



# & Workers' Liberty Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 435 12 April 2017 50p/£1

## Labour's free school meals plan should be part of bold socialist policy for education



# FOUR MILLION CHILDREN IN POVERTY

It's about time! Labour has made a policy commitment to impose VAT on private school fees and use the money raised to finance the provision of free school meals for all children in primary schools.

Just 7% of children go to private schools. They are overwhelmingly from wealthier, more privileged families – people who should be paying more tax. The 83% of children who go to state schools will benefit from the free school meals policy.

**More page 5**

### Inside:

#### US bombs Syria



Simon Nelson reports on Assad's chemical weapons attack and the US's response.

**See page 2**

#### Who is Le Pen?



Yves Coleman on the politics of French Presidential candidate Marine Le Pen.

**See page 4**

#### Livingstone's bad history



*Solidarity* discusses Livingstone, antisemitism and the Labour Party.

**See pages 6-8**

### Join Labour!

How will Labour fare in council elections?

**See page 10**



# Chechnya: stop anti-gay state killings

## QNEWS

By Mike Zubrowski

**Over 100 men suspected of being gay have been rounded up and detained by the Chechen authorities, with many tortured and some killed.**

Chechnya has an authoritarian and extremely repressive state presiding over a deeply homophobic society, but this development is shocking even in this context.

Some of the suspected gay men were killed in violent raids, whilst others have been kept in secret “concentration-camp style” prisons, where many have been subjected to electric shocks and violent abuse, with some beaten to death.

Very few people are openly gay in Chechnya, and much of the torture aims to find the identity of other gay men. The exact figures dead and detained is unknown, as many have gone missing; but by early April the names of three who have been killed in detention have been released, and activists suspect many more have too. Some as young as 16, were rounded up

Chechnya is a region of Russia with substantial autonomy, with a long history of separatist movements, ethnic violence and conflicts with the Russian government (including under the USSR).

LGBTQ+ rights in Russia itself have got worse since the 2013 LGBT “propaganda bans”, which have been used to repress LGBT liberation campaigning. Putin’s re-

sponse to the situation in Chechnya has been very limited and permissive at best, encouraging “official complaints”.

Ramzan Kadyrov, the Chechen President, has severely repressed critics, both activists and journalists. He was appointed by the Kremlin in 2007, and increased his crackdown on dissent in the decade up to elections in 2016. He was closely connected to the assassination and murder of political opponents. The Chechen regime has a history of torture and human rights abuses.

## HONOUR KILLINGS

**Kadyrov’s spokesperson has denied the execution and detention of gay men, as “such people do not exist” in Chechnya, that if they did they would have been killed by their families.**

Honour killings of LGBT people by their families are in fact quite common in Chechnya. This is in fact another danger to LGBT people in Chechnya. The conservatism and homophobia in Chechnyan society is linked both to nationalism and to traditional and political Islam. 95% of the population are practicing Muslims, although their local practices and traditions, Adat, are often seen as more important than religion. National conflicts have worsened this situation, as separatist groups have often been Islamist, strengthening reactionary ideas.

**A left response to this horrific homophobia must be secular, internationalist and forceful.**

# Erdogan tries to reinforce his power

By Dan Katz

**On Sunday 16 April Turkey’s voters will cast ballots in a referendum.**

They will decide on proposals from the ruling Islamists, the Justice and Development (AK) party, led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The main thrust of the 18 constitutional amendments that will be voted on as a package is to highly centralise power in the hands of the President.

If Erdoğan wins he will also be able to run in Presidential elections in 2019 and 2024, meaning he could be in power until 2029.

Erdoğan is an unpleasant, thin-skinned Islamist authoritarian who has used a coup attempt last summer to persecute all opposition.

Tens of thousands of civil servants, teachers, academics and army personnel have been arrested or sacked. 150 journalists are in jail. Many media outlets have been shut down. The Kurdish People’s Democratic Party (HDP) has had a dozen MPs detained, including their leader Selahattin Demirtaş.

Opponents of Erdoğan’s power-grab also have to contend with an on-going State of Emergency and, in the Kurdish south east, with a brutal military response to the armed campaigns of the Kurdish PKK and TAK.

The referendum is bitterly contested and polls suggest the result may be close. The stakes are high for AK who run a formidable propaganda machine. Their slogan is: “Vote for a Strong Turkey”.

During the election campaign Erdoğan fell out, dramatically, with key governments in the EU. Some EU states have large Turkish communities, many of whom are eligible to vote in the referendum.

Polling data suggests many Turks in Germany, for example, are disproportionately in favour of Erdoğan — who has been keen to reach them. However, planned pro-AK rallies in Germany, Austria and Holland were banned.

**Erdoğan responded with outrage and abuse which has damaged his long-term relationships with the EU, but may have increased his vote in the referendum.**

# Syria: the return of US “world policing”

By Simon Nelson

**During the US election Trump’s advice to Obama was, “do not attack Syria... if you do many very bad things will happen and from that fight the US gets nothing.”**

Therefore Trump was not heeding his own advice when he gave the go-ahead for 59 missiles to be fired at an Assad military airfield on 6 April.

Trump’s non-interventionist stance had been based on an assessment that the Syrian opposition is dominated by various strands of Islamism, while Assad is a known quantity. In October 2016 Trump said: “If they ever did overthrow Assad... you may very well end up with worse than Assad.”

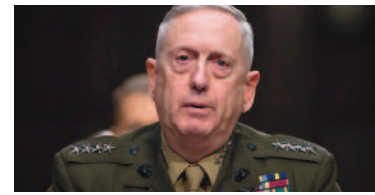
While Obama and Clinton always maintained that a post-Assad Syria was desirable, while not spelling out how they thought this would be achieved, or whether the US would play a direct role, Trump has never accepted that Assad would need to be replaced.

But Assad’s chemical attack on Khan Sheikhoun on 4 April were the worst in several years. There have been horrifying images of children affected — sarin can kill within 10 minutes by asphyxiation.

The Trump administration clearly felt they needed to act. US Defence Secretary James “Mad Dog” Mattis is a vile right wing militarist, but he also understands the “rules of war”. It is likely he advised Trump that if he failed to act then US credibility as the de facto world police would be undermined.

Since 2013 Assad has restricted the use of chemical weapons to chlorine gas, which are not explicitly prohibited by the Chemical Weapons Convention. Obama justified non-intervention on the basis that Assad was sticking to this “norm” in warfare.

More than 100 people, mostly



James “Mad Dog” Mattis

civilians were killed at Khan Sheikhoun. Assad and Russia claim the strikes were on munition factories producing Sarin Gas for rebels. Chemical weapons experts say it is “implausible” that rebel groups can develop supply chains and storage facilities capable of containing sarin.

Maybe it is true, as has been suggested, that Trump reacted emotionally to this attack. Trump reacted similarly in 2011 when he released a video calling on Obama to intervene in Libya to “save these lives.”

Trump’s reaction may not signal a turn to long-term engagement in the conflict, or that he wants to break off collaboration with Russia, or end rapprochement with the Gulf states that back the rebels. Trump has simply stated that US has a duty to stop the use of chemical weapons and ensure there are

real consequences for doing so.

Meanwhile Trump continues the Obama-era policy of engagement with a section of rebels who are targeting Daesh. This is done through close US air support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), made up of militias and effectively led by the Kurdish YPG. The US has only around 1,000 troops on the ground inside Syria. They are still working towards a coordinated assault on the Daesh capital of Raqqa. However the US action could be used by Assad to justify attempts to frustrate operations against Daesh.

On the other hand there is some differentiation within the US administration.

While Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will still visit Moscow, Nikki Haley the Trump-appointed UN ambassador remains a stringent critic of Russia. Prior to her appointment, she said “The world is waiting for Russia to reconsider its misplaced alliance with Bashar al-Assad. The United States will no longer wait.”

**Trump has not yet shown an interest in escalating US involvement in Syria, but a US military build-up on the Korean peninsula suggest that general military combativeness may escalate.**

## The state of Daesh

**Daesh remains weakened but is not defeated in Iraq and Syria.**

But in April it coordinated two bombings of Egyptian Copts as well as declaring that attacks on the St Petersburg Metro and in Stockholm were carried out by “soldiers answering the call.”

The attack on the St Petersburg metro was carried out by a Russian citizen from Kyrgyzstan who is believed to have traveled to Syria.

There is growing speculation that many central Europeans are

radicalised in Russian mosques by Chechens. Daesh has recruited many Chechen and other central European militants to fight in Syria.

The attack in Stockholm, a lorry driving into a department store, was also apparently committed by an Uzbek asylum seeker with “some links to extremist groups”.

**Sectarian attacks by Daesh in Egypt have been on the increase with the Coptic Christian minority (10% of the population) now regular targets.**

# Donald Trump’s hypocrisy

Nicole Coulson of the US International Socialist Organisation comments on Trump’s policy shift

**No, Donald Trump did not suddenly grow a conscience and a soul and begin to care about the slaughter of Syrian civilians.**

The naked cynicism of Trump’s rhetoric as he announced US airstrikes on the Shayrat Syrian Arab Air Force base was apparent to anyone who’s been paying attention.

Invoking the horrifying loss of life resulting from the Syrian government’s use of sarin gas against civilians, Trump declared that Syrian President Bashar al-Assad “choked out the lives of helpless men, women and children... Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack.”

But Syria’s “helpless men,

women and children” have been dying for years and desperately pleading for safe passage to western nations, including the US.

[Instead] Trump has seized every opportunity to whip up racism and Islamophobia against refugees — scapegoating an already embattled population as a terrorist menace.

Trump has repeatedly called for “strong borders” and “extreme vetting” of those seeking refuge in the US. While he’s expressing sorrow for Syrian babies today, in February of last year, he declared at a campaign rally that he would have no problem looking Syrian children “in their faces and say[ing] ‘you can’t come,’” because “we don’t know where their parents come from... They may be [members of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria]...It could be a Trojan horse.”

Around the same time, Donald Trump Jr even compared Syrian refugees to poisoned candy: “If I had a bowl of Skittles and I told

you just three would kill you, would you take a handful? That’s our Syrian refugee problem.”

...Trump and others in his administration repeatedly —and without any evidence — claimed that more than 300 people who entered the US as refugees were the subject of counterterrorism investigations.

But as the *Washington Post* pointed out, to put that in perspective, that number represents just one-fifteenth of 1 percent of refugees admitted from the six countries targeted by Trump’s revised travel ban since 9/11 — and it’s not clear what, if any, charges have ever been brought in any of these investigations.

Further, according to the FBI, in 2016 there were at least 1,000 open investigations into “homegrown violent extremists”.

**All of this underscores Trump’s hypocrisy.**

• [www.socialistworker.org](http://www.socialistworker.org)



# End “the tampon tax” Stop funding anti-abortionists!

By Elizabeth Butterworth

In March last year, then Prime Minister David Cameron announced to Parliament that the 5% VAT levy on period-related products — the “tampon tax” — would soon come to an end.

Parliament was told the European Commission would allow countries to extend zero rates on VAT, and more generally to have more autonomy over the VAT applied to individual products and services.

The European Court of Justice has been called upon numerous times to clarify the rules about individual, esoteric products and services — such as whether or not coin-operated booths in a Bruges sex shop counted as a cinema.

Former Chancellor of the Exchequer George “Six Jobs” Osborne tried to “soften the blow” of the short-term continuation of the sanitary product tax by pledging to spend it on women’s charities.

This was amazingly tone deaf: why should women’s charities be funded by a tax on people with wombs, rather than the general population?

The issue of the tampon tax has come back into the news for two reasons.

First, it emerged that £250,000 of the £12 million tampon tax revenue had been distributed to the anti-abortion charity Life.

Life state that the money will be used to support vulnerable women with services such as “non-directive counselling” and housing. How likely is the “non-directive” in “non-directive counselling”, when their mission statement says that



they “won’t give up” until “abortion is a thing of the past”? When Life’s campaigning arm says they believe that human life begins at fertilisation?

Undercover researchers have found that they have given misleading and wrong information to pregnant women regarding a supposed link between breast cancer and abortion, and telling them that after taking a medical abortion pill that they will have to dispose of “the corpse”.

Second, there have been an increasing number of young women and girls not attending school as they cannot afford sanitary products and do not want to ask their parent(s) or carer(s) for the money, as they know they cannot really afford it. This has been attested to by police officers who work in schools, and the young people themselves.

An 11-year-old pupil told Radio Leeds, “I wrapped a sock around my underwear just to stop the bleeding, because I didn’t want to get shouted at... I once Sellotaped tissue to my underwear. I didn’t get any money because my mum was a single parent and she had five mouths to feed, so there wasn’t much leftover money in the pot to be giving to us.”

Leeds MP Greg Mulholland raised this issue in Parliament and Education Secretary Justine Greening said she would “look carefully” at the issue.

Not only should period-managing items not be taxed, they should be collectively produced and free!

**No one should be making a profit out of a basic biological function, especially one that mostly affects women, who get paid less anyway!**



## Open up the student movement!

By Workers' Liberty students

**The National Union of Students Conference takes place from 25-27 April in Brighton and, once again, we will be in attendance. It promises to be three days of constant campaigning, debating and flogging *Solidarity* and other publications.**

Malia Bouattia is re-standing for President against two right-wing candidates. While credit is due for her commitment to campaigning for a free and liberated education system, there remain many criticisms of her twelve months in office.

The limpness of last November’s national demonstration indicates the union’s disengagement from grassroots organising. Workers’ Liberty will be backing Bouattia while making very clear our criticisms.

Solid left-winger Ana Oppenheim is running for the full-time Vice President Higher Education position; and Jenny Killin for Vice President Welfare.

Both are running as candidates for the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC). Both are on the Labour left and have campaigning records as sabbatical officers. We will be actively campaigning for them during conference.

We anticipate important debates on the future of the higher education sector.

NCAFC is supporting a motion calling for a continuation of the National Student Survey (NSS) Boycott, a tactic as part of the movement to defeat the government’s higher education reforms. While take-up has not been uniform nationwide, we believe this tactic needs further support as well as escalation on other fronts in order to tackle the disastrous Higher Education and Research Bill.

A motion on Palestine is likely to be discussed. NUS policy is to support Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel in order to support the Palestinian struggle for freedom — although only passed by the National Executive Committee (NEC), not so far by conference. While supporting demonstrations and actions against the Israeli government we have many criticisms of this policy.

We will continue to argue that the BDS movement may strengthen Israeli isolationism and nationalism, ultimately resulting in further oppression of the Palestinians.

This conference will be particularly important in shaping the future direction of NUS. Proposed constitutional changes may abolish the NEC, making FTOs even less accountable to students.

**The whole culture of cliques organising around FTOs needs to go. We need democracy accessible to all students.**

# 1917-2017: IDEAS FOR FREEDOM

29 June - 2 July 2017  
Institute of Education  
London, WC1H 0AL

**Including:**  
The Russian Revolution and the “Festival of the Oppressed”; February to October 1917; the story of a revolution; Futurism and the art of revolution;  
The fight for abortion rights, from Dublin to Warsaw, 1967 to today; What is a revolution?; Who were the Bolsheviks?; The Fate of the Russian Revolution;  
The workers’ movement in Turkey, past and future; Socialists and parliament; Is automation making us free?; Nationalise the Big Six – the labour movement and climate change; Socialism or populism; Capitalism and women’s oppression; Is neoliberalism dead?; Poetry and revolution;  
Radical Reconstruction and the anti-slavery struggle; Fighting the new right  
& more to be announced

**Register now at**  
[workersliberty.org/ideas](http://workersliberty.org/ideas)

[f](https://www.facebook.com/ideas4freedom) [bit.ly/IFF17](https://www.facebook.com/ideas4freedom) [@ideas4freedom](https://twitter.com/ideas4freedom) [#IFF17](https://twitter.com/ideas4freedom)



# Trotskyism and Maoism

## AFTERWORD

By Sean Matgamna

The Irish Communist Group of the mid-1960s, the subject of the article “Stoking up on theory” in the last issue of *Solidarity*, was part of a wider scene of Trotskyist-Maoist regroupment efforts at the time.

Stalinist Beijing and Moscow had fallen out in the early 60s. The Chinese criticised Moscow from the “left” — for instance, questioning the dogma of the Stalinist parties controlled by Moscow that there could be a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism. If you didn’t know, or let yourself forget, what and who Mao and his comrades were, it was good Marxist critique of Moscow and East European Stalinism.

The Maoists traced what they called Moscow’s “modern revisionism” to the 20th congress of the CPSU, at the beginning of 1956, the one in which Stalin’s heir Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin as a mass murderer. Groups of pro-Chinese “Marxist-Leninists”, as they called themselves, formed in and then outside some Communist Parties.

They were pre-1956 revolutionary Stalinists, cherishing the memory and implicitly the deeds and politics of Stalin. Maoists in and after the Cultural Revolution (1966) would usually be political quasi-lunatics. Before the Cultural Revolution they included some more sober old-time Stalinists critical of the Western CPs.

Naturally the Orthodox Trotskyists paid attention, wrote analyses of the Moscow-Beijing “debate”, etc. When, around 1963, independent “Marxist-Leninist” groups were formed, the Trotskyists approached them for discussion, common work, etc.

For instance, in Belgium the group led by Ernest Mandel approached the small Maoist party there.

The Mandel side of a Fourth International that had reunified in 1963 after a ten-year split with the supporters of James P Cannon and the American SWP thought of China as a deformed workers’ state. A working-class revolution against the state, what in relation to Stalinist Russia the Orthodox Trotskyists called a political revolution, was not necessary. In fact they were critical supporters of the Maoist regime.

They argued that the “great revolutionary” Mao was, unconsciously, the political heir of Trotsky (for instance, in an introduction by Pierre Frank to a French-language collection of Trotsky’s writings in 1955). They could come out for a new revolution in China — a “political revolution” — in 1969.

In the first half of the 1960s, when the Orthodox Trotskyists made approaches to Maoists, they were relating to people with whom they had much in common and whose criticism of “Moscow” they thought valid (with the exception of the Maoists’ attitude to a Third World War, that it was nothing to be afraid of).

**In fact, however, it was all in vain. There could be no rapprochement between Mao-Stalinists and Trotskyists, even Trotskyists gone seriously soft on Maoism.**

# Marine Le Pen’s Front National

By Yves Coleman,

Since 2011, when Marine Le Pen became the leader of the Front National, the presence of antisemitism (but not of racism) has decreased in its official public declarations. Marine Le Pen has tried several times to make an official visit to Israel; She has contacted the leaders of the American Jewish community, made appeals to Jewish voters, and so on.

But evidence about what the activists and the local cadres of the FN say in internal meetings shows that antisemitism and even Holocaust denial are still current in the National Front. Moreover, all the polls confirm that the FN is the party that attracts the most antisemitic and racist voters.

Only, it is now forbidden to express anti-Jewish sentiments on Facebook, on FN websites, in public meetings or at press conferences. Antisemitism is thriving in the FN, only it is reserved for the internal discussions of the party.

In the short term, if a mass fascist party appears in France, a large part of its militants and sympathisers will most certainly come from the ranks of the Front National.

For the time being, Marine Le Pen is trying to make the same kind of political mutation as Gianfranco Fini made when he transformed the Italian neo-fascist MSI into Alleanza Nazionale, but we cannot see the FN or even the RBM [the Rassemblement Bleu Marine, a broader “front” organisation] transforming into a classic centre-right party in the short term.

Even if many neo-fascist groups criticise the National Front as too moderate, as “Zionist”, or as “pro-American”, those neo-fascist groups still have many friends and allies within the National Front.

The FN does not control any trade union at the national level or even any significant fraction in a trade union, even if it has trade unionists in its ranks, which it prefers to organise in external networks rather than as fractions within the unions, probably for lack of effective organisers... It plays no role in strikes or struggles for better living conditions in low-income suburbs. It is not in a position — for the moment — to control entire areas of the territory such as Social Democratic or Communist Parties have done in their history, or as the Nazis did in the 1930s before taking power.

We must of course be concerned about its growing electoral and ideological influence (for example, its electoral results have encouraged the “Republican” right to adopt part of its program on immigration, “insecurity” and Islam; the Socialist Party government even took up one of its measures, selective revocation of nationality, after the attacks of 13 November 2015 [and then dropped it]).

In 1972, the FN had about 2,000 supporters, but ten years later (1982 and 1983) fewer than 250.

Its influence began to increase in 1984 thanks to the national television channels and the “socialist” president Mitterrand, who cynically hoping that the FN would undermine the mainstream right helped Jean-Marie Le Pen after the leader of the National Front had complained that national radio and TV were “boycotting” him.

The FN reached 20,000 cardholders in 1989 and 42,000 in 1998, just before the split between Mégret and Le Pen. Subsequently, the number dropped again (12,800 in 2000) and began to rise only ten years later, in 2010 (20,000). Since then, the progression has been impressive and permanent: 51,551 cards paid in July 2015, ten thousand more than in 1998.



The FN is still small compared to the Nazis before they took power — 1.5 million in the Nazi party, 425,000 in the paramilitary SA — or even Mussolini’s movement — 300,000 when he formed his party out of his paramilitary gangs at the end of 1921.

The electoral fortunes of the FN do not coincide exactly with its ups and downs in terms of numbers. This is linked to the special relationship between the voters, the party and its leader (Jean-Marie Le Pen, and now his daughter Marine Le Pen).

The National Front has always achieved better results in the presidential elections, which correspond more to its authoritarian nature, to voters who wish to rally round a beloved leader...

Marine Le Pen operates in the same way as her father: she publicises her own name much more than that of the FN and has created an ad hoc structure, the Rassemblement Bleu Marine. The RBM is simultaneously a money-machine; a structure to draw in forces broader than the FN and allow members of neo-fascist groups to make themselves respectable through participation in elections; and an ultra-personalised promotional enterprise.

This attitude stems from both the neo-fascist values of Le Pen (father and daughter) and the French presidential system.

## “PROTEST VOTE”

**Most FN voters, especially in working-class neighbourhoods, claim they are not racist. They say they have Arab or African friends (which is sometimes true) but explicitly express their hatred of the Roma and Romanians. They explain their vote for the FN as a simple “protest vote”.**

They think that Marine Le Pen is very different from his racist and antisemitic father, or they sometimes invoke a “democratic” argument: “After all, they deserve to have their chance and to prove what they can do”.

The Front National cadres have an even more absurd argument: “We are neither racist nor antisemitic. But it is normal to discriminate... in a restaurant, when you choose a dish, you discriminate against the dishes you do not order”.

Jean-Marie Le Pen never made racist propaganda in the Nazi sense of the word... he made racist remarks in order to attract the attention of the media, to keep the support of his fascist supporters inside and outside of the FN, and embarrass the members of his party who wanted to make alliances with the “respectable” right.

The... multiple facets of this sinister character, perhaps derive from extreme right-wing politicians like Roger Holeindre who fought in France’s colonial wars and learned to “appreciate” (in a very paternalistic way obviously) the Arab, Asian and African auxiliaries

of the armed forces.

The Front National has always tried to present itself as the best friend of the harkis [the Algerians who sided with France in the war of independence between 1954 and 1962, and fled to France after 1962], especially before each election, even if the majority of them vote more for the right than for the extreme right.

Jean-Marie Le Pen always defended a radical “assimilationist” line, not the expulsion of anyone who has not been Franco-French for centuries. In other words, Le Pen tolerates the “good” immigrants and descendants of immigrants who work hard and are great patriots (chauvinists like him), but he does not want “too much” on French soil (“I love foreigners ... when they are at home”, he said).

Everybody knows that Nicolas Sarkozy [mainstream right-wing president 2007-12], when he was Minister of the Interior, declared, in an immigrant neighbourhood where a young man had been killed by a stray bullet, that the district would be “cleaned up with a power-hose”.

But few people know that Jean-Marie Le Pen gave a very short press conference (thirty minutes, Le Pen is not reckless) in an immigrant neighbourhood in 2007 and said: “If some want to power-hose or exclude you, we want to help you get out of these suburban ghettos where the French politicians have parked you. You are branches of the tree of France ...”

This statement followed his 2006 speech in Valmy where he proclaimed himself a “republican” and addressed the “French of foreign origin”.

So, if the National Front is not a Nazi party within the meaning of the German NSDAP, it is a racist and antisemitic party. It is an extreme right-wing party because it is built entirely around a leader who has all the powers within the party.

It has a nationalist-racist ideology. It defends Christian values, like all the reactionary currents in France since 1789. Its social demagoguery, if it no longer explicitly targets Jews, takes up the theme of the struggle of the “small” against the “big”, the “people” against the “elites” (the System, UMPS, the EU, IMF, World Bank, etc.), a theme common to the whole far-right.

Since its inception, the FN has included a number of currents: from neoliberals to traditionalist Catholics to nationalist revolutionaries. Jean-Marie Le Pen always tried to hold together all the sensibilities, in part by engaging in “social” demagoguery: he liked to proclaim “Socially I am of the left, economically of the right and, nationally, I am of France”.

Her daughter does not innovate in this matter, even if she has decided to give up — for the moment — the antisemitic rhetoric of her father.

The balance between so-called “neo-liberal” proposals (openly favourable to private capitalism) and those that seem to defend the maintenance of the welfare state is very unstable.

Two fundamental elements remain. It wants to reserve social benefits and services for French people only, or for “ethnic French” (an expression whose meaning varies). And it wants to establish a “strong state” against the poor (the “lazy”), “foreigners”, “Muslims” and the “paper French” (recently naturalised).

**It defends public services only to advocate a profoundly inegalitarian and xenophobic nation state.**

• Abridged from “The Front National and its social demagoguery”, in *Ni patrie ni frontières* no. 54-55.





Rising numbers of children are going to school hungry

# Labour needs a bold socialist programme for education

**It's about time! Labour has made a policy commitment to impose VAT on private school fees and use the money raised to finance the provision of free school meals for all children in primary schools.**

Just 7% of children go to private schools. They are overwhelmingly from wealthier, more privileged families — people who should be paying more tax.

The 83% of children who go to state schools will benefit from the free school meals policy. It will ease the financial pressures on families who currently just fail the “means test” for free school meals; who may not realise that they qualify; or who are put off from claiming free school meals for fear of being stigmatised (especially in schools where children would be required to queue separately or hand over special tokens in the canteen).

The End Child Poverty Coalition reports that four million children in the UK are now living in relative poverty. Research by The Food Foundation has shown that in 2014, 8.4 million people (about 10% of the population) were living in food insecurity (they report being unable to obtain enough food to live healthily).

Cuts and freezes in benefits (especially

child benefits) are worsening this situation. Research shows a big increase in the number of people relying on food banks, indicates that food insecurity is increasing.

Policy that redistributes some income and wealth from some of the wealthiest people towards the majority of families and provides free, healthy, nutritional food is more than overdue. It would mean that there would be no financial incentive to send a child to school with a cheap, unhealthy packed lunch. It would also mean that parents would be able to spend more of their income on healthy, nutritional food for family meals at home (or to be less in debt, or less compelled to cut back on other essentials such as home heating).

Predictably there has been outcry from those who object that Labour's policy will unfairly penalise those (untypical for private schools) families on modest incomes who make sacrifices (cutting back on family holidays, the size of the family home etc.) in order that they can afford the school fees. What will these families do if VAT on school fees is implemented? In some cases, say the parents, their children will have to leave their school and go to a state school.

Changing schools can be a difficult for a child, but many children do this anyway, for all sorts of reasons. It would be progress if more children go to state schools than private schools. In particular, for “clued-up”, middle-class parents to seek to find an escape for their children from what may be “struggling” or “under-performing” state schools is no answer to the problems in those schools.

Comprehensive education works well when there is a broad social mix, and where academically motivated students and their families (whatever their income level), are involved with, committed to, and supportive of, schools that serve the whole community.

Private schools and grammar schools both represent attempts to improve education for individual children at the expense of most children in society.

The objections to VAT on school fees are, in

that sense, similar to the support for opening new grammar schools in England. It gives up on education as a universal service with quality provision for all and seeks only to create islands of quality for those “deserving enough” to have passed an entrance exam.

As well as the announcement for free school meals, Labour points out cuts to Sure Start centres, the 22,500 unqualified teachers in England's schools, and the half a million children being taught in classes of over 30. Their statement says that “Labour will invest to ensure the highest standards in schools, with every child cherished and supported.”

There is no specific mention, however, of how much will be invested or of reversing the real-terms cuts that are currently being imposed on schools between now and 2020.

There are welcome commitments to reintroduce the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) that helps to support students in post-16 education; and to bring back maintenance grants for half a million students in higher education.

But Labour could go a lot further than this — and it needs to do so.

Labour's campaign statement concludes with the words: “A good education should not be a privilege. It's every child's right. Labour will stand up for all our young people and ensure that all children, whatever their background, receive the high quality education they deserve.”

To be true to these words, Labour should present a bold, radical vision for education — levelled up and increased school funding, reversing cuts; converting academies and free schools into locally accountable community schools; free, high-quality nursery education and childcare provision; free further and higher education with grants for all students; and much more!

**Labour should also be willing to tax the wealthiest in society to implement this programme.**

• Read Labour's policy here: [www.labour.org.uk/index.php/education](http://www.labour.org.uk/index.php/education)

## Help us raise £20,000 to improve our website



We need to build a left that is open to debate and is serious about self-education.

Our website, including its extensive archive could help build a different kind of socialist culture — one where discussion and self-education are cherished.

From Trotskyist newspapers of the 1940s and 50s, to older Marxist classics, to discussion articles on feminism, national questions, religion and philosophy and resources such as guidelines for Marxist reading groups — it's all there on the Workers' Liberty website.

But to make our archive of real use we need professional help to make all content fully integrated, searchable by date and subject and optimised for mobile reading. We need to finance a website co-ordinator to ensure our news coverage is up to the minute and shared on social media. We want to raise £20,000 by our conference in November 2017. Any amount will help.

In the last week *Solidarity* sellers have increased standing orders, bringing in £70 and North London branch raised £50.

- If you would like to donate by paypal go to [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate)
- Or set up an internet bank transfer to “AWL”, account 20047674 at Unity Trust Bank, Birmingham, 60-83-01 (please email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) to notify us of the payment and what it's for); or
- Send a cheque payable to “AWL” to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Rd, London SE1 3DG (with a note saying what it's for).

**Take a look at**  
[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

## Dealing with Livingstone

**This issue of *Solidarity* carries background material and discussion on the row in the Labour Party over how Ken Livingstone should be dealt with, following his inflammatory remarks on the relationship between Zionism and Nazi Germany.**

Our editorial position is that we *do not* call for Livingstone to be expelled. We want to limit, not expand, the powers the current Party regime has to “ban” political views.

However, as the articles we print here make clear, Livingstone's long-held views on these matters are seriously harmful.

**We invite further debate.**



# Ken Livingstone: bad history, worse

By Dale Street

**Over the past twelve months Ken Livingstone has made a succession of jumbled and frequently contradictory claims about the relationship between Zionism and Nazi Germany. Even allowing for their incoherence, they add up to bad history and even worse politics.**

In April 2016 he claimed in a radio interview: "When Hitler won his election in 1932, his policy then was that Jews should be moved to Israel. He was supporting Zionism – this was before he went mad and ended up killing six million Jews."

Livingstone repeated the same argument in subsequent interviews:

"Hitler's policy was to send all of Germany's Jews to Israel and there were private meetings between the Zionist movement and Hitler's government which were kept confidential, they only became apparent after the war..."

"His policy was to deport all Germany's Jews to Israel. That's not because he was a Zionist, it's because he hated Jews. He then had a dialogue with the leaders of the Zionist movement, private, not him personally but his officials, privately discussing whether to not to proceed with that policy. In the end he didn't – he chose to kill six million Jews."

In support of his claims Livingstone cited a 1983 book by Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*:

"The shocking thing about his book was that it revealed ... that the Zionist leadership continued a dialogue privately with Hitler from 1933 until 1940/41. They were working quite closely. Lenni's book shows a shared common belief between the Nazis and the Zionists in preserving their race from inter-racial marriage and things like that."

In an interview with J-TV in May Livingstone claimed: "In a speech he made on 6 or 7 July 1920 Hitler actually says: 'The Jews, should move to Palestine, that is where they

can have their full civil rights.' So he already had that [i.e. that policy] in mind, long before [his election in 1932]."

During the interview Livingstone cited as the sources for his claims: Lenni Brenner's book, an article by the American academic and writer Norman Finkelstein, and an academic paper by the American historian Francis Nicosia.

The following month Livingstone gave evidence to the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee on Antisemitism. He said:

"When Hitler came to power, he negotiated a deal to move Germany's Jews to Palestine. I have never criticised the Zionist movement for making that deal, because the only alternative at that time was the worldwide boycott of German goods by Jews all over the world."

"As we saw with South Africa, that did not work then, and I don't think it would have done. So they had to deal with whoever was in power, however repellent, however antisemitic, but it saved the lives of 66,000 Jews."

## CONTINUED

**At the same time, Livingstone continued to argue that Hitler supported Zionism:**

"That is exactly the one I was referring to [the Transfer Agreement of 1933, which 'regulated' the conditions under which German Jews could migrate to Palestine]. That was Hitler's support for Zionism."

In his written submission to the Labour Party disciplinary hearing held in March of this year Livingstone wrote:

"The Transfer Agreement was a major political issue at the time as the Jewish movement to boycott German goods was a huge international campaign to turn public opinion against Nazi Germany."

"I was just pointing out [in the interview of April 2016] that the Nazi policy in relation to the Transfer Agreement had the effect of supporting Zionism."

"I did not make any equation of Hitler and Zionism. I neither criticised the Transfer Agreement or the section of Zionism that participated in the Agreement. ... Any suggestion that my intention was to draw equivalence between Nazism and Zionism is entirely false."

At this point neither Finkelstein nor Brenner were cited by Livingstone as his sources. The only sources cited were Nicosia and the Israeli historian Yf'at Weiss.

But Livingstone's attempt at what, in other circumstances, might be called a more "nuanced" position was undermined by the claims he made as he arrived at the disciplinary hearing:

"Hitler didn't just sign the [Transfer] Deal. The SS set up training camps so that German Jews who were going to go there [to Palestine] could be trained to cope with a very different sort of country when they got there."

"When the Zionist movement asked, would the Nazi government stop a Jewish rabbi doing their sermons in Yiddish and make them do it in Hebrew, he agreed to that. He passed a law saying the Zionist flag and the swastika were the only flags that could be flown in Germany. An awful lot."

"Of course, they started selling Mauser pistols to the underground Jewish army. So you had right up until the start of the Second World War real collaboration."

In a radio interview conducted the day after the disciplinary panel delivered its verdict, Livingstone returned to the theme of Hitler's supposed support for Zionism:

"There is a difference between saying Hitler supported Zionism in the 1930s and saying Hitler was a Zionist. Hitler loathed and detested and feared Jews. He was never going to be a Zionist. But by doing that deal with the German Zionists he undermined the world-wide boycott of German goods that Jews around the world had been setting up."

The least of Livingstone's failings in these forays into the relationship between Zionism and Nazi Germany is their incoherence and inconsistency.

April 2016: "The Zionists and the Nazis" were able to "work quite closely" together because of their "shared common belief" in issues of racial preservation. March 2017: Livingstone had never equated Hitler and Zionism and it was false to suggest that he wanted to equate Nazism and Zionism

April to June 2016: Hitler supported Zionism in the 1930s. March 2017: "Nazi policy had the effect of supporting Zionism". April 2017: Hitler was not a Zionist himself but supported Zionism.

April 2016: Hitler had no direct contact with Zionist leaders, it was "not him personally, but his officials". April 2017: Hitler himself personally "signed" the Transfer Agreement.

June 2016: Zionist leaders are to be praised for the Transfer Agreement: it saved 66,000 Jews from the Holocaust, and the Jewish boycott of German goods was doomed to failure. April 2017: It was "that deal with the German Zionists" which undermined the boycott.

June 2016: German Zionists "had to deal with whoever was in power, however repellent, however antisemitic". March 2017: German Zionists were guilty of "real collaboration right up until the start of the Second World War".

It is clear Livingstone does not know what he is talking about who has relied on just four sources of historical writing — one book, one article, and two academic papers.

In the J-TV interview Livingstone's interviewer exposed Brenner as a charlatan guilty of selective quoting in an attempt to substantiate contrived political arguments. By the time he appeared before the Home Affairs Committee the following month Livingstone had relegated Brenner to being "an old Trot who is not an academic" and therefore not worth quoting.

In the J-TV interview Livingstone cited an article by the American academic and writer Norman Finkelstein in his defence. But Finkelstein's article merely repeated Livingstone's claims without substantiating them, and curtly dismissed all allegations of antisemitism:

"Hitler wasn't wholly hostile to the Zionist project at the outset. ... Livingstone's also accurate that a degree of ideological affinity existed between the Nazis and the Zionists. ... It's long time past that these antisemitism-mongers crawled back into their sewer."

Finkelstein quickly disappeared from view as a historical authority.

In his submission to the Labour Party disciplinary hearing Livingstone cited Yf'at Weiss's 'The Transfer Agreement and the Boycott Movement: A Jewish Dilemma on the Eve of the Holocaust' and Francis Nicosia's 'Zionism in National Socialist Jewish Policy in Germany, 1933-39'. Unsurprisingly, neither of those academic papers corroborate Livingstone's arguments about Hitler supporting Zionism.

The 1998 paper by Weiss does not even deal with relations between German Zionism and the Nazis. Apart from considering the tension between the Transfer Agreement and the campaign for a boycott of Nazi Germany, it focuses solely on conflicting views of the Transfer Agreement.

## CONFLICTS

**Such conflicts existed: within Zionist organisations; between Zionist and non-Zionist organisations; between German-Jewish organisations and Polish-Jewish organisations; between Jewish organisations in the Yishuv and Jewish diaspora organisations; and between Labour Zionists and Revisionist Zionists.**

Francis Nicosia's paper date from 1978, and is even more fantastic. Nicosia has continued writing for the past four decades, including two books given over entirely to relations between German Zionism and the Nazi regime. In his second book (*Zionism and Anti-Semitism in Nazi Germany*) Nicosia argues the opposite of Livingstone's version of history.

As one review of the book puts it:

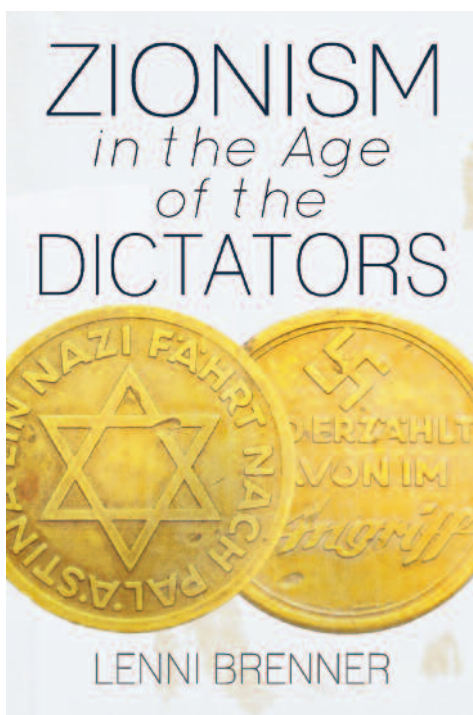
"In certain political and academic circles, there are those who would love to advance the claim, however unfounded, that there exists a remarkable similarity (if not outright equivalence) between Zionism and National Socialism, with all that such a claim implies."

"Nicosia is aware of this pitfall and attempts throughout the book to neutralise the possibility that his research might be used for dubious political purposes. ... Contacts between Zionist activists and senior Nazi officials were not, he insists, representative of any ideological or political common denominator."

Livingstone's ignorance of what he has been talking about also explains his gross inaccuracies and misrepresentations in attempting to provide specific examples of "real collaboration" between German Zionists and the Nazis.

According to Livingstone, for example, "the SS set up training camps" so that German Jews could be trained for life in Palestine. Such training camps did exist. But they existed even before Hitler came to power. Most of the camps were set up and run by Zionist organisations in preparation for emigration to Palestine.

As the Nazi persecution of Jews intensified, non-Zionist organisations also established training camps to help German Jews prepare for emigration, irrespective of destination. Zionist-run training camps also ceased to focus solely on preparing for emigration to Palestine.



**Lenni Brenner's book, from which Livingstone claims to have got his "facts".**



# e politics

The SS tolerated such camps. But they were also ambivalent towards them. They feared that the skills learnt by Jews in the camps would allow their “reinsertion” into the German economy. And they feared that the result of “rural romances” would, to use the Nazis’ language, be “the defiling of German blood”.

Livingstone’s claim that “he (Hitler) passed a law saying the Zionist flag and the swastika were the only flags that could be flown in Germany, an awful lot,” was in fact a reference to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935, the purpose of which was to segregate Germans Jews from non-Jewish Germans. Hence, they banned Jews from displaying the Reich flag or Reich colours but allowed them to display “Jewish colours”. The laws made no mention of “the Zionist flag”, and no such flag was officially recognised in Nazi Germany.

In any case, a year later Jews were also banned from displaying their own “Jewish colours” on German national holidays.

Livingstone’s claim that “when the Zionist movement asked, would the Nazi government stop a Jewish rabbi doing their sermons in Yiddish and make them do it in Hebrew, he agreed to that” is either a complete fantasy or, more likely, a reference to something completely different.

In December 1936, without having been approached by “the Zionist movement”, the Gestapo banned the use of German in Chanukah sermons.

(Far worse than Livingstone’s inaccuracy is the assumption implicit in his claim: the Nazi regime was at the beck and call of Zionists and only too happy to respond to their whims.)

Livingstone’s overarching and repeated claim that Hitler supported Zionism (until he went mad) is also wildly inaccurate. In a speech of August 1920, entitled “Why We Are Antisemites”, only a month after he supposedly backed full civil rights for Jews in Palestine, Hitler ruled out any possibility of the Zionist movement achieving its goal of a Jewish state in Palestine. And in *Mein Kampf*, published in 1925 he said:

“While the Zionists try to make the rest of the world believe that the national consciousness of the Jew finds its satisfaction in the creation of a Palestinian state, the Jews again slyly dupe the dumb Goyim.”

“It doesn’t even enter their heads to build up a Jewish state in Palestine to live there. All they want is a central organisation for their international swindler, endowed with its own sovereign rights and removed from the intervention of other states: a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks.”

For Nicosia, whom Livingstone cites:

“The Nazis maintained a contempt for Zionism as for all things Jewish, as representative of what they considered to be some of the most dangerous and abhorrent characteristics of the Jews as a people.”

Hitler and his regime never supported Zionism or Jewish emigration from Germany for the purpose of creating a Jewish state in Palestine. What Hitler and his regime supported and sought to create was a Germany without Jews. The Transfer Agreement of 1933 flowed out of that antisemitic drive to



**Contrary to Livingstone's various statements the Nazis had a contempt for Zionism as for all things Jewish**

rid Germany of Jews, not out of Hitler’s supposed personal support for Zionism.

The policy of making Germany “judenrein” was defined in an internal Security Service memorandum written in May of 1934. The defined goal was “the total emigration of the Jews”. And that goal was to be achieved by: making it impossible for Jews to earn a living; ending violent street antisemitism (due to its adverse impact on foreign policy); intensifying the social isolation of Jews; exploiting friction between German Jewish organisations; refusal of official minority status for Jews; and full support for occupational retraining as the best way to facilitate emigration. Such a policy was implemented with increasing ruthlessness.

## EMIGRATION

**Even after the outbreak of war in 1939 the focus of Nazi Jewish policy initially continued to be emigration, irrespective of destination. As Nicosia writes:**

“There was full agreement that while efforts would continue to be made to push Jews to overseas destinations, the ultimate destination of those who managed to leave German soil did not matter very much in the end.”

Only in 1941, when Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, was this replaced by a new policy: the Final Solution.

Over the past twelve months Livingstone appears to have been pulled in two politically conflicting directions at the same time.

As a disciple of Brenner he must have felt the urge to promote the “full-blooded” version of the argument that Hitler supported Zionism. This involves allegations of Nazi-Zionist collaboration, Zionist collaboration in the Holocaust, Zionism as a form of racism and fascism, Zionist genocide of Palestinians, and Israel as a latter-day Nazi Germany.

Livingstone’s view date back to early 1980s when he was an honorary editor of *Labour Herald*, a front paper for the now defunct

Workers Revolutionary Party which specialised in theories of international Zionist conspiracies.

That paper carried antisemitic cartoons equating Israel with Nazi Germany and positive reviews of books alleging Zionist-Nazi collaboration:

“Israel is a state built entirely on the blood of Europe’s Jews, whom the Zionists deserted in their hour of greatest need. These books will shock and horrify, for they expose the hypocrisy of Zionist leaders who used the sympathy for Jews stirred up after the Holocaust for their own devious ends.”

In the same period Livingstone was a supporter of the Labour Committee on Palestine (LCP) and also subsequently signed up as a sponsor of the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine (LMCP). The platform of the LCP included “opposition to the Zionist state as racist, exclusivist, expansionist and a direct agency of imperialism” and “opposition to manifestations of Zionism in the Labour movement and the Labour Party in particular.”

The platform of the LMCP likewise included a commitment to “fight within the labour movement – and the Labour Party in particular – to eradicate Zionism.” Included in the LMCP’s “recommended reading” list was Lenni Brenner’s *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators*.

Livingstone has never abandoned such politics. Faced with allegations that there was an antisemitic component to his politics, such as when he denounced a Jewish journalist as a concentration camp guard, Livingstone coined a defence which became known as the Livingstone Formulation.

Allegations of antisemitism, according to Livingstone, were raised in bad faith in order to stifle criticism of Israel. That Formulation has been repeatedly employed by Livingstone over the past twelve months. And in his submission to the Labour Party disciplinary hearing Livingstone wrote:

“There has been a significant vilification campaign against supporters of Palestinian rights within Labour. These attacks on Jeremy Corbyn and other Labour supporters of Palestinian rights are largely not about antisemitism. Their aim is to curtail the freedom to criticise the policies of Israel.”

## PRESSURE

**But Livingstone has also subject to a countervailing pressure over the last twelve months.**

He is an experienced politician. He knew that his statements had become a focus of public attention. He must have known equally well that peddling the full Lenni Brenner version of Zionist-Nazi collaboration would be easily exposed and politically disastrous.

Livingstone must have felt the need to rein it in and masquerade instead as an innocent seeker of historical truth. Hence his very un-Livingstone-like comments before the Home Affairs Committee and at the Labour Party disciplinary hearing that German Zionists were not to be criticised for their involvement in the Transfer Agreement.

However Livingstone could not pull it off.

He could not help but relapse into Brennerite allegations of Zionist-Nazi collaboration – even as he walked into a Labour Party disciplinary hearing. His April 2016 point, that “Hitler was supporting Zionism”, was replaced by the syntactically incoherent and scarcely less inaccurate formulation “Nazi policy in relation to the Transfer Agreement had the effect of supporting Zionism.”

This was a rewriting of history. But one that scarcely registers as such when compared with the much larger rewriting of history in which Livingstone has engaged for the past three and a half decades.

**And to use Livingstone’s own expression against him: that rewriting of history has had the effect of supporting – and encouraging – antisemitism.**



# Livingstone and the “anti-Zionist” left

By Sean Matgamna

*“We condemn the Oder-Neisse frontier established by the victors and the practice of mass expulsions as inhuman measures which can never be approved by socialists. But we warn the refugees against the illusion that their problems can be solved through conquest by force of their former homeland through World War Three.*

*A new war would destroy their homeland along with the rest of Europe. At present, it is important to absorb these refugees into economic life with equal rights and in accordance with their occupations. Reactionary elements among the “displaced persons” attempt in collaboration with their West German friends to distract the refugees from defending their real interests by illusory promises of a return to their former homes. But we tell them that they can get a life worth living only by joining in the common struggle with the socialist labour movement.”*

From the 1950 draft programme of the German Trotskyists, discussing the ethnic Germans who were expelled from eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War.

**The Ken Livingstone affair focuses attention on one of the major problems inside the left.**

Is Ken Livingstone an antisemite? Livingstone is a Jekyll-and-Hyde character. Inside Livingstone, there is the do-anything-for-an-advantage careerist, Livingstone-Jekyll. And there is always a Livingstone-Hyde, raging to get out.

As Livingstone-Jekyll’s careful phrases are left behind, Livingstone-Hyde gets stronger. Is he an antisemite?

As they say: “if it quacks, most likely it’s a duck”. There was the incident of a few years ago when, apparently drunk leaving a social gathering, he compared a reporter to a Nazi concentration-camp guard — meaning, I suppose, that they were conscienceless mercenaries, “obeying orders”. When the reporter told him that he was Jewish, and therefore found the comparison especially offensive, he would neither retract his statement nor apologise for it. He repeated it.

Now there is: “Hitler was a Zionist, until he went mad and started massacring Jews”. The underlying idea alluded to here is the notion that Zionism is identified with the Nazis, an idea widely accepted on the ostensible left. It’s not the facts and factoids he juggles with here — there was Nazi talk, before the war, of deporting Europe’s Jews to Madagascar. It’s the spurting malice with which he lets it out.

In his time, and over a long time, he consorted with antisemites. He worked closely with a strange organisation, the Workers’ Revolutionary Party, which was financed — and widely known to be financed — by Gaddafi’s Libya and Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. In turn, the WRP subsidised a paper which Livingstone put out, *Labour Herald*.

God knows what goes on in Livingstone’s mind, but he is a functional antisemite.

Of course he should be expelled from the Labour Party! Why wasn’t he expelled? Because he was so heavily “lawyered-up” that he intimidated his judges. He threatened to fight expulsion in the courts if they dared expel him. That he wasn’t expelled is a measure of Labour Party justice — and of the Labour Party’s seriousness in fighting the anti-Zionist antisemitic hysteria which grips much of the left.

The fundamental fact is that much of the ostensible left is in the grip of an “anti-Zionism” and an “anti-imperialism” identical to Livingstone’s. That is almost, in its attitude to Israel and “Zionism”, indistinguishable to antisemitism.



**Livingstone once worked closely with the Workers’ Revolutionary Party. In 1983, in response to our criticisms that the group took money from Gaddafi, they published an editorial asserting there was a Zionist conspiracy stretching from (our predecessor paper), *Socialist Organiser*, through Thatcher’s Cabinet and to Regan’s White House.**

It trades in the woes of the Palestinians, but it is much less pro-Palestinian than it is anti-Israel. It rejects the PLO programme of a Palestinian state side-by-side with Israel. Its central policy is the destruction of Israel.

Hysterical? It is out of all proportion to the crimes and alleged crimes of Israel against the Palestinians. It expresses in its concern with Israel and Palestine in all sorts of political frustrations and other hostilities. It incorporates vicious lies and has made of them articles of political faith.

It doesn’t see anything odd or inhibiting in its sustained animosity towards exactly the same people who have been the target of religious bigots through the centuries and were the victims of Nazi mass murder on a colossal scale in the 20th Century. The distinction between Jews, who, naturally, support Israel, however carefully, and Israel is largely meaningless here, a sleight of mind.

## ISRAEL

**It doesn’t just criticise or politically condemn Israel’s actions and policies and advocate redress. It seeks an armageddon for Israel, its total destruction.**

In the old Christian antisemitism it wasn’t that there were no Jewish financiers or Jewish money-lenders, etc., as objectionable as any others. It was the identification of a whole people with such villains. Now, it is that there is nothing to object to in Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians — towards whom Israel is a brutal colonial power — but the identification of all Israelis and non-Israeli Jewish Zionists with the worst aspects of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians. And the unconscious conclusion: that the Israeli state and its Jewish citizens should be conquered and Israel wiped off the map.

This left says Israel doesn’t have the right to exist and therefore doesn’t have a right to defend itself. From the identification of Jews — even poor Jews — with money to the identification of the Jewish state with its outside supporters with imperialism — with some sort of essence of imperialism — and the



**Ken Livingstone, always ready with a soundbite**

same conclusion as Hitler reached about the Jewish people, about the Jewish state — wipe it out.

And to an enormous extent this is based on lies and half-lies.

Take, for example, the question of the Palestinian refugees and their “right of return”.

It is routinely asserted that there are six million Palestinian refugees. In fact, the figure includes two or three generations of people who are of Palestinian descent, not Palestinians. The number of Palestinians who fled or were driven out in the 1948 war was about 750,000. There can’t be all that many of these people still alive. The figures of six million refugees is a straightforward ideological lie, and a big one.

The idea that these six million descendants of Palestinian refugees have a moral “right to return” and that Israel should be abolished so as to allow that, is implicitly the idea that their grandparents (or in some cases great grandparents) can pass on to them a right that is greater than the rights of Israeli Jews to go on living where they and their parents and in some cases their grandparents were born and have lived their lives.

The underlying idea on which this is based is also an ideological lie — the idea that Israel, founded in 1948, was and is entirely and solely responsible for the plight of Palestinians living for decades as refugees. Israel, but not the host Arab states which refused to give them the right to settle and work and build normal lives where they lived. It is, like so much of the Arab chauvinist and the Islamist “case” against Israel, a historical frame-up.

The idea that the “destroy-Israel” ostensible left champions the Palestinians is also an ideological lie or at least a serious misunderstanding.

The “Israel must be destroyed” people, who reject a two-state solution thereby make any progress for the Palestinians depend on the destruction of Israel. Nothing less will do. This, if it ever happens, will not happen for a very long time, calculably, not for generations, and maybe not at all. For the “anti-imperialist” left, the Arab states and the political Islamists, progress for the Palestinians is very much less of a consideration than hostility to Israel.

If — as is possible — expanding Israeli settlements on the West Bank makes a political solution impossible, the blame will not lie alone on Israel but also on the Arab forces that again and again refused at crucial turning points to make peace with Israel, accept-

ing its right to exist. For instance, at the end of the Six-Day war in 1967, when Israel immediately offered to vacate the territories it has occupied in return for recognition by the Arab states.

The left uses the Palestinians, but their first concern is not what is best for the Palestinians.

Finally, the idea that the 750,000 Palestinian refugees of 1948 are a unique event in modern history and therefore should have a unique solution — the extirpation of Israel — is wrong. In the years after 1948, almost 600,000 Jews were expelled from Arab countries, their property seized, and made their way to Israel. It amounted to a brutal population transfer between Israel and the Arab states. Do their descendants now have a right of return? If not, why not? Because the Zionists-Jews are uniquely evil?

Compare also the case of the ethnic Germany expelled from East Prussia, Poland and Czechoslovakia at the end of World War Two — 13 million of them, people whose ancestors had lived there for hundreds of years. They were severely ill-treated and large numbers of them were murdered by revenge-maddened people. They were victims of the often-racial anti-Germanism preached, by for instance, the Russian state. The expulsions were done with the prior agreement of Britain, the USA, and Russia.

They ethnic Germans were driven into a Germany that was in a state of ruin. Three million ethnic Germans died in these transfers. It is calculated that one in four Germans today are descendants of those 13 million ethnic Germans.

Only those whom the press used to call “West German revanchists” talked of reversing these expulsions. What the West German Trotskyists said about it is at the head of this article.

There is much to criticise and denounce in Israel’s treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories. Israel should be criticised and denounced for specific actions and policies, but not for existing.

It is nourished by Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, the living political root of left-wing antisemitism today is in the rejection of Israel’s right to exist.

**The left needs sane, rational politics on the Middle East. The cause of the Palestinians, of winning a Palestinian state alongside Israel, is too important to be left to those whose first concern is not the Palestinians but hysterical opposition to Israel’s existence.**



# The responsibility that comes with seeing

Pat Yarker reviews 'Incoming', free at The Curve, Barbican, London, until 23 April.

**Hundreds of thousands of people continue to flee war and persecution in the Middle East and northern Africa.**

Thousands die as they attempt to find safety in Europe. This installation, an artwork not a documentary, comprises almost an hour of video footage of migrants and refugees making their perilous journey.

Mosse, a prizewinning photographer, and his collaborators, Trevor Tweeten, a cinematographer, and Ben Frost, a composer, used a military-grade thermal imaging camera to film in the Aegean sea and the Sahara desert, in the migrant camp in Calais as it burns, on the deck of a US aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf, and at the Turkish-Syrian border a few miles from the battleground of Dabiq.

I didn't want to see this work. I told myself that however benevolently and skilfully undertaken, it couldn't but be intrusive and voyeuristic. It could not help change the situation. In truth I think I wanted to evade the responsibility that comes with seeing.

The footage is shown on three eight-metre high screens, in a pitch-dark auditorium. Sometimes the same material appears on every screen: sometimes each screen shows its own particular footage. At one point all screens go black, and for a minute we can do nothing but listen to the desperate voices of rescue workers attempting to revive a drowned child.

The type of camera used by Mosse and his team is classified as a weapon. Powerful enough to detect a human body eighteen miles away, and to present it identifiably from a distance of three miles, it is deployed

by the military for surveillance and detection at borders and around coasts. To record, via this device, aspects of the experience of migrants and refugees as they seek to evade detection and breach borders is a political as well as an artistic decision.

The camera generates monochrome images made up of the relative heat differences within a framed scene. The footage appears marginally-slowed in projection. The camera's tonal range is very wide, producing visually sumptuous images rich in detail. Together with the slight slo-mo this makes textural qualities of places and bodies come to the fore. Eyelashes appear to glow, but eyes themselves are lightless. When a man washes before kneeling to pray, the water sluicing his face appears like cream. A handprint lingers uncannily on the side of a shelter in the camp at Calais, or on a thrown duvet in the Berlin Templehof staging-post, or, most disturbingly of all, on the hypothermic body of someone pulled from the sea whom someone else is trying to revive.

The physical actuality of human bodily presence is rendered unusually visible, but in a way which also effaces or anonymises. Everything is recognisable, newly fascinating, and yet estranged. We are shown the world as it might be taken in through the "eye" of a non-human being.

As I watched I was hyper-aware of having to align my understanding of and reaction to what I was being shown against my full colour, full speed, experience of the world. I had frequently to decide which screen to look at and for how long, and what to take account of on the screen. I was positioned as both questioning and implicated, a spy whose awareness was being enlarged.

The textural qualities of everything caught in the camera can displace concern with the human story being depicted. Yet human sto-



ries are at the heart of this work, whose form articulates its own dilemma, distancing the viewer from what is being shown while also intensifying the haunting grip of the images. Mosse takes the risk of aestheticising the experience of forced displacement or migration in order to give us a chance to look afresh at what it means to be made a refugee. And at what it means, for those who are neither exiled nor in flight, to see those who are.

Mosse understands how the refugee crisis has been used by right-wingers to sow fear and division, and how inadequate or callous has been the response of mainstream European politicians. In an essay to accompany the installation, Mosse references the philosopher Giorgio Agamben's notion of "bare life", embodied in the stateless person stripped of the political representation and legal status conferred by citizenship.

Bare life puts in question the basis of the nation-state, whose sovereign power is predicated on a political order founded by exclud-

ing such life and allowing the suspension of law in relation to it. For Agamben, bare life has neither rights nor legal protection, and is always subject to the threat of death.

Mosse's film stays with me, its images so clear and legible it is easy to forget that much of the material must have been shot at night. The man who washes his face and kneels to pray in the desert before dawn had no idea he was being filmed. We encounter his unselfconscious humanity. Is this simply an exploitative moment? Is the man to be seen as an icon of Agamben's bare life? Or does his image recall my irrecusable obligation to welcome and share, without thought of reciprocation or hesitation at the potential risk?

**If the figure of the refugee or the migrant radically destabilises ideas of belonging based on territory, and reveals the violent face of a bourgeois legal and political order in Europe, what are the implications for solidarity, and for building a more just order?**

## Demystifying the Russian Revolution

**Workers' Liberty's new book — *The Russian Revolution: when workers took power* — retells the story of the revolution, draws lessons and outlines the important political debates of the period.**

One of its central concerns is to counter the lies and myths which have falsified the record of the Bolsheviks. While being a partisan account, it also draws on the most recent scholarship about the Russian revolution, which the author believes vindicates a sympathetic account of the Bolsheviks.

The record shows the Bolsheviks to be a diverse group, even more so by the middle of 1917, with a long-established culture of open debate.

By providing a succinct but comprehensive overview of the complexity of the political decisions made and actions taken by the both the Russian and international left in this period, Paul Vernadsky has written a handbook for today's socialist activists.

Chapter Two's narrative of the events of 1917 tells us what a mass working-class movement looks like. In 1917, this is heterogeneous movement, containing a wide spectrum of political groups with different attitudes to the Provisional Government which took power after the abdication of the Tsar in February.

Returning in April from exile, to Petrograd Lenin proposed a new perspective for the Bolshevik faction within the revolutionary

movement, arguing that an international working-class revolution *was* a possibility. As such, the Bolsheviks needed to break workers from support for the Provisional Government, for the bourgeoisie and its continuance of Russia's participation in the war. This was a policy the Bolsheviks pursued to build up support — in Lenin's words, by "patiently explaining" over the course of the year.

Chapter Three explains how the Bolshevik's methods of operation — ideological discussion, political clarification, education — originates in both the international and Russian Marxist socialist movements from the late nineteenth century.

This party did not emerge out of abstract debates but was situated in, and developed out of class struggles and working-class self organisation. Indeed the Bolsheviks drew on, learnt from and interacted with workers attempts at self-organisation which are described in Chapter Four: the soviets, factory committees and trade unions.

These three chapters together form the narrative elements of the book. The next four chapters explore the political themes that emerged prior to and after the revolution.

Chapter Five discusses the perspectives Trotsky idea of "permanent revolution"; a perspective for workers to take power in the context of Russia's unevenly developed capitalism. Vernadsky deal with Trotsky's differences with Lenin, differences that were

later exaggerated and falsified by Stalinists.

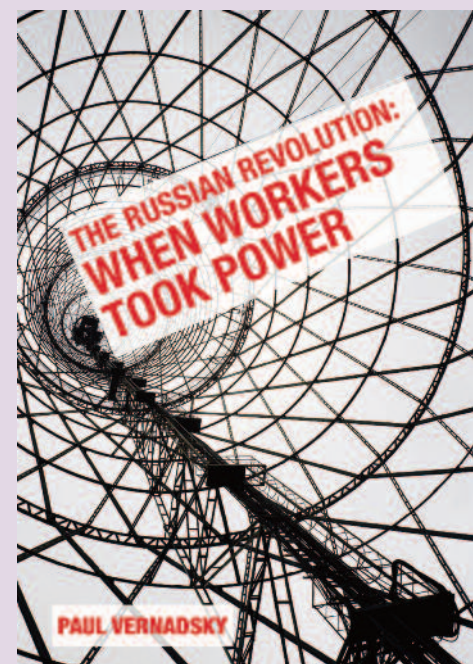
Chapter Six looks at how Marxist socialists, and Lenin in particular, responded to the First World War. These debates split the socialist movement, and many Marxists betrayed their own ideals by supporting their "own" governments in the war.

Chapter Seven explains Lenin's approach to the national question — that of "consistent democracy". This is an idea which the AWL has developed in our critiques of the contemporary left, those who have supported reactionary regimes as long as that regime opposed the US power. A "third camp" approach takes as its starting point the needs and interests of the workers and oppressed groups and says neither the likes of Bashar Assad, nor the bombs and boots of big power armies.

Chapter Eight discusses how the Bolsheviks organised around women's liberation with a detailed analysis of the work of Alexandra Kollontai.

The final chapters details the important political questions the came after 1917. Chapter Nine looks at the international communist movement set up after 1917. Chapter Ten describes the conditions under which a counter-revolution took place in Russia and how Stalin came to power.

This book does give the reader a sense of the bigger story — the heroism of the Russian working class and poor peasants as they took a chance to make a revolution, but Ver-



nadsky has also written a nuanced account, as is to be expected with our perspective of one hundred years.

**As such it *debates* the controversies rather than simply asserting an alternative historic truth.**

- Order online for £14.80 including postage at [workersliberty.org/books](http://workersliberty.org/books)
- Join us for the London book launch on Friday 21 April: [bit.ly/2mNi2IE](http://bit.ly/2mNi2IE)
- Find out about launches across the country: [bit.ly/2mZyDJJ](http://bit.ly/2mZyDJJ)



# 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!



## Events

### Saturday 15 April

**Picturehouse strike demonstration**  
12.30, East Dulwich Picturehouse, Lordship Lane, London SE22 8HD  
[bit.ly/2p1HHiG](http://bit.ly/2p1HHiG)  
5pm, Hackney Picturehouse, Mare Street, London E8 1HE  
[bit.ly/2nARnAs](http://bit.ly/2nARnAs)

### Saturday 22 April

**Take Back Control Youth event**  
11am, Rich Mix, Bethnal Green Road, London E1 6LA  
[bit.ly/2oUPG10](http://bit.ly/2oUPG10)

**Our vision for Haringey — labour movement and community conference**  
10.30am, St Frances de Sales junior school, London N17 8AZ  
[bit.ly/2lgJEBI](http://bit.ly/2lgJEBI)

**March and rally for Forest Hill school**  
11.30am, Mountsfield Park, London SE6 1AN  
[bit.ly/2nAQd8o](http://bit.ly/2nAQd8o)

### Friday 21 April

**The Russian Revolution: when workers took power launch**  
7pm, The Calthorpe Arms  
252 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8JR  
[bit.ly/RRlaunch](http://bit.ly/RRlaunch)

### Monday 24 April

**Leeds book launch for *The Russian Revolution: When workers took power*.**  
6.60pm, The Packhorse Pub, Woodhouse Lane, Leeds LS2 9DX  
[bit.ly/2oUCU2D](http://bit.ly/2oUCU2D)

**Have an event you want listing? Email:**  
[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org) Workers' Liberty @workersliberty

# Labour council losses expected

## LABOUR

By Keith Road

**Labour are 18 points behind the Tories according to the Guardian/ICM survey produced on the eve of Corbyn's launch of Labour's campaign for the May Council and mayoral elections.**

Labour could lose as many as 125 councillors across England, Scotland and Wales. Particularly damaging in Scotland where Glasgow Council is likely to fall to the SNP.

The Tories and the Lib Dems are expected to pick up 100 seats each across all the elections. A likely collapse of the UKIP vote, particularly in the south is likely to benefit the Tories. Meanwhile the metropolitan mayoral elections in the West Midlands, Manchester and Liverpool, and the Manchester Gorton parliamentary election are where Labour is likely to do best.

This is not a simple sign of disaffection amongst working class and Labour voters for Jeremy Corbyn, and neither is this decline solely the fault of a hostile media. McDonnell is right to say that the media does not portray Labour policies accurately; if even fairly moderate and limited reforms are not being reported accurately then imagine what the press would be doing if Labour had a far more radical approach. Media hostility to socialists and socialist ideas should be

welcomed as a sign you are attacking the right people! The British media is owned by a tiny clique of the ultra wealthy. Relying on this media to give you a fair hearing is misguided and looks like a way of deflecting from a lack of clarity that is currently coming from the Labour leadership.

McDonnell is right that the Party is divided. It is clearly the agenda of the right of the party to undermine Corbyn, and bad election results are the easiest way to run down confidence in his leadership.

However McDonnell believes that the party is united on Brexit. Whilst this may substantively be the case, the problem with this example is that they effectively allowing Theresa May to get away with a hard Brexit.

Corbyn is right to highlight the vast cuts being made by the Government and to welcome those council's that endorse the Ethical Care Charter and have sought to improve pay and training for care workers. However this completely fails to recognise the significance that these cuts are being implemented by Labour Councils who are now engaged in some serious



industrial battles with their own workers.

Both Durham and Derby councils go into these elections in the midst of fights with their own teaching assistants! In both instances Labour councils are attacking a low paid and largely female workforce. Such a contradiction needs to be expressly condemned by Corbyn. His failure to call on councillors to resist making cuts is another reason why his leadership appears weak in the face of the thousands that voted for him as leader.

**Within the reasonable number of members leaving, which undoubtedly includes some on the right who believe the current left wing surge won't be easy to defeat, there will be those who have left not because they are disappointed in Corbyn but in the policies and actions of Labour in local government.**

# Dodgy general secretary election?

## LETTER

**On Friday 17 March an Employment Appeal Tribunal judge overturning the decision of the Certification Officer to reject a complaint against the GMB bureaucracy, brought by GMB member Keith Henderson.**

Keith had complained that a misinterpretation and misapplication of the rules had prevented him or any other rank-and-file member from standing in the 2015 GMB General Secretary election.

Among other things he claimed by-law 13 had been misinterpreted and misapplied to prevent potential nominees from contacting branches to seek nomination. To become a candidate it was necessary to obtain the backing of 30 of the 968 GMB branches.

Keith has stated publicly his belief that the GMB general secretary election of 2015 was a bureaucratic stitch up of monumental proportions. The figures themselves tell a story. The election was won by one of the two unelected Regional Secretaries who were contesting it. Tim Roach won with the backing of 2.4 per cent of GMB members in an election that saw a 4.4 per cent turnout.

The misapplication of rules and by-laws preventing rank and file

members contacting branches must have had something to do with this.

But despite the fact that there was something clearly wrong the Certification Officer chose to accept the technical case put by the GMB's QC, employed using GMB members' money. Keith's claim was rejected on a legal technicality.

## APPEAL

**However on appeal the Certification Officers decision was set aside and a damning judgement against the GMB bureaucracy was made. A judgement that has implications both in the GMB and the wider labour movement.**

In breaching their own by-laws governing the election the GMB bureaucracy had also breached section 47.1 of Trade Union and Labour Relations (TULR) (Consolidation) Act 1992. They had prevented GMB members from participating in the general secretary election in their own union. Keith was awarded a Declaration.

The decision has given ordinary GMB members an opportunity to join together and organise to take back power from the unelected, barely elected, and crookedly elected bureaucrats who have usurped power and currently run the union.

It is now vital that a grassroots

left organisation is built to democratise and radicalise the GMB.

Devolving power and moving resources away from a national and regional level to a branch and workplace level, away from unelected national and regional officers to elected shop stewards and branch officers.

No more dodgy sweetheart deals with employers behind the backs of the members and bending the knee to the management to protect those deals. An end to nepotism and cronyism and running the union as if it were a family business or a plc. Aim to rebuild the stewards movement in every industry that the GMB organises in.

This decision has potentially the widest implications and holds the most significant opportunities for the left since Jeremy Corbyn was first elected as Labour leader.

**The GMB Grassroots Left has been setup to challenge the GMB unelected or barely elected leadership on behalf of GMB members.**

- GMB Grassroots Left facebook: [bit.ly/2ppr8cP](http://bit.ly/2ppr8cP)
- This letter was written by a GMB Grassroots Left member, we invite responses and discussion on the issues raised in it.



# Forest Hill strikes again

By a Lewisham teacher

National Union of Teachers (NUT) members at Forest Hill School in Lewisham will strike again on 20, 25 and 26 April in their campaign against vicious cuts being imposed by management to fulfil conditions of repayment of loan to Lewisham council.

There is a demonstration on Saturday 22 April.

The proposed restructure at the school is in response to a £1.3m deficit. Lewisham council has given the school a “loan” however they are demanding that the school cuts £800,000 from their wage bill. This would mean a loss of 15 teaching jobs, an escalation in teachers’ workload and a greatly diminished education for the students.

Thus far, the teachers have organised three strikes, a demonstration and two lobbies of the council and a public meeting, within just two weeks! We are backed by an in-



creasingly energetic parents’ campaign and now the students are showing an interest in becoming involved as well. Two of the three Lewisham Constituency Labour Parties have passed motions supporting the strike and calling on the council to intervene. We will need to maintain and escalate all of these approaches to the campaign if we are to ensure that we protect the school, the students’ education and jobs.

Our aim is to make Lewisham Council ensure that the deficit is dealt with not at the cost of the students or the staff. The school is a Local Authority School. The council audited the school’s books. This mismanagement that has caused this crisis was by an employee of Lewisham Council. But above all of the council has a responsibility to the children in the borough.

**They cannot wash their hands of Forest Hill School!**

## Tube news round-up

By Ollie Moore

### Reinstate Lee Cornell!

Tube station workers at London Bridge and Waterloo stations are balloting for strikes to win the reinstatement of Lee Cornell, a Customer Service Assistant sacked after he intervened with a fare evader who had pushed a pregnant colleague.

Lee was punched twice in the head and had his glasses taken; instead of carrying out their commit-

ment to support staff who are assaulted, London Underground have sacked Lee for defending himself. Two other CSAs, Dave Sharp and Saeed Sioussi, have been given final written warnings for attempting to support Lee and defuse the situation.

**The RMT union held a demonstration at London Bridge station on 3 April. Activists say that a ballot of all station staff across the Tube is expected to follow shortly after the local ballot concludes.**

### Night Tube win

**Drivers on the “Night Tube”, overnight services on five Tube lines on Friday and Saturday nights, have won significant concessions in a dispute over career progression.**

Strikes planned for 8-9 and 29-30 April were cancelled after London Underground agreed to scrap a rule preventing the drivers, who are employed on 16-hour contracts, from applying for full-time positions for 18 months.

**Both RMT and Aslef had balloted for strikes, returning significant majorities for action.**

## RCN to ballot nurses over pay

By Gemma Short

**The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) announced on 5 April that it will be “consulting” its members over the latest round of pay restraint in the NHS.**

The RCN will conduct an indicative ballot asking members about

the impact of pay restraint, and how to respond, including whether members would consider taking industrial action.

It is the fourth year in a row that the government has imposed a 1% pay rise in the NHS, despite NHS pay falling by 17% since 2010. With inflation currently at 2.3%, this pay

rise is actually a pay cut. The NHS Pay Review Body itself has voiced concern over long-term pay restraint, saying that it was damaging morale and contributing to a recruitment and retention crisis.

**Unison, which represents the majority of health workers, has not made any indication that it will be balloting its members.**

## RMT holds first disabled members conference

By Janine Booth

**On 28 March, transport union RMT held its first ever Disabled Members’ Conference.**

Rank-and-file activists had called for the establishment of this conference for several years, but repeatedly met with rejection by the union’s National Executive. But two years ago, RMT’s Annual General Meeting voted to overturn the Executive’s position, and this con-

ference was the result. Although it was quite small, it will prove itself to be a launchpad for transport workers organising against the many abuses of our and other disabled people’s rights.

Delegates examined the TUC Manifesto for Disability Equality, and called for the union to act on issues including invisible impairments, the use of disciplinary policies against disabled workers, and the need for the union itself to provide materials in accessible for-

mats. The conference repeatedly stressed that our demands benefit disabled passengers as well as workers, and that the current fight to keep guards on trains is essential for disabled people’s access to public transport.

**The conference passed six resolutions, on: Attendance at Work Policies; Mental Health; the Social Model of Disability; an RMT Accessibility Audit; Disabled Workers and Austerity; and Autism and Neurodiversity.**

# Keep the guard on the train!

By Jan Pollock,  
Momentum disabled caucus

**The guard is there for everyone’s protection; recent incidents can only remind us of this.**

Access to rail services for disabled passengers rely on an adequate number of well-trained staff and accessible facilities. Environmental barriers, service provider policies and attitudes lead to our isolation and exclusion from work, education, volunteering and involvement in our communities.

Guards have months of training and 35 different safety-crucial competencies. Yet the government is encouraging the extension of Driver Only Operation (DOO), and in many cases guards will be replaced by less-trained staff or not at all. Southern have introduced an On Board Supervisor (OBS) with just 2 days very basic training.

Southern has announced 33 stations where disabled passengers can no longer arrive on the same turn-up-and-go basis that non-disabled travellers enjoy. There will be no second member of staff and disabled people requiring assistance to board/exit the train face abolition of the right to ride. Private companies are creating longer trains with up to 12 carriages with the impossibility of drivers seeing anyone trying to board at the back of curved platforms. Lack of maintenance staff leads to the break-down of lifts, lack of toilets, help-points which don’t work, etc. The two minutes time allowed at many stations for all passengers to board/exit trains discriminated against many disabled People and puts staff under intolerable pressure.

**Momentum Disabled Caucus have been campaigning to “Make Rail Accessible.” We joined Transport for All in London on 5 April to march to London Bridge Station demanding our Right to Ride.**

## Train strikes disrupt Grand National

By a railworker

**Workers at Southern, Merseyrail and Northern struck again on Saturday 8 April.**

Merseyrail drivers again refused to cross picket lines, causing heavy disruption to trains to Aintree for the Grand National. A small number of Northern drivers also respected RMT picket lines. If more Northern drivers had followed Merseyrail drivers’ lead then Northern might not have been able to run extra services for the Grand National to make up for Merseyrail disruption.

**More dates have yet to be set, but the Tour de Yorkshire at the end of April would be a good target.**

## Six cinemas on strike

By Gemma Short

**Workers at the East Dulwich branch of Picturehouse cinemas have voted to join strikes which already involve five other cinemas in the chain.**

Workers at East Dulwich will join those from Ritzy (Brixton), Hackney, Central, Crouch End and Duke of Yorks (Brighton) on strike on Saturday 15 April. Workers will walk

out at 1pm, and be joined by workers from the other five cinemas and their supporters for a rally at East Dulwich Picturehouse.

**Community supporters in Hackney will be holding a “community picket” of Hackney Picturehouse in support of the strike asking customers to boycott Picturehouse and not use the cinema on the day of the strike.**

## Cleaners’ wild-cat strike

By Peggy Carter

**Cleaners at Barts NHS Trust, London, walked off the job in a wild-cat strike on 6 April after management removed their breaks and stated they would freeze their pay for 10 years.**

Just a day later Serco backed down and conceded that workers

have the right to breaks. The workers are still organising around issues of pay, their union Unite is planning an official ballot over pay.

**The cleaners had recently been outsourced to Serco, notorious for bullying workers and cutting pay and conditions to the bone to make a profit out of public service contracts.**





# Solidarity

For a workers' government

No 435 12 April 2017

50p/£1

## Trump targets North Korea

By Gerry Bates

**On 4 April the Syrian government used chemical weapons on civilians in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun in northern Syria.**

On the morning of 7 April Donald Trump's government responded with a cruise missile attack on the Syrian airbase which the US military believes was used to launch the chemical attack.

Trump has also sent a navy battle group to the waters off the Korean coast.

Trump's actions carry a number of advantages for the US government beyond destroying the targets and intimidating Assad. By showing a willingness to use military force Trump ramps up pressure on North Korea and North Korea's reluctant ally, China.

The rational element of this shift in US policy is to press China to deal with North Korea.

North Korea's bizarre and totalitarian regime, led by Kim Jong-un, is developing nuclear weapons and — apparently — missile systems that within a decade may be able to reach the US.

The North Korean state tested a missile system on the eve of the recent US-China summit. The US believes a further nuclear test is planned for Saturday 15 April, the anniversary of the birth of North Korea's founder, Kim Il-sung.



The US has refused to rule out a first strike on North Korea. However, a Syrian-style US cruise missile attack against North Korea, or an air strike on North Korean targets, would produce a very different response.

The Syrian state has not yet made a response to the US missile attack. If North Korea is bombed the minimum likely response is a North Korean attack on the South.

Seoul, the South Korean capital, is only 35 miles from the border with North Korea.

A wide-range of sanctions are in place against North Korea — imposed against its development of nuclear weapons. North Korea's weapons programme has been condemned by states in the region, including China.

China has reportedly moved 150,000 troops to the border with North Korea. While the Chinese state is worried about its well-armed neighbour, it also believes that the collapse of the North Korean state would pose risks for China. In particular China is worried

about enormous numbers of refugees fleeing North Korea.

**Trump's bluster and posture in "foreign affairs" mirrors how he behaves in domestic policy. But these actions, notwithstanding the "provocation" of regimes like Kim Jong-un, are forging a dangerous global situation.**

• Trump and Syria, page 2

### Subscribe to Solidarity

Trial sub (6 issues) £7 ☐

Six months (22 issues) £22 waged ☐, £11 unwaged ☐

One year (44 issues) £44 waged ☐, £22 unwaged ☐

European rate: 6 months €30 ☐ One year €55 ☐

Name .....

Address .....

I enclose £ .....

Cheques (£) to "AWL" or make £ and Euro payments at [workersliberty.org/sub](http://workersliberty.org/sub)  
Return to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

### Or subscribe with a standing order

Pay £5 a month to subscribe to Solidarity or pay us more to make an ongoing contribution to our work

To: ..... (your bank) ..... (address)

Account name ..... (your name)

Account number ..... Sort code .....

Please make payments as follows to the debit of my account:  
Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham, B1 2HB (60-83-01)

Amount: £.....

To be paid on the ..... day of ..... (month) 20.... (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing.  
This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date ..... Signature .....

### Contact us

020 7394 8923

[solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

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

Solidarity editorial:  
Simon Nelson, Cathy Nugent  
(editor), Gemma Short, and  
Martin Thomas

Printed by Trinity Mirror