

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity



weekly **worker**



Pestminister: bureaucracy, lawyers and the politics of purity are illusory answers

- Letters and debate
- Football Lads Alliance
- Moshé Machover speaks
- AWL: witch-hunters

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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LEBANON: THE DRUM BEAT OF WAR



LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Free tickets

The Socialist Party in England and Wales's annual school - self-explanatorily entitled 'Socialism' - offered an opportunity to catch up with the comrades, as they continue to wrestle with the recent changes in the Labour Party.

Glenn Kelly, SPEW's joint industrial organiser, and RMT union president Sean Hoyle addressed the problem in a Saturday evening session on Labour and the trade unions, although it ended up being very focused indeed on Hoyle's union and the equivocal attitude it has taken so far to re-affiliating to Labour - this year's AGM resolved to explore rejoining the party that its ancestor union proposed in the first place, although leaving the basis very vague indeed. Comrade Kelly - who longer-term readers might remember as one of the four Unison members ludicrously suspended from the union for racism for using the three wise monkeys on a leaflet - congratulated the RMT for taking exactly the right position. The battle in the Labour Party is hardly won; most councillors and MPs are still on the right; the RMT should make sure it gets its money's worth.

Comrade Hoyle, though not a SPEW member to my knowledge, seems very much on the SPEW 'wing' of the RMT, and very attached to the ill-starred Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition electoral front the two organisations sponsor. His rhetoric was very opposed to unconditional re-affiliation, but he was very vague on what exactly it was he was presenting to the party authorities - they were not *conditions*, but perhaps *questions*, or maybe something else. In his first meeting with Ian Lavery, Labour Party chair, he demanded an RMT comrade's £3 back, after he was denied a vote in the 2015 leadership contest, but apparently Lavery only had £1 on him, so negotiations are not going well so far. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that they are happening, in some sort of informal way. Meanwhile, he noted that several motions urging the RMT to get on with it and affiliate had appeared in rapid succession, and darkly hinted that this was the work of the right, but we have only his word for it, and frankly we are sceptical - it is more likely members of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty or similar.

Comrade Kelly had said that the discussion would have been a very different one two and a half years ago, but, so far as the floor debate went, that was something of an exaggeration. The speakers' list was dominated by SPEW and RMT comrades, who all seemed to be of one mind on the issue. Things regrettably did descend into the exasperating Socialism tradition of people listing the bad behaviour of municipal Labour administrations. "Don't you know they're attacking binmen in Birmingham?" "Don't you know they're forcing driver-only operation on Merseyrail?" *Yes, comrades, we do.*

I argued that there was a weirdly passive attitude in all this. Comrade Kelly had correctly noted that there was a struggle going in the Labour Party, yet he seemed to be recommending a 'wait and see' attitude as regards its outcome. I wished the RMT comrades the best of luck in squeezing concessions out of Lavery and co, but asked how they

could possibly have more influence over the Labour Party unaffiliated than affiliated. The answers I got were less than satisfactory, and sometimes odd. Comrade Dave Walsh from Merseyside argued, peculiarly, that mandatory reselection was a fight to be won outside the Labour Party. Kelly pointed out in relation to this that the Unite union's policy on mandatory reselection had been moved by a SPEW comrade, and very good too, but this just makes things weirder still - if you can move it in a Unite branch, why not a CLP?

The closest thing to an answer was that a Corbyn government was likely, but would come under intense pressure from the capitalist establishment, and if anything were to go wrong then the RMT (and by extension SPEW) would have been ill-served urging a full-blooded intervention. This *seems* to be an argument that the disillusioned youth will then be ready to flood into Tusc or similar, although it was not stated as such. I cannot see what other conclusions could be drawn.

All of which is pretty frustrating. Both Kelly and Hoyle - and those members of the audience who could see beyond what was happening at the end of their front garden in Birmingham, Hackney, Rhondda or wherever you like - had between them a fine programme for revolutionising the Labour Party: reselection, a sovereign conference, an end to bans, an amnesty for the excluded, the abolition of the compliance unit, and so on. All of this could be lifted wholesale from our literature. It is a bitter shame that for them it is not a programme, but an ultimatum.

Elsewhere, supremo Peter Taaffe was to be found holding court on the October revolution, and took us back to a nobler age - when the last 30 years of research into the question had simply not happened at all. Taaffe told us he does not trouble himself with "hair-splitting academics", which rather settled that. He was, however, perfectly happy to debate - and had invited the likes of Richard Pipes, Orlando Figes and Simon Sebag Montefiore along, even offering 20 free tickets for their supporters, but had gotten no luck. The CPGB's Jack Conrad welcomed that spirit, and invited Taaffe to next year's Communist University - with as many free tickets as he wants. Readers of this paper will no doubt await his response with interest.

Jim Grant
Labour Party Marxists

Safest space

And so we bid farewell, for now at least, to the Anarchist Bookfair, London's only major anarchist-orientated event for the last 34 years. For those who don't already know, the Anarchist Bookfair collective this year won't be attempting a 35th year, following threats of a boycott and active picketing by certain groups and individuals.

This is due to a small group of radical feminists handing out leaflets opposing changes to the Gender Recognition Act. This caused quite a stir among the trans activists present, who surrounded those handing out the leaflets and demanded their ejection. When bookfair collective members such as Helen Steel attempted to intercede to stop what was likely to spill over into violence, she was herself surrounded and called names such as "ugly terf", "terf scum", "bitch" and - most amazingly - "fascist". This was all justified on the basis of demanding a safe space for trans people to express themselves. As far as Helen Steel or the collective were concerned, the bookfair attempted to accommodate both groups to put

forward their positions. But, as far as I'm concerned, nobody was being threatened by a leaflet debating a big issue for many feminists.

Of course, the groups who denounced the bookfair did not see it this way. The logic of safe spaces in this particular instance seems basically to destroy the very essence of the bookfair itself: namely a space for all ideas to be exchanged and argued out. But it seems that name-calling, physical confrontation *et al* do not challenge safety at all - as long as only the correct positions are allowed. A Strange logic indeed.

The bookfair has always been an eclectic mix of political causes and positions, all loosely orientated around the broad organisational and historical traditions of anarchism. All the way from anarchist communism to full-on anti-collective individualism. You would often see Catholic worker or other Christian anarchists mere tables away from an old punk with a banner proclaiming all religion as murderous and bigoted. The understanding obviously being that this was an open platform for the exchange of ideas, a forum to find common ground for struggle in the future. And many initiatives were indeed sprung from this melting pot over the years.

I look forward to the new and 'completely safe' incarnation of the bookfair in the coming years, as seen by those who opposed its previous model. Without the messiness of the plurality of positions, those left with the right politics will be able to really buckle down to the serious issue of winning the hundreds of totally separate campaigns brought into focus.

And so now the anarchist movement finds itself in a position where it no longer needs to worry about differences of position or orientation of activity. Every group and individual can have their own complete anarchism without fear of challenge or debate, with all the anxiety-inducing rage such 'liberal' concepts seem to bring up among younger comrades these days. For, as we all know, the safest space is, of course, no space at all.

Danny Daly
email

Patel's secret

Priti Patel's secret negotiations in Israel have a far more serious and dangerous significance than claimed. The Israelis may be correct that they were not unauthorised after all. Israel and Saudi Arabia are alarmed at Assad's success in Syria and the emergence of Russian-Iranian power in the region, and have hatched a plot to reverse this by war if necessary, beginning in Lebanon. It is clear that the intention is to relaunch the Lebanon civil war of 1975-90, which left 120,000 dead.

We saw the first indications of this with the Saudi attempts to isolate Qatar and force it to break economic and political relations with Iran. This involved Israel (covertly), Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Libya, Bahrain and the Maldives, on the one side; and Iran, Turkey, Syria, Hezbollah and Russia, on the other. The real target here is Iran. But the question was whether Turkey and Russia could remain aloof, whilst the US asserted its total power in the region. That is still the question now, as the situation escalates.

On September 4, five days before Patel was sacked by Theresa May, Israel began a giant military drill on the Lebanon border, the biggest in 20 years. The drill ran for 10 days and involved thousands of ground, sea and air forces, to prepare soldiers

for "preserving the current stability in the northern sector". There is no doubt that the target is Hezbollah, which defeated the Israeli Defence Force twice, in 2000 and 2006, and remains so important to Assad's success. It is clear now that this drill was executed as part of a war plan with Saudi Arabia, which the USA and Britain, possibly via Ms Patel, were directing.

On November 4, Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri issued a resignation statement from Riyadh; his life was in danger, he claimed: "Iran controls the region and the decision-making in both Syria and Iraq," he said. "I want to tell Iran and its followers that it will lose in its interventions in the internal affairs of Arab countries."

Iran credibly claimed: "The resignation was aimed at creating tension in Lebanon and the region. This resignation was also meant to compensate the US for its failures after the defeat of the Daesh."

Hariri, who has dual Saudi-Lebanese citizenship, leads the liberal (relatively) Future Movement, which is part of the March 14 Alliance that includes Christians associated with the Lebanese forces and Kataeb party. He has supported the Syrian rebels in the past, which prompted Syria to issue an arrest warrant for him as a terrorist supporter. Most of its base is made up of Sunni Muslims. It has a parliamentary majority.

The main opponent of Future Movement is the March 8 Alliance - most important part being the Free Patriotic Movement, which is led by general Michel Aoun and contains the Shia Hezbollah and Amal movements. The March 14 Alliance also has eight ministers and so have the independents, making up a national government of 24 ministers. Aoun is the president and a Maronite Christian, whose alliance with Hezbollah and Hariri, despite their support for the Syrian rebels, has held the government and country together in recent times - initially with the support of the Saudis, now withdrawn. Obviously, the complicated constitution, unfinished business from the civil war, could now unravel at the instigation of the Saudis and the USA-Israeli bloc. Priti Patel was undoubtedly informed of all these details at the 14 meetings with the Israelis. Militarily Hezbollah is stronger and far more battle-hardened than the Lebanese national army. It cannot simply be dismissed from government; it is often referred to as a 'state within a state'.

Saad Hariri was reportedly arrested as soon as his jet touched down at Riyadh on November 3, when Saudi policemen boarded it and confiscated all mobile phones. They took him off and obviously wrote his resignation statement. But he was shuttled to Abu Dhabi on November 7 to meet Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed, crown prince of Abu Dhabi. The apparent kidnapping of the Lebanese head of state - it is still not clear whether he is a willing or unwilling participant in this affair - is part of the war plans of the USA.

Central to this also is the situation in Yemen, the merciless bombing and starving by blockade of the civilian population, funded and organised by Britain and the US to defeat the Houthi rebels, Iran allies and fellow Shia co-religionists.

The number of British-made bombs and missiles sold to Saudi Arabia since the start of its bloody campaign in Yemen has risen by almost 500%, according to *The Independent*. More than £4.6

billion of arms were sold in the first two years of bombings, with the government granting increasing numbers of export licences despite mounting evidence of war crimes and massacres at hospitals, schools and weddings. The United Nations says air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition are the main cause of almost 5,295 civilian deaths and 8,873 casualties confirmed so far, warning that the real figure is "likely to be far higher".

President Macron of France is also involved, the BBC reported on November 9, making a surprise visit to Riyadh on November 10. They reported that Macron discussed the war in Yemen, but undoubtedly the main topic was Lebanon. France is the former colonial power and still has major interests there. Also, France is a strong supporter of the 2015 Obama nuclear deal with Iran, which Trump has repudiated with the backing of the Saudis. Macron said on November 9 that he had had informal contact with Hariri.

On November 9, Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies told their citizens in Lebanon to leave the country immediately. This came after Riyadh accused Iran of "direct military aggression", saying it supplied a missile which it claims was fired by Hezbollah at Riyadh from Yemen on Saturday. The conflict between the USA, its allies in this region and not only Syria, Russia and Iran but also the European Union, is deepening now.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

Conflagration

Once the *de facto* alliance for the defeat of Islamic State achieves its ends, there will be a huge Middle East war, ostensibly between the regional imperial powers of Saudi Arabia and Iran, but more widely between Sunni and Shia and, more widely still, between the global imperial powers, with Russia, France and Germany on Iran's side and America, Britain, Turkey *et al* on the other.

It will be a war for the redivision of the region and it will cost millions of lives, with many millions more displaced. It is the price, along with the rise of fascist IS in the first place, for the failure of the Arab spring. But it is only a deepening, widening and re-emerging of that spring and its transformation into an Arab October that can stop it.

The war must be turned into civil wars against the tyrants, the Islamists, Zionists, the theocrats, the regional and global imperialist powers, bandits of all kinds for a federation of socialist sovereign states of the Middle East. Unfortunately, the degenerate neo-Stalinist western left is gearing up to back Putin and Tehran against such a perspective in yet another grand show of pseudo-anti-imperialism in opposition to revolution, democracy and socialism. But we must take the revolutionary approach wider and in opposition to these reactionary forces squatting in the labour movement, because this war and the one being fomented by Trump in south-east Asia will morph into a wider global conflagration involving the big powers directly, which can only end in world proletarian revolution or the complete destruction of the human race.

David Ellis
Leeds

Catalonia

Felipe VI's exhortations against an independence referendum in Catalonia showed that this monarchy is deeply involved in politics in spite of being only 'constitutional'. The

fact that his orders were ignored shows how little the king counts. In Catalonia, the use of Madrid's police and military violence has highlighted the oppressed status of Catalonia in the Spanish state.

The oppression that comes from Madrid is not simply a military one. It is the oppression of the big multinationals and of the biggest capitalists against the smaller ones in Catalonia. It is the oppression of high finance capital. It is the oppression of the imperialist policies of Spain, which treat Catalonia like some sort of colony.

In Catalonia, however, the 'independentist' Carles Puigdemont has appropriated the bulk of the revolt of the masses there. Because the communists, the socialists and the trade unions have not adopted a programme against the capitalist oppression of Madrid, the working class and exploited layers of the masses in Catalonia have not been able to organise themselves independently from him.

Now that Puigdemont is in Belgium, under the protection of the 'independentist' New Flemish Alliance that is making the Belgian workers pay for the capitalist crisis, there is in Catalonia a movement insufficiently organised on a programme to oppose the capitalist oppression of Madrid. It could be that it is not possible any more to create republican, anti-capitalist and socialist movements independent from the local bourgeoisies (like the Catalan one), unless one calls for support from the rest of the workers in Spain. But, if Puigdemont can call (unsuccessfully) on the EU to come to his aid, what stops the workers of Catalonia calling on the workers of Spain and the EU?

Marie Lynam
email

Dystopian

The United States is now the sole United Nations member not to agree the 2015 Paris accord, which aims to gradually reduce emissions of greenhouse gases - Trump announced in June that the United States would be withdrawing from the Paris agreement. The US is the second highest emitter of carbon dioxide after China. However, as with other exit agreements, the US will still have seat on the climate table for the next four years until formal withdrawal is complete.

This week's 23rd conference of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP23) in Bonn comes at a time of several significant developments: for example, the World Meteorological Organisation announced that 2017 is set to be one of the three hottest years on record. Further, the medical journal *The Lancet* reports that climate change is affecting human health.

Trump's abandonment of the Paris agreement comes when the US Climate Change Assessment Program reports that greenhouse gases were the "dominant cause of the observed warming since the mid-20th century". Of course, there was an outcry following Trump's decision and former president Barack Obama said: "the nations that remain in the Paris agreement will be the nations that reap the benefits in jobs and industries created." This was a response to Trump's claim that it had been "the latest example of Washington entering into an agreement that disadvantages the United States to the exclusive benefit of other countries". For all the talk about jobs, the UN reported noted the mismatch between the pledges following the Paris accord and what is necessary to keep a rise in global temperatures below 2°C.

Of course, we get the usual

reports about the risks of climate change - extreme weather, water stress and harm to human health, not to mention the risk to low-lying small island states being inundated thanks to rising sea levels. But what is the goal? To limit the rise to under 2° by the end of the century. There is indeed a wide gap between rhetoric and action. Only measures to lower carbon dioxide emissions through the reduction of fossil fuel use would achieve the target. Anything else and a dystopian future awaits.

Simon Wells
Manchester

Discredit

Two official reports published last week confirm the view of Rugby Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, based on evidence from local benefit claimants, that universal credit has been 'discredited' and must be abandoned, not reformed. It is causing untold suffering, with increased poverty, homelessness and use of food banks here and everywhere else it exists.

A report by homeless charity Shelter last week showed that over 300,000 people nationally were homeless. Its figures showed Rugby is now the fifth highest in the West Midlands for homeless people, with an increase of 120% since 2013. And what has changed since 2013? The introduction of universal credit to Rugby - one of just six pilots nationally.

Rev Michael Bochenski, the chair of Hope4, which runs Rugby's homeless shelters, agrees. He said last week that "part of the reason for the local rise in homelessness was universal credit". Tusc has growing evidence that is the case. We have spoken to many universal claimants who have been evicted, and others who had been threatened with eviction, because they had been forced to wait over six weeks for any benefits, including housing benefit; or they had been sanctioned - cut off benefits for weeks for little or no reason. This is the type of suffering Rugby MP Mark Pawsey, and his government, won't accept.

A study into food bank use has further confirmed our view. The largest ever study in Britain - by Oxford University, published in June - found many food bank users experienced dire poverty, and it warned that welfare changes, such as the roll-out of universal credit, were likely to drive up use of food banks further. Two in five food bank users were waiting for benefit

payments - a common problem with universal credit.

Local evidence again confirms that. Rugby food bank now reports that use has grown for the fifth year in a row - much more than the national average. Rugby has been piloting universal credit for those five years, unlike most parts of the country. So universal credit - with its six-plus weeks delay before receiving any payment, and the sanctions that accompany it - are obvious reasons for this increased use.

Mark Pawsey MP is reported as saying that the need to visit food banks was "highly undesirable". Mark - it is a necessity for those suffering poverty caused by your government's policies, including universal credit. Mark Pawsey also says the welfare system "supports millions of people on low incomes or are unemployed" - how can it, when people have to use food banks, face eviction threats and are made homeless? What an indictment of 21st century Britain, the fifth richest country in the world!

Universal credit is Tory government policy, fully supported by local MP Mark Pawsey. It is causing untold suffering in areas where it has been rolled out, such as Rugby.

It cannot be reformed. It has to go.

Pete McLaren
Rugby Tusc

What next?

The cuts carried out by the Tory government continue to make themselves felt. I know this from personal experience.

First, the Tory-controlled Cambridgeshire County Council closed down the Bowthorpe mental health day centre at the instructions of the government. Second, I was taken off the books of my consultant psychiatrist at Agenoria House, the office of Wisbech community mental health team. Third, my psychiatric nurse at North Brink surgery left and hasn't been replaced. Fourth, I failed my personal independence payment medical, meaning I can no longer afford to see a counsellor. Fifth, my nurse practitioner at North Brink surgery can no longer see me, as she now only does home visits.

What next? Perhaps I'll fail my employment and support allowance medical. Thankfully, that won't take place until July 2019.

John Smithee
Cambridgeshire

Fighting fund

Serious

According to comrade EW, the *Weekly Worker's* "coverage of the Moshé Machover expulsion", amongst other things, as well as our "non-sectarian approach to the history of the revolutionary working class movement", demonstrate that we "publish the only serious Marxist weekly in this country".

Well, I suppose it depends on how you define "serious" - certainly none of the others share our overriding aim of building a single Marxist party, containing all the best elements of the currently fragmented left and based on genuine democratic centralism.

But comrade EW himself is certainly serious - his £100 cheque proves it! By coincidence we also received the same amount from US reader AP. In his case it was added to his subscription - he is one of the few comrades on the other side of the Atlantic who gets his *Weekly*

Worker delivered by airmail (but apparently it almost always arrives within a week!).

Not quite so fulsome were the PayPal donations of comrades TY (£20), JP (£10) and DB (£7) - they were among our 2,619 online readers last week, by the way. On top of that the regular standing order donations from DG (£40), FD (£30), DO (£20) and RP (£5) took our total for the week to £332, and our running total for November to £926.

So hopefully, with exactly half the month gone, we are on course to break through our £1,750 monthly target. But we are still £824 short, so there's no room for complacency! ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheques, payable to *Weekly Worker*

ACTION

London Communist Forum

Sunday November 19, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 3, 'The "dress rehearsal" and the first drama'. Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday November 21, 6.45pm: Series of talks on human origins, Daryll Forde seminar room, Anthropology Building, 14 Taviton Street, off Gordon Square, London WC1. This meeting: 'Ritual life among the Hadza: therianthropes, dancing dead and animal kindred spirits'. Speaker: Thea Skanes. Organised by Radical Anthropology Group: <http://radicalanthropologygroup.org>.

Fighting racism and Islamophobia

Tuesday November 21, 6.30pm: Public meeting, Hilda Clarke room, Friends Meeting House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1. Speakers include Moazzam Begg, Naima Omar. Organised by Camden Stand Up To Racism: www.facebook.com/events/723792167813695.

Sack the Tories

Tuesday November 21, 6pm: Budget day protest, Downing Street, London SW1. Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

No more austerity

Wednesday November 22, 5pm: Protest, Waterstones, 24-26 High Street, Birmingham B4. Organised by Birmingham People's Assembly: www.facebook.com/BirminghamPeoplesAssembly.

Social histories of the Russian Revolution

Thursday November 23, 6.30pm: Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'Early Soviet society and world revolution, 1917-27'. Speaker: Gleb Albert. Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution: <https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com>.

We are many

Friday November 24, 7.30pm: Film screening, Oasis Community Centre, Princess Elizabeth Way, Cheltenham. Organised by Gloucestershire Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/Gloucestershire-Stop-the-War-Coalition-379355595736213.

Taxi co-ops versus Uber?

Friday, November 24, 10am-1pm: Discussion of cooperative economic practice, 1 Drummond Gate, Pimlico, London, SW. Organised by Cooperatives UK: www.uk.coop/taxicoops.

Craft and peace

Saturday November 25, 11am to 6pm: 7th annual fair, Birch Community Centre, Brighton Grove, Manchester M14. Organised by Greater Manchester CND: www.facebook.com/greatermanchester.cnd.

Palestine solidarity

Sunday November 26, 2pm to 6pm: Festival, community centre, 150 Ossulston Street, London NW1. Music, readings, speeches, Palestinian goods. Organised by Palestine Solidarity Campaign: www.palestinecampaign.org/events/festival-for-palestine.

Remember John Maclean

Sunday November 26, 1pm: Graveside commemoration, Eastwood Cemetery, Thornliebank Road, Glasgow G4 (near Thornliebank station). Followed by social, St Mary's church hall, 150 Shawhill Road, Glasgow G43.

Organised by Scottish Republican Socialist Movement: <http://scottishrepublicans.myfreeforum.org>.

Labour's support for Zionism

Tuesday November 28, 7pm: Meeting, 1st floor, The Wellington, 37 Bennetts Hill, Birmingham B2. Speaker: Paul Kelemen. Organised by Birmingham Socialist Discussion Group: 07771 567496.

Monopoly power against democratic rights

Tuesday November 28, 7pm: Political economy talk with Simon Renton, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London, EC1. The final in a series of four classes on 'Capitalism, crisis and imperialism'. Hosted by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.

The coming war on China

Tuesday November 28, 6.30pm: Fundraiser screening of John Pilger's documentary, followed by Q&A with the filmmaker. Rio Cinema, 107 Kingsland High Street, London E8. Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

Recalling the Spanish Civil War

Thursday November 30, 8pm: Photoart book launch, Marx Memorial Library, 37A Clerkenwell Green, London EC1. *A gentle visual fire* by artist Amy Feneck features the photographic collections on Spain in the archives of the Marx Memorial Library. Hosted by Marx Memorial Library: www.marx-memorial-library.org.uk.

Labour Against the Witch-hunt

Saturday December 2, 12 noon to 3pm: Organising meeting, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Organised by Labour Against the Witch-hunt: info@LabourAgainstTheWitchhunt.org.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

LEBANON

Drum beat of war

Beirut is now the focus of the burgeoning Saudi-Iranian rivalry, writes Yasmine Mather

The political saga involving Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iran continues to make headlines and we are nowhere near a resolution of the situation. In the meantime, the war in Yemen - scene of another proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia - is entering a more dangerous phase. Some 10,000 Yemenis have died in the fighting, while Yemen's population is suffering from Saudi sanctions, which are stopping food and medicine from getting in - and stopping the Yemenis from getting out.

So it was no surprise that in his first TV interview since his resignation, former Lebanese prime minister Saad Hariri gave stark warnings about the real threat posed to the economy if the Saudi kingdom imposes new economic sanctions on Lebanon. Hariri denied he is being held in Saudi Arabia against his will, claiming he was there to serve Lebanon's interests, to protect the country from Iran and Hezbollah - who, he repeated, were trying to take over the country.

Before the interview Michel Aoun, the Lebanese Christian president, had said Hariri's situation in Saudi Arabia was creating doubts over anything that he had said or might say, and his statements could not be taken as an expression of his free will: he was living in "mysterious circumstances" in Riyadh which were restricting his freedom and "imposing conditions on his residency and on contact with him, even by members of his family".

According to *The Atlantic* website, the Lebanese prime minister "appeared uncomfortable":

At times, he and his interviewer, from his own television station, looked to handlers off camera. The exchange ended abruptly, after Hariri implied that he might take back his resignation and negotiate with Hezbollah, seemingly veering from the hard-line Saudi script. "I am not against Hezbollah as a political party, but that doesn't mean we allow it to destroy Lebanon," he said. His resignation does nothing to thwart Hezbollah's power; if anything, a vacuum benefits Hezbollah, which doesn't need the Lebanese state to bolster its power or legitimacy.¹

The *World Pro News* website claims: "Nearly 55 minutes into the interview Sunday, there was a mysterious man, caught briefly on camera, holding a piece of paper in Hariri's line of sight."²

The TV interview itself became quite dramatic. According to the Israeli paper *Ha'aretz*, at one point Hariri burst into tears, saying:

I know that there are a considerable number of Lebanese who are concerned about me. I am here with the clear message that Lebanon comes first. There are countries that I am visiting that care more about Lebanon than factions within Lebanon and that pains me very much.

Referring to his contact with an aide of Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei, Hariri said:

In my conversation with an advisor to the Iranian spiritual leader in Beirut before [my] resignation, I made it clear to him that Iran must not intervene in the affairs of Arab countries, including Lebanon via Hezbollah. I am in favour of pluralism and the political activity of parties in Lebanon from every [religious] community, but those parties need to work for the good of Lebanon, not other countries. We in

**Hariri: still in Riyadh**

Lebanon have adopted a policy of non-intervention on the subject of other countries, and this policy has been eroded in recent years.³

Khamenei's advisor was Ali Akbar Velayati, who was quick to deny the allegations. Referring to his meeting with Hariri in Beirut only one day before the latter's surprise resignation, he said that, contrary to Hariri's claims, the talks were not "tough, violent or involving threats". Velayati denied that Iran had been interfering in Lebanon's affairs, adding that in the meeting Hariri had tried to play the role of mediator between Tehran and Riyadh.

Change in attitude

In Lebanon the resignation has provoked anger against the Saudi royals. According to the BBC Persian Service,

The taxi driver in Beirut said that if he realises he has picked up a Saudi passenger he will ask them to get out of his car. He refers to Mohammad bin Salman, the Saudi crown prince, as "Ya elbal shom" (that disgraceful shame). He then raises his arms to the sky and says: "God, this mad child wants to bring war to our country, so that we become lost in the mountains. Let us hope that all you [Arabs] of the Gulf burn in the fires of your own oil."⁴

The reporter adds that the taxi driver's opinion is typical of views expressed by Lebanese of all religions. For example, on November 12 Beirut was hosting a marathon and many runners and spectators were carrying Hariri themed placards: "Waiting for you - we don't believe your resignation."

By November 13 there were rumours that Bahaa Hariri, the former prime minister's brother, was going to replace him. However, interior minister Nohad Machnouk dismissed the idea: "In Lebanon things happen through elections, not pledges of allegiance."

Those who have contacted Hariri in Riyadh claim he does not sound like himself and replies to all questions about his wellbeing with one short sentence: "I am fine". Asked if he is coming back, he replies: "Inshallah" (God willing).⁵

The Beirut-based *Al Akhbar* newspaper, which is close to Hezbollah, claimed that the plan is to send Saad Hariri back to Beirut to submit his official resignation letter, from where

he will go to a European capital - most likely Paris - and leave politics altogether.

In those sections of the Arab press and media not directly paid for by the Saudis, reporters and commentators are also pouring scorn over the other headline grabbing Saudi measure: fighting corruption. According to Odeh Bisharat, writing in *Ha'aretz*:

It's ridiculous to hear about the young crown prince Mohammed bin Salman throwing dozens of members of the royal family and other senior figures into jail on suspicion of corruption. After all, the kingdom was founded on corruption. Everywhere a spring of corruption gushes forth; near every oil well, a spring of corruption flows. This is not a kingdom that has corruption: Saudi Arabia, under the obliging administration of the royal family, is corruption that has a kingdom....

Saudi oil has become a tool for repressing progressive culture, for blocking advancement of the status of women and, above all, for supporting fundamentalist tendencies, from the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt to the establishment of al Qaeda and other killing organisations. And all with the blessing and embrace of the developed west.⁶

As elsewhere in the Arab world, Saudi influence in Lebanon is directly related to its economic power. Saudi Arabia imposed economic sanctions on Lebanon in 2015, froze \$3 billion in aid for the Lebanese army and business deals between the two countries dwindled. The economic threat Hariri mentions in his TV interview is reference to further sanctions by Saudi Arabia and other countries on remittances sent by 400,000 Lebanese citizens who work in the Persian Gulf. It is estimated that Lebanon gets around \$2.5 billion from money sent by Lebanese workers in the oil-rich emirates to their home country.

To many Lebanese citizens, the new approach, which comes after a decade of failed Saudi efforts to bolster Hariri's pro-Saudi Future Movement, looks like revenge against all of Lebanon. According to this view, Saudi Arabia no longer distinguishes between friendly Sunnis, hostile Shias and the Christian community: Riyadh has decided to take a position against the interests of the

country as a whole.

Economy

The economic situation in Lebanon is not very different from that of many other countries in the region. Since the 1990s it has faced a shortfall in income (Lebanon's balance of trade deficit was running at \$15.65 billion in 2016), leading to serious international debt. Uncertainty about the future have led to poor rates of growth, while an all-encompassing corruption is adding to the country's economic woes. According to the World Bank, the war in Syria and the relocation of 1.5 million Syrian refugee is costing Lebanon about \$7.5 billion a year.

While existing Saudi sanctions have clearly damaged the Lebanese economy, any new sanctions - including attempts to stop remittances from workers in the Persian Gulf countries, restricting tourism, and cutting off the burgeoning Lebanese finance sector from access to Arab capitals - will no doubt bankrupt the country. According to a report on the website of the Washington Institute,

... 80% of foreign direct investment in Lebanon comes from the Gulf, 40% of which is in the real estate sector. While Gulf investment in Lebanon has not increased since 2012, despite periodic political problems, investors have not, *en masse*, sold off their investments either and thereby harmed the economy. Lately, however, Lebanon has witnessed a reported 10-20% drop in real estate values. To be sure, a Gulf sell-off would have further serious consequences for Lebanon's formerly robust real estate market....

Most notable, however, is Saudi Arabia's potential impact on the critical Lebanese banking sector. Saudi deposits at the Banque du Liban, as the Lebanese central bank is known, are about \$860 million, the sum originally placed there to help stabilise the Lebanese lira when Rafiq Hariri, Saad's late father, was first elected prime minister in 1992. To support Hariri and his economic plans for Lebanon, Saudi Arabia agreed to keep these deposits in the Central Bank.

Now that Saudi Arabia has expressed its view of a Lebanese "declaration of war" and that Saad Hariri has resigned, concerns have arisen that Riyadh could withdraw these deposits.

While overall the deposits account for only about 2% of Lebanon's foreign reserves, their removal could shake confidence in the Central Bank, if not destabilise the lira.⁷

In this respect Hariri is right in predicting doom and gloom for the country in his latest televised interview.

Riyadh is also continuing to exercise its influence over the rest of the region. Egypt's economy, like that of Lebanon, has historically been tied to Saudi Arabian and Gulf capital from the time of Sadat and Mubarak to the rule of the Muslim Brotherhood and now general Abd Fattah el-Sisi. Last week el-Sisi announced that the second round of reconciliation talks between representatives of the two major Palestinian factions, Fatah and Hamas, will take place in Cairo on November 21.

Egypt is supposed to have found a solution to the difficult issue of who will control the Palestinian security forces. The proposed plan involves the creation of a national security council, in which Hamas and the Palestinian Authority will have equal representation, with direct involvement from Egyptian military officials, who will have the final say on any disagreement between the two factions.

One of the reasons why Egypt (prompted by Saudi Arabia) is taking such an interest in bringing about a Hamas-Fatah deal is the desire to reduce Iran's influence in that part of the Middle East. In early November, the Saudi king summoned Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian National Authority, to Riyadh, where he was reminded of the importance of a deal with Hamas - one that would reduce Iranian influence in Palestinian affairs and presumably increases Egypt's role.

So at a time when Islamic State is steadily losing all its former territory in Iraq and Syria, the zone of conflict between Saudi Arabia (supported by the United States and to a certain extent Israel) and Iran's Islamic Republic (supported by Russia) has expanded to cover most of the Middle East - from Lebanon, Syria and the occupied territories to Yemen and Afghanistan.

The conflict has many facets - economic, political and military. Its victims are the ordinary people of the region, who are excluded from any role when it comes to decisions on foreign policy and war.

And, as if that was not bad enough, they have to endure the relentless media propaganda onslaught waged by both sides. Iran and its ally, Hezbollah, make use of a number of Arabic TV stations, such as Al Manar and Al Kawthar, plus Press TV in English, while Saudi princes and their accolades are financing a range of Persian satellite TV stations. These range from the trashy Channels based in Los Angeles, to the more respectable news channel, Iran International. This claims to be an 'independent' news broadcaster, yet is apparently run by a consortium of Saudi financiers ●

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Notes

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FOOTBALL LADS ALLIANCE

Rising to the challenge

Could the FLA develop into a fully-fledged fascist movement? That depends on the scale of forthcoming crises and the response of the left, argues **James Harvey**

Two well-attended marches in central London on June 24 and October 7, organised under the banner, 'United against extremism', heralded the emergence of a new grouping, the Football Lads Alliance. These events have attracted concerned debate amongst left groups and anti-racism campaigners - not least the Socialist Workers Party, which has argued that the FLA has the potential to become a new form of racist street politics, fuelled by Islamophobia. Stating that this threat must be countered before it grows any further, the SWP and its 'united front', Stand Up To Racism, organised a small, static counter-demonstration in opposition to the FLA march on October 7.¹ They are now attempting to mobilise larger numbers to counter the group's next planned march - in Edinburgh on November 25.²

The FLA explicitly denies that it is racist or has any connection with far-right organisations. According to its own press releases, the group has "a strong anti-racist stance and has no political or religious agendas ... [it] opposes anyone who tries to impose their beliefs, will or politics on others via terrorist acts".³ On its website and Facebook pages the FLA portrays itself in similar vein as consisting of ordinary football fans who have come together simply to oppose 'extremism' and demand strong action from the government.⁴

The marches were impressive for being organised at relatively short notice by drawing on social media networks and the links between groups of football supporters - 'football lads' or 'firms' - more traditionally associated in the past with football hooliganism. This is confirmed by the various films of the marches, showing crowds of between 10,000 and 20,000, largely composed of middle-aged working class men - although in this footage they seem more like football granddads than lads. Apart from wreaths in club colours, banners from 'Veterans Against Terrorism' and a campaign demanding 'Justice for the 21' (people killed in the Birmingham bombings in 1974) the organisers prohibited the usual flags and posters, presumably to reinforce their image as 'just normal people'.⁵

This self-description is a central theme in the rhetoric of the FLA - it goes to some lengths to disclaim any connection with the far right and portray the group as a purely spontaneous, grassroots movement. In this it protests too much, however. Some FLA speakers at the first rally did indeed have far-right connections, whilst reports suggested that small groups of Nazis and members of the English Defence League had been present on the march.⁶ In addition, the rhetoric of the FLA is clearly reactionary and chauvinistic. Speakers called for strong action by the state against "extremism" - a rather ill-defined enemy, but clearly identified with jihadism and "Islamic terrorism". When John Meighan, one of the key organisers, called for "suspected terrorists who are not British subjects to be deported", the crowd at the October march responded with chants of "Get them out!"

However, much of the animus on display was directed towards politicians who had either criticised the FLA or 'let the country down' in other ways. Thus, a member of Veterans Against Terrorism, 'Big' Phil Campion, drew on familiar populist themes in his attack on 'political correctness'. The crowd were assured that no-one was going to stop him "saying what he wanted" when he



Football supporters plus army vets: a worrying combination

spoke out on behalf of the unheard and disregarded people of "our country". As a representative of the multicultural elite who appeased "the enemy" and used political correctness to silence "ordinary people", Diane Abbott was subject to special abuse. When John Meighan suggested that "it's time for you [Diane Abbott] and your motley crew to move over - the FLA is taking over now", he was met with loud cheers and chants of "Out, out, out" directed at the Labour politician and others of her ilk. This very contemporary sense of being ignored or patronised by the political elite came through strongly in complaints by marchers about the way the "mainstream media" ignored or misrepresented them, and in chants demanding "We want our country back".⁷

Left response

So far, so very Nigel Farage or Donald Trump. Perhaps, more to the point, so very *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express* or *Daily Telegraph* too. Much of what was said by both the speakers and the marchers would be unremarkable in the political rhetoric of the mainstream right in Europe and North America. So, given this congruence, does the FLA merit any special attention on the part of socialists and the labour movement? Is it really a precursor to a new variant of far-right street politics and even a mass fascist movement?

The SWP's central committee for one certainly thinks this is a possibility. In the October edition of its *Pre-conference bulletin* the CC suggests that the FLA is a "dangerous phenomenon that socialists have to take seriously. We need to develop an analysis of its nature - and then work with others to confront the racism and Islamophobia at its heart" (my emphasis). It goes on to correctly argue that "the FLA is not a fascist organisation" and that "at present there is a differentiation of views within its ranks". However, the CC cautions that the FLA's "direction of travel" could mean that it becomes "nastier, more openly Islamophobic and more of a recruiting ground for fascists". So far,

so very SWP - especially given that the statement goes on to focus on the prevalence of Islamophobia in British society and how this widespread form of racism might provide the basis of a possible future fascist reaction.⁸

The SWP leadership's strategy for countering the FLA and preventing the re-emergence of a mass fascist movement is also very familiar. Tracing the history of what it describes as "mass united fronts", such as the Anti-Nazi League, Unite Against Fascism and now Stand Up to Racism, it suggests that these types of anti-racist movement have been "successful" because they "separated the hard racists and fascists from the softer layer of people influenced by racist ideas they tried to relate to". Urging the membership on to yet higher levels of activism through mobilising for the next counter-demonstration and "building a response in every trade union, at every club and in the sphere of popular culture", the CC's statement places the building of "the party" "at the heart of a systematic response to the growth of the FLA". Whilst much of this anti-racist activity can be simply understood as providing a focus for yet more activism and recruitment, this reliving of past glories from as far back as the 1970s is also an attempt to prove the SWP's continuing relevance in the very different world of the 2010s.

The SWP's understanding of Islamophobia and its approach to countering "the racism at the heart of the FLA" has much in common with official multiculturalism and mainstream liberal analyses of what is increasingly referred to as "the populist moment". As Kevin Bean discussed in recent issues of this paper, the populist label has been applied internationally to a wide range of 'insurgent' movements which challenge the political and economic elite. In claiming to speak on behalf of the masses, these movements give a voice to the 'deplorables' whose concerns have been either ignored or deemed beneath contempt. The rhetoric of Donald Trump, Nigel Farage and Marine Le Pen are examples of

this phenomenon, whilst the electoral impact of the AfD in Germany and the influence of Ukip amongst sections of the Conservative Party in Britain shows how even 'mainstream' politics can be influenced by populist themes.⁹

Cultural identity

For liberal commentators, this populist moment shows that the rise of the far right remains an ever-present danger, especially given what they see as the susceptibility of the working class to the lure of a nostalgic cultural politics of xenophobia and hostility to immigration. As Paul Mason describes it, this form of politics "is no longer a response to single events: it is about Islam and white identity, ... not the economic strain brought about by refugees".¹⁰

The rhetoric of the FLA can easily be fitted into this politics of cultural identity. The speeches attacking the political elite and the assertive plebeian pride revealed in the defence of "our country" are characteristic tropes of the populist moment. However, they are not necessarily unique to the current period, especially in Britain. Popular conservatism has often taken these forms from the 18th century onwards, especially when mobilised against radical or revolutionary movements. Whether in the form of 'church and king' mobs attacking Catholics and political dissenters in the 1780s and 1790s, or Orange reaction in Liverpool and Glasgow in the late 19th and 20th centuries, the Conservative Party has been able to call upon plebeian movements and mobilise such forms of reaction in periods of crisis.

When combined with pro-imperialist rhetoric and an elevation of the military as a symbolic embodiment of the nation, this type of popular, working class Conservatism provided a firm electoral and social base for the Tories until the 1960s. Thus, far from being a new form of working class politics, as Brendan O'Neill suggests,¹¹ the FLA can be located in this long and inglorious tradition of deferential chauvinism and pro-imperialism, which in its various

forms successfully underpinned the Conservatives for much of the last two centuries.

However, if the FLA does echo some of these historic patterns, it is not simply a rebirth of an older, plebeian Conservative tradition. Rather, both in rhetoric and content it reflects the contemporary political moment and the particular forms of the current political crisis. Above all, this is a period of political and social volatility, which has been intensified by the slow-burning, but quite fundamental effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the decade of austerity and recession that followed.

The key political features of this crisis on the right are the electoral collapse of Ukip, the political divisions within the Tories caused by the Brexit vote in the 2016 referendum and the fragmentation of various far-right groups in the aftermath of the electoral decline of the BNP after 2010. The emergence of the FLA has occurred at the confluence of these interlocking developments and reflects different facets of each individual crisis. As the divisions within the ruling class and the Tory government grow, the form that Brexit might take becomes more uncertain and leaves the Tories - especially Theresa May - vulnerable to charges of betrayal and a failure to implement 'the will of the people'.

Whilst the rhetoric of the FLA suggests that it could move in a more authoritarian direction, whether it takes a mass form as a fascist movement will depend not on the subjective positions of its individual leaders or any organised far-right currents attempting to exploit it, but on the scale of the political and social crisis facing British society in the next decade. Movements like the FLA show that wide sections of society are alienated from bourgeois politics and that they will attempt to find different outlets and forms to express that discontent. Whether that alienation will find its expression through the politics of the left or the reactionary chauvinism of the right will depend on how our movement understands the appeal of currents of like the FLA - and goes on to present a real alternative to its backward-looking and dead-end politics of the past ●

Notes

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10. P Mason, 'Europe's far right is on the march - and it won't go away without a fight' *The Guardian* November 14.
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SEX

Catholic church: HR departments, confidential investigations and 2,000 years of abuse

Power structures and democratisation

Mike Macnair looks at the implications of the 'Pestminster' scandal

The media prominence of the Westminster 'sex pest' scandal has been substantially reduced since a week ago. An agreement (details undisclosed) about what to do was made between the party leaders on Monday November 6 - several women Labour MPs expressed dissatisfaction the next day.¹

It does look as though the agreement was to do the minimum necessary to provide complaints procedures for interns and junior support staff, but otherwise to call off the media dogs on both sides, on the basis of two problems. First, all parties' MPs and peers are potentially vulnerable to such accusations. Second, the generalised exposure of all MPs' 'sexual misconduct' of any sort would destroy the whips' ability to blackmail those MPs, which is fundamental to the conduct of 'Her Majesty's government'.²

Meanwhile, media attention has been diverted successively by the 'Paradise Papers' tax avoidance disclosures, by the ejection of Priti Patel from the government over her 'holiday' meetings in Israel, and by the weekend leak of Boris Johnson's and Michael Gove's curious memo to Theresa May urging a harder line on Brexit.

Nonetheless, the 'Pestminster' story rumbles on. The most striking event was the November 6 suicide of Welsh Labour national assembly member Carl Sergeant, who was facing undisclosed sexual misconduct allegations. On November 11, *The Sun* printed a redacted version of what is claimed to be a list of allegations against Tory MPs which are part of the scandal.³ The remarkable feature of this list is that a significant number of the allegations listed - and some which *The Sun* makes most of in the accompanying article - concern straightforwardly consensual sexual behaviour.

Analogously, the affair of Damian Green's alleged pornography on his office computer, which hit the headlines again on November 12, is not in itself a matter of sexual assault, but at most possible corroboration of journalist and activist Kate Maltby's complaint of inappropriate touching in a pub. Perhaps ironically, Maltby originally offered the story precisely as an example of low-level attempts by a senior man to get sex in exchange for advancing her career, and the blurred lines this involves.⁴

November 11 also saw elements of a counter-offensive starting to appear. Sir Roger Gale, as a 74-year-old who has served as a Tory MP since 1983, has nothing to lose. He blamed female journo-

for the scandal and said that vulnerability to sexual misconduct charges meant that he would no longer employ female interns⁵ (a little behind the times, since several of the allegations on *The Sun*'s redacted list are of misconduct against male employees.) Jennifer Selway in the *Daily Express* picked up Gale's comments - her article suggested that the fears of false allegations provoked would lead to women being prevented from working, and was illustrated by a picture from the film *The Handmaid's Tale*. (Interesting that she cannot imagine a world where men are not allowed to work because of the danger that they will get 'handsy'.) Natalie Elphicke in the *Express* (November 12) complains that her husband, Charlie, was first informed of his suspension by the Tories through the media and had no notice of the substantive allegations against him.⁶

Selective

The stories mix together allegations of very serious assaults, of relative trivia, and of some matters not in any sense non-consensual. This non-selectivity is problematic, as it tends to undermine understanding of the seriousness of some cases. On the other hand, what has not been said in the press, as far as I can tell, but probably should be, is that there is a violent selectivity in who has been targeted in the scandal.

On the Labour side, it is three leftwingers among Westminster MPs: Jared O'Mara, Kelvin Hopkins and Clive Lewis. Is it really true that there are no male MPs from the Labour right (the large majority of the parliamentary party) who have done anything at all problematic on this front?

Very similar concerns affect the Tory side. Among *The Sun*'s list (which, as I said before, includes all sorts of accusations of, for instance, extramarital affairs, not just real abuse claims), Jake Berry, Stephen Crabb, Charlie Elphicke, Michael Fallon, Mark Garnier, Damian Green, Robert Halfon, Mark Menzies, Amber Rudd and Grant Schapps are all 'remainers'; only Steve Double and Justin Tomlinson, much lower-profile than most of the rest, are 'leavers'. Is it really true that no important Brexiters have ever done anything which could lead to a complaint of being 'handsy' or attempting to exploit their position to obtain sex? (perhaps there are, but *The Sun* has redacted their names?)

It seems likely, then, that some feminists have either consciously 'weaponised' the issue in the interests of antecedent, unrelated political

commitments (more likely, though not in any sense certain, in the Labour case); or allowed themselves to be used as 'useful idiots' in the interest of factional advantage for people with a radically different agenda (more likely, though again not in any sense certain, in the Tory case).

Several papers report suggestions that the sacking and suicide of Carl Sergeant reflects bullying and manipulations by the advisors' team in the office of Welsh Labour leader Carwyn Jones - again implying that the issue is being weaponised for collateral purposes.⁷

There has been a certain amount of comment from outside the Westminster and media bubble which is worth noting (if not necessarily taking very seriously). Paul Demarty in last week's issue of this paper looked at *Socialist Worker*'s shock-horror coverage of the issue and the Socialist Workers Party's inability to address its own fairly recent 'sex pest' story; so this one can be left on one side.⁸

Hannah Sell in *The Socialist* tells us that the answer is socialism.⁹ Her article is headlined: 'Westminster sexual harassment scandal: rotten establishment must go'. It begins with the idea that MPs are prone to sexual abuse because (to paraphrase) they are careerists who have spent a long time molesting the poor in the interests of the rich, so that molesting "women and men with less power than them" comes naturally. But this argument obviously suggests that "only rightwing, pro-capitalist MPs ... can be guilty of harassment", which she immediately admits is untrue:

The oppression of women ... pervades all parts of society and must be fought wherever it is found.

It is particularly important it is combated in the workers' movement. As long as we live in a capitalist society where wealth, power and the ownership of industry is concentrated in the hands of the few, it will be impossible to even begin to eliminate sexism, racism and prejudice. A socialist society, based on democratic public ownership, so that society's resources can be harnessed to meet the needs of all, is a prerequisite for overcoming all kinds of oppression ... (emphases added).

Really? Is it really the case that socialism (understood, as the Socialist Party usually does, to mean nationalisation of industry), is a "prerequisite" for tackling "racism, sexism and prejudice" and that we cannot "even begin" to do so without it? If so, why have capitalist states themselves

adopted 'official' forms of anti-racism, anti-sexism, and so on? Have these had no impact at all?

After these problematic beginnings, comrade Sell goes on to make the good point that it is a bad idea to set up an 'independent' body to investigate allegations: "... we reject the idea that the labour movement is incapable of investigating claims of assault and harassment in a thoroughgoing and sensitive manner supportive to victims." But what the procedural implications of such an approach would be, she does not say. And the point is immediately half-retracted: victims should be supported if they want to go to the police; parliament should have a complaints procedure for MPs' employees. MPs' employees should be unionised (I wonder how many family members employed by Conservative MPs would want to join?).

The campaign against sexual harassment should be "one part of a campaign by the Labour left to completely transform the structures of the Labour Party", in particular by "mandatory reselection"; but how this links to the harassment problem does not appear (it does, in fact); it thus seems to be thrown in gratuitously.

The Socialist Party in England and Wales has had its own sex complaint scandal, albeit on a much smaller scale than the SWP. Less extreme and smaller in its effect, the SPEW scandal actually posed exactly the same issues as the SWP's: that is, that bureaucratic as well as capitalist hierarchies promote improper conduct by more senior people to those below them; and that the bureaucratic principle of *privacy* in dispute resolution makes it less likely for justice to be done, as well as certainly making it impossible for justice to be seen to be done.¹⁰ It is SPEW's commitments to bureaucratic centralism in its own organisation, and bureaucratic principles of 'justice' in its own dispute resolution procedures, which underlie the incoherence of Sell's article.

Apart from the left, there has been a good deal of comment from other sources. For example, Nazreen Nawaz of Hizbut-Tahrir says the solution is the Islamist approach to gender relations,¹¹ while both Francis Phillips in the *Catholic Herald* and evangelical John Stephens urge traditionalist Christian sexual morality as the alternative.¹²

The legal establishment, in the form of Rebecca Hilsenrath of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), tells us on *Huffington Post* that "It's time to reign in [sic] the "man with long arm" but we also need to empower women."¹³

Variants on this establishment line are offered in different ways by Sarah Ibrahim on *LabourList*,¹⁴ by the *Morning Star*,¹⁵ and by the Alliance for Foreign Office Liberty (sorry, Workers' Liberty) and its *Solidarity*.¹⁶

They would

In 1963 Mandy Rice-Davies famously responded to counsel, who had put to her Lord Astor's denial that he had had an affair with her or even met her: "Well, he would, wouldn't he?" The phrase has morphed into 'They would say that, wouldn't they?' It is pretty appropriate to these comments. It may seem to be too obviously true in relation to the religious types and the Socialist Party to be worth saying more; but there is a bit more to be said here. It may seem to be untrue of the 'establishment' responses; but in fact these responses are informed by the self-interest of lawyers, bureaucrats and managers (and the low-level attachments of the *Morning Star* and *Solidarity* to bureaucracy).

In relation to the religious types, it is interesting that the Islamists are more coherent than the Christians. In essence, both argue that sexual misconduct is a product of more general sexual impurity, or sexualisation of sexual society. Nazreen Nawaz argues that it is "the secular liberal culture and system that has nurtured a culture of disrespect towards women amongst many men, as well as creating confusion regarding the morally appropriate interaction between the genders", going on to tell a media-style story of sexual harassment and so on. In contrast, she argues,

The Islamic social system embodies such beliefs, values and laws which oblige men to view and to always treat women with respect. It prohibits the sexualisation or exploitation of women for any purpose, unequivocally placing the protection of women's dignity above the pursuit of any monetary or materialistic interest. Islam also rejects sexual freedoms, and instead, it lays down a clear set of laws that effectively regulate the relationship between men and women to ensure that all forms of sexual interactions, without exception, are confined to marriage alone. This is alongside prescribing severe punishments for any form of violation of a woman's dignity, including even uttering a single word against her honour. All this facilitates a healthy and productive relationship between the genders in society, enabling women to work, study, travel and have

an active public life free from the fear of harassment and assault.

Any knowledge of Islamic history and of the cultures where Islam has been for centuries entrenched in law will make this a violently implausible story. But it is at least a *coherent* story, and one which has had a certain attraction for some young women.¹⁷ The Christian comments are a lot less coherent.

Francis Phillips in the *Catholic Herald* promotes the republication of German Catholic theologian Dietrich von Hildebrand's 1930s *In defence of purity*, which argues, as Nawaz does, for the only legitimate expression of sexuality to be in marriage. But the trigger of Phillips' concerns is not *actual* sexual harassment, but that

Speaking for myself, I am shocked, not so much by the revelations of Harvey Weinstein's behaviour, but by the gratuitously explicit, casual way in which it is discussed by serious journalists and broadcasters.

I met up with a friend recently who has lived abroad for some years. Reflecting on her mother's generation, she remarked on the complete lack of public modesty which would have been taken for granted by ordinary people up until the 1960s and how, returning to the UK for a visit, she has noticed that this former sense of reticence and decency has been further eroded.

Phillips' argument here is really regretting not sexual abuse, but that sexual abuse stories have emerged into the light of day rather than "modesty" and "reticence" keeping them quiet. 'They would say that' indeed - coming from a member of a church which has now for 30 years been wracked by scandals about sexual abuse by the supposedly pure and celibate priesthood.

Evangelical John Stephens, too, argues that "Sex was given as god's good gift for heterosexual marriage":

The historic Christian ethic that sex is only for marriage is not a repressive restraint on human freedom, but the embodiment of such love and the only sure and certain protection against the misuse and abuse of others. If the Christian ethic had been observed and applied, Hollywood and Westminster would not be facing this present scandal.

But he is inclined to play up female responsibility:

It is also dangerous to assume that sexual harassment and the abuse of power in sexual relationships is purely a male problem, although in this instance most of the perpetrators are male, and the victims are female. However, there are plenty of women who have been prepared to make use of their sexual attractiveness, and to offer consensual sex to more powerful men, in order to advance themselves or their career.

... For every David who sexually harasses a Bathsheba, there is a Delilah who is willing to sexually exploit a Samson (Judges 16), or a Potiphar's wife who wants to take sexual advantage of her husband's attractive slave (Genesis 39). *The Bible* usually characterises the adulteress or prostitute as an abuser exploiting men for personal fulfilment or financial gain.

And he is concerned lest there be a witch-hunt:

Whilst it is undoubtedly right that those who have committed criminal actions ought to be prosecuted and punished, and those who have behaved dishonourably ought to lose their jobs and their reputation, we need to avoid a witch-hunt that demands justice, but offers no prospect of mercy. The only sin that cannot be forgiven is that of rejecting Jesus.

... It is quite clear that patterns of acceptable behaviour have changed over the last 50 years, and rightly so.

But this means that there may be many members of our churches, who grew up in the era of *Carry on!*, Benny Hill or the real life *Mad Men*, who are in need of mercy for behaviour that would today be (rightly) castigated as sexual harassment.

Stephens is open in relation to one of the people who need mercy:

One of the greatest sadnesses of this current scandal is that Steve Crabbe, the former Conservative minister, has been accused of sending sexually explicit text messages to a teenager he had turned down for a job. He was well-known as a Christian.

On the other side of the Atlantic, evangelicals are keen for mercy for Roy Moore, evangelical and Republican candidate for the Senate in Alabama, who has been accused of sex assaults on teenagers under the age of consent (the Republican leadership want him to pull out of the race).¹⁸ Again, 'They would say that' is completely appropriate.

The underlying issue is that the claim that a politics of purity of the sort offered by Islamists and their Christianist equivalents provides protection against forms of sexual abuse is a complete illusion. We have better evidence for medieval and early modern Europe than elsewhere, merely because there is better survival of judicial records. But the evidence is enough to show that states which for a thousand years or more legally entrenched Christianity or Islam and the doctrine of sex only in marriage had *as bad* a record for sexual assaults as modern 'secularist' societies¹⁹ - and probably, in fact, a worse one.

Putting the SWP and Hannah Sell's article in *The Socialist* together with these ugly mugs is perhaps a bit unfair. But what they have in common is *not addressing the core of the issue* - in the religious-political case because they want to promote the delusion that a doctrine of sexual purity will prevent sex abuse; in the SWP and SPEW case because they do not want to confront the role of bureaucratic hierarchy and secrecy in creating the conditions for abusive conduct by senior men (it is usually, though not invariably, men) and preventing fair disposal of complaints - because they are themselves committed to bureaucratic hierarchy and secrecy.

Establishment

Equally 'They would say that' - and in fact equally displaying the same blindness to bureaucratic hierarchy and secrecy as fundamental problems - are the writers pursuing the establishment 'equalities' line.

It is a little strange and says something about the mainstream media that Rebecca Hilsenrath of the *official* Equality and Human Rights Commission feels the need to publish in *Huffington Post* rather than in one of the national dailies. *The Sun* was perfectly happy to publish her comments as part of the 'anti-Semitism' libel campaign.²⁰ Yet her *HuffPost* article is much less categorical and controversial than those comments were.

She emphasises that what links Westminster with Weinstein is "sexual harassment in the workplace", and argues that "It's about power in the workplace." This is a partial truth; the most serious of the 'Pestminster' allegations are indeed about the abuse of power either in work or connected to possibilities of career advancement. But quite a lot of what has been sucked into this story is not.

She goes on to say:

It's a particular problem in politics, where women are still underrepresented and employment and engagement systems do not appear fit for purpose. We need transparent, independent and robust HR [human resources] processes and we need a culture where MPs are role models, not sources of embarrassment. Parliament can and must do better. It should lead. It can

start by taking a look at how people are employed by MPs.

Vague and indeterminate; and what counts as "transparent, independent and robust HR processes" is deeply unclear. "How people are employed by MPs" implies the very bad idea that members of parliament should be forced to take their assistants and researchers from a pool employed by the state - which would be yet another means of executive control of the legislature and bureaucratic control more generally.

She says something which might be great if it means what it appears to say:

And we need to avoid the hysteria of trial by media, with all the risk that it entails of a lack of transparency and fair process. We need to remember that everyone is innocent until proved guilty. We need to have a proportionate and sustainable approach to wrongdoing ...

Again the problem with the positive sentiment is indeterminacy. What is "fair process"? What is "trial by media" and how does it relate to "transparency"? Hilsenrath says "trial by media" *lacks* "transparency"; but one would naturally imagine that *privacy* in dealing with complaints was what lacked transparency, rather than their publication. On the other hand, it hard to see what could be a clearer example of "trial by media" than Hilsenrath's *prejudgment* of the 'anti-Semitism' allegations in her statement reported in *The Sun*.

Sarah Ibrahim, like Rebecca Hilsenrath, is a lawyer. She is a barrister practising in commercial and employment matters, and is vice-chair of the Fabian Society. As far as she is concerned, the whole issue is very simple: "It is especially egregious for those involved in politics to fall foul of laws on sexual harassment and assault"; "The acceptability or otherwise of sexual harassment is tethered to the fact there are not enough women in powerful positions in our society." And:

Labour should not make the mistakes of the Tories and the Liberal Democrats by avoiding change. We must establish rigorous and independent complaint processes that provide proper protection for people who are sexually harassed and bullied. Any independent complaints body has to be separate from the party and there has to be an understanding that the party will listen to and implement its recommendations.

We must go further still and make it clear that this type of behaviour has no place within our party ...

No 'transparency' or 'fair process' needed then; merely "rigorous and independent" processes. One may *guess* that Ibrahim, as a vice-chair of the Fabian Society, probably regards the operations of Labour's compliance unit as an example of "rigorous and independent" procedure; we are not given any more procedural details which would allow us to avoid this conclusion.

'Expand the HR department and the role of the lawyers!' is the underlying slogan of both these authors - as it is, in reality, of the Equality and Human Rights Commission more generally. It is a pity, then, that this line can also be found infecting part of the left.

In the *Morning Star*, this tendency reflects its role as the paper of the left wing of the trade union bureaucracy, which is also happy to defend 'equalities' processes through 'human resources' procedures. On October 28 the *Star* reported without comment Max Freedman from Unite's parliamentary staff branch calling for a unified complaints procedure. On October 31 it similarly concluded an article by quoting Dawn Butler, shadow minister for women and equalities, who said: "I am also calling on all political parties to publicly release details of their complaints procedures to allow for independent scrutiny and to ensure these procedures are sufficiently *robust and confidential*" (emphasis added). On November 12 Unite was back in the *Star*:

The union said in a letter to Ms

Leadsom on Friday: "Staff do not have confidence that employers can take the lead in fixing this broken system. Self-regulation has failed for years.

"Unite's parliamentary branch is clear that this must be a staff-led process, and either the numbers of staff be balanced on the group or an outside expert body such as [conciliation service] Acas be asked to review the whole system and make independent recommendations for a new system.

"Staff need this system to be fixed to ensure a safe, decent and respectful workplace. Unite is committed to working to ensure this. ..."

'Safe spaces' and 'respectful' procedures are all too familiar to us from Left Unity: a justification for imprecise codes of conduct and bureaucratic and non-transparent disputes procedures, abused for factional purposes.²¹ It is clear from what I have said above that the 'sex pest' allegations are *already* being abused for factional purposes in both the Labour and Conservative parties. 'Independent' complaints procedures without transparency would only aggravate the problem.

Solidarity headlines its editorial on the issue: 'Unions must fight for robust rules'. It offers not much in the way of indication of what these "robust rules" are. The article is partly directed to asserting that sex harassment is commonplace and that "it is perpetrated by a large proportion of 'normal' men". (Since evidence is not offered, it is completely unclear whether this is true; in relation to actual rapes, it turns out that many rapists are serial offenders, with the result that a relatively large number of rapes are committed by a relatively small number of men;²² it would not be surprising if this was not also true of lesser forms of sexual assault.)

A third of the editorial is devoted to arguing that the Corbynites are wrong to see the allegations against Kelvin Hopkins as factionally motivated. Since it is obvious, as I said above, that the allegations are factionally *selective* on both sides of parliament, this argument is merely an aspect of *Solidarity's* solidarity with the US state department, Murdoch and the Labour right against opponents of Labour Zionism, on show elsewhere in the same issue of the paper in the attack on Moshé Machover and in Paul Hampton's attempt to minimise the significance of the Balfour declaration.

When we come to positive proposals, they are:

Union organisation can make a big difference to sexual assault and harassment at work, in the first place by tackling the issue itself, fighting for robust codes of conduct, reporting policies and sanctions in workplaces. These already exist, more or less, in some unionised public-sector workplaces. We should get them generalised. By so doing we would also institutionalise due-process protections for those facing charges.

The claim that *present* public-sector employment HR policies on "robust codes of conduct" are effective is severely problematic. The idea that they "also institutionalise due-process protections" is nonsense - unless the right to a secret trial on the basis of anonymous delation, the old practices of the Spanish Inquisition and the Venetian Council of Ten, are to be taken as "due process".²³

In other words, the AWL is also saying, 'Expand the HR department and the role of the lawyers!'

The problem with all this establishment solidarity, from the EHRC chief executive to the AWL, in favour of more lawyerisation and more private 'human resources' processes, is that the Catholic church's internal structure has been thoroughly lawyerised since the 12th century AD, and it has operated private (as well as, in exceptional cases, public) disciplinary sanctions throughout that 900 years. And yet, for the last 30 years, as I said above, the Catholic church has been plagued by sex abuse scandals. Nor are these matters new. Allegations of sexual misconduct by priests and monks were part of the small coin of medieval political

discourse in this country.

Alternative

I wrote at some length on what might be an alternative procedural approach to sex assault allegations which could be used by the workers' movement in my April 18 2013 article, 'Bureaucratic "justice" and dealing with sex assault cases'. I do not propose to repeat any of the detail of the argument here. But the fundamental issues are three.

First, as several of the authors I have discussed here said, forms of sex abuse are about power imbalances and the ability of the proper to reward or punish the gropee. It is for this reason and not for any other than mandatory reselection of Labour MPs would help. It would be a movement in the direction of seeing parliamentary service as like jury service, and away from seeing it as a career path. It would reduce the power dynamics involved.

Second, openness of complaints proceedings is absolutely fundamental. It enables solidarity between the abused and corroboration, as in the case of Harvey Weinstein.

Third, 'independence' of the tribunal, insofar as it means lawyerisation and insulation from general ideas, has the effect of *reducing* the impact of complaints on bad public cultures.

The implications are not to accept the conduct as 'normal' and so on. It is, rather, that this very public scandal should not be made an excuse for yet more bureaucratisation and secret justice ●

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Notes

1. "Still much work to do": Female Labour MPs slam leaders' "disappointing" plans to combat Westminster sex scandal' *Evening Standard* November 7.
2. *The Daily Telegraph's* political cartoon on November 6 focused precisely on the whips' office.
3. 'Pest-minster: what is the MPs sex scandal, who has been named in the Tory dossier and what are the accusations?'
4. S Ditung, 'The Daily Mail's attack on Kate Maltby shows the price women pay for speaking out' *New Statesman* November 2.
5. 'Tory MP blames female journalists for Westminster sex scandal and describes harassment victims as "wiling flowers"'
6. "'End kangaroo courts," says accused MP's wife.'
7. Eg, 'Welsh politician who killed himself was "sentenced to death by the system he dedicated his life to", close friend says ...' *Daily Mail* November 8; 'Former insider says Welsh government was "toxic environment"' *The Guardian* November 13.
8. 'Shutting out reality' *Weekly Worker* November 9.
9. 'Westminster sexual harassment scandal: rotten establishment must go' *The Socialist* November 9.
10. Discussed in 'Workers' movement: bureaucratic "justice" and dealing with sex assault cases' *Weekly Worker* April 18 2013.
11. 'Westminster sex scandal highlights the cracks in the secular liberal system' *Khilafah* November 11: www.khilafah.com/westminster-sex-scandal-highlights-the-cracks-in-the-secular-liberal-system.
12. www.catholicism.com.uk/commentandblogs/2017/10/31/this-book-could-be-the-perfect-antidote-to-our-sex-scandal-ridden-age; www.john-stevens.com/2017/11/sexual-harassment-how-should-christians.html.
13. *Huffington Post* November 12: www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-hilsenrath/sexual-abuse-harassment_b_18521768.html.
14. <https://labourlist.org/2017/11/public-faith-in-labour-rests-on-its-response-to-the-westminster-sex-scandal> (November 6).
15. Various *Morning Star* news reports between October 28 and November 12 display a fairly consistent spin; as does the editorial of October 30.
16. 'Unions must fight for robust rules' *Solidarity* November 8.
17. Compare 'Wrong kind of radicalisation' *Weekly Worker* February 26 2015.
18. A Buncombe, 'Why evangelical Christians are defending Roy Moore despite child sex abuse claims' *The Independent* November 14.
19. Three accessible discussions brought up on very superficial search: <http://notchesblog.com/2017/03/23/child-sexual-abuse-a-view-from-england-in-the-later-middle-ages>; Z Eckman, 'An oppressive silence: the evolution of the raped woman in medieval France and England': www.medievalists.net/files/11020201.pdf; B Tug, 'Gendered subjects in Ottoman constitutional agreements, ca 1740-1860' (2014) 18 *European Journal of Turkish Studies*: <https://ejts.revues.org/4860#tocto1n3>. Compare also 'The politics of purity' *Weekly Worker* July 21 2004.
20. 'Labour shamed by equalities watchdog after raging anti-Semitism row engulfs the party' *The Sun* September 26.
21. Articles about this are collected at <http://cpgb.org.uk/pages/news/60/safe-spaces>.
22. References in my 2013 article (above, note 10).
23. Of course, the Inquisition has been defended by some as applying due process: eg, E Peters *Inquisition* Berkeley CA 1989.

LABOUR

Target for a witch-hunt

Moshé Machover, recently reinstated into the Labour Party following his summary expulsion, addressed a meeting organised by the CPGB and Labour Party Marxists on November 12

There are two aspects to this whole affair which I would like to address. One is the weaponisation of anti-Semitism, which was not in the end the official pretext for expelling me. It was just a gratuitous smear. It is a reason, or a pretext, for expelling other people, so I need to address it. Especially as they haven't apologised for this: in fact they restated it.

The second issue is the rule which they used to expel me - in other people's cases it has been used without the smear of anti-Semitism, completely on its own. That is, you must not "support" other undefined political organisations. This is also something that needs to be addressed, because to say that it is abominable is an understatement. It is something completely

unsupportable. How it actually got into the rulebook of any party that calls itself halfway democratic is just beyond me.

So first of all, there is this accusation of anti-Semitism. This is actually a confluence of three things. Two of them international and one of them local, connected specifically to the Labour Party; and is only marginally to do with Israel and Palestine, which is just an excuse. Let me explain. The first factor behind it is an international campaign, which is orchestrated from Israel. It started a few years ago, before anyone dreamed of Jeremy Corbyn becoming leader of Labour, least of all himself.

Propaganda war

The occasion for this is the feeling in Israel that it is losing the propaganda war because of the success of the boycott, divestment and sanctions campaign. What do I mean by 'success'? It has had very little success in terms of actually hurting the Israeli economy through sanctions against businesses in Israel, which is ostensibly what it is directed at. But it is very successful in the way you would expect - in terms of public opinion - and in fact I would never have expected it to pose a serious economic

problem for Israel's economy, which is thriving (that is not to say that the people are thriving, by the way). Israel is a very unequal society, it has changed a lot - it used to be one of the most egalitarian capitalist countries. But the economy is thriving and it has a surplus in its balance of payments.

But the BDS campaign has had enormous success in terms of mobilising public opinion. In a student body, or in a trade union, someone suggests, 'Let us join the BDS campaign' and a debate is started - people argue for or against. In the best scenario a resolution is accepted to join the BDS campaign. But even if that does not occur the issue has been raised for discussion. And this is what the Israeli propaganda machine is most afraid of - that the whole business of the occupation that has lasted 50 years and the colonisation of the West Bank, if it is even mentioned, is very detrimental for the image of Israel.

So we have seen a change and it is ongoing. What is most painful from the Israeli official point of view is that this actually applies not only to public opinion in general, but also to Jewish opinion. It is an age phenomenon. That is to say, amongst people over 50 there is very little change, but amongst Jews under 30 there is a noticeable shift, even in the United States. By the way, recently this has gone even further because there is actually a rift between Israeli propaganda and a big chunk of Jewish opinion in the United States. That situation is something absolutely new, and has been created by the Israeli prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu.

So they decided to use the ultimate weapon: that is to say, accusations of anti-Semitism against anyone who speaks against the Zionist project of colonisation and the Israeli settler state. They appointed a special minister to do this - his name is Gilad Erdan. He is one of the most repellent people in the Israeli cabinet, which is saying something. Gilad Erdan has got three main

responsibilities. One is internal security, so he is in charge of the Israeli police. But the other two are international: one is 'information', which means propaganda; the other is strategic affairs, referring to the strategy of influencing world public opinion.

Erdan has two points of contact with something that happened in Britain. One is a couple of years ago, and the other one is very recent. Let me connect them. Some of you may have watched the *Al Jazeera* exposé of Israeli interference in British politics.¹ Those of you who have not seen it should do so, because it is something incredibly interesting and important politically. It is better than a lot of thrillers you watch on the television, which are fiction, whereas this is actual fact.

One thing *Al Jazeera* got a bit wrong, by the way. They described the star of this affair, the agent trying to interfere in British politics, Shai Masot, as working for the Israeli embassy. That was untrue - he was not actually a diplomat, although he was based at the Israeli embassy. But, as an Israeli agent, he was not reporting to the ambassador - that nice man, Mark Regev, whom you may have seen justifying the slaughter in Gaza. In fact, he got into conflict with Regev because of this clash of spheres of influence. He was treading on Regev's toes, because he was not reporting to him, but to Gilad Erdan's ministry.

The other connection is something that happened quite recently in Britain. All of you have heard about Priti Patel and how she spent August 'on holiday' in Israel. One of her recreational activities was a meeting with some nasties - how this can be a on a holiday schedule is beyond me! This included meeting with Netanyahu (who is currently under investigation for five different allegations of corruption, by the way). But after she came back to Britain in September, who did she meet? None other than Gilad Erdan. He was here orchestrating something he is responsible for: that is to say, the worldwide campaign to denigrate people who speak against Israel.

Patel has other connections, by the way - she is also involved with the Modi regime in India. She is one of those really reactionary people in the Conservative leadership. This is one factor feeding into this worldwide campaign. It is not new or restricted to Britain. It started long before the changes in the Labour Party, but, of course, it now feeds into what is happening within Labour.

Anti-Semitism

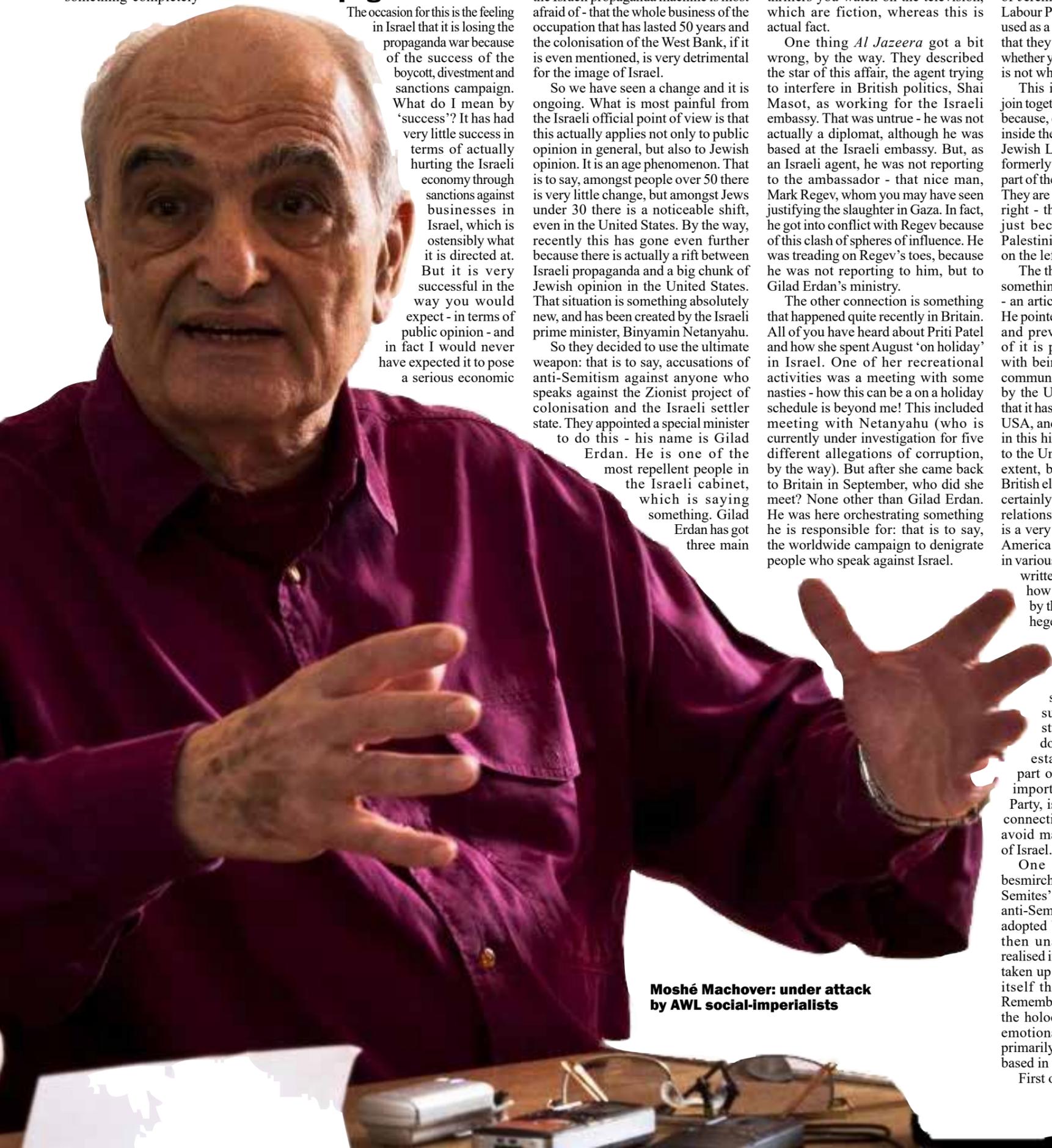
The second factor is purely local and related to the Labour Party. People are besmirched as anti-Semites and this is done by people who care absolutely nothing about Israel and Palestine, the occupation, etc, but are simply enemies of Jeremy Corbyn and the left in the Labour Party. 'Anti-Semitism' is being used as a cudgel to beat the left. It is not that they are interested particularly in whether you are for the Palestinians - this is not what bothers them.

This is the second point and they join together. These two circles overlap, because, of course, the pro-Israel lobby inside the Labour Party - including the Jewish Labour Movement, so called, formerly known as Poale Zion - and as part of the scam exposed by *Al Jazeera*. They are also mostly part of the Labour right - they hate Jeremy Corbyn not just because he is a supporter of Palestinians, but also because he is on the left.

The third factor I was alerted to by something I read in the *Weekly Worker* - an article written by Mike Macnair. He pointed out that being nice to Israel and preventing any harsh criticism of it is part of the deal that comes with being part of the 'international community' - a hierarchical order led by the United States. Britain fancies that it has a special relationship with the USA, and that it has a fairly high rank in this hierarchy of states subservient to the United States (this is true to an extent, but not quite as much as the British elite likes to think). But Israel is certainly a state that has a very special relationship with the US, because it is a very important strategic asset for America - not just regionally, but also in various international spheres. I have written in the *Weekly Worker* about how the Israeli connection is used by the United States and its world hegemony in various ways. Israel is America's rottweiler in the Middle East, and if the boss's Rottweiler pisses on your shoes you are not supposed to kick it: you are supposed to bend down and stroke it and say it's a good dog! The whole of the British establishment, including that part of it which still has quite an important position in the Labour Party, is committed, because of this connection to the United States, to avoid making substantial criticisms of Israel.

One of the weapons used to besmirch opponents of Israel as 'anti-Semites' is the so-called definition of anti-Semitism, which was originally adopted by the European Union (but then unadopted, because the EU realised it does not work), but was then taken up by a shadowy group calling itself the International Holocaust Remembrance Association. Of course, the holocaust is used as a means of emotional blackmail. The IHRA is primarily a pro-Israel pressure group based in the United States.

First of all, you might ask, why do



Moshé Machover: under attack by AWL social-imperialists

we need a definition of anti-Semitism? Isn't it enough to say that anti-Semitism is simply racism applied to Jews? Do we have a definition of racism in general, or a special definition of anti-black racism? I think the term 'anti-Semitism' is well understood, without anyone needing a special definition. We do not have a special definition of sexism or other nasty ideologies and practices. So the very fact that someone thought it necessary to adopt and promulgate a new definition of anti-Semitism is suspect - it makes you think that there is some devious purpose behind it. In fact it was actually adopted in order to be abused: subliminally they are saying that anti-Semitism is not what you always thought it was.

This consisted originally of two parts. The first part is a four-line actual definition, which says 'Anti-Semitism is ...', etc. It is rather vague, inept and suspect, but is not in itself toxic. What is toxic are the 11 illustrations or examples which are appended to this definition, and which for the most part do not have to do with Jews as such, but with Israel. It is clear from these examples of 'anti-Semitism' that they are designed to block any real, damaging criticism of Israel.

As it happens, this definition was adopted in its totality - and including the examples, which is the most vile part - by the British government. It is not part of British law, of course: it is just something that the government supports. In other words, it has an advisory function. But this definition has also been adopted - without the illustrations, which are the worst part - by the Labour Party. Nevertheless, the illustrations have been used by Labour's witch-hunters. I have seen one or two cases where the examples are used within the party to support accusations of anti-Semitism, even though Labour has not officially endorsed those examples.

The IHRA definition has also been adopted by various local councils in Britain. I know of two in London: Camden and Brent, where I live. In both cases it was adopted lock, stock and barrel, including the examples - in Camden this was proposed by Labour (most councils in London are Labour-dominated) and whipped by the leader of the council. So even those councillors known to oppose this definition were under discipline to vote for it.

In Brent it was even more bizarre. The resolution to support this definition, along with the examples, was a Tory proposal. Before the vote came up in September, I wrote to some of the Labour councillors - not to those I knew to be supporters of JLM - alerting them to the absurdities and to the damaging nature of this definition, which was analysed by Hugh Tomlinson QC,² who has stated that it is inimical to free speech. I pointed out the negative aspects, and I got two very positive responses. One was very detailed and agreed with my position and the other was from no less than the Labour leader of the council, Muhammed Butt, who said he would take it into account. But in the end he actually whipped his party to vote for the Tory resolution. However, one Labour councillor was not happy with this and proposed an amendment, which included in the definition the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination. How this fits into a definition of anti-Semitism is, of course, bizarre, but it points to the illogicalities of it all. So opposing the right of Palestinian self-determination is now anti-Semitic! (Arguably the Palestinian Arabs are more Semitic than the Israeli Jews, but this is just a 'by the way'.)

Self-determination

Of the 11 examples of 'anti-Semitism' I am going to quote three. Number 7 says that an example of anti-Semitism is "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination: eg, by saying



Highly effective ... in swinging opinion

that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour."

There are quite a few strange things about this example. First of all, how does the second part of the clause connect to the first? Suppose someone believes that the state of Israel, as it exists, is in fact a racist endeavour, how does this deny the right of the Jewish people to self-determination? What is the connection? It is surely possible to think that the Jewish people have the right to self-determination, but that its actual implementation in the state of Israel is a racist endeavour.

What about the first part itself? I have written quite extensively about this in articles in the *Weekly Worker*, so I will not go into it in detail here. Stephen Sedley, a retired senior judge who happens to be Jewish, has pointed out that this actually makes several false assumptions.³ First of all, the right of self-determination - in the sense of giving a group of people the right to form their own state - applies to nations. Are the Jews worldwide a nation? This is a very doubtful proposition. This came up at the time of the Balfour declaration 100 years ago, and it was opposed by the leadership of Jewish organisations in Britain on the grounds that Jews do not constitute a nation: we are, they said, British by nationality and Jewish by religion. The whole thing is all the more doubtful because the only thing common to all Jewish communities around the world is religion or religious background.

Also, anybody can become Jewish by religious conversion. If a person wants to become Jewish, they can go to a rabbi and undertake a religious ritual. You can be a Scottish or American Jew, but you cannot be Muslim or Catholic Jew. You can, however, be an atheist Jew, just as you can be an atheist - or 'lapsed' - Catholic. A lot of people who regard themselves as Jews, and are regarded by others as Jews, are people whose parents or grandparents actually practised the Jewish religion. Outside Israel, which is a separate case, this peters out after, say, three generations. People who have only great grandparents who were practising Jews are not generally considered Jewish (just as there are many people who claim to be Muslim,

but have a secular outlook). There was an exception to this. There was a time and place where you could be a Muslim or Catholic Jew, and that was in Nazi Germany, because the Nazis were very particular about saying Jewishness was not just a matter of religion, but of race.

This, in one sense, overlapped with Zionist ideology. The Zionists maintained that Jews were not merely following a religion, but were a nation, which in Germany was seen as coterminous with race. But it was a Zionist point of ideology that Jews are a nation and must therefore have the right to self-determination, but this is not an obvious leap. The word 'race' was once used by Zionists, but it has since become toxic - just like 'colonisation', which was also used to describe what they were doing in Palestine, but not any more: now other synonyms or euphemisms are preferred.

The second questionable thing about this claim of self-determination is that the right to enjoy it, as normally understood internationally, does not include the right to choose some distant place where it can be exercised. To claim that, according to your religion, a particular piece of land was promised to your ancestors by a deity, does not fit in with that right, as generally understood. Certainly the right to self-determination does not include the right to colonise a territory which has long been inhabited by other people - which is exactly what the Zionist project is about and what Israel is based on. So example number 7 is completely bogus in three different ways.

Another interesting example is number 10. It says, "Drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis" is anti-Semitic. Why, you might ask? You can say that maybe such a comparison is over the top, or perhaps it is too harsh on Israel to compare the two. This is a debatable point and it makes some sense, but why should it be anti-Semitic? By the way, such comparisons are regularly made in Israel itself - most often by scholars with expertise in the holocaust.

I collected some examples recently. An outstanding one comes in the form of a couple of articles by professor Daniel Blatman, who is a historian specialising in the holocaust and

genocide (please note: the holocaust and genocide are seen as separate things in Israel) at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Another example is the views of Dr Ofer Kassif, also based at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which led to a complaint in the *Jerusalem Post*.

But why is comparing contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis anti-Semitic? If you think about it, the only reason could be that saying such a thing about Israel implicates all Jews. In other words, all Jews collectively are somehow responsible for contemporary Israeli policy: the only way in which saying such a thing could be an insult to Jews collectively is if they were all responsible.

Thirdly, however, there is example 11, which states that "Holding all Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel" is anti-Semitic. This is actually a good example - it happens to be correct! Doing such a thing really is anti-Semitic. In fact number 10 is a self-incriminating definition - it implies that "all Jews" are "collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel"! So thank you to the councillors of Camden and Brent for adopting an anti-Semitic definition of anti-Semitism. Using the IHRA definition to smear someone does not prove that the accused is actually anti-Semitic: it shows that the definition itself is absurd.

Support

Let me now turn to the Labour Party rule that was used to expel me and a lot of other people, sometimes irrespective of anti-Semitism. This is 2.1.4.B in the rulebook, which states:

A member of the party who joins and/or supports a political organisation other than an official Labour group or unit of the party, or supports any candidate who stands against an official Labour candidate, or publicly declares the intent to stand against a Labour candidate, shall automatically be ineligible or remain a party member.

Some key phrases are absolutely vague and catch-all, putting the whole rule under a shadow of suspicion that it was designed to be abused. But there

is one word which is all too clear: "automatically" - providing for auto-exclusion. In other words, no process is needed whatsoever. If a person is caught red-handed with a knife over a dead or dying body, that person is still entitled to a trial, according to natural justice. No matter how strong the evidence seems to be, an accused person must be entitled to dispute it.

But not according to this rule. It allows for an allegation to be made without even saying who has made it, without disclosing the evidence in detail. This should obviously not be enough to exclude someone. It gives the bureaucracy under Iain McNicol enormous power to get rid of anyone they want because of the vagueness of the rule. It does not define what is meant by "political organisation". It could be Momentum. It could mean Refuge, the organisation that protects women from domestic violence and also fights against modern slavery and trafficking. This is a political organisation. For that matter, the Jewish Socialists Group could be declared outlawed - membership of the JSG could be used to justify automatic expulsion from the Labour Party.

The other word which is not defined is the word "support". What does it mean? It can be compared to the deceptiveness of referenda, which generally give you a choice between two false alternatives - it is never just a question of yes or no. In the Brexit referendum 'remain' was a fairly clear option, but what was the alternative? Similarly with "support" - it is not a yes or no question. In my case, they alleged "support" for two organisations: the CPGB, because it publishes the *Weekly Worker*, in which some of my articles have appeared; and Labour Party Marxists, because it too published something of mine, which was basically a reprint of an article in the *Weekly Worker*.

I have clearly stated that I am not a member of these organisations. But do I "support" them? Well, tell me what "support" means. I support some of the positions of the CPGB. For example, I support one that is not shared by some left groups: that all trade unions should affiliate to Labour. Is this a sin? Is this a reason for being expelled from the Labour Party? I do not "support" some other CPGB positions, however. I have written letters to the *Weekly Worker* where I challenged them.

In my case the evidence consisted only of articles published in the *Weekly Worker* and speaking at events organised by the CPGB. I have indeed had quite a lot of articles published there. But Jeremy Corbyn has had published far more in the *Morning Star* and a lot of Labour figures have published articles, either occasionally or regularly, in various publications connected to political groups other than Labour.

Another case came to my attention concerning a person who was expelled on the same day as myself. Mike Paling was not accused of anti-Semitism, or of writing articles for the *Weekly Worker* - he has never done so. He was not accused of speaking at meetings of the CPGB, because again he has never done so. He was expelled because on Facebook he reposted some articles which originated in the *Weekly Worker* or Labour Party Marxists, together with a lot of other articles - some on the left and some on the right. I have seen the letter expelling him and this was the only 'evidence' given.

So this is what "support" means: if you post an article on Facebook, along with a lot of other stuff, then you can be expelled automatically from the Labour Party without any hearing. What kind of rule is this? ●

Notes

1. www.aljazeera.com/investigations/thelobby.
2. http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/TomlinsonGuidanceIHRA.pdf.
3. http://freespeechonisrael.org.uk/sedley-ihra/#respond.

Both sides of the witch-hunt

It is not anti-Semitic to refer to the mutual praise exchanged between the Nazis and Zionists. **Tony Greenstein** examines the AWL's political schizophrenia

If there is one thing that the Zionist movement hates, it is being reminded of the time 80 years ago when leading Nazis not only praised the German Zionist movement, but also favoured it in preference to their 'assimilationist' opponents.

Why then do I mention it? Is it calculated cruelty? Have the Zionists changed their spots? No, the Zionist movement today is still willing to collaborate with fascists, Nazis and assorted anti-Semites. Whether it is the Zionist Organisation of America inviting Steve Bannon - the editor of *Breitbart News*, house magazine of the alt-right - to their annual gala¹ or the visit in July by Binyamin Netanyahu to see his good friend, Hungarian prime minister Viktor Orbán. Orbán is the most racist leader in Europe (and the competition is quite strong). I have previously pointed out that, "Far from Netanyahu criticising him [Orbán] for his anti-Semitism, quite the opposite took place and Israel's ambassador in Hungary, Yossi Amrani, was forced to withdraw his mild criticisms."²

Shortly before Netanyahu landed in Hungary, Orbán had launched a nasty anti-Semitic campaign against George Soros, a survivor of the Nazi occupation of Hungary - who Netanyahu also hates, because he finances Israeli human rights groups. I wrote: "His real crime has been the campaign by Orbán and his Fidesz party to rehabilitate admiral Miklós Horthy, Hungary's ruler between 1920 and 1944 and the author of Hungary's wartime alliance with Nazi Germany."³ Horthy presided over the deportation of nearly half a million Jews to Auschwitz, but that little fact did not get in the way of Netanyahu's love-in with Orbán.

However, according to the misnamed Alliance for Workers' Liberty, we are "left anti-Semites" for raising such matters (see Dale Street's *Solidarity* article, reproduced below). On the contrary, it is the AWL which is demonstrating that it consists of a bunch of social chauvinists and apologists for the racist crimes of imperialism and Zionism.

Edwin Black, a devoted Zionist has written the most comprehensive book on the Nazi-Zionist trade agreement (the Ha'avara) that helped destroy the Jewish and international boycott of Nazi Germany.⁴ Black describes how on March 25 1933 Hermann Göring, panicked by the success of the boycott, summoned the leaders of German Jewry to his offices. At the last moment the Zionists secured an invitation. The three non-Zionist Jewish leaders denied that they had any influence over the boycott campaign in America (although they could not say it, they welcomed the pressure on the Nazis - it was this which had kept Nazi violence against Germany's Jews in check). Black describes what happened next:

Blumenfeld [secretary of the German Zionist Federation] stepped forward on behalf of the Zionists, declaring that the German Zionist Federation was uniquely capable of conferring with Jewish leaders in other countries ... Once uttered, the words forever changed the relationship between the Nazis and the Zionists.⁵

The Zionists, unlike the non-Zionists, were prepared to do their best to help the Nazis defeat the boycott - if in turn the Nazis would help them build a Jewish state in Palestine.

Why is this relevant? Because today, as fascist groups and racism (including anti-Semitism) are on the rise in eastern Europe and elsewhere, the Israeli state



Nazi medal struck by Goebbels to mark German-Zionist collaboration

and its leaders have the friendliest of relations with not only Orbán, but other racist and anti-Semitic regimes - for example, Polish prime minister Beata Szydło of the far-right Law and Justice party.

Only last weekend there was a march of an estimated 60,000 fascists in Warsaw celebrating a pogrom against the Jews in Warsaw in 1936.⁶ Their slogan is 'Pray for Islamic holocaust'. Presumably there is no point in praying for another Jewish one, since most Polish Jews either died in the holocaust or departed after the war. We can assume that Israel will not be making any representations about this march.

Today the primary victims of fascist violence in Europe are Muslims and this is not unwelcome to Israel and the Zionist movement. The far right in Europe and America openly admire Israel for its hostility to Muslims. The neo-Nazi leader of America's alt-right, Richard Spencer, declares that he is a 'white Zionist'.⁷ Is there a difference between the march in Warsaw and the thousands of settlers who chant 'Death to the Arabs' in Jerusalem?

The AWL is nothing if not stupid. You might have thought that its experience of being denounced as 'anti-Semitic' by Owen Smith in the leadership contest with Jeremy Corbyn would have taught it a lesson. At least two AWL members - Pete Radcliff and Daniel Randall - have been expelled from the Labour Party for 'left anti-Semitism'.

The AWL is unique on the British left. It is Trotskyist Zionist (though Trotsky would have run a mile from them!). Whereas most supporters of a two-state solution in Palestine reluctantly accept the continuance of a racist Jewish supremacist state, the AWL endorses the apartheid Jewish state enthusiastically. Those who do not share this enthusiasm are guilty of 'left anti-Semitism'.

Absurdly, however, the AWL argues that 'left anti-Semitism' is not racist! As I pointed out in a debate with Daniel Randall on September 15 2016, if it is not racist it is not anti-Semitic either!⁸ They should find another word - like anti-Zionist!

During our debate I embarrassed Randall by noting that he had been expelled from the Labour Party for 'left anti-Semitism'. His response was: "I do want to say from the outset that it is undeniably the case that

the issue of anti-Semitism has been instrumentalised and manipulated by some on the Labour right and their supporters in the press in order to undermine Corbyn and the left."⁹

Never before or since, as far as I know, has the AWL admitted that 'left anti-Semitism' is a weapon used by the right against the left. It took the experience of the summer of 2016 for the AWL to realise that for the Labour right 'anti-Semitic' and being on the left were synonymous. In Scotland, Rhea Wolfson, the left's candidate for the national executive committee and herself a member of the Jewish Labour Movement, had her nomination rejected by her Glasgow constituency, after Jim Murphy, Blair's Scottish leftover, accused Momentum of 'anti-Semitism'.

Warm relations

What has angered the AWL is that Moshé Machover has been exonerated and readmitted to the Labour Party despite writing an "apparently anti-Semitic" article, describing the warm relations between leading Nazis and the Zionist movement in Germany. Indeed Sam Matthews of the disputes committee backed away from his initial description of the article that Moshé had written and which *Labour Party Marxists* had reprinted.

Moshé had quoted an article Reinhard Heydrich had written in the SS paper *Das Schwarze Korps* on September 26 1935:

National socialism has no intention of attacking the Jewish people in any way. On the contrary, the recognition of Jewry as a racial community based on blood, and not as a religious one, leads the German government to guarantee the racial separateness of this community without any limitations. The government finds itself in complete agreement with the great spiritual movement within Jewry itself, so-called Zionism, with its recognition of the solidarity of Jewry throughout the world and the rejection of all assimilationist ideas.

The full quotation can be found in *The Third Reich and the Palestine question* by Francis Nicosia, professor of holocaust studies at Vermont University.¹⁰

Of course, by itself, this quotation simply proves that the Nazis looked on the Zionist rejection of assimilation

favourably. Obviously Heydrich, who is described by Gerald Reitlinger as the "engineer" of the Final Solution,¹¹ was lying when he said that the Nazis had no intention of attacking the Jewish people.

Relations between the Zionists and the Nazis went much deeper. Lucy Dawidowicz described how in January 1935 Heydrich had issued an instruction to the Gestapo in Bavaria that Zionist youth groups "are not to be treated with that strictness that it is necessary to apply to the members of the so-called German-Jewish organisations (assimilationists)".¹²

The question is whether this was just one-way traffic. Did the Zionists reciprocate in any way? The answer is yes, very much so. On June 21 1933 the German Zionist Federation wrote a memo to Hitler explaining the ideological similarity between the Zionists and the Nazis.

On the foundation of the new state, which has established the principle of race, we wish so to fit in our community [so that] fruitful activity for the Fatherland is possible. Our acknowledgement of Jewish nationality provides for a clear and sincere relationship to the German people and its national and racial realities. Precisely because we don't wish to falsify these fundamentals, because we too are against mixed marriages and are for maintaining the purity of the Jewish group ... The realisation of Zionism could only be hurt by resentment of Jews abroad against the German development. Boycott propaganda ... is in essence fundamentally unZionist, because Zionism wants not to do battle, but to convince and to build.¹³

The Zionists set their face against any campaign against the Nazis. They opposed a boycott because they realised that Jewish Palestine could prosper by trading with Nazi Germany. When faced with a choice between building a Jewish state and the needs of the Jewish diaspora, they unhesitatingly chose the former. At the World Zionist Congress in Prague in 1933 they failed even to condemn the Nazi regime.

In August 1933 the Zionist leaders agreed the Ha'avara trade agreement with the Nazis, which effectively destroyed the international Jewish boycott - a boycott which

had the potential to destroy the Nazi government in its infancy. Instead the Zionist movement hitched its wagon to the success of the Nazi state. The result was that the pressure was off Hitler and the regime in subsequent years could consolidate.

As Black noted,

Ha'avara meant that, whilst most Jews were doing their best to undermine the German economy and effect the removal of Hitler, the Zionists' interest was in stabilising and safeguarding the German economy: the Nazi party and the Zionist Organisation shared a common stake in the recovery of Germany. If the Hitler economy fell, both sides would be ruined.¹⁴

Even as ardent a Zionist as Elie Wiesel has admitted that

... the Jewish leaders of Palestine never made the rescue of European Jews into an overwhelming national priority. We know that Zionist leader Itzhak Gruenbaum ... considered creating new settlements more urgent than saving Jews from being sent to Treblinka and Birkenau.¹⁵

In reviewing Tom Segev's *The seventh million* for *The Los Angeles Times* in 1993, Wiesel cited approvingly Segev's conclusion that "Only a few survivors owed their lives to the efforts of the Zionist movement."

Yet the AWL would have you believe that to mention this naked collaboration is 'anti-Semitic'. The AWL identifies with the most rightwing, racist movement amongst Jewry. This is the mark of their appeasement of and concession to imperialism today.

It is argued that the Zionist movement at this time could not be certain that the professions of Heydrich and others - that they intended no harm to the Jews, but merely sought racial separation - were false. The physical attacks on Jews in Germany and the vile anti-Semitic propaganda of *Der Stürmer* should have told them that the Nazis were no 'ordinary' anti-Semitic regime. Most Jews knew this - which was why they packed out Madison Square Gardens in New York as part of the movement to boycott Nazi Germany. But unlike most Jews the Zionists chose to believe the Nazis, which is why they alone welcomed the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which were described by Reitlinger as "the most murderous legislative instrument known to European history".¹⁶ The introduction to the Nuremberg Laws read:

If the Jews had a state of their own in which the bulk of their people were at home, the Jewish question could already be considered solved today ... The ardent Zionists of all people have objected least of all to the basic ideas of the Nuremberg Laws, because they know that these laws are the only correct solution for the Jewish people too ...¹⁷

On the September 17, just two days after the promulgation of the Nuremberg Laws, *Jüdische Rundschau*, paper of the German Zionist movement, welcomed them, declaring:

Germany ... is meeting the demands of the International Zionist Congress when it declares the Jews now living in Germany to be a national minority. Once the Jews have been stamped a national minority, it is again possible to establish normal relations between

What we fight for

■ Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

■ There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

■ Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

■ Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question—ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

■ Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

■ The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

■ Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

■ Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

■ The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

■ We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

■ Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

■ Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

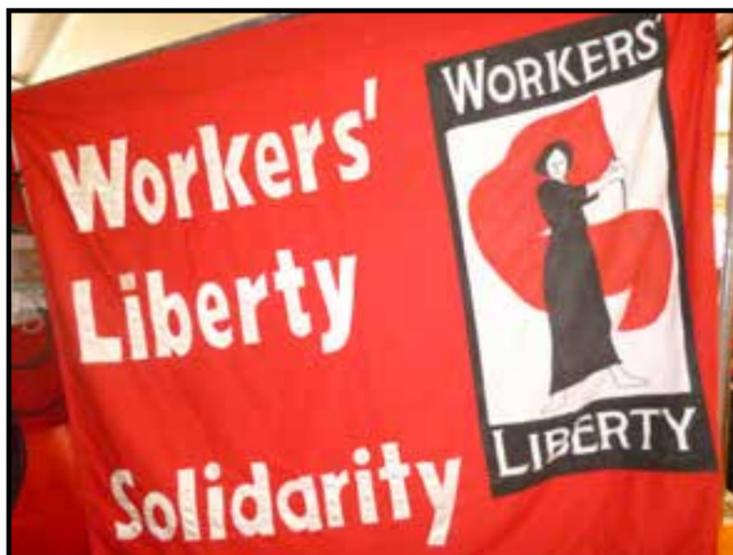
■ Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

■ Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism—a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

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Quoting Nazis to damn 'the Zionists'

From *Solidarity* November 8 2017



A misnamed organisation

the German nation and Jewry.¹⁸

Moshé also cited the welcome for the Nazi regime by rabbi Joachim Prinz, one of the leaders of the German Zionist Federation. In his 1934 book *Wir Juden* ('We Jews') he stated that the Jews

have been drawn out of the last recesses of christening and mixed marriages. We are not unhappy about it ... The theory of assimilation has collapsed ... We want to replace assimilation by something new: the declaration of belonging to the Jewish nation and the Jewish race. A state, built according to the principles of purity of the nation and race, can only be honoured and respected by a Jew who declares his belonging to his own kind.

Trope

The AWL in its 'Quoting Nazis to damn "the Zionists"' article criticises Machover for the "trope of Nazi-Zionist collaboration" ('trope' is a favoured word for Zionist dopes!). The article quotes at length Heydrich to prove that he was a vicious anti-Semite. No-one, however, disputes this or his role in the holocaust. Yet despite this Heydrich spoke favourably of the Zionists and they in turn saw in the rise of the Nazis 'proof' that the Jews did not belong amongst the German nation. The article goes on to quote Hitler in *Mein Kampf* as saying that a Jewish state would be "a central organisation for their [Jews'] world swindling ... a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks".

What else was Hitler expected to say? That he saw a Jewish state as leading to the reforming of the Jewish character? In fact many Nazis did believe this - including Eichmann, who described himself as an "ardent Zionist" - but in 1922 Hitler saw everything that was Jewish as being evil, including Zionism, which he knew little about. However, he was willing to adapt to circumstances when in power. In 1933 the same Hitler approved the trade agreement with the Zionists and in 1937-38, when others in the Nazi government wanted to end it, it was Hitler who was decisive in ensuring the Ha'avara continued up till the beginning of the war.

What Moshé Machover said in his article was merely a basic recitation of the facts of the early Zionist relationship with the Nazis. Of course, the Nazis' flattering of the Zionist movement in Germany did not mean that they changed their attitude to the Jews. They still sought either to expel them or exterminate them. The tragedy is that, instead of offering unremitting opposition to Nazism, the Zionists became the Nazis' useful fools. The Nazis played the Zionists like a violin. In 1941 with the beginning of the holocaust and the deportation of the Jews from Germany, the Nazis made no distinction between Zionists and non-Zionists. All Jews were destined for the gas chambers or the pits of Ponary. The Zionist movement even betrayed its own supporters in Europe.

Ha'avara led to 100 million Reichsmark of trade between Germany and Palestine, which accounted for 60% of total capital investment in the Zionist economy in Palestine.¹⁹

Berl Katznelson, who was a founder of Mapai, the Israeli Labor Party, and editor of the *Histadrut* paper *Davar* saw the rise of Hitler as "an opportunity to build and flourish like none we have ever had or ever will have". Ben Gurion "hoped the Nazis' victory would become a 'fertile force' for Zionism".²⁰ Zionism functioned as a Jewish Quisling movement. The Jews of Europe were completely written off by the Palestinian Zionist movement and the Jewish Agency.

In the course of its article the AWL also implies that Jackie Walker was anti-Semitic for saying that the black holocaust of slavery is not commemorated on Holocaust Memorial

Day. As this is a fact, then presumably AWL is happy with this exclusion. Former NUS president Malia Bouattia is also attacked as anti-Semitic for stating that Birmingham University was "something of a Zionist outpost", while Ken Livingstone's 'anti-Semitism' is simply taken for granted.

The AWL represents an extreme version of a historic tendency of the British left to accept what Lenin described as the crumbs off the table of imperialism. Lenin had been seeking to explain the conservatism of the British working class in terms of its identification with the British empire. The AWL has a long history of support for western imperialism, from refusing to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Iraq or Afghanistan to supporting the CIA-backed Islamic Mujahedeen in Afghanistan, to opposition to the republican movement in Ireland.

In Palestine the AWL treats Zionism not as an ethno-nationalist, settler-colonial movement, but as a legitimate form of nationalism - even though Zionism claims that Jews worldwide form a nation despite the fact that diaspora Jews do not speak the same language, occupy the same territory or have the same culture. It is a racial view of Jewry. The AWL refuses to see Israel as a client regime of US imperialism. It also has nothing to say about the virulent racism which is inherent in a Jewish settler-colonial state.

Within the trade union movement the AWL has consistently opposed any attempts at solidarity with the Palestinians. When I spoke to Unison conference in 2007 and 2008 in support of boycott, divestment and sanctions, one of those speaking against was from the AWL. However, the AWL's support for Israel had negligible support and the motions were passed overwhelmingly.

The AWL found itself in a dilemma when the Labour right and Zionist Jewish Labour Movement sought to expel Moshé Machover from the Labour Party. After all, Machover had been expelled not only for his relationship with the CPGB and Labour Party Marxists, but originally for his "apparently anti-Semitic" article, 'Anti-Zionism is not Anti-Semitism'. The AWL supported the basis on which the expulsion was proposed, but not the expulsion itself, which would have cost it all credibility on the left. In the article below the AWL has sought to try to reconcile these contradictions - how to oppose the witch-hunt of which it is itself a victim, whilst retaining its ideological purity.

The result is, as one might expect, a complete ideological mish-mash ●

Notes

1. www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/08/bannon-to-speak-at-zoa-gala/538197.
2. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2017/07/israel-supports-viktor-orban-and.html>.
3. See <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2017/07/israel-supports-viktor-orban-and.html>.
4. E Black *The transfer agreement* London 1999.
5. *Ibid* p36.
6. www.wsj.com/articles/polish-nationalist-youth-march-draws-thousands-in-capital-1510429006.
7. www.tabletmag.com/scroll/243556/richard-spencer-says-he-just-wants-white-zionism-heres-why-thats-malicious-nonsense.
8. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2016/11/debate-between-tony-greenstein-daniel.html>.
9. See transcript of the debate: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1wBaAOHkBEL7ohkelpvpaGILY-q124sKqEwCglkrVm0/edit>.
10. F Nicosia *The Third Reich and the Palestine question* London 1985, p57.
11. G Reitlinger *The final solution* London 1968, p13.
12. LS Dawidowicz *War against the Jews 1933-45* London 1987, p118.
13. LS Dawidowicz *A holocaust reader* Springfield 1976, pp150-53.
14. E Black *The transfer agreement* London 1999, p253.
15. http://articles.latimes.com/1993-05-23/books/bk-38582_1_tom-segev.
16. G Reitlinger *The final solution* London 1968.
17. M Machover and M Offenber, 'Zionism and its scarecrows', citing *Die Nürnberger Gesetze*: <https://libcom.org/library/zionism-its-scarecrows>.
18. www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/german-news-agency-on-the-nuremberg-laws.
19. D Rosenthal, 'Chaim Arlosoroff 65 years after his assassination' *Jewish Frontier* May-June 1998: www.ameinu.net/publicationfiles/Vol.LXV.No.3.pdf.
20. T Segev *The seventh million* London 2000, p18.

Had it not been distributed as a leaflet at this year's Labour Party conference, Moshé Machover's article, 'Anti-Zionism does not equal anti-Semitism', would have been just another turgid and distasteful article which had found a natural home for itself in the pages of the *Weekly Worker*.

A longer version of the same article - entitled 'Don't apologise - attack' - had been published in the *Weekly Worker* four months earlier. According to that article:

● Anyone who thought that a retweet by Naz Shah MP - which had suggested that Israel (and, presumably, its population) should be relocated to the USA - "was anything but a piece of satire should have their head examined".

● Jackie Walker "has been suspended for saying that there was not only a Jewish holocaust, but also a black African one too." (Wrong: that was not the reason for her suspension.)

● There was nothing anti-Semitic about NUS president Malia Bouattia describing Birmingham University as "something of a Zionist outpost".

● Ken Livingstone was "certainly inaccurate" in having said that Hitler supported Zionism until he went mad". At the same time, "the point he was making was basically correct".

The inclusion of a shorter version of the article in a Labour Party Marxists bulletin distributed at Labour Party conference rescued it from obscurity. Overnight, Machover's article became a *cause célèbre* for left anti-Semites (and anti-Semites in general). Zionism is essentialised. Machover unceasingly refers to "the Zionists ... the Zionists ... the Zionists". Unlike any other nationalism, Zionism is portrayed as a uniformly negative monolith.

Legitimate complaints about anti-Semitic arguments and ways of thinking are dismissed as a Zionist concoction: "And so the Zionists and their allies decided to launch the 'Anti-Zionism equals Anti-Semitism' campaign." This "campaign" is an international (cosmopolitan) one: "The whole campaign of equating opposition to Zionism with anti-Semitism has been carefully orchestrated with the help of the Israeli government and the far right in the United States."

Anti-Semitism is defined in such a way that its existence in the labour movement can simply be denied as being of no account: "The handful of people of the left who propagate a version of the 'Protocols of Zion' carry no weight and are without any intellectual foundation."

Unlike others who share his current politics, Machover does not define Zionism as a form of anti-Semitism.

But he does portray collusion with anti-Semitism as inherent in Zionism: "You can also attack Zionism because of its collusion and collaboration with anti-Semitism, including up to a point with Nazi Germany."

This brings Machover round to the trope of Zionist-Nazi collaboration: "Let us now turn to the Zionist-Nazi connection ... The Zionists made overtures to the Nazi regime, so how did the Nazis respond? ... In other words, a friendly mention of Zionism, indicating an area of basic agreement it shared with Nazism."

The "friendly mention of Zionism" cited by Machover is a quote from an article written in 1935 by Reinhard Heydrich, published in the *Das Schwarze Korps*, the in-house magazine of the Nazi SS: "National socialism has no intention of attacking the Jewish people in any way. The government finds itself in complete agreement with the great spiritual movement within Jewry itself, so-called Zionism."

Heydrich was a hardened anti-Semite from the early 1930s onwards. He was one of the architects of the Final Solution. Only a few months earlier he had made clear his attitude towards Jews in another article in *Das Schwarze Korps*:

In order to preserve our people, we must be harsh in the face of our enemy, even at the cost of hurting an individual or being condemned as rabble-rousers by some probably well-meaning people ...

If someone is our enemy, he is to be vanquished subjectively and without exception. If, for example, out of false compassion, every German should make an exception for 'only one decent' Jew or Freemason whom he knows, we would end up with 60 million such exceptions.

Ten years before Heydrich's article Hitler had already dismissed a Jewish state as "a central organisation for their [Jews'] world swindling ... a haven for convicted scoundrels and a university for budding crooks".

Thus, to illustrate the "basic agreement" which Zionism supposedly shared with the Nazis, Machover quotes an architect of the holocaust, from an article in the magazine of the organisation which played a leading role in carrying out the holocaust.

It is not about supporting the Palestinians. Machover says explicitly: that's not enough. You must also demonise "the Zionists" as an evil essence running through history to link Jews today back to the taint of the Nazis ●

Dale Street

weekly worker

'Weak and wobbly' has become a cliché

May on the brink

As the resignations and scandals pile up, Paul Demarty wonders how long this dysfunctional government can last

When last we addressed the parlous state of the Conservative government, we asked whether Theresa May might be cursed. Nothing that has transpired in the intervening weeks has dispelled that impression at all. Somewhere in Britain - possibly in the office of the *Evening Standard*? - there is a voodoo doll with a short haircut and some very expensive trousers. The pins get closer, every day, to its heart.

Where to start? Perhaps with the most serious affair - the downfall of Priti Patel, until last Wednesday secretary of state for international development, after it was revealed quite how fun her recent 'holiday' in Israel was, meeting all kinds of no doubt charming ministers and officials, up to Netanyahu himself (strictly socially, of course).

Details emerged of a plan to funnel some of her aid budget - whose very existence, as a swivel-eyed Thatcherite, she resents - to Israeli field hospitals in the Golan Heights. These exist notionally to treat Syrian refugees, but have in practice served as a means of supporting some of the fruitier forces fighting Bashar al-Assad's government. Perhaps the latter plot to treat the wounds of Salafist lunatics with British taxpayers' money was the reason she failed to inform the foreign office of the true nature of her visit; in the end, it raised enough questions to make her position untenable and force her resignation, although she has gathered support from the Israeli embassy's most loyal friends.

While Patel has got into trouble for pretending to be on holiday when she was not, foreign secretary Boris Johnson has landed himself in hot water for claiming somebody was not on holiday, when apparently she was. Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe now rots in Iran's Evin prison, apparently in poor health, for alleged 'soft regime change' activities. She is formerly of the Beeb, and now works for Reuters's charitable arm, on the basis of which fact Johnson either blew the gaff on her true mission, if you are a trigger-happy Iranian prosecutor, or blundered her into jail on false charges, if you are an anxious Mr Ratcliffe.

So far Johnson's resignation has not been tendered over this affair - indeed Zaghari-Ratcliffe's family is not officially after his head anyway, seeing as how, from their point of view, Tory fratricide is something of a distraction from the matter at hand. Frankly, however, we are amazed that he has made it through the 'Pestminster' scandal intact, given how notoriously prolific Boris is alleged to be with his Johnson. More's the pity for May, that it somehow has not troubled the man who is said to be both the most promiscuous and tendentially troublesome in her cabinet, but has cut a swathe through the rest of it. Michael Fallon, of course, is gone, after a series of allegations; Damian Green yet survives, after it emerged that 'extreme' pornography



Losing one minister after another

was found on his computer after a police raid in 2008 (Green had leaked embarrassing migration numbers to the press).

There are 'real' stories behind all these things, of course. The Damian Green porn business is wholly confected, but has leverage because of the current high visibility of sexual harassment scandals - and, of course, comes on top of his alleged brush with Kate Maltby's knee. The case of Zaghari-Ratcliffe is incomprehensible except against the background of the beat of the war-drums for Iranian blood in many quarters. With tensions so high, incidents like this are inevitable. And Patel's bizarre escapade in Israel tells us something about the confusion and hypocrisy of US-UK policy in the Middle East, and acts as yet another reminder that the forces of the 'free world' are hardly playing a straight bat, when it comes to their supposedly irreconcilable hostility to Islamic State and friends.

Yet it is not their 'serious' import as individual issues that concern us here, but rather what they tell us about the state of the Conservative Party at this most embarrassing juncture. No world event, apparently, does not leave its mark on this fragile arrangement. It seems almost that, *in theory*, the cabinet is capable for the time being of operating sensibly, as long as nothing goes wrong (leaving Johnson aside

for a moment); but the rank-and-file supporters of the various cabinet factions are certainly not reconciled to the presence of whatever hated enemy it happens to be in some post or another, so they all keep getting dragged into the strife anyway.

So we may put Green's discomfort in part down to Brexiteer manoeuvres against the 'remoaners'; and Johnson's to the vigorous efforts of the likes of George 'Freezer' Osborne, whose *Evening Standard* is increasingly turned over entirely to the task of overthrowing the government as an act of petty revenge on the part of its bloodthirsty editor. Patel's case is a little more peculiar, given the particular significance of the Israel-Palestine situation in the politics of the imperial centres; her friends claim that she is the victim of the Arabists in the foreign office, which seems a peculiarly archaic sort of bogeyperson; as a May-friendly Brexiteer, however, who knows? Any number of potential enemies present themselves.

Alternative?

As we have remarked before, the incongruity of this picture is pretty fundamental - we face a Tory Party whose historic function is to be the political glue that holds the kingdom together, but whose present state is very nearly the opposite. It is now such a tedious

cliché to call May's government "weak and wobbly" (as a direct inversion of her one-time catchphrase, "strong and stable") that barely anyone does so any more at all. It is a shame, for a better description has yet to be discovered, and it is reconfirmed every passing day.

How on earth is such a party useful to the smooth progress of the British state? Indeed, it is not. With Brexit looking rockier by the day, the time is surely right for the changing of the guard. The problem on this front is well known - one of the pre-existing weaknesses of the state establishment is its loss of the Labour Party, when it appeared so very much to be entirely in its gift. Thus the present predicament - no faction of the Conservative Party looks ready to deliver the sort of authority needed at a very risky moment, but nor is the Labour Party in the hands of such people who can be called reliable.

What, then, to do? Alas! - no small part of the present permanent farce is that there is no attractive answer. Jeremy Corbyn is doing his level best to look coquettish - he contributed a vast op-ed to *The Sunday Times* arguing that only he, of the plausible options on offer, can deliver a Brexit that is not a national disaster from the point of view of the capitalist class. He is unlikely to be trusted, however, for the ruling class still recalls his more fulsomely bearded days, with their hymns of praise for Irish

freedom and the like. But none of the Tory alternatives look terribly likely either. The 'sensible' ones are despised by the rank and file, and can hardly expect a free shot at the top job, should it somehow (suspend your disbelief!) become free. Of the notional insurgents, Johnson is the most reasonable, which says it all. Beyond him are the plain old ranters, like the beyond-parody recusant, Jacob Rees-Mogg, who can hardly be relied on to deliver on the 'national interest' they so keenly adore, but of which they understand bugger all.

As the British establishment covers its eyes in shame, so does the collective Eurocracy in frustration. There is a real chance that Brexit negotiations will collapse for no better reason than nobody can be found on the British side with the authority to negotiate, or the individual interest in even appearing to do so in good faith. The leaks from their side increasingly base themselves on the assumption that collapse is inevitable, and that Europe will have to make the best of it. Whatever Rees-Mogg thinks in the paroxysms of his wet dreams about Agincourt, we expect that *nos amis et amies* over the water will shake out just fine.

The political crisis in Britain, however, shows all the signs of running and running ●

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