

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

**SWP in
crisis**
page 5



**Avi Shlaim:
reappraising Israel**
pages 6-7

**Django
Unchained**
page 8



FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE....

**How
private
companies
are taking
over
public
services**

see page 3

Private companies like Serco and Capita now have a vast portfolio of outsourced public services and government functions, driven forward by NHS reforms and spending cuts. Campaign to reverse these privatisations!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

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Can the Lagarde list topple Samaras?

By Theodora Polenta

"The reason is simple", says Greek journalist Costas Vaxevanis. "The Lagarde list is the whole economic policy system that governs the country. This corrupt elite speaks in the name of the Republic and Democracy with the same ease it cancels democracy. Media barons, ministers with off-shore companies, bankers, prime ministers and friends representatives of 'black economy'..."

The list, of 2,000 Greeks with deposits totalling more than 1.5 billion euros in Swiss banks, and what has happened to it since 2010, is high on the political agenda in Greece.

The list was originally the "Falciani list". Hervé Falciani was working at the Geneva branch of the HSBC bank, and stole the names of 80,000 depositors. He tried to sell the list to governments. The French authorities raided his home in 2009, jailed him, and handed the list to the French Treasury. Among the 80,000 names were 2000 Greeks.

In October 2010 Christine Lagarde, then French finance minister, sent that list of 2000 on a CD to then Greek finance minister George Papakonstantinou.

Papakonstantinou copied the list onto a memory stick. As for the CD, he now says: "I gave it for safekeeping in my office, and now I do not know where it is". When Papakonstantinou transferred to the Ministry of Environment in June 2011, he delivered the memory stick to the then head of Financial Crime (SDOE), John Diotis, and claimed he had instructed previous SDOE

Former Greek Finance Minister George Papakonstantinou — a scapegoat?

chief John Kapeleri to check the 20 largest depositors.

Why hadn't he given the whole list to Kapeleri? Papakonstantinou says SDOE had "difficulty investigating such cases".

Kapeleri says that Papakonstantinou did not say anything about the list and only gave him a list of ten names, without asking him officially to check upon them. Diotis confirms Papakonstantinou handed him the memory stick — but without telling him that it was the Lagarde list.

Current Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos says that when he became finance minister he got the memory stick from Diotis in August 2011, and then it remained in his drawer for a year. Why didn't he investigate it? Venizelos blames Papakonstantinou and Diotis. Diotis blames Venizelos for not explicitly instructing him to investigate.

In October 2012, as rumours spread, for Venizelos delivered the memory stick to current prime minister Antonis Samaras.

In late October 2012 journalist Costas Vaxevanis published the list — and was instantly arrested "for flagrant violation of the law

on personal data".

Now the Lagarde list could initiate a major political crisis, and maybe the overthrow of the three-party coalition government. The coalition leaders hope to wriggle out by sacrificing one of their own, George Papakonstantinou, who when finance minister plundered public wealth and squeezed workers' incomes.

It is reckoned that total Greek-owned deposits in Swiss banks come to as much as 600 billion euros. There is not one Lagarde list, but hundreds of them. One has come out.

CLASS

Successive Greek governments have repeatedly taken rapid action against the income of workers.

Just recently the current government has voted extra taxes on the working class of 2.5 billion euros for 2013. Their class nature shows up in how long it takes them to investigate the suspected cases of tax evasion and concealment of large incomes indicated by the Lagarde list.

Greece is not in crisis for the "selected few". Greek people are definitely "all in it together". Wealth is transferred out of the country, legally or illegally, into tax havens, or converted into expensive real estate in European capitals. And most of it is not taxed. In Greece only 51 people declare a personal annual income above 900,000 euros.

It is the duty of the left, if it can get into government, to use this wealth for the benefit of the vast majority. To do that it will need to block the exit of wealth from the country and prevent the uncontrolled movement of capital.

The Lagarde list calls for the "cleansing" of a sys-

tem which cannot be "cleansed", but its revolutionary overthrow! The left needs to work in that direction.

The operations of the international and European banking system, the movements of capital, the tax havens, the gambits by big business to avoid taxes, may be legal or illegal, but are all expressions of the same neoliberal vision and strategy, all options of a system currently immersed in crisis and attempting to overcome it on the back of the working class.

Samaras and his political acolytes have tried to regain grounds by politically attacking Syriza on invented law and order issues — the question of "terrorism", the Villa Amalia squatters (anarchists evicted by police in December 2012 from an old high school building in Athens), etc.

Syriza must avoid this trap. Syriza must seize on the list to reveal the class mechanism of the Memorandum, highlighting the role of economic power and not just political management, targeting Samaras as the leader of the memorandum neoliberal strategy.

Syriza must now raise its alternative proposal:

- To overthrow the government — elections now.
- Instead of austerity, heavy taxation of capital.
- Nationalisation of the banks under workers' control and control the movement of capital.
- Break with the neoliberal strategy — unilateral rejection of the memorandum. Default on the debt.

We need a workers' government, which would be based on workers' democracy, workers' and social control self organisation and management and workers' militias.

Bob Carnegie campaign

Emma Kerin, the Communications Coordinator of Australia's National Union of Workers (NUW), has contacted the Bob Carnegie Defence Campaign to offer NUW support.

She wrote: "What has happened to Bob is particularly close to my heart after growing up through the years of Union Solidarity here in Melbourne." Union Solidarity was a labour-movement

direct action campaign network that organised pickets and solidarity actions in support of workers' struggles.

Around 2,000 new leaflets promoting the campaign have been circulated to trade union activists in the UK. To order copies, please email therubykid1@gmail.com or visit bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com

How profit is trashing public services

By Ira Berkovic

Private companies are being given access to ever greater swathes of public services, buying the right to run for profit what ought to be socially provided to meet human need.

The Tories' "Big Society" scheme was supposed to be privatisation with a friendly, local face — public services being run by local businesses and third-sector organisations as well as larger companies. In reality, only the big have prevailed in the "Big Society"; a handful of multinational capitalist firms dominate the provision of privatised public services.

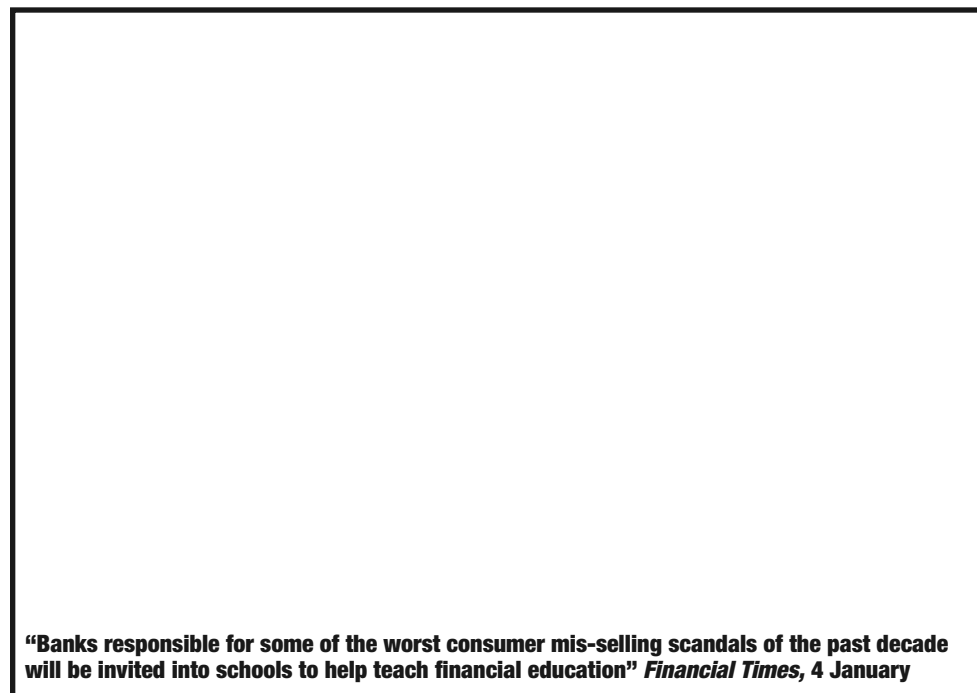
Serco, a global corporation with revenue of over £2 billion (to June 2012), has a vast portfolio of outsourced public contracts.

They run everything from GP services to railways to prisons.

ABUSE

Their operation of these contracts has been dogged by constant scandal and criticism, e.g. guards at the asylum seeker detention centres they run have been accused of abusing detainees.

In March 2012, Serco won the contract to provide almost all community health services for NHS Suffolk. 1,000 workers who had previously been NHS employees suddenly found themselves employed by a



"Banks responsible for some of the worst consumer mis-selling scandals of the past decade will be invited into schools to help teach financial education" *Financial Times*, 4 January

private company. The same month, it took over the running of cleaning, catering, housekeeping, and staff accommodation services in East Kent hospitals for 10 years. The contract was worth £140 million.

There is an Orwellian edge to the reality a private company that provides public healthcare also running prisons and providing electronic tagging devices for offenders and asylum seekers. Serco has no core business — its business is winning outsourced public contracts.

Crawley-based G4S is the world's third-largest private-sector employer — only union-busters-in-chief Walmart, and Foxconn (the company with managers so

oppressive they drive workers to suicide) employ more people. Its half-year turnover for 2012 was nearly £4 billion, and despite the well-publicised controversy over staff shortages (which required the

military to step in), it earned £150 million for providing security for the 2012 London Olympic Games.

It operates six prisons in the UK and, like Serco, also runs services for the UK Borders Agency. In October

2012, G4S guards at Cedars (a UKBA "Pre-Departure Accommodation" centre near Gatwick for asylum seekers facing deportation) were found to have used "non-approved techniques" on detainees, including physically abusing a pregnant woman in a wheelchair. Two years previously, G4S guards were alleged to have beaten Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga to death.

Perhaps the best symbol for the Tories' aspiration to unleash "the dynamism of the market" on public services is Capita, the company to whom the running of an entire north London borough council was effectively handed in December 2012.

Barnet Borough Council is a flagship for the Tories. It has been a laboratory for their experiments in private provision of public services, and the £320 million deal which saw Capita take over the running of almost all the council's back-office functions could see 70% of

its back-office staff lose their jobs. When the cost-cutting and profit-making is the main motivation in service provision, workers are disposable resources.

There is nothing innately progressive about state ownership. A totalitarian state that rigidly and violently controls economic life is no better than an entirely unregulated free market. But the welfare state, public education, and the National Health Services were concessions British capitalism was forced to make in response to working-class pressure, or out of fear of worse upheaval. The Tories' fire sale of public services is part of a concerted attempt to recoup the losses suffered by the British ruling-class over the past six decades — with interest.

To stop privatisation, we need strong community campaigns backed up by workers' organisation in both public and private sector. Our alternative is public ownership with democratic control.

Privatising schools

By Colin Foster

A mistake to your advantage in your benefit payments? It can happen, but it quickly gets clawed back.

But £174 million extra which the Government paid out to Academies in

error in 2012-3 will not be clawed back.

The overpayment, an average of £100,000 per Academy, came from miscalculation.

There are now twelve times as many Academies as in 2010. Over half of all secondary schools in England, and many primary

schools, are now Academies, directly funded by central government, exempt from national agreements on staff pay and conditions.

Bright Blue, a Tory ginger group, is calling on the Tories to move to allowing state-financed schools to be run for profit.

At present the fruits of Academies' "market" success go to head teachers — one in ten paid above

£100,000 — and to "executives" (six Academy chains bosses on at least £200,000 last year).

A report on 10 January by a commission headed by former Ofsted chief inspector Christine Gilbert found that "academies are finding methods to select covertly", thus placing children of better-off parents in extra-funded schools.

Ukip: keeping Britain bigoted?

By Rhodri Evans

The anti-EU United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip) is at 12% in the polls, ahead of the Lib Dems, in surveys published on 14 and 15 January.

But Ukip's sacking on 2 January of the chair of its youth wing, Olly Neville, should help protest voters see the right-wing nature of the party.

Neville was sacked for stating, in a radio interview, a personal opinion in favour of same-sex marriage rights. He says he was democratically elected by the party's young mem-

bers, but cites a turnout of only 117 voters, giving him a 62% majority.

He was sacked by an email from Ukip chair Stephen Crowther, sent on the authority of the executive.

The EU: Cameron's gambit

By Gerry Bates

On 8 January a raft of capitalist bigwigs published a letter in the *Financial Times*.

Richard Branson and others warned prime minister David Cameron against seeking "a wholesale renegotiation of our EU membership, which would almost certainly be rejected". The fall-out "would be to put our membership of the EU at risk".

On Friday 18 January Cameron will announce his response, in a speech in Amsterdam. Cameron wants to renegotiate to

some extent (unclear); get exemption from EU worker-rights clauses, such as the Working Time Directive and the Agency Workers' Directive; and then stage a referendum of some sort.

A big chunk of the Tory party and of smaller capitalists flatly want out of the EU. Short of a catastrophic crisis trashing international capitalist integration, Britain outside the EU would be something like Norway, locked into all the main EU economic regulations and with no say in their design. But nationalist sentiment, and the hope of making Britain an offshore base for capital free from

the mild worker rights negotiated in the EU, give the anti-EUers fervour.

Jeremy Warner, in the right-wing *Daily Telegraph*, put it neatly: "It is in the nature of big companies that they like big markets, and they don't particularly mind rules and regulations."

Cameron is balancing between the different pressures. In October 2012 he said: "I don't want an in/out referendum because I'm not happy with us leaving the European Union, but I'm not happy with the status quo either. I think what the vast majority of this country wants is a new

settlement with Europe and then that settlement being put to fresh consent."

In other words, he hopes to negotiate a new deal and then hold a yes/no referendum on that deal. By 17 December he had swayed towards the anti-EU gang; he didn't want an "immediate in-out referendum".

Socialists have no brief for the current EU structures — and less for a nationalist drive to seek an illusory national independence and scrap even modest worker-rights regulations.

Learn from Spanish health workers

Letters



In summer 2011 I was on holiday in Barcelona with my partner when I got a stomach bug. Unable to access a doctor, I decided to go into the local hospital.

The area we were staying, Nou Baris, is a working class suburb of Barcelona with a high number of Latin American migrant workers and a traveller population. Walking up to the hospital we noticed that there were banners draped out of the local flats and shops, all opposing the closure of the hospital. On arrival at the hospital we saw that there were some tents outside and a stall with several people doing a petition, giving out leaflets, chatting to passersby.

Inside, the hospital was equally covered with political propaganda, but not merely anti-cuts posters, there were political economy cartoons on the walls and longer political pamphlets left in the waiting rooms.

The staff had anti-cuts posters pinned on the back of their uniforms and the petition against the closure was at the reception. The atmosphere in the hospital was somehow one of camaraderie. While I was there staff members went outside in their breaks to participate in a sit down in the road. They seemed to do this without fear and in a way that had clearly become routine.

Campaigning to keep the hospital open was something that the staff did at work, it wasn't a private thing that they had to keep quiet. Their political opposition was open and integrated into their work.

The hospital moved a nurse who spoke some English from another ward to treat me so I was able to discuss what was happening. She told me that the land the hospital was on was owned by a private developer who had been massively increasing the rent of the hospital.

The government could no longer afford to pay the rent on the hospital and so were trying to close it down. She said that all the staff were opposed to it and ready to fight till the end. The local community were totally behind them and very involved.

Several things were remarkable about the hospital in Spain. Firstly, the campaign had communicated the message far and wide, the whole community was clearly informed about the closure. Secondly, the level of political analysis of the situation by the workers was high. Thirdly, the level of care in this workplace, where there was already some amount of workers' control, was exemplary. As we campaign to stop the closure of the A and E, Maternity and other wards at Lewisham Hospital discussions about occupations might seem far fetched to some.

Looking to Spain, where the occupation movement of hospitals is growing rapidly, planning to occupy seems both obvious and possible.

Rebecca Galbraith, south London

Fighting to keep probation public

My Life at Work

By Brendan Milton



Tell us a little bit about the work you do.

I work for London Probation Trust as an administrator. The role entails giving clerical support to Probation Officers. I am also a trade union activist in our Unison branch.

Do you and your workmates get the pay and conditions you deserve?

No. We've had a pay freeze for two years. With the price of everything going up, in real terms we're taking a pay cut, year in year out. Our conditions aren't bad in comparison to some other workplaces, however this is now at risk with the looming privatisation.

How have recent moves towards privatisation affected your work?

The government are looking to privatise 70% of the service to private or voluntary organisations, although I suspect it will be exclusively private companies. Serco have already taken over Community Payback and, as a result, our union branch has lost around 70 members.

Serco have already cut jobs and London Probation did a round of voluntary redundancies to minimise compulsory redundancies before the takeover. I predict a lot more job losses if 70% of the service gets broken up and flogged off. Workers are angry and the sense of insecurity is staggering. We simply don't know what the service will look like in the future, and a lot of us feel disheartened and undervalued.

What do people talk about in your workplace?

Pay, job security, and privatisation. Union meetings are getting bigger and there's a growing sense of anger amongst the workers. The problem I face as a union activist is that too many people are scared of being victimised for getting involved in the branch, so galvanising workers is challenging. I try to educate people as to what's happening to the proba-

tion service. Building on and responding to people's anger is vital to organising an effective fight back.

What are your bosses like? Is there a problem with bullying and harassment by bosses?

There are cases of this, yes. I've worked in plenty of private, non-unionised companies and it's safe to say bullying, harassment and victimisation is a bigger problem there. However, as job insecurity grows, so does the problem of management bullying. Managers know jobs are no longer safe and they use this to exploit workers fears by piling extra workloads onto us and expect we'll be too afraid to speak up.

Is there a union in your workplace, and does it do a good job?

There are three recognised unions in the London Probation. NAPO (National Association of Probation Officers), Unison and GMB. Unison, my union, do a good job at branch level. We represent clerical workers, receptionists and some officers. Our resources are limited and our biggest obstacle is a large-ish but fairly inactive branch (500 members).

We dispute all proposed restructures that lead to job losses and we're currently preparing a fightback against privatisation. How this fightback will look, we don't yet know. I would say our branch is effective in winning disputes. NAPO, while doing an okay job at our workplace on some issues, still have that old craft union or staff association attitude.

For example, when the bosses proposed all workers move to a 37.5 hour working week from 35, NAPO didn't dispute this on the basis that Probation Officers already did a 37.5 hour week. They were trying to level workers down and I've never forgiven them for that. GMB are the management branch, so we seldom communicate with them.

If you could change one thing about your work, what would it be?

To keep it public!

• For more in the My Life At Work series, see <http://bit.ly/uT0dSE>

Revolutionaries at work

AWL news



AWL industrial and union bulletins

Workers' Liberty members and supporters who work in the same industry or who are active the same union.

The school workers' fraction mainly discussed Workers' Liberty's activity in LANAC (the Local Associations for National Action network), the rank-and-file caucus of school workers that Workers' Liberty members were central to founding in 2012 (see page 11 for more).

The PCS fraction, which mainly includes civil service workers but also workers from other industrial sectors organised by PCS, discussed the fight against job cuts in the Department for Work and Pensions, and a battle over pensions cuts by air traffic controllers at Heathrow. It also discussed upcoming union elections in PCS, where

Three of Workers' Liberty's industrial and trade union "fractions" met on the weekend of 12-13 January — our school worker and health worker fractions met, as did our Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) fraction.

"Fractions" are groups of

Independent Left, a rank-and-file network Workers' Liberty is involved in, plans to stand candidates.

The health workers' fraction discussed the difficulties of agitating for radical industrial action in the main health union Unison, which is dominated by a conservative bureaucracy. An activist who attended the fraction said:

"The priorities of AWL activists are to concentrate on patient educational work in our workplaces in the attempt to rebuild a culture of working-class solidarity. We have been inspired by the example of the Chicago teachers, the fledgling cleaners' movement in the UK, and other approaches that seek to build a different form of trade unionism based on collective struggle.

"Even as the immediate future looks likely to bring defeats, there is important work to be done to develop a new generation of activists committed to this kind of class-struggle trade unionism. Where struggles do look likely, as in Lewisham Hospital, we orient our efforts to organising and agitating for victory.

"As the government swings the axe at the NHS it is highly likely that some health workers somewhere will begin to resist. As orders come down from on high to close services, patients will be put at risk. We call for health workers to stand by their patients, refuse to comply with any instructions that put patients at risk and collectively defy the managers and accountants who are making these dangerous decisions. It is a modest demand for clinical integrity but if it is taken up throughout the NHS it will mean a radically transform the movement to save the NHS and put workers' control back on the agenda."

AWL's industrial fractions produce workplace, industrial, and union bulletins, and are supported by a national industrial committee. To get in touch with AWL members in your industry or union, email awl@workersliberty.org.

Facing a revolt over its handling of an allegation of rape against one of its leaders, the SWP can no longer enforce its prohibition on open criticism.

SWP: the case isn't closed

The Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) should arrange a further investigation into the charges brought by a woman member of rape by its former national secretary, and still leading organiser, Martin Smith.

It should do that in the interests of justice, of justice being seen to be done, and of restoring the credibility of the left.

The SWP should tell her, and another SWP woman who has raised lesser complaints, that the SWP will cooperate with them taking the case to bourgeois justice; or, if they don't want to do that, as they may not, set up an inquiry run according to the best standards of bourgeois justice, done by legally-trained people outside the SWP and without personal connections to either party in the case.

The SWP Central Committee (CC) protests that the charges were investigated by its Disputes Committee; the Disputes Committee found Smith innocent; the SWP conference on 4-6 January accepted the Disputes Committee report; and so the matter is closed.

However, visibly it hasn't been closed for a large chunk of the SWP's active membership. The 50.4% vote at the SWP conference, after a very hurried debate chaired by a member of the Disputes Committee, does not carry authority.

Some prominent SWPers have quit, notably *Socialist Worker* journalist Tom Walker. Other well-known SWPers, notably writers Richard Seymour and China Miéville, are defying the CC's instruction to members to shut down debate on the issue and polemicising on the web against the CC.

In the broader labour movement, outside the SWP, the matter is even further from being closed. There, the Disputes Committee carries no authority at all. Since Smith is not only a backroom official for the SWP, but also a public figure for it, dealing with non-SWP anti-fascist activists in Unite Against Fascism and non-SWP trade unionists as a trade-union organiser, the SWP needs an investigation which carries wider authority.

LEFT

So does the broader left. Newspapers like the *Independent* and the *Daily Mail* are using this case to discredit the whole of the left, although there is no reason to believe that similar trouble in the *Independent's* or the *Mail's* office would be dealt with better than in the SWP office.

The rest of the left needs to persuade the SWP to drop its untenable "case closed" stance; or at least we need to go on public record as advocating a different stance.

We do not know whether all the criticisms of the Disputes Committee investigation made inside the SWP are right. The Disputes Committee may have tried sincerely to reach the truth. We don't assume it didn't. Smith should, like all accused people, be considered innocent until proven guilty. We have contempt for the *Independent's* and the *Mail's* sneering description of the Disputes Committee as a "socialist sharia court".

All that still leaves the Disputes Committee without authority. The SWP leadership has blustered about the impossibility of justice in the bourgeois courts. But the SWP did not, and could not, construct at will an island of superior proletarian justice. In fact the Disputes Committee fell short of the better criteria of bourgeois justice. There may be a lesson here for the whole of the left: our AWL Disputes Committee, too, would have lacked the resources and expertise for such a case.

All the members of the Disputes Committee (inevitably, since all were longstanding SWPers) knew Smith well. Two of the members of the Disputes Committee were also members of the CC. The CC was implicated in the case since the

complainant had brought less serious complaints against Smith two years ago, and the CC sidelined them without formal procedure.

According to Richard Seymour, at the SWP conference two years ago:

"Members were told that the accused [Smith] was exonerated, that the verdict had been accepted by the complainant, and that he had been at most a bit foolish. Some members heard that there had been a witch hunt against the poor fellow. And all were reminded of his great achievements as an organiser, which — irrespective of how true or false the allegations are — are considerable. The accused, it has to be said, played up to this. An ovation was orchestrated, with some stamping their feet".

The CC now concedes that it made a mistake two years ago, and prides itself on its decision for a formal Disputes Committee investigation this time. Somehow it couldn't see that the new investigation would have to be completely independent of the CC.

Over the course of the two years and a bit in which complaints have emerged against Smith (not only from the woman who now charges rape), the CC has removed Smith from being national secretary, and now from the CC altogether; or it has accepted his resignation from those positions without advertising that it wants him to return to them. Why, if the case is "closed" on all charges against Smith, and he has been found blameless?

SIDESTEP

The CC's response at every turn has been to make the most limited sidestep it can, and as soon as possible to declare the matter closed. Now it has instructed members to cease debate on it. The instruction is obviously unenforceable.

The CC's approach here is not an aberration generated by anxiety. It is the SWP CC's standard method.

The SWP has a rule binding all CC members to pretend unanimity on every CC decision. SWP full-time organisers outside the CC are also obliged, as a condition of employment, always to argue the latest CC line.

There is no regular forum of internal debate. Tendencies and factions are permitted only for a short period before each SWP annual conference, and must shut down afterwards. They are strictly regulated: four SWP members were expelled in the run-up to the latest SWP conference for no greater sin than some dissident talk among themselves on Facebook.

SWP members can grumble — and do. They can probably dissent and discuss in the confines of their local branch meeting. Political initiative within the SWP at large, independent of the CC, is almost impossible.

Discussion becomes largely a monologue from the CC, with only reservations, quibbles, and strictly-limited single-issue dissent audible from the ranks. Even where almost everyone in the SWP knows that the CC majority made a blunder — as on the SWP's alliance with George Galloway in Respect, in 2004-7 — there is no mechanism for discussing the lessons to be learned. Discussion is drowned out by belaboured invocation of the latest campaign or initiative or stunt, and warnings that only sectarian quibblers analyse the past. "If the bicycle wobbles", so the SWP adage runs, "then pedal faster".

The method derives from poor politics, and leads to even poorer politics, as we argued in *Solidarity* 269. The CC has become used to getting away with that: enough people have been willing to shrug at a foolish slogan or policy. Not this time.

Help us raise £15,000

Above: attendees at a future AWL film showing

On Sunday 27 January, North East London AWL will host a showing of Ken Loach's film *Land and Freedom* as a social and fundraiser for Workers' Liberty.

Film showings can be a more accessible way of having political discussions than more traditional or formal meetings. Although Loach's film is far from perfect politically, it is a good jumping off for a discussion about the Spanish Revolution and Civil War.

A film showing is also a somewhat more congenial way of raising funds than standing on a street corner rattling a tin. It doesn't take much — a space, a screen, and some food and drink.

Your local AWL branch may be organising similar events: email awl@workersliberty.org to get in touch.

The North East London event takes place from 3:30pm in Betty Bruncker Hall, Mora Street, Islington, EC1V 8EH. It costs £8/£4 (waged/unwaged), including food and drink. See <http://on.fb.me/10w8wdd> for more.

There are many other ways you can support AWL's drive to raise £15,000 by May Day 2013:

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.

- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

- Organising a fundraising event.

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Right wing gains strength in Israel

By Sacha Ismail

At the end of December, two separate opinion polls found that two-thirds of Israelis would support a peace deal with the Palestinians involving a Palestinian state on the 1967 borders, with Jerusalem as a shared capital.

That includes 57 percent of those supporting incumbent right-wing party Likud, and 47 percent of those backing the even more right-wing opposition party Jewish Home.

Yet almost no one in official Israeli politics advocates anything like such a solution, or even serious negotiations with the Palestinians. All the polls suggest that, in the general election on 22 January, a big majority of Israelis will vote for right-wing parties, with an even stronger contingent of far-right MPs than before. Netanyahu, now running on a merged electoral list between Likud and the radical right Yisrael Beteinu, looks certain to be returned as prime minister.

The "rising star" of the elections is Naftali Bennett, the software tycoon who is leader of the religious-nationalist Jewish Home. In addition to his militant opposition to gay rights and to the trade unions, Bennett is opposed even in words to the creation of any sort of Palestinian state, advocating the annexation of 60 percent of the West Bank and the enclosure of its Palestinian inhabitants in a series of enclaves with "autonomy [sic] under the supervision of the IDF and Shin Bet" (the Israeli secret police). Jewish Home has doubled in the opinion polls, to about 12 percent.

FUTURE

The Israeli socialist Adam Keller comments: "It thus seems that somewhere in the misty future, the citizens of Israel might vote overwhelmingly in favour of a peace agreement with the Palestinians."

"But in the here and now, at the general elections due to take place in Israel two and a half weeks from now, the citizens... seem likely to give a clear Knesset majority to the parties which strongly oppose such an agreement... they are about to fill Knesset seats with dozens of extreme right members as well as those from the even more extreme right, who are completely opposed to even the most petty and cosmetic of concessions.

"The fact is that most of the Israeli public completely believe what they had been repeatedly told over the past twelve years: there is no partner, the Palestinians do not want peace, there is no chance for peace, and all talk of peace is a pipe dream."

Veteran Israeli leftist Uri Avnery describes the elections like this:

"Faced with at least three grave dangers, they report, Israeli parties and voters just ignored them. As if joined in a conspiracy, they tacitly agreed among themselves not to talk about them. Instead, they bickered and quarreled about totally insignificant and irrelevant issues."

The three dangers Avnery sees are massive attacks on the living standards of the Israeli working class, through tax rises and cuts to services; attacks on democratic rights and even the independence of the judiciary (because the right regards judges' timid opposition to some government measures as left-wing treason); and the Palestinian issue itself. He argues that much of the political elite has stopped even making much effort to use the alleged Palestinian "threat" to gain votes. Meanwhile the annexation of Pales-

tine continues apace, with a constant expansion of settlements.

It is hard to deny Avnery's conclusion about what Israel's failure to offer the slightest measure of justice to the Palestinians could mean:

"In the coming four years, the official annexation of the West Bank to Israel may become a fact. Palestinians may be confined to small enclaves, the West Bank may be filled with many more settlements, a violent intifada may break out, Israel may be isolated in the world, even the crucial American support may weaken.

"If the government continues on its present course, this will lead to certain disaster – the entire country between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River will become one unit under Israeli rule. This Greater Israel will contain an Arab majority and a shrinking Jewish minority, turning it inevitably into an apartheid state, plagued by a permanent civil war and shunned by the world.

"This is so obvious, so inevitable, that one needs an iron will not to think about it. It seems that all major parties in these elections have this will. Speaking about peace, they believe, is poison. Giving back the West Bank and East Jerusalem for peace? God forbid even thinking about it."

OPPRESSION

Meanwhile Israel's oppression of the Palestinians poisons both Palestinian and Israeli society.

In Israel, the poison of nationalism and racism is running strong at every level: from mob attacks on African migrants in the streets to state-level attacks on democratic rights (laws criminalising boycotts of the settlements; attempts to disqualify Arab politicians from elections).

Despite the skewing of politics to the right and the growth of racist reaction, Israel remains a democracy, with a functioning labour movement and an organised political left. Hadash, a non-Zionist, joint Israeli-Jewish and Arab party, has four seats in the Knesset, and is running a list headed by party leader Mohammed Barakeh.

The Organisation for Democratic Action (Da'am) is a left-wing (although still Stalinist) split from the official Israeli Communist Party (which is active in Hadash). Its members were integral to the setting up of the Workers' Advice Centre (WAC-M'aaan), a radical trade union centre that has led organising initiatives amongst both Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian-Arab workers. Da'am was active in the social justice protests of 2011, and is the only Israeli political party to be led by an Arab woman — Asma Agbarieh.

The Israeli Supreme Court overturned the disqualification from the elections of Haneen Zoabi, a candidate of Arab nationalist party Balad. The Central Elections Committee wanted Zoabi disqualified because of comments, including about Iran, which they claimed "undermined the state of Israel". Although a small act in itself, Zoabi's reinstatement into the election shows that there is conflict even within the Israeli state, and that the far-right can't have it all their own way.

The working-class, socialist left is weak and still largely tied to the Stalinist tradition from which it comes. Da'am is likely to poll very poorly, although Hadash may retain its MKs. In general, things do not look good.

We should make the maximum possible solidarity with the Palestinians and the Israeli left, both beleaguered, to demand the only solution which can prevent Avnery's nightmare scenario: independence for the Palestinians and two states.

Reading th

By Harry Glass

Discussion of Israel-Palestine is often hampered by historical illiteracy. A few trite phrases denouncing "Zionism" is the best many on the left can do.

A further problem is finding coherent interpretations of history. For both these reasons, Avi Shlaim's *Israel and Palestine: Reappraisals, Revisions, and Refutations* deserves special attention.

Shlaim is an engaging commentator on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He is one of the Israeli "new historians", who challenged the official Zionist rendition of events. Other authors include Simha Flapan, Benny Morris and Ilan Pappé, although their politics are far from homogenous. Morris radically changed his views following the second intifada in 2000, retreating to the traditional Zionist orthodoxy he had previously done so much to critique. By contrast, Pappé lurched to become the darling of the one-state, BDS left. Instead Shlaim argues that "the only fair and reasonable solution is the partition of Palestine, in other words, a two-state solution". Shlaim also rejects the BDS movement, arguing that "an academic boycott is an oxymoron: you do not have a boycott on dialogue, debate, or the free circulation of ideas". He is "strongly opposed to a selective boycott precisely because it would violate the freedom of Israeli academics".

RATIONAL

Shlaim's work has much to offer a rational Marxist left, despite starting from different premises.

In particular, his framing of the Israel-Palestine question, his understanding of history, of Israel's relations with the US and his assessment of the peace process, he writes as a consistent democrat. Given the poor quality of discussion on the left, this is a considerable step forward.

Shlaim rightly frames the Arab-Israeli conflict as "a clash between two national movements: the Palestinian national movement and the Jewish national movement, or Zionism". There are "two peoples, two distinct ethnic communities, and one land; hence the conflict". He believes that the creation of Israel "involved a terrible injustice to the Palestinians", but he fully accepts "the legitimacy of the State of Israel within its pre-1967 borders". He argues that "the root problem today is the Jewish state's continuing occupation of most of the Palestinian territories that it captured in June 1967".

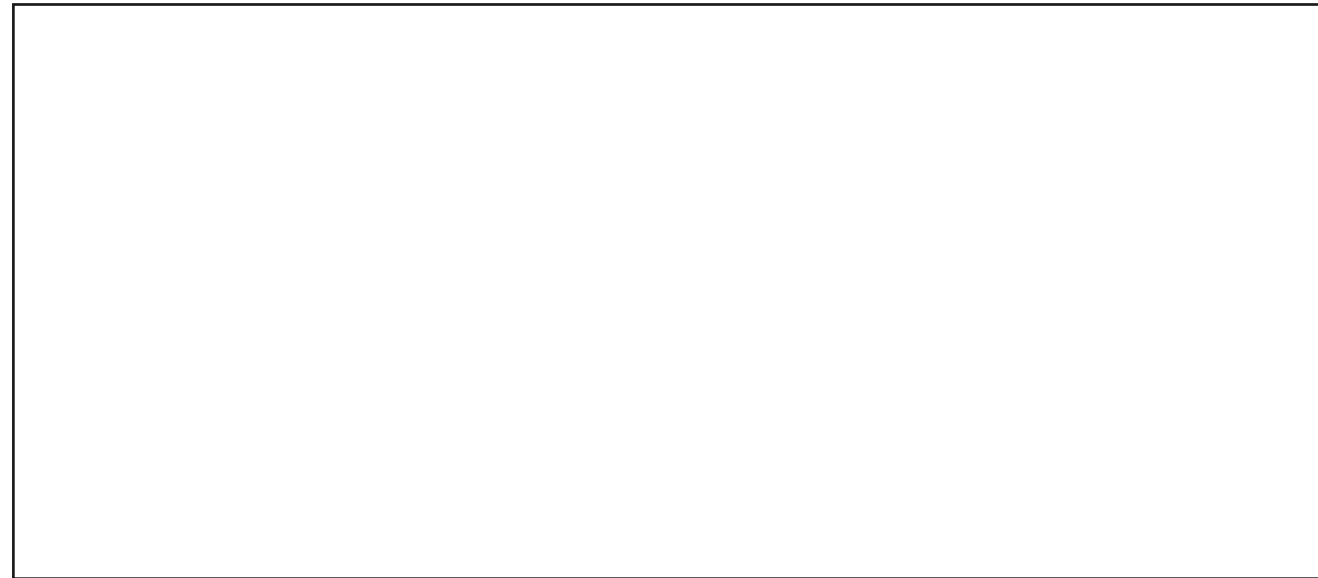
The historical debate is particularly sharp over different assessments of 1948. Many Palestinians regard Israelis as the conquerors and themselves as the true victims of the first Arab-Israeli war, which they call "al-Nakba" (the disaster). Meanwhile, many Israelis regard 1948 as the War of Independence.

Shlaim provides a sharp critique of one of the most serious Palestinian interpretations of 1948 to date: Nur Masalha's *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882-1948*. "Transfer" is a euphemism for the expulsion or organised removal of the indigenous population of Palestine to the neighbouring Arab countries, what is now called "ethnic cleansing".

In reply, Shlaim quotes from Benny Morris' (pre-2000) path-breaking work, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949*. Morris described the flight of the Palestinians and gave examples of expulsion by force. But he found no evidence of a Jewish master plan or of a systematic policy dictated from above for the expulsion of the Palestinians. He therefore rejects both the "Jewish robber state" and the "Arab order" explanations. Morris' concluded that "The Palestinian refugee problem was born of war, not by design, Jewish or Arab".

Masalha's account is wrong because, in the first place, he

The history of Israel-Palestine



The Zionist newspaper Palestine Post announces the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948

“focuses very narrowly on only one aspect of Zionist thinking and neglects the broader political context in which this thinking crystallised”.

Secondly, he portrays the Zionist movement as “monolithic and single-minded in its support for transfer, ignoring the reservations, the doubts, the internal debates and the opposition”. Thirdly, Masalha “presents transfer as the cornerstone of Zionist strategy when it was in fact only one of the alternatives under consideration at various junctures in the conflict over Palestine”. Fourthly, while sharply critical of the Zionist design and of the means by which it was achieved, Masalha “completely ignores the part played by the Palestinians themselves in the disaster that eventually overwhelmed them or the part played by their leader, Hajj Amin al-Husayni”.

SIMPLISTIC

The end result of Masalha's “selective use and tendentious interpretation of the evidence” is a rather simplistic account which “posits a straightforward Zionist policy of transfer and lays all the blame for the flight of the Palestinians in 1948 at the door of the wicked Zionists”.

Masalha goes way beyond what his evidence can sustain and “ends up with a mono-causal explanation which absolves everybody but the Zionists”. These points are highly apposite, and have wider applicability.

Shlaim provides an important assessment of US-Israeli relations. Much of the left regards Israel as simply America's watchdog in the Middle East. After Israel's military victory in the June 1967 war, the US government did come to regard Israel as “a strategic asset”, which “served to check the influence of the Soviet Union and of the radical Arab regimes allied to Moscow”. Shlaim quotes a study, which calculated that between 1948 and 1991, the US subsidised Israel to the tune of \$53 billion.

However this is not the whole story. Shlaim argues that “with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the orphaning of its Arab clients, Israel was no longer needed to safeguard American interests in the Middle East, if that is what it had been doing”. During the first war with Iraq, the US wanted Israel to “sit tight, keep a low profile and do nothing”. The US voted for UN Resolution 681, which condemned Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

From the Israeli side, the relationship is not perceived merely as that of a client. Israeli general Moshe Dayan is quoted to sum up the Israeli view: “Our American friends give us money, arms and advice. We take the money, we take the arms, but we decline the advice”. From the US side, there

is an “Israel-first” school, which supports a special relationship with the Jewish state. However there is also an “even-handed” school, which believes America's most vital interests lie in the oil-producing Arabian Gulf and is reluctant to jeopardise those interests by being too close to Israel. Shlaim argues that the Americans have “the capacity to bring effective pressure to bear on Israel”, given the \$3 billion a year subsidy.

The book contains useful essays on the peace process from the 1990s. Shlaim is candid about his own mistakes, writing that from today's vantage point, “it is indisputable that I was wrong and Edward Said was right in his analysis of the nature and limitations of the Oslo Accord”.

He is fulsome in his praise for Yitzhak Rabin, though less so of Shimon Peres. Shlaim is scathing about Netanyahu's first government for waging “an economic and political war of attrition against the Palestinians in order to lower their expectations”.

He also blames Hamas, whose suicide bombings “had the effect of shifting public opinion against the Labour-led government and the peace process and in favour of right-wing politicians like Netanyahu”.

CAMP DAVID

Shlaim is lucid about the Camp David talks in July 2000. Ehud Barak envisaged an independent Palestinian state over the whole of the Gaza Strip and most of the West Bank, but with the large settlement blocs next to the 1967 border being annexed to Israel.

The Jordan Valley would eventually be turned over to exclusive Palestinian sovereignty. Altogether 20.5% of the West Bank was to remain in Israel's hands: 10.5% to be annexed outright and 10% to be under Israeli military occupation for twenty years. Barak agreed to the return of Palestinian refugees but only in the context of family reunification involving 500 people a year.

On Jerusalem, his offer “fell well short of the Palestinian demand for exclusive sovereignty over all of the city's Arab suburbs and over Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount”.

Shlaim argues that no Palestinian leadership could accept the proposals at Camp David. However Arafat displayed “neither courage nor statesmanship”. His real mistake was not to reject the much-vaunted offer but “to encourage, or at least to tolerate, the resort to violence from his side following the collapse of the Oslo peace process”. The Palestinian resort to violence in the al-Aqsa intifada “had disastrous consequences. It came close to destroying the peace camp in Israel, convinced the public that there is no partner for peace

and brought to power the most aggressively right-wing government in Israel's history”.

Shlaim however suggests that the basic reason for the failure of Oslo was that “Israel reneged on its side of the deal”. The fundamental cause was “the Israeli policy of expanding settlements on the West Bank which carried on under Labour as well as Likud”. But under Barak “settlement activity gathered pace: more houses were constructed, more Arab land was confiscated, and more access roads were built to isolated Jewish settlements”. This policy “precluded the emergence of a viable Palestinian state without which there can be no end to the conflict”.

Shlaim also criticises Hamas as a terrorist organisation, because “its attacks are mainly directed against Israeli civilians on Israeli territory”. He defines Hamas as “essentially an indigenous movement with its own agenda of creating an Islamic state in the whole of Palestine”.

Discussing the Gaza war in 2008-09 (which he opposed), Shlaim argues that “the damage caused by these primitive rockets is minimal but the psychological impact is immense, prompting the public to demand protection from its government”. In the circumstances, “Israel had the right to act in self-defence but its response to the pinpricks of rocket attacks was totally disproportionate”.

Shlaim's work cannot be appropriated uncritically. He is too soft on the Hashemite monarchy in Jordan. His realist theory of international relations, whilst divining important relationships between ruling classes and their states, has little to say on class struggles and conflicts within states.

The most significant criticism of his work concerns agency. Shlaim believes that “the asymmetry in power between Israel and the Palestinians is such that a voluntary agreement between the parties is simply unattainable”. Instead, “a third party is needed to push Israel into a settlement, and that third party can only be the United States”.

Although an agreement from above cannot be ruled out, this perspective misses altogether the “third camp” within both Israeli and Palestinian societies, particularly among workers, that could become the force for peace.

The third camp in Israel-Palestine today is not a major force. But the labour movement is the best place to construct such an axis, not only to resolve the national question on a consistently democratic basis, but also to coalesce the forces for socialism.

- Shlaim's website contains a number of useful essays <http://bit.ly/TXW11A/>



Is a solution that acknowledges the rights of both the Palestinians and the Israeli Jews possible?

Reinventing the Western

Clive Bradley reviews *Django Unchained*

Quentin Tarantino's last film, *Inglorious Basterds*, walked a precarious line. Set in World War Two Europe, it dealt with very serious matters — the genocide of the Jews — but in Tarantino's inimitable way: at least as much about movies as about history, very violent, very funny.

It could have been a distasteful monstrosity. But to my mind it was a brilliant tour de force, with a delirious and unexpected climax that in fact was very thought-provoking.

Django Unchained sets out to pull off the same trick but this time about slavery in America. Does it succeed?

Django (Jamie Foxx) is a black slave sort-of-freed by a German bounty hunter, Dr Schulz (Christopher Waltz, the marvellous villain from *Inglorious Basterds*). Schulz — who is essentially a decent bloke — agrees to help Django rescue his wife, Broomhilde (Kerry Washington) from the most notorious and terrifying plantation in Mississippi, owned by Calvin Candle (Leonardo DiCaprio).

Much tension, and then, inevitably, much violence and gore ensues. Along the way there's a brilliant turn by Samuel L Jackson as Stephen, Candle's apparently-sweet but actually-terrifying Uncle Tom servant.

Some — notably Spike Lee (though apparently he refuses actually to see the film) have objected to the movie, and indeed to the very idea of Tarantino addressing this subject. He trivialises slavery, they say, and the African American experience. Much of this objection seems to be against Tarantino himself — a geeky white boy who verges, sometimes, on the “wigger”, a film obsessive rather than a historian, steeped in B movies, trash culture, (horror of horrors) genre.

And indeed, as you would expect, *Django Unchained* is as much about Westerns as about slavery. Its colours, its sound-

Jamie Foxx plays an avenging angel

track, many of its events, are comments on the genre itself — which was once immensely popular, but died out in the 1970s or before (with occasional revivals, of course, like the recent remake of *True Grit*).

But what a comment. Westerns, as a genre, rarely (I think it might be never, but maybe some Western fan can correct me) have slaves in them at all, never mind as central characters. (There are black characters, occasionally — comedy buffoons with wide eyes and shuffling feet — but not, I think, acknowledged to be slaves).

Westerns certainly never have slaves or ex-slaves as heroes, riding horses, shooting guns, and exacting terrible vengeance on plantation owners.

Foxx's Django is an avenging angel. There is — not quite the climax of the movie, but towards it — the inevitable set-

piece Tarantino gore fest (as you would expect, both bloody and played for jokes). And you want him to blow these evil motherfuckers away. You root for the massacre. It's exhilarating.

I don't think, here, it's as successful as the massacre in *Inglorious Basterds* (where the Nazi leadership is taken out) — which (for me, anyway) makes you reflect on your own bloodthirsty emotions; but it's not, either, as purely ridiculous and jokey as the bloodfest in *Kill Bill I*.

But I don't see that it trivialises anything. It is extremely entertaining — but how is it a valid criticism of a film maker that his film is too enjoyable? It's not very sophisticated — Django is the good guy, the slave owners are the bad guys... But that's how Westerns work; it's pretty much the point of Westerns, except in the classic Western, Good is signified by white (hats, usually), and Bad by black...

Tarantino has said, rightly, that there's nothing in *Django Unchained* that's remotely as violent as slavery was itself. And it includes some marvellous — though very bloody — dramatisations of what slavery actually meant: a runaway torn apart by dogs; slaves forced to pummel each other to death for their owners' enjoyment.

There is, I'm sure, a great film yet to be made about the experience of slavery in the US. Jonathan Demme's *Beloved*, based on Toni Morrison's novel, was leaden and dull; Spielberg's *Amistad* was simply untruthful about the abolition of slavery. *Django Unchained* is not that film. But it's a tall order for any film maker — to make the definitive statement about a vast historical experience.

I think we should cut Tarantino some slack. He has many imitators. Django shows why they are only imitators. It's exciting, compelling, inventive, and there are some terrific performances.

Hurrah for Zhukov?

By Colin Foster

On 2 February, a lavish “Victory at Stalingrad 70th Anniversary Night” is being organised by Philosophy Football (an enterprise run by former Communist Party activist Mark Perryman) and the Hope Not Hate anti-fascist group.

The keynote speaker will be Seumas Milne, associate editor of the *Guardian* and former business manager of the *Straight Left*, a Stalinist splinter publication.

The Battle of Stalingrad, between August 1942 and February 1943, was a turning point of World War Two. So were some British victories in North Africa, and US victories in the Pacific, around the same period.

More those other victories, Stalingrad is still used to cast credit on the political leaders of the winning side, and on Stalin's marshal Georgi Zhukov.

At the time, as Antony Beevor reports in his book *Stalingrad*: “The triumph of the Red Army boosted the status of the [Communist] Party member and attracted fellow-travellers in droves. Even conservatives could not avoid praising the heroism of the Red Army. In Britain, King George VI commissioned a Sword of Stalingrad to be forged for presentation to the city”.

The Trotskyists of the Workers' Party USA wrote (*Labor Action*, 1 February 1943): “Many minds have lost their balance and many eyes have acquired an unusual degree of starriness as a result of the recent Russian military victories. People who had clearly seen, or had begun to see, the tyrannical and anti-labour character of the Stalin regime... are now allowing themselves to be hypnotised into passive acceptance of the Stalinist dictatorship, because the Russian soldiers fight with ability and heroism...”

“It is not the Russian soldiers alone who have displayed heroism and enthusiasm. It is a depressing fact, but a fact nevertheless, that on many occasions the German soldiers have displayed the same qualities. And the Greeks, and the British, and the Americans, and many others. Yet who would

dare say that the countries for which all those soldiers fight have engaged in just and progressive wars?...

“Because the Russian soldiers fight well, does that in any way change the fact that Stalin is one of the bloodiest dictators of modern history, that he is the grave-digger of the Russian Revolution and the aborter of many other revolutions? Does that change the fact that he is the murderer of the Old Bolsheviks... that he has enslaved the Russian workers, that he has deprived them of every possible liberty and democratic right?”

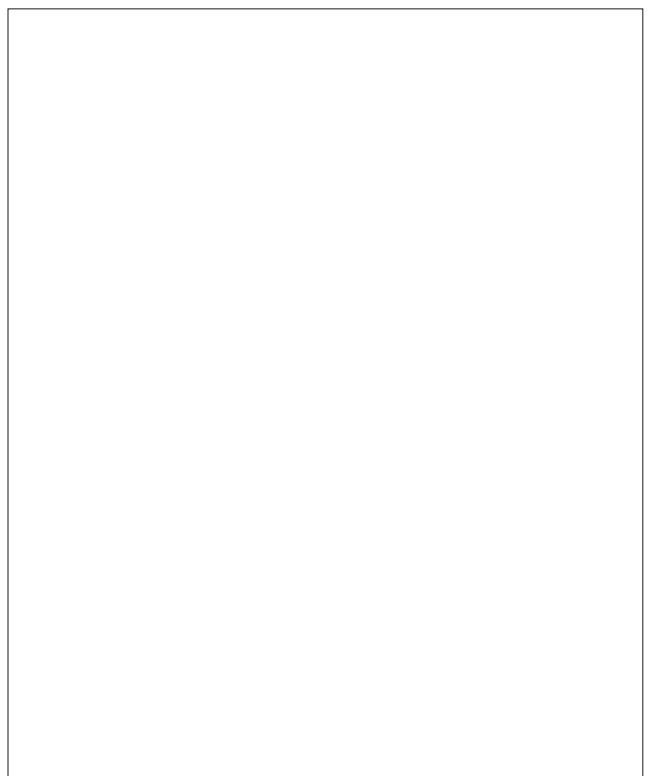
As Beevor states: “The newspaper reports which claimed that frontoviki eagerly discussed the heroic leadership of Comrade Stalin in their trenches, and went into the attack with the battle cry ‘Za Stalina!’ (‘For Stalin’) were pure propaganda. Yury Belash, a soldier poet, once wrote a verse:

“To be honest about it —
in the trenches the last thing we thought about
was Stalin”.

Until later, maybe. The Russian command's enforcement was brutal — it executed about 13,500 troops during the battle, for indiscipline — but at the height the soldiers' life expectancy was so low, and their acceptance that they had to fight the anti-Slav racist Nazi-commanded army so full, that many reckoned they had little to lose.

“For a young Soviet citizen [newly conscripted to Stalingrad], the most shocking experience was... the frank speaking of frontoviki on political subjects. Many expressed themselves in a way that prompted new arrivals to glance over their shoulders in alarm. They declared that life after the war should be different. The terrible existence for those who worked on collective farms and in factories must be improved, and the privileges of the nomenklatura restricted” (Beevor, p.288).

The Stalingrad victory, however, helped Stalin stabilise his regime, and soon to extend its model to the countries of Eastern Europe which came under the control of the Russian army as it pushed the German army into retreat.



RIP Vic Turner, one of the “Pentonville Five”

Vic Turner, one of five east London dock workers jailed for trade union activity in 1972, died in December 2012. Read the story of how working-class militancy not only freed Vic and his comrades but helped bring down a Tory government — <http://bit.ly/VYk4Bp>

What were the Communist Parties?

Mike Wood has spent some years researching the evolution of the Workers Party, the group formed by Max Shachtman and his comrades after the 1940 split in the US Trotskyist movement. This is a second article reporting the results of his research, following a first published in *Solidarity* 267, 5 December 2012.

One area of discussion in the Workers' Party in the 1940s which ran slightly aslant the other disputes was on the nature of the official "Communist", i.e. Stalinist, parties outside the USSR.

Most discussion in the Workers' Party in the 1940s was dominated by the dispute with a minority faction led by C L R James, which held that immediate socialist revolution was bursting out all over at the end of World War Two, and that the USSR was state-capitalist.

The majority of the WP held it was "bureaucratic-collectivist", meaning that it was an exploitative system but distinctly not capitalist. They argued that proletarian revolution in Europe could not happen without a period of re-composition and political rejuvenation of the labour movement, but that all the objective social and economic ingredients for such a revolution were present. They predicted a "democratic interlude" that would be followed by revolution.

The debate on the Communist Parties cut across the lines of that major dispute, though it had connections with it.

The WP considered the CP of Russia to be not a workers' party of any sort, but the vehicle of a ruling class. But what about CPs which did not hold power?

As early as August 1945 Shachtman, as editor of the *New Internationalist*, wrote that:

"It is increasingly clear that the Stalinists are not merely the agents of the bureaucratic ruling class of Russia. That conception is proving to be too narrow. The Stalinist bureaucracy in the capitalist countries has ambitions of its own. It dreams of one day taking power, and establishing itself as rule of substantially the same bureaucratic despotism that its Russian colleagues enjoy."¹ [emphasis in original]

In one of his very last articles before being assassinated in August 1940, Trotsky had written:

"The predominating type among the present 'Communist' bureaucrats is the political careerist, and in consequence the polar opposite of the revolutionist. Their ideal is to attain in their own country the same position that the Kremlin oligarchy gained in the USSR. They are not the revolutionary leaders of the proletariat but aspirants to totalitarian rule. They dream of gaining success with the aid of this same Soviet bureaucracy and its GPU..."

However, Trotsky also saw the Communist Parties as even more fragile and likely to be swept aside by events than the USSR bureaucracy, which he thought almost certain to be ousted in the course of World War Two by foreign conquest, capitalist restoration, or a new workers' revolution. The dominant image among Trotskyists of the Communist Parties was as ineffective and capitulatory groups which unfortunately retained a large working-class base but would not fight capitalism. The *Transitional Programme* adopted by the Trotskyist movement in 1938 spoke of "the definite passing over of the Comintern [the international association of Communist Parties] to the side of bourgeois order, its cynically counter-revolutionary role throughout the world", and declared that "the Comintern has set out to follow the path of Social Democracy..."

In the end most Communist Parties would indeed mutate into variant social-democratic parties and then collapse. But between times, in Yugoslavia (1945), North Korea (1948), China (1949), North Vietnam (1954), etc., Communist Parties did "attain in their own country the same position that the Kremlin oligarchy gained in the USSR", and mostly by their own efforts rather than by Russian intervention putting them in office.

Shachtman had moved on in October 1943, when he had written that where possible the Stalinists tried to oppose both capitalism and socialism and establish their own rule. The CP would only prop up capitalism, he argued, as a lesser evil where its own power was not assured. In 1943, however, Shachtman also held that in order for a CP to take power in its own right it would need not only to be facing a weak proletariat and bourgeoisie but to exist: "where geographical

transitional slogans are left hanging in mid air."⁴

A substantial minority opposed this slogan in the WP, including Al Glotzer, Hal Draper, Manny Garrett and Irving Howe. They argued that the CP was not a workers' party, which the NC majority did not dispute, and concluded that socialists could not call for the CP to be put into government.

Whether or not the CP could then take sole power in the state, it would still have additional influence and use it to the detriment of the working class. If the government proposed by the majority were to happen, then: "the difficulties and the hazards of revolutionary operation would most certainly increase". The CP would be able to use its increased governmental power to gain more influence over the workers, the opposite effect from that desired.

Garrett elaborated in a discussion article for the WP magazine *New Internationalist* in April 1946. Bureaucratic collectivism in the USSR was not able to survive in isolation. In order to ensure its survival the ruling class of Russia would use the CPs to put pressure on governments. This would generally mean a policy of class peace; but where both capitalism and the workers' movement were weak the CPs would seek power in their own right.⁵

C L R James and his minority accepted the slogan for a CP-SP-CGT government in France, but with a different set of premises.⁶ They maintained that the CPs were like the social-democratic parties. Far from attempting to establish systems like the USSR where they gained control, the CPs were cooperating with capitalism to ensure the survival of private property. James wrote of the: "Anglo-American-Russian plan for defending property and privilege."⁷

For Shachtman and his co-thinkers, a great deal more ambiguity was present. The NC majority resolution on France presented the CP leadership as an agent of the ruling class of the USSR, despite Shachtman's earlier article suggesting that CP leaderships would seek Stalinist power in their own right, independently of the USSR.

Joe Carter analysed the contradictions and ambiguities of the majority position in May 1946:

"Does the NC majority hold that the formation of a coalition government of a counter revolutionary *anti-working class party* (the CP) with a reformist workers party (the SP) would be, what it calls, 'the first step' towards the 'class independence of the French proletariat'?"⁸ [emphasis in original]

In his critique Carter recalled previously being alone in arguing on the WP Political Committee that the goal of CPs outside of Russia was to establish state power in a form similar to that in the Soviet Union. The leadership's rejection of this was consistent with the January resolution, wrote Carter, but was not consistent with Shachtman's new assessment, which Shachtman repeated in an article of May 1947.⁹

In Shachtman's book *The Fight for Socialism*, published April 1946, the Communist Parties were described as the "most reactionary" force in the labour movement.¹⁰ After the Second World War the Workers Party decided to make a general rule of backing reformists in the labour movement against CP opponents, and criticised the "orthodox Trotskyists", the SWP, for not doing the same.

When, in December 1940, Max Shachtman first came to argue that the Soviet Union was no longer a "degenerated workers' state", he had accepted that it was economically still progressive compared to capitalism. How could agents of a system more progressive than capitalism be the "most reactionary" forces in a labour movement which contained pro-capitalist forces?

The estimation of the global class struggle was another factor in these disputes. One reason the NC majority claimed in January 1946 that the CP functioned only as an agent of the Stalinist bureaucracy of the USSR in France and would not seek power independently was that it believed that, despite the "democratic interlude", despite the need for a period of re-composition of the labour movement, in basic social and economic terms working-class revolution was close at hand. Stalinism could not establish power without the strength of the Red Army to directly back it.

However: "If, contrary to this analysis, the Stalinists should now be on the verge of taking state power in France in their

American Communist Party poster from 1947

conditions facilitate not only such overthrow but also physical control by the Kremlin."²

In January 1946 the Workers Party National Committee voted to take up the call in France for a joint government of the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, and the CGT (the major French trade-union confederation, by then dominated by the CP). France was then ruled by a three-way coalition of the CP and SP with the openly bourgeois MRP, with the conservative Charles De Gaulle as president and arbiter (until 20 January 1946); but the CP and the SP alone had won a majority (282 out of 522 seats) in the Constituent Assembly elections of October 1945.

Now, if Shachtman claimed that the CP was intent, even in France, on establishing "bureaucratic despotism", then how could the Trotskyists call for them to be placed in government?

SLOGANS

The Workers Party National Committee resolution accepted Shachtman's analysis that the CP was not like the SP, and also argued that the CP was not a workers' party but simply a party based largely on the working class.

Nevertheless, they argued that the CP would be unable to take power if it were in a government also with the SP and CGT, and as such there was no risk of it using government power against the working class. In the words of the resolution:

"The slogan is not the same, adapted to French conditions, as that put forward by the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 in advocating a coalition government of the Menshevik and Social Revolutionary parties... In France today, there is involved, as far as the Stalinist party is concerned, not a democratic but a totalitarian party operating as an instrument of the Kremlin and the GPU. Hence we oppose any slogan which means lifting this counter-revolutionary totalitarian instrument into the position of state power in any country... where there is the clear threat of its use of the state police power for the extermination of the independent working class."³

The slogan, for the NC majority, was the consequence of calling for an end to the coalition with outright bourgeois parties. Any drive for working-class political independence meant a drive to throw the outright bourgeois parties out of government. Without a slogan for the outright bourgeois politicians to be removed from government: "all the other

How I was expelled from the SWP (IS)

By Martin Thomas

I was expelled from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP, then called IS) on 4 December 1971. IS then was different from, and more open than, the SWP today. But there are links between then and now.

IS (SWP) had deliberately promoted itself as democratic and open since 1957-8, as a riposte to the bigger and more active, but tightly-controlled, SLL led by Gerry Healy (only tiny shreds from which continue today: it collapsed in 1985).

IS really was more open. There was debate in its press. In December 1968, it accepted a merger with the small Trotskyist group Workers' Fight, forerunner of the AWL, which said explicitly that it had big disagreements with the whole IS tradition and would continue to argue its case inside the merger.

Yet IS was never as democratic as it seemed to be. Then as now, its leaders reckoned that building the organisation was more important than sharpness of political ideas. In those days, they explained it as a matter of IS's job being to link together the different fragments of rank-and-file trade-union militancy.

The multi-coloured eclectic variety of the IS membership of the late 1960s looked different from the pretend-unanimity of the SWP today. But its political culture disparaged political clarity, and made socialist theory (on which IS prided itself: it had many academics and writers) a mandarin affair largely uncoupled from day-to-day agitation. With that culture, the very variety lent itself to the organisation being easily manipulated, not so much by a bureaucracy (there wasn't much), as by a sort of extended family around the main leader, Tony Cliff.

By 1971 IS was probably bigger in terms of real activity than it is today. 880 members at Easter 1970, and 2350 at Easter 1972: the definition of membership was loose, but all those members would have been active adherents of IS on one level or another, unlike the 7000 "members" the SWP claims today, most of whom don't pay dues, don't sell or even read *Socialist Worker*, and quite often don't even know they are reckoned to be members.

The organisation was beginning to recruit some trade-union activists, on the basis of the pitch about linking fragments of rank-and-file trade union militancy.

It ran up against political problems. The Tory government was taking Britain into the European Union, then called Common Market. The Communist Party, then a big force, deployed nationalist arguments to "keep Britain out". The Labour left and most union leaders had a similar stance. Many Labour right-wingers backed EU entry (and some Tory

The IS was more open than the SWP is today, but it always put organisational calculation before political clarity

right-wingers opposed entry).

IS's slogan had been "In or out [of the EU], the fight goes on". This put it at odds with the flow of the broad trade-union left. The IS leaders didn't like that. The Easter 1971 conference reaffirmed the old position. In June 1971 Tony Cliff and Chris Harman proposed to the IS National Committee what they said was only a tactical modification: IS should still argue the old position, but in vote-outs in union branches between "support entry" and "keep Britain out", IS should "vote with the left".

The National Committee accepted that, with dissent not only from Workers' Fight but also from such well-known figures as Jim Higgins and Paul Foot. Without any further formal change, that NC vote was used as licence to turn *Socialist Worker* to strident campaigning to "keep Britain out" and later to "get Britain out".

Foot soon stepped into line, and Higgins didn't fight on the issue. Workers' Fight did. It campaigned for a special conference to call the NC to order for illegitimately overturning the Easter conference decision. The campaign won the constitutionally-required number of branches to requisition a conference. The IS leadership disputed one branch vote, and then short-circuited the argument by calling a special conference — but one to expel Workers' Fight. Or rather to "defuse", to reverse the merger of 1968.

The merger hadn't worked, they said. The stropky presence of Workers' Fight made discussion difficult. Get rid of Workers' Fight, and IS could return to its old, easy-going, civilised democracy.

I was by then a member of the Workers' Fight grouping in IS, called the Trotskyist Tendency. Like the majority of TT

members by then, I had joined it as a member of IS convinced by its arguments. What could "de-merger" mean to us? Expulsion.

Some people in IS argued that we should instead duck and weave. We should formally dissolve Workers' Fight, seek continue as individual IS members, explain that there was now nothing to "de-fuse", and maybe form a new caucus when the squall had died down.

We argued that it was not just a squall. The leadership was saying that there could be no "permanent" or "generalised" opposition groupings inside IS, only short-term caucuses on limited issues.

It was a while before a whole new set of rules was formally established, but we were right. The IS leaders had to have a special conference to expel ("de-fuse") us. Little more than a year later, in April 1973, they were able to expel another opposition grouping by a simple National Committee vote, on the grounds that its political ideas were too far from IS majority parameters. (The IS leaders also made a lot of the fact that the grouping was a "secret faction", i.e. not declared as such).

In 1974, yet another group was expelled for refusing to dissolve as a faction after IS conference; in 1975, two groups, also for refusing to dissolve as factions.

By now the SWP expels people with no more due process than a letter from the SWP office. If someone on the SWP CC disagrees with your expulsion, they are compelled as a condition of employment to pretend to agree with it.

It was not well along in the 1980s that the current SWP regime finally congealed (the change of name to SWP came in 1976-7), but the essential framework had been set by the mid-70s.

The Democratic Opposition faction, set up in the SWP before its 4-6 January conference, started to call for the regime to be liquefied again. Since 4-6 January all factions in the SWP are formally dissolved, but there is a visible and broad opposition calling for democratic reform.

Issues are bubbling up such as the removal of the rule of pretend-unanimity for CC members and full-timers; full and timely information for members on SWP affairs and debates; a mode of election for the CC which allows for piecemeal change, rather than forcing SWP conference into a yes-or-no vote on a complete, unamendable slate from the outgoing CC; a broader leadership committee which has real ability to call to account the necessarily small-sized day-to-day steering group; having public debate as customary alongside disciplined unity in action.

They are all important. But behind them lies the vital debate: on what a revolutionary socialist organisation is really for, and the centrality of political clarity.

What were the Communist Parties?

Continued from page 9

own name... the Fourth International would have to... revise fundamentally not only its whole European and international perspective, but also the whole character of our epoch."¹¹

Maintaining that revolution was a likely medium term prospect was connected, for the majority of the WP, with an analysis of Stalinism as a transitory and isolated phenomenon, the product of the peculiar nature of the counter-revolution in the USSR. Trotsky had suggested in 1939 that admitting another class society than socialism was possible after capitalism would mean seeing that society as the wave of the future.¹² The WP majority avoided that conclusion by casting bureaucratic collectivism as transitory and accidental. Carter responded to the NC:

"Because we may have to reevaluate our program if and when we are confronted by the 'reality' of a completely Stalinised Europe does not contradict the view that such a Europe is a real possibility."¹³

Garrett had already argued such a reevaluation might prove

to be necessary, suggesting that if the Stalinist parties proved capable of taking power it would prove that history had "been deflected from its natural course".¹⁴ Garrett also claimed that Stalinism was not simply a product of the Russian counter-revolution, but was a product of capitalism. A stratum of labour bureaucrats, intellectuals, and professionals attached themselves to the Communist Parties as they saw the possibility of office under a planned but anti-democratic economy. Garrett and Carter designated the CPs as parties with a base in the working class, but not working-class parties.¹⁵

In 1941 Shachtman and his co-thinkers had largely accepted Trotsky's theory that the Soviet bureaucracy was a transitory phenomenon soon to be buried by the coming proletarian revolution. They saw the CPs as agents of that bureaucracy, but not ones that could on their own take power. Bureaucratic collectivism was for them the result of a freak peculiarity of Russian class struggle, not a natural offshoot of capitalism. By late 1947 that analysis of the CPs was slipping.

Bureaucratic collectivist trends existed in capitalist societies, independent of intervention by the USSR. It was impossible to maintain that bureaucratic collectivism was merely a unique and momentary aberration in Russia.

By adding piecemeal to his analysis of Stalinism Shachtman slowly changed his underlying theories and dropped more and more of Trotsky's 1936 Revolution Betrayed analysis.

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Teachers' pay: "fight later" won't do

By Patrick Murphy,
NUT Executive (pc)

The Tory government plans to abolish national pay scales for teachers.

The first thing the unions need to do is to get a proper grip on the gravity of the attack. So far they haven't done this. The national officers' report on pay in December talked of militancy being dampened by Heads promising to continue as before. It described the fight to defend national pay as a long-term battle and, tellingly, one of the strategies listed was to develop new action guidelines to persuade schools not to ration pay. There is every sign that, apart from a possible token strike this term, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) Executive is planning for a strategy of closing lots of individual stable doors after the horse has well and truly bolted.

Time is not on our side. We do not have the luxury of a long-term battle before which we carefully choose the best time to fight. The consultation on these proposals is over and Gove now intends to legislate so that the new system is in place from 1 September 2013. While it's important, of course, to make judge-

ments as to whether members are ready it's actually more important to ensure that they are.

And what evidence we have suggests strongly that, given leadership, NUT members are prepared to take action to defend national pay.

Immediately after Gove announced his proposals and before any campaigning work could be done the NUT carried out a selective survey of members. Not surprisingly there was overwhelming opposition to the proposals but the response to questions on action was very encouraging. 84% indicated that they believed members would take action alongside NASUWT, but an impressive 79% said they would support such action if it was only the NUT involved. Whatever

quibbles and caveats might be thrown at this evidence it demonstrates a much greater sense of urgency and determination than can be seen from either of the union leaderships.

Our members have already voted overwhelmingly for strikes to defend pay as part of our ballot last summer.

At the December Executive some of us had received huge numbers of motions or statements from school groups calling for decisive and urgent action on pay.

NECESSARY
Does this "prove" that enough members are ready for the sort of action necessary to win?

No, but it does suggest that given a serious lead and direction from the Union we can mobilise the vast bulk of members for a serious plan of action.

And that is the other crucial part of the equation. If the most that we can do is announce a one-day strike sometime late in this term with no clear plan for any further action declared in advance then very many members will conclude that they are being asked not to defeat these proposals but to express some token anger at them. Members

will mainly support their union's call but they will see that we are not serious. They will be even more sceptical having gone through the experience of the pensions campaign (two isolated days of action which left the appalling proposals intact).

Of course we would be in a stronger position if the two largest teachers' unions acted together. It is now clear, however, that NASUWT currently have no intention of striking to defend national pay. Our choice is whether to embark on a plan of action by NUT members, while working to involve the NASUWT and other unions at every stage, or to admit defeat. We know that the decision by NASUWT and other unions to strike on 30 November 2011 was taken because the NUT gave a lead by striking on 30 June.

The most effective, indeed the only, way to make NASUWT to rethink their position is for the NUT to call action and make it a success in as many schools as possible.

• Abridged from the bulletin of the Local Associations Network — www.nutlan.org.uk

"Union should be led from workplace"

Peter Pinkney was elected national president of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT) in December 2012. Workers' Liberty members in RMT supported his election bid. Peter spoke to *Solidarity* in a personal capacity.

I stood on a platform of wanting to minimise the distance between the leadership of the union and the members at a workplace and branch level.

So my priority will be getting out to workplaces and talking to people. I want to base the initiatives I take as President on what members at a rank-and-file level want.

There's a fear of redundancy. My own job is under threat; I may not have a signal box to go back to work in when my term of office ends in three years' time.

There's also a great deal of concern about the consequences of reductions in staffing levels. Guards are worried about the possible introduction of driver-only trains, and station staff and train despatchers are very worried about the implications of staffing levels for passenger safety. The incident at Liverpool James Street, where a woman was killed boarding a train and the guard has been given five years in prison, has worried a lot of people. If staffing levels keep being reduced, there'll only be one person responsible for despatching the trains and that sort of accident will increase.

It's not just about defending jobs now, it's about defending staffing levels so workers in the future will have jobs to go into.

Where I work, on Network Rail, the RMT has already negotiated the PT&R deal (Promotions, Transfers, and Redundancies). There's a fight to make sure Network Rail

sticks to that. They're out to slash jobs by building "super boxes" that amalgamate signalling boxes across entire regions into a central box. Thousands of jobs are at risk, and I honestly don't know how we can respond to that. The scheme is already underway.

We have a signallers' conference in February which will discuss the issue, and I'll be taking my lead from there.

I don't believe the Executive and the national officers should be having the final say about industrial strategy and disputes. I think the rank-and-file voice should be listened to.

STAFFING

I do believe we're in a position to go on the offensive about staffing levels on stations.

Management will be trying to push through driver-only trains on the mainline, and driverless trains on London Underground, so we need an offensive campaign that makes the positive case not only to defend the status quo but increase staffing levels.

The union's political strategy needs to be widened beyond the current support for TUSC, which I believe is too exclusive and doesn't include a wide enough cross-section of the left. Ultimately what we need is a British version of Syriza, which can unite the political left and radical social movements. Such an initiative would hopefully take a section of Labour MPs with it, as well as winning support from unions.

We need to train reps and activists to build grassroots strength. When we recruit, that has to be on the basis of engaging workers with the issues they're most concerned about in the workplace and making the union an accessible for them to fight around those issues.

The union should be led from the workplace level up.

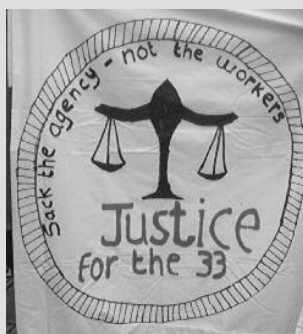
• Abridged from <http://bit.ly/V6F1w7>

Action for jobs and safety on the Tube

By Ollie Moore

Tube workers employed by the Trainpeople agency demonstrated outside Transport for London headquarters on Tuesday 15 January, demanding jobs and justice.

The workers, some of whom have worked on the Bakerloo Line for five years, found themselves facing the dole queue when 19 new directly-employed staff were taken on to fill roles that the agency



staff were already fully trained for and had already been working in.

They set up a soup kitchen outside TfL's headquarters on Broadway, St. James's Park, to highlight the poverty they face being thrown into if bosses push ahead with the sackings. RMT is now moving to a strike ballot of Trainpeople members.

Drivers on the Bakerloo Line also took action on 15 January, as members of both main Tube unions

(RMT and ASLEF, the drivers' union) refused to take trains into sidings and depots until they had personally checked that all passengers were clear.

The move is a protest against cuts to station staffing levels. An RMT statement explained that, before staffing cuts, "all carriages would be checked by station staff before moving into sidings at Queens Park, Stonebridge Park and Harrow & Wealdstone depots, but the new procedure only requires a driver to make an announcement, flash the car lights on and off, shut the doors and go.

"The result has been an alarming increase in over-carrying on the Bakerloo in the last year — some 3,362 incidents compared with just 94 on all other lines put together."

DWP jobs saved?

By Darren Bedford

A strike by workers in the Department for Work and Pensions against job losses, scheduled for 21 January, is unlikely to go ahead.

The ballot, in response to the announcement of 43 compulsory redundancies, returned a vote in favour strikes, but it now looks as though management might back down from that. PCS union leaders say talks with management have been "very positive".

As we go to press, the exact detail of the talks is unknown. Members should decide on the future of the dispute.

If the jobs have indeed been saved, that is a significant victory.

More industrial news online

Honda job cuts, construction workers' safety strike, rail signallers' strike, blacklisting fight, & more:

bit.ly/W4XtAa

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Save Lewisham hospital, save the NHS!

By Jill Mountford

Matthew Kershaw, the Special Administrator brought in to reorganise NHS services after South London Healthcare Trust went bust, has made his final recommendations.

There are no surprises. He recommends SLHT be dissolved, with services being taken over by other Trusts, and that Lewisham Hospital's A & E and maternity units be axed.

He offers no answers on how 125,000 annual patient visits to Lewisham A&E will be accommodated or how the 4,365 births in Lewisham maternity unit will be adequately supported. Three quarters of million people will be left with one A & E. Kershaw's cuts will cost lives.

The report estimates 140 jobs will be cut but others estimate this figure to be much greater.

Kershaw's accountants estimate the changes will cost a staggering £1.093 billion to implement. It will cost £195 million over a two-three year period (up to 2015-16) to close down services at Lewisham. And Kershaw's report has just cost taxpayers £5 million to produce, most of which went to line the already well-lined pockets of management consultants.

Less than two years ago £12 million was spent the A & E at Lewisham. Kershaw also recommends that £207 million of debt accumulated since SLHT was established in 2009 should be written off. The DoH will fork out an extra £25 million a year to help continue to pay for PFI deals. Naturally, nowhere does Kershaw recommend PFI debts be cancelled. Jeremy Hunt (Secretary of State for Health) will make the final decision on the proposals on 1 February (though he is not required to make his decision public).

Despite a groundswell of

angry opposition from tens of thousands of people in Lewisham and the fury many clinicians and hospital workers; despite Jeremy Hunt saying "[hospital] re-organisations are not always the panacea they are made out to be" while claiming that saving his local hospital from closure as his proudest political achievement, it's hard to see how Hunt will not implement Kershaw's recommendations.

TESTING

Many people, including health experts, see Kershaw's proposals for SLHT and Lewisham Hospital as being a testing ground for the government for changes in healthcare across England.

It's one thing fighting to save your local hospital as an opposition Tory MP under a Labour government; it's quite another to backdown over ideological

attacks on the NHS when you are Tory Secretary of State for Health and charged with the job of abolishing the NHS.

In 2005 Hunt and Gove, among others co-authored *Direct Democracy* in which they state "Our ambition should be to break down the barriers between private and public provision, in effect denationalising the provision of healthcare in Britain".

The proposals for south London hospitals are as irrational for taking care of the sick and vulnerable as capitalism itself. They reflect the ideology of a government who want to break up the NHS, sell it off, or give it away to private profiteers. Reducing the NHS to little more than a logo, the service is being parceled up and privatised to move towards a US-style healthcare system.

The NHS is perhaps one of the last two strands of the post-war welfare state, the

other being education, that can mobilise people to defend it. All over the country "Save our Hospital" campaigns are springing up. We urgently need to find ways of co-ordinating these local campaigns in a nationwide movement.

CAMPAIGN

The Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is an energetic and vigorous community campaign with collective experience, determination and resolve to carry on fighting no matter how long it takes (and it may take years).

Health workers within the hospital campus need to take confidence from the campaign.

Hampered by a local Union bureaucracy concerned with little more than defending its own position, union membership in the hospital is low. Workers on the hospital campus need to get organised to control over *their* union, pursuing a vigorous membership drive recruiting porters, cleaners, nurses and admin staff and running an open and democratic campaign to defend the hospital.

Discussing with and educating members on ways to fight the cuts and closures must be a priority. Preparing for a work-in to keep services going, arguing for and convincing other workers of the need for solidarity action, building up rank and file support to defend the NHS are all necessary if we want to win this fight.

If Hunt does back Kershaw's recommendations then we have to match his commitment to wreck the NHS with our need and desire to maintain, build on and improve it.

Any victory along the way would rebuild confidence in the labour movement that has the potential to go beyond defending the NHS.

Their Europe and ours

A WORKERS' LIBERTY DAYSCHOOL

Saturday 16 February, 11.30-6pm,

ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

14 November saw Europe's first-ever cross-borders general strike, with strikes in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece.

Elsewhere in Europe we face a situation of high working-class anger but low working-class confidence and sluggish and bureaucratised labour movements. Are there lessons from Greece applicable in countries like Britain?

Join us, and speakers from across Europe, to discuss how we can develop European working-class unity and a Europe-wide fightback, and what Marxist ideas can contribute to that fight. Discussions will include:

- **What is a revolutionary situation? Is there now one in Greece?**
- **Who are Syriza?**
- **How Leon Trotsky's ideas can help us understand the crisis**
- **Should we want the EU to break up?**
- **Facing and beating the threat from Golden Dawn**
- **Solidarity without borders: migrants' struggles**
- **Women across Europe fight back**

Free creche and accommodation. Book online at workersliberty.org/europeanrevolution

One law for the rich...

The Government has cut future pensions for public sector workers by saying that entitlements will be upgraded for inflation only by the consumer price index (CPI) instead of the retail price index (RPI). The apparently fiddly adjustment will lose some pensioners 20% or more of the value of their pensions.

The same indexing problem applies to £294 billion worth of index-linked government bonds. A regular government bond of £1000 running for, say, ten years, entitles you to £1000 in ten years' time plus twice-yearly interest payments. An index-linked bond pays back £1000 plus ten years' inflation. But inflation calculated how?

A recent announcement by the Office for National Statistics means that the bond pay-outs, unlike the pensions, will continue to be upgraded by RPI. A change had been expected to upgrading by RPI, another index, closer to CPI than RPI, and that would have saved the Government £3 billion a year.

Taking £3 billion a year from the rich is, however, for the Government, a completely different matter from taking billions from the worse-off.

MARCH TO SAVE LEWISHAM HOSPITAL!

With only days to go before Hunt makes his decision on the fate south London Hospitals we will be marching to save Lewisham Hospital.

Saturday 26 January – midday. Assemble on the grassy knoll opposite Lewisham DLR station, marching to Mountsfield Park for a rally, music, hot food and a 100-foot petition.