

The Line of March

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**Defeat the Health and Social Care Bill! Keep Our NHS Public!
Stop Paying the Rich! Increase Investments in Social
Programmes! Health Care Is a Right!
Fight for the Alternative!**

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The Need for an Anti-War Government

Both the Defence Minister Dr Liam Fox and Chief of the Defence Staff General Sir David Richards have recently called, without irony or shame, for an increase to the intensity of the bombardment of Libya. As if the inhuman crimes of the past two months are not enough, the past week alone has seen further aerial assaults on buildings and infrastructure in Tripoli; and the coded insinuations for the killing of Colonel Muammar Gaddafi have now become outright calls for his assassination – surely a crime in international law.

NATO spokesperson's obscene and fascist declarations of over 2,500 "strike sorties" – those where bombs are dropped – against Libya since attacks began in March match the recent comments and statements of Fox and Richards, which reflect a lowering of the level of human discourse.

It doesn't have to be like this. To echo the powerfully articulated message given on March 26 by hundreds of thousands of workers rejecting the government's anti-social offensive and decimation of public services: "There is an Alternative". With Britain acting as one of the headquarters of backwardness in the world and a main source of ideological justifications for war and aggression, the alternative is an anti-war government created by the people of Britain. Only an Anti-War Government can prevent the crimes against peace committed by the British imperialists.

Since the start of the war against Afghanistan in 2001 and continuing to this day a powerful anti-war movement has developed in the country. In groups small and large nationwide people from all walks of life and many different political persuasions and beliefs come together to discuss ways in which the injustice of perpetual war and aggression can be opposed.

It is true to say then that the anti-war movement is consolidated and well established. It is even said to reflect a majority opinion wilfully ignored in the political structures and forums of the government, and marginalised in the mainstream media. It must stay united against British crimes of aggression. There is therefore a democratic deficit revealed in the vote on March 21, 2011, in favour of the aggression against Libya supported by all but 13 of 577 Members of Parliament.

With Britain's political establishment represented by its cartel style government of Labour, Conservative or Lib Dem coalition, an anti-war government is not a policy objective to be subordinated to endless debates and point scoring in the Houses of Parliament or arguments about this aggressive campaign or another. Instead it should be seen as a proactive political initiative which transforms the tone and pace of an agenda set by the warmongers to one set by the people themselves.

Democratic renewal and political empowerment are important aspects of the struggle for political change in Britain; establishing



an anti-war government is a parallel endeavour to crown the anti-war movement with success.

Such a government would not only outlaw all ongoing acts of aggression and war, preventing the countless deaths and the wilful and cruel destruction of a country's heritage and infrastructure – it would also be a progressive initiative to the search for global peace and an important contribution from the people of Britain to all those defending their rights worldwide.

One characteristic of the last decade is that media manipulation and news management reduces literally life and death issues to banal point-scoring exercises and internecine debates – which follow a definite trajectory of managed intensity reaching a crescendo before the tempo is decreased and the given War and war in general becomes a normal aspect of daily life – which serve to destabilise the movement in opposition to war and aggression and imperialism and reinforce and perpetuate British chauvinism and political confusion. The call for an Anti-War Government and its consolidation can focus the energy and spirit of the anti-war movement towards establishing a government that opposes war and refuses to participate in wars of aggression, upholds the principle of the sovereignty and independence of all states and nations, withdraws from warmongering alliances such as NATO and defends and adheres to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries and absolutely rejects the use of force in settling political disputes within and between nations, states and countries. Such disputes and problems – many of which have their roots in Britain's colonial history and non-stop imperialist ambition for spheres of influence and sources of raw materials and profits – are customarily used as the pretext for the British government to participate as a junior partner of the United States to launch aggression against other countries in flagrant violation of international law.

With an anti-war government established by the insurgent people of Britain, one of the most important concerns of our time can be addressed. The need for peace, an end to the dangerous militarisation of the British economy – through the proliferation of weapons of war and aggression – and an end to the domination of the country's economic life by arms manufactures and merchants of death who profit handsomely from global armed conflicts – which they incite and perpetuate. In its place, a government which defends peace and progress enshrined in principles such as respect for equality between all nations big or small, rich or poor, defence of sovereignty and independence and adhering to international law.

66th Anniversary of the Victory over Fascism: The Overthrow of the Imperialist System Is the Only Guarantee for Peace

On May 9, 1945, the anti-fascist forces of the world with the Soviet Union and communists of all lands at the head of the Resistance Movement declared victory over the Hitlerite Nazis. On this memorable day 66 years ago, fascist Germany acknowledged defeat and declared unconditional surrender.

The turning point of the war was the historic Soviet victory at Stalingrad February 2, 1943, that concluded with the encirclement and surrender of a German army of 300,000 troops. This rout of the Nazi Wehrmacht, followed by a decisive victory at Kursk, began a powerful counter-offensive that drove the German Hitlerites steadily backward until the final demise of the Third Reich in Berlin.

Of great assistance was the Allied landing at Normandy on June 6, 1944 (D-Day), which compelled Germany to wage war on two fronts. Unable to withstand the joint blows of the Red Army and Allied forces, the German troops quickly fled back to their own lands where they finally capitulated unconditionally.

As soon as Hitler was crushed in Berlin and even before the people could breathe a sigh of relief and enjoy the heroic success of their accomplishments in the anti-fascist war, the “Western” imperialists led by the United States began their Cold War to “contain communism”. This campaign to attack and stifle the democratic rights of the people was directly aimed at preventing progressive change across the entire world. It continues unabated to the present day with anti-communism at the core. A few examples are the formation and continual expansion of NATO, McCarthyism, the invasion and occupation of Korea, Viet Nam, Iraq and Afghanistan, the arming and financing of the Suharto fascists in Indonesia, covert and not-so-covert wars and coup d’états in Latin America and so on. The period since the end of World War II has not been a time of “peace”, as the imperialists try to claim, but one of continuous life and death struggles between progress and retrogression throughout the world, between the exploited of the world with the working class at the head and the exploiters

led by the imperialist bourgeoisie.

As part of their attack on everything progressive, the US imperialists and their minions have deliberately falsified the history of the Second World War. Today, the Red Army of that time is caricatured as being similar to the army of Hitler, as if communist and people’s armies go about killing civilians and shooting prisoners, which is how Goebbels and the Nazis portrayed the Red Army. The imperialists relentlessly repeat all the old fascist accusations against communism and especially J V Stalin who led the Soviet Union and the worldwide victory against fascism. The most outrageous claims are made that Hitler and Stalin are “the same” and that “both bear responsibility for World War II”, when

it was the fascist states with the connivance of the Anglo-Americans and the French that started World War II, while the Soviet Union led the struggle to stop the war from ever beginning and finally to end it. What is the objective behind these falsifications? It could not be merely to discredit the enemies of imperialism posthumously because history cannot be rewritten in that fashion. Rather, it is to groom and egg on the fascist forces in the present, to give them every support to organise against the people in the here and now. The imperialists



present to the world a totally fabricated falsehood called “Stalinism”, suggesting this caricature is the same as its opposite, fascism. In fact, everything that is falsely blamed on the name and work of Stalin is exactly what the imperialists have been doing since the victory of the Great October Socialist Revolution in 1917 and the beginning of the Soviet nation-building project led by the working class to negate its exploiters and open a path for the emancipation of workers and oppressed people worldwide.

The truth is that the rulers of the US were very unhappy that the Red Army crushed Hitler’s forces at Stalingrad and broke the back of the Wehrmacht and its myth of invincibility. The deepest wish of the US ruling elite was that Nazi Germany would smash the Soviet Union. This was an imperialist dream that went back prior to the founding of the Soviet Union. In 1918, the US and

13 other countries invaded the newly born Soviet Russia, hoping to destroy it before the revolutionary workers and peasants could consolidate their nation-building project. Even as the “peacemakers” talked in Paris in 1919, tens of thousands of Allied soldiers were waging a bloody undeclared war against Socialist Russia and the revolutionary workers and peasants of 14 other nations fighting to join together in a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics free from imperialist exploitation and war.

Following World War I, the US ruling class pursued a policy of using the contradictions among the European imperialist powers to further its own empire building and to profit from and weaken its

European rivals, especially Britain and France. With the rise to power of the German Nazi Party in 1933, the US saw in Nazi Germany a weapon to terrorise and dominate Europe and finally destroy the socialist Soviet Union. To this end, powerful monopolies in the US such as Ford invested millions in Germany to strengthen its military for the planned invasions and war. Meanwhile, as the Nazis ruthlessly eliminated all opposition within Germany and militarised all aspects of life, Britain and France pursued a policy of conciliation and capitulation to fascism, and similar to the US prodded Germany to prepare to march eastward.

All the efforts of the Soviet Union to oppose Germany by signing a mutual assistance pact with Britain and France failed. Instead, Britain and France meekly accepted the German Wehrmacht’s invasion and annexation of Austria in March 1938, paving the way for the signing of the infamous Munich Agreement six months later in September allowing Germany a free hand to occupy a major industrialised region of Czechoslovakia greatly strengthening its militarisation and preparations for war. The Munich conciliation with fascism sealed the immediate fate of the peoples of Europe by giving Hitler the green light to invade other countries without a united opposition. The Soviet Union in particular was left on its own to prepare itself as best it could for the inevitable Nazi attack. As expected, 22 months later on June 22, 1941, Hitler’s military invaded the Soviet Union along a 1,800 mile front with over 4.5 million troops, 600,000 vehicles and tanks, 750,000 horses and thousands of aircraft. This barbaric invasion to crush the nation-building project of the Soviet working class and peasantry, annex their territory, seize their means of production and raw material and turn the people into slaves of the German monopolies was the largest military offensive in history. In the end, the resistance of the Soviet peo-



ples led by Stalin and the Communist Party broke the back of the Nazi aggressors. Some 50 million people died and another 35 million were seriously wounded during the Anti-Fascist War with the peoples of the Soviet Union bearing the brunt of the casualties.

What is the main lesson of the Second World War?

In *Causes and Lessons of the Second World War*, Hardial Bains writes: “It is very important to understand that this entire propaganda on the question of the Second World War has an aim. Working people should not take it with folded arms because its object is to organise a fascist movement, to condone fascist aggression. If the Anglo-American bourgeoisie is successful in this, it will cause a disaster for the peoples of the world just as the Anglo-American policy caused the disaster of the Second World War. A repetition of this policy will bring the disaster of a Third World War. Our Party openly states that people should take the road of revolution. Our party will give the call for the overthrow of any government that participates in an imperialist and aggressive war. We have the right to do so in order to protect the people from the horrors of such a cataclysmic war. To protect the people from the horrors of inter-imperialist war is part of the tradition of the modern democratic movement, the entire struggle for the rights and freedoms of the people. The movement entrusts us with this stand. [...] The overthrow of the imperialist system is the only guarantee for peace. There is no other lasting way peace can be achieved. This is the lesson of the Second World War.” (Hardial Bains, *Causes and Lessons of the Second World War*. Toronto: MELS, 1990) (*The Marxist-Leninist Daily*, May 9, 2011)

Parliament Supports Military Aggression and Intervention

On May 16, William Hague, the Foreign Secretary, opened a major debate which took place in the House of Commons on North Africa, the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Foreign Secretary's remarks were intended to be a further justification for military aggression and other forms of interference and intervention in several countries in Africa and Asia. His speech was full of the logic of the British imperialists of former centuries, who gave themselves the right to maraud around the world protecting vital "interests", imposing the "Pax Britannica" and shouldering the so-called white man's burden. Such is the reactionary nature of the major political parties and the House of Commons that not one MP questioned the legitimacy of such a debate, which was based on the premise that Britain has the right to pontificate about and interfere in the affairs of other sovereign countries and even to invade them, according to the economic, strategic and other interests of the major monopolies and financial institutions.

The Foreign Secretary's opening remarks were a further justification of the criminal NATO-led war against the Libyan people, which has now seen more than 3,000 "strikes" and been intensified in recent weeks so as to smash the entire infrastructure of the country built by and for the people of Libya. It was evident that some MPs were uncertain how this form of aggression, as well as recent attempts at assassination and the intervention of the International Criminal Court, which are clearly all designed to produce regime change, could be considered to be concerned with protecting civilians and within the mandate of UNSC Resolution 1973. However, as the Foreign Secretary's officials had drafted the UN resolution he assured the House of Commons that it permitted NATO to act as it saw fit. The logic of the government remains the same – it will continue to encourage, finance and support the armed opposition to the government of Libya. If that government attempts to resist this NATO-supported rebellion it will be bombed into submission. Although the absurdity and warmongering nature of this logic was clearly evident to some MPs, and even though such acts are illegal under international law, there was no parliamentary opposition to it.

The Foreign Secretary also reiterated the government's view that the NATO-supported rebellion in Libya is similar to the popular uprisings in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere in the region. However, even in Tunisia and Egypt the government is interfering in the media, in the election process and in the economy and through its "Arab Partnership Initiative", attempting to make sure that any political and economic changes are in line with its "universal values" and firmly based on the neo-liberal model. Here too can be seen every manifestation of colonialist arrogance and



eurocentrism and it becomes Britain's "civilising mission" to ensure that its form of representative democracy is universally accepted and adopted. The people of North Africa rose up against the political and economic diktat of the Anglo-Americans which was enforced by the reactionary regimes of Mubarak and Ben Ali; now the British government and its allies are trying to re-impose them and even speaking of incorporating the whole region as an appendage of the EU.

Elsewhere in the region, the government continues to act not out of any principle in regard to the rights of nations nor of non-interference but rather as suits its geo-political interest. It continues its sabre-rattling against Iran and is increasing the pressure and sanctions on the government of Syria, for example, while acting in a much more conciliatory way towards Bahrain and Yemen. It continues to attempt to dictate the future of the Palestinian people while ignoring their right to self-determination and accepting or supporting the illegal and aggressive actions of Zionist Israel. Moreover, with over 10,000 troops deployed it continues, along with its allies, the occupation of Afghanistan, and infringes the sovereignty of Pakistan as if that country were still a British colony.

In concluding his remarks about North Africa and Western Asia, the Foreign Secretary expressed the view that there was cause for optimism regarding "the potential for greater economic and political freedom in a part of the world that has known little of either". Hague cannot have had in mind that there has been little "freedom" in the past two centuries when British imperialism imposed its colonial rule throughout much of this region, nor in more recent times when British governments have propped up dictators and reactionary regimes and invaded Libya, Iraq and Afghanistan not in order to support the aspirations of the people but in order to suppress them. The current policy of the government is to continue and in many ways step up the armed intervention around the world, while the Labour Party's role is to support, encourage it, and demand more ideological justifications along the lines of "humanitarian intervention".

This is an example of the "representative", "multi-party", democracy that the government is attempting to impose in North Africa and other parts of the world, where the majority of people are denied decision-making powers, the legislature is the hands of the big parties representing the interest of the rich and the government can act and even invade other countries with impunity. The times cry out to end such a state of affairs, for the need to develop the alternative, so that the people can become the decision makers and establish an anti-war government that serves their interests.

The Defence of the Indefensible – Assassination and State Terrorism

On May 3, the Prime Minister made a statement in the House of Commons in which he congratulated and praised the United States government for what has been presented as the successful assassination of Osama bin Laden. Even Ed Miliband, the leader of the Labour Party, expressed gratitude. Although assassination and other acts of state terrorism have long been the favoured policies of the governments of Britain, the US and the other big powers, the government and all the major political parties must be condemned for their support of the policy of assassination which has no justification and is illegal under international law.

There is no doubt that US imperialism went to some lengths to present the execution of bin Laden as an act of “courage and skill”, as David Cameron referred to it, although it subsequently changed its reports of exactly what took place several times and eventually admitted that its victim was completely unarmed. The fact that the US government rapidly disposed of the evidence of its crime, the conflicting reports about bin Laden’s alleged connections with the intelligence agencies of Pakistan and the US and the cumulative effect of the policy of disinformation pursued for many years by the Anglo-American imperialists has continued to create uncertainty even about bin Laden’s death. What is clear is that the aim was to publicly justify the policy of assassination as well as seeking to justify the denial of a basic human right that permits all those who are accused to stand trial, not to mention the right to life. The effect was shamelessly to assert that US imperialism could and would pursue the politics of assassination, come what may.

The government and the major political parties were united in their praise of the state terrorism of US imperialism but although there were some attempts to claim that as a result the world is now a safer place there were even more government statements warning people that it was not. From all the major parties there were demands for even more intervention around the world to “combat terrorism” and to “support democracy” – that is, to use force as a means to settle matters and to interfere in the affairs of sovereign countries. In this connection the Prime Minister went on to champion the need for more crimes against peace and more state terrorism by Britain and its allies in Afghanistan, Libya and elsewhere.

As several commentators have pointed out, it cannot be coincidental that at the same time that the US government staged the assassination of bin Laden in Pakistan, NATO again attempted to assassinate Muammar Gaddafi in Libya, a crime which led to the



deaths of one of his sons and other close members of his family including several young children. For this crime too, the government and the major political parties issued no statement of remorse. In fact, the Prime Minister went so far as to justify the attack, even claiming that it was in keeping with UN resolutions and was designed “to protect civilian life”! Thus one act of state terrorism is used to justify another with the aim that the big powers headed by Anglo-American imperialism, those who claim to be the greatest defenders of the rule of law, should be able to act illegally and with impunity, to carry out any crime on the premise that “might makes right”.

Underlying the crimes of the British and US governments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya and elsewhere is the Eurocentric and colonialist logic that there can only be one political and economic system in the world, that this system is just and eternal, that the Anglo-Americans and their allies are its greatest defenders and are justified carrying out any heinous act in its defence. On this basis, a British parliament gives itself the right to discuss the future and internal affairs of other sovereign countries, while British governments give themselves the right to intervene in these countries militarily and by other means and carry out their criminal activities. What is clear is that in North Africa, the Middle East and elsewhere people are attempting to liberate themselves from the diktat of the Anglo-Americans and their allies and to demand that it is the people themselves who must become the decision makers. In Britain too there is an urgent need to end the rule of those who have carried out so many crimes at home and abroad. There is a need to reject with contempt and outrage the chauvinism, criminality and hypocrisy of this rule and these rulers, and fight for and establish an alternative.

Building the Opposition to the Anti-Social Offensive: Defend the NHS! For an Alternative Based on the Right to Health Care!

It is an urgent necessity for health workers to intensify their struggle, as they are doing, in defence of the health service and to stop its privatisation.

Concrete examples such as that of University College London in Euston show the urgency of the situation. UCLH, which is one of the country's leading hospitals, announced that it is to cut 360 posts, which could include "frontline" health workers. This is presented as an inevitability because the funding for treating NHS patients, which at present comes from the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), is being cut. What are termed "low-priority procedures", such as tonsillectomies and varicose vein surgery, would no longer be provided free at UCLH. The PCTs are cutting the funding because it is said that they intend to treat more patients in the community. It can be seen that the two parts of the argument do not marry up. To justify the loss of health care jobs and the departure from NHS principles, the Chief Executive of UCLH, Sir Robert Naylor, said: "If we have fewer contracts from the primary care trust to treat patients, and we do less work, then we must have fewer staff. Any business runs like that. We flex our staff numbers up and down all the time."

This epitomises the incoherence of the purchaser/provider split, the "market model", for the NHS. The health care staff are left wondering how they can take a stand against this juggernaut in which not only their jobs but also the healthcare needs of patients are sacrificed under the inevitably turning wheels of this market model and the drive to privatisation.

It becomes necessary to correlate what is happening in local hospitals with the national picture to make sense of the situation and to develop an effective opposition to the cuts and the attacks on the right to health care.

For example, the government is demanding £20 billion in what are being termed "efficiency savings" over the next four years. The government's "efficiency savings", of course, are the public's "cuts". This is what society experiences in the name of "efficiency". It translates into the cutting of tens of thousands of NHS posts. For example, the London Ambulance Service alone



is axing 890 positions – the majority of these being "frontline", not administrative or office jobs. In addition, St George's Hospital and Kingston Hospital are both axing around 500 posts, including those of doctors and nurses. How can this go under the name of "efficiency savings"?

As if this situation were not bad enough, the Lansley "Health and Social Care Bill" is designed to throw a further grenade into this carnage by pressing ahead with the aim of removing the government's responsibility to even budget for health care. Its long-term aim has been to ensure that the "market model" is everted into a competitive capital-oriented market in health services. In this scenario, with every NHS hospital a Foundation Trust, and the private sector setting up competing services, the issue is being made of scrambling for the opportunity to make the maximum profit by selling health care, with the new consortia of GPs made the patsies for commissioning this health care. Under this scenario, "efficiency savings", "productivity" and the like are really the king, and quality of health care, serving the needs of the people, meeting the claims of all for a health service free at the point of delivery, are subordinate to the motive of the private sector in the health market to enrich the owners of capital. In fact, "free at the point of delivery" is even being used as a mantra to justify the consolidation of the market in health care. This is the New Jerusalem of the Tory-led Coalition.

The local and national aim of health workers and professionals and all concerned people in these circumstances is not the tweaking of the Lansley Bill after the pause for thought, but putting a stop to it and fighting for the alternative, a health service based firmly on the claims of the people for the highest possible quality of health care as a public service, based on the needs of the people not on the demands of rich whose aim is to get even richer.

Who Decides?

Who decides how the health service should be run and what its motive force should be? This is the crucial question. Should it be run on behalf of the people or on behalf of the monopolies? The government must be held to account on this.

The bringing of the private sector into the running of the health service should be outlawed. It is natural that the government should have a budget for health care, but the setting of budget constraints as a pretext for making draconian cuts in health care and reorganising to increase “productivity” and make “efficiency savings” is ludicrous and obscene. When the government finds it necessary to increase the budget for military spending and for wars of aggression it does so without qualms. It even appropriates other sovereign countries’ funds for its own purposes.

Under the Lansley Bill, by April 2014 all hospitals must have Foundation Trust status, with the power to set their own terms and conditions, and to compete for business. PCTs are to be abolished by April 2013 to be replaced by GP consortia, and Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs) abolished by July 2012 (delayed by three months after the pause for thought). “Productivity” is to be increased by 4% a year for five years.

For a Different Direction for the NHS

It hardly needs emphasising that this is entirely the wrong direction in which to take the NHS. A change of direction is required to place co-operation between all hospitals in the health service in the first place so that the highest quality health care is available to all, as opposed to setting up a mix of “providers” in competition with one another. It is on the face of it absurd that competition is being placed in the first place. But the method in the madness, as far as the government is concerned, is that under the Lansley Bill, the GP consortia as commissioners are on the face of it decision-makers, but are set to bring in such corporations as KPMG (motto: “cutting through complexity” – read that as you will) to make the decisions, committed to “supporting the NHS as it rises to the challenge of reducing costs”. Ernst & Young is another company with a “health advisory team”. Who are these profit-making concerns accountable to? Certainly not to the public. Rather than decisions being made behind closed doors, the fight must be for those who make the decisions to be accountable to society, so that it can be affirmed: *Whose NHS? Our NHS! Who Decides? We Decide!*

The NHS must not be broken up piecemeal in the interests of



private gain under the pretext of “choice” or any other pretext. Rather than the “commissioning/providing” split being augmented and spread like a cancer through all the organs of the NHS, it must be eradicated. It is foreign to the conception of a modern health service. It is in the service of paying the rich. It is premised on people “consuming” health care, or rather the consortia buying health care and deciding on the basis of cheapness, i.e. whether it is in line with their budgets that have been imposed on them, what should be available to those in need.

What is needed is a different direction for the NHS. It must not go in the direction of coming under the dictate of the monopolies and their pay-the-rich schemes. It must not go in the direction of being subject to EU laws on private providers either. All the hype and disinformation about spiralling costs, the need for efficiency and productivity, budgetary constraints, that people are responsible for their own ill health and must pay, and all the other bankrupt pretexts which are trotted out – all this must be rejected with contempt.

Build the Opposition, Defeat the Bill

A broad and effective opposition is required to stop the Lansley Bill. The sentiment of all health workers and throughout the working class movement to develop this opposition has been very clearly seen not only in the March for the Alternative of March 26, but in such demonstrations as the “Keep Our NHS Public” march on May 17 to the Department of Health and many other actions. The BMA itself is also taking a stand against the Bill. Working people demand the maximum political opposition to this direction for the health service, and the fight to prevent the Lansley Bill is an essential step and an integral part of this opposition.

Line of March calls on the working class and people to envision that there is an alternative and to fight for it. This alternative is a national health service based on the principle that health care is a right, that it must be a public health service, not-for-profit.

Defeat the Health and Social Care Bill!

Keep Our NHS Public!

Stop Paying the Rich! Increase Investments in Social Programmes!

Health Care Is a Right!

Fight for the Alternative!

March to Save the NHS

On Tuesday, May 17, a demonstration was held to declare: Our Health Service Not For Sale!

Three thousand health workers, professionals and concerned people marched from University College Hospital, Gower St, in central London to the Department of Health in Whitehall.



GP Stages Hillside Protest

A GP staged his own public protest against NHS reforms by creating a 100-yard-long banner on a hillside. Dr Richard Solomons laid out the words "keep NHS public" in fabric in Keighley, West Yorkshire.

Dr Solomons said his protest was not part of the wider "Keep our NHS public" campaign, but a personal statement. He described the reforms as "un-needed and disruptive". He said that the changes "provide too many opportunities for private companies to take over services". GP consortia are "undemocratic" and PCTs should be "reformed rather than disrupted" Dr Solomons added.

(GPonline.com)



Save Connaught Hospital Protest

Sixty people protested outside Connaught Hospital in Whipps Cross, East London, on Friday April 29.

Connaught Day Hospital provides specialist health care to older people and is threatened with closure. Waltham Forest Keep Our NHS Public called the protest and were joined by health workers, patients and their families, trade unions and the wider community in this emergency protest to defend this essential service to some of the most vulnerable people.

(Right to Work)



May 5 AV Referendum and Elections:

Results Reflect the Need to Build the Workers' Opposition

The recent elections and referendum in Britain and Northern Ireland on May 5 were notable, amongst other things, for the historic victory of the Scottish Nationalist Party, the punishing of the Liberal Democrats and the defeat of the Alternative Vote.

It is possibly an oversimplification to paint a single overall picture of the various elections held, with different issues and circumstances. But one thing that was quite clear was the rejection of the Conservative-Liberal coalition.

In the English local elections, the Liberal Democrats did especially badly, losing 9 percentage points in their share of the vote. Though some votes went to the Conservatives, most were taken by the Labour Party. People voted against the coalition, reflected in a sentiment to kick out the Liberal Democrats, the weak point in the government at this time.

Turning to the Alternative Vote referendum, the No campaign certainly played on the unpopularity of the Liberals and leader Nick Clegg. A No vote was presented as a way of punishing the Deputy Prime Minister. This, combined with the all-round lack of enthusiasm for the proposed voting system – the turnout was only 42% – resulted in more than two thirds of vote going No.

The speculation is whether the referendum and elections will weaken the coalition to breaking-point. The question, if so, is what then? Would the resulting Tory minority government continue to rule or call an early election? And what would be the outcome, given the exposure and rejection of the Liberals and the ineffective opposition of Labour?

Such questions can only be settled in favour of the people by the working class movement constituting itself the opposition, on the basis of its own political agenda. Such a Workers' Opposition is what will be able to hold the coalition, minority or whatever government results to account, while bringing its weight to bear on future elections that may not be too long in coming, as well as on the electoral process itself.

The third major result of May 5 was the victory of the SNP in the Scottish parliamentary election.

One aspect of this was undoubtedly the fact that people voted against the Liberal Democrats, who were the main losers in that election. But also Labour and the Conservatives lost out. The Scottish Green Party was only other party to gain any seats.

The Scottish electorate have voted against all three of the big British parties. It was not just an issue of kicking the Liberals out of Scottish politics. The SNP win reflected the desire for an alternative to the entire Westminster cartel.

The fact that the SNP stands for the affirmation of Scotland's sovereignty cannot be ignored. The media is making much of the fact that the SNP have pledged to hold a referendum on independence. However, the media is somewhat acting to divert from how the issue presents itself. In particular, it appears that they are attempting to set up the SNP for a fall in the event of a defeat on this issue.

The sovereignty of Scotland is part of the alternative for which the working class is fighting. The question is how the working class and people of Scotland are taking up the issue of building the Scottish nation anew; how the Scottish working class is placing itself in the centre of nation-building, giving it its own perspective, acting not in contradiction with but as part of the working class in Britain as a whole.

As part of their nation-building programme, the Scottish working class need also to build their own opposition to the Westminster neo-liberal offensive as part of the Britain-wide Workers' Opposition. Overall, the people of Scotland have shown that they aspire to grasp the opportunity to shape Scottish politics. This is also the desire of the Welsh people as regards the politics of a sovereign Wales. The set-back to Plaid Cymru in the May 5 elections does not contradict this conclusion, but only shows that to be seen to be subordinate to the politics of the anti-social offensive has done the Party of Wales no good.

Queen of England's Visit to Ireland:

Actions Speak Louder than Words

It is all very well for the Queen in Dublin to make tacit acknowledgement of Britain's past atrocities against the Irish people and to pay respects to the Irish patriots who gave their lives in the fight for freedom from British rule. But her words ring quite disgustingly hollow at a time when the government of which she is the titular head pursues a policy of armed aggression against sovereign peoples and countries, of assassination and plunder, every bit as barbaric as the worst excesses of its colonial past.

As Sinn Féin have rightly pointed out, the visit was premature

and particularly offensive given that it occurred on the very anniversary of the 1974 Dublin/Monaghan bombings which claimed the lives of 33 Irish civilians and bore all the hallmarks of Britain's undercover agencies. That it was premature, and pushed through for reasons other than celebrating relations between two peoples so closely intertwined over centuries, not least in the struggle against a common enemy, was brought home by the bizarre spectacle of the Queen's entourage passing through completely empty streets lined only with police.

Certainly, any development of good neighbourly relations be-

tween the two countries is to be welcomed. But full free and equal relations between sovereign countries are clearly still a long way off when one continues to occupy an essential part of the other. If Britain does acknowledge the right of the “people of the island of Ireland” to decide their own future, as former Prime Minister John Major did now more than a decade ago, why does not the British government carry this declaration to its logical conclusion and withdraw all claims to the six counties of Ulster?

The British working class and all progressive people cannot and will not be “reconciled”, a word much bandied around dur-

ing the visit, to anything less than full free and equal relations, following the reunification of Ireland by its own people, between sovereign states of the four nations of our islands.



June 18 London Conference to Mark Anniversary of 1981 Hunger Strike

A conference to mark the 30th Anniversary of the 1981 Irish Hunger Strike

Hosted by Sinn Féin

Saturday 18 June
1pm–5.30pm

**London Irish Centre,
50–52 Camden Square,
London NW1 9XB**

Speakers include:

- Brendan ‘Bik’ McFarlane leader of republican political prisoners, Long Kesh, during the hunger strikes
- Jennifer McCann MLA Sinn Féin Assembly member and former republican prisoner Armagh Women’s gaol
- Bairbre de Brun MEP Sinn Féin, former member National Anti-H Block/Armagh Committee
- Tony Benn
- Dr Kevin McNamara
- Ronnie Kasrils ANC Minister in Nelson Mandela’s government and leading figure in struggle against apartheid
- Francis Wurtz former MEP France, present at Bobby Sands’ funeral
- Roy Greenslade writer and journalist
- Prof Christine Kinealy historian

Sessions include:

- The impact of the hunger strike – an event which shaped history
- How 1981 shook the world
- The future: legacy and lessons for today’s political process

“The hunger strike shaped the course of history”

The 30th Anniversary of the 1981 Hunger Strike, in which ten men died in the struggle for political status, shone an international spotlight on the conflict in Ireland and irreversibly shaped the political developments for decades to come.

“The hunger strike shaped the course of Irish politics. Bobby Sands’ election in Fermanagh South Tyrone in the Westminster election of April 1981, and of Kieran Doherty in Cavan Monaghan and Paddy Agnew in Louth in the June 1981 general election in the south, were watershed moments.

“It has needed the intervening decades to understand the extent to which the courage and sacrifice of the ten men who died on hunger strike changed modern Irish history.” – *Gerry Adams TD, President Sinn Féin*

This year, as part of events to mark this watershed moment in Ireland, Britain and more widely around the world, Sinn Féin will host a conference in London to discuss the legacy of the hunger strike and lessons for today. With leading figures from Ireland and internationally, including those involved in the struggle at the time, former prisoners, political activists, writers and documenters of events, the conference will be a key opportunity to look at this critical moment in history, mark developments in the intervening three decades and draw lessons and inspiration for today. As the current political process in the north moves forward, alongside the continuing debate around Irish unity, the conference comes at an important juncture, as the relationship between Britain and Ireland enters a new phase.

Registration: £5 waged £3 unwaged (payable to ‘1981 June Conference’), *Post:* PO Box 65845, London EC1P 1LS, Email: london1981conference@yahoo.com, *Stalls* available (£20)

Please note the email address for registration is: London1981conference@yahoo.co.uk (not .com)

63rd Anniversary of al-Nakba:

Palestinian People Step Up their Struggle for Independence and the Right of Return

Palestine and Israel

Events to commemorate al-Nakba began across Palestine on May 11, four days before the anniversary. In Bethlehem and the main cities of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, school students, teachers and politicians as well as religious leaders marched affirming the right of return for the 4.7 million refugees within and outside Palestine.

“Our message this year is that we will return, we will start to implement laws of right of return, we will march to Israeli checkpoints demanding to go home. We are working day and night to achieve our goal, the Right of Return to the villages we were expelled from in 1948,” Monther Amria, head of the Nakba Committee in Bethlehem told the Palestine News Network (PNN).

Palestinian Legislative Council Member Mohamed al-Laham said in an interview with PNN that the most important characteristic of these activities is the steadfast demand for the right of return, which is guaranteed by international law and UN Resolution 194. Al-Laham stressed that Israel must understand that its military power will not be able to erase the memory of the Nakba and the anniversary of the tragedy.

“They can kill and destroy but our people will continue to demand their rights. We call upon the international community to achieve justice for the Palestinian people after 63 years of displacement,” al-Laham concluded.

The 1.5 million Palestinians who still live in Israel also held actions. “Our hope and dream is to achieve the Palestinian Arab state with Jerusalem as its capital,” said Mohamed Naf’e of the Communist Party of Israel.

This year’s actions took place in defiance of a new Israeli law criminalising the commemoration of the Nakba. This law was passed by the Israeli Knesset in March and denies funding to any organisation, institution or municipality that commemorates the founding of the Israeli state as a day of mourning.

Demonstrators also faced stepped up levels of repression by Israeli Occupation Forces. Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak instructed forces to seal off the West Bank for 24 hours, starting at midnight Saturday. It is reported that Israeli forces deployed nearly 10,000 policemen and soldiers especially in East Jerusalem and in the 1948 territories.

On May 15, about 1,000 Palestinians and supporters who rallied near Beit Hanoun and the Eriz border crossing in southern Gaza were injured when Israeli Occupation Forces opened fire with guns and artillery. Agencies report that 82 were injured and an 18-year-old youth was killed.

Also that day, Palestinian youth confronted Israeli Occupation Forces near Ramallah in the central West Bank.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, an estimated 1,000 demonstrators marched to the Qalandia checkpoint established by Israeli forces as the main border crossing between the West Bank and what is now Israel (Qalandia’s location encroaches about 5 km east of the internationally-agreed 1967 armistice line, and thus indicates a land grab by Israel if established as an actual border). At least five Palestinian youth were injured when Israeli forces fired live rounds at them. Dozens more people were injured by rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas. Medics told Ma’an news agency that the tear-gas being used was different from the regular variety used by the military, and had caused at least 20 to go into seizures, with about half losing consciousness for at least half an hour.

In Jerusalem, a Palestinian teenager was shot by Israeli forces in East Jerusalem on May 13 and died the following day. On May 15, clashes with Israeli forces erupted following his funeral. Israeli forces invaded civilians’ houses and abducted a number of Palestinian youth, agencies report. According to witnesses, Israeli soldiers detained a number of Palestinian youth under the pretext of throwing stones and empty bottles at Israeli forces in the town of Silwan.

On Saturday, May 14, thousands of residents of Jaffa, including Jewish peace activists, marched and held an art festival affirming the Palestinians’ historic rights and their struggle against oppression and occupation.

Syria, Lebanon and Jordan

Agencies report that as many as 12 people were killed by Israeli fire in incidents on the borders with Syria and Lebanon on May 15 at protests to commemorate Israel’s theft of land from neighbouring countries and al-Nakba.

In Syria, thousands of Palestinian refugees marched towards the village of Majdal Shams on the Golan Heights, part of Syrian territory annexed by Israel in 1967. Several people were killed and many others critically injured by Israeli gunfire after entering the occupied Golan Heights, a Druze doctor who tended them told AFP.

The protesters, part of the Syrian Druze community separated from their families when Israel occupied the southern half of the Golan Heights in 1967, breached the border of the occupied territory after crossing almost a kilometre of minefields, agencies report. Since the area was annexed by Israel, border crossings have remained closed between Israel and Syria, making visits between families separated by the border almost impossible.

In Lebanon, Israeli gunfire killed several people and wounded 71 others at the country’s border with Lebanon, a medical source

in southern Lebanon told AFP. Thousands of mainly Palestinian refugees approached the border from the town of Maroun a-Ras, agencies reported. They demanded the right to return to their homes and condemned their expulsion in 1948 when the State of Israel was created.

Rallies also took place in Jordan, where security forces prevented demonstrators from reaching the border with Israel.

Egypt

Thousands of Egyptian activists took to the streets of the capital, Cairo, and other major cities, including a protest of several thousand people outside the Israeli consulate in Alexandria, to voice their support for the Palestinian cause, agencies report.

On May 13, Egyptians gathered at Cairo's Tahrir Square for a national unity rally and to mark Nakba Day. Activists also or-

ganised to march to neighbouring Gaza. The day before, Egyptian authorities demanded the march be cancelled and blocked access to the Sinai peninsula to prevent the march, AFP correspondents said. However, at least 80 Egyptian activists arrived at the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing after eluding security services. The activists carried Palestinian flags and chanted slogans demanding an end to Israel's siege on Gaza, the recognition of the right of Palestinians displaced in 1948 to return to their homes, and condemned Israel's occupation of Palestine.

The mass actions in support of the Palestinians underscore the changes in Egypt since the ouster of Hosni Mubarak. Under the US-backed Mubarak regime, Egypt consistently served US-Israeli Zionist objectives in the region by helping to impose a crippling blockade on the impoverished Gaza Strip after the Hamas government was elected in 2007.

Disinformation Campaigns Directed against Cuba: Fabricating Pretexts

Granma International Editorial, May 16, 2011

The Cuban Revolution has been the object of hundreds of disinformation campaigns, usually orchestrated by the US government with the complicity of European allies in conjunction with the powerful forces and interests which control the corporate media. However, they have not been able to divert Cubans from their ideals of independence and socialism, nor confuse the peoples of the planet who, despite everything, are led by wisdom and instinct to the truth. They are campaigns without political or ethical constraints which come up against the moral force of Cuba and merely tarnish their authors.

The most recent, which came from their prizewinning informants, was deflated in 72 hours. Lying politicians, the media which slandered out of political interest and journalists who reported an incident which never took place without even attempting to confirm it, must not be given impunity. At the very least, they should admit their error and apologise to the family whose grief they failed to respect.

Curiously, all of them remain silent in the face of the millions of civilian deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan which they define as "collateral damage", as well as in the face of extrajudicial executions with drone aircraft in sovereign countries.

They have maintained a prudent silence in relation to the use of torture, have covered up the existence of secret US prisons in Europe, have prevented investigations into the crimes committed in Abu Ghraib and the Guantánamo Naval Base – this latter usurped from Cuba – and the CIA secret flights transporting persons kidnapped in other states.

They remain unmoved at the brutal way in which European governments are inflicting the consequences of the economic crisis on the poorest members of society and immigrants. They look

the other way when the unemployed or students in those wealthy societies are repressed with exceptional violence.

However, they are constantly hunting out pretexts for denigrating Cuba, and when these are lacking, they fabricate them.

They shamelessly converted a case of acute pancreatitis into political murder; a justified detention by police of less than three hours for public order offenses without any use of force into a fatal beating; a person with a criminal record sentenced to two years' imprisonment for a common crime into a political dissident and the victim of a lengthy prison term.

The Cuban people share the protests of the family whose pain has been offended and the indignation of doctors virtually accused of complicity in a homicide. The world has more than sufficient examples of the humanistic vocation of our doctors, who have been unstinting in their efforts and, risking their own lives, have provided and are providing health services in many parts of the world.

American legislator David Rivera, famous for electoral corruption and his extremist campaigns to eliminate the right of émigré Cubans to travel to their country of origin, and who just a few weeks ago, accused former President Carter of being a Cuban agent, affirmed under oath in the US Congress that the dead man was beaten to death in Villa Clara's central Vidal Park last Sunday.

He didn't even take the trouble to verify what even the most ill-intentioned acknowledge, that the deceased was in the park before and after his brief detention on Thursday, May 5, not on Sunday, when he was already in hospital. It is not surprising that Rivera should lie, but that he should do so with such stupidity.

Salafranca, a Euro deputy from Spain's Partido Popular (PP),

known for his anti-Cuban and pro-yankee attitudes, and who has said that reports on the CIA secret flights do not contribute any additional information and refrains from any condemnation of them, affirmed in the European Parliament that the individual “died after his detention and from a beating by the Cuban police”.

El País, from the Spain of the Prisa Group and PP conspiracies, published a cable titled “Cuba dissident dies after police beating”. The ABC, historically in the service of the worst causes, stated: “Cuban opposition member dies after a beating from Castro’s police.” They are not interested in confirming the veracity of the alleged incidents and have not even bothered to disguise the conspiracy with different titles.

Even President Barack Obama himself, in response to a question from the highly tendentious Univisión network in Miami, referred to the events in Vidal Park which never took place, while stating that the details were not as yet clear.

It is strange that Obama, always so busy, retained in his memory the case of a person arrested in a Cuban park to which he was able to return shortly afterwards. However, he has not said anything and possibly does not even recall the anguished face or the account of young Iraqi Samar Hassan, published in *The New York Times* on May 7, concerning the terrible experience of the



murder of her parents by a US patrol when they were returning from the hospital after her little brother had received treatment for injuries.

But, in the case of Cuba, the worst offence is not the constant fabrication and reproduction of lies. What is unpardonable is the censuring of the great truths and the history of a heroic and blockaded people, who have been capable of achieving what for the great majority of humanity is still a dream.

In the past, there have been attempts to isolate Cuba or provoke internal disorders in order to create a pretext for US intervention. What is the object of these campaigns? Just to denigrate or something worse? Could it be that those pulling the strings and their paid internal agents would be delighted to invoke the “protection of civilians” in order to bomb Havana?

Our people will not allow themselves to be confused by internal counter-revolutionaries who are seeking a media pretext in order to promote a conflict with the United States, and they know how to respond with serenity and firmness to the actions of these mercenaries.

The arguments of the Cuban Revolution are not fabricated like the lies of our enemies, they are constructed with the dignity and integrity of our people, who have learnt that the truth is the cleanest weapon of humanity.

(Translated by Granma International)

11th Anniversary of North-South Joint Declaration: US Out of Korea! Korea Is One!

The signing of the North-South Joint Declaration in Pyongyang on June 15, 2000, between National Defence Commission Chairman Kim Jong Il of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) and President Kim Dae Jung of the Republic of Korea (ROK) marked an historic turning point in the Korean people’s long march towards reunification. The June 15 North-South Joint Declaration belongs to all peoples of the world opposing Anglo-American imperialist domination.

The US imperialists have been the main block to Korean reunification. The US forcibly divided Korea, occupying the south following the Second World War. It formed the ROK in 1948 to prevent reunification and establish a military and economic base. It fostered civil war and launched a war of aggression from 1950-53 under the pretext of “protecting” the south from the north. The US continues to interfere in the affairs of the Korean people through the Lee Myung Bak regime in the

south.

The US imperialists uphold the lie that its military force of tens of thousands of soldiers and its nuclear warheads are in south Korean territory to defend against nuclear attack. But those forces are there to further the aim of dominating Asia and the world.

The June 15 North-South Joint Declaration is a mechanism based on the experience of the Korean nation providing a guide for the people to affirm their right to reunify their country adhering to the principle of “By the Nation Itself”.

The Korean people have achieved successes marked by great struggles and victories, increasing their confidence and strengthening their resolve to rid their nation of US military occupation. The US imperialists have not been able to crush the Korean people’s fighting spirit. The Korean people’s successes in their nation-building project have the sympathy of all humanity and represent a bulwark against US ambitions.



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