



Solidarity

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DON'T LET THE TORIES RECOVER!

A rising mood that cuts are not inevitable, a rising anger against economic inequality, and a rising confidence that alternatives are possible, has damaged the Tories in recent months.

The Panama Papers have shown that they represent and serve a system of squeezing the maximum out of working-class effort and siphoning it off to tax havens. Now the Tories hope to recover poise from the 5 May elections.

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The left, Ken Livingstone, and anti-semitism



Solidarity examines the history of "left anti-semitism" and how we can tackle it.

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Junior doctors' escalation works



Junior doctor Pete Campbell describes how escalated strikes have been a tipping point.

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James Connolly in Dublin



Michael Johnson continues a series on the life and politics of James Connolly

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Join Labour!

Momentum calls for campaign against council cuts

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Islamist terror hits Bangladesh

By Gerry Bates

On 25 April Xulhaz Mannan, the editor of *Roopbaan*, the country's first magazine for lesbian gay and transgender people, was hacked to death in Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital.

Homosexuality is illegal in Bangladesh.

This is the sixteenth murder in a series of Islamist machete killings over the past three years. Other targets have included secular bloggers and liberal intellectuals.

Responsibility for all the attacks has been claimed by Islamic State or Ansar al-Islam, a local chapter of al-Qaida.

Sheikh Hasina, leader of the Awami League and Prime Minister since 2009, has said she will not be held responsible for the deaths of people with objectionable opinions, and recently described the bloggers' writings as "porn".

The government denies that Islamic State or al-Qaida is active in the country.

The Awami League won rigged elections in 2014 and has repressed the main opposition party, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), and intimidated the press. Sheikh Hasina has looked for legitimacy and support from Islamists.

In 1988 Islam was made the state religion in Bangladesh by a military government. Ruling parties have often used religion demagogically to shore up their regimes.

This spate of killings began in February 2013 following protests which demanded the hanging of Abdul Quader Mollah, leader of Jamaat-e-Islami, for war crimes committed during Bangladesh's war of independence from Pakistan in 1971.

"Many of those on trial for similar crimes have been associated with the Islamist opposition to the Awami League. In response an Islamist organisation, Hefazat-e-Islam, drew up a list of 84 secular and atheist bloggers and demanded that the government move against them for publishing blasphemous material.

Five of the victims since 2013 were on that list.



Xulhaz Mannan

Revolutionary socialist elected to NUS

At the 2016 National Union of Students conference, Workers' Liberty supporter Omar Raii, a student at University College London, was elected to the National Executive Council alongside fellow NCAFC candidates Ana Oppenheim and Sahaya James. This was Omar's election speech.

I'm Omar, standing as a National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts candidate, and a supporter of the Labour Party and Workers' Liberty.

Conference, I'm a socialist. I'm a socialist because I'm angry.

I'm angry because I found out, only yesterday, that 63 people own more wealth than the rest of humanity combined – and this is only getting worse.

I'm angry because millions of people are fleeing war and persecution, and so many of them – they

just want a better life, education for their children – are ending up languishing in camps in France. I can't turn my back on those people – once upon a time I was one of them. Everything I owe, everything I am, is because of the education I received, and those people languishing in camps in Calais deserve the exact same thing we all take for granted.

I'm angry because of the so-called free press in this country acting as mouthpieces for a ruling elite, while shrieking denunciations of any attempt to change things for the better.

But I'm also angry at the left – the force that can change all this. I'm angry for our failings – on Europe, on anti-semitism, on free speech, and on actually taking on the Tories rather than just tweeting about it.

To change the world, you need anger. But you also need thoughtful clear and radical ideas, and I think



I'm a candidate with both of them. On junior doctors' and nurses' picket lines, on demonstrations and in occupations, or in the NUS.

In the arguments we need to

remake the left and our movement, I will stand firm for socialist ideas – not ideas that pander to what's popular, or will impress my mates.

No to forced academies!

By Simon Nelson

Teachers, parents, governors, trade union, labour and community activists turned out to the first "Hands off Our Schools – No to Forced Academies" meeting in Leeds on Thursday 28 April.

100 people attended. Organised by the Leeds National Union of Teachers (NUT) branch, it was a positive first step in building a campaign to defeat the Government's White Paper on Education.

This is the government's attempt to force through wholesale privatisation of education. Patrick Murphy, Leeds NUT, spoke about some key elements to fight against – lack of democracy, the lack of evidence for any benefit to children of academisation – and the widespread public opposition, unrest from Tory MPs and the Tory controlled County Councils.

He said government should be focusing on teacher shortages, teacher turnover, the gap in funding for schools, the lack of school places, and the scourge of testing on both children and teachers.

Finally Patrick made the case for industrial action and why it was a vital part of the fightback against the academisation process. Patrick emphasised that whilst many academies do sign up to national agreements on teachers' pay etc., in the so-called "Burgundy Book", they will scrap such agreements if strikes are defeated.

Parent governor Brendon Nicholls said that the kind of people the academies want on their boards are not the people he looks up to, many of whom, like the junior doctors are being attacked by the same government that is pushing the legislation through.

Leeds headteacher Jane Astrid



Devane highlighted argued that while many of the services provided to schools by the local authority were imperfect they helped to create a school environment that works with SEN children or behavioural issues. Once the market is introduced those services will not be there.

Councillor Judith Blake said that Leeds City Council is committed to fighting the proposals. Many Leeds schools had already written to them asking for the Authority to setup its own academy chain. She said they have told schools this is premature and that it may be possible to defeat the proposals outright.

Unlike Murphy and others, Blake did believe that the right for Local Authorities to set up chains was a concession. The council would go ahead with this if they believed it would stop wholesale forced academisation going ahead. Teachers from one school confirmed that there are already talks going ahead to start turning their school into an academy.

Proposals to hold local meetings, leaflet school gates and set up local campaigns were agreed.



Workers' Liberty joined thousands of labour movement activists on London's May Day march. Our placards emphasised Trotskyist "third camp" politics in contrast to some Stalinist banners on the march.

End the "offshore policy"!

By Colin Foster

On 26 April, Papua New Guinea's Supreme Court ruled that Australia's detention of asylum seekers on Manus Island is illegal because it breaches the right to personal liberty in the PNG constitution.

Manus is a sparsely populated island off the coast of PNG, over 1000km from the nearest tip of Australia. It has been used by Australian governments as a detention centre for asylum seekers since 2012, and previously in 2001-2004.

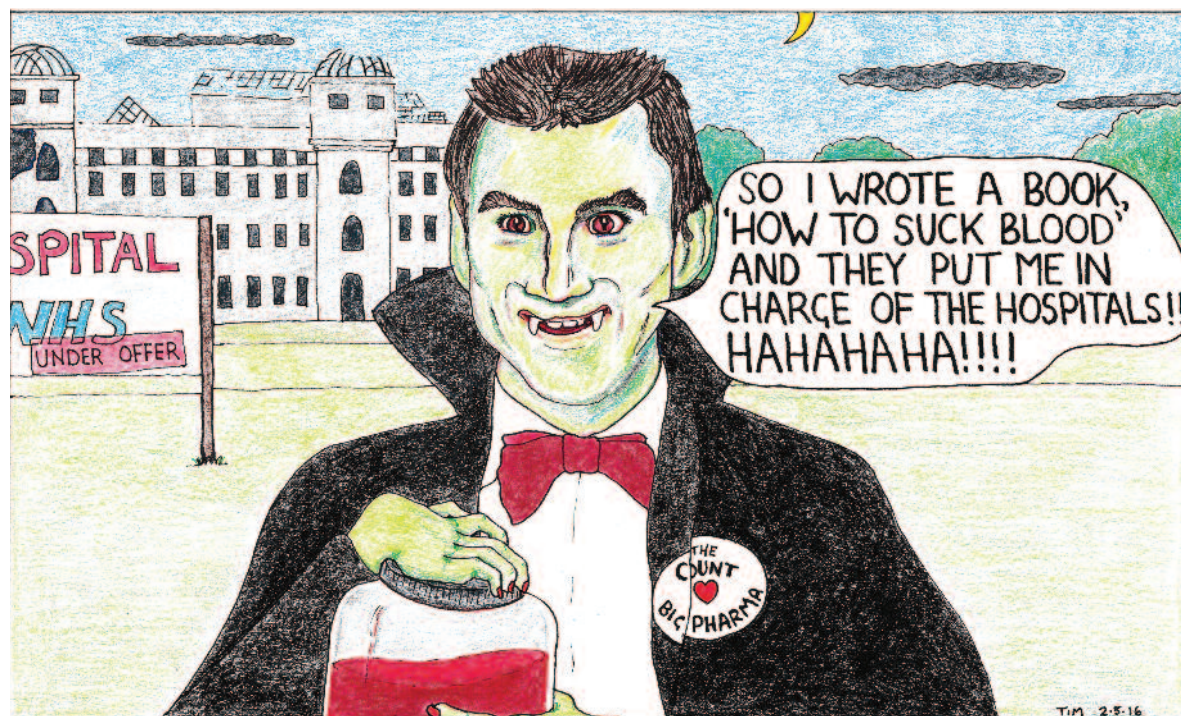
There are 850 asylum seekers there now. The PNG Supreme Court has ordered the PNG and Australian Governments to end their detention of asylum seekers in PNG.

But Australia's Liberal government says it will just move the asylum-seekers to other "offshore" centres, and the Labor opposition basically concurs.

Ian Rintoul of the Refugee Action Coalition says: "It is shocking that Opposition Immigration spokesperson, Richard Marles, is demanding any continuation of offshore detention in Papua New Guinea. The Labor Party should take the opportunity to drop its offshore policy..."

"In the end, there is only one alternative – to close Manus and Nauru; and bring all the refugees and asylum seekers to Australia.

"The Manus detainees in detention in Australian mainland detention centres should be set free immediately".



Keep faith in our solidarity

By Peter Campbell, BMA Junior Doctors Committee, p.c.

Turnout in the latest round of strike action by junior doctors (26-27 April) was an estimated 78%.

Considering that around 80% of junior doctors are BMA members and that doctors on maternity leave, sick leave and those working nights won't be included, this is an incredible turnout.

Junior doctors are growing in confidence, our placards are improving and we are getting better at picketing effectively.

Public support remains strong and more blame the government for this dispute than they did in January. We have had the full support of senior clinicians and the rest of the health service, and they have done an incredible job of keeping our hospitals safe during our strike.

As the government rhetoric becomes more panicked their true motivations become clear. The government is no longer worried about junior doctors. They are worried

about the impact this strike will have on the currently dormant trade union movement.

"With all negotiations, if you buckle at the end you send out a message to other union groups that you'll back down," one Whitehall source told the *Guardian*, on 26 April

Therefore we must show the government we can wake the trade union movement regardless, and force them into conceding before this goes any further.

Some have begun to compare this to the miners' strike. But after a week's worth of industrial action being compared to the National Union of Mineworkers' year-long strike shows a short memory.

If you must have a historical precedent, try the 1888 match workers' strike. Young women walked off the job after their colleagues had been sacked for complaining about poor working conditions. They struck for safety, acceptable working hours and fair pay. They too learnt their own strength and the meaning of solidarity on the picket line. They won their demands. It is only a matter of

time, energy and commitment until we win ours.

What do we need?

1. A plan for escalating strikes between now and the August imposition. This should be announced at one go, so that the message is clear. It should culminate in an indefinite strike where junior doctors state they are not going back to work unless imposition is lifted.

2. A national demonstration called by the BMA supported by the TUC. Demonstrations organised by regional junior doctor committees have been a huge success. We now need a national demonstration to show the government the people are on our side.

3. The BMA should affiliate to the TUC to argue for solidarity with junior doctors, and to repay the solidarity shown by the trade union movement. We should be talking to other unions and supporting the actions of the NUT against academisation.

4. In the Labour Party ask your MP to join us on picket lines and demonstrations. Picket outside private healthcare providers or their other businesses. Want to hold a candle lit vigil outside the department of health? Go for it. The broader the actions, the wider the message is spread the greater the chance of us doing something that works!

It's going to take a bit of faith. From the junior doctors to the rest of the trade union movement, and visa versa. But this is the challenge we have set ourselves. But look at what is at stake.

This contract will increase rota gaps, it will drive doctors beyond breaking point and they will leave, the country, the profession, or be forced onto the sick. The NHS cannot survive without its staff.

The government's plan rests on the fact that we do not have enough faith in ourselves and each other. Let's show them how wrong they are.

12 months, allowing unions time to "adjust". Hardly a huge win, but trade union leaders and officials have been spending a lot of energy "lobbying" for it, and claiming a victory, while other hugely damaging aspects of the bill are still being passed.

An immediate change over to "opt in", like the immediate change over for "check off", would have left unions and the Labour Party without resources at a critical point.

However this is not a victory on the majority of the Bill, which will significantly hobble workers' ability to organise.

More concessions on Trade Union Bill

By Charlotte Zalens

After the news on 19 April that the government was dropping the changes to "check off" in the Trade Union Bill, it has now also rowed back slightly on changes to trade union funding of political parties.

The bill requires unions to move from a system of members "opting out" of their union's political fund to one where members have to "opt in". Labour Party funding will take a huge hit.

The government is delaying the implementation of the change for

Parents protest at imposed testing

By Martin Thomas

On Tuesday 3 May, thousands of parents, organised by the "Let Kids be Kids" campaign, will keep their seven year old children from school to protest at the government-imposed "SATS tests".

Preparation for those tests, they say, squeezes out creative learning and makes children anxious. "What if I fail?"

A box-ticking, hurdle-jumping structure to education is common to capitalist education systems. England's obsession with testing, and testing, and testing again is extreme. It indoctrinates young children into thinking "I'm a level 3" or "my brother is a level 4".

Even conservatives are being forced to recognise some of the harm.

The Institute of Directors, in a report on 18 April, said that schools must be shifted from being "exam factories" that primarily test students' ability to recall facts and apply standardised methods, two things computers do much better than humans".

John Cridland, director of the bosses' confederation CBI, last year called for GCSEs to be abolished. "The only purpose they serve now is to allow measurement of schools through league tables".

Exams have their uses. For plumbing or brain surgery, you want someone whose skills have been verified by a commonly-recognised procedure.

But school exams have nothing to do with that. Their purpose is not to certify people as competent. It is to brand most students as failures and debar them from further education (and secondarily, via school league tables and their knock-on effects within schools, to brand teachers as failures).

Branding people as failures helps make them compliant, and so serves capitalism. But the exam obsession of English schools is so extreme that even some capitalists have come to want more actual education and less blinkered exam-cramming.

An extra twist is added by England's system of competing exam boards, some straight profit-grabbers, others "non-profits" which pay top bosses huge salaries. To do well in market competition, the exam boards make their exams highly routinised and cheap to mark.

The results are absurd. Take for example maths and further maths A levels, at the opposite end of the school schedule from the Year 2 studies tested by SATS.

For centuries, mathematical schooling consisted of teaching arithmetic calculations to relatively many and Euclid's geome-



try to some. There was much wrong with it, but it had some correspondence to maths in real life, to everyday figuring and to the understanding of how new truths could be won. Through Euclid students learned, well or poorly, about the rigorous logic of mathematical proof.

Now there is still mental arithmetic in primary and early secondary schooling, but it gets squeezed out as GCSE approaches. The average good A level further maths student has very little idea how to do the "street-fighting maths" of rough-and-ready calculations, and will learn no more of that through the A level syllabus.

Proof has disappeared from the school syllabus. The reason now given by schools for believing mathematical formulas is the teacher's say-so, not proof. Almost all A level maths and further maths is mechanical procedures — some important, and necessary to learn, and others of only special interest (for purposes about which the textbook-writers seem to know little).

To do well in A level maths and further maths is to achieve 90% accuracy in those procedures. You could in principle do it while knowing nothing about the living streams of maths in real life — rough-and-ready calculation and conjecture, imaginative transposition of patterns from one context to another, and rigorous proof. It is maths without the maths.

Universities with higher-flying maths departments disdain the A levels, and set their own extra exams for entrants, including real maths. Many state schools have little capacity to teach students for those exams. University science and engineering department put effort into websites encouraging school students to attempt problems beyond the A level routine. Employers tell researchers that students arrive from school unable to deal with "simple maths in complex settings".

Schools should teach critical, creative, and informed thinking. The exam obsession cuts directly against that.

When anti-Zionism and anti-semitism are the same

THE LEFT

Dan Katz compares the Socialist Worker Party's position on the Livingstone anti-semitism row to what we say.

SWP: Anti-Zionism and anti-semitism are not the same thing.

AWL: Not necessarily the same; but quite often they are. The anti-Zionists who carry placards equating Israel with Nazi Germany are anti-semitic. The anti-Zionists who oppose Israel by picketing "Jewish" shops like Marks and Spencers are anti-semitic. The anti-Zionists who complain about Zionist-led media are anti-semitic. And the anti-Zionists who pick on Israeli Jews — uniquely — as a people without the right to a state are a species of anti-semitic.

SWP: Livingstone's comments that "Hitler was supporting Zionism" before the Holocaust played into the right's hands, but he is not racist or anti-Semitic.

AWL: The SWP say Livingstone's comments were tactically inadvisable. They should say Livingstone's comments were wrong and shameful.

As the SWP knows, Livingstone has a long and unpleasant record of "Zionist"-baiting. In 2006 he compared a Jewish journalist to a Nazi concentration camp guard and asked him if he was a Nazi war criminal. As London Mayor Livingstone welcomed the Islamist preacher Sheikh Yusuf al-Qaradawi to the UK. Al-Qaradawi had, amongst other things, advocated suicide bombings against Israeli Jews.

The SWP is not bothered because it shares Livingstone's hostility to "Zionists".

SWP: John Mann MP, who berated Livingstone on live TV, did not confront David Cameron or Phillip Hammond as racists when they branded Calais refugees a "swarm".

AWL: Just because John Mann is a right-wing Labour hack doesn't mean he isn't right on this issue (and Mann would be right even if we were sure he was making a fuss for opportunistic reasons of internal Labour politicking). To avoid the point Mann was making — denouncing Livingstone because Livingstone declared Hitler supported Zionism — by changing the subject to the refugees in Calais convinces no-one. It is pathetic.

SWP: Opposing a state that's built on systematic Palestinian oppression is not anti-

semitic — it is anti-racist.

AWL: The oppression of the Palestinian people is not necessary to the existence of Israel, any more than the oppression of the Indian people was necessary to the existence of the UK. Israel should settle with the Palestinians and allow the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

What is anti-semitic is the systematic denigration of all things Israeli, the singling out of Israel as a specially oppressive and racist entity, and the demand for the destruction of Israel. These ideas are not anti-racist, they are a type of anti-semitism.

The AWL is opposed to the oppression of the Palestinians and we advocate two states for the two peoples to end that oppression and lay the basis for workers' unity. Why



Placards equating Israel with Nazi Germany are not uncommon

would any socialist political group — like the SWP — want to attempt to replace the oppression of the Palestinians with the destruction of Israel and the driving out and repression of the Israeli Jews?

What else is this, if not anti-semitic?

No socialist content in Hungary

LETTER

Gemma Short is quite right in her comments on Steve Bloom's review of *The Two Trotskyisms* (Solidarity 402): the nationalisations in Eastern Europe had no socialist content.

I lived in Hungary from 1991 to 2000 and in this time became acquainted with the giant Ózd steelworks complex near the border with Slovakia. I hasten to add that I never, unfortunately, visited the steelworks, but I knew a documentary filmmaker, Tamás Almási, who made a series of films on the workers there and their experience of going through privatisation and finally the closure of the works.

In all Almási made eight films from 1987 to 1998 — never once adding a voice-over commentary but allowing the workers (and others) to speak for themselves.

It was both fascinating and utterly depressing. The steelworkers' union was a sham and worked hand in glove with management and was, putting it mildly, dis-

trusted by the workers. Their pay was miserable, barely enough to live on, and

most of the workers lived in cramped apartments in tower blocks, their work was dirty, physically demanding and dangerous. Eventually part of the huge site was sold to a local "entrepreneur", János Petrenkó, but he soon went bust.

In the last film (with the poignant title 'Helpless') the whole site was closed and fenced off, all the workers were made redundant, and the only visitors were members of the local Gypsy population who raided the site for scrap metal.

Significantly, in the 11 years covered by the films, the workers only once protested against the closure. They organised a rally in the town centre and that was it. When Almási asked them why they never went on strike or took other action, they replied that they had never been on strike and didn't know what to do!

It was as if their initiative, their self-reliance, had been drained out of them by years of top-down, bureaucratic control and lies. Almási told me that visiting Ózd was like going back 25 years to the old Soviet Union — they still had worker brigades and awards for "star" workers and other such quasi-Stalinist/Stakhanovite paraphernalia.

If there was any socialism here, in any form, it certainly escaped me.

John Cunningham, Adlington, Lancashire



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Don't let the Tories recover!

A rising mood that cuts are not inevitable, a rising anger against economic inequality, and a rising confidence that alternatives are possible, has damaged the Tories in recent months.

Ian Duncan Smith resigned, demagogically spilling the truth that the Tories have been victimising the worst-off to benefit the rich. That was one of the side-products of the Tories' splits over Europe, which have seen Tory right-wingers suddenly "discovering" that the NHS is underfunded and suggesting Britain's EU budget contributions could fill the gap.

The Tories were forced to retreat on disabled benefits. The Panama Papers and George Osborne's welcome for Google's token tax payoff have shown that they represent and serve a system of squeezing the maximum out of working-class effort and siphoning it off to tax havens.

Now the Tories hope to recover some poise from the 5 May elections.

The Tories have been helped by the crass and insulting anti-semitic words said, and reaffirmed, and reaffirmed again by Ken Livingstone in three radio interviews on 28 April, and the storm they have provoked.

Labour needs to deal with anti-semitism, including the anti-semitism which thinks of itself as left-wing. The labour movement can defeat the attempts of the Tories and the Labour right to use this issue not by denying it, but only by dealing with it.

To deal with the issue, we need a lively, open, thinking labour movement. The last thing we want is a cowed, silent labour movement, reduced to carping at the Tories about details. The last thing we want is to allow the Labour right to use a bad election result on 5 May to launch a coup against Jeremy Corbyn and start to return the Labour Party to the numbed and gutted conditions it was in under Blair and Brown.

After those numbed and gutted years, the labour movement needs a thorough self-renewal, to restore its democratic life, to regain



Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell joined the joint junior doctors' and teachers' demonstration in London on 26 April

its confidence, to repair its ability to fight, to make it capable of developing and winning people to social and not just administrative alternatives to Tory policies.

That was never going to be an easy, straight-line process. It requires reinstating the ideas of socialism and working-class solidarity in a culture where they have been marginalised and smeared for decades, where even the new Labour leaders rarely dare utter the word "socialism" — and where, as we've seen, many of the well-known people who proclaim themselves "left", like Livingstone, are irresponsible

demagogues.

The Tories are chopping the NHS to bits by marketisation and by (as they say themselves) treating the junior doctors as the equivalent for 2016 of the miners in 1984-5 — "the enemy within".

They are recreating the slum landlords, by trying to trash social housing and driving millions into private renting with minimal tenant rights.

They are cutting benefits for the worst-off, and especially for the disabled, while giving tax cuts to the rich.

They are squeezing local public services to extinction.

They are trying, with the Trade Union Bill, effectively to outlaw large strikes by public service workers, and to cripple unions' political activity.

They plan to drive all schools into a quasi-market system where entrepreneur-profit head teachers compete with each other to siphon off government funds, local cooperation and democratic control are annihilated, and teacher qualifications become a matter of a head teacher's say-so.

They de-

monise migrants, and respond to the millions fleeing Syria's war and other calamities with smug meanness that would shame the openly chauvinist governments of Eastern Europe.

Their conflicts among themselves over the EU are between vicious alternatives. Some want to make Britain "like Albania" (as Michael Gove said: a Wild-West offshore capitalism, rejecting even the modest regulation won in the EU, and hard-faced against migrants). Others think that trade interests compel them to tolerate some social regulation and some migration, but want to minimise them. Both wings are equally hostile to building on the existing botched, bureaucratic, capitalist European half-unity to move forward to reduced borders and to level up socially across the continent.

The Tories are trying to use the long depression which has followed the 2008 crash to batter and bludgeon, to reduce the "cost base" for bosses, and to make a meaner, nastier, dirtier society.

All those things grow from one root, the gearing of all economic life to the competitive profit-greed of a wealthy few. The slightly-softened version of that same profit-gearing which was the "New Labour" formula is utterly discredited.

The Labour right has nothing better to offer. What do they mean when they attack Corbyn for being too left-wing? That Labour should return to the stance of criticising the Tories only on technical competence and marginal excesses? That it should revert to telling working-class people that the system which brought us the 2008 crash needs only to have the bankers and bosses refloated at taxpayer expense and be set going again until the next crash?

If the Tories — and their right-flank out-riders, Ukip — gain ground on 5 May, the proper conclusion is that the task of restoring the labour movement's will and ability to reclaim society was never going to be slick and swift, and we need to work on it more boldly, more consistently, more combatively.

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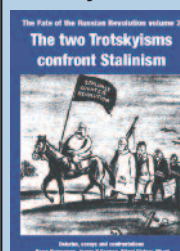
Workers' Liberty makes class struggle and radical social change central to our feminism. We are socialist feminists. This pamphlet explores what "socialist feminism" might mean in the context of the latest "wave", and global conditions.

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The two Trotskyisms confront Stalinism

For the revolutionary socialists, the Trotskyists, it has been a very long march through the 20th century and beyond, and over sometimes uncharted, unexpected, terrain. Central to it has been the fight against Stalinism, to understand it, to wipe the labour movement clean of it. This book surveys and documents for the first time the formative debates in the 1940s between the two main strands into which Trotskyism divided.



£23 (inc postage) from bit.ly/twotrotskyisms

The left and anti-semitism

By Ira Berkovic*

A simple understanding of anti-semitism as anti-Jewish racism doesn't give us a complete picture. Hitlerite anti-semitism, based on pseudo-scientific racial hierarchies, is just one strain of historical anti-semitism.

"Racism" itself can be a difficult term to define and pin down, but various forms of historical Christian-religious anti-semitism, for example, aren't straightforwardly "racist".

In historical anti-semitism, unlike other forms of racism, bigotry, and chauvinism, there is an almost ubiquitous trope of Jewish power and control. Anti-black racism, for example, is normally based on the idea that black people are lazy, stupid, and fitted only to perform menial tasks in the service of whites. Anti-semitism, by contrast, contends that the target group, Jews, are all-powerful and all-controlling.

And there is a specific "left anti-semitism" — which doesn't mean a variety of anti-semitism that is left-wing, but a specific type of anti-semitism which manifests on the left, within left-wing discourse, which is quite distinct from straightforward racist hostility to Jews, or personal animosity towards individual Jews.

The term "anti-semitism" was first popularised not by a right-winger but by Wilhelm Marr, an 1848 revolutionary and proto-anarchist of sorts. There is an anti-semitic element to the writing of mid-19th-century leftists like Dühring, Stirner, and Bauer.

Some early leftists, Proudhon, for example, were more or less straightforward anti-Jewish racists.

Those people saw anti-semitism as a perfectly compatible part of a left-wing worldview — in many cases, precisely because of that trope of Jewish power, of the conflation of Jews with capital — what, in the 1890s, August Bebel, a leader of Germany's revolutionary workers' party, the SDP, was denouncing as "the socialism of fools".

Those tropes about "Jewish financiers" and so on have never really gone away, and have resurfaced somewhat since the economic crisis of 2008 in quasi-movements like Zeitgeist, which isn't really part of the left but which permeates left-wing spaces and some left-wing culture.

That older "left anti-semitism" is there in the historical background. However, the bulk of contemporary left anti-semitism has different, or at least additional, historical roots. With it, we're not talking about straightforward racist hostility to Jews, but rather about a political methodology which, carried through to its conclusion, has an anti-semitic logic.

I do not consider members of the Socialist Workers Party, for example, to be racists, but I do think their ideas on the Middle East have anti-semitic implications.

They and others see Israel as a uniquely reactionary state and Jewish nationalism as a uniquely reactionary nationalism. The Hebrew-speaking Israeli-Jewish nation undeniably constitutes a "national group", in the



Equation of Zionism with Nazism is rooted in Stalinist propaganda

Marxist understanding of that term, as opposed to a narrow, exploiting settler-caste like the South African Boers. And it is the only national group for which the far-left's programme is that their state must be dismantled, rather than changed in some way, however radical.

There is no substantial "Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions" movement, consciously aimed at excluding a particular nation from general human discourse, directed against any other country.

They also see the Jewish presence in historic Palestine as entirely illegitimate, a product only of a colonial land-grab, an intolerable fact which can be dealt with only by the Hebrew-speaking Jewish population agreeing to be a subsumed as a religious minority in a wider Arab state, or being forcibly conquered.

They tend to argue that a Jewish, or "Zionist", lobby exerts an essentially controlling influence on American foreign policy or world affairs in general, or the media, or some aspect of the media.

They tend to demand also that Jewish people, uniquely amongst ethno-cultural groups, make a total break from certain aspects of their historically-developed identity — or be considered akin to racists.

In the 1980s some on the far left campaigned to have Student Unions ban campus Jewish Societies which did not take an explicitly anti-Zionist stance. There's little today which is quite as explicit, but the disruption of a recent meeting at King's College London of Yachad, a liberal, pro-two-states Israeli peace group, was in a similar vein.

All those ideas exist as the implied (not necessarily consciously expressed or accepted) logic of the "common sense" of a chunk of the far left on the questions of Israel/Palestine and Jewish identity.

The "Jewish question", as it was debated by Marxists prior to the Second World War, was about how to understand and relate to the quasi-"nation" of Yiddish-speaking Jews living in central and eastern Europe. That question doesn't exist any more. The Holo-

caust settled it by largely annihilating and dispersing that population. And the rising tide of violent, state-sanctioned anti-semitism, and ultimately the Holocaust, which I would argue was a historically-unique event, gave material impulse to a form of Jewish nationalism, Zionism, which had previously been a minority movement amongst Jews.

I imagine that the argument that assimilation and integration is ultimately impossible, and that only separation and statehood can provide security, looks pretty compelling in the midst of a pogrom or from inside a concentration camp.

ANTI-ZIONISM

I reject the argument that any form of anti-Zionism is de facto anti-semitic.

In the era of "the Jewish question", the authentic revolutionary socialist movement was always anti-Zionist. But it was an anti-Zionism conditioned by an understanding of the material roots of that nationalist impulse, and an anti-Zionism that acknowledged that Zionism, like all nationalisms, encompassed a spectrum of perspectives and programmes.

There was, for example, a detachment of the Red Army, organised by the left-Zionist party Poale Zion, which fought with the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War. Leon Trotsky, by the end of his life, had significantly tempered his historical opposition to Jewish statehood. "If the Jewish workers and peasants asked for an independent state... if they want it, the proletariat will give it".

Today we have an anti-Zionism based on an ahistorical erasure or minimising of Jewish refugee experience, particularly after the Holocaust. It is an anti-Zionism which sees only the frequently ethno-chauvinist pronouncements of the movement's ideological figureheads, and not the more complicated socio-political impulses that drove masses of working-class Jews towards its central tenet — the idea that the Jewish nation should constitute itself at the level of an independent state, and later, that that state should exist in Palestine.

Much of the post-1967 anti-Zionism of the

far left sees Jewish emigration to Palestine as being only, ever, colonial, erasing the experiences of the "Boat People" of the Second World War and after, Jewish refugees from genocide who had literally nowhere else to go.

This one-sided, ahistorical analysis of Jewish nationalism has clear roots in Stalinism, and specifically in Stalinism's anti-semitic conspiracy theories of the early 1950s onwards.

For example: "The capitalists of England, the USA, France, Germany, and other countries, amongst them millionaires and multimillionaires of Jewish origin, who had their eyes on the wealth of the Near East, helped the creation of the Zionist idea. From the very outset it was linked with the project of the establishment in Palestine of a Jewish state as a Jewish fortress, a barrier against Asia."

This is from D Soifer's *The Collapse of Zionist Theories*, first published in English in 1980. According to the USSR-born historian Seymon Reznik, between 1969 and 1985 about 230 books were published in the USSR which exposed the "Zionist-Masonic conspiracy against Russia and the entire world". Also according to Reznik, between 1981 and 1986 alone, nearly 50,000 anti-semitic articles appeared in the official Soviet press. In the earlier period of what we might call "high Stalinism", it would have been worse.

This Stalinist amalgam of Zionism with "imperialism" and "racism", as if the three things are unambiguously synonymous and interchangeable, continues to exert a profound ideological impact on the whole far left, even the Trotskyist left, much of which was uncritically swept along in the "anti-imperialist" fervour of the struggles of the late 60s onwards, and absorbed a great deal from the Stalinist ideologies which hegemonised much left-wing political space.

A large section of the left absorbed into its political bloodstream a type of anti-Zionism which elbows out the more rational anti-

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* Speaking at a meeting in London, April 2016



The left erases Jewish history, such as the situation for survivors of the Holocaust immediately after the Second War. Living in displaced peoples' camps, many tried to migrate, including to Palestine, then ruled by the British, but like Syrian refugees today they were stopped. This ship, the *Exodus*, carried Jewish emigrants from France to Palestine in July 1947. The British Royal Navy seized the ship and deported all its passengers back to camps in Germany.

Zionism of a previous generation and elevates Zionism to an almost mystical position as the most purely imperialistic, racist ideology in the world.

The shift might be partially explained by the fact that the Israeli state has become more heavily militarised, its colonial project in the Occupied Territories more barbaric, and so on, as time has progressed. But Marxist attitudes to the right of nations to self-determination are not determined by the brutality of their governments.

The left, in short, took what began as a Stalinist propaganda trick and elevated it into a key aspect of its worldview.

That Stalinist, or Stalinist-originated, anti-Zionism implies an exceptionalisation of Jewish people. There is no other people whose historical experience, historically-developed identity, and nationalism, is held in this regard. There is no other people whose nationalism is treated so ahistorically.

It is now an inescapable fact of history that some level of identification and affinity with Israel, seen as, in Isaac Deutscher's useful phrase, the "life-raft state" for post-Holocaust Jewish refugees, makes up an aspect of that identity.

That is not limited to the predominantly-white "Ashkenazi" Jewish populations of central and eastern European background. Non-white, Arab-background Jews also experienced significant persecution and expulsion from their home states around and after the establishment of the state of Israel, many of them finding refuge in Israel itself. Some form of "Zionism" is also widespread

amongst non-white Jewish communities, in the minimal sense of a feeling of affinity with Israel (which may be combined with sharp criticism of actual Israeli governments, and may be more or less ideologically-developed).

Academics at City University in 2015, who interviewed over 1,000 British Jews, found that 93% of them feel that Israel forms some part of their identity. 90% support its continued existence as a Jewish state: they are, in other words "Zionists".

But 71% also support the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — that is to say, they are not "Greater Israeli" expansionist chauvinists — and 75% say that the West Bank settlements are a "major obstacle to peace".

An analysis that begins and ends with the contention that Zionism is racism and that Israel is nothing but a colonial-settler state cannot begin to engage with the complexities of this identity and political views.

I saw an exchange on Facebook recently that I found illuminating on this point. A veteran leftist was defending himself against the allegation, in fact from a fairly conservative Jew, that he was an anti-semiter. He said (I'm paraphrasing): "I cannot be accused of anti-semitism. I have worked with my local Jewish community to defend their synagogues against far-right attack. I just believe that Zionists are racist scum." The last sentence is a verbatim quote.

It seems not to have occurred to this comrade that the Jews he worked with against the far-right were themselves, in his thinking, almost certainly "racist scum", and that the synagogues he was defending were filled with congregations made up almost exclusively of "racist scum". He might counter that even "racist scum" deserve defence against other racist scum, but at the very least

this attitude requires some ideological unpicking.

This, in short, is why the oft-repeated response of many on the left, when accused of anti-semitism, that they were referring to "Zionists", not "Jews" is not adequate.

I am not saying: "most Jews are Zionists, therefore to attack Zionism in any way is de facto anti-semitic".

I am saying that the commonplace "Zionism=racism" attitude means treating Jewish identity with an exceptional ahistorical insensitivity, which, at worst, sees all Jews who do not make a totalising, confessional break from their own historically-developed identity as essentially fair game.

I wish we could draw easy, impermeable lines between "Zionism", understood as the belief that the state of Israel should exist, and some level of cultural affinity with it, and wider Jewish identity. But we can't. Not today, and not in the near future.

IDENTITY

Do we want Jews to move beyond an identity conditioned principally by collective ethno-cultural memory and the inherited trauma of an experience of persecution? Yes.

Do we want Jews, and all people, to develop the internationalist, revolutionary humanist identities, based on human solidarity, that must underpin any project of political liberation? Yes, of course.

But we cannot win hegemony for revolutionary-humanist, universalist politics by storming people from above.

The likes of the SWP often point to the strong traditions of anti-nationalism, indeed of universalism, that existed amongst central and eastern European Jewish populations prior to the Second World War, as if those Jews today who see themselves as in some

sense "Zionist", or whose Jewish identity involves some species of affinity with Israel, are backward relics. If only it were that simple! Again: history has been cruel to us — and I don't mean "us" as "the Jews", but "us" as revolutionaries.

Is my argument here a form of "identity politics"? Well, it depends what's meant by that. Our critique of "identity politics" is essentially a materialist, universalist critique of post-modernism, of the idea that subjective experience and perception must be the beginning and end of political analysis, and that no universal politics is possible. But we are, nevertheless, in favour of a materialist analysis of "identity", and its role in forming consciousness. For much of the far-left, that seems to break down when it comes to Jews.

I think it's beyond doubt that sections of the right in the Labour Party, and in society more generally, have exaggerated the extent of left anti-semitism in order to politically undermine the left.

It's also undoubtedly the case that, in the past, right-wing, communalist elements within the Jewish community and other communities have instrumentalised and exaggerated allegations of bigotry to suit their own political ends.

The Labour right's scurrilous attempt to undermine the party's democratically elected leader, and indeed to purge the far left from the party, needs analysing and resisting on its own terms.

But the exaggeration or cynical instrumentalisation of an issue doesn't mean the issue is not real.

Also, just as we have a duty as historical materialists to understand the complex history of Zionism, we also have a duty to understand the material basis of the hatred and anger, often violently expressed, towards Israel and Zionism on the part of many Palestinians — a dispossessed people who have been systematically brutalised by the colonial project of the Israeli state.

To dismiss their "anti-Zionism" merely as anti-semitism would be as much, perhaps more, of a calumny as dismissal of the "Zionism" of most Jews as merely "racist". The point is to proceed from a serious analysis of history, "on all sides", so to speak, and to aspire to a politics based on equality.

Richard Angell, a leader of the hard-right Labour faction Progress, has recently published an eight-point "Action Plan" for addressing anti-semitism within the Labour Party.

It is a technical-bureaucratic fix for a political problem, which will inevitably be instrumentalised for factional use. In fact I think it's intended in that way. It recommends, for example, "new capacities for the Compliance Unit", and that "anti-semitism must lead to a lifetime ban". This is an anti-political moralism that elides the potential of political education to have a transformative effect. I think it misidentifies both the problem and the potential solution.

The only real way to tackle the phenomenon of left anti-semitism, a discrete political phenomenon which is not simply equatable with conscious, anti-Jewish racism, is to replace the "common sense" on Israel/Palestine, Zionism, and Jewish identity inherited almost wholesale from Stalinism by a new common sense based on consistent democracy and equality, the ideas that were at the very heart of the pre-Stalinist Marxist project.

More on the left and anti-semitism

www.workersliberty/left-as

The Livingstone affair

By Sean Matgamna

On one level the sudden media outcry about Ken Livingstone's anti-semitism is being used and fed by the Labour right, especially the stupid part of the right — and, of course, the Tories — to sabotage the Labour Party in the London mayoral and other local government elections and to discredit Jeremy Corbyn.

Livingstone has been what he is now for decades. He was the same Livingstone when the Blairite right took him back into the Labour Party, in 2004, after his 2000-4 term as London mayor.

The bigger truth, however, is that, whatever their motives, those who cry out against Livingstone's vicious nonsense about Hitler supporting Zionism and wanting to send Jews to Israel in 1932 (he said Israel, not Palestine) are right to do so. If the enemies of the Labour Party and of the left have found a soft target, it is a legitimate target.

A big part of the pseudo-left believe or assert that "Zionists" (that is, for practical purposes, most Jews) are historically tainted by Nazism. That "the Zionists" "collaborated" with the Nazis in making the Holocaust and share responsibility for it; that "the Zionists" manipulated even the Nazis during World War 2 and especially share responsibility for the Nazi murder of one million Hungarian Jews in 1944-5.

That in their "racism" — that is, in first their wanting a Jewish state and then in their Israeli nationalism — they run parallel to Nazism. That Israel, in that sense, is a continuation of Nazism.

This bizarre "story" originates in the Stalinist anti-semitic campaign against "Zionism" of the late 1940s and the first half of the 1950s. The fact that it is a tissue of contrived and vicious nonsense does not discredit it: one reason why it survives is that it is rarely expressed as a coherent story, as it is here.

It is the thesis of the play 'Perdition', written by Jim Allen and produced by Ken Loach, and based on Lenni Brenner's grossly biased and distorting book which Livingstone says he will submit to the Labour Party inquiry into his statements.

Politically inexperienced young people, justly indignant at Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and Gaza and moved to side with the Palestinians, are easily led into accepting some or all of these ideas.

A petrol bomb, or Molotov cocktail, consists of soapy water and petrol in a bottle, and "works", after the glass container is shattered, by way of the soapy water spreading the burning petrol. Righteous indignation at the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians is the soapy water here, spreading a lethal anti-semitism disguised as "anti-Zionism" — what someone called "absolute anti-Zionism".

It has been spread on anti-war demonstrations, for example, by way of placards and chants equating Israeli prime ministers with Hitler, identifying Zionism and Nazism, coupling the Star of David and the swastika, and proclamations of the need to destroy (in real-world terms, conquer) Israel. Young people indignant at Israeli government policies and actions against the Palestinians are miseducated to believe that support for the Palestinians against Israel demands not an independent Palestinian state side by side with Israel, but the destruction of Israel.

Least of all does this vicious claptrap help the Palestinians. Even leaving aside the ques-

tion of the national rights of the Hebrew nation in Palestine, this attitude implies indefinite postponement of a settlement, until Israel can be conquered. It rules out emancipation for the Palestinians in any foreseeable future.

Its devotees actively campaign against the only real solution: an independent Palestinian state side by side with Israel. They "use" the plight of the Palestinians to float Arab-chauvinist, Islamic-chauvinist, "anti-imperialist" hostility to Israel. They are functionally indifferent to the living Palestinian people.

The terrible truth is that the pseudo-left, and most so the "revolutionary" pseudo-left, is a cesspool of an "absolute anti-Zionism" which is anti-semitism because it condemns — as "Zionists", as criminals, as racists — Jews who refuse to agree that Israel should be abolished. In the not-so-distant past, student Jewish societies have been banned for refusing to support this.

Livingstone's comments were only a small and half-sanitised version of that politics, that attitude, and that mindset.

It is a historical fact that some anti-semites — for instance, Arthur Griffith, the founder of Sinn Féin — did say they found Zionism acceptable. It would if successful remove the Jews they hated to a distant land.

For decades such facts as the talks between Theodore Herzl, the founder of Zionism, and the minister of the anti-semitic Tsarist government, von Plehve, or the "Transfer Agreement" made by the Jewish Agency in Palestine with Hitler's government in August 1933, allowing Jews who fled Germany to Palestine to keep some of their property, were setpieces in Stalinist anti-Zionist agitation.

JEER

But Livingstone wasn't just referring to such things in the past and "construing" them. It is plain from the way he spoke that he was jeering, baiting, just as he did in 2005 when he called a Jewish journalist "like a concentration camp guard".

"Hitler supported Zionism". He wanted Jews to go "to Israel". The Holocaust was not a logical development in war conditions of Nazi policies, but a matter of Hitler, previously a Zionist, "going mad and killing millions of Jews".

Slight pauses in his speech indicated that Livingstone was being careful with his words. He reaffirmed his statements in three separate interviews on 28 April, and has refused to retract them since.

With Livingstone, the cesspool of pseudo-left "absolute anti-Zionism", that is anti-semitism, overflowed into mainstream politics. It gave the right and the Tories an easy target and an opportunity to bring the scandal out into the open.

It needs to be out in the open. It needs to be discussed. It needs to be purged politically — and the labour movement needs to purge itself of the unteachables like Livingstone.

The immediate suspension of Livingstone from the Labour Party and the setting-up of an investigation into his statements overlaps with the distinct and separate question of the rights of Labour Party members and the continuing waves of expulsions of leftists.

"Progress" and other Labour right-wingers are campaigning to make expulsions even easier, and for anyone adjudged by a Labour Party official as guilty of "anti-semitism, racism, or Islamophobia" to be summarily banned from membership for life.

Livingstone and his supporters try to present Livingstone's suspension as one more unjustified reprisal against the left. They try to



amalgamate the issues. Serious socialists should not let them do that. Livingstone is not a typical victim of Labour's expulsion-freaks.

There is a mystery here. What does Livingstone think he is doing? He is a calculating man. He is a Livingstone-serving opportunist, not a principled politician who will stand by his version of the truth, irrespective of consequences. His saying what he said and refusing to retreat from it is uncharacteristic behaviour. He knows perfectly well that he is helping the Labour right and the Tories, sabotaging Labour's election campaign. He wants to do that? Why?

The explanation may lie in Livingstone's dual character. Inside this supremely self-centred, manipulative politician Dr Jekyll-Livingstone there is imprisoned a contrary, irrational, egotist, Mr Hyde-Livingstone, who sometimes takes over.

The Labour right offensive targets not only Livingstone but Corbyn. Prominent has been John Mann MP. Mann is something of a rent-a-gob, an MP in a symbiotic partnership with busy journalists who need an immediate response, a comment, a quote. That gives the MP a spurious prominence and the journalists usable copy.

In his rent-a-gob role, when it became plain in the middle of the 2015 Labour leadership contest that Corbyn would win, Mann made the preposterous proposal that the election be called off, thus branding himself as not only a right-winger but also as a notable dimwit. But Mann has for long been an open opponent of "left-wing" anti-semitism. He is entitled to have a go at Livingstone, even though, characteristically, he did it with wild hyperbole.

Whatever the motives of those attacking Livingstone, the issue of pseudo-left anti-semitism must be tackled on its merits. For the serious left to ally with Livingstone, and to let opposition to the expulsions regime in the Labour Party prejudice us in favour of Livingstone, pushing aside the political question in this case, would be a suicidal mistake. "Left" anti-semitism is no small thing. The future of the labour movement depends on it being opposed, combated, and uprooted.

The Labour leadership had a right to suspend Livingstone and open an investigation, and they were right to exercise it. The alternative would have been to show themselves numb, indifferent, or collusive to anti-semitism and the anti-semites. Livingstone will have the chance to argue at the investigation all his claims to have been unfairly or unjustly treated.

There is a plain danger that the politics of the issue will be buried in the churning mud of denunciations and counter-denunciations.

Typical left "absolute anti-Zionists" are not racists. They most likely share all the horror

of decent people at racism. Their mental furniture includes denunciations of Hitler's and Stalin's anti-semitism, loathing of the Tsarist Black Hundred anti-Jewish pogromists, and so on.

The central problem with the "absolute anti-Zionists" is that they don't see the connection between the anti-semitism and the racism they loathe, and their own politics now on Israel. They see themselves only as champions of the Palestinians oppressed by Israel, and their hostility to Israel only as a just and necessary part of that.

Such people are typically not racists against Jews.

The dividing line is not on racism, but in the politics of the Middle East. It is not between critics of Israel and its uncritical defenders, but on the political answers subscribed to. The dividing line is between those who want to change and reform Israel, and have an independent Palestinian state side by side with Israel — and those who deny Israel's right to exist at all, who see Israel as an illegitimate political formation, a mistake, a crime of history that must be undone by the elimination of the whole Israeli polity. Everything anti-semitic specific to the left is rooted in that.

DIVIDE

It is impossible to draw a line saying which degrees and kinds of criticism of Israel are to be licensed.

Who should decide what is untrue or true, too severe or merely just, preconceived or a legitimate response to reality? It is a hopeless task. Such a Labour Party regime could not but be arbitrary and capricious, and, in current conditions, driven by a hysteria invoked for the occasion by the Labour right.

On the one side there will be people inclined to see any serious criticism of Israel as anti-semitism; on the other, those inclined to see any defence or justification of Israel as "Zionist apologetics".

The political dividing line, both true to the reality and serviceable in practice, is between critics of Israeli policy and action who want to improve things, and those whose often just criticism carries the demand that Israel be destroyed, that the Hebrew nation be deprived of self-determination — who back armed action by such as Hamas and Hezbollah, and by Arab or Islamic states, to put Israel out of existence.

It is important in all this not to lose sight of the Palestinians held in the stifling grasp of Israeli occupation, outmatched militarily and more or less helpless in the face of Israeli military might.

The Palestinian demand for their own independent state, alongside Israel, deserves the support of every socialist and honest democrat.

Uniting the Dublin socialists

Michael Johnson continues a series on the life and politics of James Connolly

When Connolly arrived in Dublin in May 1896 he had his work cut out for him.

The situation for the working-class was even worse than in Edinburgh. Overcrowding and tuberculosis were rife, and the city had the fifth highest recorded death rate in the world.

To make matters worse, despite the creation of the Irish Trades Union Congress (ITUC) in 1894, the labour movement had largely been untouched by the wave of New Unionism across the water. It was dominated by cautious craft unions based in luxury goods industries. An estimated 20% unemployment rate made it difficult for the unskilled to organise, and the hostility of the craft unions added to their problems.

An attempt to form a branch of the Independent Labour Party in Dublin had foundered. Some supporters of the reformist Fabian society could be found, but it was the Dublin Socialist Society that bravely kept the red flag flying in difficult conditions.

Connolly's first task was to unite the various socialists in one organisation. Accordingly, the Dublin Society Society immediately became the Irish Socialist Republican Party (ISRP), and held its first meeting in the snug of a pub on Thomas Street on 29 May 1896.

The ISRP was a very young organisation, with most of its members younger than Connolly, who himself was not yet thirty. One contemporary paper commented that it had more syllables than members and consisted of "a Scotto-Hibernian and a long boy", the latter referring to the tall young member, Tom Lyng. The party soon began a programme of weekly meetings and established small branches in Cork and Belfast. Following an appeal to socialists abroad to join in solidarity, Eleanor Marx's partner Edward Aveling was amongst the first to sign up.

Connolly wanted to found the party on an explicitly revolutionary socialist basis. He set out to win the battle of ideas with existing currents in the socialist movement movement — in December 1896 in addressed the Fabians in Dublin on "Why we are Revolutionists".

SOCIALISM

The reformist state socialism of the Fabians, he argued a few years later, would "emasculate the working class movement, by denying the philosophy of class struggle, weakening the belief of the workers in the political self-sufficiency of their own class, and by substituting the principle of municipal capitalism, and bureaucratic state control for the principle of revolutionary reconstruction involved in Social Democracy."

Connolly's clear commitment to working-class self-emancipation and democracy was pronounced, and anticipated his later embrace of revolutionary syndicalist ideas. In 1899, he polemicised against those who mistook moves towards state intervention by capitalists as in any way "socialistic".

"State ownership and control", wrote Connolly, "is not necessarily Socialism — if it were, then the Army, the Navy, the Police, the Judges, the Gaolers, the Informers, and the Hangmen, all would all be Socialist functionaries, as they are State officials — but the ownership by the State of all the land and materials for labour, combined with the co-operative control by the workers of such land and materials, would be Socialism... To the

cry of the middle class reformers, 'make this or that the property of the government,' we reply, 'yes, in proportion as the workers are ready to make the government their property.'"

In 1898 the ISRP adopted a programme along orthodox Second International lines. Much like the Social Democratic Federation's 1883 programme "Socialism made Easy", it contained a number of "minimum demands" such as nationalisation of banks and industry, graduated income tax, a shorter working week, free education and universal suffrage.

It also contained the "maximum" demand of socialism — "private ownership by a class of the land and instruments of production, distribution and exchange is opposed to [the democratic principle] of justice, and is the fundamental basis of all oppression, national, political and social."

In common with the other Second International parties, socialism was to be achieved by the "conquest... of political power in Parliament" though Connolly would write in July 1899 that if the will of the majority for socialism is blocked by the ruling-class then "the party which represents the revolutionary idea is justified in taking steps to assume the powers of government, and in using the weapons of force to dislodge the usurping class or government."

While British socialists, to Connolly's frustration, were content to limit themselves to calling for "legislative independence" for "colonies and dependencies", the ISRP, in contrast, declared that "the subjection of one nation to another, as of Ireland to the authority of the British Crown, is a barrier to the free political and economic development of the subjected nation, and can only serve the interests of the exploiting classes of both nations."

The ISRP called for an Irish Socialist Republic, and full separation from the British Empire. This was an Irish socialist party, with a programme for Irish conditions.

Adopting the slogan "educate, agitate, organise", the ISRP had a propagandistic function, conducting educational classes, open-air meetings and producing literature. The party gave lectures on such topics as "the Paris Commune", "Socialism and State Capitalism" and "The works of George Bernard Shaw".

In 1898, with a £50 loan from Keir Hardie, the ISRP established Ireland's first Marxist newspaper, *The Workers' Republic*. The first issue was produced by P T Daly, later secretary of the Dublin Trades Council and a left-wing Irish republican. An advertisement in the SDF's paper *Justice* announced it as a new journal advocating "an Irish Republic, the abolition of landlordism, wage-slavery, the cooperative organisation of industry under Irish representative bodies."

Initially intended to be a weekly, the newspaper soon ran into difficulties. Some Belfast socialists mistrusted its republican content and failed to rally around when the paper's northern distributor was denounced by a Catholic bishop. When the *Workers' Republic* was reissued in May 1899, Connolly took over much of the editing and technical work himself, and joked darkly that the first series was "so weekly it almost died", whereas the second would only appear "whenever it was strong enough to get out."

After the Local Government Act of 1898, introduced as part of the Tory attempts to "kill Home Rule with kindness", established household suffrage for the municipalities and local governing bodies, the road was potentially open for Labour and socialist candi-



Yiddish-language leaflet backing Connolly in Dublin 1902 elections

dates to break through. In January 1899, the ISRP ran E W Stewart in North Dock Ward in Dublin. Stewart received 448 votes (12% of the total). It cannot have helped that the party's meagre resources confined its campaigning to open-air meetings, while the *Evening Telegraph* refused to publish its advertisements.

Meanwhile figures in the Trades Council had established the Labour Electoral Association (LEA) to run labour movement candidates. Connolly welcomed this as "the most important step yet taken by organised workers in Ireland."

In the *Workers' Republic* Connolly made the orthodox Marxist distinction that "the trade unionist wishes to limit the power of the master but still wishes to have masters [while] the socialist wishes to have done with masters", but was hopeful that the trade union candidate, "if he be true to his class when elected, will find that every step he takes in the Council in furtherance of the interests of his class, must of necessity take the form of an application of socialist principles."

ELECTIONS

While the ISRP failed to break through, the LEA returned several members to Dublin Corporation.

Unfortunately, though undoubtedly a step forward, the experience of the LEA representatives demonstrated all too clearly that organisational independence of the working class is not enough unless accompanied by a programme of political independence from all ruling-class parties.

Connolly wrote in September 1899: "No single important move in the interest of the worker was even mooted, the most solemn pledges were incontinently broken, and where the workers have looked for inspiration and leadership, they have received nothing but discouragement and disgust... The Labour Lord Mayor of the Dublin Labour Party declared that he would represent no class or section and thus announced beforehand that those responsible for his nomination only sought to use the name of Labour as a cover for the intrigues of a clique..."

The Irish labour movement was still dominated by the craft unions and an often corrupt relationship with the Home Rule MPs. This partly explains the ISRP lack of emphasis on trade union struggles in this period. It was to take the growth of class struggle in the

next decade to put the question of a trade-union-based labour representation on the agenda once again.

For the 1902 municipal elections, Connolly was selected to run for the Dublin Corporation, this time for Wood Quay ward as a representative of the United Labourers' Union, though reserving the right to make his own socialist propaganda. Wood Quay ward, as Manus O'Riordan has written, was home to much of the small Dublin Jewish population, which was increasing rapidly in these years as refugees fled Tsarist anti-Semitic pogroms in eastern Europe. Numbering only 352 in 1881, within a decade it reached 1057 and by 1901 was at 2169.

For the election Boris Kahan, secretary of the East London Jewish Branch of the Social Democratic Federation, produced a Yiddish-language leaflet calling on Jewish workers to vote for Connolly because "the Socialists are the only ones who stand always and everywhere against every national oppression. It is the socialists who went out onto the streets of Paris against the wild band of anti-Semites at the time of the Dreyfus case."

"In Austria and Germany they conduct a steady struggle against anti-Semitism. And in England, too, the Socialists fight against the reactionary elements who want to shut the doors of England against the poorer Jews who were driven to seek a refuge in strange land by the Russian government's brutality and despotism..."

"Jewish workers! No matter how small your numbers as you can achieve much. Do your duty and work earnestly had in hand with your Irish brothers. Canvass for votes, vote yourself and persuade others to vote on the 15 January for the Socialist candidate, James Connolly."

Connolly won a respectable 431 votes against his United Irish League opponent PJ McCall, who won 1434 votes after a dirty and divisive campaign. The party was subjected to vilification from the Church who, said the ISRP, invoked "all the terrors of religious against all those who voted for Mr. Connolly."

The following year Connolly reminded the electors "how the paid canvassers of the capitalist candidate — hired slanderers — gave a different account of Mr Connolly to every section of the electors. How they said to the Catholics that he was an Orangeman, to the Protestants that he was a Fenian, to the Jews that he was an anti-Semite, to others that he was a Jew, to the labourers that he was a journalist on the make, and to the tradesmen and professional classes that he was an ignorant labourer; that he was born in Belfast, Derry, England, Scotland and Italy, according to the person the canvasser was talking to."

Connolly wrote in 1901 with Second International-style optimism "we confidently await the day when the ever-increasing pressure of capitalist society shall bring the workers into our ranks and the destinies of the nation into our hands."

But this could not disguise the fact that the ISRP was increasingly isolated, and suffering from a crisis of morale that would eventually tear it apart a few years later.

One area in which the ISRP would make more of a mark was with its involvement in the cutting-edge of the new, radical and anti-imperialist Irish republican politics which flourished in the period of the Gaelic Revival in the final decade of the twentieth century.

Connolly's attempt to develop a socialist approach to this movement, and a synthesis of socialism and nationalism, will be considered next time.

Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth 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 must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants 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 trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political 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 domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. 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.

- 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!



More online at www.workersliberty.org Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

Pushing Labour on council cuts

LABOUR

By Jill Mountford

Momentum has been operating on the basis of regional delegate meetings (or, in at least one case, a mass members' meetings) which send policy and elect representatives to the National Committee (NC).

On 30 April, London groups sent delegates to the second London region gathering. It was, overall, a positive and productive meeting.

Summary of what was agreed (all good things):

- Election of a nine-person provisional London steering committee

- A London Momentum conference, open to all members, in August

- Coordinated London campaigning against council cuts

- A motion to the NC calling for a strong, active stance against expulsions from Labour

- A motion to the NC calling for an "in" vote in the EU referendum

There were 40 people there, about 30 of whom were group delegates — from Southwark, Tower Hamlets, Newham, Hackney, Islington, Camden, Hounslow, Barnet, Lewisham, Greenwich, Waltham Forest, Haringey, Enfield, Harrow, Lambeth. A majority were women, about a quarter BME, and there was a mix of ages — not particularly old or young overall.

The big positive was London Momentum people taking more control over our own organisation. The meeting voted for a proposal from Enfield to elect a London steering committee of nine, to work with the four London NC reps, and a provisional committee was elected. It also agreed another Enfield motion to hold a London conference open to all members in August.

Most delegates seemed to think a third motion from Enfield, to strictly mandate delegates to the NC, was too rigid and that was rejected.



London Momentum activists asking "Where's Zac's Tax?"

A motion from Haringey for co-ordinated London campaigning against council cuts, putting pressure behind Labour councillors to encourage them to consider alternatives to their current stance, also passed. It was at the softer end of possible anti-cuts positions, but definitely a step in the right direction.

Two proposals from Lewisham were also agreed to be sent to the NC — for a democratic national conference, directly representing local groups, by the end of the year; and for a strong, active position against expulsions of left-wingers from Labour and for the scrapping of the Compliance Unit as a body which control over membership disputes. The latter led to quite a bit of debate but in end passed by a big majority.

The two big political issues were the anti-semitism controversy and the EU referendum.

On the former, the issue had only been raised after the agenda was put together. There was not much time for discussion, and none for motions. This was the result of it being quite a short meeting — two and half hours, although the London region had not met for some time. That, and the lack of adequate notice to groups, was something the new committee promised to remedy in future. The discussion

continued afterwards in the pub, in a fairly intense but comradely way.

On the EU, one of the Harrow delegates had asked for the motion passed, unanimously bar one abstention, at the Northern (North East and Cumbria) region — for Momentum to adopt a "left" in position and work with the Another Europe is Possible campaign — to be put on the agenda. Some comrades argued the issue was too divisive to take a position, but the meeting voted 19-6-1 to endorse the Northern motion.

There was also discussion on campaigning in the local elections and announcements about various initiatives in Momentum including Momentum Black Connexions, Momentum Latino, Momentum Women, the Youth and Student conference coming up in June and the proposal for a national Momentum campaign on the NHS.

Hopefully the London region will start to lead more vibrant political life and coordinate campaigning across the city, as well providing more opportunities for political networking.

- For the motions put to the meeting and the members of the new London Momentum committee, see www.workersliberty.org/londonmomentum

Events

Saturday 7 May

Workers' Liberty day school: where we came from, and where we're going
12 noon, meet at New Cross Gate station, London
bit.ly/WLschool

Saturday 7 May

Evening demonstration to shut down Yarlwood Detention centre
6pm, Yarlwood Detention Centre, Berkshire (details for transport to follow)
bit.ly/yarlwooddemo

Tuesday 10 May

UCL Labour stall campaigning to stay in the EU
12.45-2pm, outside print room cafe, South Quad, UCL, Gower St, London
bit.ly/UCLeuref

Wednesday 11 May

JC4PM Sheffield tour date
7pm, Lyceum Theatre, Sheffield
bit.ly/JC4PMShef

Thursday 12 May

Autism Equality in the Workplace: Book launch
7.30pm, Leytonstone ex-services club, London, E11 3DB
bit.ly/autismbooklaunch

Saturday 14 May

"How we defeated zero hours contracts": Forum with New Zealand & UK fast food workers
3pm, SOAS, London, WC1H 0XG
bit.ly/zerohoursforum

Got an event you want listing?

solidarity@workersliberty.org

Momentum Youth and Students National Conference

Sunday, June 5, 2016 from 10:30am to 6:30pm

Manchester Students' Union, Oxford Road, M13 9PR

On Sunday 5 June, Momentum will be holding its first conference for youth and student members.

This will be a space for Momentum's young supporters from all over the country to come together to learn from each other, organise campaigns and collectively decide on a strategy for building a grassroots socialist youth movement in support of the Labour Party.

A full agenda will be released shortly. Workshops on the day will include trade union organising, building local Young Labour groups, fighting for liberation and equality, and presenting the case for an alternative and progressive economic policy.

This conference will decide a constitution for Momentum Youth and Students and elect a committee to take forward the work of the organisation for the

next year.

In order to attend this conference, you must be a member of Momentum and under the age of 30, or in education. Join Momentum here: <http://join.peoplesmomentum.com>

If you need help getting to conference, or if you need more information, please email momentumyouthandstudents@gmail.com



Unison's rotten pay deal

By Simon Nelson

Unison members were shocked, or would have been shocked had they found the news buried on the Unison website (27 April), to find the Union has gone against the recommendation for strike action from the 2016/18 pay consultation and accepted the employers' derisory offer.

Once again accepting a two-year pay deal, meaning a rise of just 1% on the majority of spinal points, shows a complete capitulation without a fight.

Former General Secretary candidate and head of Unison's local government section Heather Wakefield said:

"Having talked to members in local government across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, we've decided that there are to be no further consultations and we have agreed to accept the employers' pay offer for 2016/18."

There is no further comment from Unison as to why an offer has been accepted when the result of the national consultative ballot was in favour of strike action and action short of strike.

With low turnouts in many branches and a feeling of malaise around the campaign, with members being balloted "cold" with no real information or effort to win members over to reject the deal, the fact that a majority of those voting did reject is significant.

Due to the low turnout and the difference in regional votes, the Industrial Action Committee referred the choice for a ballot back to the NJC committee for further consultation with the regions. The National Joint Council (NJC) Committee's decision to ignore this result is extremely worrying. London and the North West, the regions instrumental in the rebellion that led to the special conference



Unison: "smashing the pay freeze"

last year, apparently argued to move to a ballot for industrial action. But East Midlands region moved a proposal to accept the offer which was carried.

The weakness of the will to fight is a problem, but in many places this weakness is nurtured by officialdom that is wary of action and seeks to snuff out confidence amongst the wider membership. The acceptance means once again the Union nationally has decided not to fight to improve the pay conditions of its members who have already suffered a real terms pay cut of 18% since 2010.

GMB had already accepted, and Unite was only willing to take action if Unison did too, so Unison's decision to accept means there will now be no fight over pay until 2018.

The pay rises offered are substantially higher for the lowest paid, and this is in part why the GMB accepted the deal. But those rises are to meet the current minimum wage. They are not successes in collective negotiation over pay with

the employer.

The situation for national pay bargaining in Local Government is now incredibly grim. With the added threat of the Trade Union Bill's implementation, it will become almost impossible with on the current level of activity of most branches, to secure a big enough majority and turn out for a legal national strike.

Unison activists need to organise quickly to ensure that this is discussed at Local Government Conference in June. Emergency motions to re-open the discussion and for a national ballot with a proper campaign and serious proposals for sustained action should be circulated and supported, particularly by branches in the North West and London who took the lead on opposing the last pay deal.

We must however avoid the situation of a special conference that is then ignored by the bureaucracy, as in the 2014 dispute. Unison activists have an uphill struggle in this regard, but we cannot afford to lose.

Southern workers stand firm

By Ollie Moore

Train guards on Southern in the RMT union are set for further strikes after talks between RMT and Southern bosses collapsed.

Workers are fighting the extension of "Driver Only Operation", and resisting the de-skilling of the role of the guard, which the union says will have dire consequences for passenger service and safety on what are already some of Britain's most overcrowded rail routes. Workers struck on 26 April, and further strikes are planned for 10-11 and 12-13 May.

Southern management have conducted an intense campaign of bullying and intimidation against their staff, threatening to withdraw benefits if strikes went ahead and pres-

suring staff into signing individual no-strike pledges. An RMT statement said: "Not only have Southern management collapsed the talks process, they have also dished out forms to sign, to give an undertaking that our members will not take part in any further industrial action during this dispute."

"RMT has issued guidance to members that they are under no obligation to sign this form and recommending that they bin it. This is a deliberate attempt to pour fuel on the flames and deflect attention from the core safety issue at the heart of this dispute."

"The form asks members to commit to working extra days, extra hours, working rest days and overtime on strike days. It then goes on to say that members won't be

guaranteed extra work. In effect, that means that they want staff to put on record that they are willing to break the strike, but that they won't be needed and won't be paid. [...]

"Southern know that our members are determined to see justice is won in this dispute. Southern management also know that the public are on our side on the fundamental issue at the heart of this dispute which is safe staffing of our railways. Our members have been advised to ignore the threats, ignore the bullying, and ignore the intimidation."

"The union is united nationally behind our members on Southern and determined to win a victory that protects and enhances rail safety."



On Saturday 30 April around 100 activists protested outside Upper Norwood Library in Lambeth, south London, as part of the ongoing fight to save Lambeth libraries from cuts and closures. The day before the protest, fearing an occupation like that at Carnegie library, Lambeth council jointly with Croydon council (who help fund the library) reached an agreement with the library trust for the library to remain staffed until July. This temporary victory will give confidence to the campaign against other closures or reductions in staff. More: defendthe10-lambeth.org.uk

Blacklisted workers win



By Darren Bedford

Over 400 trade unionists in the construction industry have secured compensation from major firms and contractors, after a long-running legal battle against blacklisting was settled in workers' favour out of court.

The workers reached an agreement on Friday 29 April. A further 90 workers involved in ongoing legal proceedings will have their

case heard by the High Court on 9 May. The settlement brings the total number of workers who have received compensation for being victims of blacklisting to over 600.

A statement from the Blacklist Support Group said: "Until such time that the full conspiracy is exposed and those responsible for the human rights abuse are called to account in a court of law, we will never stop fighting."

Ambulance workers to ballot

By Alice Bolton

Ambulance workers across England in Unison, Unite and the GMB are being consulted on taking industrial action over pay and pensions.

Following the last national strike action in the NHS, the final deal called on employers to resolve issues of recruitment and retention and specific difficulties for ambulance staff with raising the retirement age. After 12 months of negotiation nothing has been achieved due to the governments refusal to fund proposals, so unions have agreed to consult.

In line with the recent successful dispute in Yorkshire, it looks



likely that paramedics in particular will return a positive response which could result in a formal ballot and action.



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ALEPPO UNDER SIEGE

By Simon Nelson

In an interview with the *Observer* (1 May), Brita Haji Hasan, the head of the Aleppo City Council, highlighted the dramatic decline in the Syrian city's population. He said, "In 2013 there were two million people in and around the city... there are 400,000 right now."

The semi-siege like conditions that Aleppo is now under expose the sham of the so called "cease fire" that was negotiated with the supposed support of all sides — US, Russia and Assad. The Geneva discussions which "achieved" the cessation of hostilities have brought little benefit to Aleppo.

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura has said that the ceasefire negotiated was now "barely alive", and there are no dates set for further talks.

While peace talks which have been in place since February 2016 have been collapsing, fighting between the Syrian army and rebel groups which control different districts of the city has increased, especially since late April.

The situation is now dire enough for NGOs operating in the city to circulate a memo detailing the "complete absence of the fundamentals of safe humanitarian intervention, and the absence of a clear mechanism to monitor and document violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law".

John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, has opened up discussions with Russia about reducing fight-

ing in the Aleppo area. But while the Russian state media on Friday 29 April said that a "regime of calm" agreement sponsored by Moscow and Washington would apply in the capital and surrounding area, Aleppo was not included; rebel groups and Russian jets continued their hostilities.

The Saudi backed opposition has already walked out of the UN-backed negotiations. They along with NGOs, cited the fact that the humanitarian aid deliveries were being blocked into besieged areas.

John Kerry stated that the US was attempting to continue negotiations for a cessation in fighting with "moderate rebels", excluding only the Al-Qaeda-backed Jabhat al-Nusra. And Russia has said it continues to participate in talks and remains "committed" to an end to fighting

in order to reconvene peace talks.

Meanwhile Syrian parliamentary elections are now underway in government-controlled areas, with, unsurprisingly, only government backed and vetted candidates contesting for the votes of an 8 million (once 25 million) strong electorate.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported airstrikes and Assad shelling killing at least 131 civilians in rebel areas since the end of April. Rebel shelling of government areas had killed 71 civilians. The death of Aleppo's last paediatrician in an airstrike caused mass outrage, and

there are just 70 to 80 doctors left in Aleppo, dealing with extensive trauma injuries.

Against this desperate backdrop, protests against the Assad Government and for an end to the siege of Aleppo have taken place in Tunisia, Turkey and Lebanon.



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Write to us: The editor
(Cathy Nugent), 20E Tower
Workshops, Riley Road, London,
SE1 3DG

Solidarity editorial: Cathy
Nugent, Gemma Short, and
Martin Thomas

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