

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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## 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.



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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.

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## Syria: UN pull back, murder continues

By Dan Katz

**50 people were killed on Saturday in fighting and shelling in the Damascus area, in the central provinces of Homs and Hama, and in Western coastal town of Latakia.**

For the last week rebel held areas of Homs have been under intense bombardment and ground attacks. Food is in short supply. Thousands are trapped.

Syrian human rights organisations are calling on

the UN to step in and evacuate the civilian population in the contested areas of Homs.

The Free Syrian Army (FSA) had been gaining ground across the north and centre of Syria. However the FSA lost a week-long battle in northern town of Haffah last Wednesday when the rebels were forced out after a blistering offensive. The state relied heavily on attack helicopters for the first time.

However, in response to the increase in violence

UN observers have suspended their patrols. About 300 observers are in Syria monitoring a so-called peace plan negotiated by UN-Arab League representative Kofi Annan.

In fact the "peace plan" was always going to fail. Even though its six points were generous to the Syrian dictatorship the plan demanded the withdrawal of Syrian state forces from urban centres, the right to protest freely and the release of those detained during the uprising. If such conditions were met

by the regime — it would fall. All that is preventing the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's contemptible, lying government is its relentless brutality against its own people.

The US's cautious policy on Syria is driven by fear of what might replace Assad's state. Obama also wants to avoid a new war in the run-up to this year's US presidential election.

**Russia has maintained its support for Assad, giving the Syrian state political protection and selling it weapons.**

## Islamists versus workers, art, and freedom in Tunisia

By Jack Cole

**Tunisia has seen a series of Islamist outrages against the labour movement and freedom of speech in recent weeks, while workers' struggles for jobs and public services heat up.**

On 26 May, Salafists started riots and fights in Jendouba — a provocation which began with attacks against alcohol vendors but quickly became a confrontation with the police.

On the following day at dawn, Salafists raided the premises of the al Hilwar television station — other attacks also took place against Sfax regional radio and there was a sit-in protest in front of the national radio station in Tunis. The Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UGTT) trade union condemned these attacks as outrages against freedom of the press and called for a civil society mobilisation to defend media outlets.

Significantly, it was widely reported that these attacks were not only carried out by members of Salafist or far-right religious groups like Ansar al-Sharia or Hizb ut-Tahrir — but also rank-and-file members of the ruling Nahda party. National leaders of Nahda, which rules in coalition with two smaller secular parties, try to project an image of secularism. But the participation of Nahda activists in joint attacks with religious fascists against unions and the media shows their true social function and ideology.

By 30 May rumours were spreading that Salafists were planning an attack on UGTT offices. Across Tunisia, union officials barricaded themselves in and made preparations for the attacks. In the end none

came — but gangs of young men wearing T-shirts reading "Salafist Police" roamed Tunis suburbs attacking bar-keepers and "immodestly" dressed women; and a journalist was assaulted by religious thugs at a metro stop.

Two weeks later, on 12 June, the violence reached a new peak when Salafists burned UGTT offices in several different cities simultaneously, burning down offices in Bengarden, Jendouba and Bousalam. Offices of secular political parties which have aligned themselves with the UGTT were also targeted. At the same time, an art exhibition in Tunis, which showed nudity and sacrilegious images, was invaded and smashed up.

These attacks come at the moment that the labour movement is asserting itself against the new government's economic policies. With unemployment at 18% and the new government trying to implement neoliberal medicine to re-start the economy, workers are engaged in constant low-level local battles over employment and union rights. At the same time, health workers launched a general strike on 31 May, to oppose privatisation of health care.

The international left must make solidarity with the UGTT and the Tunisian labour movement, which is the defender not only of workers' rights but also of freedom of speech, art, and culture.

**That solidarity must recognise the dangers of Islamism in the region — even its "soft", "respectable" suit-wearing variants, who open the doors for the kind of violent, sword-wielding Salafist bigots who attacked women and trade unionists in Jenouba.**

## Who killed Li Wangyang?

By Ira Berkovic

**Thousands of activists marched in Hong Kong to question official reports of the death of Li Wangyang, a veteran of the Tiananmen Square democracy uprising who was freed last year after spending 22 years in jail for his role in the 1989 protests.**

He was found dead in his hospital room after apparently having hanged himself. But supporters, friends, and relatives claim that, as Li was extremely unwell, it is unlikely he would have been able to carry out the suicide. They also say that to commit suicide without leaving a note is entirely contrary to his character.

Li's family have also criticised the way his body was handled following the death, accusing the authorities of taking it away without the family's permission and rushing through an autopsy in order to cremate it.

Days before his death, Li gave an interview to a local radio station attacking the Chinese government's repression of dissidents and reaffirming his commitment to the struggle for democracy.

Han Dongfan, director of the China Labour Bulletin, said: "If Li Wangyang was not murdered why were his friends prevented from paying their last respects? If Li Wangyang was not murdered why were those calling for an investigation

into his alleged suicide placed under house arrest or disappeared? If Li Wangyang was not murdered why did the family's legal aid lawyer disappear? If Li Wangyang was not murdered why did the Shaoyang authorities threaten and intimidate his family members at the hospital? If Li Wangyang was not murdered why were his grieving relatives placed under house arrest and prevented from talking to the outside world?"

According to figures from the International Trade Union Federation, 36 people are currently in jail in China for "offences" directly related to their involvement in workers' organising. These are the official, public figures. The real number is almost certainly much higher.

**The LabourStart website is running an online campaign to demand a full and thorough enquiry into the real reasons behind Li's death. To get involved, see [tinyurl.com/licampaign](http://tinyurl.com/licampaign)**

## Bosses' rises, workers' cuts

**While the pay of bosses of the top 100 companies rose 10% in 2011, average household incomes are slumping.**

A new report by the Institute of Fiscal Studies finds that in 2010-11 mean household income (the average of household incomes) fell 5.7% and

median household income (the income of a middling household) fell 3.2%.

Both averages are below their 2004-5 level.

**The one-year fall in 2010-11 was the biggest since 1981, and the longer-period fall is one of the largest on record.**

• [bit.ly/5-7down](http://bit.ly/5-7down)

# Teachers organise for rank-and-file push

By Tom Unterrainer, Nottingham NUT

Speaking after the 16 June unofficial meeting of teacher union-branch delegates in Liverpool, National Union of Teachers (NUT) Exec member and Barnsley division secretary Roy Bowser said that the meeting “surpassed all my expectations.”

“More to the point, it was a true outlet for the way most members are feeling. I think behind the rhetoric there is a real base for a rank and file bottom-up push that hopefully will now help shape strategy”.

Bowser knows something about union organising: he was active as a coal-miner in the 1984-85 miners’ strike.

In fact, the network set up from the 16 June meeting goes beyond — or potentially goes beyond — any unofficial grouping created in any union in Britain for many years.

Many unions have left caucuses of individual activists, focused on winning union positions and formulating motions for union conferences. The NUT has two such caucuses, and between them they hold the majority on the union Executive and the union’s top full-time official posts.

This was different. It was a meeting of more than one hundred delegates sent by over thirty National Union of Teachers Associations [branches].

## BASED

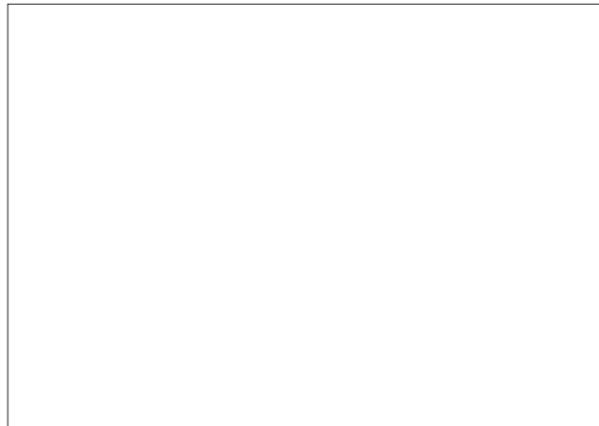
It decided on an ongoing network which will be based on union branches and workplace reps.

The committee to take forward the conference’s work is constituted on the basis of one delegate from each NUT Association backing the network.

The conference took a speech from Jean Lane, a Unison rep for teaching assistants and other school staff from East London, and the possibility is there of extending the network to become a workplace-based movement, with input from non-NUT as well as NUT school-workplace organisations.

Opening the meeting, Julie Lyon Taylor (Liverpool NUT secretary, and a member of the NUT Exec) explained the background:

“We’re here because... after 30 November [the big strike on pensions]... some of us on the Executive pushed and pushed for more action [and didn’t get it]. We organised a meeting at conference of over one hundred people [to address



Tom Unterrainer speaks at the 16 June conference

the issues]. It became clear that what happened at conference made another meeting necessary.

“There is now a further ballot taking place. We need to have a massive turnout; we need to make the ballot massive. We are the people who can do it.” Patrick Murphy (Leeds NUT secretary and NUT Exec member) explained: “What’s happening here today is a model for how trade unionists react when things go badly. When you have a setback you organise...”

## GOVERNMENT

“The government thinks the pension dispute is done. They have good reason for that. There are no more meetings scheduled, no more negotiations. There has been no national action on pensions since 30 November.”

“That’s why the government thinks the way it does and that’s why we are here. There’s anger in our union that this is the case... The proper response to this is to give our members a voice and to bring them into union activity...”

A steering committee had been working since the NUT’s national conference at Easter to organise the Liverpool conference. The committee included members of the Socialist Teachers Alliance, of the Campaign for a Democratic and Fighting Union, and of the socialist groups in the union. The new network can go well beyond those groupings, to form a network of activists much more rooted in the workplaces and branches, and committed to winning effective action in the future.

A statement on future plans was adopted by the conference unanimously, after some amendments.

A defeated amendment from Croydon NUT was presented by Dave Harvey (NUT Executive). It called for the next Local Associations conference to be called in conjunction with the Campaign Teacher (CT)

editorial board. CT is a newspaper supported and distributed by around sixty NUT divisions and associations, but, before an issue it put out just before 16 June, it had not appeared for some time.

Opposing the amendment, Pat Murphy pointed out that CT is a newspaper and not a representative organisation. CT’s editorial board was last elected more than two years ago and includes people who voted against further national strikes after 30 November.

The amendment was overwhelmingly defeated, although it got support from SWP members present.

The new ballot of NUT members, to authorise non-strike action and strikes with the NASUWT on issues other than pensions, must be won, and with a good turnout. However, we must organise for more than to give the top union leaders a good mandate and rely on them to use it well.

Some delegates argued that we should not “look backwards” at previous defeats. In fact, we must not only secure a yes vote but learn from the very recent past and create a network which can drive an effective strategy and a programme of action that can win.

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# Unemployed? Depressed? Just snap out of it!

Dole Queue Diary  
By Ella Middleton



Despite my university education, my job training, my various other random qualifications, and the endless volunteering I have undertaken, I am at the Job Centre, again.

It is a familiar routine: sign on, see your advisor, show job search activity, don’t be more than five minutes late, don’t eat, drink, loiter, or talk on your mobile and please leave quietly if it so happens you are left without any money because of “technicalities”.

All around is the unknowing glare of shame that people possess in their eyes having most probably watched the Jeremy Kyle show or read this morning’s *Sun*. They tend to believe that they are the sole cause for their unfortunate circumstances, and are treated as such by their advisors.

I overheard several verbal interactions in the short time I was there recently, but one in particular struck me as particularly incredi-

ble. It showed a complete lack of sensitivity, confidentiality and understanding on the behalf of the “job seekers advisor”.

A “signer”, as the people who claim Job Seeker’s Allowance are generically referred to by the Job Centre staff, was speaking with his “advisor” just in front of where I was told to sit. I wasn’t sitting so close that if the advisor had spoken more discreetly I would necessarily have heard, but I could hear, and this is what was said, more or less:

The signer was telling his advisor that he was unable to get a job as he was severely depressed. He explained that when he went to his interviews the potential employers would tell him that he looked unwell; he felt that he was at a dead end, and needed help.

It’s a familiar, vicious, self-perpetuating circle that anyone can find themselves in, depressed because out of job, out of job because depressed.

When listening to this man’s difficulties the advisor did not suggest any helplines, referrals or support that this man could seek, but merely had the common base attitude that unfortunately is all too frequent: you simply need to “snap out of it!”

The man, in his clear state of inertia, with shoulders bent over and head down, said, “But how?” A question that psychologists, psychiatrists and neurologists have been trying to answer for a substantial amount of time.

Yet the advisor did have an answer: “You need to spruce yourself up and put a smile on your face.” There — all better!

The economic downturn and the subsequent negative mental states people are experiencing is not because of the redistribution of wealth that is being concentrated in the hands of the few, sucking work opportunities out of both the private and public sector.

It is rather because fel-las like this one just need to “snap out of it”, and “put a smile on their face”, irrespective of the fact that machines have more sense of purpose in the work place than he.

## Occupy Finsbury Square evicted

On the night of 14 June Occupy protesters were evicted from Finsbury Square by bailiffs supported by the Metropolitan Police.

At 1:00am bailiffs put metal fencing around the site and proceeded to clear away the tents and evict people.

The camp, at that point

occupied by around fifty people, had become home to a number of homeless people. Paul Convery, Islington council’s executive member for community safety, claimed that “we have been speaking to them and offering advice and support to those who need assistance.”

However, an Occupy London statement notes

that “at 5am there were still about six people on the pavement outside, unwilling to leave their home with no appropriate alternative.”

It is unlikely, in the midst of a housing crisis, to a backdrop of cuts and with rising homelessness, that anyone got the sort of help they needed.

## Sex education under attack

From the Tower Hamlets Class Struggle bulletin

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and East London Mosque have launched phase two of their anti-SRE (sex and relationship education) campaign in Tower Hamlets.

Following a public campaign against schools using the Channel Four resource *Living and Growing*, a DVD that is accused of “priming” children for sex because it shows a brief animation of sexual intercourse, a petition has been launched to ban the programme of study many

schools replaced *Living and Growing* with *The Christopher Winter Project*. This too has been termed “sexually explicit”, by which they must mean “honest”. It would seem that if SPUC and SRE Islamic have their way, no SRE will be taught in schools.

SPUC has been opportunistic in its targeting of our borough for its ‘safe at school’ campaign. Those of us who work tirelessly to make sure that our young people actually are safe at school, and outside of it, know that clear, honest, sex and relationship education is essential for children’s physical and emotional health and well-being and all the research proves it. We live in a world where

children in year 6 have access to pornography on their phones and are using in the playground sexually violent language they’ve heard on TV. They already know about sex; how could they not. It’s our job to make them feel safe in their knowledge; to give them the information they need and are ready for in order that children can make choices and feel confident in themselves. We do that by taking our lead from the child, not the church or the mosque.

Education workers need to stand up to this bullying and explain to parents, patiently but firmly, why we will not compromise on this — because it is too important.

# Discussions with the Greek left



Dave Osler

**The decision of Antarsya — a block of ten Trotskyist, Maoist and dissident Stalinist organisations — to run a slate in last weekend's Greek election split opinion on the British far left. In the event, it secured just 0.33% of the poll, leaving the purpose of the exercise, even on its own terms, open to obvious question.**

A majority of activists favoured critical support for Syriza. Socialist Resistance, the British group linked to the Fourth International, took that stance even though their Greek comrades participated in Antarsya.

By contrast, the Socialist Workers' Party swung fully behind its Greek sister party SEK, Antarsya's largest component. But unusually, some of its members came perilously close to public support for Syriza.

I spoke to leading SEK cadre Panos Constantinou on a recent visit to Athens, after meeting him at a small open-air meeting ten days before the poll.

The discussion had limitations. My Greek is non-existent, his English is strong but not perfect. To make things worse, the background noises from a public square rendered part of the recording inaudible. So what follows should not be held up as a definitive statement of SEK's positions.

I started by asking him whether Antarsya were standing on an explicitly revolutionary programme.

"No, it is an anti-capitalist programme, based on the workers' movement and how we can respond to the capitalist attacks on the lives of millions of workers in this country," he replied. "We say that the way forward is to say to the Troika, we don't accept your blackmail."

Antarsya argues for the nationalisation of the banks under workers' control, without compensation for the bankers. It also demands a halt to mass sackings, cancellation of the debt, and the restoration of previous income and social security levels.

At one stage in the conversation, he even accepted my description of Antarsya's platform as a transitional programme, although he did not seem to theorise that in the way orthodox Trotskyists would understand the term, for instance not counterposing it to an overtly revolutionary platform.

I asked if he was aware of the Socialist Alliance in Britain in the early 2000s, and whether Antarsya could fairly be compared to that formation. Constantinou believes the answer is no, if only because Antarsya has rather more social weight.

That may or may not be a sober assessment; I don't know enough about the Greek situation to judge. But it is worth pointing out that in electoral terms, Antarsya has had no more backing at the ballot box than various British Trot electoral fronts in recent years. Then again, electoral support is hardly the decisive yardstick.

## ORGANIC

**"Our organisation has organic links with the workers' movement and influence in some of the unions, in hospitals, in education," he insisted.**

"We played a central role in the organisation of mass workers' demonstrations during the fight against the memorandum. We were the organisers of the big demonstrations.

"The bureaucracy was forced to call a general strike, hundreds of thousands of people joined the demonstrations and Antarsya was organising these demonstrations."

Pressing the point, I asked if the disparate nature of Antarsya led to any internal tension.

"The left is much weaker in the UK, we have a stronger left, reformist and revolutionary," he replied. At its peak in 2010, Antarsya secured almost 100,000 votes in regional elections, securing some elected representatives at local level. His key point was that rising self-confidence in the Greek working class is being reflected on the revolutionary left.

"The SWP in Greece has changed and we know that. We changed because we decided to be part of this workers' movement."

So who did he consider to be Antarsya's principal audience? "Our main audience is a working class, a young audience. Militants. There are thousands in this country," he said.

In particular, Antarsya looks to the hundreds of thousands of workers that took part in the recent spate of largely 24-hour general strikes. As a result, it does not target propaganda to the base of either the Communist Party, known locally as KKE, or Syriza.

Interestingly, Constantinou does not assess the current picture as a pre-revolutionary situation in the classic Leninist sense. The bourgeoisie is still able to impose its preferred form of government, although it is having trouble implementing its economic programme, on account of working-class resistance.

"On the other hand, to think about a revolutionary situation, we have to think about our relation as Antarsya to the workers' movement, defined not just in factories, but neighbourhoods, other workplaces, everywhere.

"The prospect is that we can very quickly move into a revolutionary situation, but this means we have to build a political movement. The difference in Greece is that the reformists are strong and we have the renewal of reformism, and hopes of the movement for a left alternative, a left government.

"We have to relate to people and explain that this is illusion. This will be take some time. You have to be patient with these people, they are not enemies. They are comrades in struggle. But we have to win them."

Constantinou sees the main danger right now as emanating from fascism, and not the prospect of a military coup. This perspective will hold good for as long as the ruling class is still able to push for a bourgeois solution from above and can reasonably hope to win Syriza and KKE over to their side if either were to participate in government.

Finally, I ask why Antarsya did not decide to back Syriza on June 17. Constantinou says that SEK has in the past not had any problem with critical support for reformism. In the 1990s, it supported Synaspismos — which now makes up the bulk of the forces inside Syriza — without illusions.

"Now we are not in the 1990s. We are in the next phase of the movement. We have the ability to appeal to the masses of the working class."

**Moreover, the KKE still has a larger and more radical membership than Syriza. So coming out for the latter would isolate Antarsya from the KKE rank and file.**

# Fascists harass Glasgow activists. Anti-fascists arrested



Scotland  
By Dale Street

**Police arrested four anti-fascists in Glasgow on Saturday 16 June as a mob of around twenty or so Scottish Defence League (SDL) supporters staged a "protest" in the city centre and harassed members of the Glasgow Palestine Human Rights Campaign.**

For several weeks prior to last Saturday, the Glasgow Committee to Welcome Refugees was building support for a protest at the eviction of asylum-seekers.

In the week immediately before the demonstration the SDL, Casuals United, and the BNP — all three of which overlap with one another — called on their supporters to mobilise against the event.

According to a post on the Casuals United website:

"Deranged Communists are doing a demo in Glasgow city centre tomorrow (Saturday) as they don't want illegal immigrants to be deported. They couldn't care less about these parasites being in our country, scrounging off us, and plotting to blow us up."

"Some patriot groups will be countering them to show them what we think of their idiotic plan."

Fascists threatened people setting up the demonstration, and made several attempts to attack and break it up. As the rally following the demonstration was finishing in George Square, police moved in, in order to disperse the crowd, threatening to use public order legislation if people did not leave. This was when the first arrest took place.

Having cleared the square of demonstrators, police then allowed (in fact: chaperoned) the SDL into the square in order to stage a fifteen-minute counter-protest.

The SDLers then moved down to Buchanan Street and began harassing the Glasgow Palestine Human Rights Campaign stall (the object of an attack by the SDL last year).

Police eventually arrived and moved the SDL on, effectively allowing them to march around the city centre with police protection. Another three anti-fascist protestors were arrested at this stage, before the police marched the SDL into a tube station for dispersal.

**In addition to organising a defence campaign if any of**

**those arrested are charged — at the time of writing this is unknown — the left needs to organise defence of its activities against what is hardening into a pattern of harassment by the SDL.**

• Abridged from [bit.ly/KJmHEs](http://bit.ly/KJmHEs)

## "A bit anti-Jewish"?

**Why do some people think that campaigning in solidarity with the Palestinians is "a bit anti-Jewish"? This is the question (supposedly) addressed by an article in the spring newsletter of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC).**

Of course, we can and should support Palestinian rights without being at all anti-Jewish. But there are many reasons why some people think that *the dominant form of what passes for Palestinian solidarity* is "a bit anti-Jewish" (or maybe rather more than just "a bit").

Some people may have found it "a bit anti-Jewish", for example, when the SPSC marked Holocaust Memorial Day by reading extracts from a play (*Perdition*) which claimed that the Holocaust was made possible by Zionist collaboration with the Nazis.

Commemorating another Holocaust Memorial Day by giving a platform to a pro-Hamas supporter of suicide bombings who has advocated that Israeli Jews should "go back to Germany" (Azzam Tamimi) might have struck some people as "a bit anti-Jewish" as well.

And then there is the SPSC's spirited defence last year of one of its members, charged and found guilty of racially motivated breach of the peace after abusing a Jewish student. (His appeal, heard earlier this year, was thrown out in less than a minute.) This too might seem "a bit anti-Jewish" to some people.

But none of the above is dealt with in the article in the PSC newsletter — despite the fact that these represent the actual substance (or some of it, at least) of the charge of anti-semitism which is raised against a certain form of "Palestinian solidarity".

Instead, but all too predictably, readers of the article are treated to a particularly crass version of a Zionist conspiracy theory (i.e. in order to rebut the charge of anti-semitism, the writer employs a traditional anti-semitic trope).

"Those who accuse us of anti-semitism can be divided into

roughly two groups," explains the writer.

"One is calculating and prepared to use any lies to further their own interests," he continues, "the Israeli elite benefit from favoured relations with the EU and billions of dollars in aid from the USA." In other words, and more succinctly: rich Jews.

Included in this group are "many Israeli politicians (who) are well aware of the effect on someone's career of being labelled an anti-semite and exploit this fact ruthlessly whenever they can."

Anti-semitism, by this logic, is not a real phenomenon. It is a false accusation made in bad faith by "the Israeli elite" and "many Israeli politicians" in order to promote their own interests and stifle criticism of Israel.

The other group "who accuse us of anti-semitism" are "mainly Jews brought up on scare stories about how non-Jews are, by definition, anti-Jewish and ready at a moment's notice to turn on their Jewish neighbours."

"The complexity of history," the writer continues, without a trace of irony, "is blacked out by the Zionist censor's pen."

Even by the SPSC's own standards, this is a dire level of argument: somewhere in the world there is a Board of Zionist Censors, controlling everything read by Jews in order to ensure that they do not discover "the complexity of history".

Having dismissed to its own satisfaction accusations of anti-semitism as lacking in substance, SPSC can now continue with its vital building of "Palestinian solidarity", through the essential medium of protesting sporting events.

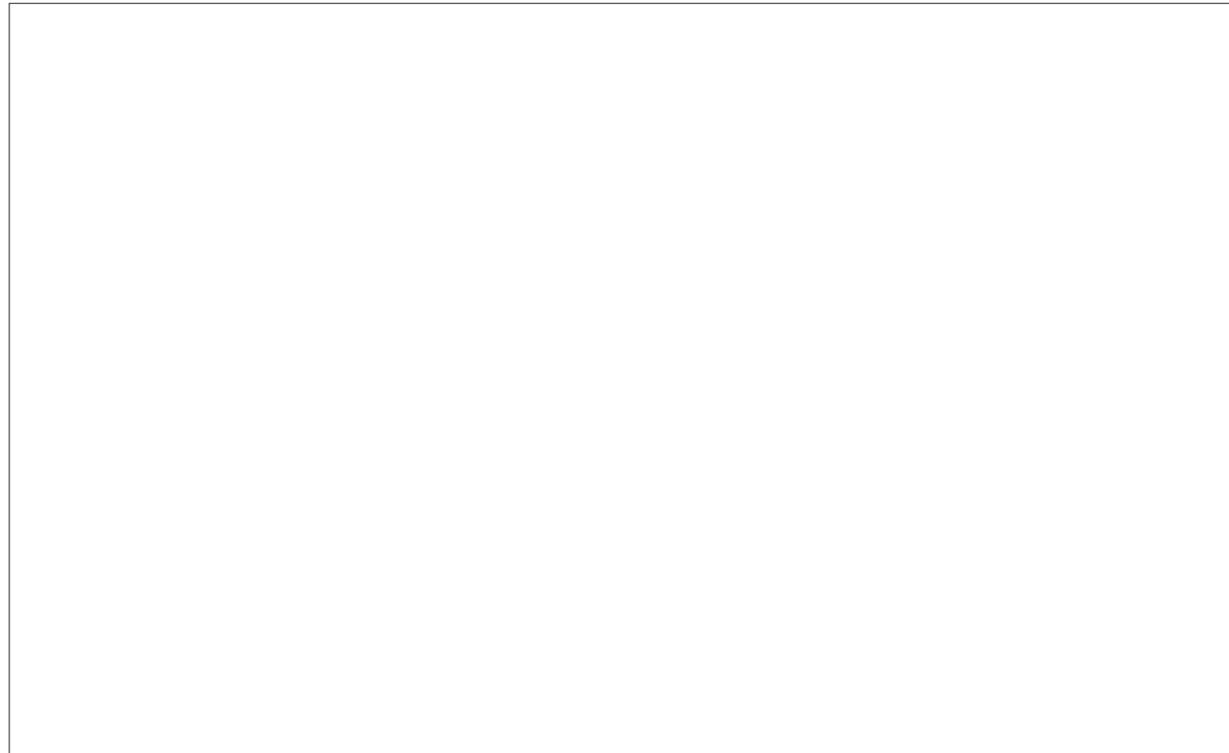
After last Saturday's Israel v Scotland Women's Euro qualifying game (cue chant: "Without guns, you're rubbish"), the SPSC has launched a retrospective campaign against Glasgow's Kingswood Bowling Club:

"Human rights activists and BDS activists only discovered through the pages of the ultra-Zionist *Jewish Telegraph*, and after the event, that an Israeli bowling team had played against a Scottish team at Kingswood Bowling Club in Glasgow last week."

"Please call or text the secretary or e-mail him and tell him courteously that you object to Kingswood Bowling Club hosting an Israeli team at the same time that Israel denies Palestinians enough water to maintain crops."

**Anyone wanting to know what a Zionist, and presumably therefore "ruthless", bowling team looks like can log on to: [bit.ly/Kx4ysa](http://bit.ly/Kx4ysa)**

• Abridged from [bit.ly/MICEHl](http://bit.ly/MICEHl)



**The Muslim Brotherhood expect to win the Presidential election. But what next?**

## Back the workers' movement! Oppose Egypt's military coup! Oppose the Brotherhood!

**A court of judges appointed by Egypt's disgraced former president, Hosni Mubarak, last week (June 13) dissolved the Islamist-dominated parliament elected last year — in the first proper elections in Egypt's recent history.**

Many oppositionists denounced the move as a coup d'état, as it leaves the army — the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which has ruled Egypt since Mubarak was deposed in February 2011 — in uncontested control of the country.

June 16-17 saw the second round of Presidential elections. But without the Parliament, which was elected to oversee the drafting of a new constitution (though a court earlier dissolved the Constituent Assembly set up by the Parliament), the status and of the new President — whoever wins — is dubious at best.

Although SCAF has promised to hand over power to the new president, it has issued a declaration granting itself sweeping powers over legislation and the introduction of a new constitution.

### AUTHORITY

**SCAF has also stripped the future president of any authority over the army. The same court ruled that Ahmed Shafiq, one of the two presidential candidates, and a politician close to Mubarak and the regime, widely decried as a "fuloul" — a remnant of the old regime — was legally entitled to stand.**

Oppositionists had contested that, since he is so closely associated with the Mubarak era, Shafiq's candidature was illegal. (These rulings followed a decision earlier in the week that the military police and security services are entitled to arrest and try civilians — which they have been doing anyway under Emergency legislation since 1981, just lately supposedly repealed).

Turnout in the presidential run-off is reportedly low — and in the first round was only around 44%. This is partly due, as most reports suggest, to a serious heat wave, which makes it difficult to be outside for long periods. But for sure it also reflects a widespread belief that neither Shafiq nor his opponent Mohammed Mursi of the Freedom and Justice Party (in reality the Muslim Brotherhood, a right-wing Islamist party) is worth voting for.

These events amount to a critical stage in the Egyptian revolution. In fact the army never relinquished power, and only removed its figurehead. Recently the trial of the former president came to a conclusion — sending him to jail but exonerating him of the worst charges brought against him; and this saw a resurgence of protests and the reoccupation of Cairo's Tahrir Square.

But Wednesday's coup reveals a decision by the military junta to pull back from its policy of controlled and limited

democratic transition. Possibly this is due to concern in elite circles about the growing power of the Muslim Brotherhood, though for most of the last eighteen months the Brothers have collaborated with the Supreme Council. Or, others suggest, it reflects a more general reassertion of Egypt's "deep state" — a very entrenched and secretive repressive apparatus (which is less concerned than its public face with the opinion of, for instance, Washington).

This is not, yet, a full-blooded military coup on the model of Chile in 1973. The popular movement remains strong and confident, able as it was to mobilise after the half-hearted conviction of Mubarak. The new workers' movement — over a million workers organised into new trade unions since the beginning of 2011 — remains militant.

### CHALLENGES

**As *Solidarity* goes to press the supporters of the Muslim Brothers are on the streets, expecting victory. However, whoever wins the Presidential election the popular movement faces challenges.**

If Shafiq wins — and there are fears of ballot rigging (which the regime has long expertise in organising) — it will be seen as a victory for the counter-revolution. Especially if the state is believed to have rigged the ballot, this may well lead to a renewal of mass street protests. And the political shape of those protests will depend on whether or not the Brothers decide to mobilise their base.

If Mursi wins, several scenarios seem possible. There must be a danger of a "full" military coup. Or the Brotherhood will seek to find a new *modus vivendi* with the Supreme Council which allows them to consolidate their strength.

The judicial ruling is blatantly undemocratic. The court claimed that around a third of the elected MPs were "illegal"; obviously they could have ruled simply in favour of by-elections in those seats, rather than dissolve the whole Assembly.

There has been justified alarm among secular oppositionists that the Parliament — and the short-lived Constituent Assembly it formed — was overwhelmingly dominated by Islamists. The ultra-conservative Nur Party was the second largest party after the FJP. But now a democratically elected Parliament has been dissolved by the military regime.

The workers' and popular movements must fight for democratic rights, attempting to put our movement's stamp on the protests against the military. In such a fight the Muslim Brotherhood leadership and its party machine are not our allies.

**The labour movement internationally must show the Egyptian labour movement and the genuine democrats in Egypt our solidarity.**

## Help the AWL raise £20,000

**On 9 June, the North East London branch of the AWL hired the tenants' hall on the estate where one of our members lives and showed the Gillo Pontecorvo film *Burn*, a 1969 classic starring Marlon Brando and dealing with issues of imperialism, racism, and class struggle.**

Members of the branch helped make food, and we invited friends and contacts of the organisation. We charged £8 (£4 unwaged) for tickets, which included food and drink. As well as raising £70 for the AWL funds, the event was a good chance for AWL members to spend some time together outside of more formal political settings.

Organising the event took relatively little effort; all we needed was the space, projection facilities, and couple of people to look after the "catering".

If you're already an AWL member, why not discuss organising a similar event in your branch?

**You can also help our fundraising drive by:**

- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at [www.workersliberty.org/resources](http://www.workersliberty.org/resources) and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.
- Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL") or do it online at [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate)
- Organising a fundraising event
- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college or campaign group.
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

More information: 07796 690 874 / [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Rd, SE1 3DG.



**Total raised so far: £14,972**

We raised a really good total of £1,477 this week — all from one-off donations. Thanks to Dan, Dave, Ed, and Mark.

### Standing order authority

To: ..... (your bank)

..... (its address)

.....

Account name: .....

Account no.: .....

Sort code: .....

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

**Amount: £ ..... to be paid on the ..... day of**

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

Date .....

Signature .....

# The future belongs to the left that dares

By Theodora Polenta

**A spectre is haunting Greece: the spectre of Syriza. All the powers of old Europe and the world have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this spectre.**

Neoliberals Merkel and Schäuble, social-democrat Hollande, unelected officials of IMF and EU, pink-green Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and the presidents of Slovakia and of Malaysia, all united in ideological terrorism and blackmail.

Yet Syriza won 27% of the votes on 17 June and was only narrowly defeated by ND [New Democracy, Greek equivalent of the Tories].

This historical challenge should not to be dismissed as a mere illusion or as an attempt to create a “new Pasok”.

The heavy artillery of the psychological warfare was the economic terrorism exercised by “our European partners”. In response to the 6 May electoral results Brussels arbitrarily withdrew one billion of the agreed loan instalment. The 4.6 billion euros that were paid went straightly to pay interest and maturing bonds. The one-billion shortfall caused chaos in public funds — hospitals with no supplies, cancer patients with no drugs.

This was a chilling warning from the Troika to Greece about their understanding of dialogue and other surplus-to-requirements democratic procedures such as elections. The message was clear to the Greek people: “next time, you should vote correctly if you do not want to starve”.

The atmosphere of chaos, dissolution, and fear was thickened by the rise of the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn and its attacks against refugees, immigrants, and left wing trade unionists and activists.

Despite it all, on 17 June the Greek working class gave the left in its highest-ever percentage. This was the first time in Greece’s history that the left had gained one third of the Greek electorate.

Temporarily the shock doctrine therapy seems to have partially worked. A new pro-memorandum government is about to be formed. But the foundations of this government are very fragile, and its life is likely to be short. The storm is about to erupt.

A record 37.5 percent abstained. That reflected broad-based disgust with the entire political establishment, as well as the inability of many voters to pay for traveling from their home villages to the cities and back in order to vote.

Only 40 percent of those who did vote backed the parties overtly supporting the memorandum, ND and Pasok. They have a parliamentary majority only thanks to the 50-seat bonus ND receives as the winning party under Greece’s electoral laws.

Such a government will have no popular mandate for its policies.

A coalition government of ND and Pasok with the Democratic Left (DL) is the most likely outcome. The two old pro-memorandum parties know that a coalition government of them alone would be too exposed.

Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos initially stated that Pasok would not participate in a coalition government unless Syriza also did. Journalists and other “voices of reason” joined in, asking Syriza to be responsible and help in save the country.

The demand on Syriza to join the coalition was preposterous after the aggressive anti-communist witch-hunt conducted against it since 6 May.

During the electoral campaign ND accused Syriza of being the party of the drachma, of harbouring terrorism, of liaising with Trotskyists, Maoists, and other communist forces to start urban guerrilla warfare, of supporting the revolutionary semi-paramilitaries, and of siding with the anarchists and “hooded youth” and other demons.

Syriza rightly and instantly rejected any participation in a pro-memorandum government.

In order to form a government with some chance of sur-

vival (though nobody is talking of a lifespan of four years), ND and Pasok need a third partner untainted by the crimes of the two and a half last years.

That is the role of the Democratic Left (DL), which split from Syriza in 2010.

The new coalition will hope for the so-called re-negotiation of the memorandum, or “gradual disengagement”, as DL leader Fotis Kouvelis terms it.

The carrot and stick approach has been initiated. The otherwise intransigent Foreign Minister of Germany, Guido Westerwelle, and the stone faced IMF president Christine Lagarde, have stated that now that the Greeks have “chosen the European route”, some aspects of the memorandum could be up for negotiation and the time schedules can be rethought.

The stick is wielded by Merkel and Schäuble, who clearly state that the hard core of the memorandum is not up for negotiation. “It is no time to make concessions in Greece”, said a German government representative: “the timetable for Greece remains as agreed... It is critical now to convince the Troika that Greece will honour its commitments and fully implement the agreed reforms”.

Both EU leaders and ND and Pasok leaders are caught in a dilemma here. Any concessions will be seen by Greeks to be the result of Syriza’s strong showing, and so will tend to increase support for Syriza. Lack of concessions will discredit ND and Pasok further.

In any case, the following measures are certain to be implemented promptly by the new coalition government, with or without DL:

1. Cuts have already been agreed and planned of 11.5 billion euros from pensions, welfare benefits, closing of schools and hospitals
2. Salary reductions and the further dismantling of labour law
3. Increase in electricity bills
4. Dismissal of 150,000 public sector workers and privatisation of 50 billion euros’ worth of public assets (infrastructure, water, energy, natural resources)
5. Creation of a special fund abroad where the country’s revenues will be directed to cover obligations to bond holders. Only if anything is left over will the diminishing wages, pensions, unemployment benefits and social services be paid for.

Interestingly, the creditworthiness of Greece has not been altered by the election results. The ratings agency Standard & Poor’s still estimates at 33% the probability of Greece being expelled from the euro.

## THE LEFT

**This election should not be assessed via the limited perspective of party patriotism and a small shopkeeper attitude. Syriza managed to become the major vehicle by which which the people’s anti-memorandum anger and wish to fight back and demand a decent future was expressed.**

The working class chose Syriza for a various of reasons, including the absence of a revolutionary party, but mainly because it insisted on a left united front (albeit in a distorted way, by including the pro-system Greens and DL in its call) and on the formation, here and now, of a left government that would scrap the memorandum and throw the Troika out of the country.

Syriza was seen by the majority of the working class as the medium to smash the memorandum and open the way for a progressive development of Greece, even if it was not fully understood or formalised what that development can be.

The social dynamism encompassed in the 27% vote for Syriza well exceeds the political reformist limitations of Syriza and presents the whole left with a historical opportunity.

The revolutionary socialists who are within, or orient to,

Syriza must fight for it to radicalise and sharpen its politics especially on the preparation of the Greek working-class movement for a possible expulsion of Greece from the euro-zone and EU.

Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras correctly dismissed without a second thought the possibility of Syriza participating in a national coalition government. He committed himself to fight against the memorandum, but only from the position of an opposition in parliament.

Yet the working-class, neighbourhood, and youth activists who voted for Syriza are looking to continue their struggle. They will go back to their workplaces, back to their neighbourhoods, back to their universities, so that the memorandum gets scrapped and the new government gets overthrown as soon as it is formed.

The left in Syriza, as expressed by Panagiotis Lafazanis, has reaffirmed the necessity of remobilising Syriza’s social base and escalating the struggle, both inside parliament but also and mainly outside parliament. Lafazanis re-emphasized that the main duty of Syriza now is to ensure that the memorandum and austerity measures will be resisted and overthrown by a militant and combat working-class, neighbourhood, and youth movement.

The gap between Tsipras and Lafazanis portrays clearly the battle that is to be fought within Syriza between the tendency to buckle down and convert Syriza into a tame left social-democratic force, and the tendency to persevere and transform Syriza into a serious fighting party, even if only fighting only for serious reforms. This outcome of this fight cannot be predetermined and its importance should not be underestimated.

It is a duty for the revolutionary left to give up the role of an observer, spotting Syriza’s reformist statements and social-democratic deviations in a self-indulgent way, or dreaming of a Syriza with a socialist programme or of a different left government of KKE and Antarsya that would implement a pure revolutionary programme.

Unfortunately the assessments of the election from both KKE (the diehard-Stalinist Greek Communist Party) and Antarsya have fallen into that trap. (Antarsya is a coalition containing some Trotskyist groups, including SEK, which is linked to the SWP in Britain, and Okde-Spartakos, which is linked to the NPA in France. Some other Trotskyist groups are in Syriza — DEA and Kokkino — or orient to it — Xekinima).

KKE assess the electoral results as negative and a step backward for the working-class movement.

According to KKE, the electoral result helps promote and support the plans of the bourgeoisie in the country to replace the rotation of the two bourgeois parties ND and Pasok with ND and Syriza, now that Syriza has absorbed a large part of the electoral base of Pasok. Syriza is a useful tool for the ruling class because it controls and manipulates the working-class movement and confines it within the constraints of pro-EU ruling-class ideology.

KKE correctly recognises the dangers of the Golden Dawn neo-Nazis becoming rooted in communities and their establishment in parliament as a credible force, it does not draw any conclusions, and does not recognise the need for a united front of left wing organisations, neighbourhood movements, refugee organisations and others to confront and smash Golden Dawn.

KKE strikes a martyr-like pose of defiance, pledging to persist in the rightness of the party line until the working class matures, realises the “accuracy of the party’s predictions and analysis”, and joins KKE.

NAR, one of the major components of Antarsya, follows a similar line in its assessment of the election.

According to NAR, Syriza’s pro-EU stance led to it adopting a watered-down “renegotiation of the memorandum”. Syriza’s stance hinders the political consciousness of the working class and places barriers to the development of the working class movement.

## What is at stake in Greece. Family living on the streets of Athens

NAR assesses the electoral decline of KKE as negative, because it has led to the empowerment of the “pro-EU reformism” of Syriza.

It is one-sided and simplistic to dismiss Syriza collectively as the “reformist pro-EU left”. It closes any discussion of a united front of the left in the industrial and political sphere to confront the memorandum and the attacks from the ruling class bloc.

The NAR statement ends in a more promising tone by stating its commitment to start initiatives for a united front of all the fighting left forces on an anti-capitalist programme.

### FUTURE STRUGGLE

**The great success of Syriza reflects a new stage in the struggle of the Greek labour movement to overthrow capitalism. The main axes of struggle should be the following:**

Fight for the development and escalation of industrial and social struggles against the coming attacks from the government and the Troika

Fight for the overthrow of the new coalition government

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

Fight for a united front and cooperation of the left in the industrial and in the political sphere.

Fight for a government of the left and a workers’ government.

Fight to alert and prepare the working class for the prospect and the consequences of Greece being expelled from the eurozone or EU.

Fight for a program of transitional demands based upon workers’ self-organisation and workers’ control. It should include the nationalisation of the banks and the main pillars of the economy (energy sector, transportation, utility services, health sector) without compensation to the capitalists and under workers’ control.

Fight alongside the European working class and particularly the working class of south Europe hard hit by the capitalist crisis, for the overthrow of the capitalism and the establishment of a United Socialist States of Europe.

Paraphrasing Tsipras’s election statement, the future does not belong to the forces of fear and the dark forces of decaying capitalism. The future belongs to the new carriers of hope.

**The future belongs to the revolutionary left. The revolutionary left interprets the world in order to radically change it, to make way for the power of workers, socialism and communist liberation. The future lies with the revolutionary left that will dare, with the movement that will fight for the struggles that are to be won.**

# Fight for Euro-democracy

By Martin Thomas

**The programme of the Greek left coalition Syriza is a challenge (though an incomplete one) to EU policy as well as to Greek policy.**

It demands a change in EU policy away from enforced cuts and enforced destruction of worker-protection laws.

The left across Europe should take up this challenge, and spell out a full and coherent alternative.

Both because democracy is important in its own right, and because calls for change in EU economic policy spin in a void if there is no measure of democracy at a European level to allow them traction, the left’s alternative must include proposals for democracy.

In quiet times the EU leaders are happy to let the feeble democratic element of EU politics, the European Parliament, play. In the crisis the last thing they bother about is what the European Parliament says.

EU leaders have set up a system, the “European Semester”, under which EU governments must submit their budgets to the European Commission each year, to get either approval or instructions to add further cuts or marketising reforms.

If Syriza wins power in Greece and implements its policy, the European Central Bank, an unelected body, notionally “outside politics”, threatens to expel Greece from the eurozone.

This Euro-arrogance threatens to throw people into the arms of right-wing nationalists.

Already groups like the Front National in France, Geert Wilders’ movement in the Netherlands, Golden Dawn in Greece, and Ukip in Britain, are growing.

To try to counter them with left-wing *nationalist* alternatives is hopeless. The programme of rebuilding barriers between nations, and seeking a way out through more unrestrained nation-against-nation economic competition, “belongs” to the right wing. Left-wingers who adopt that programme and dress it up in left-wing clothes will be trapped into being “left cover” for the right-wingers.

As Marxists, we advocate a more responsive, accountable, and worker-based form of democracy than any parliamentary system. We advocate a democracy of workers’ councils, with the right of recall over delegates, the fusion of legislative and executive powers, and officials paid workers’ wages.

That working-class democracy can operate only in tandem with economic democracy. It will not emerge through communal meditation on the relative advantages of different constitutional blueprints. It will come as working-class struggles create new democratic structures from the ground up, in the first place as means for coordinating struggles.

Europe-wide, we are far from that level of struggle now. Democratic demands from the left now should be geared round the contradictions and points of leverage in existing realities, not a future blueprint.

Leon Trotsky sketched such an approach when writing an “action programme for France” in 1934: “A single assembly must combine the legislative and executive powers... Deputies would be elected on the basis of local assemblies, constantly revocable by their constituents, and would receive the salary of a skilled worker... A more generous democracy would facilitate the struggle for workers’ power”.

For the European Union, a similar approach would mean sovereignty over EU affairs for the elected European Parliament. The present unelected “executive”, the European Commission, should be replaced by an executive elected by and accountable to the European Parliament.

A democratic programme must also be more respectful of national and local autonomies than today’s EU often is.

We want expropriation of high finance across Europe and its reorganisation into a democratically-controlled public banking, insurance, and pension service. We want “levelling-up” of social provision and workers’ rights across Europe.

Those demands imply some economic “centralisation”. Within that, we want central EU bodies to control national budgets even less than we want Westminster to control local government budgets in Britain.

**As Frederick Engels explained, correcting over-centralist views which Marx and he had earlier held: “throughout the [French] revolution up to [1799], the whole administration of the départements, arrondissements and communes consisted of authorities elected by, the respective constituents themselves, and these authorities acted with complete freedom within the general state laws... this provincial and local self-government became the most powerful lever of the revolution...”**

# Marley as artist and activist

Jade Baker looks at the life of Bob Marley and how it is portrayed in a new biopic of the musician, directed by Kevin MacDonald.

**Bob Marley was and remains one of the world's most popular musicians. He was also an advocate for the rights of black people, spoke up against poverty and a fighter against western oppression. *Bob Marley*, the film, tells the story well.**

The film touches most poignantly on the conflict Marley's mixed-race identity posed and the effect it had on his creative output and ideological outlook later on in life. It is also the story of the poverty-stricken and reggae-infused world of the beautiful and historically beleaguered country Jamaica.

The first people to inhabit Jamaica were the Tainos, believed to be of South American ancestry. The island was first colonised by the Spanish, who established settlements in 1509 and brutally enslaved the Tainos; the British then claimed the island as a colony in 1661.

Under the Spanish many Tainos took their own and their babies' lives. A consequent lack of free labour made Jamaica a financial burden to Spain, and so, African slaves were bought to the island from 1517. The British colonisers made themselves prosperous by using the hyper-exploitation of human slavery to create a thriving agriculture of cacao, coffee and most importantly sugarcane.

Over one million slaves were transported from Africa to Jamaica. Their full emancipation was not realised until 1834.

In 1938, Jamaica experienced "sugar riots", a huge struggle for rights, improved working conditions and standard of living. After the riots, a new Jamaica and a new politics began to evolve. Two new political parties were born: the social democratic People's National Party (PNP) and the conservative Jamaican Labour Party (JLP). The country won independence from British rule in August 1962.

It was in receipt of this history that Nesta Robert Marley was born in 1945.

The historical narrative is not explicitly touched upon in the film; viewers are left to draw their own conclusions about how it must have impacted on Bob Marley.

## TRENCHTOWN

**Against a background of lush green forest and the vivid yet warm colours of Jamaica's run down towns, MacDonald paints a picture of Marley's poor beginnings in Trench Town, Kingston. The main focus is Marley's rise to immense fame and stature, from very humble beginning.**

Unbeknown to many fans Marley was mixed race, the son of a white English plantation overseer, Norval Marley. Cedella Booker, Marley's mother, once said of Norval: "He told me he loved me, and I believe that he did. He was always honest with me in that time. He told me he was the black sheep of his family, because the Marleys did not like black people, but Norval liked them very much."

Yet Norval just about turned up to name his son at the birth, then absented himself not long after.

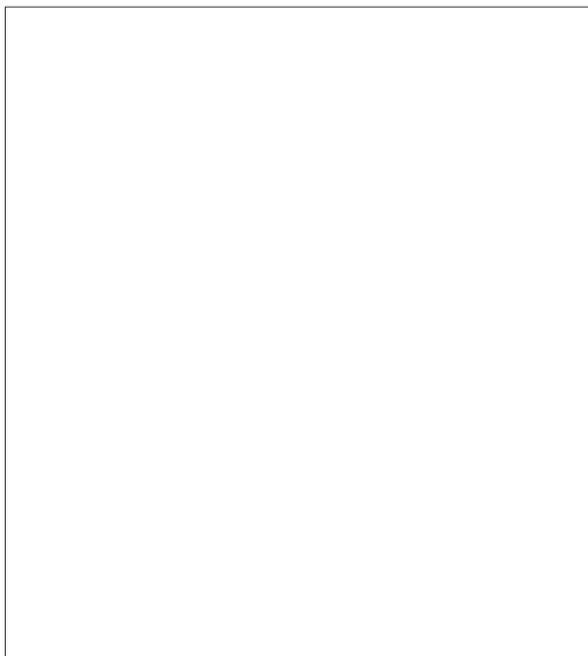
At the time of Jamaican independence when Marley was a teenager the country was 77 per cent black, 20 per cent mixed race, 1 per cent white and 2 per cent Asian. Often neither the white nor black community accepted mixed race or "mulatto" people. Black Jamaicans were suspicious of their white roots and the white people did not view them as equals. Marley was exposed to this anti-mulatto prejudice constantly during his youth.

But Marley acquired a unique view of the world, feeling the general oppression of being a poor black person at the hands of exploiters, growing rich off the work of his people. He also felt the utter contempt the black community felt for the white race and all that they stood for. This private pain is said to have inspired Marley's music.

Marley's first single written when just 16 years-old (and shown in the film), contains an astoundingly aware lyric for someone of his age. 'Judge Not' says, "I know that I'm not perfect/ And that I don't claim to be/ So before your point your fingers/ Be sure your hands are clean".

Marley was conflicted by his racial identity, declaring in 1975: "My father was white and my mother black, you know. Them call me half-caste, or whatever. Well, me don't dip on nobody's side. Me don't dip on the black man's side nor the white man's side. Me dip on God's side, the one who create me and cause me to come from black and white, who give me this talent."

Some say it was this sense of abandonment and persecution that led Marley into the comforting ideals of Rastafarianism. It was a black religion that believed Haile Selassie I of Ethiopia was a black king who Marcus Garvey prophesied would deliver redemption for the black race. On becoming a Rasta, Marley developed a strong allegiance to



black culture and dedication to spreading the ideology of Pan-Africanism.

Marley was introduced to the Rasta belief in the early 1960s by musicians and friends in Trench Town. But Marley was a missionary for a personal and collective identity; for him "Rasta" was a word that signified a history of racial oppression, but also defining a community beyond the language of race.

## COMMENDABLE

**Although it is commendable, and even a socialist ideal, to live free of the language of race and to want one common humanity, it is a shame that Marley's ideal is embedded within religion, one which believed one privileged, unelected monarch (or living god as the belief has it), will liberate black people.**

And like most religions, sadly, Rasta does not grant freedom and equality to all. It is not free from patriarchy.

The film emphasises the role Marley tried to play in raising the consciousness of black people to their oppression on his tours around Africa. During the Kenya tour in 1978, he began to read large quantities of black consciousness literature, including biographies of Malcolm X and Angela Davis.

Marley emerges from the film as sincerely passionate about his general goal of liberating the global black community from the clutches of the white oppressor but as a little more relaxed about the troubles in his own homeland. He seems to take no stance on either side of the political battle in Jamaica (between social democrats and conservatives).

His lack of position on home-soil politics, issues about for instance the living standards and political ideology of Jamaica, is quite disappointing. And the film is not critical of his laid-back approach — it seems this was permissible for someone striving for the larger goal of liberation for black people.

On 22 April 1978 Marley was "obliged" to play the One Love Peace Festival, an attempt to quell sectarian gang fights in Jamaica, then almost on the verge of civil war.

The film shows scenes from the festival. The show reaches a climax when Marley controversially, and you could argue bravely, drags the social democratic leader of the PNP Michael Manley, up on stage alongside the conservative JLP leader Edward Seaga and makes them shake hands. This action may be politically questionable (why not use the platform to promote the interests of Jamaica's poor?) but it seems a genuine attempt to help promote Jamaican unity, even for just a short while. The country was in crisis and it seems Marley felt this is what he could offer — the power of music to transcend political hostility for a moment in time. Unfortunately, the event did little to quell the political violence.

What was the political situation in Jamaica?

Michael Manley, the PNP Prime Minister, had had a successful trade union background and attempted to implement a brand of "democratic socialism" within Jamaica.

The positive outcome was a minimum wage; over 40,000 new housing units built; free education; equal pay for women; introduction of maternity leave; increases in pensions and poor relief; introduction of a workers' participation programme; introduction of free health care; new hospitals; expansion of day care centres; protection for workers against unfair dismissal and a programme against infant mortality.

However, the economy collapsed against a background

of world economic crisis: the price of oil increased nearly ten-fold during Manley's term; the sugar plantations, that the government had purchased, cost far too much to run; many businesses and upper class people left Jamaica in protest against the new left-wing government. Unemployment rose to a staggering 30 per cent by 1980.

Manley was re-elected against Seaga in 1976 but had to resort to a bail out from the IMF. To obtain loans, he promised to reduce the value of Jamaica's currency. This did not help the economy, and Jamaican living conditions rapidly declined. By March 1988, Manley refused to accept the conditions imposed by the IMF.

As the economy continued to spiral out of control violence broke out between supporters of both political parties. Over 750 died in the conflict.

Ex-member of The Wailers (Marley's original band) Peter Tosh was more principled on the night of the concert. After performing at the concert he directed anger at both Manley and Seaga: "Me glad all the Prime Minister is here and the Minister of Opposition and members of Parliament. We can't make the little pirate dem come here and rob up the resources for the country. Because that is what dem been doing a long bloodbath time...I am not a politician but I suffer the consequences."

"The police are still out there brutalising poor people," Tosh raged at Manley, who sat in the second row. "This concert here they call a peace concert ... but peace is the diploma you get in the cemetery on top of your grave."

"If I was the authorities I would close all the police stations."

All of this does not, however, minimise Marley's performance as an "historic" event in Jamaican culture and in the history of popular music.

From the *Jamaica Gleaner*, 22 April, 2009: "A packed stadium with over 32,000 spectators will never forget that night when, in a moment, everything halted and peace was no more an illusion. It was a time when our nation reeled under the violence of political war."

## PERSONAL LIFE

**The film is uncritical of the pain Marley must have caused in his private life, in his relationships with many partners and children. The daughter of his first and only wife, Rita Marley, who is featured in the film, is clearly hurt by the lack of relationship she had with her father and his disrespect towards her mother, as she perceived it.**

There is a hint of ironic moralism about Marley's sexual practice; the film is sure to report that Marley had 11 children by many different women.

At the same time, the film reports Marley's side of the argument — that he could not stay true to his marriage to Rita Marley because the institution of marriage is enshrined with western values; a seemingly legitimate reason which grew with his increasing consciousness. To be fair to Marley, he did marry the pregnant Rita when she was very young on the advice of one of his important father figures, Clement "Sir Coxson" Dodd, the founder of the famous Jamaican Studio One.

In the end how much of Marley's promiscuousness and attitudes towards women was to do with "subverting western values", and how much of it was to do with a little dose of fame and privilege-induced chauvinism, can only be left to conjecture.

Jamaican Miss World Cindy Breakspere tells the story of how Marley pursued her and asks "how could he not want the girl?" It is cringe-worthy, and particularly painful through any lens of feminist viewing. But we are all products of this society and it is not hard to see how someone riding the waves of extreme fame would be susceptible to the inducement of a mega ego and give in to the temptation of beauty and sex.

Marley is quoted at the end of the film saying that what he wants is for all people to be equal. Does he mean women too? I'm not sure.

Political people are sometimes criticised for not acting in the way they espouse people in society should treat each other. It is something to stew over. However, here it doesn't delegitimise the overall work and message of Marley.

Bob Marley is an absolute musical legend that, although a cliché, touched the hearts of many and got the hips of many more winding and grinding. It's also true to say that he did achieve his goal of adding to the black consciousness and liberation movement through the message in his music and he should be commended for that.

**The final scenes of the film track his final of fighting cancer and culminates in his funeral. The mammoth size of it, and the clear portrayals of gut-wrenching grief all across Jamaica, stands to show just what an impact he had made and how important he was to people.**

# Fighting “kill the gays” bigotry



By Paul Penny

**On Friday 15 June, LGBT rights activists staged a determined demonstration outside the Uganda High Commission in London.**

The rally, organised by the Movement for Justice, was protesting the UK’s deportation of Ugandan LGBT asylum seekers and the revival of the notorious “kill the gays” anti-homosexuality bill in Uganda.

Protestors cheered when news came through that 22-year-old Ugandan lesbian Linda Nakibuuke had won her appeal for refugee status in the UK. Linda had been detained since 11 April by the UK Border Agency who planned to deport her despite being told that she had been tortured for being a lesbian in Uganda.

LGBT asylum seekers face arrest, violence, torture or even death if deported back to Uganda.

**Last week, the Uganda Joint Christian Council called on the Ugandan Parliament to push ahead with the anti-homosexuality law to prevent what they called “an attack on the Bible and the institution of marriage”.**

## Gay marriage campaign: a wise tactical move

By Hannah Thompson

**Most self-respecting LGBT people do not aspire to religious doctrines to sanctify their relationships.**

Those who want to have a legal union are catered for by civil partnerships which ease some immigration restrictions for LGBT couples, make passing on and sharing property a bit easier, and in a society as a whole provide the social status of a “committed” relationship — in the communities that matter to us, of course.

But Stonewall’s campaign for gay marriage rights is not just about the practical application of recognition of LGBT relationships under the Church, it does something incredibly important in the fight against homophobia: it forces the church to challenge its relationship with the state and to give voice to its religiously-motivated homophobic bile out in the open. By hanging out its dirty laundry, the Church has weakened its credibility among the British population.

The new laws extending marriage to LGBT couples will not force any religious institution to perform same-sex marriages. That’s not what the Church of England and Catholic Church have been protesting about. The Church is terrified about damaging the straight sanctity of marriage in society

as a whole; it’s fighting to maintain its moral authority over the concepts of family and relationships, and beneath that, its authority to prescribe sexual norms and practises onto prescribed gender roles and identities.

This can be seen in the way the religious right have wrung their hands at the idea of LGBT “consummation”, and the inadequacy of gay sex in fulfilling the demand for ‘reproducing God’s gifts’ — of course, all straight couples immediately give up contraception after marriage in order to have children, it’s God’s permission they’ve all been waiting for! Such debates have illuminated right-wing religious ideas in the national media and forced the public to get to grips with their absurdity.

Stonewall is a liberal think tank, alienated from its radical roots and sycophantic to New Labour-ism. It has been criticised for transphobia and sexism, as well as being silent on the issues that really concern the LGBT working class; our safety, welfare and sexual freedom under austerity.

However, the gay marriage policy promise forced out of Cameron before the Tory-Lib Dem election victory, while it appeared to be by-passing the real issues, has opened a can of worms for Cameron and drawn out battle lines in society over LGBT equality. The debates long hidden behind the doors of elite institutions are out in the open.

Cameron cannot have expected to be having arguments about the relationship of Church and State when passing a policy intended to force Tory “family” norms on the gender-bending LGBT community.

Progressive C of E member Giles Fraser, famous for his opposition to the eviction of the Occupy camp outside St Paul’s Cathedral, wrote in the *Guardian* on Tuesday 12 June: “The church is no more a cartel of moral wisdom. It is...in hoc to bourgeois notions of respectability and prejudice.”

**The transparency these debates have raised is welcome.**

## PROUD TO BE RADICAL!

**A celebration of working-class, anti-capitalist politics and LGBT liberation, hosted by Women’s Fightback and Workers’ Liberty**

**7pm, Saturday 7 July (after London Pride Parade) at The Betsey Trotwood, 56 Farringdon Road, EC1R 3BL (near Farringdon tube)**

**An evening of discussion, drinks and celebration of anti-capitalist LGBT politics!**

# Sanctimonious sci-fi

Emma Rickman reviews Ridley Scott’s *Prometheus*, in cinemas now.

***Prometheus* is the prequel to the *Alien* trilogy; a series of battles in the bellies of spaceships with a creature that hatches through the rib cages of its human “wombs”.**

The (infertile) human heroine pursues the mother alien in a fight to the death, through three long sequels.

The predecessor in *Prometheus* to the heroine in *Alien* (Sigourney Weaver’s character) is a “believer”. She and her archaeologist husband board the ship *Prometheus* in search of “the engineers” (giant humanoid aliens that re-

semble statues of Greek heroes), who have left their symbols on artefacts across human history. The believers commit themselves to understanding the reason for the creation of mankind, and in the process unleash the alien which, as in the *Prometheus* myth, tears out the entrails of the crew members until there is no-one left to spawn from.

*Prometheus* is interesting in its narrative on man and “the Gods”, childbirth, parenthood, and sin. The heroine experiences an abortion while conscious; but, no, the foetus lives to save her life. The “child” of man, the robot, listens in on their dreams and plots his freedom.

Despite its beautiful cinematography and vast alien architecture, the film’s characters are unbelievable and hollow. The pilot is the worst token black character I’ve ever seen, gladly sacrificing himself, along with the other ethnic minority pilots, to save mankind from mass destruction. The believers cradle their crucifixes. The least robotic character is the robot.

The *Alien* series was terrifying because it mirrored our primitive fears about childbirth; the strangeness of having another living thing inside your body and growing, waiting to force itself painfully and possibly fatally out of your body and demand your life.

**But *Prometheus* is not frightening, it’s clichéd and sanctimonious; the Gods hate us; our children hate us; faith is better than ambition; original sin begets a monster; knowledge brings only destruction.**

# Remembering Kote Tsintsadze



**Kote Tsintsadze was a Bolshevik from the age of 17 (1904), and joined the Left Opposition in its fight against Stalinist bureaucratism in 1923. For his principled stand, he was jailed by Stalin in 1928, and died in prison, from tuberculosis, in 1930. Leon Trotsky wrote this memorial to Tsintsadze.**

**It took altogether extraordinary conditions like tsarism, illegality, prison, and deportation, many years of struggle against the Mensheviks, and especially the experience of three revolutions, to produce fighters like Kote Tsintsadze.**

His life was entirely bound up with the history of the revolutionary movement for more than a quarter of a century. He participated in all the stages of the proletarian uprising, beginning with the first propaganda circles up to the barricades and the seizure of power.

He carried out the onerous work of illegal organization, and any time revolutionists were caught in the net of the police he devoted himself to freeing them. Later he was head of the special Cheka commission in Caucasia, the very centre of power during the most heroic period of the proletarian dictatorship.

When the reaction against October had changed the composition and the character of the party apparatus and its policies, Kote Tsintsadze was one of the first to begin a struggle against these new tendencies hostile to the spirit of Bolshevism. The first conflict occurred during Lenin’s illness. Stalin and Ordzhonikidze, with the help of Dzerzhinsky, had pulled off their coup in Georgia, replacing the core of Old Bolsheviks with careerist functionaries of the type of Eliava, Orakhelashvili, and that ilk.

It was precisely on this issue that Lenin prepared to launch an implacable battle against the Stalin faction and the apparatus at the Twelfth Congress of the party.

## INDIGNANT

**On March 6, 1923, Lenin wrote to the Georgian group of Old Bolsheviks, of which Kote Tsintsadze was one of the founders: “I am following your case with all my heart. I am indignant over Ordzhonikidze’s rudeness and the connivance of Stalin and Dzerzhinsky. I am preparing for you notes and a speech...”**

Kote was not a theoretician. But his clear thinking, his revolutionary passion, and his immense political experience — the living experience of three revolutions — armed him better, more seriously and firmly, than does the doctrine formally digested by those who lack the fortitude and perseverance of Tsintsadze. Like Shakespeare’s Lear, he was every inch a revolutionary. His character revealed itself perhaps even more strikingly during the last eight years — years of uninterrupted struggle against the advent and entrenchment of the unprincipled bureaucracy.

Tsintsadze instinctively fought against anything resembling treachery, capitulation, or disloyalty... In the summer of 1928, speaking of himself and his illness, Kote wrote to me from Bakhchi-Sarai: “... many of our comrades and friends have been forced to end their lives in prison or somewhere in deportation. Yet in the final analysis this will be an enrichment of revolutionary history: a new generation will learn the lesson. The Bolshevik youth, learning from the struggle of the Bolshevik Opposition against the opportunist wing of the party, will understand on whose side the truth lies...”

Tsintsadze could write these simple yet superb words only in an intimate letter to a friend. Now that he is no longer alive, it can and must be published. It summarizes the life and the morale of a revolutionist of high order. It must be made public because the youth must be instructed not only by theoretical formulas but also by examples of revolutionary tenacity.

The Communist parties in the West have not yet brought up fighters of Tsintsadze’s type. This is their besetting weakness, determined by historical reasons but nonetheless a weakness. The Left Opposition in the Western countries is not an exception in this respect and it must well take note of it.

**Tsintsadze was the living negation of any kind of political careerism, that is, the inclination to sacrifice principles, ideas, and tasks of the cause for personal ends.**

(Abridged)

## “The freest party I ever belonged to”

**In *Solidarity* 242, we began series of recollections and reflections from activists who had been involved with the “third camp” left in the USA — those “unorthodox” Trotskyists who broke from the SWP USA in 1939/40 to form the Workers Party, and the tradition they built (the Independent Socialist League, and later the Independent Socialists and International Socialists).**

Here, we reprint an extract from a speech by Al Glotzer given at the “Oral History of the American Left Conference”, organised by the Tamiment Library in New York from May 6-7, 1983. The conference brought together many of the surviving leading activists of the third camp left to discuss and reflect on their experiences.

Al Glotzer was expelled from the Communist Party in 1928 for demanding an open and fair discussion of Trotsky’s views. Along with others such as Max Shachtman and James Cannon, he helped found the American Trotskyist movement. He was a founding member of the Workers Party when it was formed in 1940, and was at various times editor of its paper *Labor Action* and its magazine *New International*. When the Workers Party became the Independent Socialist League in 1949, Glotzer served as its National Secretary.

As Stalinism remained strong and expanding for three decades after 1949, Glotzer’s horror pushed him off track politically. He ultimately concluded that Stalinism was an inevitable outgrowth of the Russian revolution, which he came to see as being proto-dictatorial from the beginning. He died in February 2010, as a social democrat rather than a revolutionary Marxist.

While Workers’ Liberty would not agree with the anti-Leninist emphasis in Glotzer’s speech, it gives a rich flavour of the broadly libertarian culture of the early third camp organisations — a culture they combined with a democratic discipline and serious attitude to both theory and activist practise. Spellings have been changed to UK equivalents, and the speech has been abridged, but it is otherwise unedited.

To read more contributions to our series — from comrades including Dan La Botz, Herman Benson, Gabe Gabrielsky, Marty Oppenheimer, and David McReynolds — see [tinyurl.com/thirdcampsymposium](http://tinyurl.com/thirdcampsymposium)

Daniel Randall

**Maybe if all of you had attended your meetings like tonight we might have carried on the Workers Party.**

Van Heijenoort’s diary of his years with Trotsky in exile describes a discussion with Trotsky, before he left for the US [*Jean Van Heijenoort was one of Trotsky’s secretaries from 1932 to 1939*]. This was at the end of 1939, which should be a very familiar year for most of you sitting here.

The faction fight in the SWP had become very intense over the Russian question. And Trotsky said to Van Heijenoort: You must talk to Cannon and tell Cannon not to try to resolve the dispute in the Party by “organisational means”. That was one of the big complaints in the discussion — that the discussion on the Russian question was hindered by Cannon’s attempt to resolve the problem in his usual customary way of working a few organisational decisions and thus ending the discussion in the Party. But the curious thing about Trotsky’s suggestion to Van Heijenoort was that he himself had so sharpened the struggle with his book on the factional fight — *In Defence of Marxism* — that even without this caution to Cannon there is grave doubt whether anything could have ensued in the dispute except the split that came.

So the split was inevitable because the difference on the Russian question made the departure of our tendency in the SWP absolutely inevitable.

Now I don’t want to turn this nostalgic gathering into a reconsideration of politics and the program of the party and of the mistakes it made and how it could have maintained itself, because I think that would be absolutely fruitless. If we had a two day conference of the Workers Party itself similar to an old time plenum it would be under discussion for eight, ten, twelve hours, as was our custom, and maybe resolve a question or two. I doubt it very much.

Once the split took place, the discussion on the Russian question, begun originally in the SWP by Joe Carter as you will remember, joined by James Burnham, raised the question of bureaucratic collectivism first but made sure that the Party understood they were still for the defence of the Soviet Union, carried over in the WP where we began to consider what kind of state this was. And a great many people were still for the defence of the Soviet Union. Joe Carter, who took the lead in the WP in the beginning on the subject of collectivism, questioned the matter of defence.

As it turned out the leading person in the discussion became Shachtman. We completed the discussion which began in the SWP. We had a discussion for several years in the WP that was not had in any organisation any of us had ever previously ever belonged to. With the result that we became known as those who advocated the theory of bureaucratic collectivism, of Stalinism as a counter-revolutionary

current, and of Soviet society as a prison of the working class.

None of this is new to you. I cite it only to state that the adoption of the position of bureaucratic collectivism really set us in motion to question the notion of theoretical views that we had over the years and which were not before us at the time and developed and went on and led to positions and views that for all of us to one degree or another were a departure from our origins.

Now when we set up the Workers Party we [...] thought that, rid of Cannon and the incubus of the SWP, we were really going to march ahead without any interference, without any impediments.

And we tried, of course we tried at the outbreak of a war. We set ourselves up as a Leninist party — at least in theory — we never acted like a Leninist party. It was the freest party I ever belonged to then or since. The organisation had a continuous discussion of theoretical and political questions without cease, but we knew not to insult our younger people. Since we had a view that when you are called you should go with your class, our people in an overwhelming number went when they were called up. This occurred simultaneously with our industrializing organisation. “Everybody into the factory”, and we meant everybody — father and child, man and woman. And they went.

First of all it gave people who never had a job a chance to go to work. Just as it did a number of workers who had been out of work for ten years to get jobs. They went into the union movement. And our Workers Party, which was laughed at by the SWP and by Trotsky, suddenly became active in the trade union movement. Workers were making money and it was that that sustained the organisation.

I wasn’t in the shipyards local in San Pedro but I collected money in the office. I know how we put out our *Labor Action* and the *New International*. Can you imagine an organisation of our membership — three to four hundred people during the War — putting out a newspaper and a magazine and running as candidates McKinney for mayor, Shachtman for mayor, Garrett for Congress? Without a budget?

### DEVOTION

**We were only able to do these things because of the devotion of the membership. We had comrades coming in every week and handing us thirty-five dollars, thirty dollars, twenty-five dollars as a dues payment [\$30 in 1942 is equivalent to around \$400, or £250, today].**

And we were able to get out 50,000 copies of *Labor Action* during the War on the theory that we had into the organisational means of expression: the paper and the magazine. The Buffalo branch — are they here? — took 10,000 copies of the paper every week.

If you comrades recall the opinions expressed around the labour movement here, the *New International* had a very high reputation for integrity in those years.

Women took the place of the men to a great measure. I remember meetings we used to have of the editorial board of *Labor Action* where people who had never written their names let alone articles became correspondents. We’d have an editorial meeting of ten to fifteen and every one of them was a woman. Not a single man was there and we managed. It was not a bad paper. It was an excellent, agitational paper.

Some of you have forgotten, but we had clubs in factories, *Labor Action* clubs. The paper was put up on bulletin boards. Our policy was to defend the position of the workers [...] and to oppose putting the costs of fighting the war on the backs of the workers.

We fought incentive pay. We denounced the Stalinist finks who ran around like stool pigeons in the factory. We called for wage increases. We supported workers’ strikes. We comported ourselves the way we thought real socialists should.

And every once and a while on occasion when we had a plenum on the birthday of some party leader of the movement we would write an article about Lenin and the Leninist party.

But we were not in fact a Leninist organisation. Moreover, we began to change our points of view, many of us, against the one-party state which was the essence of Lenin’s contribution to the Russian revolution. You could adhere to such a view and call yourself a democratic socialist, which was the direction in which we were moving.

And yet after the War when our people came back, the spurt upward through our membership was no greater. We tried to act on the premises of the war years. We were going to be an active party and act as though we were a party.

One of our thoughtful comrades developed a concept of a “small mass party” to which one our witty fellows on the committee, whose name shall go unmentioned, said, “Oh, yes. That’s like a tall, short first baseman.”

We weren’t a mass party or a small mass party or a tiny mass party. We were simply a small group of active militant socialists trying to do our best to create a movement under conditions which were very adverse.

But our big struggle, overriding everything else, in those years, was a struggle against Stalinism. And it wasn’t the

kind of struggle that the SWP waged with their theory of the workers’ state and their back-handed support of the war. Ours was a clear cut opposition to Stalinism in all its forms. And we carried on that struggle in the labour movement, in workers’ organisations, in other socialist groups in an unrelenting manner. And if you think back on those days, you will recall the issue that affected the American working class and particularly the political movement of the American working class, was premised on the fight against Stalinism which was present in every labour activity in the United States. And we continued that, through the Workers Party, through the ISL.

It was so ingrained in our acting that we do it today no matter where. We are not fooled by movements that try to hide their Stalinism and we are able to carry on successfully, thoughtfully, the fight against the world’s worst scourge of the working class.

With all of that, with an eight page paper that we put out, the poorer we got the more we tried to do. We had about as much right putting out an eight page paper as we did putting out fifty thousand papers.

We pushed ourselves. We pushed the comrades. We maintained our income tax after the war was over and on the whole I think that our literary activity with our pamphlets — *Plenty For All* — described in general the activity of the party in those years.

But I know, being in the office, that despite all that, there was constant decline. A few people leaving here; a few people leaving there. The organisation was getting smaller and smaller.

**Our pretensions had to be surrendered and we had to recognise the reality and to act on that openly; namely, to give up the fact that we were a workers party and to transform ourselves into the Independent Socialist League as a propaganda group based on the premise that our work had to be centred in the labour movement where work would be chiefly for a labour party.**

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## Union leaders defend pensions sell-out

**By a Unison conference delegate and a GMB member**

**On Sunday 17 June, the local government conference of the public sector union Unison voted for a ballot of members over the new local government pensions deal.**

After six months of silence while negotiations

with government were underway, Unison leadership is now encouraging its members to accept a deal which involves working until 68 and accepts a switch to a career average (rather than final salary) scheme. The ballot will run from 30 July-27 August, during the school holidays, when many Unison workers will be away from the workplace and unable to discuss the issue collec-

tively.

22 emergency motions were submitted to the conference opposing the deal. A fringe meeting of the Unite Left group was packed, and the debate over the deal was the single issue of controversy on the day.

Composite 5, the motion backing the leadership's proposals, won a show of hands from the floor with a majority of around 50

votes. The chair refused to take a card vote on the issue. A challenge to standing orders to force a card vote was unsuccessful; Unison activists must now orient towards working for the maximum possible turnout in the ballot, and the highest possible no vote.

At the congress of the GMB union (10-14 June), Brian Strutton, National Secretary for Public Services, told rank-and-file activists they were "out of their mind" for criticising the local government pensions deal.

### REPORT

**Strutton used his report at the congress to talk up the deal as a positive success, despite it still requiring workers to work longer, pay more, and get less.**

Despite GMB members in the NHS voting, like Unite and Unison members in the health service, to reject their pensions "deal", there was no sense that the leadership intended to act on that democratic mandate.

In a repeat of a miserable episode last year, which saw Vince Cable invited to address GMB members, the union in-

vited senior Lib Dem minister Danny Alexander — integrally involved in the pensions reforms — to speak. Left-wingers held up banners (one attacking the "workfare" scheme and reading "hands off our pensions") during his speech, but on the whole his reception was not hostile. The GMB leadership's argument is that such invitations represent an opportunity to have "a dialogue" with, and "put pressure" on government figures, but in reality represent little more than handing senior ruling-class politicians a free run to peddle ConDem policies.

Congress rightly celebrated the inspiring industrial action the union is currently involved in, such as the Carillion hospital workers' strikes in Swindon and Veolia workers' strikes in Sheffield.

**AWL member and GMB activist Daniel Cooper spoke at a fringe meeting, organised by the GMB Southern Region Young Members' Committee, to promote projects to organise young workers and working students in the retail and service sectors.**

## Fight Blairites with politics, not bans

**A motion at GMB congress which called for the union's national political officer to "monitor" the activity of Progress, a Blairite pressure group within the Labour Party, has received significant coverage.**

Some claim that the motion amounts to a call for the Labour Party leadership to ban Progress in the way that Militant, Socialist Organiser, and other left groups were banned in the 1980s and early 90s. In fact the text of the motion simply calls blandly for "unity" within the Labour Party and contains no calls for proscription, but some

GMB figures — including general secretary Paul Kenny — have talked about pushing for a ban.

Leftists should be careful what they wish for on that score; any mechanism used to proscribe Progress could swiftly be turned on left-wing "factions" like the Labour Representation Committee. Progress should be fought using political, not bureaucratic, means.

To focus on Progress in this way is to suggest that the current leadership of the Labour Party is somehow being held prisoner by the ultra-Blairites, and that if the likes of Ed Miliband and Ed Balls could only be freed from

their nefarious clutches then all would be well in the kingdom. In fact, affiliated unions need to assert a clear political challenge which takes on the leadership on an independent basis, rather than letting it off the hook by focusing the fire on an ultra-Blairite fringe group.

**Other text on political representation and the union's relationship to the Labour Party was submitted to Congress, but the Progress motion has become the sole focus of post-Congress press coverage and discussion.**

• To read the motion, see: [bit.ly/J7jfeS](http://bit.ly/J7jfeS)

## Justice for John Lewis cleaners!

**By the Industrial Workers of the World**

**All staff at John Lewis are "partners" who supposedly share "in the benefits and profits of a business that puts them first".**

Not everyone is part of the family. Those who do the dirty work — the cleaners — do not get any of the benefit. They are employed through a contractor — Integrated Management Cleaning. The cleaners, some of whom are at work

from 6:00am to 10:00pm, earn a mere £6.08 per hour, which is below the poverty line set by the Greater London Assembly.

They are not paid for all the hours they are available, they do not get proper equipment, and feel like they are second class citizens.

Nearly half the cleaners at John Lewis Oxford Street may be made redundant, whilst others face a 50% cut in their hours (a pay cut!). But they still have to do the same work! The contract was awarded

again to this company with the full knowledge it would impose these heartless and unnecessary cuts.

Cleaners at John Lewis are demanding: the London Living Wage (£8.30 per hour), no cuts in jobs and hours, recognition of their union and their rights as workers. They deserve your support. They deserve justice.

**Demonstrate to support John Lewis cleaners at John Lewis, 300 Oxford Street, London W1A 1EX, 3pm on Saturday 23 June.**

## Tories attempt to bully low-paid out of striking

**"Pay the price" for striking, says IDS**

**By Ollie Moore**

**Low-paid striking workers will have their tax credits reduced as part of the Tories' pensions reforms.**

Workers paid less than £13,000 per year can currently get a bit more tax

credit if their income drops because they're on strike, as well as if it drops for any other reason. Tory minister Iain Duncan Smith said that, in future, low-paid workers would have to "pay the price" for choosing to take strike action.

Unions have condemned the move as a deliberate attempt to intimidate lower-paid workers out of taking industrial action.

**They have also pointed out that, if the pay increases workers often strike for were won, workers wouldn't have to claim benefits in the first place.**

## More industrial news online

• **Ford strikes — [bit.ly/Mr7TnE](http://bit.ly/Mr7TnE)**

• **Severn Trent Water strike ballot — [bit.ly/KQIFFA](http://bit.ly/KQIFFA)**

• **Downhills School strike — [bit.ly/N3qCH2](http://bit.ly/N3qCH2)**

## Flying pickets as Kirklees workers plan escalation

**By Stewart Ward**

**Local government workers in Kirklees, West Yorkshire, took three days of strike action from Tuesday 12 June to demand that council bosses withdraw a plan to make compulsory redundancies.**

Workers also struck earlier in the month in protest at the job loss plans, which are taking place despite the fact that there are already 50 va-

cancies at the council.

Many Unite members have refused to the cross picket lines mounted by Unison members, whose union is organising the dispute, and a flying picket of admin workers succeeded in bringing refuse workers at one bin depot out on unofficial strike.

**Unison rep Paul Holmes has said the dispute will escalate if the council continues to refuse to negotiate on the redundancies.**

## Food workers strike

**500 workers at food processing plant near Leicester struck for three days against a proposal from management to cut 193 jobs at the factory.**

200 jobs were already axed in September 2011, and redundancy payments for the sacked workers were reduced following a change of ownership.

Tony Lewis, an official with the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union (BFAWU), which is organising the strike, said:

**"This is about stopping the race to the bottom by food manufacturers, who in league with the multiples in their quest to maximize profits, are driving workers pay and conditions down."**

## London buses to strike on 22 June

**By Darren Bedford**

**Bus workers across London will strike on Friday 22 June to win a £500 across-the-board bonus for Olympics working.**

Up to 21,000 workers could participate in the strike, and the Unite union said it was expecting involvement from workers at every single bus operator in London.

Unite officer Peter Kavanagh said: "London buses will come to a standstill for the first time in a generation across London on 22 June."

"The blame lies squarely with the bus operators and Transport for London. The bus companies haven't met with Unite once to discuss bus workers' extra contribution to the Olympic Games and TfL has refused to intervene."

It will be the first London-wide bus strike since 1982. Unite has promised further action if workers' demands are not met, adopting an aggressive strategy of escalation by announcing that they will demand an extra £100 every time bosses refuse to meet their claim.

New scandals dog the Olympics circus every day — from allegations that senior foreign diplomats have been trading their tickets allocations on the black market, to the revelation that use of the special "VIP lanes" has effectively been paid for, to the uproar around the militarised security which will involve missile placements on the roofs of residential blocks.

**In such a context, the callousness of London's transport bosses and the Olympics overseers in refusing to reward the workers (without whom the Games cannot hope to function) for a massive increase in workload is revealed for what it is — swingeing corporate greed that suggests the London Olympics have very little to do with sport and a lot to do with making rich people even richer.**

## FIGHT THE HEALTHCARE FAT-CATS

According to *Healthinvestor* magazine, a trade journal for the parasitic profit makers in healthcare, private companies are complaining about how long it's going to take for them to get their dirty hands on the profits from the great NHS giveaway.

It is estimated that there is a £1.3 billion market in servicing Clinical Commissioning Groups. But it's all taking too long to siphon off.

There's an air of nervousness amongst private sector. They fear they have been "cast as enemy number one" during the Health and Social Care Act "debacle", says *Healthinvestor*.

The new Health Alarm campaign has been organising protests outside the offices of some of the big private companies poised to cream off the billions: Circle, Virgin, Care UK, Serco.

KPMG, Capita, United Health and McKinsey also hope to draw profit from running Clinical Commissioning Groups.

We talk with people passing by, we get into discussions about the NHS and against the private profiteers, and we urge people to get involved in campaigning to defend the NHS.

We put the case for taxing the rich to rebuild the NHS upfront and on the streets.

We irritate the private profiteers and let them know that they're not going to get an easy ride for their millions.

Activists also have to fight to get the Labour Party to commit to repealing the Health and Social Care Act and reversing the NHS cuts.

Health Alarm is joining with others in the NHS Liaison Network to stage a lobby of Labour Party con-

ference, on 2 October in Manchester.

Labour movement and campaigning organisations including the North West region of Unite the Union and Wirral TUC are supporting the lobby.

The combination of the Health and Social Care Act and £20 billion taken from the NHS budget means cuts and closures all over the country.

By the time we next get a Labour government, far too much damage is likely to have been done for us to be satisfied simply with the Act repeal.

We have to demand that Labour rebuild the NHS. That it put this centre stage in its manifesto.

**That it invest in the care of the sick, the vulnerable the old and young with the same passion and vigour that Blair's "New Labour" urged private companies to fleece the NHS through PFI deals.**

## Protest at Capita!

**Friday 13 July,  
17:30 to 18:30,  
Capita office,  
71 Victoria St,  
London SW1H  
OXA**

The NHS Liaison Network is protesting against the threat, under the Health and Social Care Act, to hand over more and more bits of the Health Service to Capita and other profit-greedy "outsourcing" companies.

Capita has long been known in *Private Eye* as "Crapita" and "the world's worst outsourcing firm". But in the neoliberal era, it, like other firms set up to grab juicy contracted-out bits of public services, has boomed. Its turnover increased from £25 million in 1991 to £2.9 billion in 2011.

Its pre-tax profits have risen to £300 million in 2011.

Capita was responsible for the multibillion pound failed/delayed IT project for the NHS and HMRC. It messed up on staff administration services at Leicestershire Hospitals NHS Trust and the BBC, so that staff details were lost. In 2002, when mandatory CRB-vetting of everyone working with children was brought

in, a large number of teachers were temporarily unable to work because Capita's systems failed: it was so bad that the start of the school year was delayed in some places.

Capita ran the Individual Learning Account, a £290 million scheme intended to give financial support to adult learners — opened in 2000 and then scrapped in 2001 following widespread and massive fraud.

Capita was involved in the near-collapse of court translation services after their acquisition of Applied Language Services. In December 2010 the *Daily Mail* reported: "The wealthy boss of an outsourcing firm stunned his workers when he complained about being labelled a fat cat, even though he earns thousands a week.

Paul Pindar, chief executive of Capita, was upset by a leaflet handed to him at the company's London headquarters which claimed he was on a £9.8 million pay and benefits package. Mr Pindar, 51, told workers he was only paid a weekly wage of £14,500.

"Staff expressed amazement. One Capita employee said: 'We didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

**"Here was one of Britain's highest paid**

**bosses telling people on just above minimum wage that he earns a mere £770,000 a year."**

## Labour lobby

The NHS Liaison Network is planning a lobby of the Labour Party conference on 2 October in Manchester. Its demands are:

- Labour should state clearly that it is for a return to the founding principle: Healthcare for all, free at the point of need.

- A clear pledge to repeal the ConDems' Health and Social Care Act.

- Business out of the NHS: reverse privatisation and outsourcing at every level.

- End PFI and liberate the NHS from extortionate PFI charges.

- Healthcare provision to meet needs; not overgrown bureaucracy: abolish the internal market.

- Tax the rich to rebuild the NHS and fund quality provision for all.

• More info:  
[nhsunity.com](http://nhsunity.com)

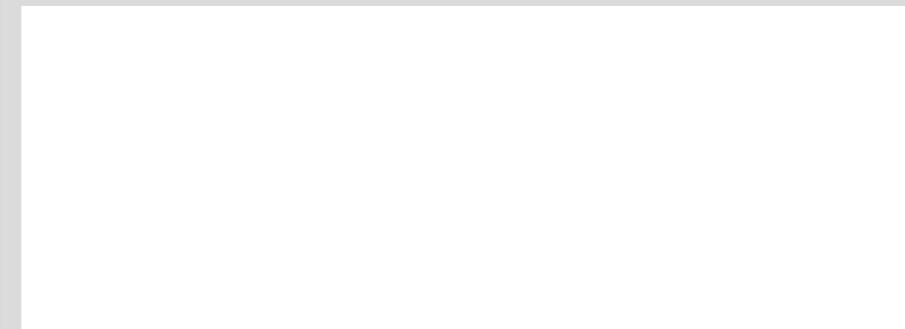
## Stop St Helier closure!

Epsom & St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust has recommended that St Helier Hospital lose its A&E and maternity units.

Local opposition is gathering pace. Kevin O'Brien, secretary of the Sutton and Merton TUC, says: "This has got nothing to do with 'Better Services Better Value'. This is about massive cuts, cuts and more cuts.

**"The Liberal Democrats have sold their souls to the Tory Devil!"**

## The Spanish miners' labour war



By Rosalind Robson

On Monday 18 June tens of thousands of people marched through the northern Spanish towns of León and Langrero in solidarity with the month long miners' strike. The marches were organised for a one-day general strike in the Asturias region.

The miners' strike, over a 64% cut in government subsidies to the industry, is spreading and become a

highly-charged regional class struggle. There have been clashes with police; miners have set up road and rail blocks and attacked the offices of the national ruling party. Teachers, transport workers, and shipbuilders have also been in strike in the area.

40,000 jobs have been lost in coal mining the last 20 years; these cuts will mean the end of the industry and a decimation of mining communities. Spain has a 23% unemployment rate.

The recent EU bailout for Spanish banks has, inevitably, inflamed the situation. As one retired miner put it: "The crisis is a useful excuse for taking money from workers and giving it to the banks."

**The crisis has also been a useful excuse for the Spanish government — elected in December 2011 — to implement a €27 billion cuts programme.**

• More information:  
[Spanishminerssolidarity@hotmail.com](http://Spanishminerssolidarity@hotmail.com)

## Asturian miners: a revolutionary past

By Liam McNulty

On 4 October 1934, the Asturian miners rose up against the inclusion of far-right ministers in the reactionary government of Radical Prime Minister Alejandro Lerroux.

Meeting the call from the Socialist UGT for a general strike against the presence of the Spanish Confederation of the Autonomous Right (CEDA) in government, the Asturian miners embarked on an armed insurrection because they were aware of the crushing of the workers' movement by Engelbert Dolfuss in Austria in February 1934 and the threat posed by fascism across

Europe. The strike soon took on a revolutionary character, with the formation of workers' councils and the capture of industrial centres such as La Felguera.

There was a history of intense class struggle in the region. As the Spanish Trotskyist Grandizo Munis recalled, because "the miners were well removed from the bureaucratic brake of the major cities they were able to act on their own account and present the leadership with the fait accompli of the revolution."

The workers battled the government for a further two weeks, in skirmishes which saw some 3,000 miners killed and 30-40,000 taken prisoner. To

suppress the rising the Government used the brutal colonial Spanish Legion, led by the future Spanish dictator Francisco Franco.

Its repression was brutal. Isolated, the Asturian uprising went down in tragic but heroic failure.

**As the historian Adrian Shubert has written, the rising "represents one of the great revolutionary moments in modern European history, one of the rare occasions in which an industrial working class — in this case some 25,000 coal miners and metalworkers — threw itself into a total, frontal and armed assault on the State and the organization of society."**