

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

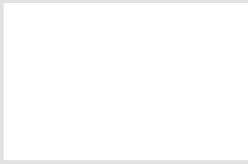


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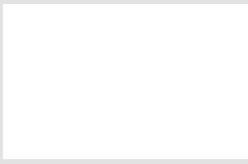
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For a workers' government

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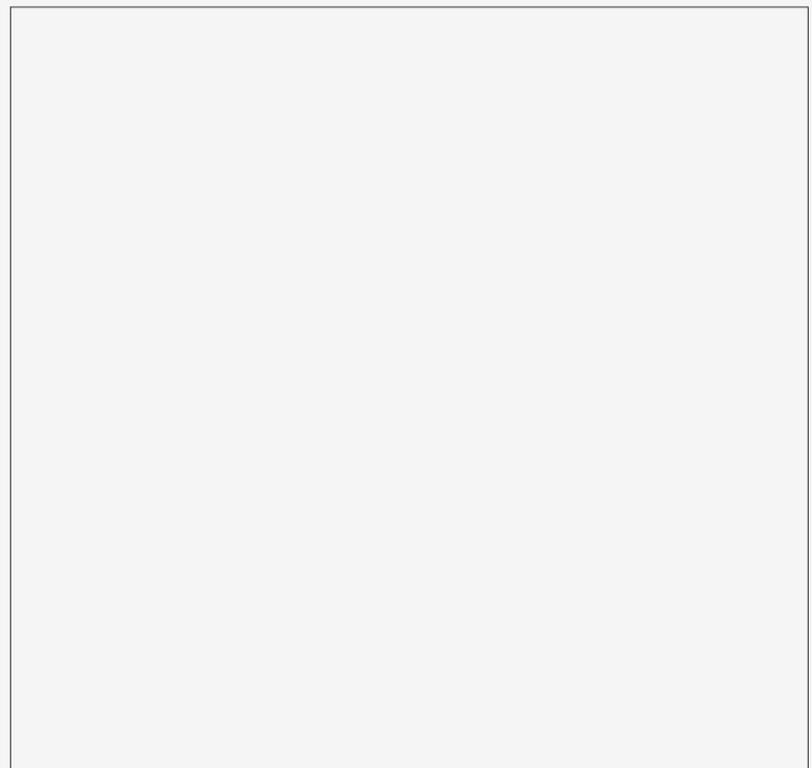
Fight Tory plan to axe benefits

MAKE THE

RICH

PAY

**See
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Tories want to scrap Housing Benefit for under-25s. If you can't afford to pay rent, and can't or won't live with your parents, then it's a friend's floor or the streets.

Jobs for all!

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

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Let in more migrants, not fewer!

By Richard Swanley

Ed Miliband had said that on immigration the Labour Party needed to make a break with its record in government.

He claims the problem is that New Labour failed to impose sufficient controls. *In fact they imposed too many.*

In 2004, New Labour oversaw 1,098 "successful operations" (i.e. raids) against undocumented migrant workers, which saw the arrest of over 3,000 workers, but the prosecution of only eight of the employers responsible for exploiting them.

In 2003, only one boss was successfully prosecuted, while 1,779 workers were arrested and removed from the workplace (and presumably deported).

Even laws which were motivated as improving conditions for migrant workers — such as the Gangmasters Licensing Act of 2004 — were used by employers and the state for further crackdowns against undocumented workers.

Labour's 2004 Asylum and Immigration Act made the meagre housing and social support to which most refugees were entitled conditional on their performing unpaid "community service".

In 2003, the Labour government deported 17,040 asylum seekers and their dependants. That was a record at the time, and a 23% increase on 2002 figures.

Britain's current points-based immigration system, which allows entry for "entrepreneurs" with £200,000 or more, or employees with high qualifications and "future expected earnings", but excludes ordinary workers, was introduced not by the Tories, but by Labour in 2008.

Labour's record in government is not one of being a "soft touch". It is one of ratcheting up immigration controls, increasing deportations, and reducing the legal status of many migrant workers, asylum



Migrant workers are some of the most exploited members of our class. Don't demonise, organise!

seekers, and refugees to something akin to slaves.

The Labour government also joined it with tabloid hysteria about immigration. Labour leaders fed the far-right's agenda by dressing up endorsement of "coming-over-here-taking-our-jobs" scapegoating as concern for the interests of white working-class constituents.

Helping whip up at atmosphere of racist fear and hatred can have a terrible effect on the lives of migrants. Crown Prosecution Service figures for 2010-2011 showed that racially and religiously motivated hate crimes were at a record high, with over 13,000 people appearing before courts (and that's just the ones who were caught, arrested, and charged). Research by the Institute of Race Relations

has shown a particular and ongoing increase in violence against eastern European migrant workers.

At the Young Labour conference on 23-4 June, both Tom Watson and Ed Balls claimed that Labour's new so-called "tough approach" is not about pandering to racism. They said it responds to people's concerns about cheap migrant labour being used to undercut wages and conditions. Immigration control is a "class issue".

This is indeed a class issue. According to official figures (*Guardian*, 1 April 2008), immigration generally increases living standards for the already-settled. But if the bosses can divide already-settled workers from migrants, then the migrants become super-exploited,

and the already-settled lose out too. We must unite. To do this effectively we have to challenge the racist immigration controls which systematically criminalise migrants, and fight the media and government-driven demonisation of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. Labour's current so-called change of heart does the exact opposite.

Unemployment, lack of housing, and the decay of public services are caused by the people who created the financial crisis — bankers, big business and the politicians who are battering the living standards working-class people have fought for and won.

British working-class people cannot fight effectively for their own interests without standing in solidarity with our brothers and sisters who come here to flee persecution or build a better life.

Socialists in the labour movement must fight for solidarity between British-born and migrant workers, against immigration controls, for decent homes, jobs, and public services for all, and against racism.

- For more on New Labour's record on immigration, see bit.ly/MXoVdd, bit.ly/MyzbKH, bit.ly/OmrjAp, and bit.ly/MqU6kg

LRC Youth makes an impact

By a delegate

Young Labour's annual conference in Newcastle on 23-24 June decided to make its "priority campaign" youth homelessness.

It resolved that Labour should commit to building at least one million new council houses, to ease the waiting list of five million in England and Wales alone, and the wealth of the nationalised banks should be used to fund socially useful projects such this.

After a close debate, it also resolved that Labour should abolish the "right to buy" council housing.

It agreed on repealing the anti-trade union laws, imposing a moratorium on sackings, encouraging young workers to join trade unions. All new public works

jobs created by the government should include union membership as mandatory, and Labour should push for a 35 hour working week and equalisation of the minimum wage across age-groups.

The conference's guest speaker Ed Balls was sharply questioned about pandering to racist sentiments in his statements about immigration.

Much of this was won by the work of Labour Representation Committee (LRC) Youth, which produced bulletins, organised fringe meetings, and spoke successfully on many left-wing motions.

A petition garnered just over 100 signatures, calling for next year's conference to be more democratically organised and allow clearer debate, and for more guarantees of conference policy getting implemented/

- www.lrcyouth.org.uk

Shaking hands with the "Brits"

By Liam McNulty

Former Provisional IRA leader Martin McGuinness has shaken hands with Queen Elizabeth II. Yes really.

After a lifetime of fighting for "Brits out", McGuinness welcomed the head of the British State at a Diamond Jubilee do in Belfast on 27 June.

McGuinness's justifica-

tion for the meeting speaks volumes about the problems of Northern Ireland's communal carve-up of a political system.

Shaking hands with the Queen is, said McGuinness, "about me representing my party, wishing to show the unionist people in the north that we are prepared to respect what they believe in, albeit that we are still Irish republicans." In

other words, let the Queen speak for the unionists and Sinn Féin will continue to represent the nationalist community.

Throughout the Troubles, Sinn Féin protested that its ideology was about universal rights such as national self-determination and not, as Workers' Liberty has said, a Catholic-chauvinist sectarian ideology.

Sinn Féin's post-conflict

willingness to content itself with managing the antagonisms between what are presumed to be two immutable and separate (but now equal?) communal blocs suggests there was much truth to our analysis.

But the monarchy is still an affront to democracy and equality, no matter what role it is said to be playing in the so-called "peace process".

Gove's demolition plan for schools

By Pat Yarker

As an ex-journalist, Tory education minister Michael Gove knows how to use the press to further his own agenda.

A timely leak from his department to the *Daily Mail* (20 June) flagged up Gove's intention to replace GCSE exams taken by most students at 16 (and brought in by the Tories thirty years ago) with a system based on the previous model: O-Levels and CSEs.

There was much excitement among Tories who rushed to equate O-Levels with "academic rigour" because the exam was designed to fail four out of five members of the school population.

Some commentators lamented the damage caused by the return to a "two-tier system", noting that CSEs, which many teachers struggled for years to establish, were never regarded as on a par with O-Levels.

Yet the current version of GCSE, departing from its original conception, is already a two-tier system under a single designation. Students are divided into those deemed capable of sitting Higher Tier papers and so given the chance of securing top grades, and those who can secure at best a grade C via the Foundation Tier route.

It has become common for graded students awarded less than a C to be told they have "failed" their GCSE.

Additionally, alternative qualifications such as the iGCSE or the IB have been

touted as better-able to differentiate among the highest-attaining pupils. A system which had only two tiers might well be seen as an advance on what pupils currently endure.

Gove's plans rehearse yet again a ruling-class obsession with narrowly-defined "academic standards" and its enduring neglect of the needs of a sizeable minority constructed by the system as "non-academic" or "less able".

Gove's plans drew fire from some within Tory ranks. Kenneth (now Lord) Baker, who as Thatcher's Education Secretary oversaw the introduction of GCSEs, warned his successor against "resurrecting a failure". But the Tory right are, as the ambitious Gove must have calculated, ecstatic.

DENY

They deny that all children are educable and the state should ensure high-quality education for all.

Their ideal is a privately-funded model catering for a privileged caste (the public school system) with a highly-selective and hierarchised state system, differentially-funded, as a fall-back. Hence their fondness for grammar-schools and silence about secondary-moderns, and their delight in Gove's accelerated demolition of what remains of a national system of education, locally administered.

The 1944 Education Act established three types of maintained secondary schools. When New Labour

Clegg and Gove visit Durand Academy in south London. The school spent nearly £200,000 on hiring a PR firm!

came to office there were a dozen or more, each with its own legal status and unique admissions procedures, including private schools, city technology colleges, grammar schools, foundation schools, varieties of special and of specialist school, and learning support centres.

New Labour added city academies to the mix, enabling Gove to claim his academy-and-"free-school" programme is merely an extension of pre-existing policy.

Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg has drifted with the current. He is not opposed to the "free school" idea. In response to Gove's back-to-the-future exam-plans he has only spoken about a "modernised" system, which for him means the Blairite agenda of education for employability and entrepreneurship. For

Twigg as for Gove, a comprehensive education system in which children of all backgrounds are educated together from 3 to 19, without segregation by so-called "ability", in schools democratically accountable at local and national level, free and fully-funded, does not register, even as an ideal.

Norms of bourgeois-democratic accountability, the flip-side of a commitment to public service, are another target for Gove's wrecking-ball.

Once a school becomes an academy and is removed from local authority oversight and some vestige of local democratic accountability, parents have no meaningful say in what the school does, and no secure way to assert any rights.

Hence the great majority of academies get away, for example, with selling food

to pupils which fails to meet the nutritional-standards legally required of maintained schools.

The extent to which academies can continue to do what they like over admissions will soon be tested in court when parents of a child with cerebral palsy (and an A* in Maths at GCSE) confront those who run Mossbourne Academy, which has refused the child a place. Other similar legal challenges are in the pipeline.

LAW

Legislation rushed through Parliament by Gove means academies are not routinely subject to educational statute except as laid down in their funding-agreement with the Education Secretary.

Instead, tellingly, they are governed by corporate and charity law.

At a time when the Coalition has been slashing public spending, Gove has been able to lavish vast sums on academies and the small number of "free schools".

The DfE estimates that between 2011 and 2013 it will spend an extra £1 billion on these schools on top of their normal funding. Gove has already spent £337 million funding such schools — a big chunk of it waste.

The DfE gave £26 million in 2010/11 to academies and "free schools" to pay for 4700 sixth form students who never enrolled. An academy in Stockwell spent almost £200,000 to pay for a PR firm. An academy CEO in Lincolnshire is under police investigation following misuse of the school's credit-card for apparent personal gain to the tune of tens of thousands of pounds.

Gove's department has earmarked half its school building budget (some £1.6 billion) for academy and "free school" projects at a time when there is an acute shortage of classrooms for

primary pupils in maintained schools, notably in London.

Government cuts forced three thousand school breakfast clubs to shut in 2011 and in October next year welfare reforms will ensure 350,000 children lose their entitlement to free school meals. This at a time when many children from low income families are going hungry.

Such changes do not worry "free schools". These take on average half the number of pupils entitled to such provision compared with the average in local maintained schools.

By introducing city academies in place of "bog-standard comps", New Labour set in train the demolition of England's system of maintained schools. Gove has dramatically quickened the tempo and broadened the scope of the destruction.

FAITH

Evangelical Christians, other faith groups, and private schools, have been quick to take advantage.

Faith groups have set up more academies than any other kind of provider. Public money goes to subsidise pupils in formerly fee-paying schools to attend the very same institutions now re-branded "free schools". Free indeed.

Gove's vandalism has made a breach for even more disturbing interlopers. In keeping with the Tory view of who is, and is not, educable, the DfE recently put up £1 million in research-funding to investigate "how a military ethos could be used to support pupils who are either disengaged with education or at risk of becoming disengaged."

This insidious proposal takes forward ideas worked on by Phillip Blond of the think-tank, ResPublica, who bought us "the Big Society" nostrum. Blond calls on the government to address what he terms "poor discipline and educational failure" in some schools through the inculcation of a "military ethos".

Branches of the military could sponsor academies, whose graduates could then join the armed forces to work.

Gove's is a purposeful destruction. He aims to rapidly to clear the decks and establish conditions in which schools can be run for profit. He is determinedly in earnest. It is all an under reported and under-challenged scandal. Those who oppose the project, and principally the unions, must fight him with no less resolve.

Ofsted inspectors should get a "fail"

By Dave Harris

According to the BBC (26 June) a number of Ofsted inspectors have no teaching experience whatsoever.

Other reports suggested that at least two inspectors were former head teachers of schools failing against Ofsted criteria who had left their posts!

This will come as no surprise to many teachers.

Gove has used Ofsted as a threat to force through his unwanted academies — as a kind of Damocletian sword hanging over the heads of teachers everywhere. If the school fails it will have to become an Academy.

Classroom teachers face constant erosion of their conditions of employment and pension rights combined with an ever increas-

ing overly-bureaucratic workload. Ofsted makes matters worse.

Ofsted inspections are an officious and pointless waste of learning time. Since few of them look at more than fifteen minutes of an hour-long lesson, they don't even evaluate a representative sampling of educational standards.

The threat of an inspection is used as an excuse for developing a school management agenda not in the interests of staff, such as extra meetings and compulsory "training projects" which only add to escalating stress levels.

Worse yet, under new DfES guidelines (which many schools are unthinkingly and uncritically applying), a single negative Ofsted observation could trigger capability proceedings against a member of staff, regardless of experi-



ence, past work history or personal context. All based on a few minutes and a brief browse through exercise books.

To have confirmed that Ofsted are recruiting — via, please note, private consultation companies — individuals with little or no experience of the realities of the role is an insult. It is an insult to the professional integrity and standards of school staff. An insult to their intelligence

to expect them to gratefully accept the results of an inspection they neither wanted nor needed, staffed by those who, it now appears, are least capable of understanding that which they inspected.

A clear message needs to be sent to the teaching unions; non-compliance with Ofsted should be one of our priorities as a vital part of the next round of non-strike action.

The debate on austerity is shifting

Katy Clark, Labour MP for North Ayrshire and Arran, spoke to *Solidarity* about the Greek election and the future of the left in Europe.

Syriza did really well. People are disappointed they didn't win, but considering where they were coming from and the international pressure, they did astonishingly well.

I think what happened in France was also important and the debate throughout Europe is beginning to shift.

Those arguing against austerity are getting stronger. It doesn't mean we are winning, and it isn't automatic that we will be successful in getting the policies we need, but it is a shift in the right direction.

For most people the economic crisis started in 2008, and it's fair to say the left has not been successful in providing leadership and articulating the arguments about how we should respond.

It is not any individual's fault, it's a collective problem, and we could discuss at great length why, but those who have argued for massive cuts in public spending and welfare have been very successful in winning the public argument. That is beginning to shift and I think Syriza are a very important part of the shift in the debate.

I think it is essential that Syriza are an effective opposition, that they oppose in such a way that they have credibility, and at the next elections in Greece they do well enough to form a Government.

No one is suggesting there are easy solutions to what needs to be done. But the extreme austerity and massive cuts in public spending in Greece is unacceptable. Syriza are part of that alternative, and I pay tribute to the campaigning they have been doing to convince people. It has clearly appealed to a lot of people especially young people.

The fact that the [Greek election] has been on everybody's TV screens has meant that now we are discussing austerity and debating an alternative. I also think it has given the Labour Party leadership a bit more confidence. I'm not exaggerating this shift, but there has been a slight shift in emphasis and I think those who are arguing there needs to be an alternative to austerity in Britain have a bit more

Syriza didn't win, but their fight has shifted politics in Europe

confidence in doing so.

Any coalition will not be very stable; it is far from a convincing win for ND and there could be more elections in the future.

Even the parties in favour of the deal are now arguing for a renegotiation so Syriza have been successful in that sense.

I think it's important that we build alliances throughout the left in Europe. We have not been very strong with that in the past. We have huge and significant left traditions in Europe and, maybe because of language and other reasons, these traditions have not been shared.

Q: How should the left react to the divide being posed between those in the stable countries having to 'bail out' those whose economies are failing?

WHOSE EUROPE? In Westminster we talk about "the narrative". The left and labour movement throughout Europe should have a common narrative.

Essentially this debate centres on whether you have a bankers' Europe or a people's Europe. That isn't down to whether or not you have a EU or how that would be organised, but how we operate as countries and as a society. The struggle of the peoples of Europe is all our struggle, and that should be the way that we look at it.

In terms of the Greek situation, the anti-austerity left was not united. Syriza was successful in bringing together a lot of the strands of the left, but not all. If the Communist Party tradition in Greece had come on board then they may have been successful.

I don't want to attack the left, but yet again we pay for the price for disunity. We need to unite beyond issues of the EU and our attitude to the euro. I sus-

pect that is an issue that is dividing people in Greece and Britain.

John McDonnell's campaign had a good slogan — "Another World is Possible." That wasn't a British slogan.

I remember being in Spain during the beginning of the Iraq war. You would see rainbow flags everywhere with that slogan. There is a power in trying to use some of the same language and in trying to find ways in joining up the labour movement in different countries.

I don't mean we should change our traditions but sharing some of the same narrative can be very powerful. We should not let the issue of the EU divide us.

When you analyse politically and economically what is going on in Europe, your analysis of the EU is not that central.

It is relevant in the sense of institutions. But this isn't about the institutions. It is about the politics of what is going on — a bankers' Europe vs a people's Europe. We need to find a way of cutting through the divide and tackling it.

The argument over membership of the euro in Greece was obviously a dividing line, and looking at the British left it has the potential to be the same.

In the last few months the public debate and the language amongst the elite has shifted. That is significant and something that we need to build upon.

The shift of language has come from Europe, and not from anything that the UK labour movement has done.

It is a debate we need to continue to engage with. This includes any attempt to get people together to have this discussion on European wide level.

People talk about revolutionary optimism. Even in the most difficult of times you have to look at the positives.

Brotherhood supporters celebrate. What deal have they struck with the army?

Egypt: the army and the Muslim Brothers manoeuvre

By Mark Osborn

An old Labour council trick is to announce £30 million in cuts and then, a little later, declare they've managed to find a bit of money to reduce the cuts to a mere £19 million. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief; things aren't as bad as were expected.

Of course Meals on Wheels, Library and Children's Services are still devastated. Activists who've seen it before suspect that £19 million was always the intended, real, figure.

Perhaps the Egyptian military are playing a version of the same game.

First, on 14 June, the Supreme Court ruled that the Islamist-dominated parliament, elected last year, must be dissolved. The Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) — the real rulers in Egypt — then allowed themselves the right to legislate, and to select the body producing a new constitution.

For a while it seemed that the Muslim Brothers' candidate Mohammed Mursi would then be denied the presidential electoral victory that they were convinced he had won. The Brothers' supporters rallied in Tahrir Square and were jubilant when the vote was announced last Sunday. Mursi's supporters celebrated his victory, rather than rioting.

But the military handed the presidency to Mursi only after taking much of the power for themselves.

The announcement of Mursi's victory seems to have come after a deal between the Freedom and Justice Party, the Brotherhood's political arm, and the SCAF. Under it, the military will control internal security, defence and foreign policy, leaving domestic matters largely in Mr Mursi's hands.

The democrats, the feminists, the labour movement, liberals and the youth who took to the streets and actually overthrew Mubarak dictatorship — well, they are caught between the state and the Islamists. The democrats may well become the victims of both — unless the dangers are recognised and fought against.

Neither the military, nor the Islamists, but liberty and workers' rights!

"Welcome to Gaza"

In the run-up to Egypt's presidential election results being announced, the Gaza Youth Break Out group (Gazan activists who published a radical manifesto for change denouncing Israel, Hamas, and Fatah) tweeted: "Shafiq losing is good but Mursi winning is bad. Dear Egypt: welcome to Gaza." GYBO also tweeted that "most Gazans" believed a win for the Brotherhood would strengthen Hamas and therefore galvanise their repressive rule in Gaza. See GYBO's Twitter page at twitter.com/gazaybo

Syria: sectarian lines deepen

By Dan Katz

The most recent Syria peace plan, brokered by Kofi Annan for the UN and Arab states, has failed. The UN monitoring operations were suspended in mid-June.

One consequence of its failure is that the Saudis and Qatar are beginning to send significant amounts of money and weapons to the armed Syrian opposition, the Free Syrian Army.

More sophisticated weapons are being channelled through Turkey and the fighting in northern Syria is intensifying. The Saudis hope by paying the fighters they will buy control and encourage dissidents in the army to defect.

On 21 June the *New York Times* reported "CIA offi-

cers have been in southern Turkey for several weeks, in part to help keep weapons out of the hands of fighters allied with al-Qaeda." The US is attempting to vet the groups that receive Saudi guns.

The US is also worried that shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, known as MANPADS, could find their way into the hands of Islamists fighting in Syria. Reuters reports that, "hundreds, if not thousands, of MANPADS were looted from arsenals accumulated by late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, and are floating on the Middle East black market."

Hillary Clinton said the US government was supplying communications equipment, not weapons, to the opposition. The wants Syria's murdering

leaders to go, but are frightened about what will replace them and alarmed about the activities of Islamists.

According to the *Economist* the regime has two big current fears. First that fighting in the capital, Damascus, is getting out of control. There are now regular battles in the city centre, and the state has responded by violent attacks on opposition strongholds in the satellite areas of Douma, Qudsaya and Harasta.

Second, that it might lose the support of Russia. Obama met Putin on 18 June and asked him to force Assad's hand. Also Russian ships recently sent to their naval base in Tartus, on the Syrian coast, are preparing for evacuations.

Greece: the rise of the Golden Dawn fascists

By Theodora Polenta

These are the election results for the neo-Nazi movement Golden Dawn, in Greece.

- National Elections 2009: 0.29% (19,636 votes)
- European Elections 2009: 0.46% (23,564 votes)
- Athens Elections 2010: 5.29% (10,222 votes)
- National Elections May 2012: 6.97% (441,018 votes)
- National Elections June 2012: 6.92% (425,980 votes)

The general shift of the Greek people to the left was reaffirmed in the June 2012 elections, where Syriza scored almost 27% and the combined electoral percentage of the left reached almost 40%.

But that was not all. The "Independent Greeks" have established themselves as a force of the anti-memorandum right, gaining over 10% in the May election and stabilizing at 7.5% in June elections. Counterposed to the formation of a left pole in the Greek society is the formation of an ultra-right pole.

To the left pole belong the majority of the working class and the youth. To the right pole belong some capitalists and others from the higher layers of the Greek society. It is common knowledge that ND [Greek equivalent of the Tories] employ Golden Dawn members in its security team. The bulk of the ultra-right electorate are scared petty bourgeois, well-off pensioners, and farmers who want to hang on to their small properties and their euro bank deposits.

The hard core of Golden Dawn are young people who are permanently unemployed, from what is termed the lumpenproletariat.

Golden Dawn has built some base in deprived, ghettoised and marginalised neighbourhoods and ghost cities, where refugees, immigrants, and marginalised sections of the working class have been left to rot. Golden Dawn's electoral results

were partly a product of that work in neighbourhoods of Athens. However, many Golden Dawn voters live in remote rural areas of Greece where there are no "foreigners".

After the May election, the stance of both Synaspismos (the main component of Syriza) and KKE could be summed up as follows: People voted for Golden Dawn to express their anger against the memorandum and the political establishment; but the vote did not express an acceptance and endorsement of racist and fascist politics.

That assessment was partly refuted by 17 June. Between May and June Golden Dawn's openly Nazi character was amply exposed. Golden Dawn people attacked students and ordinary people who do not look like their standard of the Aryan race; organised a massive armed attack on refugees in Patra exploiting the murder of a Greek young man by an immigrant.

Golden Dawn activists broke into the political offices of SEK [Greek group linked to the SWP in Britain]. They sent death threats to veteran leftist Manolis Glezos, and threatened councillors from the left coalition Antarsya and prominent leaders of the anti-racist anti-fascist movement.

Videos have been re-

leased on YouTube of scooter battalions of Golden Dawn approaching isolated immigrants, stabbing them or racially abusing them. Golden Dawn has expanded its targets from the "foreigners and dark skinned" to white Greek homosexuals; it has distributed leaflets describing lesbians and gays as a "foreign", "abnormal" part of Greek society.

HOSPITALS

One Golden Dawn spokesman called on people to treat immigrants in the same way that the citizens' movement in Keratea got rid of the rubbish dumped in their area.

A Golden Dawn candidate pledged to create armed battalions to kick African and Asian immigrants out of the hospitals that are hospitalized for free, as opposed to the Greek patients that have to pay. He pledged to organise groups of people to ensure that the public kindergartens and nurseries are free from "dark skinned" babies and toddlers.

In June, Golden Dawn got its 7% not despite the fact that it was exposed as a Nazi gang, but because of its provocative behaviour.

One third of Golden Dawn's May voters switched, but they were replaced by racist and possibly fascist voters from the older-established far-right movement Laos, whose percentage plummeted from 2.9% in May to 1.5% in June. In June as in May, over 50% of the police force voted for Golden Dawn.

During the last two years, with some exceptions on the revolutionary left and the various immigrant and refugee organisations, the left has done little about forming a front to confront the emerging fascist-racist threat in the streets, in the neighbourhood, in the workplaces, and in every section of the Greek society.

On 7 June, on TV, Golden

Dawn MP Ilias Kasidiaris threw water at a Syriza woman MP and slapped a KKE woman MP. Protest demonstrations were organised on 8 June; but there was no central call from Syriza or KKE to participate, though members from both parties did come. When Golden Dawn exploited the assassination of a young Greek by an immigrant in Patras, mobilising Nazi thugs from Athens to attack an abandoned factory where refugees were living, neither Syriza nor KKE in Patras made any initiative.

Since May KKE [the diehard-Stalinist Greek Communist Party] has begun to acknowledge the threat from Golden Dawn. But KKE's polemic against Golden Dawn is mostly restricted to the pages of its paper Rizospastis, and all the articles in Rizospastis focus on the historical role of Nazism during World War Two and the Greek resistance, led by members of the Communist Party.

The latest statement by Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras, calling on all parliamentary parties to deal with the threat to parliamentary democracy posed by Golden Dawn, exposes a lack of understanding of fascism and the way to confront it. Golden Dawn in power would dissolve parliament and all the remnants of parliamentary democracy, but the bourgeois parliamentary bourgeois parties of Pasok and ND do not want to and cannot lead the fight against fascism and racism.

The last act of the Papademos coalition government was to pass a law for the construction of 31 concentration camps for "illegal" immigrants.

This was the mark of a government that did not hesitate to form a coalition with the openly racist Laos party of Georgios Karatzaferis and put in the cabinet the fascist MPs Boridis and Georgiadis.

Pasok cabinet minister Xrisochoidis (citizen pro-

tection) declared that illegal immigrants were responsible for most crimes and that law and order was the major concern of the Greek people. Health minister Loverdos, also Pasok, said that illegal immigrants should be put in separate units in the hospitals and all immigrants from certain countries should be put in quarantine.

Athens mayor Giorgos Kaminis started a crusade to "reinvigorate and reconstruct" the centre of Athens — police storming immigrant areas with the aim of deporting as many as possible. Antonis Samaras emphasised ND's commitment to act against "illegal immigrants". "The Greek toddlers and kids should be given priority in kindergartens over the children of immigrants in kindergartens", he said.

Although the mainstream political world condemned the public display of violence in the TV attack by a Golden Dawn representative on women from Syriza and KKE, Samaras said that the violence of the Golden Dawn was only the counterpart of the "violence of the Left". Thanos Plevris, a ND and ex-Laos MP, declared that Antarsya is the equivalent of the Golden Dawn on the left.

Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos declared: "The violence, the tension, the jeering, the counter demonstrations were not brought into civilian life by [leaders] of Golden Dawn. They came from the left..."

COMMITTEES

In each city and neighbourhood, local people and immigrants must take the initiative to establish anti-fascist committees. A powerful anti-fascist front is a necessity in order to defend our struggles to come in defence of our wages, jobs, pensions.

The main duties of the revolutionary left should be the following:

1. To take the initiative in building united fronts able to smash the developing fascist movement ideologically, politically, and physically, in the streets.

2. To build anti-fascist committees in every town and every neighbourhood that embrace political organisations, social organisations and institutions, cultural and sports associations, refugee and immigrant organisations and collectives, and particularly trade unions.

3. Rank and file trade union activists should link anti-fascist and anti-racist actions their industrial struggle. Particular emphasis should be placed upon the trade-union journalists and media workers, who

have a duty to counter-inform the Greek public and expose Golden Dawn.

4. In every neighbourhood the trade unions, alongside the neighbourhood committees, should form popular defence squads and solidarity squads aiming at solving the social problems via solidarity and cooperation, the establishment of a sense of safety within the neighbourhoods, and the self-defence against the fascist thugs.

5. To link the call for the formation of workers' defence squads with workplace organisations, mass strikes, occupations, democratic organisation of neighbourhood committees, in short, the a mass movement that aims for the most extensive democracy.

SAVIOURS

The committees should avoid links with groups of so-called anti-authoritarians who, when referring to anti-fascist committees, understand small groups that will act as saviours of the working class and immigrants by chasing the fascists.

6. Systematic and persistent campaigns, around the schools, in the squares, door to door, etc., combined with the creation of defence squads and with the basic motto "Fascists out of our neighbourhoods, our schools, our parliament".

7. The anti-fascist committees must at the same time to address social problems created by the crisis and poverty and by the ghettoising and dumping of all immigrants in the most deprived areas. They must fight for decent accommodation, food, education, etc., for all economic and political refugees and for all locals.

8. Fight for a program of transitional demands based upon workers' self-management and control and the social planning of the economy to meet the needs of the people and not for the profits of a handful of capitalist parasites.

9. The left must give an internationalist response to the crisis. As long as Greece remains under the dictatorship of the Troika and big capital, racism will develop and fascism will be "available on request". Fight alongside the European working class for the overthrow of the capitalism and the establishment of the United Socialist States of Europe.

Due to the change in the left political landscape, a particular responsibility lies on Syriza to initiate a united front and mobilise its members to fight against the threat of Golden Dawn.

International stories on our website

Support jailed Iranian activists

On 15 June about 60 Iranian labour activists were beaten and arrested during a raid on a house in Taraj by agents of Iran's Intelligence Ministry. Nine are still in detention. This is the latest of a series of attempts by the regime to crack down on independent workers' organisations.

Model protest letter and more information at: www.workers-iran.org

More: tinyurl.com/iransupport

Turkish aviation workers under attack

The Turkish government has banned strikes by aviation workers — but the workers are fighting back. tinyurl.com/turkeystrikeban

Back to that first International?



Eric Lee

A century and a half ago, workers' leaders from a number of European countries met in St. Martin's Hall in London under a banner proclaiming "All men are brothers." The organisation they founded has come to be known as the First International.

Last week at the giant Bella Center in Copenhagen, a much larger conference representing many more workers was held. The organisation it formed was called IndustriALL Global Union.

If I seem to be comparing the two events, it's not to wrap IndustriALL in the glory of that legendary First International. It's because the parallels where they exist are not flattering.

The First International was Eurocentric, male-dominated and paralysed by in-fighting. While some of its leaders such as Marx and Engels had a clear view of the direction the workers' movement must follow, others were — to put it mildly — cranks. The First International was not a Marxist organisation in spite of Marx's participation in it. It was not even social democratic, as many of its members were anarchists. And it lasted for little more than a decade. It wasn't until the formation of the Second International in 1889 that one could speak of a global organisation of workers united behind socialist ideas.

IndustriALL was meant to be the biggest and most powerful of the global union federations, which are unions of unions around the world organised by sector or profession. It's a merger of three existing federations, some of which have histories going back more than a century. These were the metal workers; the chemical, energy and mine workers;

and the textile, leather and garment workers. The first day of the congress was taken up by the business of dissolving those three global unions.

What followed was a bit reminiscent of the First International, but not in a good way.

The Latin American delegates noisily walked out, furious at their reduction in representation on IndustriALL's Executive. As they pointed out, in one of the key global union federations that had just dissolved itself (the metal workers), Latin America had 15% of the seats. That was reduced to 10%. They felt they were being cut out and replaced by powerful and rich northern European unions including Germany and the Nordic countries. As one of them put it in a speech to congress, "one dollar one vote" was "a bourgeois form of democracy". They wanted the leadership of the organisation to reflect the size of the working class, not how rich it was.

FEMALE

They were not the only ones to feel under-represented. The report from the Credentials Committee noted in passing that about 22% of the congress delegates were female. Only one of the eight elected officers was a woman.

And in creating the Executive, there was little effort to ensure equal participation by women, who were allocated, at best, about 30% of the seats.

This contrasts sharply with the practice at other global union federations. For example, the food workers (IUF) required delegations to its recent congress to be at least 40% female. Delegations that didn't meet that requirement lost votes. When a male European delegate rose to challenge this, the IUF general secretary basically said, "tough."

The Copenhagen launch of IndustriALL was supposed to be a celebration, so there was little in terms of politics. A ten point action plan was adopted committing the federation to global organizing, democracy and so on. Resolutions were passed against precarious work and for democracy in Fiji. An online campaign was launched to support striking Span-

ish miners.

But there was none of the sharp ideological edge one used to find in some of the global union federations. The former leader of the International Metalworkers Federation, Herman Rebhan, was a staunch anti-Stalinist, having battled against the American Communist Party in his days working side by side with Walter Reuther in the United Auto Workers. So was the former leader of the chemical workers, Charles "Chip" Levinson. Levinson was a pioneering advocate of global trade unionism, and also an iconoclast. His book, *Vodka-Cola*, published in the late 1970s, made the argument that Stalinist states had become junior partners in a globalized capitalist world. Both Rebhan and Levinson came out of the North American unions during the time of the cold war, and had politics that we might recognize today as being not far removed from the third camp politics of Max Shachtman's organisation.

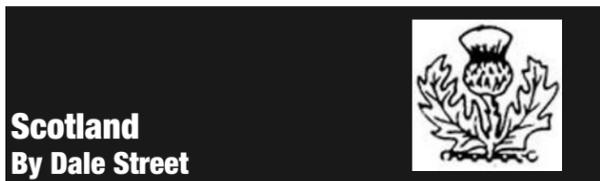
The politics of their successors is somewhat more muddled. At the opening congress of IndustriALL, congratulatory videos were shown featuring the exiled leader of the Mexican mine workers, Napoleon Gomez, and the Australian Labor prime minister, Julia Gillard. That made sense. But videos were also shown featuring Noam Chomsky (whose connection to the trade union movement is tenuous at best) and then one featuring a vice president of Nike.

The last of these reflected a view common among the powerful European unions, which is that some kind of "social partnership" needs to be reached with companies like Nike, which have very poor records of respecting workers' rights or recognising unions. This view is probably not shared by the Spanish miners who face daily confrontations with armed police.

It would be a great thing if IndustriALL succeeds. The world does need large, strong global union federations.

But when I think about the relative absence of women, the domination by established and powerful European unions, the ideological muddle — I am unfortunately reminded of the the First International, which never did live up to its promise.

Marxism? Or catch-the-mood opportunism?



Scotland
By Dale Street

"We believe that the Marxist tradition is essential for anyone who believes we need radical social change and will attempt to develop Marxist theory."

This was the ringing declaration issued by the 39 Scotland-based members of the Socialist Workers Party in April of last year when they quit their organisation and formed the International Socialist Group (Scotland).

The ISG's pretensions to uphold the Marxist tradition suffered an immediate loss of credibility if the lack of principle, logic and consistency they have subsequently displayed is anything to go by.

Most recently the ISG has decided Independence for Scotland is the key to opening up the political universe. An article on the ISG website (May 2012) informs its readers: "The SNP leadership's attachment to independence is of the romantic obscure variety."

Yet just three months earlier (February 2012) they were saying:

"Leading figures in the nationalist hierarchy are visceral in their hatred for 'cultural sub-nationalism'. Their national vision is resolutely business-like."

And then there is the ISG's analysis of the British workers' movement, past and present.

A website article in April sounded the alarm about "the influence of two toxic British diseases — Fabian moralism, and syndicalism which says that the only 'working-class politics' worth thinking about is rank-and-file factory committees."

To describe "Fabian moralism" as a "toxic British disease" is not controversial. But the description of syndicalism as a "toxic British disease" is something else entirely. There was nothing "syndicalist" about the decision of British trade unions to create the Labour Party!

The ISG paints a grim (but not entirely unrealistic) picture of the current Scottish labour movement: "With plummeting membership, little purchase on the political scene and few victories on the industrial scene, the Scottish unions are perhaps the weakest they have been for over a century."

But there is no explanation of how this squares with the ISG's promise to engage in "workplace and trade union agitation for a general strike." Last year a general strike was on the horizon. This year the unions are a virtual basket case.

And all in the space of just twelve months!

The ISG's explanation for this state of affairs? "The decline of the trade unions and the decline of the Labour Party are linked."

But this does not square with reality. One example. in the Scottish referendum, the driving force in the unions for "devo max" and a third question is Unite, a Labour Party affiliate. But if the unions were under "Labour control", then they too would oppose devo max, as Labour does.

One of the many peculiarities of the political universe inhabited by the ISG is that everything (apart from itself) is either dead or about to expire. The left in Scotland included. "The collapse of [the SSP] project flattened the left like a great course of chemotherapy — killing new and old alike, and leaving the scene barren and confused."

(But the SSP project collapsed when Sheridan led a futile but utterly destructive split from it. ISG members, at that time part of the SWP, walked out with him. When the ISG subsequently walked out of the SWP in 2011, they immediately allied themselves with ... Sheridan's "Solidarity"!)

WASTE

In this wasteland of political and state corpses, salvation will come in the form of ... Scottish independence!

There is "a lot to hate about Britain." There can be no compromise with "its (Britain's) 'culture' (which is barren) and its history (which is genocide)." Scottish independence "poses the greatest existential threat to British imperialism since decolonisation."

"By far the most convincing — and ultimately conclusive — argument for a yes vote," explained the ISG in July 2011, "is that it will break up the British state. Minor scrutiny will reveal that the history of Britain is written in blood rather than ink."

And, "On this basis, *any excuse* (emphasis added) to break the British state should be welcomed by the left."

Devo max is rejected because "the Britishness we will retain will be the ugliest and most decrepit elements of the state: ... unconditional subordination to American foreign policy, including support for Israeli ethnic cleansing."

Independence will also cut through the Gordian knot of the Labour-union link: "The independence referendum represents an opportunity to hasten the demise of Labour control over the trade unions. ..."

"A vigorous campaign to break the unions from devo max and towards leading the arguments for a yes vote can begin to permanently break the link between Scottish trade unions and the Scottish Labour Party."

But how any of this can be deemed a "development of Marxist theory" remains a mystery.

Socialists of the Marxist tradition generally favour larger political units, reducing to a minimum the barriers between people embodied in state frontiers, and the unification of the working class over wider areas to fight for common conditions.

The exception to this general principle is where the creation of a larger political unit involves the domination of one (or more) nation(s) by another. But Scotland does not constitute an oppressed nation. And the ISG does not pretend that it is:

"It is a long time since I met anyone foolish enough to believe that the Scots, like the Irish or the Palestinians or the Kurds, are an oppressed people. Left nationalism of this sort is a chimera dreamed up to motivate the Trotskyist sects."

That Britain is a 'bad' state with a 'bad' history (genocide!) that still does 'bad' things and does not even have a culture is not decisive. Why, after all, would any socialist expect a capitalist state to be anything but that? Would an independent bourgeois Scotland be not 'bad'?

Nor is there anything Marxist, or even logical, about the argument that independence for Scotland would end the Labour-unions link.

The projected 2014 referendum is about the relationship which five million people living in Scotland choose to have with the rest of Britain. They have the right to decide that relationship.

The idea that a decisive argument in favour of independence is that it (supposedly) presents a chance to break union-Labour links is therefore nothing short of nonsense, made even worse by the ISG's weird conceptualisation of the relationship between the unions and the Labour Party.

The way the ISG advocates independence for Scotland on the basis of the quack "anti-imperialism" (strike a blow against British imperialism by breaking up Britain!) is in fact the hallmark of the SWP over the last decade.

And its sectarian approach to the Labour Party is a continuation of the SWP's own long-standing sectarianism.

The ISG also continues the SWP's practice of raising slogans to "catch the mood" rather than on the basis of any kind of political rationale. At the moment they want to catch the mood of the 'rebellious' fringes of the pro-independence campaign.

In the course of a political dispute with the leaders of the French Workers Party (POF) in the early 1880s, Marx declared that if the POF leaders deserved the new term of abuse coined by their left-wing rivals, "Marxist", then "me, I am not a Marxist!" Marxists will have the same comment to make on the ISG's pretensions to "develop Marxist theory".

The government talks about getting people into work — and cuts jobs!

Fight Tory plan to axe benefits!

On 25 June David Cameron bid to shore up his support on the Tory right by floating plans to cut welfare benefits.

All the proposed cuts would come on top of what's already under way: drastic cuts in housing benefit and in eligibility for disabled benefit; increases in the state pension age; and more.

Cameron pitched his proposals as an appeal to hard-pressed working people who pay taxes and end up no better off than jobless people on benefits; and as a drive to get people into jobs.

He ignores six facts:

- 2.65 million people are unemployed. There are 2.65 million fewer jobs than there are people trying to get jobs. If all the jobless suddenly improved their job-getting abilities, that might "churn" the figures — some people currently with jobs would lose them, and some people without would get jobs — but there would still be 2.65 million jobless.
- Of those who have jobs, 1.4 million can only get part-time work, though they want full-time.
- The Government is rapidly cutting public-service jobs. At present, the number of private-sector jobs is rising a bit. That's a recovery from the drastic private-sector crash in 2009 that would happen more or less whatever the Government did. With the global economy at best depressed, there is no guarantee that small increase of jobs will continue.
- Real wages are being pushed down, in part by the Government's public-sector pay freeze. The pay of bosses of the top 100 companies rose 10% in 2011, but the income of a middling household fell 3.2%, to below its 2004-5 level. The government has cut the top income-tax rate back from 50% to 45%.

MINIMUM

• The government is cutting the legal minimum wage in real terms. In October, the money minimum-wage rate will be increased just 1.8% for over-21s, and not at all for under-21s. Inflation is 2.8% (CPI) or 3.1% (RPI).

• Many, in fact most, benefits are claimed by hard-pressed working people who have jobs but low pay. The proportion of households "in poverty" which are also "in work" has been increasing for a decade. More than half of all children "in poverty" live in "working" households.

For example, Cameron proposes to abolish housing benefit for people under 25, unless they can prove (how?) that they had a "terrible, destructive home life". But many people under 25 claim housing benefit because they move to find a job, and can't instantly find a permanent one well-paid enough to pay the rent. Should stay with their parents in areas where there are no jobs?

For example, Cameron spoke about housing benefit as if it is claimed only by the jobless. But 93 per cent of new housing benefit claims made between 2010 and 2011 were made by households containing at least one employed adult. The high housing benefit bill is a subsidy by the Government to profiteering landlords, generated by the refusal and then failure of successive governments to invest in cheap social housing.

The official Labour Party response to Cameron, from Work and Pensions front-bencher Liam Byrne, was piffling. "Chaos at DWP is stalling the Government's reforms... The Government's welfare plans are shambolic..."

The labour movement should say: tax the rich heavily — not just income, but wealth. Nationalise high finance, and reorganise it as a public banking, pensions, and insurance service under democratic and workers' control.

Redirect investment to expand affordable social housing and public services, and thus create good, useful jobs for all!

According to the Royal College of Nursing, the Government's cuts have already taken 26,000 "front-line" NHS jobs, and are set to take another 35,000. Already the number of teachers in schools has been cut by 10,000.

Cameron sketched a big range of cuts, some of which he will discard as unworkable when they've done their job of rallying the flog-the-feckless brigade.

The proposals include:

UNDER 25

• Axing housing benefit for under-25s. (Currently 385,010 under-25s claim housing benefit, of whom 204,450 have children).

- Excluding people on higher incomes from council housing (and maybe also from housing-association places).
- Uprating benefits only by the lower of prices and wages, so that they decrease both in real terms and relative to wages.
- Cutting benefit rates for those out of work for long periods.
- Further "capping" housing benefit so that large households in expensive areas have to move or become homeless.
- Cutting income support and possibly child benefit for single mothers if they have three or more children.
- Cutting off benefits after a time unless you pass a literacy and numeracy test.
- Making full-time "work for the dole" compulsory after a time.
- Refusing benefits to school-leavers until after they have first had a job.
- Paying welfare benefits "in kind" (vouchers?) rather than in cash.

Instructively, Cameron's proposals do not include cuts in state pensions, or in other payments to the elderly such as free bus passes or winter fuel payments. Cameron started his speech by boasting that the Government has committed to raise pensions in line with whichever rises faster, prices or earnings, and to fold the complicated pension-credit system into an increased basic state pension.

He skated over his government's plans to raise the state pension age; but it's true that benefits for people who are currently past pension age, or nearing pension age, are surviving this government's cuts much better than benefits for younger people.

By now, possibly for the first time ever, people in their 60s are on average better-off, and less likely to be in poverty, than people in their 20s (*Financial Times*, 16 March 2012).

Older people have become better-organised, have campaigned harder, and use their votes more. The labour movement has failed to organise, inspire, and mobilise young people sufficiently. That is why Cameron's proposals specially target younger people.

• *Solidarity's* schedule is varying from usual around the Workers' Liberty summer school, 29 June to 1 July. This issue is dated 29 June. *Solidarity* 252 will be dated 11 July.

Help the AWL raise £20,000

Over the weekend 29 June to 1 July Workers' Liberty will be hosting our Ideas for Freedom conference.

Unlike at some other socialist and labour movement events, the participants will not be "fed a line", talked down to or stopped from saying things which contradict the opinions of the "top table". It may seem staggeringly obvious, but that is not the way to create a healthy socialist culture.

We will be having robust debate, discussing big ideas and arguing the fine details of theory, contemporary politics and activist organisation.

You may or may not be there. You may or may not agree with us on everything... or even very much. But you may like our attitude.

Want to keep the spirit of critical socialist culture alive? Please send us a donation!

You can also help our fundraising drive by:

- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.
 - Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate
 - Organising a fundraising event
 - Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.
 - Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.
- More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Rd, SE1 3DG.



Total raised so far: £15,107

We raised just £62 this week. Thanks to Dan, Ed, Emily, London AWL, Mick and Stuart

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

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Account name:

Account no.:

Sort code:

Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ to be paid on the day of

..... (month) 20 (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

Boycott Workfare is having a week of action in the UK from 7-14 July. BW campaigns to end forced unpaid work for people who receive benefits. www.facebook.com/#!/boycottworkfare/events www.boycottworkfare.org

The legacy of PFI

By Todd Hamer

South London Healthcare NHS Trust includes Queen Mary Hospital in Sidcup, Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich and Princess Royal Hospital in Bromley. Its budget shortfall (£1 million a week) is the equivalent of employing 1,200 nurses or doing 200 hip operations a week.

It is the first NHS organisation to go into the "unsustainable providers regime" — a system set up by New Labour but never used. Under that regime an administrator is brought in to run the Trust's board and to recommend measures directly to the Health Secretary about how to put the Trust on a more sustainable footing.

The Trust's outgoing Chief Executive, Dr Christopher Streather, says that the administrators will succeed where he has failed. He believes they will be able to secure a subsidy to help with two PFI deals that bleed funds by £61 million a year. Maybe, but only if the government agrees to such a subsidy.

More to the point, Streather has said the administrators are likely to sell off parts of the hospital estate and shut down services, shifting them onto primary care and community providers.

This Trust was recently shortlisted for an award for its quality of care, management and innovation. It has one of the best mortality rates and infection control records in the country. But it costs money to deliver this level of care. These standards cannot be met whilst private sector parasites demand their risk-free returns on their PFI racket. In a situation where the government is demanding NHS Trusts slash their budgets, the burdens of PFI schemes — massively expanded under New Labour — may send many Trusts into bankruptcy.

According to the Daily Telegraph up to 22 NHS trusts are facing serious financial difficulties because of expensive PFI schemes, and six are thought to have taken on projects viewed by ministers as "unsustainable".

As you cannot run the NHS on the loose change that is left over once the millionaires who benefited from PFI have all taken their slice of the cake, the PFI "legacy" could threaten very future of the NHS as system of free quality healthcare.



Fight to reverse p

Jacky Davis is a member of the council of the British Medical Association (the doctors' trade union) and chair of campaigning organisation the NHS Consultants' Association. She spoke to *Solidarity* in a personal capacity.

It's important to understand why we lost on the Health and Social Care Bill. Until we understand we won't be able to regain the upper hand.

Partly it was the simple mathematics of the Coalition. The Lib Dems are so unpopular now they can't afford to leave the Coalition, no matter the political price. And they give the Tories a very solid majority.

But we also have to look at the response from the unions and professional associations. Unison did nothing, as far as I can see. Unite was more active but isolated. And medical organisations like the BMA did not step up in time and sharply oppose the Bill.

The government was very clever, pitching their plan in terms of GP commissioning; it was very attractive to GPs until they finally understood it, too late. That muffled any response.

The media also played a terrible role, with the only the *Guardian* even providing serious coverage. The BBC was so bad that there are rumours that it did some kind of deal with the government. I remember a headline on the BBC website calling it a "Bill to give power to GPs and patients". BBC workers reported that stories about criticism of the Bill were raised internally, but never taken up.

UNDERSTANDING

Partly because of the media, I'm not sure how much public understanding there was, or is, about what the Bill means. The government has kept the debate focused on the idea that the NHS will still be free at the point of use.

I think one thing which disoriented the unions was the fact that the screws on the NHS had already been unloosened before the Tories came to power. Lansley had some truth on his said when he described the reforms as "evolution, not revolution". To some extent Labour has not even known what its position should be, given its own record, and that disoriented the unions too.

Beyond that, we face the fact that unions are often run in the interests of the people who run them, not their members. That is hard to change when there is not much pressure from the grassroots. In the NHS, staff are very apathetic and unorganised, because they see no fight being led from above and without that they are frightened of losing their jobs.

Even before the Bill passed, Hinchingsbrooke hospital in Cambridgeshire was taken over by Circle. Now Virgin is taking over services all over the shop. In Camden we have an inquiry because of a practice given to United Health by the PCT. United Health pulled out, and then another "partner" pulled out, with the result that the practice has now closed down, leaving 4,000 people without a GP. This was all done without any democratic process or transparency. So there is an inquiry, but doctors have been told not to testify to it!

The point about transparency is crucial. Take Lansley's figures he gave the RCN conference about nursing numbers. If [RCN general secretary] Peter Carter had been less polite, he would have told Lansley his numbers were lies. But what's even more important is that Lansley dismissed responsibility

for any decisions, saying, well, it's down to the PCTs. More and more, as the service becomes more and more fragmented, we'll see a dispersal of responsibility, away from the government and the Secretary of State and onto Clinical Commissioning Groups, which means GPs.

RESPONSIBLE

GPs are supposing getting a lot of power in the new system, but in fact they'll be the ones made responsible for carrying out the £20 billion spending cuts the Tories are insisting on, and for the measures of marketisation and privatisation necessary to carry that out.

Already in Ealing I heard a local councillor blame a hospital being shut down on local GPs. Of course if GPs are judged to fail, then the private sector will be brought in directly, by which I mean even faster.

Even the idea that the NHS is free at the point of use is already being challenged. Services that were free are ceasing to be so, and I'm not talking about things like tattoo removal, but hip replacements and cataract operations. The question is, if it's free, what's actually on the menu. If the only thing that's free is, say, a burst appendix, then talking about a free health service is ludicrous.

The first thing is to get the information out there, to the wider public, which means particularly into doctor's surgeries. Keep Our NHS Public has produced a postcard which patients can give to their doctors objecting to private treatment but there are obvious limits to this, as it's potentially unfair to ask patients to forego treatment for their principles.

Then there's the GPs' pledge written by John Lister of Health Emergency, which opposes GPs being pushed into privatisation.

I think we may also see more local campaigns around private beds in NHS hospitals. The Bill raises the cap on private beds from something in the order of two percent to 49 percent. Hospitals will have to become Foundation Trusts, and their basic obligation will be to stay out of the red - not to provide any particular services. They will shed services, both to Clinical Commissioning Groups and to direct private sector provision, which will take on more and more of the low-cost services and procedures. More private beds are the obvious way to make this up, but of course there can be a fight about that. There are already local campaigns linked to many hospitals and this is an issue they can take up and campaign on.

There may or may not be legal limits to what a Labour government can reverse. But our basic tack should be to demand they reverse the Tory "reforms", cancel as many private contracts as fast as possible — but also go beyond that.

PURCHASER-PROVIDER

The crucial thing here is the "purchaser-provider split", the basis of the internal market which was introduced by Thatcher.

With this split, admin costs soar. There are no longer exact figures, but we are talking about a rise from 6 to something like 16 or 18 percent. And the waste of money is not just a question of bureaucracy. When money is allocated in this way, it creates perverse incentives, where different bodies seek to attract patients in order to attract funding. There is evidence this creates false, unnecessary demand.

Treatment rationing in the new NHS

By Todd Hamer

If you are losing your sight, in chronic pain or need a wart removed, your chances of being treated in the NHS are greatly reduced under the new regime.

A survey commissioned by the Labour Party revealed that over 90% of Primary Care Trusts and shadow Clinical Commissioning Groups are restricting access to treatment due to financial pressure. 125 assorted treatments are no longer available or severely restricted on the NHS due to the cuts.

But as the NHS shrinks the private sector moves in. Shadow Health Minister Andy Burnham described the ex-

perience of a patient in west Yorkshire who received a letter from his GP informing him that treatment for a skin condition was no longer available on the NHS and was given a menu complete with prices for treatments available at a private clinic.

When challenged about treatment rationing in the House of Commons, William Hague, deputising for the Prime Minister, claimed that this practice is illegal and any PCT/CCG that is denying treatment on financial grounds will be held to account by the government.

However, as health policy expert Allyson Pollock has pointed out, the legal power of the Secretary of State to en-

sure provision of a comprehensive health service was deliberately abolished as part of the Health and Social Care act. Any legal challenge to treatment rationing would probably fail as the Secretary of State absolved himself of the "duty to provide" free NHS care.

Powers to decide which treatments are included in the free NHS service was largely devolved to the Clinical Commissioning Groups.

These organisations have a direct financial incentive to deny their patients treatment. Their members, as illustrated by the west Yorkshire example, have multiple links to the private sector.

Privatisation!

We lost the fight to stop Lansley's Bill becoming law. How do we block implementation and force repeal?

This situation doesn't exist in the devolved nations, which do not have the internal market [which was scrapped by the Blair government and then reintroduced in England after devolution]. As the NHS degenerates and fragments in England, that contrast will become even sharper - because what exists now is not really an internal market, but an external market, a market pure and simple.

Scrapping the market set-up would save enormous amounts of money which could be ploughed back into front-line services even if funding was not increased. In my area, radiology, for instance, the Blair government ignored the views of professionals on how to overcome bottlenecks with MRI scans and instead went to the private sector at enormous cost. The same goes for enormous PFI bills hospitals and trusts are saddled with. A straightforward, publicly funded health service is not only more equitable, but cheaper and more efficient.

The point is that there are a few fairly simple demands we can make on Labour, which would be a very big deal if they were carried out. If Labour were willing to campaign on these issues it would win enormous support among NHS workers and hundreds of thousands if not millions of new votes.

A number of campaigners have founded a National Health Action Party to raise a protest about how the Bill was bulldozed through. I think it will have a broader agenda in defence of education and the rest of the welfare state too.

There will be a careful discussion about the right people to challenge, which seats to stand in. It's possible they will stand against prominent individuals like Cameron or Lansley. The aim isn't to take seats away from Labour. In fact, one aim

would be to put pressure on Labour to take a strong stand on the NHS.

KONP is probably the best established campaigning organisation on the NHS. Its strength is its local organisations. If people start new groups, it would be ideal for them to come under the banner of KONP.

A national demo is a good idea; it could help galvanise public opinion and activism. But we can't rely on a demo solving everything, even a very big one — look at the Iraq war. We need a much broader campaign, including creative use of social media.

PROTEST AGAINST OUTSOURCING

Friday 13 July

5.30-6.30pm, Capita HQ, 71 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0XA

Protest against the threat to hand over more and more of the NHS to Capita and other profit-greedy "outsourcing" companies.

More details:

healthalarm1159.wordpress.com

Save Trafford General!

By Nik Barstow

The National Health Service was officially launched at Park Hospital in Davyhulme on 5 July 1948 by Health Secretary Nye Bevan. As he symbolically received the keys to the hospital, Bevan was conscious of the place the hospital would occupy in Britain's history.

Now, 64 years later, NHS bosses have been planning in secret to close it. Earlier this year the hospital was taken over from local managers by the Central Manchester Foundation Trust because they said the hospital's finances are "unviable".

By June the new Trust bosses and NHS officials had come up with sweeping plans that would leave virtually nothing in the local area. A report to Greater Manchester NHS discussed, in secret, by Trafford Council's Health Scrutiny Committee proposes the closure of the A&E department at the hospital (now called Trafford General) and of the Intensive Care Unit by April next year, the end of all children's

services at the hospital, and stopping all acute surgery.

The Report says:

"Critical Care Level 3 services (ICU) currently available at TGH should be reprovided elsewhere."

"The current model of Accident and Emergency (A&E) provision at TGH is not sustainable."

"A Paediatric Observation and Assessment unit (POAU) (children's services) is not sustainable in the absence of a full, Type 1 A&E department."

"Emergency surgical services currently available at TGH should be reprovided elsewhere."

Save Trafford General campaign Chair Matthew Finnegan said: "This report passes a death sentence on the birthplace of the NHS."

The Save Trafford General campaign has organised a march and rally on 7 July – 11.00am from Golden Hill Park in the centre of Urmston – and is urging health campaigners to join local people in their protest.

• savetraffordgeneral.com

We need co-ordinated action to save the NHS

By Vicki Morris

Against the backdrop of the new Health and Social Care Act, and deep cuts to NHS budgets, Keep Our NHS Public (KONP) held its AGM on Saturday 23 June.

The meeting lasted just one hour but was followed by a public conference, "Reclaiming our NHS", sponsored by a number of organisations including KONP, TUC, Unison, Unite, NHS Consultants Association, Socialist Health Association (SHA), Health Emergency and the NHS Support Federation (NSF).

There were about 60 people at the KONP AGM and around 350 at the conference. Both events showed the need for more coordination of NHS campaigning efforts.

The KONP AGM was sometimes cosy and sometimes fractious, but more like a family gathering than a campaign that could save the NHS. There are just 33 local KONP groups.

KONP runs on a federal model. Local groups are represented on the steering committee. The model has its virtues, but the KONP central office is run on a shoestring, it seems, and with a tiny staff.

COORDINATE

Key KONP activists Wendy Savage and John Lister have resisted the idea of an umbrella group to coordinate the campaigns to save the NHS, and resisted KONP assuming this role. Yet it seems that they have come under some pressure and realise they must raise their game.

They helped to call the bigger conference on Saturday; and at their AGM passed a "strategy statement" that said the organisation should aim to raise £200,000 a year in order to become "more professional". (This seems to be about five times as much as they spend at the moment.)

Later, at the main conference, in a summing up plenary session, KONP activist and SHA chair Brian Fisher said that the suggestions coming from the day's workshops would be collated and followed up on by KONP.

Is KONP up to taking on the vital coordinating role that is needed to save the NHS? It seems to be assuming a greater role — but reluctantly. There are tensions in the organisation between those who want KONP to be beefed up and play more of a coordinating role, and those who want to stick with the "federal" model of (an insufficient number of) local groups.

Workers' Liberty members attended both the KONP AGM and the public conference. We argued for more pressure on the Labour Party to commit to reversing the Health and Social Care Act should it win the next election. We encouraged activists not to wait for KONP, but to support the new NHS Liaison Network and to urge KONP to participate.

We promoted the lobby of Labour Party conference in Manchester on Sunday 30 September called by the NHS Liaison Committee, North West Region of Unite the Union, and Wirral TUC.

Saturday's conferences underlined the urgent need for a bigger coordination of efforts, with resources particularly from Unison and Unite, the main unions representing health workers.

Although these two unions supported the conference, they had not mobilised their members to attend.

At the KONP AGM, campaigners expressed their anger with the unions and Labour at not leading a bigger fight against the Bill. We must continue to push Labour and the unions to act.

Why EU is stalling on crisis policy

John Grahl (Professor of European Integration at Middlesex University) spoke to Martin Thomas.

What is likely to come out of the 28 June EU summit?

There is not likely to be much movement. There may be some acceptance of moving towards a banking union. It would isolate the problem of instability and possible insolvency of banks from the financial problems of the member states. Whether Germany is prepared to move fast on that, I don't know, but it seems to be what the European Commission and some of the member states will be pushing for.

Even if the summit decides for a banking union, the timescale for setting that up is much longer than the timescale of the crisis?

On the basis of an agreement in principle to go for a banking union, it might be necessary to increase the room for manoeuvre for the European Central Bank or at least the stability funds. If the eurozone can say it is going for a general regime of centralised recapitalisation of banks that are in trouble, it could start doing some of it now. Or a reasonably solid commitment to a banking-union agreement might change market sentiment. Suppose you had a two-year horizon, then even an insolvent bank that could secure funding for two years would be secure against speculation.

There may be other moves at the summit — something towards eurobonds and mutualisation of some of the government debt — but resistance to those seems stronger than to a banking union. Anything worthy of the name of fiscal union is beyond the horizon at present.

But the period of apparent success for the EU's band-aid measures is becoming shorter and shorter...

Spain can't manage with an obligation to offer 6% interest when its government borrows, though the time horizon of its debt also matters, and there isn't an *immediate* emergency there. The talk was before the Greek election that the Greek government would need money quite soon, but presumably that money will now be found. But it's true: the inadequacy of the measures is revealed at a more and more rapid rate.

It looks as if the leading EU governments still think that they can hold firm and get through without a crash.

How would a break happen? The most concrete thinking I've seen on that is from John Dizard in the *Financial Times* (18 June). He says that a member state could invoke Article 65, which appears to give scope for capital controls. Other states would be reluctant to see that, especially if it was one of the "good pupils" doing it. There might be an attempt to refinance such a government rather than see it introduce capital controls. I don't know how that would be done, but Angela Merkel has changed her mind in the past.

The real imponderables are political, not financial. It's a question of how much will there be to keep the show on the

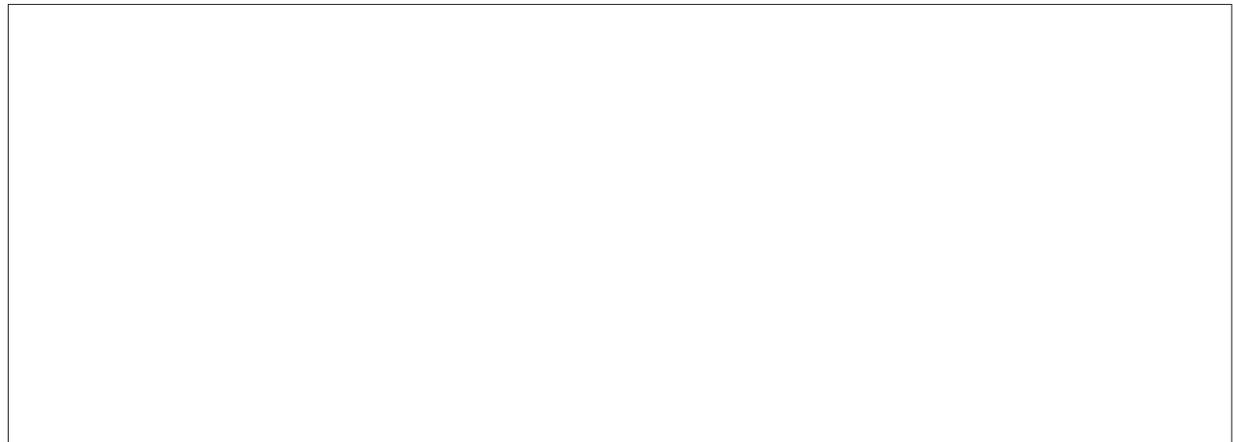
Fine Barclays? Expropriate the bankers!

"It's quite hard to think of behaviour by a bank as shocking as this", commented BBC business editor Robert Peston as Barclays Bank was fined £290 million on 27 June for dishonestly manipulating the interest rates used for short-term bank-to-bank loans, Libor and Euribor.

Why so shocking? It seems technical and abstruse. Libor and Euribor, published each morning by a committee after collecting information from banks about their rates, are the benchmarks for hundreds of other interest rates. And banks live on interest rates. They profit by borrowing at one interest rate and lending at a higher one. Dishonestly manipulating Libor and Euribor thus corrupts the entire global financial system. And it can be done only by central people at a bank. This is not a "rogue trader" thing. The Barclays fine is a pay-off to avoid further investigation. No individual has been brought to court or jailed. Maybe 20 other banks are being investigated.

The people who manipulated Libor and Euribor have vast power to scare governments and decide which investments are funded. They can't be trusted with that power.

The Labour front bench demanded only that "Treasury Ministers now review the regulation of LIBOR arrangements". Instead the labour movement should demand the expropriation of high finance and its reorganisation into a public banking, pensions, and insurance service under democratic and workers' control.



Germany is still heavily committed to the eurozone

road. I suspect there is probably still a strong will in Germany to save the eurozone.

The FT has reported an estimate of the immediate, first-order costs of a break-up of the eurozone, which would be 10 to 13% of output for countries across the EU.

You could certainly rescue Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, and Italy for a lot less than 10% of eurozone output. It struck me before the last Greek election that it would cost the EU states more money to crush the Greeks than to assist them. The losses on a comprehensive Greek default would be large, and you'd have to add the firewall that would have to be put in place hurriedly, using lots and lots of cash, to stop a snowballing collapse.

What's your opinion of Syriza's programme?

I very much hoped that Syriza would win on 17 June and that the Greeks would fight openly for an abrogation of the bailout terms. I can understand why Greeks voted otherwise, because they saw a danger of isolation.

Syriza was going to suspend some aspects of the bailout agreement. Some of the draconian cuts were going to be suspended or reversed. I don't know whether they were going to try to keep servicing the debt.

The primary deficit of Greece [the shortfall of government income from government spending, excluding debt payments] does not look that terrifying. It's maybe two or three per cent of GDP, and in an emergency any government can find 2% of GDP, especially if it has popular support. A special wealth tax would be the best way, but there are others.

The real danger would, perhaps, not be the government becoming unable to finance its current expenditure, but a banking collapse — that a Syriza government would face comprehensive banking failure because nobody would deposit with or lend money to the Greek banking system.

Of course, Syriza is an alliance of disparate forces. The people I know in Syriza mainly have a background from the Communist Party (Interior). But Syriza includes other forces, some of them, probably, more combative than Synaspismos.

One analyst has said that the European Central Bank would respond to a Syriza government by cutting Greece off from the Target 2 payment system, with the effect that euros inside Greece would become invalid for payments outside Greece.

Yes. That more or less coincides with what John Dizard has written in the *Financial Times*. You would have euros trapped in the Greek banking system, which could be used only for transactions within Greece with someone else who also has a Greek bank account.

It would be a sort of dual currency system; but you could have an objective, or a programme, for restoring the connection.

Cutting off Greece from the euro payments system would require a high-profile political decision by the European Central Bank, which is supposed to be independent of all politics. Given the will and the organisation, there would be large scope for a campaign to stop the cutting-off.

One of my worries about Syriza is that there wasn't much solidarity forthcoming. Governments in a similar position were saying that they would never do what Syriza proposed. If the four or five countries involved in the sovereign debt crisis articulated some common positions, that would strengthen their position. But Syriza is still a force. I'll bet that the new Greek government will be glad it's there and constitutes the only alternative. The Greek government can say to the EU leaders: if we fall, this is what you face...

The theory was that the European Central Bank would keep in the background — regulate inflation, and that

was all. Here it is already involved in high-profile political decisions, and potentially involved in more. Some mainstream writers have said that this shows that the model of an "independent" central bank has failed.

The European model of an "independent" central bank has failed; but it is a very extreme model. Everywhere else you have only operational independence. With the Bank of England, a simple piece of legislation, or an Order in Council even, could change its mandate overnight in an emergency. In the United States, the status of the central bank has not been changed in recent decades.

The notion that you can assign monetary policy to the single target of stabilising the price level is discredited. There have to be other objectives. And the model of "absolute" independence of a central bank which you have in Europe has also failed. It has allowed political leaders to evade their responsibilities for three years now.

What do you think is driving Angela Merkel's policy?

In the background is a big change in the attitude of German corporations to economic and social development in their home country. As they became highly globalised, Germany ceased to be so important to them as a market and more important simply as a cost. The constant pressures from the largest corporations for cost containment condition the German political class.

That fact may help to explain the otherwise surprising compression of wage costs which took place in Germany in the first decade of this century.

I find it much more difficult to assess the political calculations. Some people invoke the relative failure of integration of the two Germanies. Jürgen Habermas has invoked the same sort of scandal as we've had here in Britain in relations between the media and the political class. Habermas argues that German political culture has become "Berlusconiised".

Yet if what emerges from the crisis is a very small eurozone — say, Germany, Austria, Finland, Netherlands, Slovenia, Slovakia — then they are looking at a 30 to 35% appreciation in their currency. For the corporations there would be a huge cost escalation, and strong contractionary forces would be released in the German economy.

Another aspect is historical. Think back to the break-up of the European Monetary System in 1992-3. The German government squeezed harder and longer against inflation which never reached 5% than Paul Volcker in the USA had against inflation which was verging on 20%, ten years previously.

They said to their partners in the European Monetary System that they would cut interest rates provided that the others devalued. That wrecked the chosen strategies of their partners, who were trying to use the Deutschmark link to bring down inflation. I found that episode hard to understand in terms of rational interests. The previous case is described in the autobiography of the former president of the Bundesbank, Otmar Emminger, *D-Mark, Dollar, Währungskrisen*. He tells the story, with pride, of a meeting between himself, [then German Chancellor] Helmut Schmidt, and [then Federal Reserve president] Paul Volcker in the autumn of 1979.

The dollar was dropping like a stone. Volcker was travelling back from an IMF. He stopped off in Germany and asked for support from the Bundesbank for the dollar. They turned him down flat. Emminger says that he insisted that Volcker had to get the money supply under control. He quotes with pride Volcker saying as he left: "You're right. The decisive factor is the money stock".

Emminger reports this as a triumph. But that was the Germans helping to precipitate the worst crisis there has been in the post-war economy [Volcker pushed interest rates high in an effort similar to the "monetarist" binge under Thatcher in Britain at the time, and real US GDP in 1983 Q1 was still lower than in 1980 Q1].

Healy's WRP: the inside story

The Workers Revolutionary Party was the largest group on the revolutionary left until the mid-1970s, and a sizeable force until it collapsed in 1985. Here, Richard Price, a former full-time organiser for the WRP, reviews *Come The Revolution: A Memoir*, by Alex Mitchell. Mitchell was the editor of the WRP paper from the early 1970s until 1985. He quit politics without explanation in 1986, returned to his native Australia, and made a career in mainstream journalism. Now Mitchell has written an autobiography.

In October 1985 the Workers Revolutionary Party split explosively, amid allegations of sexual abuse of female members by its leader, Gerry Healy.

Healy had led his organisation in various guises (The Club, The Group, the Socialist Labour League, which became the WRP in 1973) for four decades. For a long period it had been the largest Trotskyist organisation in Britain, although it had been overtaken by the SWP in the 1970s and by Militant in the 1980s. Within a short period the WRP splintered into a number of warring groups, most of which are now extinct, and very few of its former members remain politically active.

As is the case with so many political memoirs, the most interesting parts are those covering the formative years. The first 200 pages are genuinely entertaining and engaging. As a seasoned news hound, Alex Mitchell knows how to tell a story, liberally sprinkled with witty and revealing anecdotes. They trace his life from his childhood in Townsville, Australia through his rapid ascent up the greasy pole of journalism, from cadet reporter on the *Townsville Daily Bulletin* and a posting to the *Mount Isa Mail* in a grim outback mining town to the *Sydney Daily Mirror* run by a young and surprisingly liberal Rupert Murdoch. By the age of 22 he was reporting from the parliamentary press gallery in Canberra, and three years later he took his chances and left for London, where he quickly found work with the *Sunday Times* — then at the height of its liberal investigative powers.

As a member of the *Sunday Times*' prestigious Insight team, Mitchell helped break a number of high profile stories — an investigation of Kim Phiby, exposés of the original 'bouncing Czech' Robert Maxwell, assignments in revolutionary Paris and war-torn Biafra.

In 1970 he switched to Granada Television's fledgling *World In Action*, where he exposed the dodgy financial dealings of Home Secretary Reginald Maudling, who resigned shortly afterwards. A second programme on Uganda led to a face-to-face interview with Idi Amin — then a darling of the Tory press.

Already an active opponent of the Vietnam War before he left Australia in 1967, Mitchell was becoming steadily radicalised in the London of the late 1960s. In 1968 he began attending private Friday night discussion meetings organised by prominent radicals in the media and theatre. Initially a small circle, it rapidly expanded to include the cream of left wing playwrights, producers and directors. From a kind of beauty contest between various left wing intellectuals, Gerry Healy rapidly became the dominant influence — a process subsequently immortalised in Trevor Griffiths' play *The Party*, with Laurence Olivier playing the Healy figure at the National Theatre.

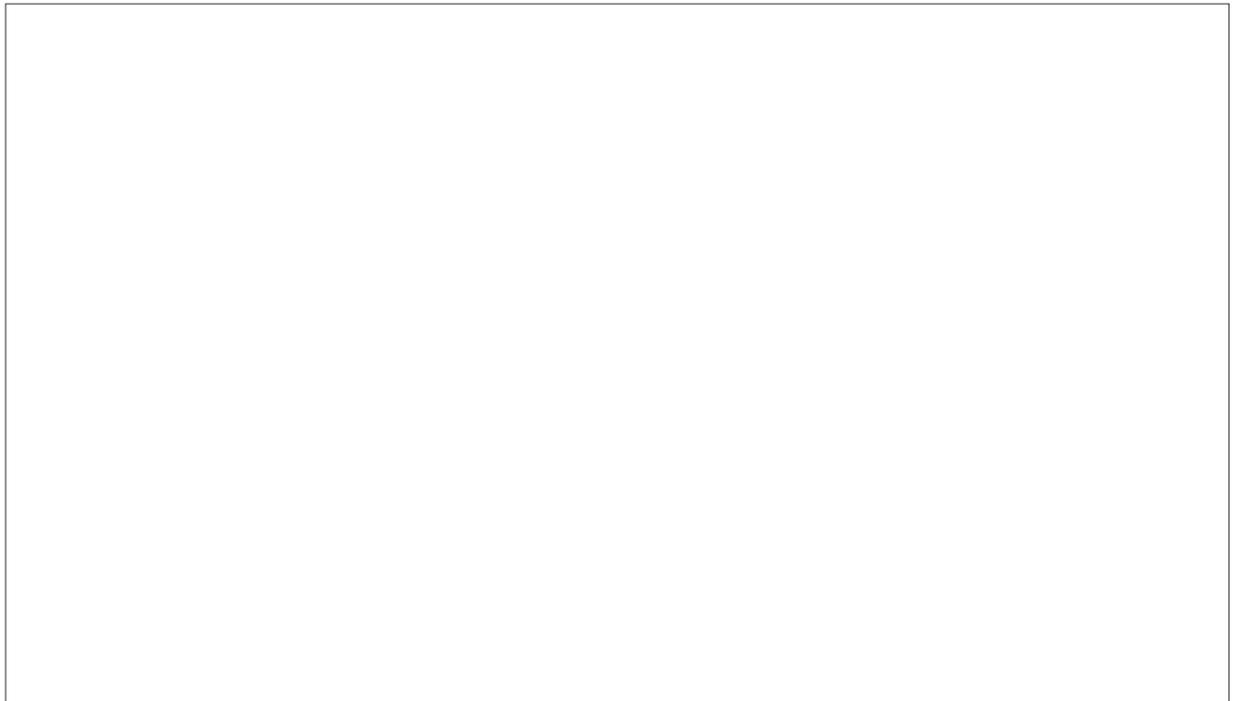
FAST TRACK

In May 1971 Mitchell resigned from World In Action and joined the editorial board of Healy's shoestring daily, Workers Press. Within a short time, he had been fast tracked on to its Central and Political Committees, and became the paper's editor.

For the next 15 years, he was one of Healy's closest confidantes, and acted as the WRP's roving Middle Eastern ambassador, conducting bilateral contacts with, among others, Yasser Arafat, Colonel Gaddafi and Saddam Hussein.

Anyone looking for major revelations from these years is going to be disappointed. There's nothing new on the shooting of PC Yvonne Fletcher outside the Libyan Embassy in 1984. Mitchell does acknowledge a limited amount of "Arab gold" via Gaddafi and the PLO and some Gulf state funding of Vanessa Redgrave's documentary *The Palestinian*, but in nothing like the quantities that have been widely alleged. But he also says that relations with the Iraqi Ba'athists had cooled in 1979 and ended in 1981 as a result of the Iraq/Iran War — although not before the WRP had published a sycophantic pamphlet entitled *Iraq under the Leadership of the Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party*.

By 1981 Gaddafi became more distant as a result of British government pressure. Certainly, the WRP had accumulated major financial problems by the time it split, and this has often been attributed to its Middle Eastern funding drying up. But if the Arab gold dried up four years before the WRP split, then this is hardly a convincing cause.



Press conference to launch *Newsline*, the new daily paper the WRP launched when it closed *Workers' Press* on financial grounds and established links with Qaddafi's and other governments. L to R: John Spencer, Royston Bull, Alex Mitchell, Stephen Johns

The truth is probably more prosaic. The WRP had been living beyond its means for some time, maintaining an HQ, a chain of bookshops, a school, a print shop, and a number of youth centres, as well as satisfying Healy's obsession with acquiring expensive technology. By 1985 it employed — albeit on small wages — about 90 full timers. Despots don't tend to like bad news, so the reality of the WRP's financial crisis was kept from Healy, and he was fed grossly exaggerated membership figures by assistant general secretary Sheila Torrance. As the attendance at aggregate meetings during the split in October 1985 showed, the WRP had an active membership of barely 1,000.

ALLEGATIONS

As for the allegations of sexual abuse against Healy, Mitchell — perhaps truthfully — professes to knowing very little, but he is nevertheless soft on the old brute.

He rubbishes claims that Healy "raped dozens of women" and believes that only lower level abuse took place. This is complicated by the fact that the anti-Healy majority by-passed holding a control commission and went for a straight expulsion of Healy, only to conclude a year later that what had taken place was "not so much rape but ... sexual abuse by someone in a position of power and trust".

Mitchell stands by the WRP's widely discredited "Security and the Fourth International" investigation into Stalinist penetration of the Trotskyist movement, which charged veteran US Trotskyist leaders Joe Hansen and George Novack with being accomplices of both Soviet intelligence and the FBI. Although its central allegation was grotesque, Mitchell's investigative skills did throw up new information on some key Soviet agents within the Trotskyist movement in the 1940s. This however only served as grist to the mill of Healy's obsessive denunciation of his opponents on the left as agents.

In what he does say, Mitchell generally comes over as a fairly honest witness. He owns up to various doubts about the WRP's internal regime and politics: "The trouble with the WRP was that internal discussion was confined to reaffirming the party line, not debating it, and certainly not challenging it." He hit a crisis in the middle of the miners' strike, convinced that Healy's line (that the strike would either end in a direct struggle for power or a military dictatorship) was completely out of sync with reality.

Mitchell seems to have forgotten the old newspaper adage that facts should be checked from two independent sources. The text is riddled with clumsy factual errors. He interviewed Daniel Cohn-Bendit, for the *Sunday Times* in 1968, and writes that he was "opposed to the terrorist violence which was then being conducted by the Baader-Meinhof group in West Germany". This must have been clairvoyance on Cohn-Bendit's part because the Baader-Meinhof group wasn't formed until 1970, in a wave of disillusion with mass politics after the events of 1968!

He writes that Ted Knight was expelled from the Socialist Labour League in 1954 — five years before the SLL was launched. In fact, Knight was expelled from the Labour Party in 1954 for supporting Healy's entry paper *Socialist Outlook*.

He claims the publication of former *Sunday Times* colleague David King's *Trotsky: A Documentary* in 1972 "lifted Trotsky's name from political obscurity". Aside from the fact that Trotskyist groups across the world had published a large amount of Trotsky's writings since 1968, it was surely Isaac Deutscher's widely read three-volume biography which established Trotsky's reputation among western intellectuals.

He credits the Queen Mother for dragging George VI away from appeasement, when history records she was an enthusiastic appeaser herself.

Bigger problems lie in what Mitchell doesn't say. Internal repression in Iraq and Libya is only acknowledged in passing, as if it was a minor sub-plot of the global struggle against imperialism. The similarity with the method of Stalinist anti-fascism in the 1930s is striking. There are huge gaps in the narrative. The expulsion of up to 200 supporters of Alan Thornett in 1974, which destroyed a large part of the WRP's industrial base, doesn't rate a mention. A whole chapter is devoted to the WRP's libel action against the *Observer*, but he doesn't refer to its long-running litigation against *Socialist Organiser*. Apart from cursory references to the 1984-5 miners' strike, the great industrial battles of the 1970s and 80s and the riots of 1981 and 1985 barely feature.

CHAOTIC

After Thornett's expulsion, the WRP's industrial work was chaotic. In truth, the WRP leadership instinctively feared organised trade union work because it might create a potential opposition to the party's ultra-leftism.

It preferred working with impressionable actors, inexperienced youth and the permanently unemployed, while keeping a relationship with left-leaning trade union leaders.

In spite of official disinterest I succeeded in building the organisation's most effective industrial group in London's largest health authority. In the middle of the 1982 NHS dispute I gave an enthusiastic report in which I mentioned how the dispute had united many different types of people in the pyramid of nations that made up the NHS in those days. Mitchell moved a motion of censure on the grounds that there were no differences between the different groups and nationalities. They were all workers, and therefore my remarks were objectively racist!

Similarly, the WRP's behind the scenes "alliances" with various nationalist movements could be a minefield for members. In 1979 I was put on the standing orders committee at the WRP Young Socialists conference and made the mistake of putting a fraternal speaker from Robert Mugabe's ZANU on ahead of one from Joshua Nkomo's ZAPU. Mitchell came up to me furiously and punched me on the arm for breaching etiquette.

Mitchell never had much grasp of either Marxism or Trotskyist history. Having been catapulted into the leadership, his relationship with Marxism was mediated through the person of Gerry Healy.

But having had a quarter of a century to reflect, he's no

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

better informed now, and doesn't refer to Bob Pitt's *The Rise and Fall of Gerry Healy* (freely available on the net), or to Al Richardson's books on British Trotskyism.

The WRP was part cult, part sect, with the cultish elements often winning out. It shared many common features with the People's Temple of Jim Jones, whose members committed mass suicide in the Guyanese jungle in 1978: support for progressive causes and anti-racism; puritanical self-denial alongside the leader's "special needs"; ritualised self-criticism; the inflation of minor into major differences; the separation of members from family and friends.

Other parts of the WRP's internal regime and politics were lifted wholesale from third-period Stalinism — leadership elections conducted by approving a recommended list en bloc; unanimous decision making; and the slogan of a workers' revolutionary government.

Mitchell's politics are full of contradictions. He derides work in the Labour Party in general and dismisses the Militant Tendency as "a clandestine project to burgle the Labour Party from within". But he defends the WRP's close relationship with Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight, and its clandestine *Labour Herald* operation, "because it extended the party's influence into the heart of the anti-Thatcher mass movement". He also boasts of running spies within the Communist Party.

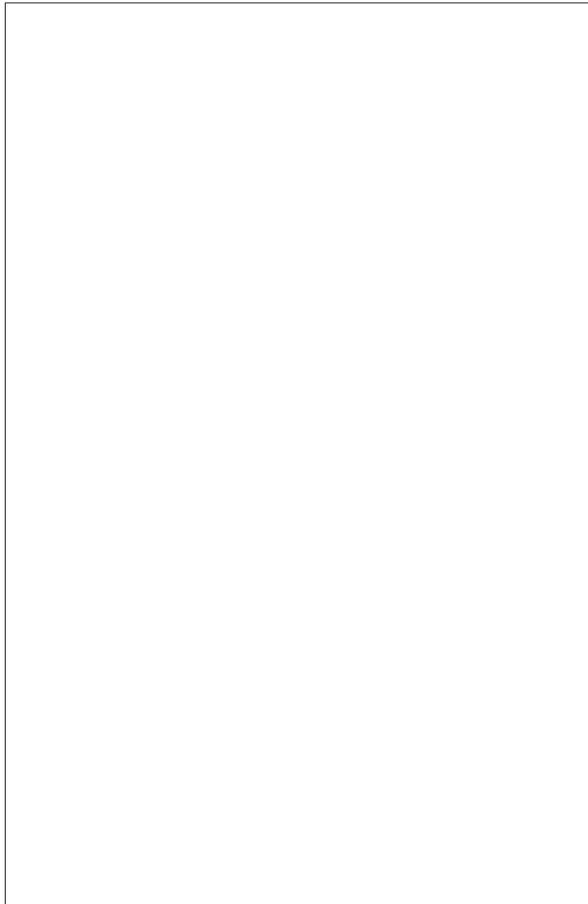
Much of his analysis is questionable and reflects the fact that he divided his time between the hothouse atmosphere of the WRP's Clapham HQ, addressing public meetings and jetting around the Middle East, but had little knowledge of the consciousness of workers or the state of the rank and file. According to Mitchell's account, the WRP went from success to success "building and recruiting" in the 1970s and only hit serious problems in the 1980s. The truth is more complicated.

Although Mitchell briefly mentions reservations with the slogan of "the struggle for power" adopted in 1977, what he doesn't mention is that from 1975 onwards the WRP campaigned to bring down the Labour government — and this with a resurgent Tory party under Thatcher waiting in the wings.

It was this policy more than any other which came close to wrecking the WRP in the 1970s. Even the most militant groups of trade unionists during the winter of discontent rejected it, knowing that it could only assist the Tories.

The WRP also abstained almost entirely from the struggle against the National Front, despite being the only far left group with a significant number of black members.

It carried out virtually no student work, and scorned women's and gay liberation as diversions from the class



Healy speaking at a WRP rally commemorating the murder of Leon Trotsky

struggle.

From a high point of 2-3,000 members in 1973, the WRP was reduced to a shell of a few hundred by 1979. Its 60 candidates in the 1979 general election polled a disastrous total of 12,631 votes. It cost the party £8 per vote.

With the Tories back in power, the WRP rowed back from the wilder shores of ultra-leftism and built close (and quite opportunist) relations with Labour left-wingers Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight. During the miners' strike it was close to Arthur Scargill.

Access to such nationally known figures helped it grow slowly but steadily from 1981-4. The tactic adopted by a

number of Labour councils of refusing to set a rate during the rate-capping crisis of 1985 was a policy made in Clapham. This was more success than Healy had experienced for some years.

What did for the WRP was a perfect storm involving several factors. The anti-imperialist alliances Healy thought he had built lay in tatters. With the end of the miners' strike, morale plummeted and recent recruits dropped out. Following Scargill, Healy insisted that the miners were undefeated, but the reality was there for all to see. Neither a struggle for power nor a military government had materialised. Healy's claim to infallibility began to be questioned. Allegations of sexual abuse and a financial crisis in an organisation that disapproved of "opportunist" personal relationships and regularly bled its members dry became the catalysts of an explosion. Like all great British scandals, it took in sex and money.

ORCHESTRATED

Mitchell, unlike both Vanessa Redgrave and Ken Livingstone, doesn't claim that state agents orchestrated the split, although he does think they gave "a push to history" — which is possible, but he provides no evidence.

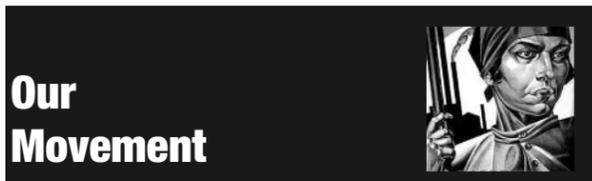
He correctly records that the anti-Healy majority carried out a wave of deranged violence, and points out that after the split many of Healy's most vociferous opponents "simply evaporated, never to be seen in further political activity".

With some honourable exceptions — Dot Gibson of the National Pensioners' Convention and Andrew Burgin of the Stop the War Coalition spring to mind — few WRP members did much that was constructive in the labour movement after 1985. Some were traumatised, no doubt, although many on both sides claimed that they had taken part in an epoch-making struggle. For the bulk of ex-members, their allegiance had been primarily to a person rather than a programme or a set of ideas. Once their guru had fallen off his pedestal they were unable to reason independently and simply retired.

For all Healy's toxic reputation, it's worth remembering that he was not the only Trotskyist leader to have an exaggerated view of his own importance, surround himself with bodyguards and female admirers, and pursue insanely opportunist or sectarian policies. Over the years Healy had managed to recruit people of the calibre of Ken Loach, Stuart Hood, Des Warren, Peter Fryer, Bernie Grant, and a clutch of future Labour MPs, and several of our finest playwrights.

But if there are lessons to be drawn from the history of the WRP they are almost all negative and Mitchell is incapable of supplying them.

How Greek Trotskyism was born



Our Movement

In an ongoing series, Liam McNulty pays tribute to some of the heroes of revolutionary socialism. This week, he examines the political life of Greek Trotskyist leader Pandelis Pouliopoulos.

Pandelis Pouliopoulos (1900-43) was the first general secretary of the Greek Communist Party (KKE) and a founder of the Trotskyist movement in Greece.

As a young law student, Pouliopoulos joined the Socialist Labour Party of Greece (SEKE), the forerunner to the KKE, in 1919. The following year he was conscripted to fight in the Greek-Turkish war and was arrested in the final year of the conflict in 1922 for anti-war activity.

In 1924 Pouliopoulos was KKE delegate to the Fifth Congress of the Comintern and later that year became general secretary of the party. He came to prominence when, along with 23 others, he was tried in Athens and exiled for promoting the autonomy of Macedonia and Thrace.

As Stalinism tightened its grip over the Russian Communist Party, the KKE suffered bureaucratic degeneration. In March 1927, Pouliopoulos was removed from the Central Committee. He soon formed an oppositional journal *Neo Xekinima* (*New Beginning*).

The journal moved in the direction of Trotskyism in the period 1927-30. According to the Greek Trotskyist Loukas Karliafitis ("Kostas Kastritis") it "discredited the degenerated leadership of the Stalinist KKE. It raised questions about the great split between Stalin and Trotsky."

However, Pouliopoulos "also fought against the particular character of Archeiomarxism and its liquidatory work against the KKE." The "Archeiomarxists" were a tendency

who had split with the KKE in the early 1920s. Pouliopoulos and his group, which after December 1928 was publishing a journal called *Spartacus*, argued for the need to reconstruct the KKE in accordance with ideas influenced by the Trotskyist International Left Opposition (ILO).

However, the ILO believed that the KKE was not the most promising source of adherents to Trotskyism on account of its shallow roots in the working class and particularly degenerated internal regime. The ILO passed over the Spartacus group of Pouliopoulos to grant its franchise to the Archeiomarxists, who were increasingly Trotskyist in orientation and were gaining influence in the trade unions.

CRIMINAL

Spartacus refused to join with the Archeiomarxists. However, the historic defeat of the German workers' movement in 1933, partly due to the criminal policies of the Stalinists, led Leon Trotsky to raise the banner of a new Fourth International.

At the same time, the Archeiomarxist leader Dimitris Giotopoulos fell out with Trotsky and his group became affiliated with the centrist "London Bureau."

The Pouliopoulos group fused with another tendency to form the Organisation of Internationalist Communists of Greece (OKDE) in 1934. For a while Pouliopoulos, with Raymond Molinier in France, opposed the foundation of a new international, but in 1938 he took the initiative to unite the Greek Trotskyists to form the Unified Organisation of Communist Internationalists of Greece (EOKDE), which was present at the founding of the Fourth International in Paris in September 1938.

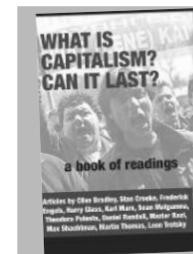
Karliafitis wrote: "With the unification Pouliopoulos now became the unquestioned leader of all the Trotskyists who remained loyal to the Fourth International, and he fought ceaselessly against all the social chauvinists who capitulated during the war."

In World War Two, the "anti-fascist" Allies were represented in Greece by the fascist Metaxas government, which proclaimed its ideological kinship with Hitler but sided

with Britain for economic reasons, and managed to hold off Italian invaders in 1940-1. In April 1941 Germany invaded. The KKE reacted with the social-patriotic slogan of "liberation of the Nation from the foreign yoke". Pouliopoulos called instead for a dual revolutionary struggle against the occupation and for the establishment of a workers' and peasants' government in Greece.

In 1938, after going into hiding, Pouliopoulos had been arrested by the Metaxas dictatorship and imprisoned in Acronauplia. He refused to kneel before the dictatorship or sign a declaration of repentance allowing him to flee abroad, declaring that "they can only take me abroad in chains, and even then I will find a way to return."

On 6 June 1943, he was executed by Italian occupation forces. In his final moments he delivered an internationalist speech to his executioners, so that the firing squad rebelled and the officers had to shoot instead.



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December 1944: when Greek Stalinists murdered hundreds of Trotskyists

In December 1944, the Stalinists in Greece massacred several hundred Trotskyists, anarchists and other internationalist communists. In doing so they strangled the revolutionary dynamic of the Greek movement against German occupation, paving the way for the conservative-led White Terror of 1945-6, which was backed by British troops in Greece and led directly to the Greek Civil War from March 1946. Liam McNulty looks at the background.

German forces invaded Greece on 6 April 1941. Athens fell by 27 April and, by the end of the month, the German campaign claimed victory with the capture of Kalamata in the Peloponnese.

The Communist Party of Greece (KKE), like other Communist Parties, had been in a state of confusion about its attitude to the Nazis, in the period following the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939. All that changed after the Nazis opened hostilities against the USSR with Operation Barbarossa on 22 June 1941. The KKE was ready to swing four-square behind the Allied side.

On 27 September, the Seventh Plenum of the KKE formed a popular front for the liberation of the country, the National Liberation Front (EAM), along with a number of other minor parties. Lefteris Apostolou represented the KKE, with Christos Chomenidis from the Socialist Party (SKE), Ilias Tsirimokos from the Union for People's Democracy (ELD) and Apostolos Voyiatzis from the Agricultural Party of Greece (AKE).

On 10 October EAM published a social-patriotic manifesto calling for the "liberation of the Nation from foreign yoke" and the "guaranteeing of the Greek people's sovereign right to determine its form of government".

However, as Pierre Broué has written: "This desire to maintain a 'united nation' against the invader — when it was not united — and to ignore in silence the class sources of the popular opposition to the occupiers and to the members of the Greek bourgeoisie who collaborated with them, did not, however, succeed in preventing the workers and the poorest strata of the people from laying hold of the framework of the organisation which the KKE offered. They instinctively used it to fight for their demands. The influx of fighters gave a working class character to the EAM, which was doing so much to reject it."

By 1942, EAM had its own popular militia, the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS). ELAS fought the German, Italian and Bulgarian occupiers and in November 1942 carried out one of the largest acts of sabotage in occupied Europe during the Second World War when, along with the National Republican Greek League (EDES) and British agents, it attacked the Italian garrison and destroyed the Gorgopotamos bridge.

Such spectaculars strengthened ELAS and it spread through the Greek countryside, including to territories such as Thessaly and Macedonia. During the winter of 1942-3, large mountainous regions of central Greece passed from Axis control to ELAS and the EAM became the largest mass political organisation in Greek history, with 1.5 million members and 150,000 partisans.

By 10 March, EAM-ELAS controlled most of the country and established the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA), often referred to as "the Mountain Government", which rivalled both the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo and the collaborationist administration in Athens.

What gave EAM its base, which far exceeded that of the small KKE, was the spontaneous mass movement of Greek workers and peasants which spread across the country during the occupation.

Workers demonstrated in their thousands on 18 October 1941, the first anniversary of the initial Italian invasion, and throughout the winter and the following spring were joined

KKE headquarters in 1944

by students and by wounded war veterans.

On 15 March 1942 there were strikes in several cities, including Athens, which were followed by a strike of 40,000 civil servants led by Trotskyist militants.

On 25 June 1943 there was a general strike in Athens against the execution of hostages by the occupation forces which saved 50 tramway workers who were sentenced to death for participation in the tram drivers' strike two weeks earlier.

According to Broué: "By 1944 not only were wide rural areas liberated, but the German troops lived under siege in the cities, which they could only leave in guarded convoys. The 'Red Belt', the workers' quarters around Athens, were nothing less than fortresses of the armed people."

Despite this explosion of workers' struggle, the KKE leadership of EAM denied the class character of the movement and insisted on its purely national basis. It announced that the "KKE supports by all possible means the struggle for national liberation, and will do all in its power to help gather all the patriotic forces into one unbreakable national front, which will unite the whole people to shake off the foreign yoke and to win national liberation at the side of our great Allies."

RULING CLASS

The ruling-class had no such illusions in national unity.

Elements of the officer corps of the Greek government-in-exile in Cairo, under the protection of Winston Churchill, grouped together their own forces, linked to the military hierarchy and the secret services, and organised a counter-attack. They tried to organise non-Communist nationalist guerillas to fight the Axis forces and also hoped to undermine ELAS. One British Special Operations Executive, agent, Eddie Myers, recorded being told by his superiors in April 1943 that "the Cairo authorities consider that after the liberation of Greece, civil war is almost inevitable."

That year Ioannis Rallis, who was in close contact with the British secret service, became the Prime Minister of occupied Greece, and with British help took steps to curb the popular movement. It was with these forces, backed by British imperialism, that the KKE sought "unity".

In October 1944 Stalin held talks with Churchill at the Fourth Moscow Conference, where they reached the cynical "percentages agreement" to divide spheres of influence in the region. The Comintern had been dissolved in May 1943

and replaced by self-consciously more "diplomatic" Cominform. Stalin agreed to give Churchill a free hand in Greece in exchange for greater Russian influence in other countries.

In April 1944, the Cairo government was entrusted to Georgios Papandreou, who pressured the EAM leaders to sign the Lebanon Charter on 30 May, which denounced ELAS "terrorism" and agreed to unite the Greek armed forces under government control "alongside the Allied troops."

The KKE was unhappy but a Soviet mission led by Colonel Popov pushed them into unconditional agreement. With Churchill's backing, Papandreou attempted to disarm ELAM on 2 December, provoking the resignation of the EAM ministers and a mass demonstration the following day in Athens. The protesters in Syntagma Square were fired upon by the police. More than 28 people were murdered and at least 148 wounded.

During the consequent wave of struggle, known as the December Events (Dekemvriana), fighters from EAM-ELAS fought the Greek government and its British backers. Churchill, announcing that he was intervening against "triumphant Trotskyism", finally unleashed his plan to crush the Greek revolution.

RUSSIANS

Abiding by the Stalin-Churchill agreement, the Russians told the KKE leaders to abide by the counter-revolutionary doctrine of "national unity" and to hold off on attacking the British. By February 1945, the Varkiza agreement provided for the disarmament of all resistance forces.

One ELAS leader, a member of the KKE Central Committee, Aris Velouchiotis, denounced the agreement as a betrayal. He was isolated by the party who refused him permission to leave Greece, and he was assassinated on 16 June by pro-government paramilitaries, possibly with KKE collusion.

If revolutionaries had not suffered enough repression from the Axis occupation, the Greek government and British imperialism, they had the KKE to reckon with.

In a tragic mirroring of Stalinist conduct during the Spanish Civil War (1936-9), the Stalinists backed the forces of "order" despite having an influential position at the head of a popular movement which revolutionary potential. Just as in Spain, they also extended the methods of the Russian secret police to the conflict within the liberation movement, forming the Organization for the Protection of the People's Struggle (OPLA), which was accountable directly to the Politburo of the KKE. Its ostensible role was to protect EAM and track down collaborators but it served a more sinister purpose.

Before and during the "December Events" the OPLA murdered revolutionary opponents of the KKE, particularly Trotskyists, but also Archeiomarxists [a longstanding Greek revolutionary group, briefly associated with the Trotskyist opposition] and anarchists. "We killed more than 800 Trotskyists", boasted KKE Politbureau member Barzotas. In the period before December, Loukas Karliaftis ("Kostas Kastritis"), the secretary of the united Trotskyist organisations, narrowly escaped an assassination attempt. Many more were not so lucky.

Amongst those murdered by the Stalinists included the whole Archeiomarxist group in Agrinio, and cadres from the Opposition faction of the KKE. According to the memoirs of the one-time Trotskyist Agis Stinas, they murdered the leading Trotskyists Dimosthenis Voursoukis, a member of the Organisation of International Communists (OKDE) and later of the International Communist Union (KDEE), "one of the most devoted, active and competent militants, and one of the best trained, an escaper from [the prisoner of war camp] Acronauplia."

Broué writes that "throughout the country OPLA agents abducted, tortured and murdered such militants as Stavros Veroukhis, the Secretary of the Association of the War Wounded, and Thanassis Ikonomou, former Secretary of the Communist Youth at Ghazi. Workers, dockers, metal workers and teachers all suffered alike."

The murder of genuine revolutionaries by the Stalinist forces during the Greek struggle for liberation was the horrific extension of the KKE's counter-revolutionary policies, which saw it betray the struggle against capitalism and imperialism.

Long transformed into an instrument of Kremlin diplomatic intrigue, the Stalinists in Greece confirmed their role as border guards for the new Russian empire and the "syphilis of the working class movement."

**More on our website:
Stalinists smear AWL on
Palestine: an exchange of letters**

On 22 May, the *Morning Star*, newspaper of the rump-Stalinist Communist Party of Britain, printed a review of Colin Shindler's book *Israel and the European left*. The review included an attack in passing on the AWL, resulting in an exchange of letters. The attacks on us are clearly attempts to hide the real dividing lines on the left through political smear tactics. Judge for yourself at: www.workersliberty.org/node/19045

Songs of Liberty
& Rebellion

Global, impersonal, uncaring, ruthless and divisive but... Fragile

Global.

A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.
Capitalist society has become a monolithic empire, in control of all of our thoughts.
A construct of enormous proportions, computed, controlled by ones and by noughts.

Impersonal.

A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.
Capitalism, an alienated system of profit, of greed and of war, has but one single desire.
For profiteering and accumulation, the only things able to stoke the insatiable fire.

Uncaring.

A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.
"I am not a worker" he indignantly claimed, "I'm part of the management team.
I'm valued, respected and highly regarded, I am the cream of the cream."

Ruthless

A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.
Capital is happy all the while it maintains that, "We are all in this together".
But it jettisons anyone who gets in the way when hitting economic stormy weather.

Divisive.

A machine that will not sway in its quest, our daily lives to control.
But...

Fragile.

Because it will only exist for as long as we allow it, our daily lives to control.
There exists a real alternative to this unfair economic paradigm.
Overthrow existing order and rid ourselves of divisive ugly crime.

Robert Ford

(Robert Ford is an activist and poet based in south west London)

Debating the SWP on Egypt?

The Left

By Mark Osborn



AWL activists have been leafletting SWP meetings to try to engage SWP members over their organisation's support for a vote for the Muslim Brotherhood in the Egyptian presidential elections. Generally we found SWP members unwilling to discuss. If a debate had taken place it might have looked like this.

SWP: Fundamentally you are sectarians. You intend to turn your backs on the mass of workers who are following the Muslim Brothers.

The Brothers got 10 million votes in the parliamentary elections in December 2011. Yes, the leaders are well-off, but the rank and file are workers. In the Suez industrial area, for example, the big majority of workers voted for the Brothers or the salafist party Nour. We need to win the workers and to do that we need to get close to them, link up with them and talk to them.

AWL: Get close to them and link up? You're addressing this as an organisational matter, as if all we need is a bus ticket to Alexandria. Talk to them? Of course, but what should we say?

We shouldn't "follow the workers" irrespective of what "the workers" are actually doing. We don't want to "ignore" the workers who follow the Brothers, but it is necessary to tell workers the truth: this party will lead you to a disaster! Workers have their own interests, distinct from the right-wing religious sectarian, pro-market millionaires and professionals who run the Brotherhood.

By endorsing the Brothers you are turning your backs on other workers — those who are rightly alarmed by the Brothers as well as women, Christians, young liberals, trade unionists and leftists and everyone who is for democracy! The MB's support peaked in December 2011, millions have turned away from them — our job is to encourage that flow towards us.

SWP: If you fail to back a vote for the Brothers you will never get a hearing from the many millions that still follow them. We have not dropped a single criticism of them. That is not necessary. We have made no political concession.

AWL: Advocating a vote for them is a political concession! It means taking some responsibility for them. At some level you are recommending them to the workers.

COMMON

You say they are "not the counter-revolution", but "the right wing of the revolution". You advocate that the left and MB agree on a common immediate programme.

SWP: They are preferable to the tired, corrupt old regime. Is that not true? Our slogan is the old communist one: "march separately, and strike together".

AWL: That useful idea is rewritten by you as "march behind, help them strike for what they want".

"March separately; strike together" is the idea behind the workers' united front. It is a joke to use it here, now, with the clerical right-wing MB! During the election campaign they presented themselves as pro-market, overtly Islamic, devout.

SWP: Well, what do you expect? Most Egyptians are devout. Simply denouncing religious parties and Islam will get you nowhere. We need to be sensitive to religious sensibilities. The MB is the right wing of those people who want to continue the revolution against the old regime. Given the choice of only two candidates a vote for them is a rough expression of opposition to the old regime. We have to relate to that. Moreover the attempted on-going "slow" coup by the army makes this more important. Right now, on the streets, it is: for the military? Or for democracy and the people's choice, the Brothers?

AWL: What about "for the revolution?" The Brothers sat on the sidelines while the youth fought in the streets against Mubarak. The political benefits of that fight have, unfortunately, fallen into their laps. The aim of socialist activity is to make workers' liberty a possibility and a political collapse in front of people who are hostile to workers' liberty will not do that.

No-one advocates headlines on all socialist propaganda: "Down with Islam!" Equally, we are secular Marxists, and it would be better if you remembered that and were more cautious about your political bedfellows.

Let's accept that the Brothers are "making a revolution". This is their revolution, which is both against the army, and simultaneously against us — the left, the workers, the feminists.

SWP: Reformists always compromise and often let others do their fighting. We must be there to point out to the poor

and the youth that follow the MB that they should be pursuing a resolute struggle against the army and old regime.

The MB took a turn after the book *Signposts*, by Sayyid Qutb, was published in the mid-60s. They stopped seeing the only enemy as imperialism, and attacked the local state directly. Thousands of young radicals were inspired.

AWL: Yes, but inspired to do what, exactly? You are relating to them like they were the Labour Party, which is absurd. They are no sort of working-class or social-democratic party.

SWP: Your argument has become even weaker as the military have begun to move against the Brothers and against democracy. Socialists defend the MB against the military and defend the right of the MB to take power after winning a majority in an election. Let's put them to the test. When the MB take people out onto the streets in self-defence we must be with them, against the military. Or would you stand on the sidelines while the military take full control again?

AWL: If big, popular mobilisations against the military threat take place, led by the MB, socialists would take part. We'd intervene, organise our own contingents; organise our own initiatives. Attempt to rally the workers and poor not just against the military but for democracy, women's and workers' rights. We would aim to rally people not just against the military, but for positive, socialist demands.

SWP: And you fail to understand the potentially anti-imperialist role of Islamism. The Iranian Islamists took control of the US embassy. The Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Palestine have played a key role in the armed struggle against Israel. The Algerian FIS organised huge demonstrations against the first US war against Iraq.

AWL: Before coming to power Khomeini said he was for democracy, women's rights as well as against imperialism. He destroyed democracy and trampled on women's freedom.

KILL

Anti-imperialism is not enough. You need to know what a political group is for. You fail to understand the counter-revolutionary role of Islamism. These forces will smash us and kill us if they can.

SWP: The job is also to relate to the radicals amongst the Islamists. In the *Prophet and the Proletariat* (1994) the SWP's Chris Harman wrote, "As with any 'petty bourgeois utopia' its supporters are faced with a choice between heroic but futile attempts to impose it in opposition to those who run existing society, or compromising with them, providing an ideological veneer to continuing oppression and exploitation. It is this which leads inevitably to splits between a radical, terrorist wing of Islamism on the one hand, and a reformist wing on the others..."

AWL: So Harman thought that the radicals, involved in armed "resistance" were automatically closer to us than the reformist Islamists? Hasn't this nonsense been ended by 9/11?

This is another example of the SWP becoming mesmerised by "militancy" rather than asking what a particular political force positively stands for. Look at Hamas — the Brothers' sister party — in Gaza. Sure, they oppose the Israeli government — but in their own way, for their own reactionary reasons. In Gaza they have smashed unions, uprooted secularism, enforced backward dress codes on women, created a one-party religious state. The Islamists' revolution against the state and imperialism is both partial and — more to the point — against us (the left, the unions, women, religious minorities, lesbians and gay men) too.

SWP: Yes but, as Harman also said, "On some issues we will find ourselves on the same side as the Islamists against imperialism and the state. This was true, for instance, in many countries during the second Gulf War. It should be true in countries like France or Britain when it comes to combating racism. Where the Islamists are in opposition, our rule should be, 'with the Islamists sometimes, with the state never'".

AWL: This is sloppy. If the fascists attack a mosque, for example, the socialist left will be with the Muslim self-defence. It might be necessary to conclude a practical agreement with the Mosque leaders — even Islamists — to that end. However, we are never "with the Islamists" in politics or ideas.

And by the way, Harman also wrote this: "But socialists cannot give support to the Islamists either. That would be to call for the swapping of one form of oppression for another, to react to the violence of the state by abandoning the defence of ethnic and religious minorities, women and gays, to collude in scapegoating that makes it possible for capitalist exploitation to continue unchecked providing it takes 'Islamic' forms. It would be to abandon the goal of independent socialist politics, based on workers in struggle organising all the oppressed and exploited behind them, for a tail-ending of a petty bourgeois utopianism which cannot even succeed in its own terms."

So even Harman was against what the SWP is saying now!

Wins for Tube workers

By Ollie Moore

Workers in various London transport companies and grades are planning industrial action as union efforts bring long-running demands to a head.

RMT London Underground service control members (signal operators, line controllers, etc) have won some important demands for job security, and a planned three-day strike will not now go ahead. The company intended to use the opening of the new Hammersmith Service Control Centre in 2015 as a pretext to keep the staff they wanted and ditch those they did not, and to reshape the service control function in a way that undermines effective trade unionism. RMT demanded — and won — protection of career paths, lifetime protection of earnings and union agreement to staff movements. Service control staff will now keep their rate of pay (and pen-

sion) permanently even if they are displaced into a lower grade.

A service control RMT rep told *Solidarity*, “Service control workers across London Underground have shown our solidarity and support to each other by gaining a tremendous victory against hostile LU management, in winning what must be a once-in-a-lifetime guarantee of earnings protection.

DEMANDS

“There can be no doubt that London Underground saw no alternative but to give in to our demands when they realised that their managers could not the skilled jobs that members do on a daily basis when we announced a three-day strike.”

Meanwhile, ASLEF has abandoned its fight for the reinstatement of Piccadilly line driver Charlie Savvides, who London Underground sacked after he made a driving error. A planned one-day strike on the line would have been supported by members of RMT as well as ASLEF, but the Society called it off for what seems to be a relatively small payout for Charlie. A Piccadilly line driver told *Solidarity*, “Most drivers on the line

feel that Charlie has been badly let down. His union has not run much of a campaign, in contrast to the successful RMT campaigns last year which won the reinstatement of Eamonn Lynch, Arwyn Thomas and others.”

With just a month until the Olympics start, talks between transport employers and unions have reached end-game; it is time to either fight for more or accept what is on offer.

BONUSES

RMT has reached agreement with several companies, which will see members receive bonuses of several hundreds of pounds or more.

Some include agreed changes to working arrangements, others (such as London Underground) preserve agreements).

But London Underground could still face industrial action during the Games, as RMT ballots members to refuse to cooperate with the company’s disastrous policy of counting “ICSAs” (admin staff in high-visibility vests) towards the minimum number of staff required to be on duty on a station for it to stay open safely. And RMT members

on Transport for London will strike for one day starting with the night shifts on Sunday 1 July, as TfL refuses to pay an Olympic bonus to many staff and is restricting annual leave.

The union is also balloting members on First Great Western, Greater Anglia, South West Trains, the London Cycle Hire Scheme, three cleaning companies (ISS, Initial and Carlisle) and two engineering contractors for strike action to demand a decent offer for working arrangements and financial reward during the Olympics.

Janine Booth, London Transport region representative on RMT’s National Executive, said, “After years of privatisation, the transport industry and its workforce are fragmented.

“But RMT is looking at co-ordinating these disputes, which will give us unity and power, and we support and feel boosted by Unite’s action on London buses too.

“With the revolting spectacle of corporate snouts in the Olympic trough, transport workers deserve decent compensation for the hard work and demands of Games, without having to sacrifice hard-won working conditions.”

Bus pickets confront scabs

By an FE worker, south London

On 22 June hardly any students made it into the college I work at because of the strike.

I went down to my local picket line during my lunch break; it was the best picket line I’ve ever been to. There were at least 40 there when I went, and apparently it was much bigger earlier. There was a very lively atmosphere and people were willing to try and stop the scab-driven buses that were coming out. There were some attempts to block them, people shouted “traitors” at the drivers and they opened the bus doors to properly argue with them.

People I spoke to were positive about how the day had gone and were confident that they will be out again. We’re entering a dispute over redundancies at my college, but staff there have little history of taking action.

The bus strike was important because all our staff saw the impact it had, so it showed them what can happen when workers take action.

• More on bus strike: back page

GMB in blacklist challenge

By Stewart Ward

The GMB union has launched a landmark legal challenge against contractor Carillion, after evidence emerged that it had been involved in large-scale blacklisting of trade union activists in the

construction industry.

The case is part of a wider labour movement campaign on the issue, blown open by the revelation in January 2012 that the shadowy “Consulting Association”, a data collection company used by numerous construction industry contractors, was holding files on over 3,000

workers containing information that could only have come from the police or other security services.

Meanwhile, GMB members at a hospital in Swindon (pictured) are continuing a dispute against Carillion.

Workers have so far taken 20 days of strike action in a battle over management bullying.

• For more on the background to the blacklisting issue, see bit.ly/NGWC7F and bit.ly/Op0CMY

Doctors consider next steps

By Ruben Lomas

Over 1,000 operations and 7,000 appointments were cancelled on Thursday 21 June, as industrial action by the British Medical Association (BMA) made an impact.

60% of GPs’ surgeries

in Scotland were affected by the action, where 3,650 procedures were cancelled.

The BMA’s annual conference, currently taking place in Bournemouth, will discuss the effectiveness of the action and plan the association’s next steps.

A spokeswoman said: “We have always been willing to return to talks, but it is the Government that has failed to return to the table to negotiate on the detail of the pension changes.”

Unite in pro-Europe vote

The policy conference of the Unite union has passed a motion supporting European unity and opposing calls for Britain to withdraw from the EU.

Although far from perfect, the motion represents a defeat for the Stalinists who were pushing for the union to take a left-nationalist position on the European question.

The conference also saw a heated debate on the union’s relation to the Labour Party.

Firefighters discuss cuts battles

By Jack Bradley

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) met in Blackpool last week for what (with one exception) was a fairly quiescent special conference, with the union’s Executive Council carrying all the motions it proposed.

Delegates discussed the continued loss of front-line firefighter jobs — over a thousand a year — and the impact these would have on emergency fire cover in local communities. There are a number of local disputes brewing over cuts. The union announced dates for five strikes in Essex, starting from 28 June in a long-running dispute about cuts to the service.

The threat from privatisation and “mutuals” was also debated. Parts of the fire service, such as the London control room and its fire appliances have already been privatised.

But profiteers are circling for the Fire Service College and setting up mutuals to fragment the service in Humberside and Cleveland. The union is launching a campaign to defend a publicly owned and democratically controlled fire service.

Pay and pensions were also debated. Fire service employers have refused to make a pay offer in recent years, effectively imposing the pay freeze.

The FBU is slightly out of synch with other unions on pensions, having had smaller contribution increases in April and with still-ongoing negotiations around the final scheme, which have not finished.

The conference voted for national strike action on both issues if acceptable settlements were not reached, but did not set

dates for action, which some brigades pushed for.

The conference had one international debate, on whether to sever ties with the Israeli trade union federation Histadrut, arising from last year’s conference. Delegates voted narrowly for the executive’s recommendation to continue to critically engage with Histadrut, which includes Israeli firefighters. The resolution also endorsed a policy of two states for two peoples, which the FBU has backed before. Clearly this is a victory for class politics and consistent democracy over the anti-Jewish revanchism of the boycotters.

POLARISED

The most polarised debate concerned international union reorganisation.

The FBU has been squeezed by falling membership, although its density remains high. The executive proposed reducing employed staff, facility time and other measures mainly affecting the top bureaucracy of the union.

This included removing the women, black and LGBT reps from the executive. Whilst the changes do reduce equality voices on the top table and votes in regional and brigade committees, they do not affect equality committees, schools or other activities.

The conference voted for the measures to ensure the FBU survives as an independent, industrial union. Some delegates argued that the changes damaged the union’s democracy and equality representation.

Uni staff strike for decent pay

By Darren Bedford

Support workers at the University of Birmingham struck for two days last week as librarians, technicians, admin staff, and other workers fought for a decent pay increase.

Unison, the workers’ union, says that they have suffered real-terms pay cuts every year since 2009 as pay deals have failed to keep pace with inflation.

It is the first strike by support staff at the university for 20 years. University bosses want to increase support staff’s pay by just 1.9%, despite the university’s surplus

increasing from £22.3 million to £27 million last year. Support staff, many of whom earn as little as £13,000 per year, are already second-class citizens at the university — receiving only 6 months’ sick pay entitlement (compared to a full year for academic staff).

Unison official Dawn Sant said: “Support staff are absolutely vital. If academics didn’t have their support to help with students, or the management, then the place would simply grind to a halt.

“Support staff work shifts and work long hours, so it is only right they get the pay they deserve.”

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

London bus strike: “About more than the Olympics”

An east London bus driver spoke to *Solidarity* about the London-wide strike (22 June) for bonuses for Olympics working.

This strike is about much more than the Olympics. The Olympics bonus is the immediate issue, but people voted yes to this strike because we're fed up with the attacks we've faced over the past few years.

We've had our Sunday working payments reduced. We've had attacks on our working time. It used to be you were entitled to a ninety-minute paid meal break, and if you came back late you could still take it. That's gone now; if you come back late, your meal break gets knocked off.

Finishes are getting later and later. It's not like working in an office or a factory, where you can just walk away at finishing

time. If I'm stuck in traffic on Oxford Street at my finishing time, I can't just leave the bus.

At my garage, our staff parking has been taken away, which makes it very difficult for us to get to work, especially if we're on an early start. If we live any distance from the garage, and we can't drive to work because there's nowhere to park, how are we supposed to get in at three in the morning?

People are saying that this strike is last-minute, but it's not; negotiations have been going on for nine months, so management has had nearly a year to sort this issue out.

Bosses are using the recession as a cover to attack us, but it's not as if we're workers in a factory where production has dropped because of an economic collapse. People are actually using the bus *more* during the recession, because it's a cheaper form of

transport. Our workload has gone up and our bosses are making more money.

Transport for London is desperate to make as much revenue as they can, so they've got revenue inspectors on buses really scrutinising people's tickets. As drivers, we only get a flash of a travel card or a ticket, so we can't be expected to catch all the people who are travelling on expired or invalid tickets.

Revenue inspectors get a good long look, and then book the drivers for failing to catch it! It's all about generating as much money as they can, even if it means penalising workers.

This strike has shown people that we can come together and take action. That in itself will give people confidence. People are prepared to dig in over this one and we see it as a key into the wider issues.

I've worked here for 16 years, and for the first 14

years I was never involved in strike action. If you'd have said to me during those fourteen years that bus workers could come out and strike, I wouldn't have believed you.

But once you've done it, you know it can be done.

Flying pickets cause rush-hour chaos

On the morning of Wednesday 27 June, Unite activists mounted flying pickets at six garages across London.

The garages were operated by companies which injuncted the strike.

The pickets completely shut the garages down, and no buses ran between 6-8am.

The message to bus bosses was: if you prevent your workers from exercising their democratic right to strike, we'll prevent your buses from moving.

Spanish miners are striking for us all

By John Cunningham, Spanish Miners' Solidarity Committee (personal capacity)

After a series of localised industrial actions, Spanish coal miners, in the main mining regions of Asturias and Castile and León, went on indefinite strike on 29 May. This is their response to the announcement by the right wing government of Mariano Rajoy that subsidies to the coal mining regions will be massively cut, in effect announcing his intention to close down the industry.

The cuts mean the end of the remaining 8,000 miners' jobs, with another 30,000 jobs affected indirectly. Many of the mining communities, particularly in the mountainous border region between Asturias and Castile and León, where they are geographically very isolated, will be wiped out.

The miners' unions, the Comisiones Obreras (CCOO) and the Union General de Trabajadores (UGT), are united in their response, and the strike is 100% solid, energetically supported by their communities. Even the local police seem friendly.

Groups of miners at Candín, Santa Cruz, and elsewhere, have organised “stay down” strikes or in some localities occupied the local government offices. There have been numerous demonstrations by and in support of the miners and “piquetes” have regularly blocked various motorways in the region.

The Government has sent in the loathed Civil Guard, who appear to be totally ineffective in responding to the miners' hit and run guerrilla tactics. On occasions they have turned their anger and frustrations on ordinary villagers. On one occasion they fired rubber bullets into a group of mothers and their children gathered outside a village school.

On 18 June the miners' unions called a regional general strike which was strongly supported in both Asturias and Castile and León. A few days later the women of the mining regions descended on the Senate building in Madrid and faced off politicians and police in a stormy confrontation. On Friday 22 June over a hundred miners set off on a “Black March” to Madrid, where they will eventually camp out in front of the government buildings.

This could be a long strike, and for the Spanish miners to win it is essential that they receive our support. This is not a small localised dispute. The Spanish miners are the first major group of workers in the whole of Europe to go on indefinite strike against the neo-liberal austerity measures being inflicted on millions across the continent.

Nor should it be forgotten that in the British miners' strike of 1984-5 Spanish miners were generous in the extreme with their support and solidarity. It is now time to stand shoulder to shoulder with them.

To this end a Spanish Miners' Solidarity Committee (SMSC) has been formed in the UK by ex-miners and other activists and trade unionists. The Honorary Chair is Ian Lavery, the ex-National President of the NUM and now a Labour MP; the work of the committee is also supported by the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign and Chris Kitchen, the present National Secretary of the NUM. The RMT has announced its support, along with the TUC General Council, and among many messages of support has been one from filmmaker Ken Loach.

Two members of the SMSC visited Spain very recently to discuss how help could be best organised and to spread the message that the Spanish miners are not standing alone. The SMSC has been recognised by the CCOO and UGT, and a bank account is in the process of being set up, able to channel funds to the striking miners and their families. It is hoped that a delegation of striking miners will be able to visit the UK shortly.

Please help support the Spanish miners by sending a donation to the solidarity fund. At the moment we can only accept cheques; please make these out to “Spanish Miners' Solidarity Committee” and send them to: John Cunningham (SMSC), 136 Regent Court, Bradfield Road, Sheffield S6 2BW, South Yorkshire. As soon as bank details are finalised the Committee will publicise these as widely as possible giving all the necessary information for you to make donations on a regular basis, including taking out standing orders.

This is a monumental dispute. The Spanish miners and their families must not be starved into submission.

Hospitals go bust

By Gerry Bates

South London Healthcare NHS Trust has become the first NHS trust to be placed in “special measures” after racking up a deficit of £150 million. The Trust will now be run by insolvency administrators who will be free to impose “whatever it takes” to get the Trust back in the black. That means cuts in services.

Trafford General in Manchester is to close because managers say its finances are “unviable”.

Many other Trusts and hospitals will find themselves or have already got in the same position — “financially unviable”.

In the case of South London Healthcare Trust this is the result of having to service the huge costs of Private Finance Initiative schemes.

If the government does not bail out these hospitals the NHS will no longer be able to provide a comprehensive service.

Health activists, trade unionists and socialists need to sound the alarm.

• More on pages 8-9

The NHS Liaison Network is working for the maximum coordination of campaigning efforts on the NHS.

It was launched at a meeting on 21 March attended by 80 people, including key NHS campaigners.

The Network has taken the initiative in calling a lobby of Labour Party conference on Sunday 30 September. A planning meeting for the Lobby, open to all, is on Saturday 7 July, at 3.30pm, at Unite HQ, 128 Theobalds Road, Holborn, London WC1X 8TN. Please join us!

LOBBY OF LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

Sunday 30 September

Demand Labour rebuild the NHS!

2.30pm. Meet at the central entrance to the convention complex, Peter Street, Manchester, M2 3GX

More details: nhsliaison@yahoo.co.uk / tel. 07904 944 771