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Solidarity

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What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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



We stand for:

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

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Half the UK targeted for fracking

By Michael Johnson

On Monday 28 July, the Government announced that about half of the UK was now ripe for fracking, with energy firms encouraged to bid for on-shore oil and gas licenses for the first time in six years.

National parks, world heritage sites and areas of outstanding natural beauty are included in the sites advertised for exploration, though the government has said that such applications would be granted only "exceptional circumstances and in the public interest."

It is worrying that such sites would be considered for fracking at all — and the oversight is little consolation when it is the likely that the communities secretary Eric Pickles will be making the decisions on appeals over the next 12 months.

Political intervention from Pickles could be designed to preserve core Tory areas such as Hampshire, Surrey, Sussex and Kent at the expense of shale basins like the Bowland basin of the north-west and a central belt of Scotland. This would leave millions

of people facing what Greenpeace have called a "fracking postcode lottery".

Matthew Hancock, the Tory energy minister, wants to speed up the process so companies can start drilling within six months of putting in applications. This already follows tax breaks and other incentives designed to kick-start the industry.

Aside from local environmental damage, threats to water supplies, and the risk of triggering seismic events, the expansion of fracking makes a nonsense of the Coalition's legally-binding commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 50% against 1990 levels in the fourth carbon budget period 2023-27.

A Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research report in 2011 concluded that large-scale extraction of shale gas "cannot be reconciled" with climate change commitments to limit global temperature increases to 2°C.

This latest profit-driven drive to increase investment in fossil fuels flies in the face of ever more drastic climate change. It proves yet again that markets have no answer to the

environmental crisis, and that social ownership and democratic control of energy firms and resources is a critical necessity to save the planet.

This requires socialists to push the labour move-

ment to take up environmental issues, and create a mass working-class climate movement for democratic control over energy, fighting for green jobs and a sustainable energy policy.



Free Shahrokh Zamani and Reza Shahabi!
Despite the rain there was a good turnout at the demonstration to Free Iranian Trade unionists, Shahrokh Zamani and Reza Shahabi (25 July).

Both comrades have been unjustly imprisoned for over three years simply for their involvement in trade unions.

Nearly forty of us gathered outside the Iranian Embassy in Knightsbridge and made our presence known with placards and speeches. The demonstration was uninterrupted by Embassy security even though we covered the entrance with posters demanding the release of political prisoners in Iran.

It is important to show solidarity with the prisoners, especially as Reza Shahabi is currently on hunger strike and has been since the beginning of July. There will be more demos in support of Zamani and Shahabi coming up, details of which will be on the Worker's Liberty website.

Holly Rigby-Lewenstein

Italy: 1.2 million more poor in one year

Rich & poor
By Hugh Edwards



In 2007 2.4 million Italians were living in a state of "absolute poverty", a condition officially defined in Italy as "lacking the means to acquire the goods and services considered essential to a standard of living minimally necessary to subsist."

Between 2007 and 2012 the figure doubled as the global financial crisis bit deeper.

The latest report from Italy's national statistics office records further freefall last year.

In one year an astonishing 1,200,000 more people — 303,000 families! — have become victims of the crisis, become part of the so-called "absolute poor".

There are therefore now six million or 9.9% of the

population who do not have enough money to live on.

Further, those described as living in "relative poverty" are 10 million or 16.6% of the population. The stark reality is that 17 millions — one in five families in the eighth richest country in the world have been condemned to a level of misery suffering and rejection.

This has to be seen as the latest indictment of the paralysis and impotence of the country's trade union movement and those who laughably describe themselves as "the radical left" (or the movement, autonomists etc).

As elsewhere in the world those who are bearing the brunt are the young, especially those with families — for whom platoons of politicians from the left and right have wept tears of pity and congratulated themselves on putative ameliorative anti-poverty measures. But as another recent report from one of the country's leading

charities underlines these measures have merely scratched the surface, and at worst added to the numbers of poor.

Italy's chronic ad hoc approach to matters of public and social welfare makes things worse. Along with Greece, Italy is the only other EU country without a programme of universal minimal welfare provision. While the system remains unreformed its ramshackle edifice of occasional, badly designed and poorly directed palliatives falls under the axe of austerity.

The poverty figures are but the most extreme evidence of the state of things in the country.

The buying power of the average salary is now that of 1988, and unlike other countries in the grip of the crisis, where a sharpening of social inequality between the social classes has occurred, Italy has seen a massive generalised decline in living standards of its

working and middle classes right along the spectrum of social strata.

All but the most obscenely, parasitically wealthy of the capitalist classes are significantly worse off. Among those I referred to as "the poor" are tens of thousands of people in employment, signalling graphically the capitalist success in eroding the power of labour.

Ironically the poverty report highlights the fact that although the elderly too saw the conditions of life further deteriorate, compared to the young it has been less. The regular pension afforded some sense of security. In fact the only counter-poverty measure in seven years of crisis turned out to be the indexation of the pensions of the lowest-paid elderly.

That surely puts the cap on the argument about the crisis of the Italian working class movement.

Where now for Brazil?

By Raquel Palmeira

The World Cup has just ended in Brazil. Contrary to what we might expect the political situation remains, with the exception of the struggles of normally active groups, very calm and steady.

This is, however, definitely not due to a lack of good reasons to protest.

In the social media the changes were quick to be noted: the most common hashtags went from #NÃOVAITERCOPA (There will not be a World Cup) and #COPAPRAQUEM? (World Cup for whom?) to #VAITERCOPASIM (There will be a World Cup).

Bit-by-bit, both the leftists and the conservative elite whom insisted there would not be a World Cup, got caught up in the football fever and the voices on the streets were silenced by patriotism.

"If we supported the national team during the dictatorship, why the hell wouldn't we support it now?" said a famous socialist journalist on Facebook. While a left protester said "If there is nobody here (protesting) I might as well go home and watch the match. Nobody is made of steel".

During the World Cup the heckles to the president by the white unrepresentative elite, the heckles to the Brazilian player that chose to be on the Spanish national team and the minuscule demonstration of 20 to 40 people that were repressed by the police in a cowardly fashion with bombs of tear gas and arbi-



World Cup protests didn't last

trary arrests seemed to be the closest we could get to protests.

Nothing was said about the people evicted from their own houses for the stadiums to be build, the unsafe working conditions that lead to tragic deaths of construction workers of the stadiums, or the homeless people that had water jets directed on them, and their belongings thrown away in the "sanitation" process to prepare the country for the World Cup.

HOPE
Before the World Cup started, however, a few demonstrations gave us some hope.

The most prominent example was the protest that united thousands of people on the streets of São Paulo to support the MTST (Movement of Homeless workers).

The movement was victorious, winning their demands from the government. This included: a new housing project in the current occupation "Copa do Povo" (Cup of

the people) near the Itaquera Stadium and more control to the workers and organised popular movements in the government housing project "Minha Casa Minha Vida".

These victories stimulated more protests by the MTST, this time going further. Recent protests demanded better public transport, access and telephone service in periphery areas from both the government and private companies.

Unfortunately victories were not enough to spark a new wave of protests in Brazil. Whilst some people were only disturbed by the protests, complaining about how unsafe they felt, some, I believe, got scared of going to the streets to protest and have their voices co-opted by the media to back up their own criticism to the government, in an election year.

The Workers' Party (PT) government does get criticism, but the media is not pointing out poor efforts at the agrarian reform, for instance. Instead, it is criticising social programmes that were actually successful. Thus, if protests break out and have the same limited broad demands, it's almost certain that the PT candidate would lose the elections, leaving us an unpalatable alternative — a right wing candidate.

One campaign caught my eye back in June, mostly for its participation in social media.

The campaign calls for a plebiscite to commence a political reform. Excitingly, some of the topics covered by the proposed political reform are directly con-

nected with the problems recent social movements have had in Brazil.

One of them, the regulation of media, would stop monopolies in the communications industry, prohibit the ownership of media means by empowered politicians, and regulate the balance between public, community and private control of the radios, television and press media.

This measure would only reinforce what is already in the Brazilian constitution and create more liberty for any social movements to organise without having their demands highjacked and transformed by the press.

The other important demand of the campaign is the public financing of electoral campaigns. This would stop private companies from "sponsoring" politicians and getting their way once they are elected, and aid the end of the eternal dichotomy between PT and PSDB (the self-denominated Brazilian Social Democratic Party, but in fact is liberal right wing). It might also help the growth of smaller less powerful, and potentially more radical parties in the elections.

Although the political situation in Brazil is unpredictable, and the calmness of the World Cup might lead us to be quite pessimistic, strong changes have happened since June.

However, any mass movements would still be likely to be taken over; it is left for me to hope that we will have the political maturity to sustain demands independent of media control or electoral interests.

Support Al-Jazeera journalists!

By Gerry Bates

An Egyptian court which jailed three journalists for "spreading false news" has issued a statement explaining its decision.

Mohamed Fadel Fahmy, Baher Mohamed and Peter Geste, who work for the Al-Jazeera news network, were given jail sentences of seven to ten years after reporting on the brutal repression of Muslim Brotherhood supporters following the military coup of 2013.

The court said that the journalists had "falsified the truth" and that "the devil guided them to use journalism and direct it towards activities against this nation."

The military regime in Egypt believes that Al Jazeera works on behalf of Qatar, where the network is based. The Qatari government was close to the Morsi government, and condemned the army's massacre of over a thousand

Brotherhood supporters.

Several other journalists were convicted in absentia by the same court, and are now unable to return to Egypt without risking capture and imprisonment.

In an interview with Prezz Gazette, Al Jazeera journalist Dominic Kane said that he is now unable to visit around 75 countries where he fears he would be handed over to the Egyptian authorities. Since those tried in absentia have not handed themselves in, the sentence will hang over them for the rest of their lives, unless a pardon is granted.

Media trade unions around the world continue to campaign for the release of the three prisoners.

In the UK, members of the National Union of Journalists held a protest on 16 July. The imprisonment represents an attack on free speech and a free press, and an attempt by a military regime to scare journalists away from reporting on its crimes.

Homophobia: a colonial legacy

By Kate Harris

As the Commonwealth Games gets underway in Glasgow, various LGBTI rights groups have been raising awareness about the oppression of LGBTI people in the countries taking part.

In 42 out of the 53 Commonwealth countries, same-sex relationships are a crime. In northern Nigeria, some states have the death penalty. The Commonwealth Charter does not mention LGBTI rights.

Edwin Sesange, from the Out and Proud Diamond Group, writes in Gay Star News, "This isn't about abstract 'laws'. Legislation wrecks LGBTI people's lives, even leaving some of them dead. Millions of our [LGBTI] brothers and sisters risk police harassment and possible imprisonment, which may come with beatings and torture.

"They are discriminated against at work, refused basic services and shunned at home. They suffer entrapment, blackmail and extortion. They are targets of 'honour' killings, forced marriages, and 'corrective' rapes, alongside a range of other methods to 'cure' them of their sexuality or gender identity. And when mob justice isn't visited upon them by the family, it is by their community."

It doesn't stop there. Sesange continues, "Some are forced to flee, leaving them homeless, with all the risks associated with that or even seeking asylum, where the countries they hope to find shelter often reject them, sending them back to their potential death." Laws restricting freedom of speech mean that groups cannot distribute information about sexual health, leading to worsening HIV rates.

Last year trans teenager Dwayne Jones was brutally murdered in Jamaica, and Cameroonian gay rights activist Eric Lembebe was killed in Yaounde. In 2011, Ugandan activist David Kato was murdered shortly after winning a lawsuit against a magazine which had published his name and photograph and called for him to be executed. There are many others, whose names we may not know.

New legislation in Uganda, Nigeria and India has been in the news, and rightly so, but most of these laws are the legacy of British colonialism. Commonwealth countries make up over half of states worldwide where there are homophobic laws.

Victorian colonialists publicly justified their plans by saying they were taking the three C's to Africa: commerce, civilisation and Christianity. More than a century later, evangelical Christians in the US look to some Ugandan churches as models of gay-bashing Christianity.

The British state's collusion with and enforcement of homophobic oppression in the former Empire is ongoing: partly due to a lack of action taken on issues of LGBTI rights, but also by refusing to grant asylum to LGBT refugees.

LGBTI rights groups are calling for the UK government and Games organisers to speak up and for UK activists and sportspeople to show solidarity. The left should be at the forefront of showing solidarity to the brave activists fighting for LGBTI rights in the Commonwealth.

London-based readers should come to the Solidarity Sounds gig and help raise money for the Rainbow International Solidarity Fund. 30 July, 7.30pm at Union Chapel, N1.

- Out and Proud Diamond Group: www.opdg.org
- Rainbow International: www.rainbow-international-fund.org
- Peter Tatchell Foundation: www.petertatchellfoundation.org
- Nigerian LGBTI Diaspora: <http://nigerianlgbtindiaspora.wordpress.com>
- Movement for Justice: www.movementforjustice.org
- UK Gay and Lesbian Immigration Group: www.ilga.org

Syriza shifts to the right

By Theodora Polenta

Syriza's (Coalition of the Radical Left) Central Committee meeting on 21-22 June was a turning point for the organisation.

Although the meeting was to evaluate recent electoral results (local and European elections), the debate was primarily concerned about a new wave of radicalisation and the tactical and strategic steps that a government of the left would need. Especially one dialectically connected with a combative working-class movement, with a "transitional" perspective on how to achieve general social liberation and socialism.

Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras and other high profile members of the leadership team presented, without much spin, a proposal for a right shift in Syriza focusing on the task of destroying the government's plan to get the enough MPs (180) to elect a President of the Republic and thus avoid early parliamentary elections.

Syriza leaders want cooperation with PASOK (Panhellenic Socialist Movement) and independent MPs and the direct inclusion within Syriza of DIMAR (Democratic Left). Tsipras said that even MPs that have previously voted for the two memoranda and all the austerity policies are welcome.

This was presented as a comprehensive plan for how Syriza could govern, but with many possibilities on the range of alliances open. The shift is based on the misplaced analysis that Syriza has reached the limits of its influence on the left and therefore should seek to gain the "hegemony" of an illusory middle ground. In place of the "government of the left" the Syriza leadership are now talking about a "broad coalition of powers".

Syriza have already put forward two ideas, that prepare a shift to the right: "Saving the country" and "productive reconstruction." Nebulous references to these goals describe a "stage" where Syriza, can cooperate with broader social and political forces, postponing the programme and the commitments of the "government of the left" for an undefined future.

The leadership's final proposal got a majority, albeit less decisive than the usual 70%-30% majority.

To the draft proposal the "Left Platform" submitted two amendments: one on the reconstruction and democratic functioning of Syriza and the relationship between Syriza's leadership and the rank-and-file; the second was on the centrality of the "government of the left" and the political urgency of the united front of the radical left. The first amendment was accepted and incorporated in the final decision, while the second was put to a vote.

From the second amendment of the Left Platform:

"Syriza will also seek joint action and cooperation with forces and persons from the social democratic space who have not been involved with positions of responsibility in implementing the neo-liberal memorandum policies and who have been radicalised and shifted to the left.

"Syriza keeps an open front against the centre-left, which is the other side of the neo-liberal social democracy, and expressly excludes all forms of cooperation with forces and persons who voted, supported and implemented in parliament or under government jobs and positions of responsibility the memorandum and neo-liberal policies, which destroyed and impoverished the country, the working class people and popular strata."

The above amendment got 59 votes in favour, 84 against, 4 blank votes and 7 abstentions. The Left Platform did not vote in favour of the majority Central Committee's final decision. Of the 200 members of the Central Committee over 50 did not participate in the vote at all or did not vote either for or against.

The Left Platform's attempt to reject the centre left orientation of Syriza highlights the essential internal processes and political and ideological battles within Syriza.

Over the weekend, a number of speakers shared their experiences and conclusions of the recent electoral campaigns, highlighting weaknesses and wrong choices made by Syriza's leadership. Many members of the Central Committee spoke critically of the overall political shift of Syriza's leadership and criticized, often very harshly, the selections of certain Syriza's candidates (those that came from the centre left and are were part of the memorandum policies) as well as the decision making process outside the parties

elected organ and bodies, highlighting the problems in the democratic and collective functioning of the party.

The criticism also came from members politically close to Syriza's leadership. The switch to "realism" and attempt to establish new political geography within Syriza will herald re-arrangements in the intra-party correlations. This is expressed by the new group within Syriza, the "53 Central Committee members" initiative which submitted a text prior to the meeting but chose not to submit alternative amendments.

THE DOCUMENT OF THE 53

The document of the 53 constitutes a clear differentiation, if not a rupture with the choices of the leadership team. The document of the 53 raises two issues: the first relates to the functioning of the party and its internal democratic procedures. The second is the political orientation of Syriza and its shift to the right.

There are a number of issues of democracy from who gets to make the key decisions to how Syriza is adopting the slogans and catchphrases of the class opponents like Nea Ellada/New Greece (neaellada.gr).

And in Syriza's rank and file there is great concern about the speed in which the leadership is overwriting previous conference decisions.

But on political matters, the document of "The 53", is quite diplomatic and timid. However their stance on the intra-party struggle, and their "practice" in the everyday life of the party is important. This is especially so if one observes that all the leftist opposition tendencies of the Left Platform, ANASA and AREN (the main forces in the 53) have a majority within Syriza.

On the other hand, the left opposition needs to realise the leadership has two main advantages against them

The first is that it has a "clean" and coherent economic and political direction which is not characteristic of the left opposition of Syriza, at least in its entirety.

Secondly, within the conflict between Syriza's leadership and its left opposition, the leadership will have the full support of the establishment and the media.

The document of "The 53" was co-written by major members of AREN, (Aristeri Enotita, or Left Bloc) who are the "backbone" of the President's majority, so there are ambivalences.

The final decision on alliances states on the one hand that Syriza should persevere an aim to be the government of the left, to try to forge a united front with the Communist Party and ANTARSYA (Anti-Capitalist Co-operation for the Overthrow) and other forces of the radical left; and on the other hand recognise as potential allies top executives of social democracy who have recently (or not yet) differentiated from PASOK. This is in contradiction with the previous decisions of Syriza.

This is a clear opening to the forces of PASOK, and not the rank and file of PASOK and/or the PASOK working class voters (not much left of them) but the leaders of PASOK.

The Left Platform as a whole and the Red Network in particular, highlighted the dangers of Syriza backtracking. They highlighted that the shift to centre-left not only does not preserve any hegemonic role for the radical left line, but opens the door to wider cooperations and governments of "national unity" and "grand coalitions" which inevitably lead to historical compromises and defeats similar in magnitude to those of the PCI (Italian Communist Party) in Italy in the 1970s and the Greek EDA (United Democratic Left) in the 1950s and 1960s.

Meanwhile the government's story that after the restructuring of the government the "new" ministers will be looking to offer some token "relaxation" of the memorandum policies has now been forgotten. Schaeuble, the Eurogroup and the Troika says "reforms" must continue. Bills to do that job are now being written. The most prominent example is the vote for further privatisation of the energy industry DEH and the subsequent civil mobilisation order against the DEH strikers.

Syriza does have an alternative. This is to form a united front with the radical left and to escalate the working-class resistance. By forming a united front in the strikes and the anti-fascist movement we can give the final blow to the crumbling New Democracy and PASOK government ensuring that the cleaners, the ERT workers, the public sector workers

under the "availability" (redeployment/redundancy) scheme, the DEH workers, the hospital workers, the university striking admin staff and the Coca Cola workers are victorious. Proving that the future lies within a more anti-capitalist left rather than to a collaborationist bowing to the deflated life of Samaras left.

In a speech to business leaders Tsipras denounced the policies of "privatization of profits and socialization of losses", but without taking a breath, he also pledged to "support innovative private investment", "reduce the price of electricity for the energy intensive industry", "taxation of profits and not of the components of production" (this means taxation of wealth but exemption of capital — a commitment that they have not dared to utter to bourgeois politicians with such universal form), and "elimination of state bureaucracy for the business entrepreneurs".

On the other hand, "decently paid work" was simple reset at the minimum wage level of survival threshold (750 euros), while the restoration of industrial relations, proved that it is nothing more than the restoration of Metenergeia (commitment to collective agreements six months after expiry), as if the collective bargaining agreements have not been dismantled. Such efforts show the Syriza's leadership shift and the party's orientation towards social democratic politics and for Syriza to be portrayed as a "responsible" and a party encouraging "development" from a capitalist power standpoint.

But it alienates and causes frustration in the ranks of workers as well as undermining the prospects of the formation of a government of Syriza. Attempts to win the support of the Greek bourgeoisie or a portion of it, the imaginary productive capitalist class, can only be successful if the social democratic orientation of Syriza is completed and the party's leadership proceed in the formation of a bourgeois government within the context of continuation of austerity and anti-working class attacks. But this will lead to loss of support of the working class masses and the collapse of such a government.

THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT

It is important to recall that the slogan that elevated Syriza in the elections of May and June 2012 was none other than "the government of the left". The leadership of Syriza seem to want to forget it in every possible way.

So the shift to the right of Syriza (if is not stopped) will be detrimental for the working class and will lead to another historical irrecoverable defeat. It cannot persuade the ruling class. It will alienates further Syriza's rank and file and working class supporters.

The Left Platform, ANASA and AREN (Left Bloc) should coordinate their action and seek common coordinates. All three tendencies want to put a brake on the leadership shift to the right. Combined together they have the majority and they can halt these developments. Each one on their own runs the risk of being defeated by Syriza's leadership.

The left opposition of Syriza should:

- form a united front of all left wing tendencies and poles within Syriza (with each separate tendency retaining its autonomy)
- process a programme (economic and political) around a way out from the crisis, based on socialist policies and a programme of transitional demands under workers' power and control.

And the left outside Syriza, has a class responsibility and duty to support in every way, in coordination and comradely consultation, the battles that the left opposition gives within Syriza.



“The left had no strategy and the right did”

Miguel Perez, a Lisbon-based socialist activist and historian who delivered a talk on the Portuguese Revolution of 1974-5, spoke to *Solidarity* about his view of events.

Why was there so much left-wing ferment in the Portuguese officer corps in the 1970s? Why did Portugal's colonial war have such a big effect on the officer corps, the army and society?

The colonial wars in Africa exhausted the state. People found themselves pushed into a war they didn't want. The officers knew, by looking at the experience that French colonialism had been through in Algeria, that the war could not be won. So they organised a movement and took power.

Why was this possible?

The weight of students within the army — often, students who had been conscripted, frequently as punishment for subversive activities — had an effect on its character. Conscripted students would be signed up as “milicianos”, the lowest rank of junior officer.

The Portuguese army had a certain radical tradition which dated back to the 1st Republic of 1910 to 1926, and earlier wars against absolutists in the 19th century. The Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) was the main political opposition force from the 1940s. While Maoist dissident groups, who appeared from the 1960s, called for soldiers to desert, the PCP argued for people to stay and organise in the army. The subversive process was sped up by what happened at the front in Africa. Every front was organised into a number of small sub-sectors, within which armed units enjoyed some autonomy.

What was the PCP aiming for in 1974-5? At least in their own heads?

The PCP defended the idea of an insurrection to overthrow the dictatorship. But in the 1960s, there was a change of emphasis: they elaborated a radical democratic programme: a 9-point plan for democracy and land reform. In the revolution, the PCP was confronted by the question of taking power. But from the 1960s, they basically maintained their “national democratic revolution” line: the Stalinist “stage theory” of taking power. In the 1980s there was some change in a more conventional European-Stalinist direction.

What was the “Cuban model”?

The PCP tried to influence the army in the direction of the model of the Cuban revolution, whereby the Communist Party came to hold much administrative power following a military coup, but without itself leading an insurrection. Their hope was for the creation of a new state within which the PCP could be hegemonic. The PCP was the only organisation on the left in 1974 with real, tested and experienced cadres. I think that the Cuban experience, where the revolution happened at first without the CP, and where the CP was at first outside events, was an important experience for the PCP. It was a warning to them to remain, as they understood it, inside the process.

Was the revolutionary left right to support the 5th Provisional Government in 1975, via the FUR (Revolutionary Unity Front)?

The FUR Front is the only case of an alliance between a pro-Soviet CP and far left parties in this period. It is often seen as a victory for the far left. In fact, the far left was being led along by the CP. They had arrived at a point where they didn't know what to do. The right was gaining ground for their programme, the far left didn't know what to do — so they went along with the FUR — the Front consisted of the PCP, the MDP (the former democratic opposition), the MES (Guevarists), the PRP, LUAR (Guerillierist), the LCI (Fourth International Trotskyists). The LCI was important in the secondary school students' union, and in the rank and file soldiers' movement in Autumn 1975. After the PCP left the Popular Unity Front, a few days after its inauguration, it took the name Revolutionary Unity Front.

What is your assessment of the PRP?

They were important in the Armed Forces Movement. They influenced the officers but had no real political line. But they were very theatrical. They had a putschist strategy. The PRP were eclectic — they sympathised with Third-World-



A mural in Lisbon depicts the Portuguese revolution

ism, Maoism, Guevarism, Trotskyism. I think Third-Worldist is the best way to describe them.

Why did the Eanes coup (of November 1975) suppress the revolutionary ferment so easily?

The whole Left in Portugal expected the Armed Forces Movement to protect the whole revolutionary movement from physical violence. But the left had no strategy — in particular, no military strategy — and the right did. The PCP had a strategy of “legalising the revolution”, or “institutionalising the revolution”. The Armed Forces Movement simply had no plan to fight the coup. The 25 November coup was carried out by 200 soldiers in Lisbon. The left, which numbered easily 1,500, did nothing.

On 25 April 1974, when the initial left-wing coup was carried out, the hierarchical principle of the army was broken. This weakened the discipline of the army. The Armed Forces Movement (MFA) was made up of junior officers, and it was not in step with the workers' councils (CTs) and neighbourhood committees which sprang up in the revolution. The name of the rank and file soldiers' organisation was SUV, which stood for “Soldiers United Will Win”. Only when the MFA turned to the right in September 1975 did the SUV appear. It was a project of the far left — a project of the Trotskyists. It created soldiers' committees in the barracks, rather than basing itself on officers. It organised huge demonstrations in the final stages of the revolution. The PCP intervened in these demonstrations with their politics too. The PCP line was to support the leftwing officers; the far left had a class position on the army question — for control by soldiers' committees. This class line in the SUV had been pushed by the Trotskyists. The LCI had many debates on their governmental slogans.

What do I think socialists should have said during the revolution? As an historian, I try not to speculate. Maybe you had to have many different lines during the period. Initially, organising and centralising the CTs and neighbourhood committees, and then, from a certain point, to have taken a turn towards arming the committees with the support of the army, and having a revolutionary policy to win over some of the officers and neutralise the others, and to advocate a government of the CTs.

Moving towards today's politics of the left in Portugal — why do you think the Left Bloc did so disappointingly in the Euro Elections?

There are some important internal features of the Left Bloc.

It has some organisational problems, and some problems with its social roots. It works like an electoral machine and only appears for a short time around elections. But you need more than good posters, good leaflets and good speeches to succeed.

The trend of the social movement is also a factor. In 2011-2012, there had been the biggest demonstrations since the revolution. And in October 2013, the main TU [trades unions] federation, CGTP [General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers], called for a demo across the bridges of Lisbon and Oporto. But in Lisbon, the government didn't organise the demo. The CGTP tried to cross the bridge, but did not succeed. This was a turning point, and the demonstrations declined from this point. That could be seen as an indictment of the CGTP leadership, but in reality it is not. If it hadn't been that incident, it would have been something else. It is difficult to mobilise the workers' movement right now.

What do you think about Greece?

I want to see a Syriza government, and to see what a Syriza government would do. In Greece there have been many general strikes. In Portugal there have been a lot as well, though not so many. But they only really mobilise public sector workers, disrupt public transport: they have not resolved the situation. In Greece, there is a greater continuity of struggle going back many years.

There seems to have been a right-wing, anti-migrant shift in Northern European politics. What about Portugal?

This phenomenon does not exist meaningfully in Portugal, and only at a very low level in Spain. The Portuguese people could have blamed the mass privatisations and sackings on the EU. The EU's high court mandated the full privatisation of public sector firms, quashing a law which safeguarded 51% public ownership. But they did not blame the EU!

There is a widespread understanding that leaving the EU is not a solution. Portuguese people remember the 1970s and the misery and hunger which preceded integration into the EU.

After Portugal entered the EU in 1986, there was a high level of investment.

The policy of a left government should be to do things which would see you expelled from the EU — not to leave on your own. The Syriza approach on this question is right. To defend anti-EU policies in the UK is very dangerous — the PCP has this position in Portugal.

Challenging anti-semitism on the Gaza demonstration

Letters



On the 26 July London demonstration against Israel's assault on Gaza, I confronted a man who was carrying a placard which read "Research: The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion", with an image of a Star of David, dripping blood, with "666" in the centre.

The Protocols are an anti-semitic forgery dating from Tsarist Russia, which purport to expose a Jewish conspiracy to dominate the world. They were used in their time, and have been used since, to whip up racist hatred, often violent, against Jews.

I confronted the man, and in the course of what I said, I mentioned that I was Jewish.

"Well, you're blinded by your bias because you're a Jew", he said. "Only Jews make the arguments you're making."

Several onlookers were drawn in, and while some supported me, others backed him up. Their defences ranged from, "he's opposing Zionists, not Jews", to "he's not racist, Zionism is racist!", to the perhaps more honest "Jews are the problem. If you're a Jew, you're racist, you're what we're demonstrating against." One man, topless, but wearing a balaclava, said "fuck off, unless you want your fucking head kicked in."

Explicit anti-Jewish racism of the kind displayed on the man's placard has been rare on Palestine solidarity demonstrations in Britain. But as recent events in France and Germany have shown, there are anti-semites in the global Palestine solidarity movement, and ones prepared to violently express their anti-Semitism. That must not be allowed to infect the movement in Britain. If people with such politics want to attend solidarity demonstrations to peddle them, they should find themselves isolated, and face constant harassment.

While outward displays of "classical" anti-Semitism are rare, subtler themes are more common. Placards and banners comparing the Israeli state to Nazism, and its occupation of Palestine to the Holocaust, and images melding or replacing the Star of David with swastikas, are, while far from universal, more frequent. The politics of this imagery, too, has an anti-Semitic logic.

Nazism and the Holocaust – an experience of attempted industrialised genocide, just two generations distant – left deep scars on Jewish identity and collective cultural memory and consciousness, wounds that will take a long time to heal.

As others have written recently (see Sarah McCulloch's blog, here: bit.ly/israel-nazis), no other ethno-cultural group has the most traumatic experience in its history exploited in this way. The fact that those who take such placards on demonstrations intend only to target the Israeli government, and not Jews in general, is no defence or excuse. The barbarism of Israeli state policy does not make the Jewishness of its government fair game, any more than Barack Obama's imperialism excuses racist attacks on him.

To describe the Palestinian solidarity movement, as such, as "anti-semitic" would be a calumny. Undoubtedly, the vast majority of marchers attended because they want to oppose Israel's current assault on Gaza. The movement includes many Jews (and not just the theocratic reactionaries of Neturei Karta, but secular-progressive Jews too), and many sincere anti-racists. But a situation where anyone thinks it appropriate to carry such a placard, where he can find sup-

porters, and where such people can openly racially abuse Jewish demonstrators who challenge them, is not tolerable and must be addressed.

Right-wingers in the Jewish community will use instances of anti-semitism to discredit the Palestinian cause, and dissuade Jews from acting to support it. On this, instrumental, level, anti-semitism harms the Palestinians. But racism should have no place in any solidarity movement, not because it's bad PR, but because the politics of solidarity should be anathema to any form of racism.

It is now common in the left-wing blogosphere for articles which contain potentially traumatic content to carry "trigger warnings", alerting those who have experienced particular traumas that something in the article might trigger painful memories of their experience. To attend a demonstration where Nazism and the Holocaust, the worst and most traumatic of Jewish collective experience, is used as a cheap propaganda tool, and openly anti-semitic placards are carried and defended, while those challenging them are racially abused, must surely be "triggering" for many Jews. But we can't put trigger warnings on demonstrations, or on life. All we can do is work to win hegemony for a political culture where such things are confronted and pushed back.

Finally, a "historical" note on placards on Palestine solidarity demonstrations. In 2009, during Operation Cast Lead, some Workers' Liberty members in Sheffield (three of us, incidentally, Jewish) took placards on a demonstration against the assault which, amongst other things, said "No to IDF, no to Hamas." I now think, for various reasons, that our slogan was misjudged. But no-one attempted to engage us in debate or discussion about it; we were simply screamed at, called (variously) "scabs" and "Zionists", and told we must immediately leave the demo (we didn't). Our placards were ripped out of our hands and torn to pieces.

I wouldn't particularly advocate physically destroying the man's placard, or attempting to physically drive him and his supporters off the demonstration. But a movement in which "no to IDF, no to Hamas" is considered beyond the pale even for debate and discussion, and must be violently confronted, but a placard promoting The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion can be carried without challenge, even for a moment, and its carrier find numerous defenders, needs to change its political culture.



A protester on the Gaza demonstration invokes the anti-semitic Protocols of the Elders of Zion hoax

Daniel Randall, North East London
Abridged from: bit.ly/anti-S-placard

Good riddance to the "fake sheikh"

Press

By Liam McNulty



The career of the Sun reporter and so-called "fake sheikh" Mazher Mahmood looks to be in tatters, after a judge ruled that he seems to have lied under oath in the trial of musician Tulisa Contostavlos.

Mahmood has made a career out of entrapping celebrities in sting operations, and claims to have been responsible for stories that have seen hundreds of people imprisoned.

There can be genuine public interest in undercover sting operations. Arms trading, corrupt politicians, human trafficking — all can reasonably be justified in the public interest.

But there was neither public interest, nor journalistic merit, in the set-up of Tulisa Contostavlos. Mahmood encouraged her to set up a £800 cocaine deal between himself a friend of the former X-Factor judge.

The Sun then ran a series of front-page splashes, exhaustive centre-page coverage, and an online video, about Contostavlos having been "sensationally arrested... after an undercover operation by the Sun."

The case parallels that of one-time television actor John Alford, whose career was wrecked by Mahmood in 1997 in very similar circumstances when he was aged just 25.

In the case of Contostavlos, who says she contemplated suicide after the sting, it is accompanied by no small amount of old-fashioned class hatred.

Marina Hyde of the *Guardian* compiled the following: "Tulisa really is a chav in a tracksuit as she goes to Tesco for late-night shopping," observes the *Daily Mail* on one occasion. "You look like council estate Barbie," runs another *Daily Mail* offering, adding that "Tulisa shows uncanny resemblance to Little Britain chav Vicky Pollard". Then we've "X Factor judge Tulisa Contastavlos shows off her 'chav' fashion style" in the *Sun*, and "Tulisa reveals chavvy tattoo in skimpy bikini" in the *Mirror*."

Since when was it news that famous people have access to class A drugs? Indeed, entrap a random twenty-something on the street and the odds of a successful "undercover operation" are pretty high.

This is hardly the stuff of Woodward and Bernstein, and the Watergate break-in — it's easy, unimaginative and hypocritical moralism from the likes of Murdoch's *Sun*.

No, such cruel sting operations represent the slow death of British tabloid journalism, fighting the circulation wars like rats in a sack.

This deliberate humiliation of young and often women celebrities to manufacture mass media spectacles cheapens journalism and demeans public life.

Good riddance to the "fake sheikh".

Come to Workers' Liberty summer camp!

Over the long weekend of 14-17 August, the AWL will be hosting its fourth annual summer camp at Height Gate Farm, near Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire.

The camp is a weekend away for members and friends of Workers' Liberty. There will be workshops and discussion, food, drink, music, games and fun in the countryside.

This year, many workshops and discussion have been organised around the broad theme of "arguing for socialism". Each topic will be tackled in a systematic way, "from top to bottom" and will provide insight for people with little knowledge and depth for those with a greater understanding.

The cost of the weekend, including food, is £15 unwaged or school students, £20 low waged or uni students, and £30 waged.

For the agenda, other information and to book a ticket, go to www.workersliberty.org/camp

Israel: stop the war on Gaza!

As we publish (29 July) over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed and more than 6,000 injured since Israel began its assault on Gaza on 8 July. Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu has just stated Israel's military campaign will continue for some time, and that he has no intention of heeding calls for a ceasefire.

The UN says 73% of the Palestinian fatalities are civilian, and over 200 are children. Some neighbourhoods have been destroyed, homes have been turned to rubble. Much of Gaza is now without electricity.

Before the conflict Gaza was poor and isolated with over 40% living below the official poverty line. Now things are even worse.

On the Israeli side 43 soldiers and three civilians have been killed. The difference in the numbers of dead is a stark indication of the disparity in power.

Israel says it wants to stop the rockets fired from Gaza by Islamist fighters and destroy tunnels that could or have been used to attack Israel. Israel says it has the right to defend itself.

Israel does have the right to defend itself, but its actions go far beyond reasonable self-defence. Israeli forces have killed more Palestinian children than Palestinian fighters. The destruction in Gaza is enormous.

Israel says it has no interest in causing Palestinian civilian casualties and that Hamas has caused the Palestinian casualties by siting rockets, weapons and fighters near schools, hospitals and in built up areas.

No doubt Israel is not actively seeking civilian deaths. But the casualty figures show that the Israeli state does not care very much about killing Palestinian civilians, either.

Suppose it is true that Hamas has its weapons stores in or near a school, say, which is also housing refugees. Then the IDF has a choice: destroy the weapons and accept many civilians will die, or not. The IDF has chosen to fight ruthlessly in Gaza, understanding that a large number of innocent Palestinians will be killed as a consequence.

And if Israel has the right to defend itself, surely the Palestinians do too? Of course. Except that launching rockets at Israeli civilians is not self-defence. During the last three weeks Hamas has launched over 2000 rockets at Israel but most have been repelled by Israel's sophisticated anti-missile system, causing little damage and relatively few deaths. Hamas's rockets do cause real fear among Israeli civilians, but as such are just a political gift for the Israeli right.

Even in its own terms, it is difficult to see how this "rocket strategy" can work. Is Israel going to collapse or settle because of these missiles? Of course not. These rockets just make things worse.

A section of the British left has cheered the rockets on. They do so because they don't care what happens to Israel civil-



Against the tide: Israeli anti-war demonstration Tel Aviv

ians, and don't care if the Israeli right is strengthened. Such people are Hamas's "useful idiots," obsessed by doing damage to what they oppose, and with little concern to think about or advocate a positive, lasting, democratic solution.

And the rockets undermine the efforts of the Israeli left which is fighting for peace. 6,000 protested in Tel Aviv on Saturday 26 July — harassed and attacked by right-wing Israeli thugs — demanding an end to the Israeli war. These people are brave and important allies, the left in Britain should make solidarity with them.

AGAIN AND AGAIN?

This is the latest round of major fighting that has taken place regularly since Hamas took power from Fatah (mainstream PLO Palestinian nationalists, who run the Palestinian Authority based in the West Bank) in Gaza in 2007.

Hamas has built a one-party clerical-fascist state in Gaza, smashing competing secular and nationalist institutions and organisations. It has repressed trade unions and women's rights advocates. It purged the judiciary and education system.

Israel responded by sealing Gaza off, and then with military intervention. Israel's last major offensive on Gaza was in November 2012 when 167 Palestinians were killed, including 87 civilians. Six Israelis were also killed. The last time Israeli ground troops went into Gaza was in December 2008, as part of Operation Cast Lead. In that round 1,400 Palestinians were killed, including about 760 civilians.

So what can end this cycle of war? *Only a long term peace settlement that deals comprehensively, and as democratically and equitably as possible, with the underlying conflict, will end the drive to the next battle.*

In this latest war Israel has not just been dealing with

Hamas rockets, but has been defending a status quo in which it is engaged in a land-grab in the West Bank, annexing more and more land to its settlements. It has also been defending its right to throttle Gaza (in alliance with the Egyptian military), by harshly restricting its ability to connect with the outside world.

To end the violence the Israeli state should allow the formation of a fully-independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. Two states for the two peoples is the only possible solution. And from a working-class, socialist viewpoint it is the only possible basis for Jewish-Arab workers' unity.

Such a "two states solution" looked possible in the 1990s, following the Oslo Accords signed in 1993. One consequence of the likelihood of two states was the eclipse of Hamas, isolated by the mid-90s. However the right-wing Israeli government of the late 1990s, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, systematically undermined the prospects for a two state, which culminated in the second intifada (Palestinian uprising) after 2000. During the second intifada, Hamas regained the initiative using suicide bombings against Israeli civilians.

Hamas gained from despair, and every bus bombing strengthened the Israeli right.

In Britain lack of a two states solution and peace has produced a resurgence of far-right anti-semitic attacks and a new confidence for the "smash Israel", anti-Zionist left. Groups such as the SWP advocate the destruction of Israel. They are not too picky about who does the destruction, either.

These groups pretend to believe the Israeli Jews can be won to the idea of a single state — voluntarily giving up the protection afforded by the Israeli state to merge themselves, as a minority, into a single, Arab-run, state. Who could believe this could happen?

More honestly such a state — if it were possible — would be built on the ruins of Israel and a new massacre of the Jews. If it were possible, it would be reactionary creation, replacing the oppression of the Palestinians with the oppression and murder of the Israeli Jews.

Right now the destruction of Israel is difficult to imagine. But the Middle East is changing. The stability built on the lines of the British-French carve-up of the Middle East a century ago, cemented by repression, is being replaced. Globalisation, the end of the Cold War, the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the Arab Spring, mean what was solid is no longer so.

In Israel's own narrow interests, aside from principle, it is important a two states agreement is signed. The chaos in Syria and Iraq will not leave Israel untouched.

From our standpoint, however, peace and democracy, to end now and to stop a repeat of the carnage in Gaza and workers' unity requires such a political settlement. For democracy, for an end to Israel's war, for two states for the two peoples!

How to make solidarity

Calls for boycotts of various aspects of Israeli society — whether academic, cultural, sporting, economic or simply thoroughgoing boycotts "of Israel" — have gained a lot of prominence in the last few years. Many UK trade unions have adopted some form of pro-boycott position.

The call for "boycott" appeals because it implies we can each do something practical, now, to help the Palestinians.

Workers' Liberty also believes in practical solidarity with the Palestinians. This is a basic starting point. But we believe that the proposal to boycott Israel is counter-productive and will hinder efforts to build an effective movement of solidarity with the Palestinians.

Academic boycotts of Israel, for example, cut us off from the many Israeli intellectuals who oppose their own government. An effective boycott of Israeli goods would mean Israeli workers would lose jobs and pro-Palestinian activists would get the blame, strengthening the Israeli right.

Of course much of the left does not care what Israeli workers and peace activists think, or do, or how strong and effective their movements are. They want to see Israel destroyed.

Since the Israeli Jews will not voluntarily accept the abolition of their state — why would they, they are surrounded by enemies? — the destruction of Israel would be carried out by

force. This is wrong in principle and certainly is no policy for peace and democracy in the region. It is a policy for a new massacre of the Jews.

We oppose the right-wing Israeli government, but with the intention of seeing it replaced by a government which helps to create a Palestinian state alongside Israel. To achieve that change requires doing what we can to strengthen the Israel left.

So, for the British unions to boycott left activists or the Israeli unions is ridiculous. We need to help initiatives such as Gush Shalom (the Peace Bloc), not abandon them. We should strengthen our links, not break them.

Much of the impetus for a proposed boycott of Israel is the anti-apartheid boycott of South Africa. In fact the boycott of South Africa lasted for 30 years, from the 1960s and had very little practical effect. The force that overthrew apartheid was the mass movement inside the country, and, centrally, the birth of new, militant independent non-racial trade unions.

But the Israel-Palestinian conflict is not the same as the fight against South African apartheid. The Israeli Jews are not a exploiting caste, as the whites were in South Africa. Israel is a normal capitalist society, with its own capitalist class, which exploits a largely Jewish working class. The task in

South Africa was to break the power of the racist white caste. The task in Israel-Palestine is to allow the formation of a fully independent Palestinian state alongside Israel.

And finally, some words of warning. The main calls for "boycott" come from groups who want to see Israel destroyed. These groups treat Israel as a specially, uniquely, reactionary force. Many states in the world, unfortunately, have a record of oppression — but in the minds of many on the British left it is only the Israeli state that has forfeited the right to exist.

There is a strongly anti-Jewish undercurrent here, often dressed up as "anti-Zionism", which could easily morph into something more explicitly unpleasant.

Already on marches in the UK protesters have been seen with placards with the Star of David on the Israeli flag replaced with a swastika. One banner even read "Hitler was right".

The idea of blanket bans on everything Israeli feeds the idea that Israel itself, by its nature is an illegitimate, outlaw state. The policies of the current Israeli government are the problem, not the state itself. We should resist the idea that Israel is a pariah state while we make practical solidarity with the Palestinians and aid the Israeli left.

Opposing the war inside Israel

By Adam Keller (25 July 2014)

Two and a half weeks into the horror in Gaza. Netanyahu convenes the Inner Cabinet. According to the radio news, the agenda will include both a possible ceasefire and “expanding the operation”. Reportedly, some IDF generals have become tired of “pussyfooting at the margins of Gaza” and prepared plans for penetrating deeper.

The number of fatalities in the Gaza Strip passed the eight hundred mark. As long as the State of Israel employed in Gaza only its airforce, the number of dead was making double-digit increments. Since the artillery came on the scene, the jumps are in three digits.

After the air raid alarm yesterday morning, the radio reported that heavy shrapnel fell on the main streets of Tel Aviv. Sharp steel fragments are the bigger danger. Most of the rockets fired from Gaza are intercepted in the air by the Iron Dome system, and only few of them land. But the sharp debris is falling down after each interception, and a sliver of the Iron Dome counter-missile can kill you just as dead if it falls down on your head.

Yesterday afternoon came the news of the killing at the United Nations Relief and Workers Agency (UNRWA) school in Beit Hanoun. Fifteen killed, and horrible footage was broadcast on TV around the world (except, of course, in Israel.) The IDF announced that it was investigating the unfortunate incident. Government and military speakers repeatedly reiterated that it is in no way the policy of the State of Israel and its armed forces to kill unarmed civilians... and that we are deeply sorry when it does happen. And in reality it does happen again and again — always accidentally, always without intention and indeed despite all the army’s good intentions to the contrary, and the army is always very sorry when it happens.

In the UNRWA school at Beit Hanoun were not only students of the school itself but also refugees who fled their homes elsewhere in Gaza, responding to the warning issued

by the IDF telling them that their homes were under threat. But for the Palestinians in Gaza there is no safe place to escape to, death can come at them at any place and any time and from any direction.

A political correspondent notes that the government does not intend to accede to Hamas’ demand to lift the siege on Gaza in the framework of the ceasefire. First they should stop shooting and then we’ll see.

Earlier this week, after the bombardment which left dozens of killed civilians lying in the streets of Shujaiyeh, Gush Shalom** published an emergency ad in several papers: “Enough! The bodies of civilians are piling up in the streets of Gaza. Dozens of children were killed. Israel is sinking into a new swamp in Gaza. Enough! We must end the bloodshed and lift the siege of Gaza.

There are no military solutions. Only negotiations can achieve a quiet border.”

On the following day we got an angry phone call: “How dare you write such things? Don’t you see how they are slaughtering us?” “Are they slaughtering us? Are you sure you are not a bit confused?” “Certainly they are slaughtering us. Every day they shoot hundreds of missiles at us.” “In case you have not noticed, Iron Dome is intercepting these missiles.” “So, we have to apologise for knowing how to protect ourselves?” yelled the caller, and hung up.

The majority of Israeli citizens are indeed effectively protected by their government. Under the Iron Dome protection,



Unrecognised Bedouin villages are unprotected by Israeli missile defence system

we in Tel Aviv we can lead an almost normal life. War enters our daily lives only with one or two alarms per day and a bit of nervousness for the rest of the time. It is only the “unrecognised villages” in the Negev, home to some eighty thousand Bedouin citizens of Israel, which are not covered. The Iron Dome computer system defines the unrecognised Bedouin villages as open empty spaces. In normal times they do not get water and electricity, and in times of war they do not get protection from missiles.

One of the rockets which was not worth the Iron Dome’s effort to intercept fell and exploded last week near Dimona, precisely on the spot where some 200 members of the Jenayeb Tribe, citizens of Israel, live in tin huts (more solid houses they are not allowed to build, and if they try to build them anyway the State of Israel takes care to demolish what they built).

Shrapnel thoroughly pierced the tin hut next to which the rocket exploded and killed the 32-year old Ouda Lafi al-Waj, seriously injuring in the head his three months old daughter, Aya.

The rocket was fired from Gaza in this general direction because the Jenayeb Tribe happens to live near the city of Dimona which gave its name to the Dimona Nuclear Reactor which is well-known worldwide, also in Gaza. But Hamas’ rockets are inaccurate weapons.

As is the Israeli artillery this morning heavily and inaccurately shelling northern Gaza.

Dov Koller, peace activist from Karmiel in the north and an old friend, sent me this morning a communiqué: “Out of our duty to speak out in shared citizenship, we hold a protest vigil at Noon today in the Karmiel West Junction. We, Jews and Arabs in the Galilee, will stand there to jointly call for an end to the bloodshed, for stopping the war. Jews and Arabs do not want to be enemies!”

At this time that I am writing, the “Peace Bus” is making its way from Jerusalem to the Gaza border, for the second time since the war began.

Tomorrow night we will all gather for a demonstration against the war at the Rabin Square in Tel Aviv, which hopefully will be bigger than previous demonstrations.

And yet, there can be no illusion — we, opponents of the war, are isolated in the Israeli society (at least, in the Jewish Israeli society). Opposition to this Gaza war is the business of a radical, determined minority. It is unlikely that a mass protest movement could be precipitated in the Israeli soci-

Racism and division increase

By Tom Harris

In the narrow, densely populated ribbon of land by the Mediterranean that is Gaza, hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured by the Israeli military. But while the worst horrors of the conflict are taking place in the strip itself, the war has also unleashed a fresh wave of racial and religious sectarianism far beyond the Palestinian territory.

In Israel, street violence against Arabs has spiralled.

In Jerusalem, two young Arab men were hospitalised after being beaten by a mob with baseball bats and metal pipes. Both right-wing street movements and the government ministers are attempting to construct a popular narrative in which any opposition to attack on Gaza is treachery. On social media, there has been a proliferation of pages calling for retribution against “traitors”, inciting violence against Arab Israelis who they view as an enemy within.

Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman has called for a boycott of Arab businesses, and some Arab Israelis have been sacked from their jobs for criticising the Gaza invasion on-line.

In Europe, protests against the actions of the Israeli state have repeatedly shaded over into outright anti-semitism. In Germany, footage has emerged showing hundreds of protesters chanting “Jew, Jew, cowardly pig, come out and fight alone.” In France, eight synagogues have been attacked, and a riot took place in the Parisian suburb of Sarcelles, home to a large Sephardic Jewish community. Cars,

kosher shops and identifiably Jewish restaurants were attacked and burned. A Jewish cultural centre in Toulouse was also attacked with firebombs which failed to ignite.

In Norway, the Jewish museums of Trondheim and Oslo were closed for fear of attack. In Austria, protesters attacked Israeli footballers playing for Maccabi Haifa. In Britain, police have recorded over a hundred anti-semitic crimes since the bombing of Gaza began, including the beating up of a rabbi in Gateshead, and the smashing of a Belfast synagogue’s windows two nights in a row.

This grim litany of racism and mob justice demonstrates the potential for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to pit Jews and Arabs against each other not only in the Middle East but throughout the world.

Reactionaries on both sides stoke this division. Socialists oppose all racism and ethnic division, wherever it appears; we work to unite workers across the boundaries of race or religion. This is doubly urgent in the case of Israel and Palestine.

The best hope for a peaceful solution is the development of solidarity between Jewish and Arab workers around a programme of consistent democracy and self-determination for both peoples. There are embryonic signs of such a movement developing, as thousands of Israelis and Palestinians gather in the squares of Tel Aviv to protest against the bombing.

The left in Britain and around the world must stand with those in Israel and Palestine fighting to turn back the tide of chauvinism, and for peace.

ety, such as flourished during the First Lebanon War.

In the first week of that war in June 1982, the missiles fell on Kiryat Shmona and the communities of Northern Israel, and peace demonstrations were very small and isolated. But after that first week, the IDF crossed the Forty Kilometer Line — at the time marking the maximum range of Palestinian missiles. The shooting of missiles stopped, but the army continued racing northward to Beirut, promoting the schemes of Defence Minister Sharon to create “A New Order in the Middle East”.

That was the point when the crowds began to take to the streets and protest, and the soldiers who were killed in increasing numbers on Lebanese soil seen as having fallen in vain at a foreign country where Israel was sinking in a swamp. Eventually mothers organised and demanded to bring the boys home, and ultimately they succeeded.

In 2014 Israel these soldiers are seen as fighting and falling “to defend out homes”, their deaths in a worthy cause and not in vain. Tens of thousands came last week to attend the funerals of “lone soldiers” whose families do not live in Israel. The initiative for this did not come from the government or the army, but from an organisation of soccer fans who had sent out via Facebook the call to attend the funerals.

At my neighbourhood supermarket today, I found a large carton box at the cash register where customers were asked to put in gift packages for soldiers.

Amnon Abramovich, a well known Israeli media, embarked on his career as a very staunch and outspoken opponent of the First Lebanon War. Yesterday he expressed his support for the current war in Gaza: “The cross-border tunnel system established by Hamas is truly horrifying. They could have come at night and taken over Kibbutz Nir Am, of which my parents were among the founders. I find it hard to stop imagining the nightmare scenes of what horrors they might have perpetrated.”

The French philosopher and writer Albert Camus, a Frenchman born in Algeria, objected to the way France maintained control of Algeria. But he said that “those who oppose French rule are placing bombs on buses. These are the buses on which my mother is travelling. If that is Justice, then I choose for my mother.” And so, it seems, does Abramovich. In fact, in all cases where Hamas made use of these tunnels, its members who crossed the border clashed with soldiers rather than attack civilians — but somehow this is not registered.

When yesterday I cleared up old files clogging up my computer I came across an article written a bit less than four months ago in Le Monde under the title “If Kerry fails, what then?” The Jewish-Palestinian co-writers — Tony Klug and Sam Bahour — started with the words: “Suppose Kerry fails to cajole the Israeli and Palestinian leaders into finally ending their conflict. What would happen next? A tsunami of pent-up animosities is likely to be unleashed, with each side holding the other responsible for the failure and calling for retribution. Attempts to indict and isolate each other would gather pace and violence might return with a vengeance. The toxins let loose will inevitably have global spillover.” Few prophecies were fulfilled in such a swift and chilling manner.

And here John Kerry is back — this time with a more modest goal. Not an end to the conflict but just putting off the immediate combustion in the Gaza Strip. “The tireless Kerry has drafted a ceasefire proposal somewhere in between the Egyptian proposal, which was designed to grind Hamas to the ground, and the Qatari proposal aimed at giving Hamas a grand triumph” writes Nahum Barnea. “It would offer a temporary respite, during which all the demands of Hamas will be taken up. Israel will have to negotiate about all these issues under the eyes of Kerry and the Europeans — a bitter pill for Israel to follow.”

At least hawks in Netanyahu’s cabinet consider it far too bitter, and they are yelling and screaming and demanding a continuation of the operation and a deeper and deeper penetration into Gaza. Which suggests that there just might be a reason to take it seriously.

* Taken from Adam Keller’s blog, <http://adam-keller2.blogspot.co.uk>

** Israeli peace organisation: www.gush-shalom.org/



Netanyahu is also responding to unity between the Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas

Arab-Jewish workers’ centre:

Oppose the Gaza war!

WAC-MAN, the Workers’ Advice Centre, is an independent trade union centre organising both Israeli-Jewish and Arab workers, in both Israel and the Palestinian territories. Below is its statement on the current war on Gaza, reposted from its website here.

The Independent Trade Union Centre WAC-MAAN, unionising Arabs and Jews in Israel, calls on the Israeli government to stop the attack on Gaza. The only livable alternative is a political settlement based on a two-state solution.

WAC MAAN calls on trade unions and peace supporters all over the world to initiate activities and pressure their governments to demand an end to Israel’s war against the Palestinian people.

The military escalation in Gaza, where civilians are being killed and homes destroyed, while rockets from Hamas confound the lives of Israelis, is a direct result of the swaggering anti-peace policy carried out by the Netanyahu-Bennett-Lieberman government. The attempt to obtain a Palestinian surrender by bombing civilian targets is criminal, reckless, and pregnant with disaster. This is the third such round in five years, and it is already clear that when it is done, the two sides will return to precisely the same point as in December 2008-January 2009 and November 2012. The Palestinian side has again endured destruction of buildings and infrastructure, with more than a hundred dead and thousands wounded so far, while millions of Israeli civilians are exposed to rockets.

WAC-MAAN, which unionises thousands of Arabs and Jews in Israel, calls for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of peace talks, based on an Israeli withdrawal to the lines of 1967 and the formation of an independent Palestinian state.

It was the Netanyahu government that broke the US-sponsored framework of negotiations and started a wave of settlement building. Then it came out against the Fatah-Hamas unity government — a step that amounted to blatant interference in an internal Palestinian issue. The diplomatic stalemate, and the failure to fulfill the promised fourth stage of the Palestinian prisoner release, formed the background to the kidnapping of three Israeli youths. In response, Netanyahu proclaimed an all-out war against

Hamas, hence against the Palestinian unity government.

The next step occurred when Netanyahu’s extremist position, along with calls for vengeance on the part of some cabinet ministers, incited rightwing Israeli extremists to kidnap a 16-year-old Palestinian boy, Muhammad Abu Khdeir, and burn him alive. When the government sought to sidestep any responsibility for this horror, the Palestinian street exploded. Protesters took to the streets in Jerusalem and the Arab cities of Israel.

The present escalation, which includes Israel’s bombardments of Gaza and the launching by Hamas and others of primitive rockets against civilian targets in Israel, has sparked initiatives from the international community for a cease fire and a return to negotiations. Yet Netanyahu insolently repeats that he has no intention of initiating a cease fire, rather he’ll go on raising the ante until the Palestinians produce a white flag.

To this end the Israeli army has introduced a new tactic: bombing the homes of Hamas activists. By any account that is a war crime... Most of the victims are civilians, many of them children.

Amid the attacks, we must not forget the events that led to the war. After the kidnapping of its youths, the Israeli government launched an all-out offensive against Hamas in the West Bank, broke its agreements by re-arresting more than fifty Hamas members who had been freed in the Shalit deal of 2011, and did all it could to foil the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation. Netanyahu, in short, dragged Hamas into a showdown. Given these provocations, Israel’s government bears the ultimate responsibility for every drop of blood that has been and will be shed in the present war.

WAC-MAAN joins many others, both here and abroad, in calling on both sides to reach a cease fire. The only livable alternative is a political arrangement, the principles of which are embedded in the long-existing UN resolutions and concurred in by the entire international community.

Those paying the price of the present war are the workers on both sides. We call on trade unions and peace supporters all over the world to initiate activities and pressure their governments to demand an end to Israel’s war against the Palestinian people.

**No to a war aimed at perpetuating the Occupation!
Yes to peace talks on the basis of the two-state solution!**

How the working-class party was built

Part one of a two part article on the early history of the German socialist movement. By Paul Hampton

The German Social-Democratic Party (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands, SPD) was the largest working class party built so far by Marxists, yet it is mostly remembered today with infamy for the great betrayal of 1914.

When its Reichstag deputies voted for war credits, Lenin was so shocked by a copy of the party's paper *Vorwärts* justifying the decision he thought it was forgery. How could a party with over a million members, that garnered over four million votes (a third of the electorate) and 110 MPs, capitulate to its own government and throw sand in the face of international solidarity?

The party was founded in opposition to the German state, its leaders refusing to vote for war credits in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871. SPD leaders had served time in prison for their political convictions, was forced underground (1878-1890) and had to fight for every bit of democratic space to organise. The slogans "Not a man [sic] and not a cent for this system" and "war on the palaces, peace to the huts" summed up their defiance.

The party had been instrumental in establishing the Second International in 1889, which repeatedly pledged to oppose war between the great powers. Even in late July 1914, the party was publishing manifestos against the imminent conflict, organising anti-war demonstrations in Berlin and preparing for illegality.

Yet on 2 August, the SPD-led trade unions made an agreement with the employers that there would be no strikes or lock-outs, and that all collective agreements would be extended for the duration of the hostilities. The SPD Reichstag fraction met on 3 August and decided by 78 votes against 14 to vote for war credits. The minority agreed to respect discipline on the following day and so the party's decisive weight was added to the government's war policy. The SPD became in Rosa Luxemburg's words, "a stinking corpse". Similar betrayals took place across Europe, with few honourable exceptions.

The history of the SPD has mostly been refracted through subsequent lens: the Bolshevik-led Russian revolution, the emergence of the German Communist Party (KPD) and the third, Communist International. Sociologists such as Max Weber dubbed the party "a state within a state", while Robert Michels identified an increasingly conservative party-union oligarchic bureaucracy, apparently foretelling the party's demise.

Yet not a single Marxist theorist of note called for a break with the SPD before 1914. On the contrary, the SPD remained the model for Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky and countless others, despite the sharp criticism they directed against elements of the party and its leaders. The SPD was their model of a mass working class party for good reasons. Its history was replete with lessons about how to fight for independent working class politics, how to translate Marxist ideas into practice and how to develop class consciousness among wide layers of the working class. In its pomp, the SPD looked like the organisational distillation of working class political representation. Its early years were both subversive and liberationist. The SPD deserves to be studied critically by a new generation who want to change the world.

ORIGINS

It took socialists fifty years to build the SPD into the force it was in 1914. They did so from a very limited base and in very difficult conditions, something Marxists today should take heart from.

Before the 1848 revolution, Germany was fragmented into a series of monarchical states, with only a small industrial working class and very little labour movement organisation. It took until 1871 for Germany to be unified from above by Bismarck's wars against Austria-Hungary and France, and for the subsequent combined, state-led industrialisation for a millions-strong working class to develop.

The origins of the SPD go back as far as the Communist League, which Marx and Engels joined in exile in 1847. Communist League members worked in the larger organisations of German workers — often educational associations —

which gave them the possibility of public propaganda and from which they could recruit members. Franz Mehring described how the communists worked in his biography of Karl Marx:

"The procedure of these associations was the same everywhere; one day in the week was marked down for discussion and another for social intercourse (singing, recitation, etc.); libraries were founded everywhere in connection with the associations and where possible classes were organised to instruct the workers in the elementary principles of communism."

The Communist League is best remembered today as the organisation that commissioned Marx to write the *Communist Manifesto*. From its ranks sprang the embryo of an international working class party and slogans such as "workers of the world, unite". When the 1848 revolutions broke out, many members of the Communist League took part, most as the left of the democratic movement, and then suffered further imprisonment or exile. After the revolutionary tide had ebbed, the organisation split and soon dissolved. It never cohered into a sizable organisational force. For example Michael Löwy was able to identify 65 members between 1847 and 1852, of whom half were intellectuals and the rest artisans and workers. But some of the cadre went on with a new generation to refound the German labour movement in the 1860s.

FALSE STARTS

There were many efforts to revive the working class movement across the German states and many false starts.

Communist League member Stephan Born tried to form trade unions. After the 1848 revolution, it was within the movement of liberal Arbeiterbildungsvereine (Workers' Education Associations) that most workers took their first political steps.

Independent working-class political representation emerged from this milieu. Most significantly, on 17 May 1863, 110 delegates from forty-five cities met in Frankfurt to form the Verband deutscher Arbeitervereine (Union of German Workers' Leagues, VDAV). The organisation included August Bebel, who would become the central leader of social democracy until his death in 1913. Wilhelm Liebknecht, a former Communist League member who spent 12 years in exile with Marx and Engels, also worked within it. In 1866 the VDAV severed ties with the liberals and merged with the People's Party (Volkspartei).

Around the same time another organisation split away to form the Allgemeiner deutscher Arbeiterverein (General German Workers' Association, ADAV). It was the first working class political party in German history.

The ADAV invited Ferdinand Lassalle, a former associate of Marx and Engels who by then was living off the proceeds of his relationship with a countess, to address their gathering. Lassalle, in the year or so he led the ADAV (he died fighting a duel in 1864) emphasised that workers should maintain unconditional ideological and organisational independence vis-à-vis the liberal bourgeoisie — although this did not prevent him offering his services to the Prussian chancellor Bismarck. The Lassalleans regarded trade unions as incapable of permanently improving workers' conditions because of the "iron law of wages", a notion ridiculed by Marx and Engels. They also promoted universal manhood suffrage along with their panacea of state-funded cooperatives.

The most relevant lesson from this early period is that socialists worked within the existing labour movement and sought to find a way to reach workers. They published newspapers to propagate their views and used parliamentary and local elections to promote socialist ideas. Travelling agitators built the movement through face-to-face persuasion, expressing "a boundlessly exaggerated negative criticism of prevailing conditions and of the foundations of the existing social order", those responsible for the plight of the workers and the means of working class self-liberation.

They also built supporters' groups in localities and workplaces. As one wrote in 1875: "Whenever a particular area or industrial district is to be opened up for socialism, this usually takes the form at first not of a big 'people's rally'. Rather, a few comrades quietly enter the region, take up work, and

at their workplaces and in the factories and in other places where they come into contact with their fellow workers they sow the seeds of socialism." Party intellectual Karl Kautsky would sum up the approach in 1903: "We should never forget that we are first and foremost still a party of propaganda. Our most important practical task is at present much less the conquest of power than the conquest of the masses."

GROWTH

The Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) was founded in 1869 at a conference in Eisenach, which brought together Bebel and Liebknecht's supporters with some dissident Lassalleans around Wilhelm Bracke.

In 1868, both the VDAV and the ADAV affiliated to the International Workingmen's Association (the First International), led by Marx in London. State repression of socialists of all stripes also drove to unity. Bebel and Liebknecht took a principled anti-war position during the Franco-Prussian conflict and supported the Paris Commune in 1871. The SPD united with the ADAV at Gotha in 1875 to form the Sozialistische Arbeiterpartei Deutschlands (SAPD).

The growth of the party was rapid. The ADAV claimed 500 members when it was founded in 1863. The SDAP had around 10,000 members in 1869, and the SAPD claimed 25,000 when it was founded. After twelve years of illegality, it emerged in 1890 as the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD) with 290,000 members. It would reach half a million in 1907 and over a million by 1914.

The means by which the party was built from a propaganda group to a mass party are instructive. It was built through splits and fusions, as well as individual recruitment.

The party programmes of 1869 and 1875 were compromises, and made great concessions to the Lassalleans. Marx and Engels wrote scathing criticisms of the Eisenach and Gotha programmes and threatened to dissociate themselves from the party. Even the Erfurt programme (1891), with a maximum vision of socialism and minimum set of demands drew fire from Engels. Liebknecht was renowned for avoiding quarrels, and putting organisational compromise before political lines of demarcation.

However he and Bebel insisted that the political limitations could be overcome because the basic organisation was highly democratic. The ADAV under Lassalle and his successors was regarded as highly dictatorial. By contrast, Bebel maintained that the sovereign annual congress should make the party's major political decisions, with controls over the executive committee alongside strong local organisations. In 1871, the SDAP established the institution of the Vertrauensmännner ("trusted person") to maintain a regular channel between local branches and the central party organisations.

A member was someone who "actively supports the party", advocates the party programme and pays monthly dues. Early on Bebel argued passionately for regularly monthly dues to finance party activities, but the dues were waived for subscribers to the party's official organ. According to a history by Gary Steenson's, local branches were not bound by the statutes to support the larger party financially, nor did the party leadership have statutory control over the local press, the selection of electoral candidates or any other aspect of local party activities.

J P Nettl argues that the SPD was extremely democratic. The party press "debated problems at great length, and opened its pages to the representatives of all divergent opinions", at least until 1911. But for most of the period before the war "almost any view could get a public airing. At the party congresses there were no attempts to restrict the expression of opinions other than those dictated by time". The SPD congress jealously guarded its rights and privileges: "there was no guillotine and the chairman's [sic] rules of order were lax.

Above all the opposition had many opportunities of putting its views to meetings in various localities all over the country. Local party secretaries were more concerned with having interesting and provocative speakers in order to provide a worthwhile evening for their members than with any attempt to impose a party line". Up to 1900, the party only expelled seven people for violations of the rules.

We all belong to Glasgow

Charlotte Seleus reviews *Glasgow Girls* (15 July, BBC3)

The Glasgow girls, are a group of school students from Drumchapel High School in Glasgow, who in 2005 took it upon themselves to campaign for the release of their friend Agnesa Murselaj, a Roma girl from Kosovo who was detained by immigration police in a dawn raid.

Agnesa's whole family were placed in Yarls Wood detention centre and faced deportation back to a country where Roma people faced persecution.

The area of Glasgow where she lived housed a large number of asylum seekers from across the globe, and many went to Drumchapel High. It was not uncommon for students at the school to disappear, either because they had fled or because they had been taken in a dawn raid. When Agnesa was taken, seven of her friends started a campaign to prevent her deportation; four of them were themselves asylum seekers, some waiting for "leave to remain" and under threat of deportation.

This BBC3 musical dramatisation showed how the girls did not stop at highlighting the plight of their friend but went on to broaden out their struggle to defend other students facing deportation, gathering support from the local community, taking direct action to prevent raids and highlighting barbaric practices of detaining and deporting children.

The programme, though stylised in places to make the narrative smoother, stays true to the fighting spirit of these students and the teacher who helped them. It successfully tackles the issues the students faced, not least hostility from a local white working-class community. The students tackling racist attitudes head on in public meetings and on doorsteps.

In one lovely moment a local woman, who became instrumental in the direct action to stop dawn raids, stands up with the students to blame the government for the suffering of the white working-class community and those seeking asylum.

The programme does not shy away from showing the qualms one of the students, Jennifer, had about supporting her peers who were seeking asylum. The programme carefully handles her changing her mind and does not gloss over gritty arguments in the process. The solidarity in the face of attack is neither overly romanticised, nor is it sterilised.

Scenes depicting the "dawn raid patrols" are serious yet



show a human sense of humour. Older residents take it in turn to keep watch from the top of the tower for immigration vans, alert a picket and the family under threat and hide the family in another flat until the police leave. There is a building of strength amongst those involved, until this direct action turns into mass pickets of the entrance to the tower block to prevent police entry.

Interviewed after events in 2008 by the *Times Educational Supplement*¹ the students said that they did not manage to protect everyone — the programme does show families being

deported and the demoralising effect that this had on the students. The students make it very clear that despite the concessions they won — that students will not be deported during exam time — the struggle is not over for the rights of those claiming asylum in the UK.

I really enjoyed watching the adaptation of the Glasgow girls' story and would recommend it. The human solidarity it captures is inspirational.

1. <http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=2313937>

Discovering what socialism should really mean

How I became a socialist

By Omar Raii



Socialism has always been a bit of an odd word for me. Growing up, reading about history I could never really understand what it meant. The Labour Party called itself a "democratic socialist party", the totalitarian dictatorship that ruled Russia was known as the "Union of Soviet Socialist Republics" and Saddam Hussein's thuggish ruling party in Iraq was known as the "Arab Socialist Ba'ath Party". So in what sense could it mean anything?

At the same time it was becoming clearer and clearer to me, the older I got, that society was laid out in a certain way and that socialism was an alternative and more humane system for the world.

Growing up on a council estate in Birmingham wasn't at all a harrowing experience. I quite enjoyed school and I was fairly spoilt. If I wanted some toy or a book for my birthday, more often than not I would get it. It didn't even occur to me that my family was poor until I went to secondary school. There I discovered, in a grammar school located in a leafy suburb, that most people were in fact much wealthier than me, and had certain expectations of themselves and their place in society.

Come election time, my parents would always vote Labour. As immigrants that were fairly new to the country, they had clearly found out the typical attitude of many work-

ing class communities in this country; "we're poor, so we vote Labour". But most of my new school friends' parents did not automatically vote Labour; some voted Tory, others Lib Dem. I wondered why this was the case. This was a crude exposure to what I would learn later is a hallmark of class society. I realised that where you grew up and where you went to school would have a profound effect on the rest of your life, on how you thought, on how well you could expect some things to turn out for you.

And then in 2010, the Tories effectively won the General Election and we were faced with a government that would be relentless in driving its right-wing agenda, leading me to somewhat reluctantly join the Labour Party. But being in the Labour Party was not enough for me; I still hadn't worked out what kind of socialist I was.

Like most people my age, my political thought was heavily influenced by the post 9/11 milieu in which I grew up.

I saw on my television screens what the British and the American governments were doing in Afghanistan and Iraq. The "War on Terror" was such a significant thing and it seemed important to try and understand it.

Most of the left seemed to have an odd view of the conflicts. Sure, it was as obvious as anything that the United States didn't invade Afghanistan in order to free the people of the country. But when I saw the euphemistic tone with which much of the British left talked about say the Taliban, I was very much put off. My family and I had fled Afghanistan because they knew what the rule of theocrats looked like, and here was the left in an affluent first-world country, effectively

supporting the same kind of people we tried to escape from — in the name of anti-imperialism.

And then there was the problem of Israel and Palestine. It seemed shocking beyond belief that during the war in Lebanon in 2006, as stupid as the actions of the Israeli government were, I saw self-professed socialists in the streets of London carrying placards saying "We are all Hezbollah". Did these people understand what Hezbollah was? Did they think any resistance to the US, to Israel, to the West was positive? If this was what being a socialist was, then I was not a socialist. But then what was I? I certainly wanted there to be a Labour government, but why?

Had I not found Workers' Liberty, I have no idea where I could have ended up. Meeting up with them meant I was taught properly about class politics, and how the class struggle was the important division in the world, not the division between "the west and the rest". They showed me about the primacy of the working-class in the world. The realisation came that if there was any hope to solving the problems in the Middle East, to changing the world in general, the hope lay with the international working class.

Henceforth I knew that, despite the disagreements I had with all the people who in the 20th (and indeed the 21st) century would call themselves "socialists", it was time to make the word mean something again. To support the working-class in its struggle to assert itself, in the struggle for a better world, that was what it was to be a socialist and I knew that I was one.

Lessons from Birmingham

Liam Conway, NUT Exec member (PC), comments on the "Trojan Horse" affair in Birmingham schools

There have been two reports into Birmingham schools; one commissioned by Birmingham Council, written by Ian Kershaw, a former Head Teacher from Coventry, the other by Peter Clarke, former counter-terrorism chief at the Metropolitan Police.

Both reports relied on similar sources: comments from people who had worked at the schools in various capacities, including head teachers and teachers who had been forced out because they objected to the way the schools were being run. Clarke's report was heavily influenced by the testimony of over 50 people he interviewed. Both reports came to similar, shocking, conclusions.

Whatever the motives of those who commissioned or wrote the reports, the evidence presented should be something that greatly concerns socialists. The common view in the National Union of Teachers (NUT) that the original "Trojan Horse" letter was a hoax is not relevant. What matters is whether its contents are supported by the evidence, which very much appears to be the case.

The reports' findings are credible. The way that girls were being separated out from boys and treated differently, the way that the curriculum was being narrowed. Cancelling a netball tournament because the organisers were not able to guarantee that men would not be present is not acceptable in an educational context. Sex and relationship education being taught with reference to an Islamic moral framework under which boyfriend/girlfriend relationships as well as homosexual relationships are not acceptable is wrong.

Since Clarke and Kershaw reported new evidence about the Chair of Governors at Nansen Primary school, Shahid Akmal, has emerged. He is heard on film saying, "White women have the least amount of morals", and arguing that it is justifiable to exile gays and what he calls adulterers. He believes that the job of schooling is to prepare girls for a life of domesticity in the home. Akmal had music removed from the curriculum. He is a bigoted, homophobic man who should not be running schools.

Similar views to these were revealed in the social network conversations of what was termed the "Park View Brotherhood". This male-only group included teachers within the Park View Trust, one of whom was the Vice Principal of Nansen Primary School, Razwan Faraz. During one conversation Faraz says, "These animals [gay people] are going out in full force. As teachers we must be aware and counter their satanic ways of influencing young people."

The Muslim community needs protecting from people like

this. The biggest victims of not standing up against the likes of Shahid Akmal and Razwan Faraz are Muslim children. The NUT is committed to equal rights in education for all. Such a claim is not real unless we challenge right-wing ideologues who want to take education back in time to when it was less equal and less tolerant. Evidence suggests that the NUT, understandably concerned to give no quarter to Gove and Ofsted, failed to stand up for its own policies or to recognise real problems at these schools.

At the Birmingham NUT Executive meeting of 12 June the SWP and RS21 proposed a motion under the broad ambit of "Hands Off Our Schools" — that the focus of any campaigning should be Islamophobia and that no credence should be given to any of the claims made about educational practices in the schools.

In the light of the Clarke and Kershaw reports such a position is politically unsustainable for socialists. These schools were being directed by right wing "leaders" of the Muslim community, whose views on education are not shared by the majority of Muslims. I was brought up a Catholic and attended schools heavily influenced by priests and nuns. This is like the left taking its view of what Catholics think from what the local Parish priest says.

GOVERNANCE

A key contributing factor in these developments is the structure and governance of schooling and this goes beyond the crude privatisation inherent in Free Schools and Academies.

There has been a general decline in the democratic control of schooling. This has allowed powerful "community leaders" or financial interests to promote narrow views of education. The answer to this is to return all schools to democratic local authority control with elected governing bodies in every school, including a bigger role for elected staff and parent governors.

We are having problems in other areas of accountability too. For example there have been a series of frauds in school, most recently at Haberdasher Aske's in south London. This is also a product of the erosion of democratic controls.

The ability of the unions to negotiate across all schools is disappearing rapidly, replaced by piecemeal negotiation, school-by-school or academy trust by academy trust.

In Birmingham some schools are Academies, some not. Birmingham City Council appears to have abrogated its responsibility for fear of being called Islamophobic. There is evidence that Birmingham Council tried to gag teachers who were trying to speak out about what was happening in these schools. Compromise agreements were made with the teach-

ers, involving financial settlements in return for keeping quiet. This again is not acceptable.

Last year a not dissimilar situation occurred in Leicester at Uplands Junior School. I think the local NUT in Leicester took a different approach than in Birmingham, calling for the resignation of the head teacher and organising three days of strike action. People like Shahid Akmal and Razwan Faraz should have been forced out by the NUT, not through investigations by Clarke and Kershaw or Ofsted reports.

Perhaps there should have been an independent trade union enquiry into what went on in Birmingham but for sure there are serious lessons to be learned here. It is not enough to put a cross wherever the Government puts a tick. We have to actually dirty our hands and find out honestly what is going on and come up with independent labour movement responses based on justice and the ending of wrong-doing. This did not happen in the Birmingham schools.

Instead, the NUT continues to put hands over eyes and fingers in ears, exemplified by the latest NUT press release which focuses on the "Islamist plot" story rather than the real story of the warping of children's education.

Marxist Revival

No.2 of the international revolutionary-socialist discussion magazine Marxist Revival is now out, and available for £2 (or £3.20 including postage) from AWL.

The first section of the issue is short articles from the participating organisations on recent interventions.

AWL has contributed a critical review of our activity in the recent strikes against job cuts and restructuring on the Tube in London. Marxist Tutum, from Turkey, writes about a mobilisation by the workers' association UID-DER, and the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency discusses activity for the worker political prisoners in Iran.

The second section comprises articles from the three groups on imperialism today. All three groups, in different idioms and from different angles, argue that there are large differences between the world-market imperialism of today and the "high imperialism" of rival colonial empires which flourished between the 1880s and the aftermath of World War Two.

Thus, to endorse strivings for "economic independence", or military action against the USA, by politically-independent capitalist powers which generally have their own ambitions for regional dominance, is not observance of the duty of socialists to back national liberation. It is subordinating working-class politics to battles of the weaker capitalists against the stronger. We should instead seek an independent working-class stance.

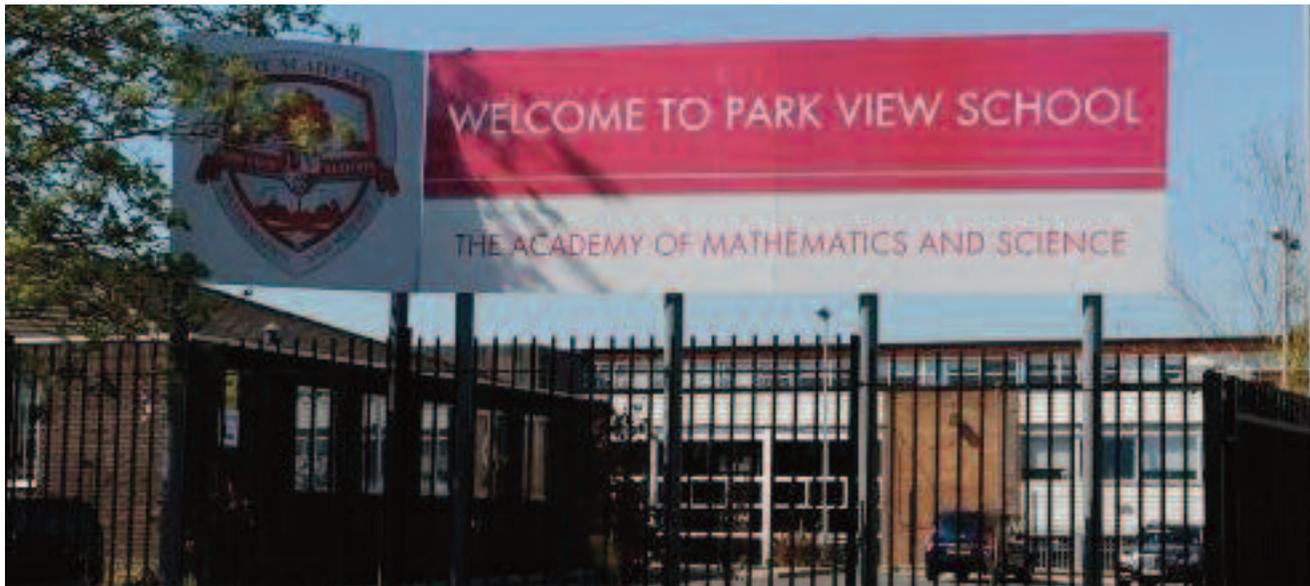
The third element in the issue is an article by Maziar Razi of IRMT on "The necessity of Marxists' convergence". Some of the ideas in that article were debated in a session at the AWL summer school, Ideas for Freedom, on 5-6 July, and again at a Marxist Revival seminar in Hamburg, Germany, on 11-12 July, which was also attended by L'Étincelle from France and Sozialistische Arbeiterstimme from Berlin.

Work is underway on producing a French edition of this issue of Marxist Revival, as a French edition of no.1 was produced.

It is a small beginning in international Marxist discussion, but a beginning which no-one else is making.



School students outside Park View. Teachers' unions should face up to the facts when principles of equal education are being undermined.



“Trojan Horse”: the official view

Pat Yarker analyses the official reports into the “Trojan Horse” affair.

“Trojan Horse” has become journalistic shorthand for an apparent attempt by a small group in east Birmingham to secure control of local non-faith schools and impose policies and practices in keeping with the very conservative (Salafist/Wahhabi) version of Islam which they hold.

In November 2013 a copy of an incomplete, unsigned and unaddressed letter was brought to the attention of officers at Birmingham City Council (BCC). This document describes a five-step strategy to take over governance of a number of schools in Birmingham as a prelude to changing their ethos, curriculum and practices. The provenance and status of the letter remain uncorroborated and it is widely presumed not to be what it purports.

A copy of the letter was passed to West Midlands Police, who decided there was no basis for intervention. However, they passed the letter to the Home Office in December 2013, from where it was passed to the DfE, which began its own investigation. Union reps received redacted copies of the letter in February 2014 and also contacted the Department of Education (DfE). Reports of the letter reached the national media in early March, and have been seized on by the right-wing press.

Separate investigations were launched by Ofsted and the Education Funding Agency, as well as by the DfE into its own conduct. BCC chose Ian Kershaw of Northern Education, a private company offering professional support to schools and governors, to look at what had been going on in the maintained schools (and some very recently converted academies) supposedly affected. Controversially, Michael Gove, then Education Secretary, chose Peter Clarke to conduct an additional inquiry, and to report before Parliament’s summer recess.

PETER CLARKE

Before his retirement in 2008, Clarke was frequently described as Britain’s top anti-terrorist police officer. Clarke took a law degree, then joined the Met in 1977. From 1994 to 1997 he was Divisional Commander in Brixton.

During his tenure, in 1995, the death in police custody of Wayne Douglas led to five hours of rioting around Brixton Police Station. Clarke went on to work in the Met’s Specialist Operations directorate. In 2005, as commander of the Anti-Terrorism Branch, he led the response to the London bombings, and received an OBE for this work. In 2006 his organisation merged with Special Branch to become the Counter Terrorist Command. Clarke was seen as the interface between the police and MI5. He has advised government on policy and the framing of laws as well as on practicalities. Since retiring, Clarke has continued to be involved in private security and protection work. He was appointed by David Cameron to the National Security Forum, a body created by Gordon Brown’s administration to enable politicians to access expert advice from outside government.

Clarke is aware of the vital importance of impression-management in matters of security and counter-terrorism. He

told the Leveson Inquiry that the public still does not recognise “the true nature of the terrorist threat”. This led him to engage in off-the-record briefings with national newspaper staff to rebut charges that the police were unfairly targeting Muslims and arresting large numbers of innocent people. His appointment as investigator played to fears about terrorism and was criticised by one Birmingham MP. Ironically, after the 2004 Madrid bombings, the Muslim Council of Britain praised Clarke for encouraging the media not to use the phrase “Islamic terrorists”, which he said was both offensive and misleading. The *Guardian* has claimed (23 July) that in accepting Gove’s commission Clarke required the DfE to indemnify him against legal action, while the DfE retained a say over the contents of his report.

Clarke had no brief to look for evidence of terrorist activity, radicalisation or violent extremism, and found none. His report endorses the view that there was a deliberate plot by a group of associates to gain control of governing bodies at a small number of schools in order to introduce a distinct set of behaviours and religious practices in keeping with beliefs the group held. He identifies and presents what he claims are a pattern of events and behaviours, evident at a number of schools over a period of years (and arguably stretching back two decades), which testify to the reality of the plot and accord with the five-step strategy outlined in the Trojan Horse letter.

He notes a sustained and co-ordinated agenda to impose segregationist attitudes and practices, and records examples of sexist, homophobic or otherwise discriminatory behaviour and comments from people allegedly involved. He draws attention to the way the curriculum was narrowed in some schools. He criticises BCC for failing to support headteachers harassed, bullied and ousted by members of governing-bodies party to the “plot”. He identifies Park View Education Trust (PVET), which ran three academies, as the incubator for much of the malign activity, and names a number of staff-members as instigators.

Perhaps surprisingly, Clarke also criticises the academy programme. He says the DfE allowed PVET to be set up too quickly, and without adequate oversight of the Trust’s financial arrangements and management approaches. His enquiry has highlighted that there are potentially serious problems [of oversight] in some academies. He also criticises the way the DfE responds to whistle-blowing about academies. One of his recommendations implies that the entire academisation process, including the way local concerns are considered, is flawed.

Clarke says the tight timetable constrained his inquiries. He interviewed some 50 witnesses. He says a significant number only talked to him on condition of anonymity. Two refused to have their testimony electronically recorded. Consequently, his report contains much unattributable material, and allegations which aren’t securely substantiated.

However, certain established facts are in the public domain. For example, the nature of a school’s curriculum offer and how it has changed in recent years, and the history of recent staff and governor appointments. Minutes of full governors’ meetings (and perhaps sub-committee meetings) should also be readily available, along with OfSTED reports.

In generating an authoritative account, it is the context within which facts are deployed, and hence how they are framed for understanding, which especially matters. Clarke’s background is likely to colour the way he constructs that context.

One significant section of Clarke’s report relies on the transcript of postings over time on a private social media discussion-group. Clarke characterises this material as disturbing before he presents it, as if to shape a reader’s response. He says the material came into my possession but does not explain how it did.

Given the private nature of the source, it seems to me possible to see the hand of a security service in making it available. What has been selected from this transcript for use in Clarke’s report fits with the picture Clarke wishes to paint. On other occasions, he appears to make more out of some details than is warranted. He says that a malfunctioning fire-alarm was the pretext to suspend a head, but suspension in such circumstances might be entirely justified. Elsewhere he regards it as suspicious that a governor does not have DBS clearance, although this is not a requirement. He states, questionably, that it is unusual for a non-faith state school to make Religious Education a compulsory GCSE course.

In other words, in some respects Clarke appears to have slanted the presentation or interpretation of some relatively minor matters to favour his general stance. That all said Clarke does make a case, and people with segregationist practices, who make sexist, homophobic or otherwise discriminatory comments should not be allowed to run schools.

KERSHAW

Kershaw, who was asked to investigate by BCC, does not endorse the idea of a plot. Nevertheless he also found clear patterns of behaviour indicative of a concerted attempt to change schools, often by unacceptable practices, in order to influence educational and religious provision.

He spoke with 76 witnesses, 18 of whom also spoke with Clarke. (No witness was afforded anonymity by Kershaw, but the copy of the report I have seen is heavily redacted to safeguard some identities.) Other evidence was shared between the two investigations, although their timeframes were different, as were their briefs and foci.

Kershaw offers more local and community context than Clarke, and is more specific (though just as condemnatory) on aspects of governance, and on the behaviour of individuals. He also points out how the law was broken. He is concerned to support and value the record of education in Birmingham as a whole, but does not avoid criticising BCC.

The Council leader has publicly acknowledged that in some cases the council took no action, was too slow to act, or did the wrong thing, and that this was often out of fear of being regarded as racist or Islamophobic. A misguided understanding of “community cohesion” trumped the duty to support school staff and tackle embedded problems with particular governing-bodies.

The whole complex affair continues to have multiple implications on many levels.

What Kershaw’s report says about the council’s failure to support some school staff in the face of bullying and harassment has implications for the conduct of trade unions in the city. Kershaw’s report will lead to a radical overhaul of school governance procedures and practices in Birmingham. This is likely to have national implications for maintained schools and, given the debacle at PVET, for academies and free schools too. OfSTED gave some of the “at risk” schools glowing reports, only to put them in special measures shortly afterwards. This raises further questions about the existing inspection regime.

Many of the schools caught up in these events serve pupils who come from poor backgrounds. The proportion of pupils attaining highly across the board in SATs and other public exams has historically been quite low. Ensuring and improving broad educational opportunities for all pupils in these schools, and thereby boosting attainment-levels, ought to be a central concern. But if nothing else, “Trojan Horse” has indicated how contested is the notion of what counts as a good education.

The left is historically committed to a fully-comprehensive maintained education system. We will have yet again to think through how, and to what extent, such a system may be secularised. We will also have to reflect further on how best to engage with the religiously-dedicated without diluting our own adherence to democracy and equality.

- Clarke report: bit.ly/1mXQK7H
- Kershaw report: bit.ly/1nCa53d

Unison to discuss pay fight

Dave Pannett

After just a single day's strike over pay by workers local government, education, and the civil service, the press and the Tories are on the offensive against unions, highlighting the low turnouts in ballots, and pushing for new anti-union legislation.

We are right to highlight the hypocrisy of these calls coming from a government elected by a minority of voters with low turnouts in many constituencies, but in our own movement, we cannot be complacent. We have to honestly assess how we are organising for action and how best it can win. Turnouts and getting strong "yes" votes for industrial action, are important to our side and we need to seriously assess the state of our unions and their ability to organise and mobilise members.

The recent vote in Unison, where a majority of 59% voted for action, should be cause for concern. The turnout hasn't been officially announced, and many staff in schools were not balloted, but it is possible it was under 20%. Three years ago turnout in the pension dispute ballot was 30%, with a 78% yes vote.

In GMB, they achieved a 73% yes vote on a 23% turnout, and Unite achieved 68% yes vote. Both of these may have been boosted by Unison already having voted yes, as they were voting to join already-proposed action.

Poor turnouts shouldn't make ballots invalid; there are many reasons why turnouts will be low. In a general election, coverage across all media for months in advance (billboards, post from political parties bring the subject into everyone's home and lives) delivers a turnout of just over 60%.

Union ballots, by comparison, can look relatively low-key. Not everyone works in large workplaces, some work from home, or work part-time doing multiple jobs, and can be hard to engage. Existing anti-union legislation, which insists on postal (rather than workplace) ballots, further atomises union members.

But these factors alone do not account for why the turnouts were so low this time. What's going wrong, and why?

Since 2010, we have seen a concerted attack on public sector funding. City local authorities especially have faced unprecedented cuts (for instance, Manchester City Council has had to cut £250 million since 2010, and Liverpool has cut £173 million since 2011). Hundreds of thousands of jobs have been

Health ballot over pay

Unison has confirmed it will ballot its 300,000 health sector members from 28 August to 18 September for strikes against the "1% or increment" offer from the employers (which Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt believes is already too high).

Unite, GMB, and the Royal College of Midwives have also announced they will ballot for strikes.

If the ballots return a yes vote, they create the potential for a coordinated mass strike on 28 September (the date Unison has announced for its next local government strike, and in which the other public-sector unions which struck on 10 July could also participate).

A strong yes vote from health workers would open up a new front in the battle with the government, whose policies on health have proved hugely unpopular. This would also give a much needed boost to education and local government workers.

Workers' Liberty members who work in the NHS and other parts of the public sector will be mobilising over the summer to help deliver the best-possible yes vote, and to discuss ways of pushing for coordinated strikes in September.

We will also be pushing within our unions for them to name the next strikes, and other industrial actions, now, and for them to escalate from one-day strikes, rather than waiting for weeks (during which time momentum can subside) in between each strike.



cut, services have been decimated, and workers who have kept their jobs face unachievable workloads, extremely low morale and high sickness levels. Some councils have privatised or outsourced whole departments, children's services, leisure, IT, etc.

Public sector workers know this, and are angry about the attacks. How has the main public sector union, Unison, responded? Nationally, Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis has repeatedly said any branch or any group who want to fight back will have full support of the union. In reality, this hasn't been the case.

Unison's national political strategy is based on the idea that we cannot defeat the government in between elections — i.e., that it is not possible for councils, unions, workers and communities to win any concessions. So we wait for an election where we can oust the Tories and, in the meantime, help (Labour) councils consider how to soften the blow of cuts — whether through voluntary redundancy schemes, early retirement programmes, or spending reserves.

Attacks impact differently in each authority and region, and there has been little organised or coordinated action against cuts to jobs and services. When Unison branches want to take action, the union structures make it slow and difficult to get agreement to ballot.

So if branches are not encouraged or allowed to fight local outsourcing, or cuts to jobs, then why should they listen when the national unions makes calls to action?

The national strategy has led to many union branches prioritise casework, disciplinaries, and negotiation with management, over engaging with or communicating with members. This is not to say the council workers don't get emails or newsletters from their branch, but the combination of the wave of attacks, and the lack of coordinated opposition from the unions, has led to a local, regional, and consequently national leadership not able or confident to fight. Union members who've essentially been told by their union that they cannot fight and win over cuts are unlikely to feel confident that we can fight and win over pay.

The national pay dispute should link with local battles over cuts, and unions should be allowed to fight on those issues locally. Publicity and material should convince our members that we can and must demand that councils don't pass the cuts onto local communities and workers, and win the argument that the money exits to both improve and fund local services and pay decent wages.

This means that winning over unions, especially Unison, to a real fight with both local and national government over budgets. The same budgets that keep pay down, lead to the cuts. This is the same battle. Fighting them properly can turn around low turnouts.



Save Stafford Hospital camp

Around 40 people have set up camp outside Stafford Hospital in protest at plans to downgrade the services there. Accident and emergency, paediatrics and maternity ward are all set to be scrapped. If the changes go ahead, locals would be forced to travel all the way to Stoke or Wolverhampton in the event of a medical emergency.

The protest was organised after it was discovered that two applications for a judicial review of the decision to downgrade the hospital had been rejected. The Support Stafford Hospital campaign plans on appealing against the decision, but have camped outside the hospital to publicise the issue and build support.

The camp has received visits from other campaigns in defence of hospitals and the NHS from around the country. A delegation from the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, as well as from Charing Cross hospital, arrived to give their support and to talk about their similar struggles to defend the health service.

Ritzy Living Wage campaign hots up



By Phil Grimm

On 20 July workers at the Ritzy cinema in Brixton were on strike again as part of their Living Wage campaign.

The strike had been

timed to disrupt a live screening of the new Monty Python musical, the kind of screening that normally draws packed audiences and big profits.

For the first time in the dispute, the bosses decided to try and keep the cinema

running during industrial action, drafting in managers from elsewhere to fill in for strikers. A large, noisy crowd — perhaps fifty strikers and well over a hundred supporters — gathered at the entrances to cinema, waving flags, dancing to

music and holding an enormous banner calling for a boycott of the cinema.

Workers' Liberty members and other leftists, RS21 in particular, helped out with picketing and leafleting.

In support of the work-

ers, some customers refused to go in to the screening rooms and demanded a refund from management instead. However, screenings went ahead and so some protesters decided to sneak in and disrupt them. Around ten people managed to sneak past the scab ushers and into the Monty Python screening, climbing onto the stage and chanting slogans for a living wage. Security and police eventually succeeded in bundling everyone out, but it was an embarrassing spectacle for the bosses.

The Ritzy cultivates a

reputation as a trendy, avant-garde cinema catering to a forward-thinking clientèle. This reputation has been damaged by the strike. In the press and on social media, Monty Python member Terry Jones criticised the cinema for its refusal to pay a Living Wage, and urged fans to demand a refund. On the Sunday, potential customers would have seen the cinema surrounded by a dozen police officers, with large metal barriers erected outside to block out the view of picketing workers.

Earlier in the week, cinema workers from across London and beyond marched from the British Film Institute on the South Bank to City Hall, where they were addressed by film director Ken Loach, BECTU (media and entertainment) trade unionists and Labour assembly members. Solidarity messages were sent from other labour movement bodies, including the Bakers' Union.

As the campaign hots up, building solidarity for this crucially important dispute is urgent.

Struggles on London Underground

By Ollie Moore

Tube cleaners who are refusing to use "biometric fingerprinting" machines to book on for shifts remain locked out by their employer, ISS, with the lock out now stretching into its third week.

ISS want the machines, which take unique DNA-based data from everyone who uses them, to replace the existing method of booking on using telephones, and have already admitted that the data collected would be shared with the UK Border Agency and the Home Office. One cleaner told *Solidarity*: "This is a racist attack on a predominantly immigrant workforce."

The locked-out cleaners are using their time to visit other London Underground workplaces to raise awareness of their dispute, including talking to cleaners working for Initial (the other



major company which provides cleaning services on the Tube). It is widely believed that if ISS are able to introduce the machines, Initial will soon follow.

Two cleaners who participated in the boycott of the machines have been sacked; their union, RMT, is pursuing appeals.

Meanwhile, London Underground workers are gearing up for more action

in their dispute over job cuts and ticket office closures, as ongoing talks and reviews reveal the full extent of management's cuts plan. Major stations like Oxford Circus stand to lose up to five full-time-equivalent staff posts under the company's new regime, and there will be a massive increase in the number of stations where lone working will take place. London Underground is also attempting to renege on the commitment it made after RMT's April strikes to maintain salary levels for all workers affected by the cuts. It is now suggesting staff will have to undergo assessments in order to keep their current salaries.

RMT, along with fellow Tube union TSSA, has written to London Underground management restating their opposition to cuts and closures, and demanding written and binding commitments on issues such as salary.

At the RMT's "Listen to London" conference on 26 July, union activists along with community campaigners from Disabled People Against Cuts, the National Pensioners' Convention, and other groups, met to discuss increasing public political campaigning against Tube cuts, including leafleting and picketing at local stations.

Anti-union attacks at Glasgow Life

By Anne Field

Unison members employed by Glasgow Life, an "arms-length company" set up by Glasgow City Council, staged a series of protests last week to highlight their employer's treatment of them as a second-class workforce.

They should have been on strike. But Glasgow Life, aided and abetted by the Legal Department of the Labour-controlled City Council, had latched onto a technicality in the Unison strike ballot, and had threatened the union with legal action if notice of the strike was not withdrawn.

At the core of the dispute is the demand for enhanced payments for the extra work generated by the Commonwealth Games currently underway in Glasgow. Glasgow City Council and other arms-length companies it has set up in recent years have agreed to pay affected staff enhanced terms for the duration of the Games, such as higher overtime pay, paid lunch breaks, and one-



Dispute is over extra payments during Commonwealth Games

off lump-sum payments.

But employees of Glasgow Life, which runs the city's sports centres and museums, are to be paid only their normal rate of pay for any overtime work. Many workers have also had new shift patterns imposed upon them without their agreement.

A June strike ballot returned a 76% majority, but when Glasgow Life threatened legal action over a minor technicality, the union called the strike off and replaced it with a series of protests.

But then the Council itself applied to the Court of Session for an interim interdict banning the protest in front of the City Chambers, and also a protest at Kelvingrove Museum.

The Council argued that the protests were supposedly a covert attempt to persuade staff to strike.

But this was too much even for a judge of the Court of Session. He threw the application out: there was no evidence that "the intended protest carries with it any form of illegality", and the right to protest was part of the human right of freedom of speech and assembly.

The climbdown forced upon Unison by the threatened use of the anti-union laws, despite the clear mandate for strike action, underlines once again the undemocratic nature of those laws and the need for trade-union campaigning for their repeal.

Vote John Leach!

Ballot papers in the RMT General Secretary election went out to union members from 21 July. Workers' Liberty members active in RMT are supporting John Leach. For more on John's campaign, see johnforgs.org. As the election is based on an STV system, we are also advocating a second-preference vote for Alan Pottage.



Construction workers' sit-down safety strike

By Darren Bedford

Nearly 1,000 construction workers at a gas plant in Shetland staged a sit-down strike in their workplace canteen on Monday 21 July, over safety concerns.

The sit-in also raised a number of long-running grievances, including some workers being deprived travel allowance, inadequate accommodation for non-Shetland-resident workers, and Total and

Petrofac's (the companies which run the plant) refusal to pay workers for a previous 2.5 hour safety stoppage, which workers are legally entitled to undertake if working conditions are unsafe. A further sit-in on 23 July drew in greater numbers, and the companies involved have agreed to pay the 2.5 hours backpay, and look into extending travel allowance.

The strike also had the effect of cancelling a planned visit to the site by David Cameron.



Birmingham students occupy

By Omar Raii

On Monday 28 July, students from Birmingham Defend education occupied the Strathcona building.

They were occupying in solidarity with their fellow students, Kelly Rogers and Simon Furse, who have been suspended on very spurious and draconian charges for previous occupations, in protest against Birmingham University management.

An occupier told Solidarity, "Comrades have been suspended on trumped up charges and in solidarity with them, we're reclaiming university space.

"The suspensions of the students has a reflection on the modern corporate, neoliberal university. I don't think the expulsions nor protests would have happened had it not been for all the changes we've seen in Higher Education in the last four years.

"It's impossible to separate the demands for freedom to protest and the living wage demands. It's all about instilling confidence in the wider movement."

The occupation is ongoing and has received support from the wider student left.

The movement against repressive university managements, for freedom to protest and for a living wage for all workers on campus, as well as the growing demands for free education in the wake of the 2015 general election, all need to be linked up to fight for the democratic universities that we all want to see.



Ukraine government in crisis but fighting in the east continues

By Dale Street

The Svoboda (neo-fascist) and Udar (right-wing) parties resigned from Ukraine's coalition government on 24 July. A few hours later the Prime Minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, announced his resignation as well.

Svoboda's stated reason for pulling out of the coalition was: "A parliament which protects state criminals, Moscow's agents, and refuses to strip (parliamentary) immunity from those who work for the Kremlin should not exist."

Udar's stated reason for pulling out was: "We see that the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) is not set for constructive work in accordance with the will of the Ukrainian people."

Yatsenyuk based his resignation on the fact the Svoboda/Udar withdrawal from the coalition left the government without a parliamentary majority. This was reflected in the parliament's refusal to back a package of budgetary 'reforms' proposed by Yatsenyuk the same day.

The "reforms" in question

involved yet another attack on the already crumbling living standards of the majority of Ukrainians. Imposing cuts in public spending — apart from military spending — is a condition imposed by the IMF before it releases a further tranche of a \$17 billion loan.

The state budget deficit for 2014 currently amounts to 14.5 billion hryvnia. Inflation is expected to remain at around 20%. Ukrainian GDP is set to decline by a further 6%, or, in the worst case scenario, by around 10%.

The Ukrainian economy has been weakened still further by the fighting in the south-east, which accounts for around 15% of Ukraine's GDP and 25% of its industrial output. The fighting has resulted in a slump in output, and widespread damage to the industrial infrastructure.

The daily cost of the conflict runs to some three million dollars. Overall, the costs of the war in the south-east are expected to run to a billion dollars.

After Russia's annexation of the peninsula in March, the Crimea is no longer a source of revenue for

Ukraine. And, unsurprisingly, the level of trade between Ukraine and Russia in recent months has slumped dramatically.

On the eve of the parliamentary vote on the proposed cuts the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FTUU) wrote to all Ukrainian MPs, urging them to vote against the cuts.

CUTS

The cuts included: powers to suspend employment law protection; changing, for the worse, the indexing of pensions and other welfare benefits; powers to impose cuts in daily working hours and compulsory unpaid "holidays" on state employees; and freezing the already low rate of the minimum wage.

However weakly, FTUU leader Sergei Kondryuk warned: "If the Rada does not listen to our appeals and adopts these proposals, trade union members are calling on us to stage serious protest activities."

The Rada did reject the proposals. But certainly not in response to the FTUU's appeal, nor out of any concern for the impact of the

budget cuts on Ukrainian workers.

Even before the collapse of the coalition government, it was likely that parliamentary elections would be held in Ukraine this autumn. (The government's collapse makes this more likely.)

Rather than enter the elections as members of a government which imposed another savage round of spending cuts, Svoboda and Udar can now enter them as parties which brought down the government rather than vote for cuts.

By resigning, Yatsenyuk has also avoided responsibility for the cuts. By the time of the elections he will doubtless declare that whatever cuts have been imposed are far worse than anything he suggested.

While the country's oligarchic and kleptocratic parliamentarians manoeuvred for electoral advantage, fighting intensified in the south-east.

Militarily, the separatists are on the defensive: more and more territory is being lost to the advancing Ukrainian forces.

Politically, the separatists are even more on the defensive.

MALAYSIAN AIRLINES Evidence continues to mount that they shot down the Malaysian Airlines Boeing 777 (not realising it was a passenger plane). Evidence of external Russian military support for the separatists also continues to mount.

Propaganda-wise, the separatists are doing just as badly: Contrary to their claims, the Ukrainian authorities are clearly not committing "genocide" (sic) as they advance, and whacky conspiracy theories advanced by separatist leaders and supporters about the downing of the Boeing 777 undermine their credibility even more.

But the biggest losers are the civilian population in what are now the main areas of fighting: the densely populated cities of Gorlovka, Donetsk and Lugansk. A tweet by one inhabitant of Donetsk succinctly summed up their plight:

"Artillery fire can be heard every night in Donetsk. Shelling comes from both sides. Civilians suffer. Many people flee in recent days."