

For a  
workers'  
government

# Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

## ON THE STREETS FOR RIGHT TO STRIKE



**2 November plans, see page 5**

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

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# Russia backs Assad's new offensive

By Simon Nelson

The Russian military intervention has had its intended effect of strengthening the Syrian Army, enabling it to start a major offensive in the north east of the country.

Both Aleppo and the valley of Orontes, previously strongholds of Jabhat al-Nusra, are now under sustained attack by the Syrian military with the support of Russian airstrikes. Russia's air war is being guided by Damascus. *Independent* reporter Robert Fisk claims Russia receives up to 800 coordinates a night for targeted airstrikes.

These co-ordinates are being shared with Turkey, and Fisk reports a communications system now operates between the Russian base on the Syrian Mediterranean coast and the Israeli Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv. Meanwhile numbers of US-led airstrikes have fallen.

Russia has a particular interest in driving rebels out of Aleppo and Latakia in the north east, where their coastal bases are located. This has pushed the Syrian ground troops into the area and far closer to the Turkish border.

Raqa, the capital of the Islamic State of Daesh, is still being targeted by coalition airstrikes.

The BBC report that at least 70,000 people are now on the move south of



### Aleppo

The Free Syrian Army has been provided with US anti-tank missiles, but it is highly unlikely that this will be enough to repel Government forces.

With the attacks getting closer to the Turkish border, there could be a further exodus of refugees into Turkey joining the 11 million Syrians displaced since 2011 and the four million plus that have fled abroad.

Amnesty International have accused the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the largest military force in the autonomous Kurdish Syrian region known as Rojava, of war crimes.

Their report *We Had Nowhere Else to Go* includes allegations mostly from Arab and Turkmen Syrians that their villages were razed to the ground by the YPG following Daesh being driven out. They claim that Arabs were forced to leave

their homes and have had their land occupied and taken over by the YPG.

One villager is quoted saying that: "They told us we had to leave or they would tell the US coalition that we were terrorists and their planes would hit us and our families." Other reports from villagers say the YPG would regularly use the threat of US airstrikes to drive people out of their homes.

The report has been widely disputed by the YPG and their political wing, the Democratic Union Party (PYD). They say forced evictions were undertaken to protect civilians from militarised zones that included mines and IEDs left by Daesh.

Amnesty International does not accept this version of events and says that forced displacement constitutes a war crime.

In a sign that the US is in-

creasingly cautious about open support for the YPG and Kurdish forces linked to the Turkish based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) Colonel Patrick Ryder announced that military aid was being given to a new organisation, the "Syrian Democratic Forces", which is made up of Arabs and Assyrian Christians who have previously worked with the YPG.

His statement says that the leaders of this movement have been "appropriately vetted by the United States" and makes no mention of the role of the YPG.

Such a weakening of formal if not informal support will weaken the YPG's drive to increase its presence in Jarablus, which remains a Daesh stronghold. A military incursion that drove Daesh out of Jarablus would allow the PYD to link together Jazeera and Kobani with Afrin and strengthen Rojava's position as a contiguous territory.

The US believes that this expansion would increase tension with Turkey and will not give the YPG formal support to go ahead.

**Amnesty International has previously noted that the PYD seem happy to comply with outside scrutiny, despite the fact the findings may question their compliance with international human rights law.**

# School students will not be silenced!

By Rida Vaquas

Students at my school (King Edward's Camp Hill School For Girls, Birmingham) were recently intimidated for protesting the conditions under which a visit by the Israeli deputy ambassador took place.

Students who spoke against the visit, and against the process itself, were pulled out of lessons, and there have been notices throughout school about their use of social media. A student has been deliberately singled out for having written a statement against it. This is silencing, this is an exercise of authority. Students voicing an opinion, and that opinion being shared widely, is not.

The visit was arranged in total secrecy, and all ques-

tions were seen in advance by staff. To add to that atmosphere of intimidation, the ambassador came with bodyguards.

The procedure was extremely atypical for speakers at our school. Speakers at our school are normally organised a week in advance, with a sign up sheet for anyone interested. Questions are not usually written down and then checked by staff. The structure is much more open and free-form.

Hosting the Israeli ambassador without providing the opportunity for students to challenge him implies that the ambassador is a figure so uncontroversial that there is no need to interrogate or scrutinise his record as a representative of the Israeli state.

The denigration or dismissal of students' sugges-

tions to move forward, such as inviting a Palestinian speaker, indicated that the school as an institution is neither interested in making amends nor is interested in a "dialogue" between respected equals, that is, they are not considering our complaints about this process to be serious.

But our use of social media, providing it is not used for bullying or harassment, can not and should not be subjected to the control of the school.

There should be a transparent procedure for accepting speaker requests that is collaboratively decided on by students and staff. What this process looks like to me — however this is only a starting point for discussion — should be that the speaker must accept certain conditions in

coming to speak: that they understand it will be an open forum, that it will not be held in secret and there will be time to prepare challenges. If a speaker demands secrecy, demands that their presence goes unchallenged, we should state that these demands are insupportable according to our school procedure. This, surely, is not too radical for a school that prides itself on independently-minded young girls.

**The school subsequently apologised in the whole school assembly for the affair. This shows us the power of collective organising. When we come together and fight, we can and we will win.**

● Full statement at [bit.ly/1ZTKRz7](http://bit.ly/1ZTKRz7)

# “We are Raif” campaign for Saudi human rights

By Pete Radcliff

**For many decades the relationship between the Saudi Wahhabist dictatorship and the arms, oil and other companies in Britain has been ignored by the media.**

Despite Bin Laden’s wealthy Saudi family background. Despite the majority of the 9/11 bombers being Saudi. Despite the Saudi Arabia’s brutal treatment of women and migrant workers. Despite Saudi having been second only to Iran in numbers of executions per head of population (this year it’s likely to overtake Iran).

Despite too, having a legal system run by religious reactionaries who execute people for being gay, an atheist, for fighting back against rapists or demanding democratic change. Despite having the fourth highest military expenditure in the world. Despite its record of imperialist intervention in the Middle East (Bahrain, Yemen). Despite the complete lack of trade union rights or free speech.

The media were no doubt intimidated and told criticism would disrupt profitable and politically influential UK businesses.

But over the last year, this has started to change, largely in response to the growth of Daesh (Islamic State).

For decades Saudi has exported its reactionary ideology through schools, mosques and other institutions they have financed. The aim was to create religious movements and polit-

ical parties, to penetrate the civil services and state apparatuses of the countries they “aided”.

But the Arab Spring of 2011 shook the Saudi regime. Their allies in the ruling classes of the Middle East were challenged like never before.

The Saudis had to send in what was effectively an occupying army in support of the Bahraini dictators to suppress the revolt. Even in fiercely repressed Saudi Arabia, voices of criticism started to be raised, questions started being asked about how it was that the terror of 9/11 and of Al Qaeda had begun in Saudi Arabia.

Prominent amongst those questioning the Saudi state’s political ideology was a blogger in his late 20s, Raif Badawi.

Al Qaeda started breaking up in 2012 with the emergence of Daesh and the setting up of a geographical “Islamic state”, the centre of a claimed caliphate. This was an even greater challenge to Saudi Arabia’s standing within the international Sunni Islamist movement.

The response of the Saudi rulers was threefold.

Firstly, they reasserted the brutality of their regime in competition with the Daesh. The rate of executions doubled. Intimidation of the Shia minority in Saudi increased with their acknowledged figurehead, Sheikh Nimr Al-Nimr, sentenced to death. Provocative attacks on Shia were allowed to happen and protests in defence were brutally repressed.

Secondly, they stepped



up their military activity in the region — launching a war on Yemen.

Thirdly, they have tried to forge an alliance with fellow Islamists, the Muslim Brotherhood and sections of Al Qaeda (itself formed in opposition to the Saudi regime), both militarily and politically. In Syria, with seeming US agreement they have attempted to reorganise non-Daesh Islamist militias.

But their repression and imperialist interventions are not going unnoticed. The start of the lashings of Raif Badawi triggered off protests throughout Europe. It led to a confrontation between the Saudi regime and the Swedish government and their Foreign Minister, Margot Wall-

ström. She described the Saudi’s treatment of Raif as “medieval”. The Swedish government made threats to stop supplying the Saudi regime with arms. The Saudi regime and their close ally in the UAE blocked visas to Swedish people in an attempt to scare Swedish businesses.

However the UK Tory government has proved itself the most loyal of Saudi friends. Not only have they not spoken out against Saudi internal repression, they also helped ensure Saudi Arabia, possibly the world’s largest human rights abuser, was granted the chair of the UN Human Rights Council!

Jeremy Corbyn has demanded Cameron take action against the planned

beheading and crucifixion of the nephew of Sheikh Nimr, the young Shia activist Mohammed Al-Nimr. Corbyn also called for the cancelling of the contract between the Ministry of Justice’s commercial arm and the prison system of Saudi Arabia. Parts of the press, particularly Channel 4 News also pursued Cameron on this. But Cameron refused.

There then followed press revelations about the Saudi-UK deal in the UN and the Tories buckled and cancelled the contract.

For months NGOs and campaigners had been campaigning on Raif’s behalf and against the Ministry of Justice contract. English PEN had been holding weekly vigils outside the

Saudi Embassy; in June a day of action was held in support of Raif Badawi and his imprisoned lawyer. Parliamentary debates and interventions were organised.

A new coalition has been launched “We are Raif: for Free Speech and Human Rights in Saudi Arabia”. It has brought together many NGOs already active on human rights issues in Saudi Arabia. But it has also got the support of campaigns in protest against Bahraini repression as well as Hope Not Hate, and anti-Islamist campaigns One Law for All and the Peter Tatchell Foundation.

The main practical focus of the campaign is to “end the sales of UK arms and military equipment, including military support packages, to Saudi Arabia” and to “call for an end to any business relations with the Saudi regime...”

Saudi military and political tentacles are spreading across the Middle East; already 5,400 have died as a result of their war on Yemen. Britain is Saudi Arabia’s third largest military supplier.

**The Saudi economy has been one of the fastest developing economies in the world, with one million unorganised building workers. There will be a lot to campaign about.**

• [watercraft.org](http://watercraft.org).

## Attacks in Turkey target solidarity and unity

By Cagatay Cengiz

**On 10 October, two bomb blasts officially killed 97 people in the Turkish capital, Ankara.**

The had gathered for “Labour, Democracy, and Peace Rally” to protest the resumption of war between the Turkish state and Kurdish militants, mainly in Turkish Kurdistan.

The deadly atrocity, which fundamentally targeted the rapprochement and unity of the Kurdish people, Alevis, leftist and progressive social groups in Turkey, was no surprise.

The attacks can be seen as the continuation of a political process which commenced with the overturning of peace process between the state and the Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK), and with the

end of two-year ceasefire.

It is important to point out that the violence intensified and all the atrocities occurred after the pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party, HDP, achieved a big success in the June general election, passing the 10 percent threshold and winning 80 seats in the parliament.

This electoral achievement was significant. It led the ruling Justice and Development Party, AKP, to lose its absolute majority.

Following the elections in July, a bomb exploded in the town of Suruc, near the Syrian border, killing 33 young Turkish and Kurdish activists who were taking part in the reconstruction of Kobane in Syrian Kurdistan. Meanwhile, the Turkish state did not hesitate to impose a curfew and martial law in Turkish Kurdistan.

According to Turkey’s

Human Rights Association, in just the two and a half month period since the Suruc massacre, 96 civilians, including 21 children, were killed in the war against Kurds.

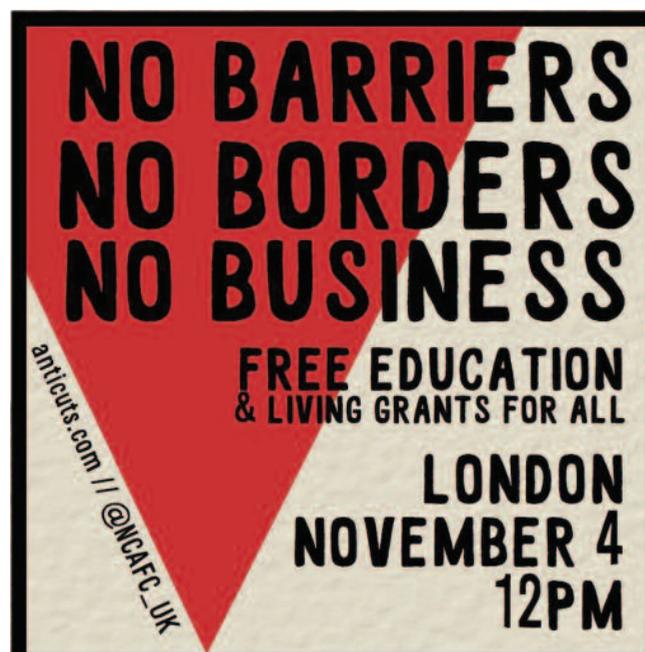
The Suruc bombing was followed by over a hundred fascist attacks on HDP offices, organised by far-right Nationalist Movement Party, MHP, and its organic youth organisation.

The recent suicide bombing in Ankara is the culmination of a process which targeted not only the electoral success of the HDP but also the solidarity and peace that Turkish and Kurdish people want to build. It is reported that Islamic State is the prime suspect in recurrent suicide bombings in Turkey, but it has also been revealed that the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation as aware of

the potential suicide bombers.

Although the governing party utilises coercion, manipulation and repression in order to denounce the HDP as the extension of the illegal PKK, leftist organisations and workers have shown solidarity with those killed in the explosions. Left-wing trade unions, the Turkish Medical Association and Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects, which had organised the “Labour, Democracy, and Peace Rally” in Ankara, called for a two-day general strike.

**The call was supported by workers in Senkromec Scheider factory in Izmir; Sio factory in Trakya; Cimsatas factory in Mersin, Cayirova factory in Gebze, and many others.**



# A new kind of uniformity

## Letters



**The attack by Class War on the Cereal Killer shop in Shoreditch has been rightly condemned as self-indulgent, misguided and ineffective in articles by Gemma Short and Martin Thomas in *Solidarity*.**

Martin has gone further by writing — under the heading “The enemy is capital!” — to give a generally favourable view of gentrification in its impact on working-class communities in London. Where it causes their displacement, it can be resisted, he glibly asserts.

Some of the effects of the movement of better off people into an area can indeed be positive. But alongside these there are necessarily negative effects for the local working class population which arise precisely because the process of gentrification itself is intimately entwined with the processes of capital accumulation — something that has been researched by Marxist geographers such as Neil Smith and David Harvey.

I have watched this in two socially mixed communities where I have lived. Neither location was gentrified in the original sense of areas of slum or low quality housing with potential for improvement where the original population was moved or priced out, enabling large scale investment in property either by middle class individuals or property developers as, for example, in Notting Hill. Both areas had had socially mixed populations with private and “social” housing for a long time. However the nature of both areas has changed considerably as both the range and cost of housing and the range of shops and facilities comes increasingly to reflect the needs of a growing number of better off inhabitants.

In 1978, Islington Council offered me a “hard-to-let” council flat in Clerkenwell, an area adjacent to and similar to the one where Martin lives on the edge of the City of London. Today it is valued at £440,000 on the open market enabled by Thatcher’s “Right to buy” legislation. Housing there — or anywhere in Central London — is no longer for working-class people. This is an example of Smith’s explanation of gentrification as “an expected product of the unhampered operation of the land and housing markets” and thus not reversible by piecemeal resistance or, given that land is in fixed supply and largely occupied, by simply building more “affordable housing” in the same area. Its impact is entirely negative.

For the last 20 years I’ve lived in Chorlton-cum-Hardy, a suburb of South Manchester rated by *The Times* as the 17th coolest place to live in the UK, associated with young professionals but also with a large working-class population mainly living on three large estates originally run by the council. In that time, the area has been changed less by a shift in prop-

erty ownership but by a process of “trendification”. This is both product and cause of higher commercial rents as capital is attracted by the presence of higher income occupants with more to spend.

As Gemma Short commented of Shoreditch, a wide range of shops that catered for the community have gone, largely replaced by bars, restaurants and shops selling tat, many of which fail and are replaced on a regular basis. A laundrette (one of three to close) has been replaced by a restaurant wittily called “The Laundrette”. Contrary to Martin’s assertions, it has brought a different kind of uniformity, not increased variety.

It has also bred a certain kind of smugness among the middle class inhabitants about the greatness of Chorlton that can turn into a kind of snobbery. For example, the local vegan health food coop (which, I confess, I use) ran a campaign against the opening of a small Tesco shop nearby, partly on the grounds that it might harm local, small, “special” shops. Never mind that people might not want or be able to afford to shop in the “special shops”. No Tesco for them. This reflects a degree of social division visible in Chorlton in terms of where people eat, drink or shop which in turn points to the exclusion of many from the presumed benefits of the changing environment.

### PROCESSES

**Gentrification in this broader sense of “a generalised middle-class restructuring of place” takes place through two processes.**

The first is the economic effect of Smith’s operation of the market. Often the precursors of the better-off gentrifiers are artists, squatters, “trendy lefties” (as one comrade called Chorltonites) or young people seeking somewhere cheap to live who move to a district and begin to change things, often for the better initially. Once the area is established as somewhere interesting and “on the way up”, it creates a new demand for property which drives prices and rents up (and often the original population out) and begins to attract capital, either invested in land and property or in other opportunities to take advantage of a better-off population.

Short of a large slump in the property market or radical political intervention, market-led gentrification is difficult to reverse as it is a molecular and self-perpetuating process. It is not possible just to reach the optimum level of upward regeneration and then stop.

The second cause of gentrification is where the local or national state encourages it. Councils have often done deals with developers to redevelop areas where the net result is to diminish the range and quantity of housing available as social or “affordable” housing, while extending that of more expensive housing that creates better returns for developers. Boris Johnson has taken this to its logical conclusion of encouraging private building in London which is then mar-

keted to foreign investors in China. Gentrification can become social cleansing as a result.

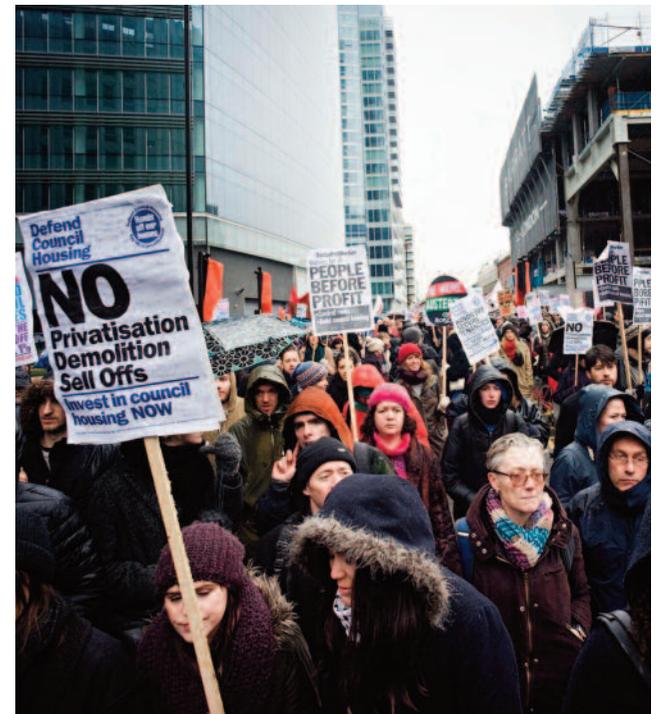
Equally national government can set a framework that enables gentrification through the framework for planning, its housing policy, the powers of local government, spending priorities and, as has recently been seen, its social security rules.

To counteract the pressures that lead to gentrification, it is necessary to go beyond the defensive campaigns to preserve council housing and working class removal from particular areas, though they have had positive effects.

We need more than immediate measures such as more social housing, ending “Right to Buy”, rent controls and giving far greater planning powers to local councils. We must attack the fundamental links between capital, land and the built environment that define our communities through measures such as nationalisation of the land.

**We need a new democratic, participative planning system to decide how places develop as town planning in the past has often been itself the bureaucratic vehicle for disenfranchising working class communities.**

Bruce Robinson, Manchester



**Protesters at the March for Homes earlier this year, marching for social housing, and against the displacement of residents from their homes and communities.**

# Abolish Israel? How, and then what?

## The Left By Tom Harris



**In *Socialist Worker* of the 17 October, Nick Clark turns his attention to the new wave of violence in Israel-Palestine.**

Clark writes about the indignity and oppression suffered by the Palestinians forced from their homes in East Jerusalem, starved and bombed in Gaza, harassed and driven off their land in the West Bank. He argues, correctly, that the violence has to be seen in this context.

He notes that there is currently little sign of the Israeli government tolerating the setting up of a Palestinian state. But, in a clumsy non sequitur, he then argues that this means that the “vision of a state of Palestine alongside Israel is no solution”. Indeed, that there can be no solution “while Israel exists”.

Clark’s argument runs like this: it is no good calling for an independent Palestine alongside Israel, because it would be too hard and too unrealistic to get the Israeli state to make

the necessary concessions. But what’s the better, supposedly more viable alternative? Force the Israelis into dissolving their state altogether! In the weird and not-so wonderful world of *Socialist Worker*, we are asked to believe that the Israelis are too strong and intractable to concede territory to Palestine, but not so intractable that they can’t be made to dismantle their state entirely.

The argument is not just illogical, it also has reactionary political implications. If the Israelis are going to surrender their statehood, why will they do it and how will the dismantling be carried out? We know that the Israelis themselves are very unlikely to voluntarily collapse their national entity. Once independent, not many nations willingly forego their right to self-determination, and the Israeli Jews (made up mostly of families who fled European anti-semitism, Stalinist persecution or expulsion from the Arab world) are far less likely than most. So if they won’t do it themselves, who will force them into it?

It might be by armed, far-right Islamist groups in Palestine like Hamas (euphemistically described as a ‘resistance group’ by Clark as if they were a Gaza branch of UK Uncut). Or it

might be through military intervention from the surrounding Arab states. The SWP’s traditional policy for a single “democratic, secular state” in all pre-1948 Palestine. But Clark doesn’t mention this. Obviously, today, the likelihood of such a state being set up by Hamas or a conquering neighbour is nil.

*Socialist Worker* rarely goes into the details, and for good reason. When the position is thought through properly, it starts to look very dodgy, very quickly. It is a recipe not for democracy and working-class unity, but for an ethnic blood-bath.

Workers’ Liberty believes that the viable democratic solution to the conflict is an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, with self-determination for both the Palestinian Arabs and the Israeli Jews. Israel should pay heavy reparations to the new Palestinian state to make it viable and to compensate for the great damage it has inflicted on the Palestinian people.

**That is a solution around which both the Palestinian and Israeli working-class can unite against their rulers. The destruction of Israel obviously isn’t.**

# On the streets for the right to strike

**The Tories plan to drop the section of the Trade Union Bill that would require trade unions to give two weeks notice to the police of any material they plan to post on social media as part of a strike.**

The social media rules, heavily criticised and entirely workable, were always likely to be the section of the Bill to be dropped in order to win over Tories, like David Davies MP, who thought this was “going a bit far”. However, the rest of the bill, as it reaches the end of committee stages in the House of Commons, remains largely intact. The worst attack on workers’ rights since Thatcher’s anti-union laws are likely to pass in the House of Commons.

The bill will then proceed to the House of Lords, where it may be amended or knocked back for reworking. There is something particularly grotesque about an unelected House of Lords, which includes hereditary peers and representatives of the Church, passing judgement on the democratic procedures trade unions must use.

Activity around the Bill has increased across the country, and many trades councils have now held public meetings about the bill. But these meetings need to just do more than be an echo chamber for our disgust at the Bill. They need to co-ordinate local trade unionists to actively campaign, run street stalls, petitions, demonstrations, protests and lobbies.

Trade union leaders and the TUC have not quite heralded the planned dropping of the social media rules as a victory, but they certainly see it as a step on the way to other elements being dropped. This is naive.

The union leaders’ formula of using friendly amendments, giving evidence in the committee stages, challenging the legality or feasibility of certain sections, and using the House of Lords to gradually chip away at the bill, is not going to be anywhere near enough. How much of the bill will remain when they declare victory?

On Monday 2 November the TUC has a lobby of Parliament which was intended to be held just prior to the third reading and to put pressure on MPs. The lobby should be supported by as many people who can get there, but many rank-and-file trade unionists will not be able to make a mid-week lobby.

The Trade Union Coordinating Group (the Parliamentary group of left-leaning unions) is calling for a nationwide day of action on 2 November, supported by Right to Strike, Unite the Resistance and the National Shop Stewards Network. There will be a protest at Parliament at 6pm on Monday 2

November. Local activities have already been organised in Lewisham, Nottingham, Newcastle and Sheffield. Will you organise activity in your area on the day?

Right to Strike continues to organise protests and public activity across the country.

**Join us at our national meeting on 31 October, in Birmingham, to help decide our campaigning activity and to get involved.**

- Lewisham: 6pm 2 November at Lewisham Clock Tower — [on.fb.me/1jyZGXm](https://on.fb.me/1jyZGXm)
- Nottingham RMT activists will be leafletting commuters on 2 November. Contact [tonyjpburne@aol.com](mailto:tonyjpburne@aol.com)
- Main facebook event — [on.fb.me/1M4FhxY](https://on.fb.me/1M4FhxY)
- Right to Strike National Meeting, Saturday 31 October, 12, The Wellington, 37 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham, B2 5SN.
- [www.righttostrike.co.uk](http://www.righttostrike.co.uk)



## Government to victimise more

By Kelly Rogers

**I submitted a subject access request last year to the University of Birmingham, where I studied, for all data containing my name.**

It came back with correspondence between Peter Clarke, retired head of Counter Terrorism Command in the London Met, and lead officer on the Trojan Horse investigation in Birmingham, my university management and West Midlands police, all identifying me in a video of a student protest in London from 2013.

This is a protest where I was not arrested, let alone charged. My only previous interaction with police had been when I had given my name following a protest against cuts to library services in Birmingham.

The lesson, which becomes more relevant as we anticipate the rolling out of Home Secretary Theresa May’s new “counter-terrorist” strategy, is that we should expect the counter-extremism agenda to be used against political activists of all stripes — including socialists, student activists, environmental activists — as well as, of course and most notably, being used as a means of scapegoating Muslim and black and minority ethnic (BME) communities.

Only a few months after the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act was passed, Theresa May is “stepping up” new measures to fight extremism.

The strategy targets the public sector and, for the first time, introduces policy which criminalises individuals exhibiting “extremist ideology” even when a crime has not been committed.

It begins with a full review of all public institutions — including schools, colleges, and local authorities — with the aim of implementing measures to “safeguard against ‘entryism’” and expose extremist individuals. It will give new powers to the government which include the power to ban supposed extremist groups; close the local mosques of individuals seen to be promoting extremism; intervene in faith schools; impose “disruption orders” on extremist individuals; and to confront and suspend the services of television and radio broadcasters if they are seen to platform “harmful messages and falsehoods without critical challenge”.

As Prevent has been rolled out in universities and schools over recent years, ratcheted up in February with the Counter-Terrorism Act, it has seen pressure mount on teachers, tutors and other staff to monitor, censor and report on students expressing opposition “to fundamental British values”.

Putting the irony that the counter-terrorism agenda being pedalled by May, Cameron and others is itself extreme to one side, this latest strategy will undoubtedly have the effect of further boosting McCarthyite anxiety, and see an ostensibly Islamophobic surveillance and criminalisation of our Muslim and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities.

Most concerning, the strategy will target individuals guilty of no crime. Whether they are deemed to be a threat to national security will be judged by a government pedalling a racist, right-wing, counter-extremism agenda.

What the government judges as a harmful message might be a protest for free education, against austerity, or for free movement across borders. What the government judges an incident worthy of intervention might be a young boy of primary school age who faces racism and Islamophobia day-to-day asking his teacher about terrorism, or a university student writing his thesis on terrorism, asking probing questions about the government’s political agenda.

In the face of a government that becomes increasingly like that in Orwell’s dystopia 1984, we should be prepared to all fight instances of victimisation and criminalisation under the auspices of counter-terrorism when they happen, in solidarity with comrades, brothers and sisters from other political organisations, and other communities and backgrounds.

**As May steps up her counter-extremism rhetoric, we must step up our struggle against the government’s strategies for division and control.**

## Help us raise £15,000!

**It’s been nearly five years since *Solidarity* became a weekly newspaper, and in those five years the paper has improved and our circulation increased.**

We are now in a political situation where the circulation of *Solidarity* will increase more, and we are working to improve our paper further.

The production of a weekly paper takes a lot of work to commission and write articles, edit and lay out. We now

have in the office a team of four people working on the paper with the addition of our new part-time worker, Kelly.

We are always looking for new writers for the paper, so if you want to send us a report from your local activity, have seen something in the news you would like to comment on, or would like to write a longer piece please get in touch.

Please consider:

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**Thanks this week to Tom. So far we have raised £11,375.**



Gemma and Kelly producing this week’s *Solidarity*

# The icepick again?

By Martin Thomas

**According to Stephen Bush in the *New Statesman*, the Labour Party machine's spate of expulsions and banings in the run-up to the leadership election which Jeremy Corbyn won was talked about as "Operation Icepick".**

The name echoes the sick in-jokes popular among leaders of the Labour student organisation in the 1970s and 80s; they admired the Stalinist assassin who used an icepick to kill Leon Trotsky in 1940.

Bush reported that "Twitter [was] ablaze with activists who believe they have been kicked out because they are supporters of Jeremy Corbyn". The purge was not systematic. According to Bush, Labour Party head office had "little money and fewer staff — many [had] left after the general election... neither the personnel or the resources for a genuinely exhaustive search".

As the leader ballot approached, the apparatchiks looked overwhelmed. A number of people who had been summarily expelled were reinstated.

There are contradictory signals now. One activist who stood as a Socialist Alliance and Socialist Unity candidate a few times against Labour has had a letter indicating that probably there will be "no objection" to her rejoining.

Yet on 14 October Edward Maltby, a member of Hornsey and Wood Green CLP, was told that his motion tabled for his ward on 18 October could not be discussed because he'd been expelled. Later he got a letter from Labour Party head office (dated 14 October) saying that he had been expelled as

being a member of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty. Without charge or hearing.

Liam McNulty, another member of the same CLP, had had a letter expelling him during the leadership campaign, on grounds of association with an unspecified "political organisation other than an official Labour group" (CND? What?) Many CLP activists protested. He got an email from a Unite union official telling him that the matter had been taken up centrally and he would be reinstated. He remained active in the CLP. Now the word from some CLP officials is that his expulsion is "on" again.

## PROTESTS

**New protests against these expulsions are under way. They may signify head-office people on a sneaky counter-offensive, aimed at subverting Jeremy Corbyn's leadership by "criminalising" his most active supporters. Or they may be a local blip. We don't know.**

The Labour Party used to have a "proscribed list" of groups whose members were banned, mostly groups linked to the Communist Party. That list was abolished in 1973. In principle the only grounds for expulsion from the Labour Party (other than racist misbehaviour or the like) should be opposition to a Labour candidate in an election.

The minimal rule seems fair enough, but even that has never been strictly applied. In the 1987 general election, Frank Field, then and still now a right-wing Labour MP, publicly refused to back the left-wing Labour candidate in a neighbouring constituency. Many right-wingers have advocated "tactical voting" — voting Lib-Dem against Labour where the Lib-Dems have a better chance of beating the To-

ries. In 2000 many Labour left-wingers backed Ken Livingstone when he stood against Labour for London mayor, and won, and were not expelled.

The paper *Socialist Organiser* was banned by a specific Labour Party conference decision in 1990. There is a continuity of political attitudes between *Socialist Organiser* then and Workers' Liberty now. That can't justify a sort of "hereditary expulsion" rule against people who were toddlers in 1990.

Workers' Liberty was involved in the Socialist Alliance, and the SA stood some candidates against Labour (in seats where there was no chance of letting in the Tories) in the early 2000s. Workers' Liberty people contested some elections after 2003, mostly under socialist-unity banners, but have backed no anti-Labour election campaigns recently, and have taken themselves off the Electoral Commission list of electoral parties.

The Independent Labour Party, which was a founding group of the Labour Party in 1900, then split away in 1932. It attempted to reaffiliate in 1939 and was refused. It contested parliamentary elections against Labour up to February 1974.

In 1975 it decided to redefine itself as a "political pressure group", Independent Labour Publications, but was explicit that the new ILP continued the old ILP. It was accepted back into Labour, and rightly so. It's still around.

**The same approach should apply to Workers' Liberty as to the ILP. And, what is more to the point, no-one should be excluded for "thought-crime" of being interested in the ideas of Workers' Liberty, circulating *Solidarity*, or attending discussions organised by Workers' Liberty.**

## Join Labour? No, vie with Ukip

By Colin Foster

**The TUSC electoral coalition, mainly organised by the Socialist Party, will continue to stand candidates against Labour under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership.**

A member of the Labour Representation Committee (a Labour left group) reports: "It was confirmed to us that TUSC would be standing candidates... in the coming local elections in May 2016. They also said they would oppose trade unions re-affiliating to the Labour Party, and were against re-joining the Labour Party".

The Socialist Party's line is that TUSC should contest council seats, wherever they are able, unless the Labour candidate commits to oppose all cuts.

The SP is right to oppose all cuts, but instead of working with others on the left — and mainly, now, within the new Corbyn Labour Party — to assemble an effective force against cuts, they use the "oppose all cuts" formula as a sect badge.

In January 2011 they used the National Shop Stewards Network, which they control, to set up a new "national anti-cuts campaign" counterposed to the Coalition of Resistance, People's Assembly, Right to Work, Unite the Resistance, etc. on the grounds that those groups are allegedly not as strongly anti-cuts as the SP. The new "campaign" never did much, but its launch did disperse almost all the non-SP people previously active in the NSSN.

The drift, never clarified, was that it was wrong to join campaigns opposing one lot of cuts unless they are equally intransigent against all other cuts. (The SP suggest that their forerunners, Militant, didn't make cuts when they led Liverpool Labour council in 1984-6. In fact they did).

In 2001, when the SP were in the Socialist Alliance, they rejected the view of everyone else in the SA (including AWL), that the SA should target its candidates so as not to oppose



left Labour people or run a risk of letting in the Tories. The SP insisted on running a candidate against John McDonnell in the 2001 general election, and the rest of the SA had to refuse to back that SA candidate and explain we backed McDonnell.

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) is also in TUSC, and less gung-ho than the SP about TUSC candidates against Corbyn-Labour, but the SP has the decisive voice. The RMT rail union is affiliated to TUSC; it is not reported as having been represented at the meeting with LRC.

The smaller Independent Socialist Network seems unhappy with this TUSC policy, and also with TUSC policy on the European Union.

TUSC emerged from a "No2EU" slate in the 2009 Euro-

election. On 8 October TUSC declared, under the headline "Socialists to challenge UKIP for Exit EU crown", "that it would officially register as an exit campaigner in the forthcoming referendum on EU membership".

No2EU has denounced "the so-called 'free movement' of labour" in the EU and "the social dumping of exploited foreign workers in Britain", which is really a would-be "left" way of vying with Ukip to capture anti-migrant votes. TUSC has toned down that stuff; but in the 2010 general election leading SP and TUSC campaigners explained to us that it was deliberate that they said nothing on migrant rights.

**That is not a constructive left-wing alternative to the battle inside the new Corbyn Labour Party.**



# We need to make our unions effective

Continuing our series of interviews with labour movement activists

**Rachel Mullen, a young activist in the Bakers Food and Allied Workers' Union and a delegate to Labour Party conference, spoke to Solidarity.**

**I work for Greggs, in one of their shops, in Gateshead. I became a shop steward five years ago, when I was 20. I work in the same branch as my mum, and she helped me get involved in the union.**

I was involved in taking a proposal to our national conference for a dedicated youth rep on our National Executive. That could have been a double-edged sword. They could have said, okay, we should just have this one position for young people. But in fact it's had a good effect in getting young members more involved.

I've also been involved in the Labour Party for several years, but the last six months have been very different. I've been on the left of the party, with a socialist agenda, from the start, and so is my union, but it's only since the summer that much larger numbers of people seem to have been listening.

## OVERFLOW

**I was very struck by the Labour Representation Committee meeting I spoke at this year. In previous years it was just about full, this time it was overflowing.**

After the disappointment of the election, and the Tories stepping up their attacks, it's clearer than ever that we need an alternative.

In addition to representing members in places like Greggs, the main thing the union is doing is the campaign to unionise and organise workers in fast food.

It was launched from the young members' conference because there are so many young workers in the fast food industry, facing issues like zero hours contracts and differential rates for the minimum wage.

We've been organising stunts and protests outside the big chains and trying to get into discussions with workers in them. We've stressed that the only way to get proper contracts, better wages is to unionise, but at the moment unions aren't allowed in these companies.

In Greggs, things aren't perfect but the fact that we have unions means the company operates differently and we get higher wages and contracts with guaranteed hours.

Seeing young members involved in this campaign has challenged some older members' view of what young peo-

ple are like — that we're not interested in trade unions or in politics. Yes, the majority of young people don't know what the labour movement is. That's all the more reason for the labour movement to be trying to educate and involved them.

We've taken inspiration from America, from the Fight for \$15 campaign and we are starting to pick up new activists. In Scotland we have a group of people recruited in the last year. That's what we need to establish everywhere.

The leadership debate has changed the atmosphere at Labour Party conference. People are more on the left or at least shifting. Basic left-wing policies on austerity, on council housing, on the NHS make sense to people. There is a renewed idea that people should be able to live with dignity.

I think we need to challenge exploitation, whatever form it takes — low wages, denial of healthcare, energy prices, rail prices. We need a society where people can live without being exploited.

The left needs to get out there talking politics to people, including to people who aren't already on the left — including even people who are currently right-wing. Make the case, that's how we'll make headway.

It would certainly help if we had a bigger, stronger Labour left organisation. If all the different organisations could come together more, it would help organise all the people swimming around.

In the bigger unions the leaderships are more distant from the members and maybe less accountable. And the leaders and even the activists get more distant from the day-to-day concerns of workers and more worried about making radical arguments, because maybe they're no longer sure how they'll go down with the membership.

On the other hand it's not a case of small unions good, big unions bad. We need to change the big unions too, to make all our unions effective.

Being a socialist is not about you as an individual, but what's good for the whole population, collectively. It's about the interests of the big majority, 90 or 99 percent. There is nothing wrong with aspiring to a better life, but it's about collectively aspiring for a better life for all.

**The banking crisis and the way the media have misrepresented it shows why society should be run according to the market. The rich caused the crisis but we've been paying — to me that makes the case for a different kind of society.**

## Repoliticise the unions!



**Ian Hodson, President of the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, spoke to Solidarity in a personal capacity**

**What are your general thoughts about Corbyn's victory?**

The election of Jeremy Corbyn was a welcome outcome of the leadership election. For the first time in many years the Labour Party will represent something different to the stale politics we have witnessed since the election of Thatcher.

We are witnessing a shift in a political landscape where it felt nothing could ever change, where we have to accept that life becomes tougher for each new generation. For the first time we will see an alternative to austerity. The real enthusiasm we witnessed during the leadership campaign, with thousands turning up, is something that hasn't happened in my lifetime.

**What should happen now?**

We have to build in every town, every city, a movement that explains what the alternative would look like.

There was a huge enthusiasm built up for politics and we need to tap into that by making sure we keep people involved and be part of this fantastic opportunity that Jeremy's election offers.

We have a party leader fighting for a fairer, more decent society for all. But the establishment is going to try and derail this opportunity, so we need to recognise that our movement is stronger when we act collectively. That means ending the sectarianism and working together to achieve a better country and the better world we all want to see.

**What were your impressions of Labour Party conference this year?**

As a trade unionist it was refreshing to see the party leadership being prepared to acknowledge trade unions and their pride in being part of our trade union movement — something that hasn't happened for many years.

A lot of the spin had gone; the focus was on policy and dealing with the needs of our society. Politics felt human again and less scripted.

**How do you think the unions should capitalise on Corbyn's victory?**

As an affiliated union it is important that our voices are heard, but also the voices of those trade unions that are not yet affiliated. My union believes in democracy and that Labour conference should democratically develop policies for a fairer society.

**The union movement should use this opportunity to repoliticise its members, to build links with the new grassroots movements springing up, to explain the need for collectivism and rebuild our once strong links in our communities.**

# Six lessons from Greece

On 21-22 November Workers' Liberty will be holding our annual conference. One of the documents to be discussed, collates the lessons from the last seven years in Greece.

**Greece has been one of the countries worst affected by the economic slump since 2008. It has also been where left-wing responses to the slump have been strongest.**

Lesson one: industrial action alone does not provide an adequate working-class answer to capitalist crisis. Greece has had over 20 general strikes since 2009. They have been important as gestures, as rallying-calls, as signals, and in galvanising social forces which Syriza later benefited from. But they have not won anything.

The problem is not just that they have been 24 or 48 hour actions rather than indefinite general strikes. An indefinite general strike can produce a socialist outcome only if it is an ancillary to political action (uprising, etc.) by a socialist political party winning majority support and able to form a workers' government.

Short of that, an indefinite general strike may win concessions on particular issues. In some conditions, that will speed political radicalisation, as with May-June 1968 in France. However, if that indefinite general strike comes not as a "general rehearsal" (as in May-June 1968), if it comes as the last throw of a period of radicalisation, and if there is not adequate political follow-through, then even if the industrial action wins concessions its effect may be to start a retreat, by convincing workers that even their most extreme actions cannot triumph (examples: the September 1920 factory occupations in Italy, the 1936 general strike in France).

Lesson two: in today's capitalism, nationally-limited strategies will not work. The Syriza government elected in January 2015 could have forced concessions from the eurozone leaders only if it had become the pivot of a wave of working-class mobilisation across Europe, with common cross-European demands. When they looked close to electoral victory in summer 2012, the Syriza leaders made some small efforts to help along such mobilisation, addressing rallies in Paris and Berlin. In 2015 they went to Paris and Berlin only to talk to the finance ministers, and appealed to the European working class only to hope for their success in negotiations.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary-minded Antarsya continued to marginalise itself because its leading slogan was the replacement of the euro by the drachma, based on vague and untenable speculations that this replacement would somehow generate a wave of socialistic policies. It would not. Probably a workers' government pursuing socialistic policies would at some point find itself expelled from the eurozone, and having to coin a separate national currency, but that is an entirely different dynamic from the supposition that a new separate national currency in and of itself has socialist merits. Much of the left inside Syriza also let itself be boxed into

drachma-versus-euro (under the guise of "break with the lenders") as its frontline policy; the Popular Unity Party formed by the ex-Syriza left has tied itself to the drachma as its lead policy, and has consequently won only a small fraction of Syriza's former constituency.

Lesson three: an internationalist working-class strategy in Europe is entirely different from a strategy of haggling and negotiating within the existing structures of the eurozone. After summer 2012, the Syriza leaders dropped their small gestures towards cross-Europe mobilisation; let their talk about building Syriza into an active mass party dissolve into very little; and increasingly focused on winning electoral victory on a promise to negotiate a better deal with the eurozone leaders. By the time of Syriza's January 2015 victory, its leaders had already narrowed down its program to that of relief from austerity won by negotiating a better deal (and the eurozone leaders knew that, and so knew that if they stalled then Syriza would in the end accept a bad deal). So by then, a poor outcome from the experience of Syriza government, if not exactly the outcome we have seen, had been made very likely.

## MOBILISATION

**Lesson four: socialist politics can be developed only by independent working-class mobilisation, not by nudging existing institutions leftwards.**

The Syriza leaders' decisions after January 2015 for coalition with the small right-wing party Anel and for a "moderate" right-winger as president sealed the locks on the pre-programmed slide to a poor outcome.

This is not a matter of abstractly counterposing immediate full socialist revolution (which Syriza could not have won majority support for in early 2015, and could not have carried through anyway at that point). Possible, if the Syriza leaders had stepped back, or been made to step back, from their drift of the couple of years leading up to 2015, was the creation of a workers' government which would have proceeded step by step to mobilise the working class, facilitate workers' control and workers' defence groups, enable rank-and-file organisation within the largely conscript army, taken punitive measures against the peaks of the Greek bourgeoisie, nationalised the banks, and negotiated with the eurozone leaders on the basis of cross-European mobilisation and a pause in debt repayments.

If the left in Syriza had been strong enough, the movement could have sharpened and grown sufficiently to win a decisive confrontation with the Greek bourgeoisie and "deep state", inevitable if the pro-worker reforms continued to roll ahead, and thus to open up socialist revolution.

But even if not, even if such a workers' government had later lapsed back into being only a reform government within



Protesters supporting an "oxi" vote in July's referendum

bourgeois limits, its reforms would have inspired new confidence and mobilisation, and shifted the parameters for politics thereafter.

Lesson five: the revolutionary Marxists must focus on transforming the historically-developed labour movement, rather than on vain attempts to build "their own" little labour movement on the side. Syriza was not (despite some efforts to describe as such) a brand-new formation come from nowhere: it developed from the evolution of the historical mainstream of the organised working class in Greece, which was around the Greek Communist Party and its mutations. But the revolutionary Marxists who intervene in those historically-developed labour movements must develop the essentials of their own "party", whether it is described formally as "party" or only as "faction", "tendency", etc. They must have rigorous and sharp policies, tight organisation, and the energy and confidence to give them capacity for rapid and cohesive independent initiative when needed.

The left in Syriza was right to be in Syriza. But its message was too blurred, its sense of urgency insufficient, its organisation too diffuse. Instead of seizing on such things as the majority opinion of the Syriza Central Committee against Tsipras's capitulations, and waging a bitter fight to win the Syriza majority from Tsipras, it went for an "amicable divorce".

Lesson six: if the left scares the bourgeoisie without decisively acting against it, then the threat of right-wing reaction redoubles. After Syriza's debacle, Golden Dawn, a street-fighting fascist party of a timbre different from the electoralist Front National in France and similar far-right groups, has consolidated itself as the third party in Greece.

**We must work, especially in the Corbyn movement, to promote discussions of the lessons from Greece and their relevance for Britain.**

## Learn about the history of Trotskyism

**Uniquely, this new book traces the decisive political divisions within the broadly-defined Trotskyist movement by presenting key texts from both sides of the political debates as they happened.**

The book's overall thesis, argued in a substantial introduction, is that by the late 1940s there were two Trotskyisms.

They had separated, fundamentally, through their different responses to events neither "side" expected: the transition of the Stalinist USSR from unstable beleaguered semi-outlaw state to a continent-bestrident world power, stably self-reproducing at least for some decades to come.

The other issues were many, but, so the book argues, mostly linked to that fundamental division. They included different conceptions of what a revolutionary socialist party should be and do, and what Marxism is and how it is developed.

The "orthodox" strand of Trotskyism came to dominate by the late 1960s; but that "orthodoxy" has been in disarray since the collapse of European Stalinism in 1989-91.

**Today's revolutionary socialist politics, struggling to regain ground after the long triumph of neoliberalism, needs to nourish itself by studying these long-shelved debates at the hinge of the 20th century politics.**

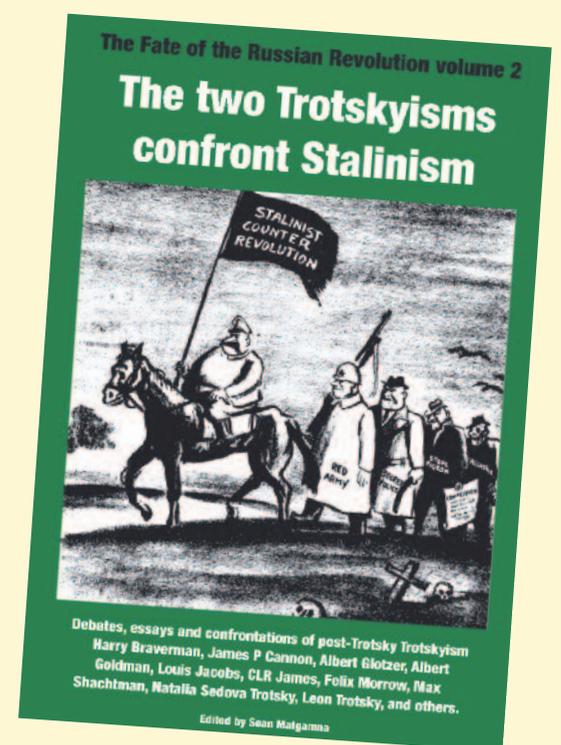
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# Physical force feminism

Cathy Nugent reviews *Suffragette*

*Suffragette* retells the story of the early 20th century movement for women's suffrage from the point of view of east London laundry worker Maud Watts (Carey Mulligan).

Maud is gradually drawn into the movement, as she tries to make sense of childhood trauma and overcome the grim restrictions of wage slavery. The film shows a selection of historical events in the year or so leading up to Emily Wilding Davison's "sacrificial act", stepping in front of King George V's horse at the Epsom Derby in June 1913.

In school history lessons we are told that the suffragettes were feisty but also overwhelmingly white, middle- and upper-class "ladies". We may not have been told that working-class women also wanted, and fought for, the right to vote. That the film-makers choose to foreground the biography of a working-class woman is an unusual and commendable choice. It is good that a mainstream film has brought a less well-known side of history to light, including some of the terrible realities of life for working class women (domestic abuse, sexual abuse at work). However, this film is not without flaws.

I attended a special showing of the film organised by Feminist Fightback at the Genesis cinema in Stepney. As the speakers — historian Laura Schwartz and Feminist Fightback activist Alice Robson — pointed out in after-film talk, the film almost completely leaves out important dimensions of the suffrage movement, as they would have been experienced by women like Maud, in the very streets near where the film was being shown. In east London, and elsewhere in England, working-class women campaigned for the vote, but they did this alongside male comrades of the socialist and labour movements. This was not shown in the film.

Also absent is Sylvia Pankhurst, the suffragette who would become the most consistent fighter for working-class women's political and social rights. By 1912 she was already active in east London but moving away from the "commandist" rule her mother and sister, Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst, had over the Women's Social and Political Union. Sylvia gets but a brief mention in the film. That said, the film portrays Emmeline Pankhurst (played by Meryl Streep) as a

strange, cult-like figure so, to be fair, the real texture of the movement is represented in this film.

Perhaps most problematic is the way Maud's working-class community is portrayed. Yes, domestic violence, alienation and depression would have been a big part of the reality. But the way Maud is completely ostracised when she takes up the cause and is thrown out of the house by her husband strikes a false note. She would have had a friend, or neighbour, or workmate somewhere in that community willing to take her in.

As Laura and Alice pointed out, a history that is just for the archives is not much good to us. It needs to be an inspiration to take action in the here and now. For the kind of protest Sisters Uncut took at the film's premiere, to draw attention to cuts in domestic violence services.

Equally, dragging history out of the library vault only to appropriate it in an uncritical way is also a problem. Laura's talk discussed the criticism that has been made by film maker's use of the slogan "I'd rather be a rebel than a slave" — without, she says "considering its racist origins and contemporary resonances."

## EMPIRE

**Laura described how white British feminists "argued for political rights for themselves, on the grounds that this would better enable them to play their part in Empire and/or 'rescue' their 'sisters' in the colonised territories from oppression at the hands of more 'backward' societies."**

But, that all said, is *Suffragette* still an inspiration? I think it is. If you are not incensed by the brutal class intransigence of the establishment, the all-male plutocracy of the House of Commons and the lackeys of the state, its prison wardens, the force feeding of imprisoned suffragettes, then you have a very hard heart.

The increasing frustration of the suffragettes and growing "militancy" is also well depicted. It is not the militancy that Sylvia followed, deeply committed political intransigence for and alongside working-class women. It is the militancy of smashing windows and blowing up a government Minister's country home, an attempt to physically force the all male plutocracy in the House of Commons to listen.



Maud Watts, played by Carey Mulligan

**In its historical context, this kind of militancy feels both understandable and necessary. Judging by the cheers and clapping at those dramatic points in the screening, I was not alone in those thoughts.**

- Laura Schwartz on the class and race politics of the film, and other articles: [www.feministfightback.org.uk/bringing-together-the-past-and-the-present/](http://www.feministfightback.org.uk/bringing-together-the-past-and-the-present/)
- More on Sylvia Pankhurst: [bit.ly/1kmbHj2](http://bit.ly/1kmbHj2)

## Árpád Göncz: 1922 – 2015

By John Cunningham

**Sometimes being worthy, decent and honest isn't enough.**

Although at the time I moved in slightly more elevated circles than I do now, in the nine years I lived in Hungary I never met Árpád Göncz, Hungarian President for ten years in the nineties, who died on 6 October.

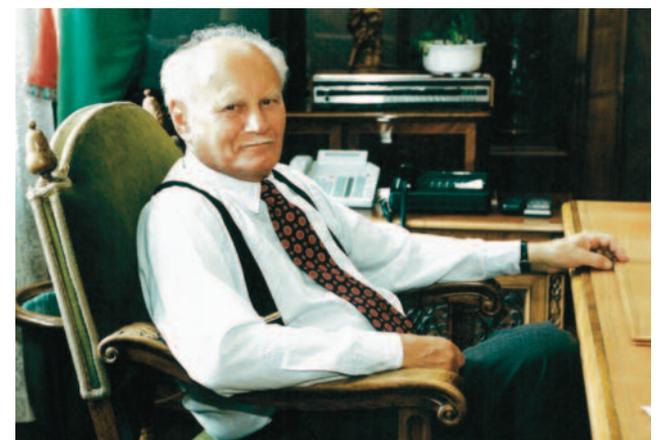
Yet in those early days after the so-called "regime change" in 1989 his name, words and image were everywhere. For many Hungarians he epitomised the new start after the collapse of Hungary's soft version of Stalinism, a voice of reason amongst what was often utter chaos. Like a number of other East European Presidents in this period, Vaclav Havel for example, Göncz was an accomplished writer, translator and playwright, honing his skills while a prisoner in a Stalinist gaol after the defeat of the 1956 Hungarian uprising.

With the change to parliamentary democracy, the highly respected Göncz became the President of Hungary. It was not an easy time. The political parties of post-Stalinist Hungary were, to put it mildly, a ragbag of opportunists, careerists and turncoats; corruption was rife — and got worse — while the economy was an utter shambles. Successive political parties and their Prime Ministers came and went. Through it all Göncz ploughed a lone furrow, using his skill, diplomacy and patience to try and steer Hungary away from an embrace with the right towards a centre-based, humanistic type of social democracy (he was a member of the Free Democrats, although the position of President is non-partisan). It is doing no injustice to his memory to say that in this he failed.

No political party in Hungary, then or since, has been prepared to reject the Stalinist past while at the same offering a programme which refuses the worst "robber baron" practices of neo-liberal capitalism. The workers and the poor have been marginalised and greedy swindlers, bankers and so-called entrepreneurs (a buzz word at the time) allowed to go on the rampage. Many political parties adopted policies and practices, particularly in the field of media censorship, little better than the Stalinists. Without any history of meaningful social democracy, and their only experience with "communism" being utterly tainted, Hungarians have often fallen back on the ideology of their pre-war parties such as the Smallholders, an agrarian-peasant based party whose politics and practices found little traction in modern-day Hungary except to stoke up nationalistic feelings and encourage the worst narrow-minded attitudes and xenophobia.

Göncz, once his period in office was over, must have looked at developments in Hungary with despair. He retired from public life in 2000 and his last years were plagued by illness. At the end of his life Hungary is in the grip of the elected dictatorship of Viktor Orbán and his Thatcherite Fidesz party. They have erected razor wire against refugees and turned Hungary into a kind of exclusion zone for foreigners — all of which would be anathema to the liberal-humanistic mind of Göncz.

The tragedy is that Göncz, who all agree was affable, honest, open-minded and adaptable, was never able or inclined to forge a political movement which would have taken Hungary in a different direction to the one in which Orbán and others have shunted it: the dead end of Central European Christian nationalism.



The failure is not Göncz's alone; others bear responsibility too for accepting the supposed post-1989 neo-liberal consensus. Göncz and his generation, many of whom have honourable records in opposition to Stalinism, thought Parliamentary procedure and constitutionalism would be enough to guide Hungary in the new post-1989 dawn. It wasn't. Instead, there was a crying need for a political movement to be built which would fight against the slide into xenophobia and political backwardness but it never happened.

**Sometimes just being decent and honest isn't enough. You need to get in there and fight your corner, throw away the Queensbury Rules, exchange blows with the enemy and forge a new path. It isn't always pretty, but it is necessary.**

# The Rosa Luxemburg I met as a student

Antoinette Konikow was a Ukrainian-born American socialist, and a founding member of the Communist Party USA. She was expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 for being a Trotskyist, and remained active as such until her death in 1946. In this article, Konikow describes Rosa Luxemburg, with whom she studied in Zurich.

By Antoinette Konikow

**Physically she was small, slender. A neglected hip disease in childhood left her with a limp. On her arrival to address large gatherings, committees meeting her for the first time would become crestfallen. How could such a frail being make an impression on the speaker's platform?**

But once she faced the crowd, she seemed to grow in stature; her resonant powerful voice, her flaming oratory roused audiences to wild enthusiasm. Our Red Rosa, the German workers called her with proud tenderness.

Rosa Luxemburg was a magnificent speaker and combined this with a rare ability of presenting the ideas of socialism in a simple and graphic language.

She was not only a student but a theoretician of Marxism, the author of many pamphlets and books, among them, *The Accumulation of Capital* in which she expanded and modified Marx's exposition. (The controversy over her interpretation still continues and I leave it to theoreticians to evaluate its merits.) But Rosa was no cabinet theoretician. Her writings as her speeches were intimately bound up with action.

She possessed the rarest of gifts — the ability to understand and even sense in advance the vital periods, problems, and strategy of the workers' movement. It was precisely this that brought her into sharp conflict throughout her life with the self-satisfied and degenerating leadership of old German Social Democracy.

Rosa Luxemburg was born in Tsarist Poland, and began to participate in illegal revolutionary circles from a very early age. At 18 she was forced to flee Poland in order to escape arrest. I met her at Zurich, where she studied economics and philosophy. She was so mature, serious and self-assured that my friends and myself considered her our senior, but in reality she was several years younger than we were.

## POLAND

**Returning to Poland she worked to counteract the reactionary nationalist movement which had grown strong, by organising the workers on a principled Marxist basis. Lenin criticised her opposing the demand for self-determination, in particular for Poland.**

Her influence in organising a powerful and strongly centralised party in Poland was enormous. On more than one occasion she sided with Lenin against the Mensheviks within the Russian movement.

Through a fictitious marriage she became a German citizen and was thus admitted to the arena of the large German party. From then on we find her dealing blow after blow to the reformist tendency which was gaining sway over the German Social Democracy and the Second International. For example, when the French Socialists became jubilant because [one of their leaders] Alexandre Millerand had received a high ministerial post, Rosa at once condemned this entry into a bourgeois government. The gist of her criticism was: socialists can accept executive state positions only if the government itself is in their hands, otherwise they invariably serve as the servants of the bourgeoisie and betray the workers.

In her fight against revisionism she attacked Eduard Bernstein, a very prominent and influential party leader in Germany, who argued that Marx had become "out-moded" and that it was possible to evolve into socialism without any revolution by simply relying on progress, the parliament, and the feelings of justice and morality.

The party had several million votes, a vast treasury, many newspapers, scores of parliamentary seats, etc. Party functionaries were well paid, and trade union leaders dominated the party. A feeling of satisfaction combined with a fear of losing their gains began to possess the Social Democratic tops. They argued against revolutionary action because everything seemed to be progressing smoothly. Why rush, why "gamble" when a gradual growth would bring about socialism? In her fight against this Philistine outlook, Rosa had against her almost the entire German leadership.



When the 1905 revolution broke out in Russia, Rosa with great joy followed the tremendous mass movement in her own backward homeland. She grasped at once the importance of the new weapons applied in Russia, especially the role of the general strike. The German leadership inclined to dismiss the general strike as "general nonsense." But Rosa saw in it revolutionary mass action surging onward without fear of the possibilities of defeats — an expression of the tremendous vitality latent in the masses. During this period she became more and more estranged from the old leadership.

The World War of 1914 brought with it the crucial test for all revolutionists. The German party and the Second International revealed the full extent of their degeneration. The leaders betrayed the working class.

Kautsky, the theoretical leader of the Second International bid his farewell to Marxism, declaring that internationalism could operate only in peace time and had to be suspended for the duration of war. Rosa Luxemburg did not waver in her stand. Together with Lenin she had sponsored the resolution against war adapted at the Stuttgart World Congress, the last one before the war. This resolution in veiled phraseology (to elude the German censors), had actually threatened a civil war against the bourgeoisie in every country if war were declared.

At the outbreak of the war Rosa Luxemburg applied the line of this resolution. Addressing the workers in Germany she said: "If you are ordered to shoot down your French brothers refuse to shoot!" She was arrested and imprisoned for the duration of the war. Her fate became henceforth indissolubly linked with that of Liebknecht, her comrade-in-arms, who had proclaimed: "Our main enemy is at home!" and who soon shared Rosa's fate — imprisonment.

Rosa Luxemburg, caged like an eagle, spent her days in a tiny cell from which she could barely glimpse a blue patch of the sky. Her letters from prison reveal an aspect of her character previously known only to her friends. The tenderness of this indomitable fighter is evidenced in these letters. She could not observe without revulsion even the suffering of animals — the overloaded oxen, the tiny, unprotected bird. In her letters she puts down her deep sympathy for all suffering, her craving for peace and beauty, her anger at injustice. She did not, however, let her hands hang. Her magnetic personality and noble nature enabled her to make friends in prison who helped to smuggle out her articles for *The International* the publication of the Spartakus group which she and Liebknecht had formed.

Her best known work of that period is the *Junius* pamphlet, circulated throughout Germany. She did not sign her name because that would have disclosed her work in prison. Even Lenin was unaware of the identity of the author, of this remarkable pamphlet, which he greeted with joy as a sign of a new and powerful revolutionary wing developing in Germany. He criticised the pamphlet for its mistakes, but appreciated its power and true revolutionary spirit.

Rosa explained that the victory of either side — whether Germany or the Allies — would necessarily lead to another world slaughter. Only the masses could tear humanity out of war. Nothing can save the world except Socialism.

She exposed the hypocrisy of the capitalist class, the fraud

of patriotism. The ruling class will always make an alliance with the enemy in order to suppress its own working class. The French aristocrats allied with the English and German armies against the French Jacobins. The German army released the army of Napoleon III so that the Paris Commune could be crushed. The Russian White Guards urged England, France and Germany to help them against the Russia of the Bolsheviks.

She pointed out that, far from weakening the working class, the revolution would strengthen and encourage the masses to defend their country, which becomes their real fatherland only after the revolution. The combined forces of all the monarchies could not subdue the great French Revolution. Nor could Soviet Russia under Lenin and Trotsky be overthrown by all the imperialists.

And when the social patriots sneered that the party could do nothing during war time, she replied:

"Our task is to issue clear political slogans comprehensible to the workers; a determined consistently revolutionary course of action followed by the party will arouse assurance, self-confidence, and resolution. In the masses a weak, vacillating course not only undermines the power of the working class but demoralises and confuses the masses."

The *Junius* pamphlet states that national war cannot be waged under imperialism. Lenin realised that Junius had the world war in mind, but considered it necessary to correct this statement by explaining that we would support national wars of the colonial peoples for self-determination; such wars are progressive and a blow to imperialism.

*Junius* called for a German republic to put an end to the war. Lenin pointed out that a parliament constituted of representatives of the bourgeoisie and the middle class could never stop the war. Only the masses — through the Soviets — can assure peace.

## RUSSIA

**In prison Rosa received the great news of the Russian Revolution. She burned with indignation over the Brest-Litovsk peace forced by Germany upon the Bolsheviks.**

She accused the pro-war "socialists" of their responsibility, their degrading submission to the Junkers. The Russian Revolution deeply inspired Rosa. Enemies of the Russian Revolution have tried to construe her criticism of the Russian Bolsheviks as an opposition to the Russian revolution. This is false. It was as one of them that she criticised some of their tactics. The most vicious lie is that spread by the Stalinists, who tried to depict her as an enemy of communism.

The doors of her prison were thrown open by the German workers. It was 9 November 1918 — the beginning of the German revolution. Although her prison term had weakened and exhausted her, Rosa threw herself into the work. She edited the *Rote Fahne* (Red Banner). Together with Liebknecht she organised the German Communist Party. The manifesto of the party was written by her.

The degenerated leadership of the Social Democracy took charge of the government in order to crush the revolution. Luxemburg and Liebknecht were hounded. Leaflets demanding their assassination were circulated. Large rewards were offered for their capture. The Spartakus group which had become the German Communist Party had a large following but was not yet strong enough to take power. The situation greatly resembled the July days in Russia in 1917.

The advanced workers were pressing forward to battle, while the leadership realised that it was premature. The bourgeoisie and the Social Democratic leaders did everything in their power to provoke the masses in Berlin to an uprising so as to drown the revolution in blood. Liebknecht and Luxemburg did not stand aside from the masses. On 1 January 1919 they were arrested and immediately assassinated. These two great revolutionists, two of the most sincere, devoted and fearless leaders of the proletariat were murdered by the bourgeoisie and its socialist lackeys. Luxemburg and Liebknecht have become the symbols for courage, militancy and unswerving opposition to imperialist war. The monuments erected in Germany to commemorate these two comrades have been destroyed by Hitler.

**But Luxemburg and Liebknecht have more permanent memorials than monuments of stone. Their names are inscribed in flaming red letters in the hearts of the international working class.**

• *Socialist Appeal*, 18 January 1941

# Tubeworker round-up

## Tube talks falter

By Ollie Moore

Rank-and-file London Underground workers' bulletin *Tubeworker* is calling for Tube unions to reinstate industrial action in disputes over jobs, pay, and Night Tube.

Tube bosses derailed negotiations by restating a pay offer unions had already rejected.

The RMT's pay claim is for a four-day, 32-hour week for all grades and a pay rise that keeps pace with increases in the cost



of living.

**Unions previously suspended strikes after 24-hour running ("Night Tube") was deferred, but with talks faltering, many activists are calling for a return to action.**

## Agency workers continue quest for justice

Agency workers who were sacked by London Underground are continuing a legal battle through Tribunal courts.

The workers were part of the 2012 "Justice for the 33" campaign, which demanded reinstatement for the sacked workers after London Underground terminated its contract with

the Trainpeople agency. The workers continue to seek compensation and back-pay; LU says it paid all monies owing to Trainpeople (which has now ceased to exist), but workers say the money was never passed on.

**The Tribunal is ongoing.**



## Rail cleaners' fight

*Tubeworker* is pleased to hear that ISS cleaners on JNP have been given a 4% pay rise taking pay from £8.80 to £9.15.

The cleaners' union had asked for a substantial pay rise; and this offer will be discussed at a reps' meeting — to which all cleaners should go and have their voice heard.

It's a positive step but there is still much for cleaners to fight for: even better pay, stronger terms and conditions and decent pensions. All transport workers must back that fight.

Meanwhile, on the

Docklands Light Railway, Interserve cleaners struck for the fourth time over pay and conditions. They struck for 48 hours from 15-16 October. The bosses had promised new talks after the last strike, but have chosen to ignore their employees' demands. There is a courageous battle which we should all support.

**The unions must continue and build on efforts to organise cleaners, and cleaners must join the union to have their voices heard and to fight back against the bosses.**

# FE strikes on 10 November

By Gemma Short

Workers in Further Education colleges will strike on Tuesday 10 November as bosses impose a pay freeze.

UCU members in Further Education voted 74% in favour of strikes after the Association of Colleges rejected the union's claim for a £1 per hour pay rise. Unison members also voted to reject the pay freeze, voting by 95% in favour of strikes.

The college bosses' association instead recommended that all colleges impose a pay freeze. In the last six years FE lecturers have seen their pay decrease in real terms as employers have offered a series of below-inflation pay rises — totaling less than 3% since 2009. Both unions are also seeking a guarantee that workers won't be paid below the living wage.

The pay freeze comes in the context of ever tightening budgets for FE colleges, with many colleges having already gone through may rounds of course closures and redundancies.

It is estimated that the

## Parking wardens win pay rise

By Gemma Short

After 11 strike days, parking wardens in Camden voted on 14 October to accept a pay offer which guarantees a minimum hourly rate of £9.40.

Workers had been fighting to increase their basic pay from £8.92 per hour to £10.50, but had offered a compromise of £9.50 an hour which parking contractor NSL rejected.

## Barnet strike 2 November

Unison members in Barnet will strike again on 2 November in their ongoing dispute over privatisation.

Social workers, coach escorts, drivers, occupational therapists, schools catering staff, education welfare officers, library workers, children centre workers, street cleaning and refuse workers struck on 7 October.

These workers are some



Workers at Lewisham and Southwark College on strike last year

adult skills budget has been cut by 35% since 2009 (19% of that was in the 2014/15 year alone), and funding for adults over the age of 19 is to be cut a further 24% in 2015/16. In 2014/15 there was a 17.5% cut in the rate paid for full-time 18 year old students.

This is on top of a 12% cut in non-school budgets agreed by the Department for Education (DfE) in 2010 for the period until 2015.

There has also been no increases in funding for pay rises or inflation since 2010.

Many colleges continue job cuts. In the last few months Leeds City College has announced 146 possible job losses, Bradford College 140, East Kent 40, Lewisham and Southwark 112, Telford 85, and Petroc and Stafford have announced an unspecified number of job losses.

Understandably many

workers will be concerned where this dispute will lead after a strike planned by UCU for October 2014 (as part of last year's pay dispute) was banned by the High Court and the union ruled out more strikes.

**The whole trade union movement should rally behind FE strikers on 10 November, and pledge support to help them fight for the future of further education.**



## More steel job losses

By Charlotte Zalens

TATA steel has announced that 1200 jobs will be cut at its plants in Scunthorpe and Lanarkshire.

This is on top of 1800 redundancies steel firm Caparo has accounted and 2,220 at SSI, amounting to a huge crisis in the UK steel industry.

The large scale job losses are likely to have a huge impact on local communities, yet unions representing steel workers seem to be doing little to save the jobs, short of making appeals to the government and steel

companies to work with them to "save the industry".

No significant calls have been made to nationalise the SSI Redcar steel plant which is now in the process of being shut down. Unions instead kept themselves to the demand that the plant is "mothballed" and the furnaces kept burning, so that it can be put back into operation at a later date.

**Job cuts at TATA and Caparo, which do not involve shutting down the whole plant, could be fought by industrial action uniting all workers in the plants.**



## Oppose Tax Credit cuts!

By Lizzie Brooks

George Osborne has announced a new wave of cuts to tax credits, to be implemented in April 2016.

The income threshold for Working Tax Credits, currently £6,420, will be cut to £3,850 per year. Those earning over £3,850 will see their payments considerably reduced.

The income threshold for those claiming Child Tax Credits will go down from £16,105 to £12,125. Tax credits will also taper at a much faster rate. For every £1 over the income threshold individuals earn, they will lose 48p of their tax credits, up from 41p.

In addition, Child Tax Credits will be limited to two children; tax credits



will be frozen for the duration of the parliament.

3.3 million families, the vast majority of them with

children, stand to lose on average £1,300 in the first year alone, and most likely increasingly more each year. This is on top of plans to cut tax credits and housing benefit for under 25s, and for a four-year ban on migrants claiming benefits with the aim of stemming migration from the EU into Britain.

Tax credits are designed to top up wages when individuals and families are struggling to make ends meet: to help pay rising rent and bills, buy clothes and other necessities. They are a life-line which have become more important following the onslaught from the Tories over the last five years.

Osborne's strategy has been a well-calculated. He has masterminded moves to co-opt the language of Labour, calling the Tories the "workers party" and advocating his national "living wage" (which stands considerably below the actual Living Wage).

He has proudly announced that unemployment has decreased under the Conservative government, despite his figures being based on people being increasingly em-

ployed in precarious, zero-hours, low-waged, part-time work.

Osborne has also been at a loud proponent of the Tory campaign to scapegoat and vilify anyone who is out of work, unable to work, or dependent on benefits.

Cutting in-work benefits doesn't chime quite so neatly with the "strivers" and "skivers" narrative, but it is another battleground for all of us who are struggling in this age of austerity.

The Tories are cutting the benefits we rely on, while simultaneously attacking our ability to organise around our pay and conditions.

**A struggle against cuts to tax credits, should get hand-in-hand with grassroots campaigns against the regressive Trade Union Bill (see page 5), workplace struggles for higher wages, better contracts and job security, campaigns against cuts to all welfare support, and struggles for free movement across borders and equal citizenship for all who live in Britain.**

## Far right surge in Swiss election

By Sebastian Osthoff

On 18 October Swiss voters elected new representatives for the two chambers of the Swiss parliament.

Though there has to be a second round of elections for the smaller chamber of parliament, the Council of States, the results are clear. As was generally predicted the right wing nationalist Swiss People's Party (SVP) won the most votes, increasing its share of votes to 29.4%.

The SVP now has 65 representatives in the National Council. Of the major left parties, the Social Democratic Party was unable to win territory and stagnated, increasing the share of its vote by 0.1% but losing two representatives. The Greens lost four out of their formerly 15 seats as well as 1.3% of the share in votes.

The conservative nature of the Swiss political system which is enshrined in its federal and local nature as well as the relative stability of the Swiss economy do account for the shift. The election result nevertheless does give expression to important changes in the Swiss social fabric.

### IMMIGRATION

**The SVP was able to win on mainly two issues: immigration and Euroscepticism. Large amounts of the right's campaign funds were directed towards fear mongering about Switzerland being colonised by migrants and, of course, Islam.**

The increased influx of refugees into Europe this summer proved to be a fertile ground for this hateful propaganda. The SVP also made use of a warped self-image of Switzerland as a country that always stood up to foreign oppressors, preserved its archaic democracy and has been fiercely neutral in all European conflicts.

The EU was casually

compared to the old Habsburg Empire, Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. The whole nasty repertoire of far right ideas was dug up during the election campaign.

This is all the more absurd if we keep in mind that the SVP's rise is very much due to its massive financial backing by Christoph Blocher, who made billions in the chemical industry.

The Switzerland the SVP defends is not the peasant democracy of yore, but the very real capitalist Switzerland of today. A country that becomes increasingly more parasitic, scrounging off international tax evasion, speculative banking and extractive companies which overexploit Third World countries. For this sector of finance capital Switzerland has become a safe haven. Financial crisis and pressure from without have shaken the coziness of the Swiss middle classes and made them painfully aware of their increasing dependency on foreign events. Especially the European Union, undermining Swiss democracy by enforcing human rights and demanding an end to uncontrolled tax evasion — now the perceived number one threat to the countries prosperity!

During the election campaign the left failed to find a clear voice of opposition. Not even a vague "us down here against them up there" rhetoric was used. Instead, especially the Social Democratic party, in accordance with their participation in government since 1943, tried to portray themselves as embodiment of "Staatsräson", the interests and logic of the state as such.

**The left failed to present a clear cut alternative to neoliberal, racist and Eurosceptic politics and failed to deliver an inspiring message beyond "prevent a shift to the right", and paid the price.**



20,000 junior doctors and their supporters marched in London on Saturday 17 October as part of ongoing protests over the imposition of new contracts.

The protest was young and was joined by many doctors' families as well as contingents of medical students. The march was addressed via video link by former Tory Health Minister Dr Dan Poulter, who was previously in charge of negotiating the new junior doctors' contract and has accused Jeremy Hunt of ripping up agreements with doctors.