



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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SPEAK GREEK TO THE BOSSES



SEE PAGES 5, 6 & 7

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.

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- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
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Euro-QE: a conservative sop

By Colin Foster

The European Central Bank's Quantitative Easing (QE) plan, announced on 22 January 2015, was a bit more energetic than expected.

The good thing about it is that it confirms that EU leaders know their current plans aren't working, and therefore are more susceptible into being pushed for change. Whether QE as such will help working-class people across Europe is another matter.

The plan is shaped so as to exclude for a while buying Greek government bonds. It includes a rule that the ECB won't own more than 33 percent of the debt from a single issuer. That keeps Greece out at least until it has made a July repayment on Greek IOUs which the central bank already owns.

There's more. QE means

that the central bank, which can "print" money, physically or electronically, at will, supplies commercial banks with hard cash by buying up dodgy IOUs (bonds, etc.) which they are holding. There's a twist to euro-QE in that if the dodgy IOUs go bad, most of the loss will fall on national central banks rather than the ECB.

QE is supposed to "work" in several ways. IOUs of the type the central bank is buying become saleable everywhere, rather than dead matter. The increased price of bonds pushes more big-money purchasing power towards buying shares. Banks with more cash may become more willing to lend, thus "trickling down" credit to a wider range of people.

The ECB's QE has an additional hope, which has not been much of a factor with QE in the USA and the UK: by pumping in cash it is de-

signed to restart inflation and to reduce the value of the euro relative to other currencies. Mild inflation is helpful for capitalism because it increases people's propensity to spend rather than hold onto cash and it erodes debts. A reduced value for the euro cheapens eurozone exports in markets outside the eurozone.

Whether the USA's and the UK's big QE plans have counted for much in the USA and the UK seeing more recovery of overall economic output than the eurozone, or whether other factors have dominated, no-one really knows.

The effect of QE for which there is some solid evidence is that it helps the rich. The Bank of England officially reported in July 2012 that QE had "boosted the value of households' financial wealth held outside pension funds, but holdings are heavily skewed with the top 5% of households holding

40% of these assets".

Inequality usually narrows a bit in capitalist recessions, because the rich have further to fall; this time, inequality has spiralled in the USA and the UK.

Even in terms of bourgeois economic-management gambits, QE is a conservative option. More radical monetarists propose that the central bank, instead of pumping cash into banks, should instead create new cash to give an equal handout to every resident. Keynesians propose that governments should, in recession, deliberately run deficits to pump up public investment and services.

Truly, however, the labour movement should take the control of the economy out of the hands of the bankers by expropriating the banks and redirecting credit towards the expansion of public services under democratic control.

Free schools failing

By Gemma Short

Durham Free School, one of the government's state-funded schools outside of local authority control, has been forced to close after being rated inadequate by Ofsted.

Shortly after, Grindon Hall, a free school in Sunderland, was judged by Ofsted to require urgent improvements. Ofsted criticised the school, which is a Christian faith school, for failing to teach its pupils about diversity of race, religion and sexuality in British society. They also found that the school was not tackling "prejudice-based bullying" or pupils' use of racist and homophobic language.

The free school program, as with academies, means state funds are funneled into schools that are not ac-

countable in any way to local authorities or local people. Figures released by the Department for Education show that the 4,400 academies in England held cash reserves of £2.47 billion at the end of the last financial year, more than £500,000 per school. The remaining 18,700 local authority schools only held £2.18 billion.

Judgements by Ofsted, who are themselves unaccountable, should not be used to attack and close schools. Free schools and academies judged to be "failing" should be taken back into local authority control, not closed or passed to another private provider.

Significant state money is being held in academies, draining the education system of funds that could be spent on learning.



500 prevent eviction

By Tim Cooper

On Friday 23 January a 500-strong demonstration stopped the eviction of 63 year old Tom Crawford from his home in Nottingham.

Tom was due to be evicted by bailiffs acting on behalf of Bradford and Bingley building society who claim he owes them £45000.

Tom is suffering from cancer and when faced with eviction last year put a video on YouTube saying he would give a cup of tea to anyone who came to help avoid his eviction. It struck a chord went viral and hundreds turned up to stop the eviction.

Tom said: "I can't believe that people have come from all over the country to support me. This is something I feel very passionate about — I've been here more than 25 years and have brought three children up here. I've

worked hard all my life."

The bailiffs can return unannounced but it will be difficult for them to evict Tom with so many alerted and ready to defend him.

Tom claims he has paid over £120,000 in mortgage payments and Bradford and Bingley don't deny he paid that amount. This illustrates how banks exploit people for their own huge profits. Building societies such as Bradford and Bingley were originally "mutuals" meant to provide low interest loans. Deregulation has resulted in an increasing drive for profits.

Bradford and Bingley was technically nationalised in 2008. However, like other such banks, it continues its heartless pursuit of profits with the victims being people like Tom. Nationalisation should be under workers' and service users' democratic control.



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Russian nationalists stage new offensive

By Dale Street

Russian-separatist forces based in the so-called Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) have launched a major offensive against Ukrainian government forces in order to seize more territory.

The DPR was formally declared last May, after a sham referendum in which voters were not even asked if they backed independence. The DPR "head of state", Alexander Zakharchenko, was appointed by Moscow in August, shortly before Russia escalated its aggression against Ukraine by invading the south-east of the country.

Zakharchenko won "elections" held in the DPR in November. But most opposition parties and would-be candidates for the position of head of state were banned from standing. The two candidates who were allowed to stand against Zakharchenko both declared their support for him.

The social basis of support for Zakharchenko is provided by the most conservative sections of the local population, especially senior citizens who pine for the "law and order" and moral intolerance of the long defunct Soviet Union.

Zakharchenko and the DPR are backed by western-European and Russian fascist and far right organisations, and also, of course, by the Russian government, which helped bring the DPR into existence and placed Zakharchenko in power.

The constitution of the DPR bans abortion, criminalises homosexuality, enshrines the Russian

Orthodox Church as the state religion, guarantees protection of private property, and defines the DPR as part of "the Russian World, on the basis of its traditional religious, social, cultural and moral values."

Workers' rights are no part of the DPR's political agenda. According to Hryhoriy Dotsenko, leader of the Ukrainian Independent Mineworkers Union:

"DPR and LPR (Lugansk People's Republic) leaders are insisting that there be no independent miners union on their territory. Zakharchenko recently held a meeting with mine managers and union leaders and decreed, with an armed soldier by his side, a reduction in miners' annual leave from 66 days to 24 days and a reduction in their pay."

CLAIMS

Organisations such as the UK-based "Campaign in Solidarity with the Anti-Fascist Resistance in Ukraine" claim that the DPR constitutes a form of "anti-fascist resistance" (battling against a non-existent fascist junta in Kiev).

This is a fantasy, albeit one with a political purpose. A peace deal signed in Minsk last September, following on from the Russian offensive, was meant to end fighting between the Ukrainian authorities and the DPR/LPR.

But in the months following the fighting continued, although initially at a much reduced level.

At the same time, and especially so in recent weeks, Russia continued to supply the DPR and LPR with troops and military equip-

ment: tanks, armoured personnel carriers, Grad-missile launchers, Uragan missile-launchers, anti-aircraft artillery and radio-jamming equipment.

Russia denies that any of its troops are in the DPR/LPR. Confronted with hard evidence to the contrary, Russia has variously claimed that its troops had got lost and strayed into Ukraine by mistake, or had gone to fight in Ukraine "in a personal capacity".

By the time of this renewed offensive, over a million people in Ukraine had fled their homes and over 5,000 people had been killed since last spring.

Since last September another hundred square miles of Ukrainian territory had been seized by the Russian-separatist forces. And in the nine days prior to the new offensive 262 people were killed.

On 23 January Zakharchenko announced that there would be no more peace talks with Kiev, that a new offensive was underway, including against the coastal city of Mariupol, and that the goal was to seize the entire territory of the Donetsk region (not just the area currently covered by the DPR).

Pavel Gubarev, the one-time self-proclaimed "people's governor" of the Donetsk region, enthusiastically reported the first results of the new offensive on his Facebook page:

"Offensive on almost the entire front. We are attacking Avdyeyevka, Mariupol, Debaltsevo, Marinka.

Ukrainian troops are pulling out of Dzerzhinsk. We are attacking Krimskeye, Popasnaya and Troitskoye. Krasny Partisan and Verkhnyetroit-



Alexander Zakharchenko

skoye have been captured, as well as Shuma. Peski is completely ours. Ukrainian troops are fleeing Yasinovata in panic."

Zakharchenko claimed that the new offensive was a response to civilian deaths in Donetsk. But the breadth of the offensive, as described by Gubarev, underlines the fact that it had been in preparation for weeks.

Little more than twelve hours after the launch of the offensive, a salvo of Grad missiles fired from the east of Mariupol (i.e. territory controlled by Russian-separatists) hit a residential area of the city, killing thirty civilians and wounding another ninety.

ATTACK

A Russian anarchist summed up the characteristic dishonesty and incoherence of Zakharchenko's response:

"Zakharchenko declares that Mariupol is under attack. Then after the news of dozens of civilian deaths, he says that there is no attack, or, to be more accurate, there is one but there is not one, just one without artillery, which the DPR does not have anyway, and, of course, cannot possibly have.

"No, it was Ukrainian troops who shelled Mariupol, in order to whip up public opinion against Russia, and that is why it was correct to fire on Mariupol, to defend its peaceful Russian population from Ukrainian troops. And, anyway, how can you accuse

the Russian army of firing on Mariupol if you still don't know who opened fire on the Maidan?"

The Putin-loyal media in Russia repeated the line that Ukrainian troops had shelled Mariupol. In fact some Russian reports even claimed that the city had already surrendered to Russian-separatist forces.

The Ukrainian Stalinist sect Borotba, which the "Campaign in Solidarity with the Anti-Fascist Resistance in Ukraine" treats as a reliable source of information, also immediately claimed that the shelling had been carried out by Ukrainian forces.

The new offensive is a land and resources grab. Its major targets are Debaltsevo (crucial railway junction), Sloviansk (fresh water supplies) and Mariupol (access to the sea, and another step towards linking Russia with the Crimean peninsula which it annexed in March 2014).

The offensive also fits in with Putin's longer-term strategy of weakening and destabilising Ukraine, so that he can exert increased pressure and control over the Ukrainian government as it continues to pursue a pro-EU and pro-NATO orientation.

As usual, the Kiev government claims (unreliably) that it is inflicting heavy losses on the Russian-separatist forces.

Apart from bringing more death and destruction to south-east Ukraine and furthering the interests of Russian imperialism, the

offensive will almost certainly strengthen the right in Kiev-governed Ukraine.

The ruling oligarchs will demand yet more sacrifices from the working class in the "national interest", in order to defend the country against Russian aggression. More anti-democratic legislation will be introduced on the pretext of combating terrorism within Ukraine.

Support for the far right will be boosted by the front-line role being played by the military units created by the Right Sector and the neo-Nazi Patriot of Ukraine. As was the case on the Maidan, they will win support not because of their politics but because of their readiness to fight.

Many people in Ukraine see the left as associated with the pro-Russian Ukrainian Communist Party and the ultra-reactionary Russian Communist Party. Syriza, which certainly is a party of the left, is also seen in both Ukraine and Russia as pro-Russia and anti-sanctions.

Denunciations of the Kiev government as a fascist junta and support for the DPR/LPR by sections of the left internationally only add to the disrepute and contempt for what is (wrongly) seen as left-wing politics.

Socialists need to back the real left in Ukraine and Russia and rally support internationally for its opposition to the Kiev oligarchs and to Russian imperialism and its stooges and allies in the DPR/LPR.

ISIS defeated in Kobane

By Gerry Bates

Kurdish fighters have expelled Daesh (ISIS) from inside the Syrian border town of Kobane.

This is a huge physical and symbolic blow to Daesh's ambitions.

Some Daesh forces reportedly remain in the Maqtala district, on the eastern outskirts of the town.

Daesh is said to have lost more than 1,000 fighters since it began its advance

on the town on 16 September 2014 in an attempt to control the border between Syria and Turkey. At one point the group had taken over most of the city.

Kurdish forces of the People's Protection Units (YPG), later reinforced by the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, slowly pushed back Daesh. Air raids by the US-led coalition fighting backed up the militias but US military officials had predicted the city would fall. Against the odds the Kurdish forces have held

the city.

The victory coincides with reports of Daesh retreats from battles in northern and central Iraq.

Wherever Daesh has captured territory it has declared an Islamic "caliphate" and acted with brutality — executing and torturing and raping. But its apparent failure in Kobane could put the brakes on its plans for expansion in Syria.

That would be good news for people in the Middle East.

Since 2008, poorest have lost most

Rich & poor
By Matt Cooper



According to the government, economic data published this month show ordinary people have begun to benefit from economic growth. Really?

A 1.8% annual growth in wages was real growth, but only because of low inflation, which stands at 0.5% on the government's preferred CPI measure. That does little to counteract the fall in real wages since 2008, and the figures may over-estimate growth in wages. As the Resolution Foundation has pointed out, government figures exclude 4.5 million self-employed people who, on average, have seen their wages squeezed 20-30% more than other sectors of the workforce since 2008.

The structure of the jobs market in the UK adds to a general picture of downward pressure on pay. An Oxford academic, Craig Holmes, has shown that between 1996 and 2008 high-skilled jobs in Britain declined, middle-skill jobs disappeared and low skill jobs boomed. There is every reason to believe this process has accelerated since 2008, so that ever more people are stuck in low-skill jobs. Holmes's research is about skill, not pay, but it can be assumed that low-skill jobs are also low paid.

It is low-skilled workers along with people reliant on benefits who are suffering most from the government's austerity policies. New research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) looks at the groups which have lost or gained most from the changes to tax and benefits since 2010. (Note, these impacts are additional to falls in wage income.)

If pensioners are excluded (the "triple lock" on pensions has meant that most have neither gained nor lost through tax and benefit changes) the picture is roughly as follows.

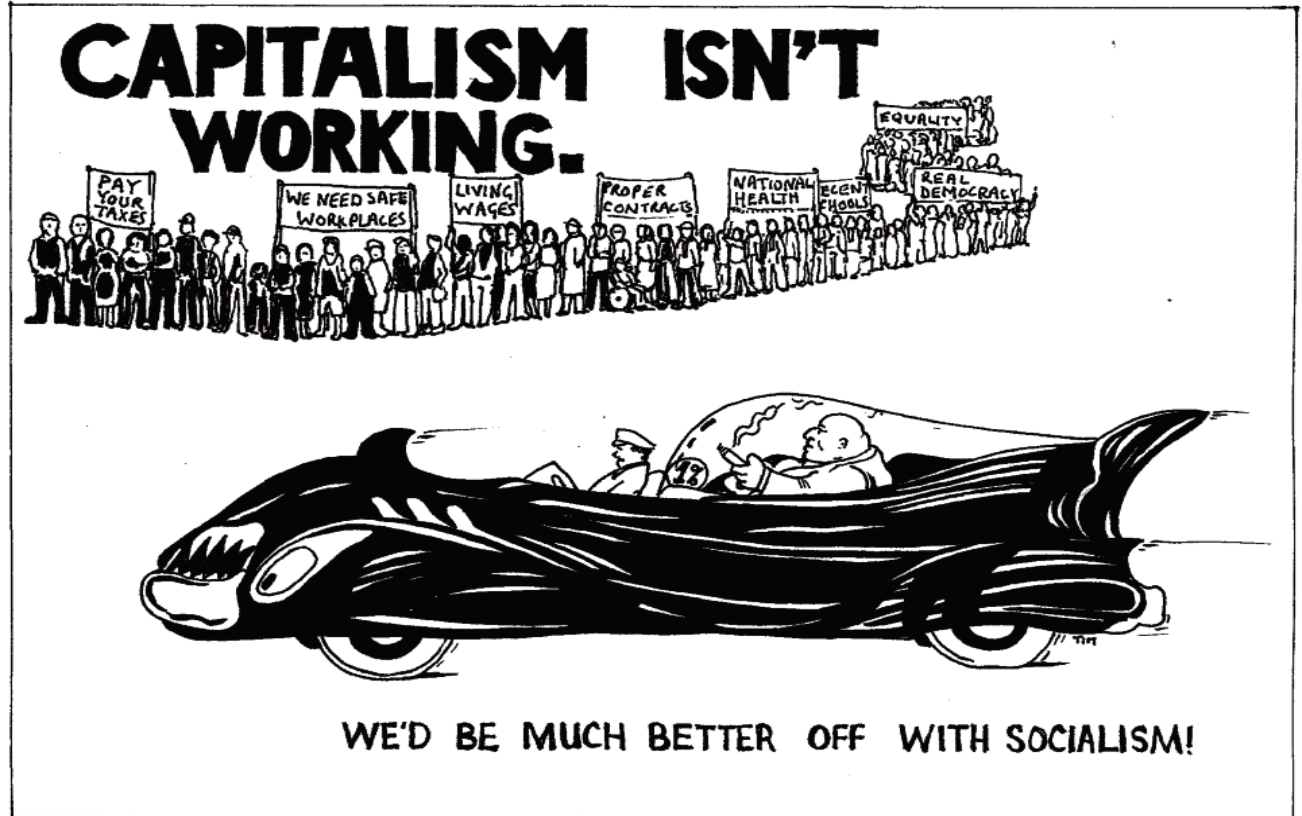
- The top ten per cent of income earners have lost around 4% of their income due to changes in tax bands, national insurance and pension relief rules.

- Of working-age families, the poorest 10% lost the most — 6% of their income. All households with children have lost out but those in the bottom half of incomes have lost most — between 3% and 6%.

- Households without children who do not receive out-of-work or in-work benefits have gained a little.

- Only those households with higher incomes have gained. The band of people who constitute the richest 40%, but excluding the top 10% (the seventh to ninth deciles) have, overall, not had their income affected by the changes; those without children gaining a little, and those with children losing a little.

This has reversed the changes made in incomes via tax and (especially) benefits by the Labour governments after 1997. That saw some moderate increases in income in the poorest



third of households, although not enough to stem increasing inequality. Since 2010, anyone who receives benefits has lost out, the greatest losses affecting those who are most reliant on benefits.

People with children have lost more, as have those with no work, those living in areas with high rents and those households containing someone with a disability.

The Conservatives' proposals for further cuts in benefits after 2015 will continue this process.

Sources

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- Laura Gardiner, "How the exclusion of the self-employed might obscure the 2015 earnings recovery", www.resolutionfoundation.org
- Craig Holmes, *Why is the Decline of Routine Jobs Across Europe so Uneven?*, SKOPE and University of Oxford, December 17, 2014, www.skope.ox.ac.uk

Stifled Story of the Month

Press
By Harry Davies

theguardian

On 20 January the *Guardian* reported on academic research showing benefit sanctions push people into destitution, not jobs.

The 1.9 million benefit sanctions that were imposed between June 2011 and March 2014, stopping people from receiving jobseeker's allowance (JSA) and the 43% of those sanctioned subsequently ceasing to try to claim the benefit, did reduce the unemployment figures. No surprise there. Massaging unemployment figures is what every government since the 1980s has done.

But only 20% of those who went off benefit said they had found work.

In the words of one of the authors, David Stuckler, people end up "disappearing from view". He went on to warn that there was a danger of the NHS, food banks and the prison service becoming the support network for those who fall

through the increasingly ragged net.

Strange that no other paper covered the story apart from the *Morning Star* who focused their reporting on the role of the PCS in combatting management sanctions targets, starting with the blood-and-thunder storyline, "PCS demanded a full enquiry", and ending with an account of the union's dialogue with the Work and Pensions committee that sounded a bit like a grouchy village fete planning meeting.

So here we have one of the most important stories of the recent past: how the government is applying wildly unfair and fantastic sanctions against millions of people. A story which shows how no-one really knows what is happening to the most vulnerable people in society. And what about people who are clinging on to their entitlement to benefit. How the government is crowing in press releases about it is literally killing people. How Job Centre staff are being bullied into enforcing this disgrace.

But can we read about it or hear about it in the general press? Apparently not. This is our Stifled Story of the Month!

Labour MPs call for left turn

By Martin Thomas

In the wake of Syriza's victory, and in the run-up to the Left Platform conference called by John McDonnell MP for 7 February, 15 Labour MPs have made a statement calling for a shift to the left by Labour.

They oppose continued cuts, and call for "public investment to kickstart the economy out of faltering growth and to generate real job creation and rising incomes", financed maybe "through taxing the ultra-rich by a special levy".

They want a Labour government to return "rail franchises when expired to public ownership rather than subjecting them to competition".

They demand "the restoration of collective bargaining and employment rights"; they want to "strengthen the rights of trade unions to recognition, and of their members to representation".

Syriza's victory — and the collapse of Pasok, which was once a "Bennite" social-democratic party but became more and more just another vehicle for managing capitalism — shows that the labour movement can best mobilise support in this recession against class-war conservatism by standing up for such working-class demands.

With luck the Left Platform conference on 7 February, designed to bring together left Labour MPs and candidates with left trade-union leaders, will go further, and call explicitly for the restoration of workers' rights to organise solidarity strikes and pickets, for the full restoration of the NHS as a public service, etc.

In parallel, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is organising at a rank-and-file level for a more comprehensive socialist set of demands, so that we can work both for a Labour victory against the Tories and to rally and reassert an activist socialist pole within the trade unions and the Labour Party.

- Left Platform: <http://leftplatform.com/>
- The 15 Labour MPs: bit.ly/15-mps
- SCLV: bit.ly/S-LV

Speak Greek to the bosses!

As thousands of left-wingers and Syriza supporters both from Greece and from the broader European and international anti-Memorandum movement celebrated in Athens on 25 January, Alexis Tsipras made his first speech as the first ever Prime Minister of Greece who belongs to the left.

Red flags were waving, the Internationale was sung, and slogans were chanted about the “Time of the left that has arrived”. Alexis Tsipras promised to scrap the memorandum from Monday, reverse austerity, beat unemployment, renegotiate the bailout agreement, fight against corruption and ensure “democracy, decency and justice”.

He pronounced Syriza’s victory as the victory of the Greece of the 99% against the 1%. He reiterated that he wants to keep Greece in the euro but lift the austerity and have large amounts of the unpayable Greek debt written off.

He pointed to the need for a change in Europe as a whole; restating the party’s slogan: “Hope is coming. Greece is going forward. Europe is changing”.

Despite the crowd’s chanting, he failed to attribute Syriza’s victory to the continued efforts over the years of the class struggle and the historic movement of the left. This contrasts with the June 2012 elections, where Syriza was narrowly defeated by the ND.

Then, Alexis Tsipras, at his post electoral rally, in a symbolic gesture, walked alongside Manolis Glezos, a veteran of the World War Two anti-Nazi resistance, and promised him that a government of the left would be formed in the next elections.

SCARE

Syriza has achieved a great and historic victory. From Kastelorizo to Othonous, the working classes resisted the scare campaign from both foreign and domestic centres and asserted their demands for an end to the Memorandum era. Syriza got very high percentages in working class regions and municipalities.

The Syriza victory marks a dramatic change in the relation of forces between the working class and capital in Greece. It can have a domino effect throughout Europe, for example with Spain and the Podemos movement.

This time the big electoral rise of Syriza was not accompanied by absorption of votes from other forces of the left, on the contrary both KKE and Antarsya-Mars have increased their percentages in comparison to the June 2012 elections. This is an indicator of a shift to the left.

Syriza’s vote expressed the result of the over 30 general strikes and other anti-Memorandum movements since 2010. The battles by teachers, transportation workers, laid-off pub-



Syriza’s vote expressed the result of hundreds of strikes in the last few years

lic sector workers, school guardians, cleaners, ERT and other media workers, Greek Steel, Coca Cola, General Recycling, and many neighbourhood movements that were partly defeated, scored a delayed victory in the vote.

The ideas and principles of the left now win wide sympathy and are no longer taboo for the majority in society, as they used to be.

Paying tribute to secular democracy and confirming his atheism, the chair of Syriza took his oath as prime minister without the traditional religious references. After taking the oath, Alexis Tsipras wanted to pay respects at the war memorial in Kessariani for the anti-fascist fighters executed by the Nazis during World War Two. The crowd accompanied him to the monument.

Election day was, rightly so, a day of celebrations for thousands of left activists across the country. Tomorrow, for conscious leftist militants, the celebrations will give way to organised political struggle.

The revolutionary left should be loud and proud — not in an introspective, gloating way, but with the inner confidence to re connect with the wider masses, and remain firm in our

belief that major changes are made with the participation of the masses and the great social and political movements, and not via “institutional” management. Big changes can only be achieved through ruptures and overthrows and not via gradual tweakings.

The overthrow of capitalism, the smashing of the capitalist state and the struggle for a revolutionary government on the basis of power of the working class is the only way out of the capitalist crisis not only in Greece, but throughout the world. It is time again to dare to fight and dare to win:

The future that was well overdue has arrived. It is time not only for our dreams to take revenge and become reality but to start forming new dreams and follow undiscovered roads and paths. And in the words of the Turkish poet Nâzım Hikmet:

**The most beautiful sea hasn’t been crossed yet.
The most beautiful child hasn’t grown up yet.
The most beautiful days we haven’t seen yet.
And the most beautiful words I wanted to tell you
I haven’t said yet.**

The limits of negotiations

The people who will take the strategic economic posts in the new Greek government — the economists Yanis Varoufakis, Giannis Milios, Giannis Dragasakis and Giorgos Stathakis — are adamant that they will not be confronting the EU and they will not be acting unilaterally. In the words of Varoufakis, all negotiations will be performed within the framework of EU and the Eurozone.

They aim to renegotiate Greece’s terms with EU and ECB so that its debt burden is eased and social cuts can be reversed. As Syriza has come close to office, its representatives have more and more pointed to the need for a change in direction across Europe as a whole. Syriza’s central election slogan was: “Hope is coming. Greece is going forward. Europe is changing”.

Tsipras welcomed the moves by ECB and Mario Draghi to follow the US Treasury and the Bank of England in injecting cash into the banking system through Quantitative Easing.

The programme of Syriza is more realistic even in capitalist terms than Margaret Thatcher’s and Ronald Reagan’s “voodoo economics”, which claims that if a nation demolishes the power of unions, cuts business taxes, and eliminates public ownership of utilities, economic prosperity will follow.

The economist Paul Krugman, in his recent article “End-

ing Greece’s nightmare” (bit.ly/krugma), has stated that Syriza’s politics are more realistic and likely to have an effect in the economy than the currently implemented ultra-neoliberal austerity politics. From back in May 2010: “The Troika, while pretending to be hardheaded and realistic, was peddling an economic fantasy.

“Why were the original projections so wildly overoptimistic? Supposedly hardheaded officials were in reality engaged in fantasy economics. Both the European Commission and the European Central Bank decided to believe in the confidence fairy — that is, to claim that the direct job-destroying effects of spending cuts would be more than made up for by a surge in private-sector optimism...

“And here’s the thing: If the Troika had been truly realistic, it would have acknowledged that it was demanding the impossible. Two years after the Greek programme began, the IMF looked for historical examples where Greek-type programmes, attempts to pay down debt through austerity without major debt relief or inflation, had been successful. It didn’t find any...

“In calling for a major change, Mr. Tsipras is being far more realistic than officials who want the beatings to continue until morale improves. The rest of Europe should give him a chance to end his country’s nightmare”.

Syriza spokesman Giorgos Stathakis has said that the new government had no plans to meet Troika negotiators and would instead seek direct talks with governments. In his victory speech Tsipras stated: “Greece leaves behind catastrophic austerity, fear, authoritarianism and five years of humiliation and anguish... The verdict of the people means that the Troika is finished”.

Still, ECB president Mario Draghi has said that a precondition for extending Quantitative Easing to Greece is that the new government must continue with the agreed cuts in welfare expenditures and “reform of the labour market”. In other words the Syriza government must slash workplace protection, eviscerate trade union organisation, and drive working people further down.

It is real naivety to believe that capital, especially international capital, will come to our country to make massive investments and “bring development” under a government of the left which is committed to respecting living standards and workers’ rights.

Capital will do just the opposite: it will blackmail the government of the left to surrender. It is vicious and it is not susceptible to the moderate and highly reasoned arguments of Syriza’s negotiating team.

Third place for Golden Dawn

The main downside of this election was the third place, with 6.28% of the votes, for the Nazi criminal gangs of Golden Dawn, despite the fact that seven of its outgoing 11 MPs and all its leaders were in prison, and disclosures and documents about the Nazi nature of the party.

Golden Dawn only lost 0.64% and 37,600 votes from June 2012. This shows in a more emphatic way that Golden Dawn cannot be dealt with just by courts and imprisonments.

In Piraeus B, where Pavlos Fyssas was murdered on 18 September 2013 by a Golden Dawn thug, Golden Dawn polled above 7%. Two years ago, the electoral mass of Golden Dawn could have possibly pleaded ignorance and claimed that they considered it just a “patriotic”, “nationalistic”, “anti-systemic” vote against corruption. But now Golden Dawn has been exposed openly as a Nazi and fascist party.

21 candidates from the armed forces were on the ballot list of Golden Dawn.

It is imperative for Syriza, the newly formed government of the left, and most importantly the revolutionary left, to sharpen its front against Golden Dawn and all the dark forces of fascism and racism through the revitalisation of the rank and file and the re-invigoration of the neighbourhood committees.

KKE refuses to back left government

The old-line Stalinist Communist Party of Greece (KKE) got a slightly increased vote in the election — 5.5%, compared to 4.5% in June 2012 and 7.5% in 2009, before the Greek debt crisis broke.

Its 15 MPs would be more than enough to enable Syriza to form a left government, without a coalition with the right.

However, the KKE insisted it would refuse to give a vote of confidence to a Syriza-led government. It states its first priority and line of struggle as the front against Syriza.

“It has emerged as a new social democratic party in the place of Pasok, a new pole in the two-pole bourgeois political system... The president and leading officials of Syriza are feted in the mansions of the plutocracy, the IMF, the Bilderberg Group Meeting at Lake Como in Italy, the City of London... The KKE will not support any government that is bound by the anti-people strategy of the EU and capital... We fight for the emancipation of the working class and the people from social democracy and opportunism”.

Alexis Tsipras made a last attempt to meet with the KKE on Monday 26 January, but the general secretary of the KKE refused, stating that KKE had excluded the possibility of even vote of tolerance for a Syriza government a priori, and therefore there was no point in a meeting.

Syriza was then faced with two choices. It could try to form a government by getting a vote of tolerance or a vote of confidence from the Independent Greeks (ANEL) or Potami; or it could try to form a minority government, stating its programme as the six commitments of the Thessaloniki declaration and exercising pressure on KKE's individual MPs (who are not immune from the pressure of KKE's rank and file and supporters) to give a vote of tolerance to this government in opposition to KKE's central line.

The KKE has in its time joined coalition governments with New Democracy (1989-91). No valid ideological or political idea prevented KKE from giving a conditional yes to cooperation with Syriza but proposing a minimum set of working-class demands as the basis for cooperation.

The ANEL coalition

By Theodora Polenta

Syriza fell short by two of the 151 MPs needed for an absolute majority in parliament. As widely rumoured during the election campaign and before, ANEL (Independent Greeks, a 2012 splinter from New Democracy, a nationalistic and anti-immigrant neo-liberal party with an anti-Memorandum stance) came to an agreement with Syriza.

ANEL will give Syriza a vote of confidence, but ANEL leader Panos Kammenos is likely to be assigned the ministry of National Defence, with other two minor ministries being assigned to ANEL MPs.

Syriza's leaders had already said that they were aiming for a government of “national salvation”, and despite protests from Syriza's left Platform and rank and file, they included in Syriza's ballot lists two ex-ANEL MPs.

ANEL is a right wing bourgeois party. It has a deeply reactionary, anti-labour political programme in all key fields. Its anti-memorandum rhetoric relates to sections of the Greek capitalist class and traditionally conservative middle class layers that have been short-changed during the Memorandum years.

In its election campaign, ANEL portrayed itself as a force complementary to Syriza, with a duty to “control” the momentum of Syriza by letting Syriza unfold the anti-memorandum program, but raising red lines on “values” issues such as state relations with the Greek Orthodox Church, immigration, and foreign policy.

When the EU/ECB/IMF Troika and Greek capital press the new government to retreat from radical measures, ANEL will bring forward the slogan of the government of “national unity”, namely unity with the other capitalist parties.

Also, ANEL's MPs will be very vulnerable to leadership and policy changes within ND. A change in ND to a leader close to the patrician, national-liberal direction of Karamanlis will most definitely cause ruptures and splinters within ANEL.

SCARE

ANEL is said to have agreed to support Syriza's Thessaloniki programme:

- Restoration of the minimum wage (up to 751 euros, a 30% raise)
- Restoration of all labour laws and of collective bargaining
- A 12,000 euro tax-free threshold
- Free health care for the uninsured
- Abolition of socially unjust taxing
- Free electricity for 300,000 households
- A program for 300,000 new jobs in the public and private sector

It is not known if there is a commitment from Syriza's leadership against ANEL's red lines on national and immigration issues.

The coalition government of Syriza-ANEL will be by its very nature fragile and unstable as the two parties represent conflicting and antagonistic class interests. ANEL may have temporarily agreed to a series of relief measures to alleviate poverty, but the central issue that will arise sooner or later is the issue of the structure of the economy.

Serious pro-working class policies will be impossible without taxing the wealth and attacking the profits of corporations and multinationals. The issue of nationalisations under working-class and social control will arise.

A rapid response to the Syriza-ANEL coalition government came from the Greek left group Xekinima. It regards the coalition as inherently unstable and says:

“Syriza's rank and file and supporters should be prepared for the coming crisis with ANEL. And there is only one way to do this preparation. Syriza's leadership should be pressurised to implement a program that is consistently serving the interests of the workers and working classes, which means essentially a socialist program — something of course

that the leadership has shown that it has no intention to do so, except under the enormous pressure from the base of the party and society.

“If and when ANEL clarify their refusal to support such a policy and such pro-working class and popular strata measures and against the ruling class, then Syriza can resort to the popular verdict in early elections. The broad masses would have understood that elections are necessary: why ANEL is an obstacle to the implementation of policies that serve the labor and popular layers. Syriza could further increase the power for a majority government and a consistent left programme”.

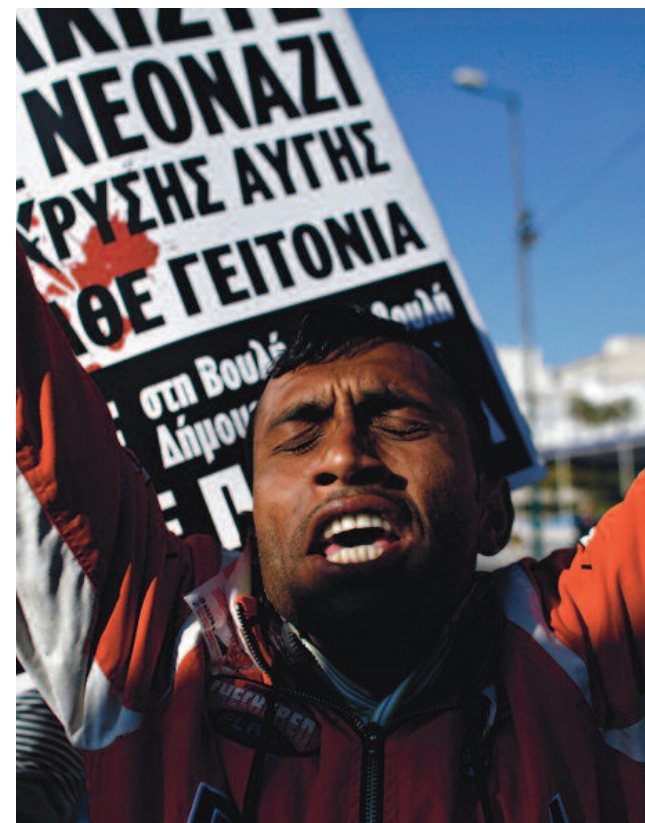
Syriza should not lose the momentum. It should move rapidly to deliver radical change. The re-opening of ERT and the re-employment of all the sacked media workers would be a signal that democracy has returned to Greece. The issue of reopening of ERT is political and not institutional, and will symbolise the end of the era of the coalition government of ND-Pasok.

To disarm the Greek ruling class before it starts a war against the leftist government, left-wingers should demand socialisation of the banking system and the key levers of the economy under workers' control. They should work for mobilisations to smash attempts by the capitalists and their trusted agents in the state to block the implementation of the programme.

They should call for European workers to actively show their solidarity with the Greek left government and fight for leftist, socialist governments across Europe as a first step towards United Socialist States of Europe!

The new Syriza government can open a new era for the workers and the working classes. This will not be done by consensus and in consultation with the status quo and big interests — local and foreign capital, EU, IMF, ECB etc. It can be done only through conflict with these forces.

It's up to the leadership of Syriza to take the necessary measures. And if it does, then the big policy reversal in Greece can produce a domino effect, causing the recovery of the left throughout Europe and internationally and promoting a counter-attack against capital by the labour movement and other social movements.



ANEL is an anti-immigrant, neo-liberal party.



Greece shakes Europe

Micheál McEoin reports from Athens

On the night of the election in Greece (25 January), other visitors from Britain and I watched the exit polls with comrades from DEA (a left group inside Syriza) and international visitors in the Syriza building on Leonidou Street. Then everyone converged around the Syriza tent in Klafthmonos Square.

By contrast with the press crews and general buzz by the Syriza tent, the suited-up New Democracy members in Syntagma Square looked despondent. The Pasok hut near the University had been simply abandoned by its inhabitants during the afternoon; a padlock protected piles of unused election literature and plastic furniture, while graffiti on the front read: “No chance. Closed for good.”

As the extent of a the Syriza victory become known, the streets echoed with amplified renditions of Bella Ciao from the speaker system and crowds gathered in front of the University of Athens to hear from Tsipras. As comrades translated for us, Tsipras’s speech was a mix of national salvation rhetoric, denunciations of the Troika, and calls for European solidarity. In the crowd there was a sober recognition that the real struggle begins now, and that it will be hard and fraught with risk.

TSIPRAS

Later that night at the Syriza headquarters off Omonia Square, we were speaking to a party official and his phone rang. “I will be back down in a minute, I have to run upstairs”, he told us; “Evo Morales is calling for Tsipras.”

As we spoke again afterwards in the smoke-filled first-floor cafe in the building, we learned that the official had been active in student occupations in London against the tuition fee rises under the Blair government.

That a group of British Trotskyists could walk into the headquarters with no credentials, while the soon-to-be Prime Minister of Greece conducted negotiations in an office floors above, reveals how Greece has broken through the bureaucratic carapaces which usually insulate governmental politics. (In Britain, it’s said, even mainstream Labour MPs, let alone leftists, never get beyond Ed Miliband’s office door).

Syriza is not an establishment social-democratic party but a party with roots in Greece’s left tradition, with no previous ties to the deeply corrupt state and its political elite. Its presence in the corridors of power will shake the centres of capital across Europe and beyond.

Our group from Britain had arrived on 23 January. From Athens airport, we took the city’s modern metro system, via Syntagma Square, to the apartment which we were renting for the weekend.

At first sight, there were few signs of Greece being on the verge of a confrontation with the Troika. The streets were quiet, with people milling around with shopping bags from high street stores, and the city-centre stations were clean and well-maintained.

Many comrades we spoke to on the left of Syriza told us that the intense social struggles of 2011-12 had given way to a period of relatively passive waiting, as people turned to the electoral road to replace the New Democracy-Pasok coalition.

Thanasis Kourkoulas, from the central committee of DEA (Internationalist Workers’ Left), which is part of the Left Platform of Syriza, told us: “This is not a pre-revolutionary period. People have not decided to take power and the economy into their hands. If they did, Syriza would not have just over 30,000 members and us 350... In 2012, after the elections, people hoped Syriza would be the government and that we could stop austerity by the electoral road.

“That didn’t happen so we still have a movement at a low ebb and many struggles here and there which continue to

Emergency steps

Extending the Thessaloniki pledges the Greek left should demand the following emergency steps be immediately taken:

- **Support for all workers, the unemployed, the poor to have access to food, electricity, healthcare**
- **The restoration of basic salary to 750 euros and of a 13th month’s pension for low-income pensioners**
- **The restoration of industrial relations and collective bargaining right to pre-crisis levels**
- **The right to homes for all, and the termination of auctions of homes for arrears in payment**
- **Kicking out Eldorado Gold, in response to the struggle of the inhabitants of Chalkidiki**

It is necessary for working class people and popular strata for Syriza’s rank and file and supporters to form their own structures in order to defend the Syriza government from the national and international attacks that they are bound to come sooner or later and to push the government to carry through pro-working class measures.

Other demands should include:

- **Legalisation of all immigrants without terms and conditions**
- **Citizenship for all the 200,000 children of immigrants who were born or grew up in Greece**
- **Asylum, shelter and full rights to all refugees**
- **Compensation for victims of racist violence from police or fascist gangs**
- **Places of worship for Muslims**
- **Return and expansion of political rights for immigrants who live and work permanently in Greece.**

have a left political direction but are not able to stop austerity. Many more will vote Syriza but do not have self-confidence to fight on the streets and in workplaces, with some important exceptions.”

Yet the five years of shrinkage in Greece’s economy of small and scattered workplaces have scarred the face of Athens. In some whole blocks all shopfronts are either boarded up or shuttered, the pavements are cracked, and graffiti and political posters compete for space on walls and pillars. People sleeping in doorways only yards from city-centre restaurants, and large stray dogs roam the streets.

Our apartment was in Metaxourgeio, a traditionally working-class area of small metal-working workshops just to the north of the city-centre. According to a comrade from the Trotskyist group Okde, which has its office nearby, the area entered a period of decline in the 1970s, though a new migrant population and the opening of the metro station have gone some way towards arresting this. The back streets away from the main thoroughfares have a warren of small shops nestling amid the many empty units, with cafes dotted on the street-corners.

A mechanic looked on in amusement as we walked up to our apartment, and found a huge KKE sign protruding from the wall next to the front door. On the ground floor was a local KKE office, a reminder of Greece’s Stalinist party’s continuing roots in working-class areas. It is quite probable that the party owned the whole apartment block.

On the first evening, we headed straight for the Syriza main election tent in the central Klafthmonos Square. Young Syriza activists greeted visitors at many stalls — a large Italian contingent arrived about the same time as us. Stacks of election literature were piled in the corners. People sat around on chairs, smoking and listening to music. When we first arrived, a live broadcast of Tsipras’s rally in Crete was playing on the big screen.

DASH

Electioneering is forbidden on the day before the election, so on the 23rd we accompanied Syriza Youth on a last-ditch campaigning effort, dashing around the bars and cafes in centre of the city between Syntagma Square and Monastiraki.

Activists received a positive response from the mostly young people in the area’s trendy bars, and stuck election posters to each rain-soaked car windscreens that we passed.

Syriza’s youth wing is an autonomous organisation, the result of recent changes which saw amalgamation of the youth wings of the radical coalition’s component groups. The secretary, Elias Panteleakos, explained to me that the youth organisation has its own version of the factional platforms in Syriza. A left-Eurocommunist platform, which Elias described to me as Marxist, though also open to “post-Marxist” theorists such as Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau, has just under half the support at congresses of Syriza Youth. According to Elias, it is critical of the idea of a “national salvation government” and stresses the importance of relying on working-class and movement struggles from below. Another comrade told us that a more leadership-loyal faction has around 30% support, and the Left Platform around 12-13%. Oddly, the Syriza left is weaker among the youth than among older members.

The next day, Sotiris Martalis from DEA and the Syriza Central Committee, told us that over recent weeks Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras has applied major pressure on the questions of coalitions with other parties and election lists. Most of the youth, Sotiris said, are with the leadership. However, we found no enthusiasm for coalition with parties to Syriza’s right among the activists we spoke to.

Most of Saturday and Sunday (24th-25th), before the election results, we spent interviewing comrades from the Central Committee of DEA, Stavros from the Trotskyist Organisation of Communist Internationalists of Greece (Okde) and the women from the “glove revolution” of sacked cleaners at the Ministry of Finance.

We also attended a social event put on by Syriza Youth for delegations of European left groups. As well as the Italians, we met members from the Socialist Youth Front in Denmark, Die Linke and other European left parties.

French demos were not like Pegida

By Olivier Delbeke in Paris

To see only a fascist threat in the demonstrations in France of Sunday 11 January would be to misunderstand the nature of the mass sentiments which they expressed.

The demonstrations were in no sense a Pegida-style wave — had they been, we would have seen a daily explosion of attacks against people of Arab-Muslim heritage and against Muslim places of worship: and a completely different climate. To be sure, there was a flurry of several dozen such incidents, but a “French Pegida” with four million participants on one Sunday across the whole country would make for a sinister remake of Kristallnacht, or a menacing prologue to such an event.

We saw two phenomena on Sunday 11 January. On the one hand, a profound wave expressing attachment to “the Republican values of freedom, equality, fraternity and secularism”, and in particular freedom of expression, the desire for a day-to-day life which is free of discrimination and racism. On the other hand, we saw the government’s attempt to take charge of the calls to demonstrate which originated with the unions and the left, with the ridiculous “demonstration of 50 heads of state”. This operation was explicitly aimed at creating and maintaining for as long as possible a “National Union” which would allow Hollande to climb again in the polls, given that his popularity has fallen uninterruptedly since 2012, under the effects of his policies.

HOLLANDE

Unfortunately for Hollande, his surge in the polls as a “head of state who faces up to his responsibilities in a crisis” will not last, because the right, led by the UMP, have already broken the momentum of this National Union – which hardly lasted a week because from the bosses’ point of view, serious business (the economy and social questions) requires attacks of an unprecedented intensity.

With the Macron Bill (named for the Minister of the Economy who wrote it), Hollande has given up on “social liberalism” and taken a turn to straightforward economic liberalism. The chief aim of this Bill is a serious attack on the Labour Code by removing the special status of Sunday and night work; by throwing systems of staff representation into question (DP [staff delegates], CE [works council], CHSCT [health, safety and working conditions committee], and the employee claims court [justice prud’homale]; and by giving bosses more rights to fire workers without justification. (For briefing on these systems see bit.ly/wk-rep).

The reading of the Bill in the National Assembly begins on Monday 26 January. On this date, the unions, mainly the CGT, FO, FSU and Solidaires, and in some cases the UNSA, are calling for a demonstration, but the desire of the big union centres (CGT and FO) to avoid a confrontation with the government’s entire policy are hampering the mobilisation that is needed. The Catholic CFDT union federation, champion of social liberalism, is playing the game of collaboration with the government and the bosses, but the situation is such that in sectors where bosses are carrying out ferocious exploitation, the structures of the CFDT can call for strikes like the current road hauliers’ stoppage, which is flaring up over pay demands (the inter-union CGT-CFDT-FO-CFTC-UNSA alliance is calling for 5% pay increases but the bosses are insisting on 2%).

Even if Hollande has won himself a 15-minute reprieve in the polls around the January attacks, his newly-won capital with the media is melting away like snow.



“Le Pen and the Front National are not secular”

What secularism means

By Olivier Delbeke in Paris

With regards to what is written in the Anglo-Saxon press, or heard from leftwing activists from the Anglophone world, we should clear up a few things.

First of all, *laïcité* [secularism] and atheism are not the same thing, and they exist on different levels. Atheism is a philosophical conviction which can be held by people who are anti-secular in practice (i.e., who wish to impose a belief in a world without god, who are against religion) just as much as by people who have a secular world-view (who express and develop their convictions without wishing to impose them by force or by law).

So one could be a Christian, or a Muslim, secular or anti-secular (like the fundamentalists who proclaim that humans must be ruled by the word of God).

In this way, a secular state is a state which guarantees freedom of conscience for all, which includes religious freedom. It is democracy applied to the realm of ideas, not the suppression of unpopular ideas. A state which calls itself atheist can only be a totalitarian dictatorship – Stalin, Mao and Enver Hoxha have given concrete examples of this.

In a secular state, citizens are free to believe in a religion or not, they have the right to change their religion or philosophy, they are free to worship (or not). But this religious practice has a limit: it must be private (within churches, mosques, synagogues or other temples) and may not impose itself upon the public domain. A distinction must be drawn between cultural practices and the expression of ideas via publications or public conferences, which are subject to free discussion and criticism in the public realm (e.g. a philosophical or religious debate on a public TV channel). There is no crime of blasphemy!

For this to be possible, the secular state must have nothing to do with religion or priesthood. There is no official state religion, nor religious authorities who hold public office. And the state does not spend public money on churches: let believers subsidise the needs of their priesthood! In this sense, France is not fully secular, because for historical reasons, there are local situations (in Alsace-Moselle and some overseas territories like Guyane [in South America, but officially a region of France]) where the state supports religions and priests.

The secular state does not discriminate against believers or non-believers. It guarantees civil and civic equality for all citizens, of all genders! Secularism is of a piece with feminism and the right of all to define their own sexuality.

In a secular state, laws may only issue from the public debates of elected officials and not from the application of religious texts imposed by priests.

A fully secular state is impossible under capitalism – only the socialisation of the means of production and full democracy will make it possible. Nevertheless, in a capitalist soci-

ety, the secular advances which have been won are a means of helping the development of the class struggle and the organisation of the exploited for this struggle, in particular at the level of ideas.

Le Pen and the Front National are not secular because they refuse Muslims the right to have their religion and practise it. When the Le Pen family speak of Muslims, one must remember that they use the word as a coded way of talking about Arabs. This is nothing but a hoary old deception, part of the far right’s racist stock in trade, perpetuating the member of the colonial period when natives of colonised countries suffered domination and worse; the memory of the Algerian war when the colonised proudly rose up against oppression.

The same goes for Germany, where Pegida is taking aim at Turkish immigration under the guise of denouncing Islam.

RACISM

Today in France, the far right is developing various targets for racist hatred. In the first instance, there is hatred against immigrants of French citizens of Arab-Muslim background, mainly those from the Maghreb.

Then there is anti-black racism against black people. These two forms of racism come from the tradition of colonialism and slavery and are reproduced by current social conditions (precarity, mass unemployment, demolition of public services, the degrading living conditions of the suburbs, fear for the future in the context of globalisation), combined with the presence of millions of citizens from non-European backgrounds.

Recently we have seen a return of anti-Semitism, thanks in part to the anti-imperialism of fools, notably in relation to the question of Israel-Palestine, and used by currents of political Islam. Let us not forget that the old reservoir of Catholic anti-Semitism from before the war and Vichy France has always been a part of the traditional far right, of which the FN is the major legatee. The Soral-Dieudonné double-act are aiming for an alliance of the fascism of poor whites of days gone by, and the fascism of the oppressed youth of the suburbs [banlieues], cemented by the hatred of Jews and the demonization of homosexuals.

During the demonstrations against gay marriage, sectors of the Catholic-fundamentalist far right (Civitas), or blood-and-soil fascists (les Identitaires) or sectors of the hard right in the UMP, but also some parts of the Catholic hierarchy, tried to create a new hate figure by targeting homosexuals of all genders. Ironically, the FN, some of whose recent leaders who are close to Marine Le Pen are famously gay, had a much more moderate attitude on the subject.

Le Pen even tried to play the card of defending homosexuals against “the Muslims”, who are supposed to all be fundamentalist homophobes.

Eichmann on TV

Ruben Lomas reviews 'The Eichmann Show' (BBC, January 2015)

"People say 'it cannot be true. You invent this. Such things are not possible.' I say, 'if I could make up such things, I would be in Hollywood, not running a cheap hotel in Jerusalem.'" (Rebecca Front as Mrs. Landau, a Holocaust survivor, in 'The Eichmann Show').

'The Eichmann Show', the BBC's dramatisation of the filming and broadcast of the trial of senior Nazi leader Adolf Eichmann, in Israel in 1961, is, perhaps, about too much.

In its chilling use of archival footage from both the trial and of the genocide itself, the film tries to be a lesson in Holocaust history. In showing the struggle of Leo Hurwitz (Anthony LaPaglia), the blacklisted filmmaker who directed the trial broadcast, to come to terms with Eichmann as a human, the film attempts an essay on the nature of evil and the human potential for barbarism.

By driving the narrative through the struggles of Hurwitz, producer Milton Fruchtmann (Martin Freeman), and their team to film and broadcast the trial in the face of bureaucratic opposition from the Israeli judiciary, death threats and assassination attempts from Nazi sympathisers, and competition for audience from more glamorous world events such as Gagarin's space flight and the Bay of Pigs invasion, the film tries to be a straightforward drama about decent people striving for a noble goal against the odds.

Perhaps most centrally, the film is a comment on how we understand history, that asks whether, in an age of mass media production and consumption, events of enormous magnitude must be "spectacularised" before we can assimilate them.

This central focus is suggested by the film's title: can we only understand the Holocaust through the lens (pun intended, obviously) of TV drama, as a "show", because it is

so grotesque as to defy direct comprehension? When the production crew misses the drama of a witness collapsing in the stand because Hurwitz wants to keep the cameras on Eichmann, Hurwitz insists, referring to the witness, "that's a real broken human life in there, not a fucking TV show." "And!", Fruchtmann shouts back, "And a fucking TV show!" There is plenty more in the film besides, including nods towards an exploration of the role of the Holocaust in Israeli national identity.

With so many themes, arguments, and concepts involved, some of the film's most powerful dramatic moments are the simplest. In a particularly poignant scene, Hurwitz's son listens to the testimony of a former child inmate of Auschwitz, and asks: "Is this all true?" "Yes," his father replies, simply. "He was the same age as you." That, ultimately, is where we must start: this happened. We owe it to ourselves to understand how and why.

That is only a starting point, of course; Hurwitz idealistically believes that, when faced with the documentary truth of his crimes, Eichmann would "not be able to subvert his subconscious", and would show some sign of guilt or remorse. Hurwitz's faith is not quite rewarded, although the film crew share a moment of triumph when Judge Hausner finally gets Eichmann to admit his initiating role (rather than having been simply following orders) in the November 1944 death march of tens of thousands of Jews from Hungary to Austria.

Was Eichmann a "monster"? Or was he merely a functionary cog in a bureaucratic killing machine? Both, perhaps, and neither.

Metaphysical or religious concepts of a monstrosity be-



yond socio-historical location or understanding cannot "explain" Eichmann or the Holocaust. But there was more that compelled him, and other Nazis, than "banal" stupidity or blind adherence to someone else's ideas. The architects of the Holocaust were neither functionary ciphers for faceless historical forces, nor deranged psychopaths acting outside of them. Humans can act within and against our historical conditions, sometimes reaching monstrous conclusions, sometimes reaching liberating ones, and we are capable of acting on either.

Having taken on such subject matter, to focus too much on any one of these aspects may well have seemed narrow. As it is, though, and while not quite decisively failing to be any of the things it sets out to be, the film's scope is too wide. Maybe that is proper; a 90-minute film on this subject must pose more questions than it can possibly answer.

If we are to answer those questions, there is still a value (lenses, mass media, the spectacle, and the "banality", or otherwise, of "evil" notwithstanding) in beginning from that simple restatement: this happened.

Wealth trickling up

By Becky Crocker

If you didn't see *The Super Rich and Us*, I would really recommend you look at it on i-player.

The first episode covered Britain's property market and tax laws. The second focused on the growth of international financial markets.

Presenter Jacques Peretti begins each episode with these stark observations: "The super rich are taking over. 85 people now own the same as half the world's population. Never before has money been so polarised. The 21st century will be the most unequal in human history."

It is invaluable to have the facts about wealth inequality spelled out to a mass audience in this way.

It is also useful to "see" the rich. The programme gives us a window into their world. We see a woman spending £50 million on diamond jewellery as if she's spending pennies in a sweet shop. We see the Jacques Peretti enjoy a £30,000 luxury beauty treatment in Mayfair. As the beautician covers his face with a soothing mask containing solid gold, she explains that, for most of her clients, this is a routine treatment. A throwaway solid gold face mask!

The wealth on display here is more vast and obscene than I had ever contemplated.

The program includes analysis. It interviews Thomas Piketty and promotes his demand for a wealth tax favourably. It describes how "trickle down" economics leads to inequality: "wealth has not trickled down – it's trickled up. From us to them".

It explains that this inequality is no accident; it has been deliberately created. We see local councils selling public land to investors, fuelling the housing crisis. It explains that this creates a "business opportunity" for the buy-to-rent indus-

try, which is able to extort high rents from low-income families. We see a Citigroup strategist explain the advantage of the division of the economy into "two sectors": the "1%" and "everyone else". There has been growth in the sector where the 1% is active, e.g. investment in yachts and luxury goods. There has also been growth at the end of the "super poor", e.g. payday loans companies and Walmart. It describes an "hourglass society".

LSE anthropologist David Graeber tells us that the plan throughout the 1980s was to get us all in debt. Debt reduced industrial action, depressed wages and controlled inflation. Peretti asks him, "How important is debt for the extraction of wealth from us, the 99%, to the 1%?" Graeber's answer is that it is "Key to the whole thing. The finance industry and the debt industry are really the same thing. Finance is just another word for other people's debt."

There are obvious limitations. The programme hints that the problem with this polarisation of wealth is that the "middle class" is missing from society's hourglass shape. It does not share our vision of class struggle, of taking the wealth out of the hands of the rich and using it to create genuine equality by putting it at the service of the society that creates it.

But it does visit and interview anti-austerity marchers, people on strike for higher pay and the Focus E15 occupation for social housing. It indicates that this intolerable situation is vulnerable to class struggle. It is interesting in itself that a program focusing on extreme wealth inequality has been made at all. Culturally, the message that poverty is extreme and that inequality is intolerable seems to be getting through.

As socialists, we've been given a challenge and an opportunity; this program indicates that there is an appetite for talking about the potential and necessity to radically reorganise society.

All The Rage a celebration of women in class struggle

Women in Workers' Liberty are organising this conference to celebrate and learn from women's struggles in Britain and around the world, and to consider how socialist feminist ideas can make a difference.

**Saturday 28 Feb, 11AM - 5:30PM
UCL, Darwin Building, Gower Street, London
£4/6/10 covers free creche, speaker costs materials.**

womensfightback.wordpress.com



FOCUS E15 MUMS

Cuba: alternatives after the thaw

By Sam Farber

Sam Farber is a Cuban socialist, based in the USA, who has written a number of books on the Castros' Cuba



On December 17, 2014, Washington and Havana agreed to a pathbreaking change in a relationship that, for more than fifty years, was characterized by the United States' efforts to overthrow the Cuban government, including the sponsorship of invasions, naval blockades, economic sabotage, assassination attempts, and terrorist attacks.

The new accord set free the remaining three members of the "Cuban Five" group held in US prisons since 1998 and, in exchange, Cuba freed the American Alan Gross and Rolando Sarraf Trujillo, a previously unknown US intelligence agent imprisoned on the island for almost twenty years, in addition to over fifty Cuban political prisoners. Far more consequential are the resumption of official diplomatic relations and the significant relaxation of travel restrictions and remittances to Cuba.

The agreement covers the political normalization but not the full economic normalization of relations: that would require Congress repealing the Helms-Burton Act, signed into law by President Clinton in 1996.

Why did Obama succeed where previous US administrations failed? More than anything else, the end of the Cold War, the departure of Cuban troops from Africa, and the less militant stance of Cuba in Latin America have, through the years, qualitatively downgraded the importance of Cuba in American foreign policy, as witnessed by the fact that practically all US government strategic studies in the last two decades don't even mention the island.

CAPITALIST

At the same time, however, the American capitalist class, except for its most right-wing fringe, has come to support not only the reestablishment of diplomatic relations, but even more so the elimination of the economic blockade.

This has been the position adopted by the US Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers in the last several years, and also the general stance taken by the business press. Business columnists have been arguing, with more than a grain of truth, that massive American investment and trade with the island would "subvert" and eventually overcome the Communist economic system, as has been happening in China and Vietnam.

Moreover, after exemptions to the US economic blockade allowing the export of agricultural goods and certain processed goods to Cuba were authorized by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, firms such as Cargill, Archer Daniel Midland and Tyson Foods got involved in trade with Cuba. After the current December 17 agreement, other corporations, such as Caterpillar and PepsiCo joined in supporting it. During the last several years, dozens of business people and politicians, particularly from the South, Midwest and Southwest have been visiting the island and discussing with the Cuban government future economic prospects especially if the blockade is repealed.

Reflecting the attitude of their business constituents, many Democratic and Republican politicians, such as Arizona Senator Jeff Flake, have been advocating political and economic relations with Cuba. It remains to be seen whether these forces will be strong enough to amend, if not repeal, the Helms-Burton Act and allow for a full normalization of economic, as well as political, relations with the island.

As the Cuba issue lost importance after the end of the Cold War, and as major business sectors have begun to favor economic and political relations with the country, the right-wing leadership of the Cuban exile enclave in South Florida remains the only political force firmly defending the blockade. Its political clout was particularly important in a closely divided state like Florida, where Cuban-Americans account for around 5 percent of the electorate.

But the conservative exile generation of the sixties has been dying out and by now the growing majority of the Cubans residing in Florida came to the United States since the eighties. In contrast with the older exiles, many of these people regularly visit the island and are more concerned with the welfare of their Cuban relatives than with Cuban exile politics. It is no wonder then that public opinion polls have shown that a majority of the Cubans and Cuban-Americans residing in Florida favor a change in policy leading to full relations with the island.

Nevertheless, many of these people are not yet citizens and affluent, conservative Cubans still have great power over the media and political system. The three Florida representatives in Congress of Cuban origin are still right-wing Republicans strongly committed to the blockade.

CUBAN-AMERICANS

And yet the fact that Barack Obama won 48 percent of the Cuban vote (and larger proportions among younger Cubans) in the 2012 elections is a clear indication of the political trends among Cuban-Americans away from right-wing positions on Cuba.

Moreover, as the Cuban-American sociologist Alex Portes has indicated, the Cubans who have arrived since 1980 generally come from modest class backgrounds in the island and are hardly distinguishable from other Latin American immigrants in socio-economic terms. One wonders about the future of the Latin American "model minority."

For its part, the Cuban government has been intent to find a way to resume diplomatic relations with the United States even though this may in the long run undermine its legitimacy as it won't be able to blame the blockade for continuing political repression and economic woes.

Ever since Raúl Castro assumed power — informally in 2006 and formally in 2008 — he has been moving towards adopting the Sino-Vietnamese model.

This means a state-capitalism that retains the monopoly of political power through the Communist Party, and that controls the strategic sectors of the economy, such as banking, while sharing the rest with a domestic and foreign private sector.

But this has been a contradictory road where the Cuban government has tried to "have its cake and eat it too," accompanying every economic change with restrictions that limit their effectiveness.

Despite the rosy picture drawn by Castro sympathizers, such as Emily Morris in *New Left Review*, the results of the Cuban government's new policies have been meager and unable to finally overcome the long economic crisis that has gripped the island since the Soviet Union's collapse. The real wages of state employees, who still constitute the great majority of the labor force, had only reached, in 2013, 27 percent of their 1989 levels.

Since 2008, spending on education, health, social welfare and housing have diminished as a proportion of the state budget and gross domestic product. Furthermore, for the last several years economic growth has been low (1.2 percent in 2014) and capital investment has been a meager 10 percent of the GDP compared with the average 20 percent for Latin America as a whole.

Not surprisingly, Marino Murillo, Cuba's Minister of the Economy, has said that the island needs at least two billion dollars a year in investment to achieve an economic takeoff. This is the key to Castro's willingness to resume relations with the United States, especially in the light of the serious political and economic problems that Venezuela (Cuba's principal ally) and Russia are currently facing along with the relative decline in growth of the Chinese economy.

Castro has nothing to lose, since even if the Helms-Burton

law is not amended or repealed, the Cuban economy is bound to benefit by the liberalization of travel and remittances recently decreed by Obama. For the Cuban leader, any benefit he obtains from the agreement may be the lever he needs to vanquish the resistance in his own bureaucratic apparatus to the full implementation of the Sino-Vietnamese model in the island.

For his part, Obama must surely be conscious of the opportunity to reassert American political influence and its economic power in Cuba, aside from other real political benefits to be gained by this new agreement in Latin America and the rest of the Global South.

Independently of the considerations that led the governments of Cuba and the United States to reach this agreement, it is a major gain for the Cuban people.

First, because it acknowledges that the imperial power of the US was not able to coerce the imposition of its socio-economic and political system, handing a victory for the principle of national self-determination. It is up to Cubans and Cubans alone to decide the destiny of their country. Second, because in practical terms, it can improve the standard of living of Cubans and help to liberalize, although not necessarily democratize, the conditions of their political oppression and economic exploitation, making it easier to organize and act to defend their interests in an autonomous fashion against both the state and the new capitalists.

This has been the case of China, where thousands of protests occur every year to protect the standard of living and rights of the mass of the population in spite of the persistence of the one-party state.

Contrary to what many liberals thought right after the Cuban Revolution, the issue was never whether the end of the blockade would lead the Castro brothers to become more democratic.

That possibility was never and is not in the cards, except for those who believe that the establishment of Cuban Communism was merely a reaction to American imperialism instead of what Che Guevara admitted was half the outcome of imperialist constraint and half the outcome of the Cuban leaders' choice.

LANDSCAPE

What is real is the likelihood that the end of the blockade will undermine the support for the Castro government thereby facilitating the resistance and political formulation of alternatives to its rule.

That Cuba will be free from the grasp of US imperialism even if the economic blockade comes to an end is not likely. The more "normal" imperialist power broadly experienced in the Global South will replace the more coercive and criminal one of the blockade era, especially if a successful alliance develops between American capital and the native state capitalists of the emerging Sino-Vietnamese model, as it happened in China and Vietnam. Even at the purely political level, there are many conflicts that are clearly foreseeable, like, for example, one that was left unmentioned in the Obama-Castro agreement involving the return of revolutionary exiles, such as Assata Shakur, to prison in the United States.

With the passing of the historic generation of revolutionary leaders within the next decade, a new political landscape will emerge where left-wing opposition political action may resurface and give strength to the nascent critical left in Cuba. Some may argue that since socialism of a democratic and revolutionary orientation is not likely to be on the immediate agenda, there is no point to put forward such a perspective. But it is this political vision advocating for the democratic self-management of Cuban society that can shape a compelling resistance to the economic liberalization that is likely to come to the island.

By invoking solidarity with the most vulnerable, and calling for class, racial and gender equality, a movement can build unity against both the old and the emerging oppression.

• From *Jacobin* magazine, December 2014, slightly abridged: bit.ly/cuba-us

18% rise for the bosses, 3% for us

By a PCS member

On Tuesday the 13 January the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) branch of the PCS union voted by an overwhelming majority to call strikes over pay.

The ICO has been lagging behind civil service pay for some time, with members' salaries a grade behind what the rest of the civil service receive.

This year's pay offer was limited to a 3% rise for workers who have been in the job longer, and bumping newer workers up the pay scale. Whilst this allows management to bribe newer staff with superficially large increases in pay this is money they are contractually obliged to over time. It does nothing to address the wider disparity between the ICO and the rest of the civil service.

Meanwhile the Executive Team at the ICO re-

cently granted themselves pay rises of up to 18% each. Perversely they have justified this on the grounds that the ICO has been historically underpaid compared to the rest of the civil service! Their pay rise was carried out in secret, with the union and other employees only finding out after the deal had been completed.

Disappointingly, despite initial talk of sustained strike action, the plans announced by the branch so far are only two days of strike action on 3-4 February followed by eight weeks of work-to-rule and overtime bans.

Two token days on strike followed by weeks of passive action will do little to draw in new members or encourage members disillusioned by the union's ineffectual response to years of Tory attacks on public sector pay and conditions.

Where's the money, ISS?

By Peggy Carter

Outsourced workers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) in Woolwich South London have learned that contractor ISS has been given enough money by the NHS to pay them full NHS wages — but still isn't paying!

Workers struck several times in a dispute about the two-tier workforce and are planning more strikes.

Documents obtained by GMB union show that ISS has been awarded the con-

tract for another five years, but with the addition of over £1 million to give full NHS agenda for change terms and conditions to ISS employed staff. Yet ISS has not yet passed this on to workers.

GMB will be holding a protest at the NHS trust board meeting, QEH Conference Centre, 10 February at 9am. They also ask for members of the public to submit questions to the board and call for an investigation into where the money has gone.

Lambeth college deal

By Charlotte Zalens

Workers at Lambeth College have voted to accept a new offer they received on Wednesday 21 January.

The new offer means existing workers will not have new contracts, but new staff at the college will be given the new contracts. The offer also retreats from attacks on sick pay. It is clear manage-

ment would not have retreated without the strikes, but the offer sets up a two-tier workforce for the future.

Workers have been in dispute over contractual changes since April, totalling 42 strike days. The workers, who are University and College Union members, have accused the union of not giving the dispute its full support.

NHS pay: what's been gained?

By Charlotte Zalens

As *Solidarity* went to press on 27 January, news of a deal on NHS pay had just been announced.

Unison, Unite, GMB and the Royal College of Midwives have all confirmed they have suspended strikes planned for Thursday 29 January to consult members on an offer from the government.

A GMB official said the offer included "the implementation of the 1% pay rise for all NHS staff from April 2015 plus some further improvements for the lowest paid NHS staff."

The details are unclear. However initial publicity suggested that it includes:

- A consolidated 1% payment for all staff up to Band 8B from April 2015,
- An additional consolidated £200 payment for lower paid staff (pay points 3-8),
- The first point on the pay scale to be abolished and the second raised to £15,100,
- A commitment from the

government to the NHS Pay Review Body and that the Body will continue to make future recommendations on pay uplift for NHS staff in 2016-17.

It is unclear if the offer is solely for next year (2015-16). If so it would leave NHS staff with a pay freeze for this year and a below inflation one for next year.

There is also indication that this deal comes with commitment to a wider ranging review in 2016 of Agenda for Change, which could signal government attacks on pay increments, unsociable hours payments and other terms and conditions.

Unison head of health and the unions' lead negotiator, Christina McAnea said "This isn't a great offer but it addresses some of the key concerns unions have about low pay in the NHS." However Unison's own publicity about the strike was not demanding more than that the government implement the NHS Pay Review Body recommendation of a 1% rise for 2014-15.

Strikes against academisation

By a Lewisham Teacher

Lewisham National Union of Teachers (NUT) branch are balloting members in five secondary schools about strikes to prevent the schools being turned in to academies.

The NUT has written to the governors of the schools seeking assurances that they will not be seeking academisation. This follows indicative ballots where each schools' members voted by at least 95% in favour of strikes to prevent their schools becoming academies. If successful these will

be the first strikes against academisation to have occurred before the schools have started the process of becoming academies.

Sedgehill, the school which is furthest along with their academisation, has been placed under an Interim Executive Board. However, pressure from children, parents and staff at the school has meant that Bethnal Green Academy, which the council had been lining up to take over the school, has pulled out of the deal.

It shows that our pressure can make a difference. However there is a big fight ahead of us.

No to outsourcing at National Gallery

By Peggy Carter

Workers at the National Gallery, London, have voted for strikes against the privatisation.

Workers, members of the union PCS, voted 94% in favour of strikes on a 62% turnout.

Gallery bosses plan to outsource 400 staff, including guards and visitor assistants.

CIS, the company that will employ the staff once outsourced, has contracts in many industries, meaning that staff could be transferred to other workplaces.



NHS pay has fallen in real terms by 15% in five years, and increasing outsourcing means large sections of NHS cleaners, caterers, porters and administrative staff are not paid anywhere near a living wage. A 1% increase does not solve this.

It is clear to all that the problems within the National Health Service go much deeper than insufficient pay.

There are currently too many crises going on in the

NHS. A funding crisis, a bed crisis, a staffing crisis. The demands over pay were linked to these issues.

We must have political demands to go alongside the demand for a 1% pay rise, even if it has been won — an end to the costly and ineffective healthcare market; the cancellation of PFI debt; a recruitment drive in our hospitals; and better funding for community services.

By Gemma Short

Workers' Liberty member Patrick Murphy received 15% of the vote in the Deputy General Secretary election in the National Union of Teachers (NUT).

Incumbent Kevin Courtney won with 61% of the vote and right-winger Ian Grayson received 23%.

The low turn out of 10% can be partially explained by the poor timing of the election, straight after the Christmas break. Such timing makes a left-wing challenge to an incumbent difficult. In these circumstances the vote means the

rallying of a significant constituency within the union round a clear alternative to the leadership, and to the "old left" represented by Kevin Courtney.

Teachers who campaigned or voted for Patrick have a practical task ahead of them.

We will work with Patrick and others in the Local Associations National Action Campaign to transform the union on the ground to be able to fight for the demands that Patrick put forward in his campaign.

• More information: nutlan.org.uk

run one current exhibition.

PCS says the gallery has also reneged on a previous agreement to pay the London living wage.

Workers are now deciding dates for strikes.

• Sign the petition against privatisation here: bit.ly/Gallery-petition



Rent-controlled housing for all!

By Gemma Short

Over 635,000 homes in England are empty. For every family in need of a home there are 10 empty houses.

Over 200,000 homes have been empty for more than six months.

In September 2014 the number of families placed in temporary accommodation was over 60,000, the highest it has been in five years. The number of people who are homeless or in precarious housing situations is likely to be much higher. London, where there is a boom in house building, accounts for 75% of the increase in homelessness.

In London there are more than 70 social housing estates being “regenerated”. This affects an estimated 160,000 residents. 16km² of land, with a combined value of £52 billion, is being developed or repurposed. The building trade is making a lot of money and at the same time massively reducing the provision of social housing.

Across the country, but particularly in London, councils are giving housing estates to private companies for redevelopment. Compa-

nies like LendLease, Barratt, Peabody are trying to squeeze profit out of redevelopment projects. In many cases this means reducing the amount of social housing and increasing the amount of private housing stock, sold at extortionate prices.

Councils are meant to have social housing quotas on any redevelopments. However many developers are getting around quotas by giving money to councils in exchange for dropping the quota.

In Southwark, LendLease’s development at Elephant and Castle has avoided the council’s 35% quota by paying £3.5 million towards the construction of a community leisure centre, a project which will cost £20 million to build. However the equivalent cost of building 35% social housing would have been about £10 million.

It is estimated that developers in Southwark alone have avoided paying £265 million in affordable housing tariffs. Of 4,282 new homes being built in the borough, just 79 will be social rented.

Residents on Barnet’s West Hendon estate are fighting a running battle



with the borough council and house builders Barratt Homes over the redevelopment and social cleansing of the estate.

Tory Barnet council has obtained compulsory purchase orders to buy flats on the estate from leaseholders who bought their flats from the council under “right to buy” laws.

Under the purchase order Barratt will pay £175,000 for a two-bedroom flat and

£115,000 for a one-bedroomed one. However two-bed flats in the redeveloped estate are expected to sell for up to £415,000. Most current owners will be unable to afford a home in the borough where they have spent most of their lives.

Hundreds of council tenants are also facing forced relocation out of the borough. Only 250 of the 2,000 new homes will be classed as affordable, a net loss of

199 affordable or social homes. There is an ongoing public inquiry into the redevelopment and the council’s actions, and West Hendon Residents have been blockading areas of the sites already under redevelopment, physically stopping construction traffic from entering.

Residents in West Hendon are just some of many fighting councils and property developers. Vibrant commu-

nity campaigns will be needed to prevent the social cleansing of our cities.

We also need political demands. Councils should build and renovate housing stock themselves and create jobs and homes; take social housing stock back into council control from housing associations and arm’s-length organisations; stop aiding profiteering by private property developers; control rents!

Focus E15 campaign continues to fight

By Hannah Webb

The Focus E15 Campaign was initially formed by a group of young mothers from the Focus E15 hostel in the rapidly gentrifying area of Stratford in East London.

They were resisting the attempts of Newham Council to evict them and force them out the borough, to places as far away as Hastings, Birmingham or Manchester.

When all mothers were rehoused in Newham (though in temporary, unstable accommodation), the campaign continued; with

increasing numbers of people involved, both from the hostel they had been living in, and from across London.

They continued to raise the demand of “Council Housing for All” — that all should be entitled to good quality housing in the area they wish to live, with secure tenancies.

Linking up with residents of the Carpenters Estate, an estate with hundreds of empty homes, near the Olympic Park, the campaign occupied a low rise block of four flats on the estate and opened it up as a community centre for two weeks, with support from the local community. The

centre was used for a wide range of events and workshops.

Newham council went to

court for a possession order to force the occupiers out the flats.

The campaign has also ex-

tended to helping other local residents with applying for housing, and assisting with eviction resistance. The street stall, from 12-2 every Saturday outside Wilko’s on Stratford Broadway, continues to run.

The campaign is linking up with other housing and anti-gentrification campaigns, recently meeting and leafletting at the Fred Wigg and John Walsh towers in Leytonstone where the council is trying to bring in private developers to renovate without resident consultation, which will inevitably lead to residents being priced out.

Focus E15 are co-sponsors

of the March for homes, Saturday 31 January, alongside the New Era 4 All Campaign, the Radical Housing Network, and 11 other tenant groups, a number of trade union branches and trades councils, and other organisations.

The East London march led by Focus E15 will meet at St Leonard’s Church in Shoreditch, the South London march will meet at Elephant and Castle.

Both will assemble at midday in their respective locations and march on City Hall to demand better homes and an end to the housing crisis.

