

## State terror in Jenin

Israeli forces occupied several Palestinian towns in April. Controversy rages over these events, and many people may think it is impossible to know what really happened. However, it is possible to get to the facts, and they definitely tell a story.

The most controversial episode has been the events in the Jenin refugee camp where widespread killing of Palestinians and destruction of their homes and utilities is undeniable. The number of dead, particularly civilian dead, responsibility for their deaths, and responsibility for the destruction are all disputed. The Israelis claim that their soldiers acted with "restraint", and that they only killed "gunmen" in battle. They have also suggested that homes had to be bulldozed because they had been damaged by Palestinian booby traps and were unsafe – blaming the victims, rather than their own liberal use of explosives, including missiles fired from helicopters.

The Palestinian response has been to brand the occupation a war crime, to compare the actions of the Israelis to those of the Nazis, and to let exaggeration and unsupported assertions get in the way of the cold, hard facts which tell the story. If we just balance the views of the two sides we end up thinking either that the truth is somewhere between the two positions, or that they are both as bad as each other and that we can never know the truth. In spite of the efforts of the Israeli occupiers to prevent scrutiny and to (literally) bury the evidence, significant facts have emerged.

The mass media in Britain subscribe to the idea of "balance", which usually means telling "both sides" of a story. This is

particularly true of television news. In this case exaggeration, lies and the habit of "spokespeople" attacking the opposition rather than answering interviewers' questions tend to obscure the facts and replace analysis with confusion and despair. However, a few journalists are a credit to their profession and unearth facts, place them in context and analyse them.

Justin Huggler and Phil Reeves of *The Independent* discovered that as well as the destruction of the homes of around 800 families, nearly half of 50 Palestinian dead who had been identified were civilians, and that Israeli troops committed many atrocities during the course of the operation. The fullest results of their research appeared on 25<sup>th</sup> April. They found that as well as displaying a complete disregard for civilians trapped in their homes, Israeli troops also deliberately killed a number of them, including a uniformed nurse. These were neither "gunmen" nor victims of "crossfire". Israeli troops also prevented ambulances and medical assistance from reaching wounded Palestinians, in violation of the Geneva Convention.

The conflict in Palestine affects us here in Britain. In London most of us live and work alongside, or are ourselves, Moslems. Both the plight of the Palestinians and perceived Western indifference to it are of grave concern to them. 30,000 people, mostly British Moslems, marched through Central London on 13<sup>th</sup> April in a display of solidarity. State terror affects people all over the world, opposing it wherever it occurs is in the interests of all working class people. We can find out what is going on in the world, and we ought to make the effort because it will affect us sooner or later.

## Synagogue attacked

Finsbury Park Synagogue was desecrated on 29<sup>th</sup> April. Anti-Semitic attacks in Britain are on the increase as Israel's claims to be a Jewish state, and Jewish people often get blamed for its actions. They also provide a convenient cover for those who hate Jews anyway, and who need to disguise the nature of their own views and actions.

The Synagogue's union jack was taken out of a cupboard and propped against the lectern, suggesting British nationalists were responsible.

If people feel strongly about what is going on in Palestine they shouldn't blame Jews. Yes, most Jewish people support Israel, but very many oppose it either for religious or political reasons, and many more are critical of its actions. Any boycotts should be of Israeli goods and of businesses which actively support Israel, not which are simply Jewish.

## Racist chants

Finsbury Park also is close to Arsenal Football Club, whose local rivals Tottenham Hotspur are often referred to as "Yids" or "Yiddos". "Yid" is a derogatory term for a Jew, and is used to abuse Tottenham players and fans. Tottenham were first dubbed "The Yids" in the 1930s, because at one time their entire board of directors was Jewish. This is ironic as both the driving force behind Arsenal's recent success, Vice Chairman David Dein, and the Club's biggest shareholder, Daniel Fiszman, are Jewish.

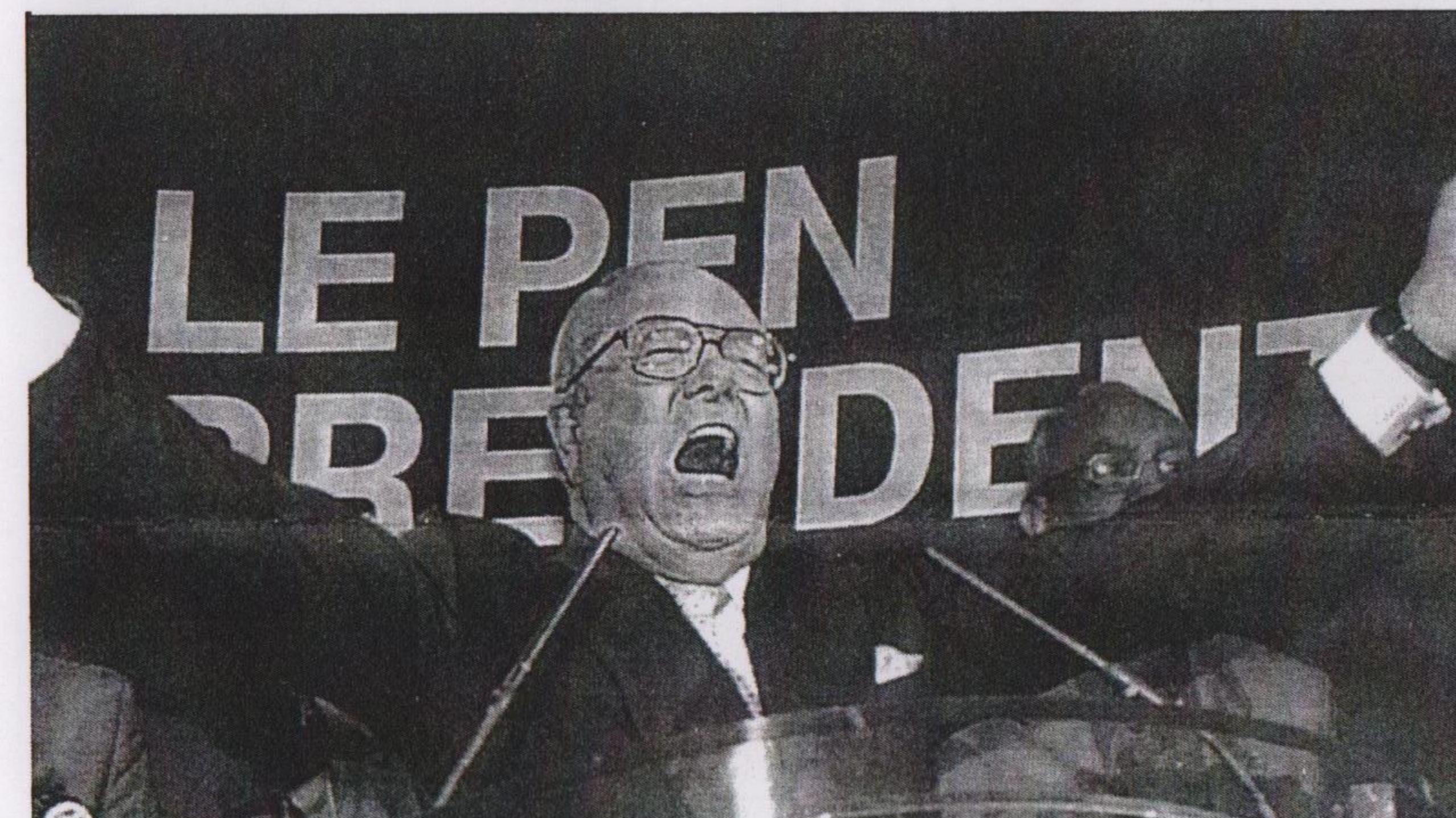
A rather coy piece in the Arsenal vs. West Ham United Programme under the headline "Racist chanting at Highbury" referred to "a nickname for Tottenham fans... which is very upsetting to a large number of our fans... although no racial connotations are probably meant..." It's time to grow up - if people didn't think there was something wrong with being Jewish it wouldn't be a term of abuse. Football doesn't exist in isolation and football fans have a responsibility to understand what their actions mean and to change.

Produced by North & East London Solidarity Federation, an anarcho-syndicalist group. We seek to replace capitalism with a stateless society based on the principle of from each according to their ability, to each according to their needs. We support working class struggles towards these ends. We welcome anyone who agrees with our aims and principles. We also welcome comments on this newsletter. For more information, including monthly socials, contact: NELS, PO BOX 1681, LONDON, N8 7LE or 020 8374 5027 [ansaphone]

# Solidarity

## for anarcho-syndicalism

## Labour politicians encourage the Fascists



Many people will have been shocked by the success of Jean Marie Le Pen, the fascist leader, in the first round of the French Presidential election. But it is the failure of social democracy which is leading the fascist advance.

Voters are increasingly disillusioned with parties such as the Socialist Party in France and the Labour Party in Britain, which offer little different from their right-wing opponents. Whilst communities and livelihoods are being torn apart by the effects of capitalist globalisation these social democrats offer the same policies of privatisation and deregulation. As a cover for these policies they echo the right wing in their attacks on immigrants and calls for tougher law and order.

The Asylum Bill going through Parliament and statements by the Home Secretary David Blunkett about schools being "swamped" by refugees can only encourage the racists.

Every time the Fascists make a noise the social democrats adopt more of their agenda. This encourages racists to blame "foreigners" for the many problems that are created by the capitalist system that the Labour Party backs so enthusiastically.

### Globalisation

In reality, the very forces that the social democrats support drive refugees and "economic" migrants here. They are the front-line victims of the globalisation of capital, and the wars and repression it causes.

We need an anti-capitalist movement prepared to drive the fascists off the streets whilst attacking the capitalist system which spawns them.

## Contents

Page 2... *Activities*.

Page 3... *Hackney Libraries strike; Subsidising the arms trade.*

Page 4... *State terror in Jenin; Anti-Semitism.*

## COUNCIL HOUSING UNDER THREAT

Council tenants across the country have been getting organised to fight the sale of council houses to housing associations. Recently tenants in Birmingham defeated plans to sell the entire housing stock of the city.

Labour claims that sell-offs are the only way that necessary investment and repairs can be paid for. Many tenants, frustrated by years of neglect and poor service may be tempted by the carrots being put under their noses by the Housing Associations and their public relations consultants. In reality, tenants stand to lose their security of tenure and promises of repairs may prove to be just that—"promises". Rents in many housing associations are much higher than council rents, although it is now Labour policy to "converge" council rents with housing association and private sector rents.

In Haringey we have been fighting plans to sell off "out of borough" estates. These include Imperial Wharf estate in South Tottenham, which is only one street into Hackney, due to a boundary change. Similarly the White Hart Lane estate is just into Enfield. Both estates have yet to be balloted about the proposed sell off.

(Continued on page 2)

## COUNCIL HOUSING UNDER THREAT

(Continued from page 1)

Ballots have already been held at estates in Cheshunt, Potters Bar and Waltham Cross. These estates have been systematically neglected and run-down by the council. A good example of this is the closure of the repairs depot at Cheshunt. Consequently tenants at Cheshunt and Potters Bar voted to transfer to housing associations, although Waltham Cross voted against. Since then the Housing Corporation (a government agency) has been forced to intervene in the management of Ridgeway Housing Association, which is set to run the Potters Bar Estate. It may now be taken over by another housing association.

Where the council's plans for the future of council housing became most obvious was the street housing in South Hornsey, which couldn't be described as "out of borough" by any stretch of the imagination. This is housing which is not part of any estate and is therefore a desirable grab for any housing association.

### Tenants organise

Tenants got organised by going round to all the houses (including those ex-tenants whose freehold was to be sold) and talked to people about the issues. The tenants association took a clear stand against the sell-off and organised a number of public meetings. They started a petition against the sell-off amongst the tenants and leaseholders, which came out with a clear majority

against the sell-off. They then challenged the council to hold the ballot straight away and stop wasting money on a bogus "consultation exercise". The then leader of the Housing Committee tried unsuccessfully to suppress the petition. He later resigned. When officials were sent round by the housing association to value the cost of repairs to the properties, tenants refused to let them in, saying the housing was not for sale. Eventually Family Housing Association, the preferred bidder, pulled out of the deal. The council blamed a "campaign of misinformation" by tenants. This shows that when you get organised you can beat privatisation.

For more information contact: Haringey Defend Council Housing, 68 Grand Parade, Green Lanes, N4

# Agitators at work

## Activities of North and East London Solidarity Federation

### GREED

North and East London Solidarity Federation leafleted outside Reed Employment in Holloway Road, North London, on 9<sup>th</sup> April. This was part of the week of action against employment agencies called by the International Workers' Association (IWA).

Employment agencies are the parasites of the casual economy. Workers lack job security, rights to paid sick leave, the right to an occupational pension and they're often paid less than their permanent colleagues for work of an equal value. In 2000, Reed Employment made £15.4 million profit from the labour of its workers.

The Labour Party has a close relationship with Reed. Before the 1997 election, Chairman Alec Reed gave £100,000 to the party. Tom Sawyer, the party's former General Secretary, was listed as a non-executive director of Reed in December 2000. After the election, Reed ran a pilot for the government's New Deal scheme. Today they run the scheme itself in many parts of the country. In other words, Reed is benefiting from

both the denial of many employment rights to temporary workers and the vulnerable position of the unemployed.

People who work for agencies like Reed don't have to be powerless. Many companies rely more and more on temporary workers, which gives these staff greater strength. Solidarity between permanent and temporary workers, and direct action – including industrial action – are the key to building union organisation in the workplace.

### Council workers

Prior to the 14th April Local Government strike, called by UNISON in support of the claim for £4,000 London Weighting, NELSF leafleted a number of workplaces in Haringey informing temporary workers of their rights, including the right to strike, and urging all workers to support the permanent employment of staff currently on temporary contracts.

On the day many temporary workers supported UNISON and did not cross picket lines.

## Hackney library workers strike

Workers in Hackney's libraries continue to strike every Saturday, as they have done since mid-November. The aim of the strike is the restoration of Saturday-enhanced pay, part of the nationally agreed terms and conditions which are included in workers' contracts. Hackney Council has unilaterally declared Saturday to be a regular working day for which regular pay rates will apply, in spite of its contractual obligations.

The opening of the new Central Library in the "Technology Learning Centre" on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> April was prevented by a 24-hour strike by all library workers, which also closed the Borough's other six libraries. A ceremonial opening planned for Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> had to be cancelled because the strike had been previously scheduled for that day.

Library workers are poorly paid and rely on the additional half-day's pay (without London Weighting, being paid at national rates) for the Saturday they are required to work each fortnight to make ends meet. The fact that they have been able to sustain the action in the face of losing a whole day's pay each fortnight demonstrates their determination to win back what is rightfully theirs.

That determination is supported by strong organisation built up in the workplace, which goes beyond the usual trades union formula of electing a shop steward and relying on them to "lead" resistance to management. In contrast to this steward-based organisation, workers have been encouraged to tackle problems collectively themselves through direct action, rather than just asking their stewards to sort the problems out with management.

Most of the membership of UNISON (the library workers' union) in Hackney Council do not work in such well-organised

workplaces, however. This has led to library workers fighting alone for the restoration of enhanced pay rates in spite of the fact that this issue affects workers all over the Council. Union activists seem unable to tackle the patchy nature of workplace organisation in Hackney, praising library workers as an example to others in the same situation rather than taking any practical steps to help the latter organise.

### Everyday problems

Active union members need to start building up organisation in their own workplaces as the best way of supporting library workers. How library workers started was by picking everyday problems where they could say "no" to management and take collective action to thwart them with a good chance of success. This was started by stewards but relies on the involvement of all members to work. It also has to be done at library, office or depot level so that management have to deal with all the workers, not just with a steward.

Once a small victory has been won workers gain confidence and management start to lose it. Better organisation also means more reliable decision-making and is the cornerstone of union democracy. Decisions made and action taken in this way will always be strongly supported, and will give workers a measure of control over their workplaces which electing "community candidates" onto the Council never will.

## How would you spend £760 million?

If you were the government, what would you do with £760m? Perhaps build 10 new hospitals? Or 100 schools? Or would you give it to arms companies to help them export military equipment around the world? You've guessed it – that's what the government does.

Even though arms exports account for just two per cent of UK exports, it is the most heavily subsidised sector in the economy apart from agriculture. UK taxpayers foot the bill for subsidies, which amount to around £30 per taxpayer this year.

Undoubtedly the arms trade fuels conflict and leads to an increase in casualties. In modern armed conflict nearly 90% of casualties are civilians, and 40% of these are children. Although the government professes to strictly control arms exports, in reality, the UK continues to arm 30 of the 40 most repressive regimes in the world.

For more information contact: Campaign Against the Arms Trade, 10 Goodwin St, LONDON N4 3HQ



Turning guns into armchairs