Rail Extension Plans

Of course what is more unbelievable is this mess before the extensions has now finally put an end to the plan for a new rail network built for the

Creek with a junction to the south line Glenfield (now complete). This line would continue to the East Hill's line now complete and to Central (using the empty platforms above the Illawarra line) via Sydenham or the Airport Line. A further extension from Leppington to Camden, the section St Mary's Leppington- Camden would also have been built. Beside it a coal line for western coal to be delivered to Port Kembla via the uncompleted Maldon-Donbarton line stopped by the incoming Liberal government in the 1980's. And I almost forgot this plan also showed the proposed completion of the Northern Beaches line from North Liberal Sydney, (Bradfield concept 1920's) but that will not happen as the NSW Governments from 2013 were going to build a road instead.

@afs5609

## NSW Train Crew News

If you wanted to snap at the intercity crew training programme, the trainees have plenty of difficult experiences including rostering regularly scheduling illegal separation between shifts, etc... Then of course late notice changes once

trainees notify them - usually having a Sunday shift cancelled and a day off later in the fortnight substituted. In addition there is a "culture" of trainers spreading their opinions and rumours (yes, like school) about trainees to other trainers who

haven't met them yet. Creating significant prejudice. I can only call that highly unprofessional and damaging.

*By Railway Johnny*

### PROBLEM WITH THE SYDNEY TO MELBOURNE RAIL LINE

8/1/26

Last night I boarded the Sydney night train to Melbourne to check the cool seats there and meet anyone who was around.

About three hours later, around 12:30 am, the train stopped at Goulburn, NSW.

There, an announcement was made

on the train's speaker system to let we passengers know, the heat of the day and night had broken the train line ahead, that no coaches were available and the train had to return to Sydney. Because, otherwise, the train driver could not continue driving as his driving hours are limited for safety reasons.

Long serving train staff said this had

never happened before.

Some 400 travelers got off the train at Central at 4 am where we'd left some hours before.

**I was lucky. I walked home in about ten minutes. Gosh knows what other travelers less lucky did with no place to go.**

Michael Mobbs/Facebook

## SYDNEY BUSES NEWS

### Leichhardt Depot News

**RW:** What are views on the rosters changes issue at the depot?

**Leichhardt Driver:** In regard to the changes to the AM shifts affecting about 10% of the depot workforce reported in your Sept.-Oct. 2025 edition, the changes were just slotted in by management. We were taken by surprise as we weren't given any prior warning. Before the changes, we were already running late with the AM's with some finishing at 4pm, 4.15pm, 4.30pm and 5pm. However with the merging of the Day Shifts into the AM shifts we are much worse off with the later finishing of shifts. After the slotting in of the new rosters, which have only affected Leichhardt and no other depot in Region 6. It was rumoured the reason for the change was that we were moving from the old depot to the new one. However, so far the location of the depot has certainly not changed. So it seems a very flimsy pretext by management.

The previous two statements have

erroneously been a rumour for a while, but I've been informed by a RTBU rep that (1) Leichhardt never had a local agreement, but the other 3 depots did so. (2) As the award allows it, we have to wear it. Unless (3) management would agree to a local agreement, which is unlikely!

**RW:** What are other developments?

**LD:** Management is continuing on its corner cutting rampage. They have abolished WAD (Work As Directed) shifts. So if a trip goes down it can't be immediately covered.

**RW:** What else is management doing?

**LD:** They are currently paying 15 minutes VOT (voluntary overtime) for drivers to be trained on the new BYD Volgren buses. When we were trained on the previous "Ding Ding" buses, Leichhardt got 15 minutes VOT and Kingsgrove got 30 minutes VOT? I am not sure what Kingsgrove are getting this time. Anyway one of our drivers did the training and instead of 15 minutes VOT, they were charged/docked 15 minutes on their payslip!

**RW:** Have there been changes in management at the depot?

**LD:** We have a new Depot Manager. Colloquially known by drivers and some in management as "Bat Shit". You'll see why. The higher up bosses normally search their networks for a head kicker, but surprise, surprise, they already had one on site working as a staff supervisor. He was always accusing drivers of doing all sorts of misdemeanors without first checking their journal for the date of the incident, despite instructing drivers to write everything on their journals. In one case, he accused a driver of self adjusting work without approval. On looking at the journal, he then accused the driver of forging the D.O.'s instruction which the D.O. then said wasn't true.

Since taking the job, it's been reported to me that on at least two occasions, he has falsely accused drivers of serious incidents, which turned out to be a mistaken identity. As a staff supervisor, it was rumoured he was sent to an anger/people management course.

## Kingsgrove Depot News

RW: What's the latest situation with the routes since late March?

**Kingsgrove Driver 1:** We are continuing to face management seizing ever more opportunities to cut our wages and routes. In the case of the 445 in the evenings, the bosses decided to cut the route, in the interest of corner cutting. So instead of going to Campsie station it now terminates at Canterbury. In this way cutting 4kms from the run. So the bosses can save half an hour of higher paid wages from us. Commuters have to catch all stops services from Canterbury station.

RW: What are your impressions of the situation with running times and layover breaks?

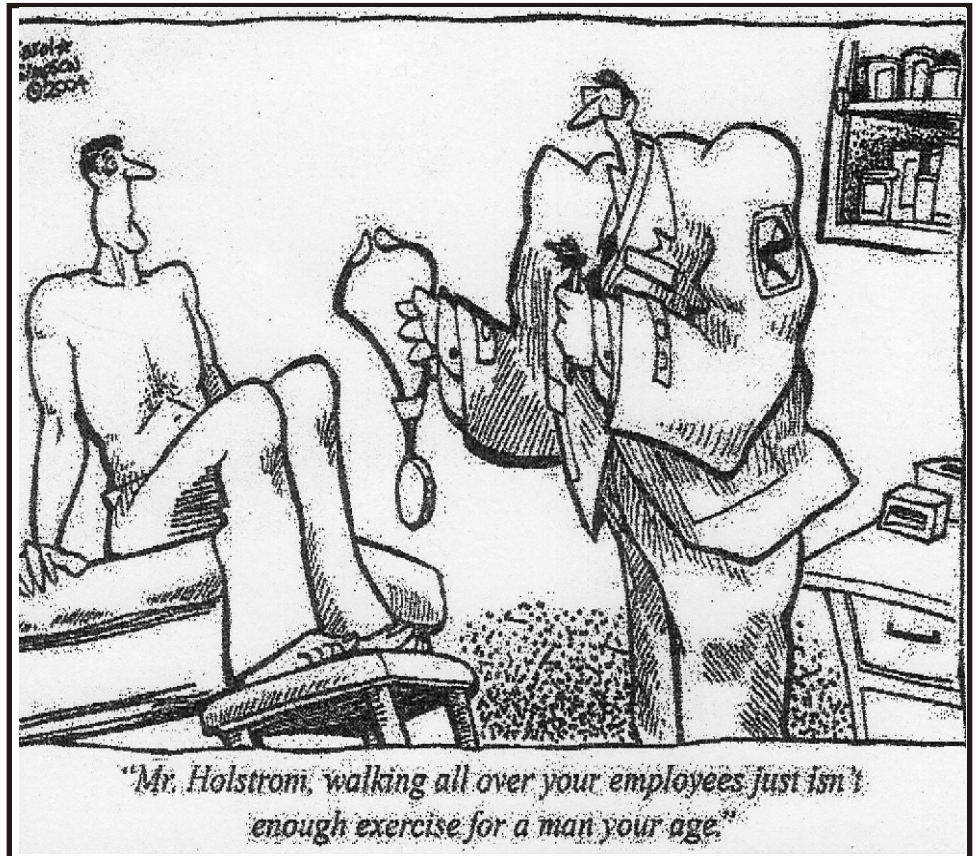
**Kingsgrove Driver 2:** We are continuing to have problems with both issues. In the case of layover breaks at the end of runs, it varies. Sometimes, 5 minutes, 7 minutes and 10 minutes. The maximum is 10 minutes. However with late running related to heavy traffic and inadequate running times, we often end up with the layover breaks greatly reduced.

## Tempe Depot News

RW: What are the latest developments at the depot?

**Tempe Driver:** We are facing a real crisis with the rosters. The bosses have gone on the rampage constantly flipping them. We aren't being given any adequate warning about the constant changes. We are angry over the worsening situation. I have also noticed many new drivers are coming to the depot who can speak little English. Management seems also getting up to favouritism/corruption. One driver was suddenly put on a spare roster. However, there was no advertising in the depot seeking applicants for this roster. Why not?

I find our wages aren't keeping up with inflation. As a result some are seeking better paid jobs elsewhere to cope with the rising cost of living.



## Burwood Depot News

RW: What's the latest situation at the depot?

**Burwood Driver:** The situation at Burwood with the rosters is similar to your reports of other depots in Region 6 on the issue. Everyone is complaining about the rosters. A particular gripe is shifts finishing significantly later. Such as in the case of the mid days starts. All the old time legacy drivers are in the RTBU. However all new drivers are TWU members and aren't allowed to change over to the RTBU. The RTBU at the depot seems to have gone very quiet lately in the months around the Easter period. However, strangely enough the TWU has burst into activity. It has been active

over complaints drivers have made of bullying by management.

RW: What is the situation with management and other issues?

**BD:** A previous manager was transferred from Tempe to Burwood as a demotion apparently. He seemingly was in the bad books of an area manager. He didn't last long at our depot. One day we received a message from management, that "he wasn't with us any more."

Many have left the depot. Its rumoured management appears to have pushed them off the job as they were considered "dead wood" and apparently weren't toeing management's line. It has been rumoured that management has been recruiting workers in Qld and deploying them here to replace those who have left the job in the roster



# VICTORIAN RAILWAY NEWS

*In this issue of RW, drivers, conductors, station staff and various conductors will discuss current issues at V/Line. As in previous issues of RW names have been changed.*

**RW:** Did you obtain a Christmas Present from V/Line?

**Ichabod:** Nothing not even a party. All employees received a swipe card.

**Ezra:** Not even a thank you from management. A new procedure for signing on and off is being introduced across V/Line over the next year.

**Rastus and Roscoe:** The swipe card has been introduced through the Driver grade. You will have to be at work on time with the cards or you will be docked. When signing off if there is no work to do you will be allowed to go home a few minutes early without being docked.

**Archie:** This maybe for the drivers but station staff and conductors have to be on time and stay until sign off time.

**Roscoe:** You should be allowed ten minutes when signing on to cover for arriving late with early shifts and allowed to leave if there is not other duties at least half an hour early.

**RW:** What is the story of a foreign train operating companies seeking business in Australia?

**Rastus:** These foreign companies have been in Australia since 1995.

**Ezra:** The current government in Britain is re-nationalising the passenger network. As the franchises expire the Government is taking back the operations.

**Rastus:** This does not apply to open access operations. These operations operate on open access agreements with the office of open access. Examples of open access operators are Hull Trains, Grand Central. These operators will be able to continue competition with the passenger network.

**Ichabod:** One train operation company which has recently opened an office in Australia is the Go Ahead Group. They operate a train Operating Company in Britain and

Buses in the UK, Ireland and parts of Europe.

**Ezra:** The Metro Trains franchise is up for renewal next year and Go Ahead and other companies will bid for Metro.

**RW:** What about V/Line?

**Rastus:** With V/Line, privatisation will be decided by politicians. They will decide whether V/Line is privatised.

**Esah:** One of the problems with V/Line is when construction of Airport Rail commences there will be a fair amount of construction work taking place between West Footscray and Albion. Will a TOC tender for V/Line occur in these conditions?

**Rastus:** V/Line was privatised between 1999 and 2002 and when

Privatisation only works when things are operating smoothly. If a major disruption or a Recession occurs these train operating companies incur heavy losses. This happened in Britain. The train operating companies there threw in the towel.

In Britain the Government has a TOC called 'Operator of Last Resort'. This operator operated the trains until they were Re-Franchised but over the last five years the companies stayed with the UK Government.

**RW:** Is overcrowding still occurring?

Allison: Overcrowding is still occurring on the Shepparton,



Regional Fast Rail was planned, V/Line was to be returned to the Government. The operator National Express returned V/Line to the Government and has remained as a Department within the Victorian Government.

**Ezra:** There are also works to commence on the Geelong line.

Warrnambool and Albury lines. On these services compulsory test braking applies on the Albury and Warrnambool lines. With Shepparton and Bairnsdale lines there are separate carriages which are reserved.

**Ichabod:** During the Christmas Holidays there were problems on Warrnambool and Albury lines. These

trains were overcrowded so back up buses were provided. Passengers preferred trains to buses. In other words, they preferred to stand.

**Rastus:** Questions have been raised in State Parliament about overcrowding on these trains. One Member of Parliament who holds an electorate in North Eastern Victoria has suggested four car Velocity trains on the Albury line. V/Line has replied to this person with "No".

**Archie:** The Velocity trains operating the Albury line are classed as "Intercity Velocity Trains" of which only six units were constructed. These units have buffet cars. In peak periods they operate as six car units. The fifth unit is the spare unit. That is in theory. If one unit is defective, the timetable is out the door.

**Ichabod:** Bairnsdale, Warrnambool and Shepparton lines use the Velocity trains classed as Interurban Velocities.

**Allison:** V/Line could operate four car trains to Albury and Warrnambool but some platforms would have to be lengthened. This could take years to complete. In fact five stations on the Traralgon line, six car trains have the last carriage overshooting the platform.

**RW:** What about service disruptions?

**Roscoe:** One word: chaos.

**Clarence:** One disruption is Track Faults. Employees have observed over the years that these faults occur during peak hours. During January a fault occurred and half the platforms were out of action.

**Rastus:** This problem also happened at Metro Trains. The companies should have maintenance crews stationed where these track faults occur.

**Clarence:** In January there were major works at Melton, Deer Park and Tarneit over a two week period, Ballarat/Melton trains were replaced by buses between Bacchus Marsh and Melbourne. Geelong trains were replaced by buses from Wyndham Vale to Melbourne. There were express buses from Geelong to Melbourne but passengers traveled on trains from Waurin Ponds to Wyndham Vale. Buses to Werribee then suburban trains to Melbourne.

**Roscoe:** They could have the

**Geelong train to connect at Werribee with suburban trains.**

**Ichabod:** This suggestion is positive thinking in theory but in practice it did not happen. Not all trains from Geelong would run to Werribee but a mixture of trains and buses to Werribee could have been planned.

**Rastus:** A fair number of drivers are not trained to operate trains via Werribee.

**RW:** Once again we have run out of space.

**Rastus and Roscoe:** In having the final say, V/Line management should adopt these suggestions, but our opinion is some of these managers do not have the power of positive thinking.

*In this issue of RW we will discuss the forgotten fire trains of Victoria which*

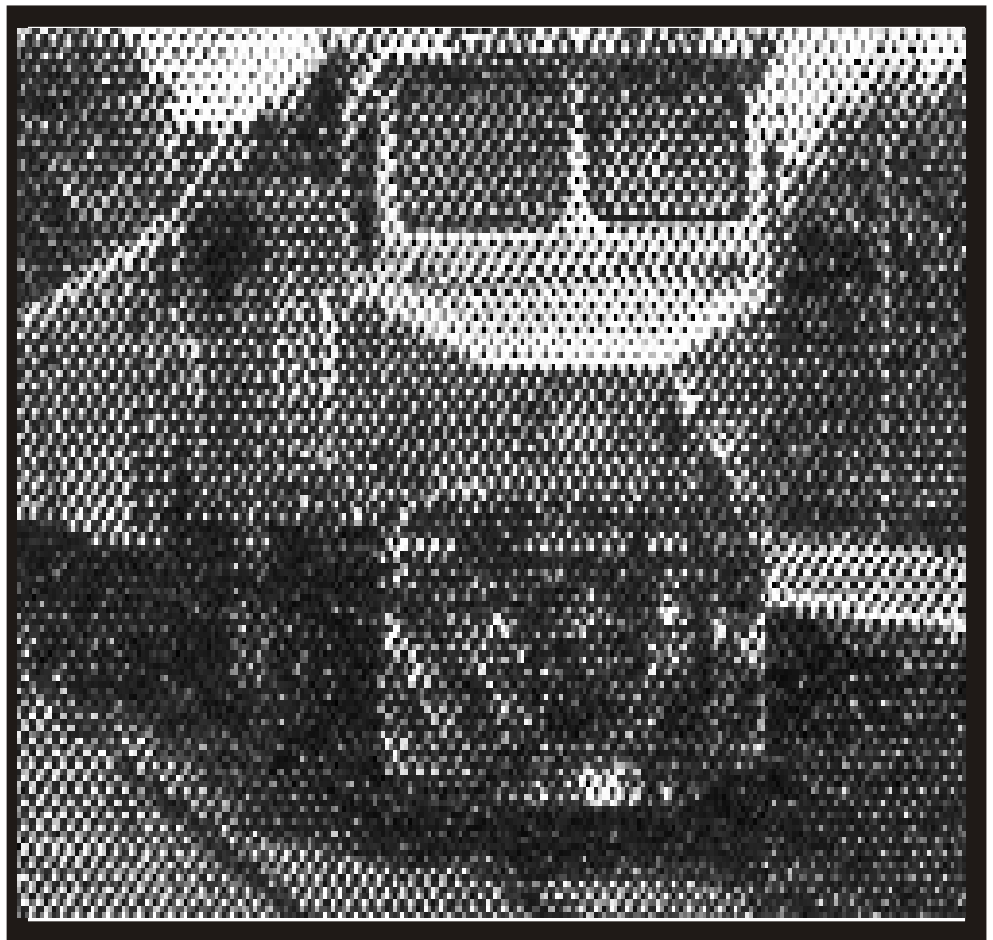
around Victoria. In those days the Railways produced a train of four wheel wagons behind a locomotive. These trains were manned by railway employees.

**Ezra:** These trains were also used to replenish water tanks and employee housing water tanks at railway stations, fire trains were used during bush fires in 1926, 1939 and 1944.

**Irving:** There were also special trains used to transport volunteers from Melbourne to Warragul in 1938 to fight the fires.

**Ezra:** In 1962 there were bush fires in the Dandenong Ranges and a fire train was kept on standby on the Fern Tree Gully line.

**RW:** When was a permanent fire train established.



*operated during the fire season. In this article we will give a brief history of these trains.*

**RW:** Can you tell us the origin of these trains?

**Irving:** In Victoria there is a record of these trains operating in the late 19th Century to various locations

**Alvin:** After the bush fires of 1962 a fire train was established during the fire season from November to April.

**Rastus and Roscoe:** Some of the older drivers remember the train. The train consisted of two Guards vans plus oil tankers. These tankers were thoroughly cleaned and filled with water. The train was stabled at either Melbourne Yard or

Jolimont Yard.

Alvin: On days of acute fire danger, if a fire occurred, the train would be despatched to the location of the fire. Country fire authority volunteers would man the tanks and fight the fire. Railway trains would operate under the supervision of a railways official. The use of the word TOTAL FIRE BAN instead of Acute Fire Danger was introduced in 1966.

Rastus: In 1966 a grass fire around St. Albans was severe. The train was despatched to the fire location what is now Keilor Plains and Watergardens and was used to fight the fire. The train received praise from the general public, The train was also written up in the Victorian

Railways Newsletter.

Alvin: In 1968 the train was despatched on two occasions to fight fires on the Belgrave line around Upwey.

Rastus: There was a drought in 1968 and a second train was established and kept on standby. On one occasion both trains were utilised at two different locations.

Alvin: The railways held exhibitions in 1968 and 1972 at Spencer Street and the fire train was on display. Both times the train was used to give a demonstration in fighting fires.

RW: Why was the fire train disbanded?

Roscoe: We do not know when the train was last used but we think it was

around 1983.

Alvin: The train would be a useful asset but with the use of fire aircraft and infra red technology the train has become redundant.

RW: Could a fire train be an asset in today's environment?

Ezra: One word NO! With the breakup of Victorian Railways in 1983 and privatisation in 1999 who would operate the trains?

Irvine: With deregulation of Oil in 1992 there are hardly any Oil tankers. Most oil wagons were scrapped.

Rastus: The train would be a useful asset today in fighting line side fires. Fire aircraft cannot be used if the weather is a high wind on a bay.

## BRITAIN TODAY

### UK EDUCATION CRISIS

The financial crisis in UK Higher Education is deepening, and the response of the University administrations is to make their workers pay for it with job losses and the reward of additional workloads for those who have kept their jobs. The response of the University and College Union (UCU) has been underwhelming, though not surprising given the level of disaffection and distrust they managed to create with the way communications and the Marking and Assessment Boycott of 2023 was handled. The low ebb amongst members was echoed in the 2025/6 National Pay Claim last November which failed to reach a 40% turn out and saw the imposition of a 1.4% pay increase. Within the union, recent elections to the National Executive Council saw a miserable turn out of around 10% and the victory of what might be called the right faction(s) of the union, notably the Commons faction which started life as a vaguely leftist alternative to the Stalinist/Labourites and the Trotskyists of the UCU Left but which rapidly exposed itself by entering into alliance with the right. In the absence of a significant autonomous rank and file movement in the union\*, willing to

organise at the grassroots and across trade union boundaries, this victory is likely to have a long-term negative impact on militancy.

On the ground, this week has seen strikes in Higher Education in Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen in response to threatened compulsory



redundancies, involving the UCU and other campus unions, particularly Unite. Dundee is looking to get rid of 180 workers on top of those previously threatened in an effort to save £10 million. Opposition has been consistent and militant. The University of Strathclyde, Glasgow has been

'reshaping' with focused 'voluntary' severance. A union request to open up institution-wide severance as an alternative has been consistently rejected by an intransigent management that has worked hard to show that they were being super-consultative and ready to listen whilst budging not one significant inch. At Glasgow Caledonian University, where the Education Institute of Scotland's University

Lecturers Association (EIS-ULA) represents the majority of academic staff, 100 staff jobs have been announced as at risk. A rally of EIS-ULA, UCU, Unison and Unite members this week hopefully foreshadows joint industrial action.

The reality is that the crisis will

deepen further, and it will continue to be the workers who will carry the burden. And it will also be the case that the trade union leaders will look to control and direct the opposition, keeping it within the boundaries of the legislation with regard sympathetic strikes, passive picketing etc. They will not look to escalate or expand the struggles in individual institutions, but rather allow them to remain isolated, all while talking incessantly about "solidarity". Ultimately, the only way we as workers will have a chance to successfully halt these relentless attacks will be through our capacity to extend the fight, across union boundaries and across institutions, from below and with a focus on self-organisation.

*\*<https://notesfrombelow.org/tag/university-worker> are going someway to develop this approach.*

*<https://www.anarchistcommunism.org/2026/03/21/crisis-in-higher-education/>*

## AI THREAT IN THE UK

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a catch all term for a number of technologies. They are mainly concerned with robots replacing human labour, and data gathering via Data Centres (DCs). These Data Centres are spreading across the UK. It is estimated that another one

hundred will be needed over the next few years. These DCs are different from the ones that are used to store photos, social media accounts and work applications. Without going into the technical details they are unimaginably massive! DCs already need huge amounts of electricity to power them and are similarly greedy with the water they need for cooling, boosting climate change. Ireland already hosts many Data Centres which consume 21% of Ireland's electricity. West London is also suffering an electricity shortage thanks to them. The situation will get much worse as DCs to service AI are expanded. Each of the planned DCs will need 500 mw of electricity. This could be used to power 2 million homes! The attraction for the ruling class lies in their potential to replace a lot of jobs, decreasing costs and increasing their control and profits. They are also a global stock market bubble that is being massively invested in by tech companies and governments. When the bubble bursts - as they always do - the bosses will try to impose further austerity on us so we pay for their losses.

Starmer's recently trumpeted \$31 billion 'prosperity deal' with the U.S government (\$22 billion pledged from Microsoft, and \$5B from Google) is to build Data Centres and the infrastructure to power them, such as mini-nuclear power stations to provide the electricity they need. At the time of writing the U.S. has put the deal on hold over trade

disagreements. Although it was touted as 'great for Britain' the main beneficiaries will be U.S capital. Each data centre built in the North-East England 'growth zone' will employ only 15-20 people when built, meaning a few hundred jobs rather than the 5000 promised.

AI is mainly used to replace human labour, resulting in unemployment and deskilled jobs, such as warehouses and call centres. It takes away the creativity of human beings whether it be in design, art or writing. AI is used by governments, big tech, and right-wing populist parties to monitor and control people, who are manipulated via misinformation, such as altered images and algorithms.

**We need technologies that extend people's capabilities, and that can be controlled by the community. AI does not fit the bill. Very few people understand how it works, leaving us in the hands of the corporations that control AI. In addition, the huge amount of energy and water required for AI, via the DCs, means that it is incompatible with addressing climate change.**

**We want to see a future society with a better quality of life for all, and a reversal of global warming and loss of biodiversity. This society needs to be under our control, not corporations, technocrats and politicians. It is difficult to see how AI is going to contribute to this vision.**

*Thanks to ACG*

## IRAN WAR cont. from page 2

The counterrevolution and bloody repression unleashed by Khomeini has its continuation in the bombing by the USA and Israel. The overthrow of the regime by action of the Iranian masses has been closed down by these bombings. Equally, a rabid Iranian nationalism has been strengthened by these bombings, and hatred and repression against minorities within Iran, Baluchis, Kurds, and Arabs, as well as the many Afghan refugees, has been exacerbated. Already the monarchist

forces around Reza Pahlavi, the former Crown Prince of Iran, are positioning themselves to coopt the mass movement, and to move it to the right. It is unclear, as usual, as to what the Trump regime plans for Iran, if it is successful in destroying the mullahs' government, which is far from guaranteed. It could be Pahlavi, it could be some 'reformist' leader, it could be a renegade of the regime willing to do Trump's bidding, as has happened in Venezuela.

We reject the mullahs' regime as

equally as we reject the forces around Pahlavi or the so called reformist elements within Iran. Equally, we totally oppose the barbaric bombing of Iran and Lebanon. Action similar to that of dockers worldwide must sabotage the war efforts. Here in Britain, we have to encourage the blockade of bases used for the bombing and given the go ahead by Starmer. Mass mobilisation around the world must strive to stymie the US war effort.

*Thanks to the ACG*

# SPANISH LABOUR NEWS

*Introduction: All the allegedly anarcho-syndicalist union confederations mentioned in the below article operate within the Spanish Industrial Relations Racket and are parties to fixed term contracts. Therefore they would face restrictions regarding taking direct action. So they have moved away from an important anarcho-syndicalist principle. Ed.*

**28/4/26** I originally went to Barcelona in October 2003; during my visit, an international meeting of alternative trade unions organized by the anarcho-union CGT was taking place. At that time, there were said to be fifty, even close to a hundred, squatted houses throughout the city; I stayed in one of them.

The twenty-odd years that have passed since then, with the intensification of tourism, the increased exposure of popular city centers to rent-seeking, and the rapid "value" increase of spaces, have brought about a kind of precarious transformation of urban space, resulting in capitalist enterprises (restaurants, shops, etc.) "re-occupying" the squatted houses (squatted houses) backed by the financial (and of course, state-sponsored) power of capitalism. Similar processes have, of course, occurred in other cities (Istanbul, etc.). However, this capitalist occupation seems to have been more effective in Barcelona.

## Can Batllo

Before going to Barcelona, I contacted Angel, the former international relations secretary of the CGT, whom I had met on my first visit. She has since retired but continues to work for an anarchist foundation. She invited me to Can Batllo, the former textile factory site in Barcelona that has been effectively "taken over" by residents and anarchists.

The story of Can Batllo is truly

fascinating; the buildings, former textile factories, became defunct in the 1970s as a reflection of the "deindustrialization" process. In 1976, the municipality approved a development plan for the area, envisioning a social housing project and the creation of green spaces; however, the plan was never implemented for many years. In 2009, residents came together and declared they would effectively "take over" the area, demanding that the municipality fulfill its promises. Finally, in 2011, the municipality agreed to lease Can Batllo (presumably free of charge) to the residents for 50 years.

Anarchists, along with the "residents," effectively use the spaces. These spaces operate

presses), and many more. The only thing the municipality did was build a large park next to the area.

As a space heavily used by the locals and maintained entirely through self-initiative, its size and the variety of spaces were truly impressive. I also asked Angel about the situation with the squatted houses; she said there weren't as many as before, and only a few squats lasted a few months. Nevertheless, the activity in Can Batllo was somewhat reassuring.

It's important to remember that Can Batllo should absolutely not be considered a tourist area or added to any "route"; it's a genuine self-governing space, actively used by the locals, especially in the evenings,



entirely on a self-governing basis, including: a large public library (it was closed, so we couldn't see inside), a nursery/kindergarten, a cafe-bar, a meeting room, a gym (with even a climbing ramp), a brewery, an anarchist foundation with a very extensive archive named after an anarcho-syndicalist (Salvador Seguí) who was assassinated, an anarchist publishing house (which also published Can D'ndar's book), an anarchist printing press (with both very old/antique and new printing

and it's not a "marginal" area!

## The Present State of so called Anarcho-Syndicalist Unions

Regarding the state of anarcho-syndicalist unions - for those who may not know - in the 1980s, after emerging from underground (in the post-Franco era), the CNT union split into two, and the wing that embraced participation in workers'

representative elections (described by others as reformist) organized itself as the CGT. For many years, the CGT has appeared far more active than the CNT; **Currently (according to Angel), it has 85,000 active members, 25,000 of whom are in Catalonia. Some sources suggest that membership will surpass 100,000 by 2023, making it the fourth largest trade union in Spain. In fact, the CGT's influence is far greater than its membership numbers suggest; while not as large as other unions close to socialist and communist parties, they do win the right to represent hundreds of thousands of workers in worker representative elections.**

**There's another, lesser-known process that resulted in the CNT effectively splitting in two in 2016. The smaller group, continuing to organize within the historical anarcho/revolutionary-syndicalist international, uses the name CNT-AIT, while the larger CNT formed a new internationalist structure under the name ICL-CIT. Although I didn't have the chance to reach the larger group, I visited the CNT-AIT office in Madrid, which is open for two hours every evening. The tragicomic part was that I couldn't have a productive meeting because I couldn't find a single person who spoke English in the office of the group that accused the other side of not giving enough importance to internationalism.**

Meanwhile, unfortunately, a legal battle has also taken place between these two organizations regarding issues such as the ownership of offices and naming rights; the CNT-AIT group, which lost the case, accuses the other of reformism and centralism. From what I've observed, neither CNT is as active as the CGT; they seem to have spent recent years focusing on internal conflicts. **However, the CNT (the larger one) recently made headlines with its members who were sentenced to prison for intervening in the harassment of a pregnant female employee by the employer at the La Suiza pastry shop**

**in Gijon. Known as the "La Suiza Six," these trade unionists, mostly women, received 3.5-year sentences and went to prison as a result of a process that began in 2017 and concluded in July 2025. Although they are in a kind of open prison system with mandatory nights in jail, and there is a possibility of them being eligible for probation in the spring of 2027, they have not yet fully achieved their freedom despite the support of the left and anarchist public.**

Another anarcho-syndicalist organization is the smallest (and probably more radical) union, organized under the name of the historic anarcho-syndicalist journal Solidaridad Obrera (Workers' Solidarity). I know they are organized in the Barcelona metro, but they aren't very visible.

**These differences shouldn't discourage us; there are still positive developments. In April 2023, the CGT, CNT, and Solidaridad Obrera publicly announced that they had reached an agreement on joint action. Although they are organized separately, this development can be**

**read as a good sign for the future.**

These are my observations on the anarcho-syndicalist and anarchist movement in Barcelona and Madrid after more than twenty years. Although my trip to Spain didn't go as well as I expected due to an unfortunate incident in Barcelona, personally, neither I was devastated, nor did I see the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist tradition - despite all its stumbles - as having collapsed. I hope that these experiences I've shared will somehow serve as an inspiration for the region we live in.

#### **Abbreviations:**

**CGT - Confederacion General del Trabajo / General Confederation of Labour**

**CNT - Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo / National Confederation of Labour**

**ICL-CIT - International Confederation of Labour**

**AIT - Asociacion Internacional de los Trabajadores / International Workers' Association**



## BOOK REVIEW CORNER

### **Capital's Grave: Neo Feudalism and the New Class Struggle by Jodi Dean. Published by Verso.**

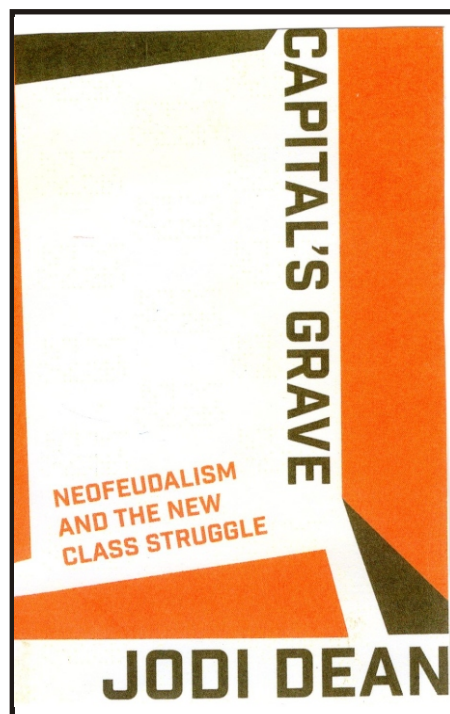
A common feature of contemporary capitalism is the shift of many countries in the advanced capitalist world from production industries such as manufacturing to non production industries focusing on providing services. Associated with new style corporate outfits involving "platform operations". Some of the most well known being Uber, Door Dash, Airbnd, Lyft, Gruubbub, Instacart. The author particularly sees this Neo Feudal push in the context of the Neo Liberal orientation of Governments internationally to resolve the economic crisis associated with the Oil crisis of the mid 70's and the worker/student upsurges and strike waves of the long 1960's. Together with Governments facilitation of privatisation and the removal of various "fetters" such as aspects of public services, industrial legislation, etc to these more exploitative operations.

She sees a key factor in propelling the new Neo Feudal push being the defeat of various groups of workers with the onset of global Neo Liberalism from the 1970's. She argues these operations have different dynamics from capitalism which is characterised by profit making via the exploitation of wage labour with the aid of technological developments, capital accumulation and competition. In contrast these new Neo Feudal outfits focus on a system of rents, destruction and hoarding driven by privilege and dependence.

#### **Neo Feudalism & Corporate Unionism**

A problem with the book is that the author squanders considerable space on a discussion of dubious psychoanalysis issues, but ignores

the critical role of corporate unionism in facilitating these new Techno Neo Feudal operations and older ones. Particularly stemming from Corporate unionism's integration into the corporate set up. Involving union officials involvement in the direct management of capitalism via membership of Super boards, massive financing from "legal"



Corruption involving Super Boards, employers and Governments using various pretexts on an enormous scale and much less significant "Illegal" Corruption. Together with the alleged rigging of union ballots such as in the Australian context, by ALP Networks in the AEC (Australian Electoral Commission) with the assistance of the Deep State/ASIO. Together with Deep State infiltration of the union hierarchy by their agents and training of union officials in sophisticated

manipulation techniques such as with the CIA's notorious Harvard Trade Union Officials Training School.(1)

The author refers to the rise of compulsory arbitration as a powerful example of the major impact of Neo Feudalism across USA industries. With over 55% of US workers subject to mandatory arbitration agreements as a condition of employment. Preventing workers' "class actions" and other legal recourse, but also aimed at intimidating workers from taking spontaneous wildcat action and the spreading of this direct action in the form of strike/direct action waves across industry. With legal retainers of the owners acting as adjudicators in the arbitrations. With these agreements, owners of companies exert both economic and political power, like lords in traditional feudalism.

However the author ignores the role of the corporate unions such as the AFL-CIO-CIA in collaborating with Big Business and Governments to implement this legislation. So as to further secure their bureaucratic fiefs from grass roots insurgencies and significant break away unions stemming from major wildcat strike movements. She also fails to discuss an important back drop to this labour legislation which was the wildcat strike movement across US industries in the late 1960's and early 1970's, associated with the Viet Nam War economic boom and important lessons drawn by agents of the ruling class/corporate union officials from this experience. One breakaway syndicalist style movement which emerged during the wildcat strike movement was the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) established in 1968 in Detroit from a wildcat strike. The impact of divisive and dangerous black identity politics on DRUM contributed to its subsequent demise following a management counter attack.(2)

## **The NSW Taxi Industry, Corporate Unionism, the ALP Octopus, Massive Corruption & Neo Feudalism**

In NSW, Australia, since the Depression of the 1930's following a decision of the Industrial Arbitration and Conciliation Court, Neo Feudal style operations have affected most taxi drivers with the Bailor/Bailee system. Where taxi drivers via a legal fiction are treated as a type of contractors rather than as wage workers. The corporate union, the TWU (Transport Workers Union) aligned with the ALP Octopus collaborated with the corporate taxi bosses to maintain this serf like status of the cabbies. Avoiding or sabotaging any moves to organise/recruit them to the union on a significant scale. Many years back in Sydney, a certain taxi driver militant associated with the ASN (Anarcho-Syndicalist Network) was seeking to work with a TWU organiser, a relative of a former high profile politician from overseas. When ever this militant arranged with the organiser to meet at Sydney Airport to recruit taxi drivers there to the TWU, Taxi section, the organiser would never turn up using some pretext. Resulting in the failure of the organising drive. In another notorious case, a militant taxi driver was elected as President of the NSW TWU Taxi section and was initially very energetic recruiting taxi drivers to the TWU. However, when he was out jogging in a park near his home one evening, suddenly he was confronted by someone following him wielding a large knife. Shortly after this encounter, he resigned from the NSW TWU Taxi section President position! (3)

## **The ASN & Grassroots Taxi Drivers' Union in Sydney**

Some decades ago taxi activists in Sydney approached the NSW Industrial Relations Department to establish a union in the framework of enterprise bargaining and the Un-Fair Work Court. They were obstructed and fobbed off by

Departmental officers presumably part of ALP networks. So as to maintain the monopoly of the TWU in the sector, the Neo Feudal regime and the TWU bosses' corrupt relations with the Taxi bosses, the ALP Octopus and State officials. Perhaps also because the taxi "serfs" had no wages and conditions for gradual attrition by the "smoke and mirrors" techniques of corporate unions/corporate media/employers during enterprise bargaining campaigns set up to fail.

Subsequently taxi activists whose morale was raised by exposes of massive corruption in the taxi industry and other issues in ASN publications Sparks and RW went on to establish a union which in its early phase had a direct action/syndicalist style orientation. It organised a blockade by taxis in Sydney CBD streets focusing on the NSW Parliament. However subsequently the cabby elected as President and an important spokesman of the new union accepted a \$30,000 consultancy from Lime Cabs. Leading to a rapid decline and dissolution of the union. Since this time up to day, the activity of taxi militants has faced significant difficulties with the death of a key taxi activist under s o m e w h a t m y s t e r i o u s circumstances, the loss of ethnic militant networks and many taxi drivers also moonlighting as Uber drivers. The TWU has certainly been doing nothing to organise taxi drivers to take industrial action to abolish the exploitive bailee/Bailor system affecting conventional taxi drivers and Uber's Techno Feudal regime with drivers considered as "independent contractors". The TWU officials and Govts. have connived with Uber's illegal operations for many years and particularly its draconian disciplinary policies. (4)

## **Pathways to "Communism" & the Death of Capitalism/Neo Feudalism?**

The author sees the core demand of those seeking to overthrow Capitalism and Neo Feudalism to establish "Communism" as

Universal Basic Services (UBS). She is quite vague in discussing what "Communism" would constitute in the real world. Does she mean like State Socialist regimes with central planning in the former Socialist Bloc with a very unsavoury track record such as the former Soviet Union/USSR or Libertarian Socialism based on workers and community councils and ultra democratic processes? She also seems to favour a vanguard party style outfit similar to a sort of updated version of the Bolshevik party in the Russian Revolution of 1917 to facilitate the organising to achieve "Communism". The Bolshevik Coup in Russia 1917, however led to a State Capitalism and a Red Dictatorship tyranny.

In the Australian context and in the Anglo World generally most groups from this vanguard/Marxist Leninist heritage are more caricatures of the Bolsheviks. Becoming mainly middle class/student leftist social clubs/pseudo churches. They have mostly taken a rightward shift since the early 1990's and have been hopeless in assisting workers to achieve significant victories on the industrial front. However they have been heavily involved in facilitating the corporate unions "smoke and mirrors" performances with fake or/circuses, so as to isolate groups of workers on strike and set up campaigns to fail. Meanwhile covering up the massive corruption of the Corporate union officials. Assisting the Neo Liberal push and the employer offensive, camouflaging this record with constant revolutionary and socialist posturing and rhetoric. The few from this heritage which oppose corporate unionism have also been lured on occasion into the union bosses' "smoke and mirrors" performances associated with community picket line circuses, playing an unintentional bit part. Any formal hierarchical "vanguard party" organisation would also be open to Deep State infiltration. She ignores the importance of facilitating major syndicalist break aways from Corporate Unionism in the context of strike/direct action

wave movements. So as to prepare workers for establishing workers' control of industry and community control of communities with an associated council system. Without bureaucratic central planning and the rise of a new State Capitalist regime like in the deceased State Socialist Bloc. An "informal" catalytic network composed of an interweaving of networks of cores and layers of a peripheries like the ASN has played an important role since the 1990's in assisting militants to win important victories in the class struggle such as the defeat of various restructuring for privatisation pushes in the NSW Railways and new spearheads of the employer offensive in the Public Service during the 1990's. (5)

### Service Industry Labour Vanguard

The author sees the expanding service industries workers of various types such as teachers, nurses, warehouse workers and transport workers playing the role of a labour vanguard in the class struggle to achieve "Communism". She looks at the relative self generalising aspects of various service workers industrial action. Particularly emphasising the extent of self generation of these different sectors of workers. She correctly sees transport workers having the most self generalising impact contributing to the disruption of diverse industrial sectors. In comparison to teachers strikes which also affect other sectors to a lesser extent, as parents may have to take time off work or scramble for child care. With nurses' strikes only affecting their hospitals operations. However, she fails to take account of the influence the corporate unions have over such sectors and elite groups of workers within them and their officials capacity for sophisticated manipulation courtesy of their Deep State, political establishment and corporate media connections. Highlighting the crucial necessity of breaking this influence via major syndicalist oriented breakaways in the context of strike/direct action wave movements and their federation into



new industrial union confederations with associated transitional steps. To turn the tide against the employer offensive and Neo Liberalism and Neo Feudalism to prepare the preconditions for achieving Libertarian Socialism.

In conclusion, the author presents a good case for the transition from old style capitalism toward a more ferocious Neo Feudalism. Her discussion of its various dimensions are however inadequate. As she neglects a discussion of the crucial role of the Corporate Unionism phenomena to this transition although squandering significant space in the book on psychoanalytic issues. Also her discussion of the way forward to tackle Neo Feudalism/Capitalism is extremely vague and is supportive of discredited Marxist Leninist party building and perhaps State Capitalism. However, she correctly emphasises the strategic importance of transport workers to the class struggle and the overthrow of capitalism/Neo Feudalism.  
M.

Notes

- (1) See "RTBU Elections 2018: Were they rigged?" In RW Dec.2018-Jan.2019 Vol.36 No.3 (223) on [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) & "From Corporate Bureaucratic Unionism to Grass Roots Controlled Direct Action Unionism: Perspectives for Strategy and Activity for Australia Today" in RW No.41 No.3 (235) Dec.2023 - Jan.2024 on [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) and [Libcom.org](http://Libcom.org)
- (2) See "Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement" by Martin Glaberman on [Libcom.org](http://Libcom.org)
- (3) See Sparks No.76 Mar.-April 1998 "Cabbies' News." & Information received from a long term prominent Sydney taxi activist.
- (4) Information received from a long term prominent Sydney taxi activist.
- (5) See "From Corporate Bureaucratic Unionism to Grass Roots Controlled Direct Action Unionism: Perspectives for Strategy and Activity for Australia Today" in RW No.41 No.3 (235) Dec.2023 - Jan.2024 on [www.rebelworker.org](http://www.rebelworker.org) and [Libcom.org](http://Libcom.org) & "Great Victories, New Tasks", NSW Railway News p.3 RW Dec. 2025 - Jan.2026 Vol.41 No.3 (241)

## Zaragoza Bound: A Chronicle of the Durruti Column

Column by Roberto Martinez Catalan

Published by AK Press

“On to Saragossa” was the rallying cry for the anarchist militia advance from Barcelona into Aragon at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War. “Zaragoza Bound, a Chronicle of the Durruti Column,” is ostensibly an account of this. Except it’s not. Its focus is largely on key gaps in anarchist thinking as seen from outside and from inside the militia. Martinez Catalan sees these gaps as having had fatal consequences for the organization and conduct of the war, leading ultimately to the failure of the revolution. He suggests that any future attempt at a libertarian reorganization of society requires a rethinking of anarchist theory.

This book is organised around a study of the Durruti Column, an anarchist led militia formation that was formed in the first days after the defeat of the military rising in Barcelona. The Durruti Column immediately set out for Zaragoza/Saragossa, the major city in the province of Aragon. This city was a CNT stronghold, where the military uprising had been successful. Unlike rural Catalonia, anarchist and CNT (National Confederation of Labour, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union) influence was strong in rural Aragon. As the anarchist militias moved through villages on its march to Zaragoza, most villages set up collectives to share the land.

For Martinez Catalan at least two elements are essential to a politics that aims at a successful revolution. One is the question of the forms of military organization necessary to win a civil war, and the other is the question of the State. Both are questions of power. For Martinez Catalan the Spanish anarchists’ deep antipathy to militarism and the State left them floundering for ad hoc solutions to unavoidable and predictable problems.

The CNT was the largest union in Spain, and strongest in the “cinturon rojo y negro”, the belt of working class

suburbs around Barcelona, where most workers were members of the anarcho-syndicalist trade union. According to George Orwell, it was as common there to be a member of the Anarchist Federation as to be a member of the Labour Party in Britain. The large scale takeover of Barcelona factories and enterprises under different forms of workers’ control isn’t dealt with in this book. The focus is on what Martinez Catalan sees as the key issues of Army



and State, issues that he argues the anarchists were theoretically unequipped to deal with. Following the experience of the militias, there is discussion of the rural collectivization in Aragon.

How deep anti-militarism went in the anarchist and CNT rank and file cannot be underestimated, and this antipathy is central to the issues that Martinez Catalan identifies. Durruti, the leader of the Column, made regular broadcasts to the militia units. These were concerned overwhelmingly with the issue of functional discipline in an egalitarian and ant-authoritarian militia. There was no saluting or

saying sir, and no privileges of rank. The militia was organized in groups of ten, and these were in turn organised into groups of a hundred. There were regular meetings by elected delegates from both levels. This largely followed CNT union practice. These delegates took part in higher level meetings with Durruti and an ex-army artillery sergeant who worked with Durruti as military advisor.

Simone Weil, serving with the Durruti Column’s International unit, summarizes a Durruti broadcast: “discipline, discipline, again discipline” The idea here was

self-imposed (and group pressure imposed) regulation of behaviour. This meant following orders in combat, keeping discussion on organization and different approaches to the war for rest time and the regular delegates meetings. The anarchists opposed coercion, relying on argument and an egalitarian ethic of cooperation and sharing. The question was how far a military unit could be organized along these lines. Martinez Catalan argues that, while the Durruti Column was regarded by opponents as the most disciplined of the militias, there was an uneasy acceptance of what he sees as a “necessary” compromise that anarchist theory could not encompass. He points

out that, while there was an absence of traditional military coercion, there was still coercion. Offenders dismissed from the Column were sent back, walking, to Barcelona.

**Durruti felt that it was essential to work for the quickest victory, which meant the liberation of Zaragoza; if the war continued it would destroy the chance for a libertarian revolution as it hardened and brutalized those engaged in it. Speaking of relations between the militias and the peasants of Aragon, Simone Weil noted at the time “Without any insolence or brutality or at any rate I saw none - B there was a gulf between the armed men and the unarmed populace, a gulf like the one between the poor and the rich. There was always something humble, submissive and fearful in the attitude of some and the swagger, lack of care and condescension coming from the others”.**

**Durruti opposed and tried to stop the killings of “fascists” (usually large owners) that often occurred when the Column reached a village, which was usually collectivised by acclamation after some discussion.** This rural movement, partly conscious anarchist, partly the poorest sections in the village seeing value in the change to collectivization (with at least some feeling coerced), was then organized under the Council of Aragon. This consisted of Barcelona anarcho-syndicalist militia leaders, its purpose was to organize and control the rear guard. While often seized on as an example of revolutionary organization, it was largely what any regular army would have done. There doesn't seem to have been any movement to bring the Council under the control of the collectives.

**There were different levels of involvement in the collectives. Martinez Catalan reproduces (in his notes) diary entries made at the time by Simone Weil: “Conversing with the peasants of Pina. Are you all agreed on farming together? First response (over several occasions); Whatever the committee says will be done. Old man: Yes provided that we**

**are given everything we need and I am not all the time straining to pay off the carpenter, the doctor, the way I am now. Another said: We will have to see how everything works out. Would you rather farm together or divide things up? Yes (but none too categorically) to the militias these impoverished and magnificent Aragonese peasants, bearing their degradation with such dignity, were not even items of curiosity.”**

Franz Borkenau (The Spanish Cockpit) describes visiting a collective village where there were two cafes, one for the collectivists and one for the individualists (this was a negative anarchist term for small owners, not individualist anarchists). This was an ongoing situation that would continue developing, maybe going one way or the other, with the collectivists dominant, but might also have kept a large amount of tolerance for individual choices that did not involve the labour of others.

**George Orwell, serving with the POUM (Workers Party of Marxist Unification) militia unit, aligned with the anarchists on the Aragon Front, recounts an incident that shows how deep the anti-authoritarian ethos ran in the CNT rank and file. This was the case even in those who had taken the POUM rather than the anarchists as their political direction. The bulk of the rank and file POUM militia members were from the CNT. For Orwell the POUM militia was as close to a fully egalitarian society as possible in wartime. Orwell noted that, despite egalitarianism, orders were supposed to be obeyed in the POUM militia. When he tried to drag a militiaman who refused to do guard duty to his post, Orwell was surrounded by militiamen calling him a fascist. When Mary Lowe and Juan Brea, attached to the international section of the POUM, described Durruti's funeral, they pointed out that, while the Communists marched like automatons, and the anarchists were consciously all over the place, they felt that the POUM marched in a proper, democratic fashion.**

**Because, they summed up, “We were all cenetistas”.**

Martinez Catalan draws crucial lessons from the anarchist experience through examination of the decisions made and how they were made. He sees their failure as built into the theoretical perspectives of the anarchist militants, those who dedicated their lives, up to and after the civil war, to struggle for an egalitarian and libertarian socialism. He argues “...the lesson of the failed Spanish Revolution might be summed up as the inescapable obligation to take political power and establish some sort of a democratic revolutionary government, complete with its corresponding specialist armed agencies - army or police, or howsoever one might prefer to label them unless one was prepared to doom the revolution to defeat in advance; in the early stages at any rate.”

**The “in the early stages at any rate” contains the problem. What form of revolutionary government will deny itself continuing power? One that could is the Workers Councils system, dismissed by Martinez Catalan. Taken as the body holding the sole right to determine the use of force, in this meeting Weber's core definition of the state, it is still the form of organization that can be brought under the most direct control of the rank and file. It can coordinate rather than order, depending on the extent to which it stays, or progresses, under rank and file based control.**

Martinez Catalan argues for the necessity of a clear anarchist recognition of the need for some form of State (regardless of what it may be called). The book includes a critical discussion of the Friends of Durruti group (who were not actually friends of Durruti), which called for a revolutionary junta and a new revolution during the 1937 May Days fighting in Barcelona. Unfortunately there is nothing on the Italian volunteer Camillo Berneri's advocacy for Workers' Councils, which he carried on in the militias though his paper

Guerra di Classe until his murder. Just before the May Days he was shot (either by Stalinist or Italian Fascist agents) after making a radio broadcast on the death of Antonio Gramsci.

**Martinez Catalan is dismissive of the idea of an anarcho-syndicalist organization as an alternative to the State. He emphasizes Durruti's position that the CNT would liberate Zaragoza, even refusing POUM support in an assault on Zaragoza, arguing that the CNT was sufficient in itself to free Zaragoza and proclaim Libertarian Communism.**

Both Durruti and Garcia Oliver, two of the foremost militants of the FAI (the Iberian Anarchist Federation) always speak of revolution as the CNT taking over as the form of transition to libertarian communism. However, for them this had to be a CNT with their views of how the revolution could be made. The period from the FAI's formation in 1929 to the military uprising in 1936 was a period of seeking and establishing FAI dominance within the CNT.

**The history of FAI dominance of CNT conferences, of the expulsion of the BOC (later to form the POUM) and the Trientistas from the CNT, is what is missing here. The Trientistas, lifelong anarcho-syndicalists, were opposed to the FAI's insurrectionary tactics. They argued for building the CNT as a mass organization aimed at a libertarian revolution. Expelled**

**from the CNT together with the local union sections that supported them, they asked what was the goal of the trade union? They declared revolution, and so were revolutionary syndicalists. But then asking themselves what kind of revolution, they declared a libertarian revolution. They called their organization the Libertarian Syndicalist Federation, and worked to reunite the CNT and develop internal democracy. The history of the rise of FAI substitutionism is as much an issue as what was done with it.**

Lenin, arguing with Bukharin on trade union autonomy, said "Everything from below is the anarchist way. But doesn't comrade Bukharin see that if the workers could vote on everything they might vote to do away with socialism?" This is indeed the core position which distinguishes anarchism from other approaches. Some of the problems Martinez Catalan examines come from too much rather than too little departure from this.

**Zaragoza Bound is a book with a lot of worthwhile information and challenging arguments. It's a book where the notes are an essential part of the book, containing more nuanced forms of the main arguments and extensive and valuable passages from many first hand accounts.**

However, for these very reasons, this isn't the best first book to read on the Spanish Revolution. George Orwell's "Homage to Catalonia" gives a better feel for the situation where, according to Orwell, the working class was in the saddle, and why that mattered. The Trotskyist Felix Morrow's "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain", written at the time, gives a fair, critical account of what happened. Ronald Fraser's oral history "The Blood of Spain" and Chris Ealham's "Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona 1898-1937" give modern academic accounts that capture the lived experience of the war and revolution.

**Despite these reservations, this is a valuable book, especially for anarchists. Its argument against anarchist views (which he often dismisses as anarchist dreams) of alternatives to the State, can lead to difficult conclusions. The flaw in the argument however is that it makes the differences between forms of overall social power appear irrelevant in the face of the need for a State. For Martinez Catalan there is no alternative. Yet the radical democracy of the Workers' Council system is such an alternative. One consistent with enabling the development of libertarian and democratic goals. One that can fail, but also one that can succeed.**

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## UKRAINE: CRISIS & WAR

**The Epstein coalition's aggression against Iran has overshadowed news of the war in Ukraine, which has completely disappeared from mainstream media, but continues to claim victims, making it appropriate to update the situation on the battlefield. Indeed, even websites specializing in military coverage of conflicts have focused their attention on the conflict in the Middle East, both because of its devastating consequences for the geopolitical structure of a vast and sensitive area of the planet and because of the**

**economic repercussions of the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.**

The Ukrainian issue is returning to the forefront, at times, in the form of extolling the results of a much-vaunted Ukrainian counter offensive, which supposedly led to "significant" territorial gains, as well as the conflict between Zelensky and Orban over Ukrainian sabotage of the Druzba gas and oil pipeline, and Orban's subsequent veto blocking the disbursement to Ukraine of the non-repayable grant of 90 billion Euros stolen from European welfare states to

continue financing the war, thus fueling the theft and endemic corruption prevalent in the country.

**The regime press is doing its utmost to express its jubilation over the aforementioned territorial gains, resulting from the counter attack launched by Syrsky's army, which involved a large swathe of territory on the border between Zaporizhia and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts. This counter attack involved a penetration of approximately 18 km in depth, affecting 100-150 km# of sparsely populated territory, transformed into disputed territory, with both Russian and Ukrainian forces.**

**See page 20**

**NEWS & NOTES**

Some of the most important news lately has been of course the Trump and Israel war with Iran. It has resulted in major rises in oil prices and a fuel crisis which is likely to worsen. The effect in Australia has been a soaring cost of living. Making a mockery of the Enterprise Bargaining “smoke and mirrors” performances and so called negotiations involving the corrupt ALP aligned union bosses of the corporate unions and employers. Particularly the so called wage rises associated with EBA's which are being demolished by the rising inflation.

Emphasising the importance of organising on the job in the strategic transport industries which can lead the way in a direct action campaign across industry to tackle the worsening standard of living workers are facing. In this context also take steps to establish a grass roots controlled and direct action alternative to the bureaucratic Corporate Unions entangled in the tentacles of the ALP Octopus. (See articles pages 2 & 3.)

In this edition, we throw more light on the expansion of Metros in Sydney and their role in a spiders' web of conspiracy entangling the NSW Government, the Corporate set up and the union hierarchy. (See article page 3.)

In this edition we also look at the situation in Region 6 of Sydney Buses, particularly the worsening problems with rosters drivers are facing and changes in management. (See article page 5.)

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**Where we stand:**

1. Our aim is to create a free and equal society.

2. We are a revolutionary labour movement that uses as its only means of struggle, direct action in all its forms: occupations. Strikes, boycotts, sabotage, etc. We are independent from all reformist and hierarchical unions and political parties, and we are creating an alternative to these and existing society. We do not seek to gain political power, but rather to see it distributed amongst all.

3. We are a network of anarcho-syndicalists practicing co-operation and mutual aid. We have an equal part in making decisions. Responsibilities within the network are subject to agreement by the members.

4. We are engaged in struggle where we work and where we live, to develop self managed production, distribution and servicing for the world community to meet human needs rather than profit. We give solidarity to others in their struggles.

5. We are fighting to abolish all authoritarian institutions such as the State (including its communist variety), capitalism, all hierarchical and oppressive divisions between people.

6. We have no country and are organised on an international basis in opposition to oppression everywhere. The ASN is striving to build a viable revolutionary syndicalist movement in Australia as part of a world wide movement able to meet the challenge of the global employer offensive.

**TO FIND OUT MORE:**  
I would like more information about the Anarcho-Syndicalist Network. Please send me information.  
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**REBEL WORKER  
Web Site:**

**www.rebelworker.org**

**Continued from page 18**

In other words, General Syrsky, at Zelensky's request, identified what might be called the "soft underbelly" of a 1,000 km front and attempted to achieve a quick, if fleeting, success there. The Russians, for their part, have allowed the Ukrainians to let off steam in this area, limiting themselves to containing them, in order to concentrate their efforts and resources on the unusually rapid advance for this war from Huliajpole, conquered by force, in the direction of Oriv and are dangerously approaching the city of Zaporizhia, advancing along the Dnieper.

**On another segment of the front, they are focusing their efforts on transforming the city of Pokrovsk into a strategic hub to fuel the advance toward the Dnipropetrovsk border, moving behind the cities of Kramatovsk and Slovyansk. This enveloping maneuver is unfolding while the city of Kostiantynivka is surrounded on three sides and has already been heavily infiltrated for months by Russian raiders operating in its southern and central districts. This is while drones, FABs, and glide bombs target the supply routes of the city garrison, which is constantly weakened by Russian artillery fire positioned on the highest salients in the surrounding territory.**

But moving further north, it becomes clear that Russian troops have already partially overwhelmed the first fortified defense line of the cities of Kramatovsk and Slovyansk on the southeastern front. After crossing the Donesk Canal, they have moved within 8 km of their objective, putting the two cities within range of artillery, fiber-optic drones, glide bombs, FABs, and other weapons. These cities have lost



their role as logistical hubs feeding the front, having themselves become part of the battlefield awaiting the infiltration. The administrative authorities of Slovyansk have ordered residents to urgently abandon the city. At the same time, the Russians are surrounding the city of Lyman on three sides. Lyman is now locked in a vise and close to a final assault, with some of its neighbourhoods already infiltrated by Russian army vanguards. The only other point of Ukrainian resistance that can be identified is the city of Kupyansk, largely retaken by the Ukrainians and where the front is now static, while the Russians are combing through pockets of Ukrainian troops in the surrounding area east of the Oskil River.

**It is therefore natural to ask whether Russia's objectives are still those stated in the negotiations or whether it is moving toward a rapid realignment, as evidenced by events on the battlefield and some rumours leaking out of Moscow, given Ukraine's reluctance to conclude the negotiations.**

**There is no doubt that the war in Ukraine is costly for Russia, and that a segment of its establishment, led by Putin himself, would like to end the conflict, contenting itself with achieving certain objectives such as what will remain of Ukraine,**

**its non-membership in NATO, the country's denazification, a military scaled down to numbers compatible with a policy of peace and good neighbourliness, and tolerance toward the canonical Orthodox Church.** Meanwhile, territorial demands can be scaled down to the boundaries outlined in the negotiations. But within Russia, there are those who opt for more radical solutions and believe that Russia's true security can only be achieved by acquiring a much larger portion of territory.

Those fanatics aspiring to Putin's death, so numerous among Europe's current ruling classes those who call for his poisoning, his succumbing to his alleged illnesses, those who hope he doesn't survive the internal pressure, and so on would do well to reconsider their calculations, given the risk of jumping from the frying pan into the fire and finding someone more intransigent in the Kremlin.

**If there's one lesson from both the Ukrainian and Iranian crises, it's that using "orange revolutions" to destabilize states with the scale of an empire and a historical memory that stems from their geographic location, their resources, their tradition, and their structural composition, is unsuitable for achieving this goal. In other words, the theorizations and desires of Brezinski and his cronies and followers on the dissolution of Russia and Iran were and are unrealizable dreams due to the economic, cultural and strategic factors that guide the development of history and relations between states.**

*Gianni Cimbalò*  
*Edited*