

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

**Gove and  
edubusiness**  
page 3



**French left on  
Mélenchon**  
pages 8-9

**Trotskyists in the  
Spanish revolution**  
pages 13-14



# Government policies widen wealth gap but don't cure slump

# Inequality crisis

Gateway Family Services, working with poor families in Edgbaston, Birmingham, recently revealed they are providing food parcels to pregnant women, some of whom are going a week without a proper meal

- Handouts to banks ● Social cuts
- Wages pushed down – see page 5

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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



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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
- Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
- A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression. Full equality for women and social provision to free women from the burden of housework. Free abortion on request. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
- Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
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# The fight for secularism

Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of the British Humanist Association, spoke to Ira Berkovic.

### What's behind the resurgence in self-confidence on the part of organised religion?

In many ways the apparent resurgence is only apparent and not as real as it seems. The situation is that of a diminishing group of individuals shouting louder rather, than a growing group speaking up with increasing confidence.

However, it is certainly true that in the absence of other easily identifiable and self-promoting groupings, politicians are increasingly turning to ready-made religious groups whose leaders, even though they are often self-appointed, can present themselves as speaking for a large group. Perhaps this is a failure of politics.

### In the context of the growth of the far-right, and its "anti-Islamic" or "anti-Muslim" edge, how can anti-racist secularists create a political space that allows for secularist, atheist and humanist criticism of Islam (and all religions) while rejecting/opposing anti-Muslim racism?

It is important to point out that many religious people are secularists — that is, they believe that the shared political life of a diverse community needs to be governed in a way that does not disadvantage or privilege people on grounds of their religion or belief.

Religious people benefit from that as it is what gives them the freedom to believe, worship and dissent as they wish — a freedom that does not exist in non-secular states.

Atheist critiques of theistic religions focus on the fact they are not true, and this is very important, but it may not be very important in political terms.

Humanist critiques of religions focus — as well on the question of truth — on the negative social, cultural and political effects of religions. I think this is helpful in distinguishing humanist critiques of religious belief, religious organisations and their effects from prejudiced stances that use criticism of religion as an avatar for racism.

### How much of a problem is "official" or establishment multiculturalism — i.e. the doctrine of boxing off ethno-cultural groups into rigid categories, each presided over by some self-appointed "community leader" who will invariably represent a less-than-progressive institution or organisation?



### Praying outside an abortion clinic. Why are political acts by religious groups on the increase?

### How can we develop a critique of that which defends the idea of a multicultural society but critiques this establishment multiculturalism?

It's a major problem. Increasingly, the Government is offering strong encouragement to religious groups to take on a role in local communities and to local government to welcome such religious groups as "partners".

Insofar as these arrangements are no more than what would be offered to any local group with strong links with the local community, they might be acceptable.

Religious groups and communities have been singled out by Government as having a special importance and being in need of special attention and assistance, mostly in isolation from other communities and almost always to the exclusion of the non-religious. This is harmful for two reasons.

Firstly because it wastes the opportunity of social cohesion and other community initiatives focussing on the contribution that all individuals and groups in the community can make and generating cohesion that way.

Secondly, because it encourages separatism and communalist politics. If we move the focus from groups towards individuals and society as a whole then I think we can cut through this.

### Some of the criticism of the most high-profile secularists, atheists and humanists — most prominently Richard Dawkins — claims he's just as "fanatical" as his opponents. How do you see people like Dawkins and others in the so-called "New Atheist" movement?

"Fanatic" suggests a person who sticks to their pet theories and prejudices at all costs and in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. It seems impossible to me to apply the word to people whose beliefs are by definition provisional and open to correction when new evi-

dence becomes available.

### One of the criticisms of e.g. Dawkins would be that he seems to conceive of religious belief as merely a stupid, wrong idea and that if everyone was an Oxbridge intellectual like him then the world would be fine. How can we develop critiques of religion and religious ideas that also understand them in their material, social context and understand the reasons why people turn to such ideas?

Most people who identify themselves as a member of a religious group do so for reasons other than a sincere doctrinal conviction. There is even evidence to suggest that most people who practice a religion are similarly without profound belief.

The comfortable habit of worship and observance, the solidarity of a community — both real and imagined, the cultural loyalties that generates, the yearning for a better life to come or a bigger story of which we can be part: all these are just as important in the adherence of individuals to religious identities.

If you choose to address these as problems than one possible basis for doing so is that they spring from a false idea and so I don't think that an emphasis on the lack of a foundation for religious belief in reality is a wrong-headed approach.

I have met many people in the course of my work who have had their religious opinions changed by Richard's books. If you want to address the other motivations that people have for religious identities — those other than sincere belief — I suppose you need strategies that will provide those things that religious people get from religion, like community and meaning.

### What can progressive atheists, secularists and humanists most usefully do in the current climate to reassert basic ideas and values against an apparent resurgence of organised religion and religious ideas?

The purpose of the British Humanist Association is to give support to those with non-religious beliefs and to counter religious privilege and discrimination. I think that non-religious people (who in the UK tend to have views that we could call humanist) need to be more self-confident in seeing their own worldview as coherent and respectable, rich in values and in ways of making meaning in life.

**I think that secularists — religious and non-religious — need to be robust in making the case for a politics that treats us all as equal citizens of a single community rather than as members of groups, privileging religious categories.**

## Workers rally against EDL

By Luke Atterton

The far-right, racist English Defence League demonstrated outside the Home Office in central London on 17 April.

The protest was formally against the government's failure to deport Islamist ideologue Abu Qatada (though the *Guardian* reported on the same day that the government has in fact arrested Qatada and is making fresh attempts to deport him).

In reality the EDL action was, predictably, a bile-filled demonstration of anti-Muslim hatred, with sieg heils and death threats against counter-protesters.

The Unite Against Fascism campaign, with the support of the PCS union, which organises thousands of Home Office staff, organised the counter-demonstration against the EDL. It was made up mostly of PCS reps and activists, with some student support (both groups including AWL members). Despite the short notice, there were about 40 anti-EDL demonstrators, against 30 EDLers. Unfortunately, because the EDL members arrived late and the counter-demo dispersed first, at one point they were in a majority.

**The calls made by some UAF spokespeople for state bans on EDL actions were also unhelpful; we should rely on labour-movement self-defence and community organisation to keep the EDL off the street, not the police force.**

# “Edubusiness” vultures circle

By Pat Yarker

This week owners and administrators of private capital will assemble in London to share ideas about how state education can be further opened up to their insurgency.

*Education Investor* magazine (yes, it does exist) is hosting a conference to bring together established edubusinesses such as Pearson (owners of the “awarding body” or exam-board Edexcel), academy-sponsors (including Balfour Beatty and ARK), and representatives of private equity companies, some of whom have given large amounts of money to Education Secretary Michael Gove in recent years.

## DONATIONS

According to material published by the GMB union, Gove has received almost £650,000 in donations, sponsorship and remuneration, the bulk of it in the last four years.

The biggest individual contribution came in 2009 as a cash-donation of £150,000 from Martin Calderbank, a founder of private equity group Stirling Square Capital Partners. In 2010 Mr Calderbank set up Agilitas Partners, and someone from Agilitas will attend the Education Investor

conference. Agilitas’s website argues that money can be made these days by investing in businesses which will benefit from “favourable political trends”. Such as extending the opportunity to set up for-profit schools, perhaps?

Other private equity firms are also looking to get involved. They sense the Tories want to widen the extent of for-profit schooling, as in Sweden, one of the models for Gove’s “free school” project. Currently it is possible for profit to be made out of state-funded schools, but only via various forms of contracting-out and in compliance with complex EU procurement rules. However, the charitable trust which oversees a “free school” in Brandon, on the Suffolk/Norfolk border, has recently called in a Swedish for-profit company to run the institution. This company will be able to siphon off any “surplus” state-funding

over the course of its ten-year contract. Private capital already runs chains of Academies, and funds independent schools.

Such capital must expand, and find new markets. Perhaps this prompted the donations made to Gove not only by the founder of Agilitas but also by representatives of a company owned by Sovereign Capital, who finance the Alpha Plus Group of independent schools, and by Aurum Fund Management, who put money into ARK?

## SPONSORING

Sovereign Capital is sponsoring workshops at this week’s conference.

Information about the sessions indicates what lies in store for English state education if private capital gets its wish.

A further drastic reduction of the role of local authorities in education will help pave the way for schooling-for-profit.

Public spending cuts will enforce “partnership” with private capital. Job-losses, pay cuts and attacks on working conditions will drive down operating costs, and “surplus government properties” may be handed over as sites for profit-making schools. Among those addressing the conference are the Chief Executive Officer of the Alpha Plus Group, the Managing Director of Serco Learning, the Vice-Chancellor of London Metropolitan University, and former New Labour Education Secretary Charles Clarke.

## ACOLYTES

Gove won’t be present, but his acolytes will be.

Confirmed attendees include members of Policy Exchange, the right-wing think-tank which Gove helped found, and the New Schools Network, which does the donkey-work for companies or individuals setting up “free schools”.

NSN likes to style itself an education charity and not part of government. Yet it is run by an ex-advisor to Gove and Boris Johnson.

Trustees of Policy Exchange also serve as trustees or staff at NSN. In 2010, without advertising it or putting it out to tender, Gove awarded a grant of £500k to NSN.

Gove took scores of ad-

ditional powers under the Education Act rushed through Parliament soon after the Election. He cannot yet mandate schooling-for-profit in the state sector because the Liberal-Democrats oppose such a policy. But for how long?

Will the policy appear in the next Tory manifesto? Hedge-funds and private equity companies have been manoeuvring for some time to push for it. Their spokespeople already claim that a focus on profit will raise standards in the classroom and re-knit the bond between school and community.

Like the NHS, state education is set to become “a big opportunity for the for-profit sector”, as a Prime Ministerial advisor told private equity executives in the US last year. It too will be shown “no mercy”. Shadow Education Secretary Stephen Twigg pledged his opposition to for-profit state-schools at the NASUWT Conference. Holding Labour to this pledge is a vital first step in any fightback.

Ultimately, though, such a fightback requires a reckoning with the private investors behind Gove.

- GMB report on funding to Michael Gove: [bit.ly/HOdQKp](http://bit.ly/HOdQKp)
- *Education Investor* conference website: [bit.ly/gSWgNK](http://bit.ly/gSWgNK)

## Miliband’s gaffe

By Rhodri Evans

It’s time for another political initiative, so Ed Miliband’s advisers seem to have told him.

A follow-up on the NHS to Miliband’s declaration a short while ago that we have “three months to save the Health Service”? No, the sharp-suited wonks have decided that is boring.

So, on 15 April, Miliband called for change on... political-party funding.

It looks as if Miliband, or the wonks, think this is “clever”. Labour gains the high ground by calling for a ban on donations above £5,000 (while defending union political-levy contributions), the loss in unions’ above-levy donations is manageable, and the Tories won’t take it up anyway.

In fact it is dangerous. The Tories have predictably counter-attacked on union political levies, proposing that the law be changed so that union members have to “opt in” to pay political levies, rather than “opting out” if they don’t want to.

Miliband’s proposal also compromises a principle. Unions should be able to make large political donations: that is one of the few ways in which working-class people, individually unable to fund expensive operations, can act collectively to reduce the advantages of wealth in politics.

On Tuesday 17th, Miliband’s “clever” idea backfired further, with millionaire Labour donor Assem Allam proposing that “parties should be funded by ‘independent’ individuals such as himself who would only gain tax relief if they gave to more than one party” (*Financial Times*, 17 April).

The *FT* recalls: “On March 10 Mr Miliband appeared in the chairman’s [Allam’s] box for a [Hull City football] match against Ipswich Town, having said he was too ill to attend a rally against government health reforms in the morning.

“[Miliband] had accepted a lift in Mr Allam’s Rolls Royce Phantom from his Doncaster constituency.”

## The campaign which fights for student democracy

Edd Bauer, from the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, is standing for the position of Vice President Welfare in elections at the forthcoming conference of the National Union of Students (24-26 April). Ed Maltby spoke to him about the issues.

“This conference will not be facing any new choices. It’s the same fight along the same lines. But this year there is a real, serious challenge from the left, an alternative vision, with candidates who look like they could win it.

“There is a groundswell of support for free education and a national demonstration in the first term. The movement has consolidated itself and captured formal structures.”

“It is true that left-wingers and NCAFC supporters have had major victories in student union elections at UCL and Edinburgh, where they now effectively politically lead the union. The is true at Birmingham Uni and several other colleges as well.

“The next period is one in which issues of student union autonomy, ability to act and democracy will be raised by radical new student union executive teams.”

Edd explained the situation this new generation of student union activists will have to face up to. The democratic structures of most student unions have been subverted and undermined by the increasing influence of general managers, external trustees (often local capitalists are chosen to sit on the all-powerful trustee boards of student unions) and corporate structures.

“During the lull in student activism in the 2000s, when New Labour changed student unions into charities limited by guarantee, they became unrecognisable as unions — with bosses and [other capitalist “worthies”] on student union boards of trustees.

“Now that the student movement has kicked off again these structures have been put to the test as trustee boards and man-

Edd Bauer was arrested (and jailed) for dropping this banner at Lib-Dem conference, then suspended from his position in the student union — by his university’s management!

agement try to crack down on protest.

The ball is in NUS’s court — will the NUS, as a student organisation which is not controlled by the Charity Commission, unlike student unions, use its powers to support student union activists who are falling victim to the structures of their own unions? It’s happened to me, but it’s happened to a lot of others too\*.

“The NUS needs to be on hand to condemn unelected boards and student managers who are running the unions behind closed doors as their own petty fiefdoms.

“We need to reverse the

ultra vires legislation of 2006 that made student union non-exempt charities; it needs to reverse the legislation that stops student from pronouncing on broader political issues; it needs to reverse the process of giving managers a greater role in running the student union; it needs to win back the right to give money to political causes; it needs to get a more secure funding than a block grant which college authorities can withhold — that money should come directly to the student union from the government, not via the university.”

Part of Edd’s election

## Why I changed my name to seem more Muslim

Letters



Recently someone I know told me a prominent student SWP had claimed (to my acquaintance) that I changed my name to Sacha Ismail in order to sound more Muslim: the implication being that I was seeking to cover up or mitigate the AWL's supposedly "Islamophobic" — in fact secularist, anti-racist — politics. And that my original name was John Smith.

(Just to be clear, Sacha Ismail is my real name. My father is Bangladeshi and my full name is Alexander Salim Ismail. Sacha is a diminutive for Alexander).

Ordinarily not worth mentioning in print, but is now worth doing so because it seems almost emblematic of the surreal torrent of lies which gets poured out against the AWL by some others on the left, particularly the SWP, and particularly in the weird world of student politics.

Unfortunately, most of these lies are more significant than the fantasy about me changing my name. Some other them are:

- AWL supports the presence of Israeli troops in the Occupied Territories;
- we support an Israeli attack on Iran;
- we think Islam is worse than other religions...

I have even been told, on Facebook, that we "drag" Muslim people into bars in order to throw them out (that was from the same person who said my name is John Smith).

Another example which is clear and instructive: at the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts conference, there was a motion proposed by members of various left groups to oppose war and sanctions on Iran. The AWL proposed a four-line amendment to insert solidarity with the struggles of students, workers, women and national minorities in Iran. The motion passed. But the SWP, Counterfire and others who had originally proposed the motion voted against it!

SWP student leader Mark Bergfeld got up and told the conference AWL students had proposed the amendment because the AWL supports war on Iran! But our amendment didn't remove a single word from the original motion. It so happened that the back page of our paper that week also included a headline: "No to war and sanctions" — pretty clear evidence of our position, you would think.

### SLANDER

The point is that members of the SWP, rather than debating their real differences with opponents on the left, particularly the AWL, regularly slander them. In the case of the Iran debate, presumably they felt under particular pressure to lie because their position was so embarrassing.

If SWPers made arguments along the lines of: "We think the AWL's opposition to war on Iran is unreliable... in the past they published an article saying Israel had good reason to strike Iran's nuclear program, is that a record we can trust?" — that would be wrong, but at least a respect-worthy attempt to debate us. Why don't they do that? I think partly because many of them are not very confident in their arguments, and partly because slandering opponents is increasingly part of their political DNA.

We also experienced this kind of nonsense in the election for University of London Union Vice President. AWL member Daniel Lemberger Cooper, who won the election, was ridiculously accused by SWPers of being a racist and a sexist.

I'm not sure why this kind of dishonesty and sectarianism is worse in the student movement than the labour movement. It may be because people stay in the student movement for relatively brief periods of time. In the labour movement, where people often work together for many years, there is a built-in tendency against this sort of behaviour.

**The willingness of the SWP and others on the left to tell lies about their opponents poisons the political atmosphere. Cut it out, comrades! Let's debate our differences openly and honestly instead.**

Sacha Ismail, south London

## Put Respect on the spot?

The AWL is right to be sceptical about George Galloway but is wrong to imply that the Respect victory is of no significance.

Whilst not a TUSC supporter it is incorrect to say that TUSC is the same as Respect. Galloway is a shameless self-publicist who uses his undoubted talents to good effect.

Galloway is a self-professed Catholic so whether he actually has sympathy for Islam or whether he simply plays the card is difficult to determine. He is anti-abortion and his views on homosexuality seem to be unclear.

Respect's victory in Bradford [cannot] be explained away by Galloway's charisma or political manoeuvring. Galloway wasn't just voted in by a cabal of Pakistani Bradford elders. He was voted in by young Pakistanis many of whom had never voted before and received considerable support from white working class people.

In your article (*Solidarity* 241) you explain why Respect was successful. How else do you explain the massive swing? If anything it is the Labour Party that has and did rely on traditional communalist politics that was caught napping. I think Galloway himself was taken by surprise by the vote in his favour. Also in fairness to Galloway he has always described himself as "traditional" or "old" Labour. He is no revolutionary but then he has never claimed to be. If Miliband were to ring him up tomorrow who knows? Remember Ken?

Galloway is probably preferable to the miserable New Labour candidate who refused to have a single debate with Galloway. But more importantly the vote for Respect in Bradford (ignoring Galloway's idiosyncrasies) does reflect a protest and a temporary move to the left. Whether this will last is a different question.

**Vote for the social democrats in and put them on the spot seems to fit with Respect.**

John Grimshaw, from website

### The Left

By Gerry Bates



## A Galloway spring?

Many on the left have seized on George Galloway's startling by-election victory in Bradford West (29 March) as proof that the recently-slowing trickle of left-of-Labour electioneering can now become a surge.

*Socialist Worker* (14 April) suggested: "The Galloway effect could now ripple across the country. Imagine if on 3 May Respect won council seats in Bradford while elsewhere radical left candidates such as Michael Lavalette [SWP] and Dave Nellist [Socialist Party] won their seats. This would provide a platform for the left as whole to regroup and create a serious left of Labour alternative".

The first difficulty with this scenario is that the SWP (and the Socialist Party) had no part in the "Galloway effect" — they did not even have articles in their papers backing him before polling day — and on all evidence Galloway wants nothing to do with SWP and SP.

### FRAGILITY

Galloway's victory certainly shows the fragility of Labour's base, even at a time when Labour now leads the Tories in the polls by 10%, and the widespread working-class resentment at Ed Miliband's feebleness.

But many left-group candidates have discovered that resentment and disillusion do not necessarily rally voters to them. There has been a general trend since about 2005 for left-of-Labour election scores to shrink, and even at times when Labour was in government and extremely unpopular. Galloway himself failed electorally in 2011 in Glasgow, winning only 3.3%.

AWL was not active on the ground in Bradford, any more than SWP or SP were, and we do not know exactly how he pulled off his victory. Helen Pidd of the *Guardian*, who was the only national newspaper journalist to report the by-election on the spot, estimated:

"Those who voted for Galloway... were either a first-time voter or a disaffected Labourite, and all wanted to congratulate him on his robust stance against the wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq. Many said they watched him on Press TV, the English language Iranian-controlled channel..." Many were aggrieved by the, so to speak, sub-communalism of the local Labour Party, controlled by "a small number of Pakistanis who came from Mirpur, a small town in Kashmir, who had carved up the most important Labour party positions between them over the years". The Labour candidate, an unimpressive lawyer, was a Mirpuri.

Galloway went for Muslim votes, but his victory cannot be explained exclusively by that. "All praise to Allah!" he yelled [at his victory rally, so the sympathetic Helen Pidd reports] to jubilant cries of 'Allah Allah!' And on it went. 'Long live Iraq! Long live Palestine!' But his main election leaflet promoted him as the "real Labour" candidate, opposing NHS cuts and tuition fees.

The going-over to Galloway of Labour's election agent in Bradford may have been important. It has to be doubtful whether the "Bradford effect" is transferable — even by Galloway himself, let alone by groups like the SWP and SP, who have been openly disgusted with him in recent years and only now swivel round to praise him.

### TUSC

**In the May local elections the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC: an operation run by the SP with some activists from the RMT union and some minor involvement from the SWP) is running 115 candidates.**

TUSC is also running for the "list" part of the Greater London Assembly election (not in the "constituency" part or the mayoral contest) and for mayor of Liverpool. In Coventry, where in the past it has had councillors, SP is running as "Socialist Alternative", not TUSC.

Galloway's Respect party, which before Bradford had been on the verge of shutting down, with almost all its council seats lost, has been given a new boost, and will run a slate in Bradford's council election.

TUSC's pitch for the London poll — a woodenly-expressed "anti-cuts" declaration and identification with "trade unions", with no positive content of socialism or working-class political representation beyond the bare word "socialist" — seems unlikely to catch on in the way that the practised "real Labour" demagoguery of the well-known Galloway did in Bradford. And what will be achieved if it does catch on, other than obvious benefits for the SP? There is no channel from TUSC successes, if they should happen, to a revitalisation of the labour movement or the left.

**But we shall see.**

- Why didn't *Solidarity* welcome George Galloway's victory? He

has a long history, since the 1990s, of promoting himself on the back of political operations paid for by despotic elites (Pakistan, the Emirates, Saudi Arabia). His campaigning over Iraq was heavily financed by money funnelled to it through a colleague, Fawaz Zureikat, who in turn got the cash from Saddam Hussein. Voters in Bradford will not have known this shady history, or may have known it but reckoned (thinking all politicians are shady anyway) that it wasn't decisive.

## Workers' Power splits

**About 15 members of the British Workers Power group, a third of the organisation, have resigned, along with some others in the WP-linked international tendency.**

The British resigners are mostly workers and students in their 20s — essentially the leadership of the new layer of WP members who expelled the group's trade unionist old guard in 2006. They have developed similar conclusions to those they helped to expel, now constituted as Permanent Revolution.

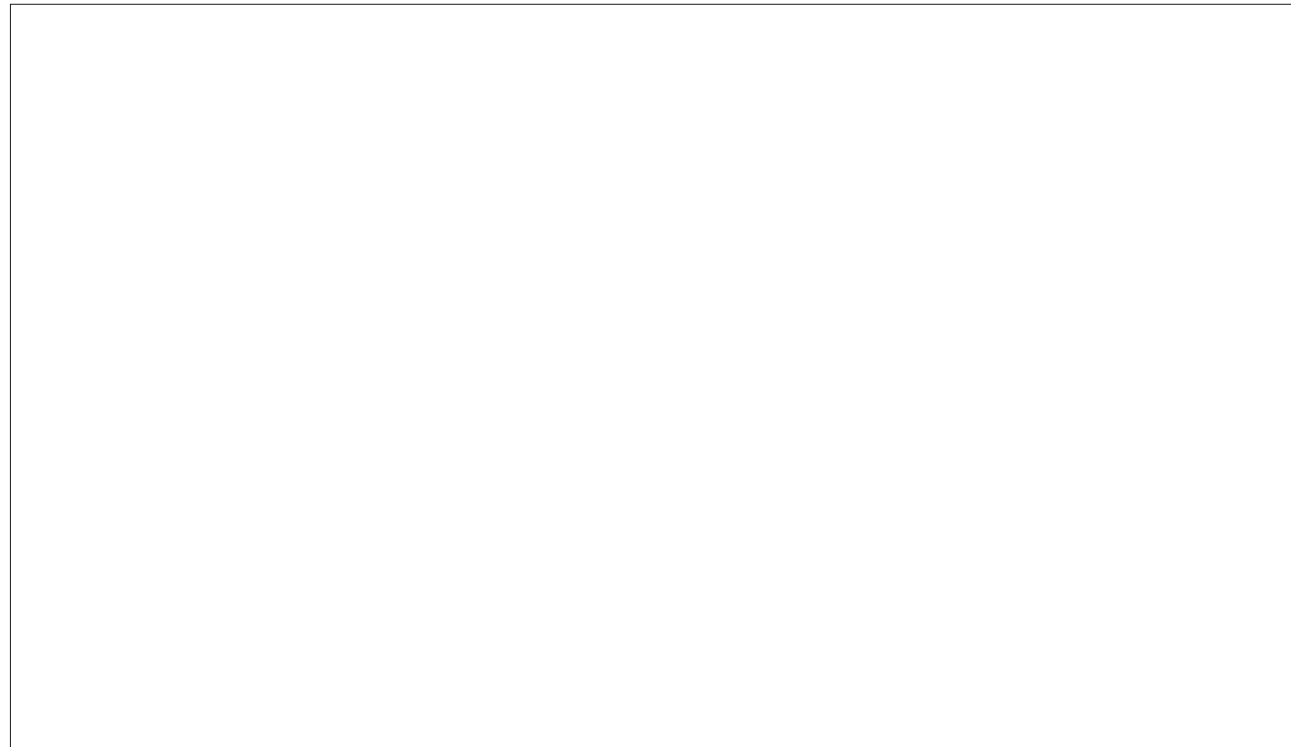
They have produced a document, *A simple proposal for a new anti-capitalist left*, in which they propose a regroupment of socialists and radical activists around "revolutionary", "anti-capitalist" but not explicitly "Leninist-Trotskyist" principles.

Part of the reason this group left Workers Power is its stifling regime, in which public unanimity was required. Those resigning no longer believe disagreements should be hidden from public view, which is progress. However, they seem — it is not clear — to be also rejecting the whole idea of seeking to work out and fight for a clear political line.

Moreover they have not constituted themselves as an organisation, creating the possibility of an apolitical clique held together by their former experience in WP and the fetish of a new "anticapitalist organisation".

They show no sign of reassessing WP's disastrous legacy on issues like Stalinism, imperialism and Israel-Palestine. If anything, their statement that they still believe the working class is "a crucial agent of revolutionary change, though..." (our emphasis) suggests a drift away from class politics.

**But the problem with WP is not too much class politics! A tradition which maintains that North Korea is a "workers' state", and which in 2003-4 supported "no platforming" reformist Iraqi trade unionists while promoting the fascistic Iraqi "resistance", is precisely lacking an independent working-class focus.**



London Stock Exchange. People who own lots of shares are still doing well.

## How the Tories fuel the inequality crisis

On 27 April Barclays Bank bosses will face protests from shareholders at their annual general meeting. They will question the bank's decision to pay a £5.7 million extra to boss Bob Diamond last year in the guise of a "tax equalisation payment", and the total £17.7 million paid out to him.

Another two bosses, Jerry del Missier and Rich Ricci, are being paid £6.7 million and £6.5 million.

The labour movement should not leave protest to well-heeled shareholders. We should be raising an outcry against such pay-outs, and demanding that the big banks, already dependent on public subsidies, be put under democratic control and run with limited top-wage levels, with their wealth directed to improving social provision rather than boosting bonuses.

Real wages have fallen in recent years, and the Government's plan, with its public-sector pay freeze, is to push them down further. Benefit and service cuts have reduced the "social wage", and will reduce it more. Yet the rich are back to the levels of income and wealth they had before the crisis.

Capitalist slumps increase poverty, but *usually*, in statistical terms, they reduce inequality. The rich lose too, with their businesses going bust or their shareholdings losing value, and they have further to fall. Inequality fell in the 1930s, and it probably fell a bit in 2009, too.

Yet in this crisis, since 2010 anyway, inequality has risen. In the UK as in the USA, the slice of income taken by the top one per cent has more than doubled since the 1970s. That long-term trend had a momentary hiccup in 2009, but on the available evidence (no comprehensive surveys have been completed yet), it has got right back on course since then.

### PUMPED UP

Banks and the financial markets surrounding them have been pumped up by vast public subsidies. Large pay-outs and credit guarantees were given to the banks at the peak of the crisis in 2008, to stop them going bust — and that continues.

The European Central Bank has lent one trillion euros to banks, for the next three years, at ultra-low interest rates. Unless the banks choose completely wrong when using that cash to buy bonds and shares, the ECB operation amounts to a public subsidy to the banks of some tens of billions.

"Quantitative easing", done in Britain by the Bank of England, amounts to another subsidy to banks — giving them hard cash in return for dodgy assets. When the banks are cashed up, that tends to have a positive effect on all financial markets.

Thus, despite the fact that total output has been pretty stagnant, and prospects are bleak, share prices on the London stock exchange have recovered sizeably since 2009. People who own lots of shares are doing well, and top bosses



have plenty of cash to pay themselves with.

Directors of the top 100 companies had a 49% rise in average earnings in 2010-1, to almost £2.7 million each, while average gross earnings for full-time workers fell 5.9% in real terms between April 2007 and November 2011.

The Government's and the bosses' drive to push down wages and "social wages" is not just, or even mainly, a matter of healing deficits. It is a drive to use the crisis in order to impose a shift in the balance of class forces — to set a lower baseline for workers' attempts to recoup standards whenever a general economic recovery comes, and to ensure that this recovery starts with a lush profit rate from day one.

So far the Tories are getting away with it. George Osborne's move in the Budget to cut the top tax rate from 50% to 45% shows their smugness.

But they are getting away with it only because the labour movement is not mobilising the great pool of resentment which exists in the working class against the people whom Ed Miliband last year called the "predators". (Remember that, Ed Miliband? What about some more like that? And with some practical campaigning conclusions this time?)

Bonuses in high finance and in other industries totalled £22 billion in 2011. The Coalition government's planned cuts for 2011-2015 total £18 billion from benefits, and £16 billion from education and other local services. They are big cuts. But the amounts going to the wealthy — £22 billion in bonuses for a single year, £137 billion gain in wealth by the top one thousand over a single year — are much bigger.

**The resources are there. It depends on which class fights hardest for its slice.**

## Help the AWL raise £20,000

### Support our May Day Appeal

Would you like to build support for your dispute or campaign? Why not send a message to trade union and socialist activists by placing a May Day message in *Solidarity*?

Send a very short text (10-20 words) to us before Friday 28 April, and we will print it in the following week's May Day issue. It costs £15 for a one-column advert and £30 for two columns.

Please also send us an electronic copy of the logo or graphic you would like to use to: [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org).

### Other ways you can help

- 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:  
**£12,002**



We raised £577 this week from donations, new standing orders and for May Day adverts. Thanks to AWL Australia, Tim, Liam Aidan, Chris and a reader in Sheffield.

### 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 .....



## International news in brief

### Pakistan: Islamists fight against women's rights

**Islamist parties have taken to the streets to oppose the ratification of a law which would penalise domestic violence in Pakistan.**

Women's rights campaigners confronted the bigots outside parliament last week.

The Islamists' arguments against the legislation include: preventing domestic violence is "Western"; and that the Bill is a copy of Indian legislation.

A spokesperson for Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam Fazl said, "We will not let these senseless women, who depend on American dollars, to work against the Constitution and Islamic Shariah."

The anti-violence Bill, first introduced in 2009, advocates jail terms for those found guilty of violence against women, children and domestic workers.

Farzana Bari, a women rights activist, commented: "This is a very soft bill, it gives a minimum punishment of three months and maximum of three years, but it is important that it is passed."

**Violence against women in Pakistan is widespread. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan states that 943 women were the victims of honour killings in 2011.**

### Tunisian union defies ban

**Riot police enforcing the ruling Islamist party's ban on protests in central Tunis, used tear gas and batons against thousands of union-organised protesters on Monday 10 April.**

The workers had assembled to protest against a police attack on an unemployed workers march.

There are 700,000 unemployed workers in Tunisia.

Amna Guellali, a researcher for Human Rights Watch, said the police had beaten some members of the constituent assembly who

had participated in the march. Guellali said the clashes appeared to mark a new level of conflict between the government and the secular left. "People went down to the Avenue Bourguiba with the spirit of a showdown with the government," she said. "There was a feeling of: 'We are going to defy this ban just as we did during Ben Ali's rule.'"

The ban on assembling in the Avenue Bourguiba — symbolic centre of the uprising against Ben Ali's dictatorship last year — was imposed after 28 March, when a group of secular artists and ultra-conservative Islamists both staged marches there. Fighting took place after the Islamists attacked the artists.

**The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) has declared that the 1 May celebrations will be held in Avenue Bourguiba and signalled its intention to break the government's protest ban.**

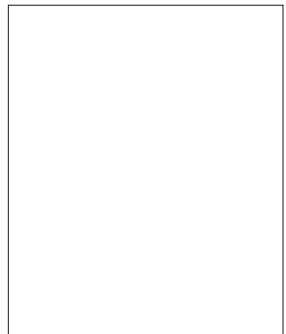
### UK/Congo: Justice for Daniel Ngonga Nsevelo!

**Congolese asylum seeker Daniel Ngonga Nsevelo was assaulted by private security guards working for the UK Border Agency during a failed attempt to deport him.**

Daniel, a friend of Angolan asylum seeker Jimmy Mubenga, who was murdered by G4S security guards, has been on hunger strike for nearly a month in protest at his treatment. He is being detained at the Colnbrook Bypass centre near Heathrow Airport.

Daniel has been assaulted three times over the course of nine separate deportation attempts.

**Sign the petition to demand his release at [bit.ly/ITuy0E](http://bit.ly/ITuy0E)**



**Injury on Daniel's arm**

# Greece: defy election blackmail!

**By Theodora Polenta**

**The Greek government is about to announce Parliamentary elections for 6 May.**

All the mainstream political parties are trying to shift the political agenda from austerity measures to racist and xenophobic hysteria and law and order policies, with promises to spend money on building concentration camps for all "illegal immigrants". Then an individual's symbolic suicide spectacularly ruined their plans.

The political suicide of retired pharmacist Dimitris Xristoulas on 4 April sent a clear political message to the politicians that their "memorandum policies" are leading the majority of the Greek population to poverty, destitution and despair. This is what is at stake in the election: all of us and our needs against them and their profits.

The upcoming elections are the most critical since the formation of the Greek state. The people will not be voting to elect a government or a political party but to take revenge against all pro-memorandum parties, their policies and the effects of those policies: preposterous interest rates; drastic decline in living standards and working conditions. They take place just before the June implementation of a new package of anti-working class measures of 15 billion.

### TROIKA

**The previous Pasok government and the current coalition, in cooperation with the EU-IMF-ECB Troika, have systematically attacked wages, pensions, benefits, pension funds.**

They have dramatically increased direct and indirect taxation on workers while decreasing taxation of the capitalists and the financial speculators.

Unemployment has reached one million.

Bit by bit, the welfare state is being destroyed. Schools and hospitals are being stretched by an increase in demand and underfunding. Continuous increases in electricity and water bills and transportation tickets make even basic necessities a luxury. Many workers have not been paid.

People are partially, temporarily or flexibly employed, with no rights and no collective negotiating powers.

A massive emigration of young people is taking place, for the first time after the Second World War.

Homelessness has dra-

should not be under negotiation if the Greek people want to safeguard Greece's position in the Eurozone.

For various reasons, including the political weakness of the left, these elections will not raise the issue of a workers' government. However, they could lay the foundation for the abolishment and further pushing back of the memorandum parties. That would create better conditions for the resurgence of a more militant, compact working-class movement.

Ultimately the class struggle will be decisive, but these elections could lay the seeds in determining whether Greece will be a "guinea pig" of counter-revolution or a prototype of class struggle of resistance and the revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system.

Our struggle, our strikes, our civil disobedience movements are the decisive weapon of the working class in the struggles to come.

However the power of our voting should not be underestimated. The rejection of the pro memorandum parties involves not only the two coalition government partners of Pasok and ND but all the acolytes and splinters that are willing to be part of a coalition government after the elections.

### FASCISTS

**Special attention should be given to the political isolation of the openly Nazi and fascist party of Xrisi Aygi.**

The formation of a broad political united front to confront and smash the fascists in the streets and in the elections is incredibly urgent. No space should be given to the fascists, they should be politically exposed. It needs to be explained that the fascists are not part of the anti-memorandum spectrum as the mainstream media try to claim. If Xrisi Aygi enter parliament it will be a terrible, historical turning point.

The strikes, occupations, demonstrations, and civil disobedience movements have to be expressed on election day with electoral support for the left — that is the only consistent and politically valid anti memorandum vote.

It is the duty of the left to raise the issue of workers' government, workers' power, workers' control — socialism in the here and now, not postponed to the distant future. Within the context of this worst historical crisis, there is no time to wait until the ruling class, the Troika and the fascists bury us.

During the last two

years of struggle blueprints of workers' control were evident — during the refuse workers' and GENOP-DEH workers struggles, and the Office of the National Statistics workers' occupations.

The demand for direct democracy and self-governance was expressed albeit in a confused and incomplete way during last year's indignant square movement.

What is needed:

1. Uncompromising class struggle and class confrontation against the Troika, financial speculators, capitalist asset strippers and imperialism.

Any middle of the road solution, e.g. a call for a "progressive government with the radical left at its centre" is an illusion and will ultimately betray the working class struggle. Whichever government is elected on 6 May election, it should be confronted not with the usual 24 hours strikes but with an escalation of our struggle until we can organise a general political strike to get rid of the memorandum and all pro memorandum parties.

2. Self organisation and direct action of the workers' rank-and-file movement within each workplace, neighbourhood, college, outside of the constraints of the trade union bureaucracy.

3. A program of action connected to transitional demands, demands linked to our strategic struggle for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of socialism.

4. The restructuring and resynthesising of the workers' movement for the building of a new revolutionary party which will attract the rank and file of both KKE and Syriza, and the most advanced of the Pasok workers, but most importantly the most vanguard and militant sections of workers and youth that are emerging from the escalation of the class struggle against the anti-austerity movements.

5. Internationalist coordination of our struggle with all workers across Europe and across the world for a world wide socialist revolution. We do not fight to establish socialism in one small Balkan country isolated from the rest of the world.

**Our future lies neither in the EU nor in national isolation, but in the coordination of our class struggle with all the workers in Europe for the destruction from below of imperialist EU institutions and the establishment of the united socialist states of Europe.**

# An appeal to the NPA: don't split!

Pictures left to right: Myriam Martin; Jean-Luc Mélenchon; Philippe Poutou (centre) with Olivier Besancenot (right) and Christine Poupin (left)

By Martin Thomas

**For the French Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (New Anticapitalist Party – NPA), and the ex-LCR (Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire) core of the NPA, to split now would be a great setback not only for activists in France but for all of us who fight for working-class self-emanicipation, all across Europe.**

Reports from France point to a “cold split” already, and an open split after the legislative assembly elections in June. At the end of March, tensions exploded in a public battle over who would get the government subsidy due to the heirs of the LCR, under French law, on the basis of the LCR’s score in the 2007 election. The LCR minority, as we understand it, proposed that only 57% of the cash go to the NPA treasury, the other 43% going to the minority and to another group which left the LCR in 2009.

We are glad to read that the prospect of the dispute being decided in the bourgeois courts has been avoided for now, but it seems not to have been settled.

Leaders of the minority have publicly expressed their view that the NPA would do better to support Jean-Luc Mélenchon, the candidate backed by the French Communist Party and other forces clustered round Mélenchon’s own Left Party (a splinter from the Socialist Party), in the French presidential election (22 April/6 May) than to continue with its own candidate, Philippe Poutou.

That is their right. They have also gone further, publicly committing themselves, in activity, to Mélenchon’s campaign, i.e. creating an active split as well as a difference of opinion.

The majority refers publicly to the minority as a group which “is both inside and outside the NPA”.

This is no small division. The minority claims to represent 40% of the NPA membership and leadership. Its prominent people, such as Pierre-Francois Grond and Myriam Martin, were central figures in the LCR before it dissolved itself, in 2009, into the larger NPA.

Different views on the presidential election are no basis for a split.

There are reasonable arguments for the NPA presenting Poutou. Only with a candidate of its own can a party present itself in the electoral arena as a distinct political alternative rather than just a force for criticism and pressure, and thus the general rule is that a party with sufficient resources and profile should stand a candidate where it can.

If it has built a political profile by standing candidates — as the LCR did before the NPA — then there is a reasonable argument for sustaining a continued profile, and emphasising what is permanent and fundamental about the politics, by still contesting elections even when the score on a particular occasion looks poor. (Poutou is currently at 0.5% in the opinion polls, though the LCR candidate Olivier Besancenot got 4.1% in 2007 and 4.25% in 2002).

## REASONABLE

**A reasonable argument can also be made for backing Mélenchon. He has rallied support far beyond the ambit of the CP and the Left Party. From 5% in the polls in October 2011, he has risen to 16% today, and he has drawn huge crowds.**

The NPA, despite being the strongest force of the revolutionary socialist left in Europe, is still a small group of a few thousands. Maybe it would gain more political traction by integrating itself into crowds of the Mélenchon campaign and seeking leverage to explain to the Mélenchon crowds how clear working-class politics would serve their interests better.

The wrong line on such tactical issues can be damaging. But they are tactical issues. The election is only an episode. The damage of a wrong tactic here is much less than the

damage of a split.

“Every great action begins with a statement of what is”, as Lassalle put it. The overthrow of capitalism, and the victory of working-class self-emanicipation, begins with the creation of an organised political force which reliably advocates and fights for the working class to become the ruling class and to secure democratic collective ownership of the means of production.

A million tactical questions then remain. But they are all contingent on, and secondary to the creation and consolidation of that class-struggle-socialist political force.

Unity is not a fetish. The future mass working-class revolutionary party will emerge not in a straight line, but only through a zigzag of splits and mergers. Sometimes revolutionary socialists have no choice but to split on tactical questions.

But for a split to be justified, its rationale must be such that it can be explained to the activist working-class public that the alternative would be enervating compromise or paralysis.

For revolutionary socialists to have different opinions on tactics in an election is normal. To split over such an episodic issue is wrong.

AWL and our forerunners have always had differences with the NPA and the LCR. But we have always sought dialogue and cooperation, too.

The LCR and the NPA — like the AWL, but, unfortunately, like very few other organisations of the radical left — has had a regime of open and democratic debate, with a drive to develop a clear collective political line but with the right for minorities to dissent openly without anathemas and expulsions. Even when the LCR and the NPA have been grievously in error, they have had a political culture which allowed for self-correction.

That political culture has made the existence of the LCR and the NPA, as organisations of some weight and profile, an asset to activists like ourselves all across Europe.

## ALLOWANCES

**In appealing against a split, we address ourselves mainly to the NPA minority, since, as far as we can see from here, the NPA majority has been liberal in its allowances for minority rights.**

The minority’s statements suggest movement towards, not just a tactic of backing Mélenchon the better to get traction for distinct revolutionary socialist ideas, but a virtual political identification with Mélenchon. They propose as future organisation an “anti-crisis left”, demarcated by commitment not to join a Hollande-led government and not much more.

It seems incongruous for activists in Britain to remind activists in France of this, but to oppose social-democracy is not enough. For many decades the French Communist Party has been somewhat to the left of social-democracy on questions of French politics. In the past the CP scored higher than Mélenchon does now (21% in the 1969 presidential election). Today the CP is the backbone of Mélenchon’s campaign.

But the LCR and the NPA have existed precisely because the CP, even if “leftish”, has been a force for corruption, bureaucratisation, and miseducation, not for enlightenment, in the working class.

The CP was to the right of social democracy on many international issues, notably workers’ rights in the Stalinist states, and today’s CP has escaped the old Moscow control? Yes, but even today’s CP is rotten on international issues, and it was not just the CP’s line on international issues which made us argue that a better party was necessary.

The minority has criticised the CP for indicating that it would join a Hollande-led government given the chance? Yes, but an adequate working-class political force is defined

not only and not mainly by what it is against, but by what it is for.

To define the left we want as demarcated only by opposition to the SP leaves the SP leaders, rather than us, to define the parameters; and leads both to sectarianism towards the workers who back the SP, and to political vapidness.

Look at what has happened to the previous (smaller) minority which quit the NPA in 2009, the Gauche Unitaire led by Christian Picquet. Picquet now chairs Mélenchon’s campaign staff. The GU are not intervening in the Mélenchon campaign to advance revolutionary socialist politics. The Mélenchon campaign has “intervened” in and absorbed them.

Myriam Martin, a leader of the current minority, has been quoted as saying: “We had different interpretations of the initial project [of the NPA]. There were things not teased out enough over these last two years”.

This seems true. The move to create the NPA came after many years of debate in the LCR about piecing together a “new anti-capitalist force” — from splinters of the SP and the CP, and so on — into which the LCR could then merge. Negotiations repeatedly yielded nothing, and finally the LCR decided to launch a “new anti-capitalist party” by direct appeal of the LCR to individual activists.

There was much talk about the “new party” nevertheless not being just a rebranded and expanded LCR. But, as we said when we attended the LCR congress which decided on the drive for the NPA, no-one should have expected a miracle to ensure that. The NPA would be a group with broadly the same politics as LCR, but a broader reach — and a good thing too.

The NPA at first launch drew about 9,000 members, compared to the LCR’s 3,000. Perhaps inevitably given political conditions, perhaps in part because of errors (we don’t know), there has been much shake-out since then. When the NPA held local congresses in preparation for its June 2011 conference, the total voting was only 3,100.

## DISARRAY

**The shake-out has caused more disarray than it needed to because many LCR and NPA people hoped for something miraculous — hoped that the shift from the LCR format to the NPA format would somehow enable them to jump over the problem that revolutionary socialist ideas as yet convince only a small minority (although a bigger minority in France than in Britain).**

There was much talk about “new epoch, new programme, new party”. But to desire new thinking, as a generally good thing, is not the same as producing it.

Too often, in practice, the desire for a “new programme” has led to junking the “old” programme, and replacing it by no programme at all, beyond a vocal and militant tone on “left” causes as defined by broad public opinion, rather than by a carefully-analysed revision in light of new conditions.

One strand of that evolution which we have particularly noticed has been on Israel and Palestine. The LCR would explain (sometimes more clearly, sometimes less so) that “two states appears to be the only way to open, eventually, the road to a federal or confederal solution for the two groups occupying the same land” ([bit.ly/lcrisrael](http://bit.ly/lcrisrael)). The NPA only echoes “broad” anti-Israel indignation, in militant tones implying a desire to see Israel destroyed, with no hint of an independent approach geared to uniting Arab and Jewish workers.

A similar evolution on other questions has led to debate in the NPA being narrowed down, more and more, to squabbles over electoral tactics. That, combined with impatient desires magically to escape the irritations of revolutionary socialism still for now being a small-minority cause, has led to a danger of split.

**We appeal to all NPA activists to rally against the split.**

# Different “lefts” in Fr

**The first round of the French presidential elections is on 22 April, with the run-off between the top two candidates on 6 May.**

The latest opinion polls put right-wing president Nicolas Sarkozy, Union for a Popular Movement (UMP), on 26-27% and François Hollande, candidate of the Socialist Party (PS, similar to the British Labour Party), on 28%-30%. These will almost certainly be the top two candidates in the run-off. Here, Hollande is a full 10% ahead of Sarkozy in the polls. Marine Le Pen, the candidate of the fascist Front National (FN — National Front) has also been polling well.

A debate has opened up on the far left about the Jean-Luc Mélenchon candidacy, currently on 16-17% in the polls. Mélenchon split from the Socialist Party in 2008 to form the Parti de gauche (PdG — Left Party). The PdG, the (post-Stalinist) French Communist Party and some smaller fragments together make up the Front de Gauche (FdG — Left Front) for the 2012 election.

The Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste (NPA — New Anti-capitalist Party), France’s biggest non-Stalinist far-left group, is running auto worker Philippe Poutou. Lutte Ouvrière (LO — Workers’ Fight), another sizeable Trotskyist party, is running Nathalie Arthaud. LO and the NPA’s predecessor organisation, the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire — Revolutionary Communist League, have in the past scored around 5% in presidential polls.

This time, however, Poutou and Arthaud’s projected votes are nowhere near the 10% the LCR and LO achieved between them in 2002.

Some on the French revolutionary left are backing Mélenchon. Others stick with Poutou and Arthaud. Below, we print views from French comrades, translated by Ed Maltby.

## Create revolutionary current in Left Front

By *Le Militant*, a socialist journal

**In *Le Militant*, we said in June 2011 that Jean-Luc Mélenchon could come out in the lead in the first round. Not because of our illusions, or enthusiasm, but by cold analysis, which is this: the relations between classes.**

We are keeping a cool head: whether it will succeed or not, the movement aims to undo Sarkozy and confront the regime of the 5th Republic and the boss class. We are aiming for that confrontation. If Mélenchon is in the lead then the confrontation will come faster and stronger, and if not it will still advance. In any case, we must organise. In the Left Front in particular, the question is posed of the organisation of the thousands who are mobilised.

That is why *Le Militant* is taking part actively in the campaign for a Mélenchon vote, and is raising the need for a democratic government which repudiates the so-called “public” debt and breaks with the 5th Republic.

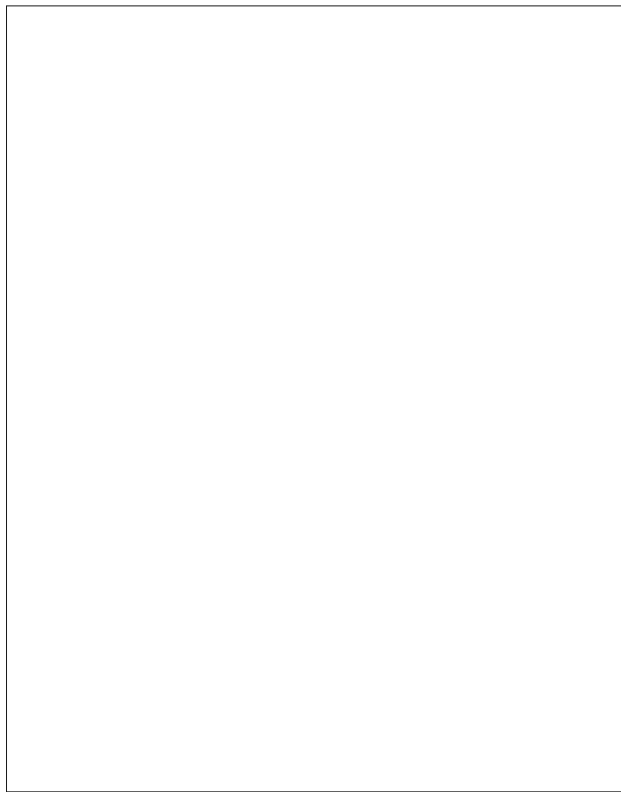
What is at stake in this election for millions of workers is kicking out Sarkozy, while the candidate that the media presents as the only one capable of achieving this, François Hollande, does nothing to lead a mobilisation with a programme which responds to the needs of the working population.

The media and the political establishment want give the impression that:

- Hollande is the only one who can beat Sarkozy, with votes from the centre;
- François Bayrou, candidate of the “centrist” Democratic Movement, with his electoral capital is important and must be addressed;
- that abstention will remain at a high level because working-class and poor voters do not know who to vote for;
- that blue collar workers who are victims of the crisis can only vote for the National Front.

That is why the campaign by the Left Front and Mélenchon has usefully confronted Le Pen and put her on the defensive, and shown that there is nothing inevitable about leaving the political space open to her, by exposing her chauvinistic and racist demagoguery.

By building a dynamic campaign that directly challenges Sarkozy, the president for the rich, Mélenchon has created an enthusiasm responding to the needs of the millions of



**François Hollande, the Socialist Party presidential candidate**

workers who have suffered successive defeats since 2002, notably in the strikes of 2003 and 2010, giving a political opening to the majority rejection of the European Constitutional Treaty in 2005. This did not signify a nationalist rejection, but a refusal of the constitutional freedom given to bosses and to the markets to do what they wanted without social restraint.

An anecdote: at the start of the electoral campaign, the leaflets distributed by the PS were blue, the colour that Sarkozy’s UMP uses a lot. Now, PS leaflets are red — the same colour the Left Front uses.

Mass rallies at Bastille on 18 March (120,000 people), at Toulouse (70,000 people), Lille, and Marseille (100,000) have expressed the need for a clearly left-wing campaign to beat Sarkozy. Activists at these rallies will not be satisfied just with voting but want to mobilise beyond the ballot box to stop cuts and impose measures which favour the working population.

### MAJORITY

**Beyond the presidential election, the left as a whole must fight to win a large parliamentary majority, in which the Left Front has substantial weight.**

There too, nothing is inevitable. If Hollande is elected, he will want to limit the influence of the Left Front by asserting PS supremacy in the future parliamentary majority, or by looking for alliances with the centre, or by trying to buy the entry of Left Front ministers into his own government.

For now, given that Hollande intends to apply a programme of managing the debt crisis, there can be no question of entering such a government. That would certainly be the first key test of the longevity of the Left Front after the elections.

In any case, with the debt crisis and the “deficits”, and the predictable policy of Hollande for managing the crisis in the same way as Zapatero (Spain) or Papandreu (Greece), social tension will not let up. There is no possible half-way choice: either managing the debt at the expense of the workers and those relying on the welfare state, by means of privatisations, sackings and cutting wages, or the reconstruction of public services and worker’ rights through measures aimed against capitalists. Either ratification of the Sarkozy-Merkel treaty, or repudiation of the debt: no half measures are possible!

Furthermore it is important to note that this is the first time that a left-wing electoral campaign has put the need to finish with the 5th Republic front-and-centre, and the need to return to a real parliamentary regime by calling a constituent assembly. This radical democratic demand is very bad news for all institutions created over the last thirty years through decentralisation and regionalisation, likewise for all

the European institutions which are European in name only and which are all political tools for the exclusive benefit of capitalists and bankers.

For the Left Front to play a useful role in the coming period, it needs to orient its programme in a clearly anti-capitalist direction. It is the responsibility of all those who support anti-capitalism and real socialism to work to this end.

This is why *Le Militant* is proposing to all to create a revolutionary current within the Left Front, pushing for the adoption of an adequate programme to meet the crisis of the capitalists and aid the political and social mobilisation at all levels.

**2012 has not yet finished surprising us!**

## Organise the mistrust!

By Yvan Lemaître, NPA Paris

**“Philippe Poutou storms in!” wrote *Le Monde* the day before one of the main TV broadcasts of the presidential election campaign in France.**

Effectively, in a very difficult context, the NPA campaign has seen a turning point ten days before the election of 22 April. Its candidate, Ford car factory worker Philippe Poutou, has met with a lot of sympathy in sticking to a language of breaking with the accepted game of institutional leaders and parties, the routine of language which is hollow and alien to the preoccupations of the population.

It is very difficult to tell at the moment of writing whether that will translate into electoral support. Up until now, the two anti-capitalist candidates, Natalie Arthaud for LO and Philippe Poutou for the NPA, are scoring between 0.5% and 1% in the polls. These scores do not correspond to those of Arlette Laguiller for LO and Olivier Besancenot in the last presidential elections of 2002 and 2007, where together they won around 10% of the vote.

### CONTEXT

**The context is one of the explanations for this. Today, for the majority of voters, it is no longer a matter of punishing the “institutional” [reformist, parliamentary] left, when the Communist Party is falling apart, Marie Georges Buffet [the Communist Party candidate] having got less than 2% in 2007.**

The priority is to beat Sarkozy while hoping that Hollande, the PS candidate, will alleviate the effects of the politics of austerity. Even if everyone knows full well that the elections will not change a great deal, they hope that the elections will allow the left — broadly speaking — to come to power and that this will mean protection in the short term. The responses of anti-capitalists win sympathy but do not appear credible at the electoral level: “Okay, you are right, but you can’t do it today”.

This context also explains the second new fact of this campaign after the likely increase in abstention: the dynamic around Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the Left Front. The Left Front is a regroupment of a small party, the Left Party founded by Mélenchon, former minister under [PS Prime Minister] Jospin, after his split with the PS in 2009, shortly after the foundation of the NPA, the Communist Party (the activist force in the regroupment), and a number of small groups of the radical left.

Mélenchon has succeeded in creating a dynamic around this regroupment by combining a critique of the PS with the perspective of “citizens’ revolution” — that is, change through the ballot box, within the framework of existing institutions, through a game of parliamentary alliances. Mélenchon has a talent for playing on his ambiguities and succeeding in remobilising the apparatus of the Communist Party while making anti-capitalist postures.

He currently has between 13% and 15% in the polls, a success which expresses a desire to get rid of Sarkozy and his gang, without trusting Hollande, but which remains inside the electoral, institutional framework.

No-one can say today where the Mélenchon adventure will go, partially because we do not know to what extent the current projections reflect the real results which will come out of the polls on 22 April. And above all, we cannot know what the social and economic situation will be after the elec-



# France's election

**Phillipe Poutou, candidate of the Nouveau Parti Anticapitaliste**

tions.

One thing is certain: it is urgently necessary to give an organised and reliable form to the mistrust, or rather the total lack of illusions, concerning the PS and Hollande. That form must be capable of following through the critique of the dictatorship of the markets to advance a programme of defending workers and the poor by refusing to pay interest on the debt, with a view to cancelling it; to work for a democratic and popular government which can rely on the support of mass mobilisations; to nationalise the banks within the framework of a public service finance sector under the control of the population.

From this point of view, the campaign of the NPA candidate, Phillippe Poutou, is a staging post to re-launch the dynamic of the NPA, while the demagogy and the ambiguities, including the patriotism, that Mélenchon is pushing will crash into the reality of the balance of forces and the establishment.

**Poutou's campaign is a staging post to pursue the regroupment of anti-capitalists, while working for the unity of all the forces who refuse austerity from left or right.**

## Mélenchon is two-faced

**By comrades in L'Étincelle, a faction of the NPA**

**Rating at over 13% in the polls and drawing some 100,000 people to the Bastille, the Left Front candidate Jean-Luc Mélenchon has a real dynamic.**

This dynamic is all the more interesting because the press presents him sometimes as a “revolutionary” leader. But is that really what he is?

Mélenchon is not new to politics. Joining the Socialist Party (PS) in 1976, he became a member of its leading committee in 1983 (at the same time as his current rival Francois Hollande). Under Mitterrand he progressed within the PS apparatus. He was elected as a PS senator in 1986, and became a minister in the last left government, in charge of vocational education from 2000 to 2002. The career, then, of a PS careerist.

In his programme, there are certain social demands, of which some appear radical, so long as you don't look too closely. For example, the demand for a minimum salary of €1,700 a month for all, but, watch out, €1,700 “gross” (in fact €1,350 net — the demand of the far left, LO and NPA, is for €1,700 net as a minimum immediately), having taken care to spell out in an interview in a bosses' newspaper that it would rise to €1,700 “at the end of the parliament” and only for “activities not exposed to international competi-

**Nathalie Arthaud, candidate of Lutte Ouvrière (Workers' Fight)**

tion”... you might well ask who will really benefit!

This is a simple example of a two-faced politics: one politics for the bosses (that is, the politics that he would really support) and another for the workers.

On the question of job losses though, Mélenchon only has one face. He prefers to play the French nationalist card by supporting different protectionist measures against outsourcing businesses abroad... goodbye to the slogan for “outlawing redundancies” [a widespread, established far-left demand in France], a slogan which would allow workers, if they raised it in struggle, to defend themselves and unite against the bosses whatever their nationality. It is actually difficult for Jean-Luc Mélenchon to not use the word “France” in every sentence, whose “universal interests” he lauds. We're dealing with an imperialist language here, scarcely dressed up with “left-wing” values.

## FERVENT

**Because on international questions, Mélenchon is clear: he is the fervent defender of the interests of France, or to put it another way, of the French boss class.**

The last example to date is the praise from the arms boss Serge Dassault and the support he has given to the sale of Rafale fighter jets to India. When he was invited on to France Inter public radio lately, the journalist asked him the following question: “Can one support disarmament, and also cheer on the sale of fighter jets?”

Mélenchon's response: “Let the Russians and the Americans disarm first, and then we'll talk. France does not threaten anyone!” (He forgot to mention that France is at war in Afghanistan, in Libya, that her army has brought the new President to power in Ivory Coast, etc.). And he continues to express his sympathy for Serge Dassault, the head of the firm of the same name and the sixth richest man in France...

Another, slightly older, example is his insistence in affirming his solidarity with French imperialism in the context of the rigged election of Ali Bongo in 2009, the son of Omar Bongo, dictator of Gabon who was supported by French imperialism. An election which assured the continuation of French imperialism and its businesses (Total, Bouygues, Bioré, Axa, BNP) in this former French colony.

So, what's left that's revolutionary in the Mélenchon campaign?

I am radical, he suggests, but I remain within the capitalist system! Hence his cleverly-chosen phrases about the “citizens' revolution” and the “civic insurrection”, which stick contradictory words together. On one side, apparently radical measures, on the other, words which lead to an parliamentary and electoralist highway.

And it is exactly there that the principal difference be-

**Jean-Luc Mélenchon, candidate of the Front de Gauche**

tween revolutionaries and the Left Front lies. They call for revolution... via the ballot box.

The fact remains that this campaign has succeeded in attracting many workers and many youth, with whom the revolutionaries have an interest in discussing. But then two problems arise: how to explain, despite (or because of) these limits, the popularity and dynamic of the Mélenchon campaign? How can revolutionaries approach the problem of talking to the workers and youth drawn into the campaign?

## POSITIONING

**In Mélenchon's success, there is at the same time the political positioning of the man, and his talent as a tribune, which is recognised by the PS candidate, Hollande himself, who sketches the division of labour which has arisen between the two men: “Mélenchon functions as a tribune, but my objective is to become President”.**

He capitalises on leftwing votes, which will go to Hollande for the second round. These are votes which would otherwise disappear into abstentions, or go to other candidates, even to the far-right Marine Le Pen, who has not hesitated to present herself as a workers' candidate.

The rise of Mélenchon relies in any case very heavily on the mobilisation of the Communist Party and its local apparatus, which has taken on a new vigour. And likewise, it owes a lot to the mobilisation of the sections of union apparatuses (in particular the CGT, the General Confederation of Labour) which explicitly support him. It is the CP and a section of CGT members which provide Mélenchon's activist forces. It is they who are doing the lion's share of the work of mobilising (by coach) for the rallies and the big public meetings in provincial towns.

The rallies have met with real success, which revolutionaries have to face up to at the same time as presenting their own candidates and programme, especially by taking part in more discussions with the milieu which is looking to the Left Front, including in workplaces. It is a very good thing for us to be able to discuss “reform or revolution” — or, more concretely and immediately, the objectives of the struggles which we must engage in once the election is over.

But to face up to the challenge, the most efficient method remains to present a candidate ourselves, a revolutionary candidate who affirms the objectives of these struggles of the working class. In this campaign, Nathalie Arthaud from Lutte Ouvrière and Philippe Poutou from the NPA, who we are supporting, support these objectives.

**This candidacy allows us to raise our programme, for the short period of the election, in front of millions of people. It is a chance that we are taking to popularise our ideas and develop our political implantation.**

# Abolish money without class struggle?

Janet Burstall reviews *Life without money: building fair and sustainable communities*, edited by Anitra Nelson and Frans Timmerman

**This book argues that abolition of “the market” is the key to replacing capitalism. The medium of the market is money, so abolition of money is the way to “non-market socialism, a moneyless, wageless, classless, stateless world”.**

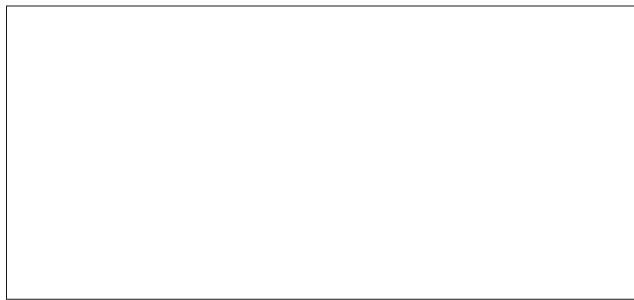
After the poisonous decades of Stalinism and the failure of social-democracy to challenge capitalism, it is welcome to find socialists looking for a different vision of socialism.

The vision in this edited collection is based on examples of people managing to live more or less without money, i.e. outside of but parallel to capitalism.

These people — rural, indigenous, peasant and domestic workers who are unwaged; squatters; work refusers; commune dwellers — are seen as the agency that can create the new non-market socialism. Several of the authors and the editors of this book claim to base their arguments on aspects of Marxist theory, especially Marx’s critique of money and commodities. Yet none of them explains why they have ditched and contradicted most of Marx’s analysis, particularly on the role of the working class.

“The market” is not what defines capitalism. Capitalist relations differ critically from pre-capitalist market relations in that they are based on a new commodity, a new market, the labour market that was constructed as recently as 200 years ago. This created the working class, whose members must enter the labour market, to receive a wage, to have money, to be able to buy the necessities of life.

The editors of *Life without money* recognise the need to re-organise production. But their preferred agency, non-wage labour, has no concretely imaginable historical role in doing so. Failing to employ a Marxist analysis of history and class relations, to explain the origin of current conditions, there is no understanding of the current motives and desires of labour and capital, no picture of how interests and actions in the present could unfold and lead to socialism.



## Agents of socialism?

Unavoidably this makes the book utopian in the sense that Marx described. It is both highly critical of existing society and in that way useful, but because it lacks a sense of “historically created conditions of emancipation” it is in effect a fantasy, personal invention without connection to actual historical forces.

Any vision of the future carries within it the seeds of dictatorship rather than democracy, unless it is able to mobilise desire for its fundamentals, desire that is expressed, formulated for and taken up by a mass democratic collective.

## CLASS

**The working class is the only class that organises itself against capital, with more or less independence and democracy, depending on the time and place.**

No other social force has shown this potential, yet *Life without money* shows no interest in the politics and development of the labour movement.

The conclusion of the book reads like a fantasy that could only be achieved by conquest of the rich “north” by an alliance of the poor meta-industrials of the “south”, and work refusing, squatting allies in the “north”, to enforce a “contract and converge” strategy leading to more equal consumption, lower in the north, and higher in the south.

Local communities would be as self-sufficient as possible,

and exchange of goods between communities would be reduced to a minimum. Essentials would be produced as locally as possible. The only purposes proposed for complex industrial production are electronic communications and minimal cargo transport.

This economy would hold down production, deliberately reduce personal consumption, and pull back from global interchanges of raw materials, goods and services, in order to reduce overall consumption of resources and to achieve greater equality. It is much more rural and less urban.

Measure this vision against the failure of Stalinism. The authors attribute the initial failure of the Russian revolution to the retention of money. If only money had been abolished, Stalin would not have triumphed in Russia and the Cuban revolution would have been pure, they argue.

The account of debates about money amongst the Bolsheviks and the Cubans is interesting, and a socialist government would have to make decisions about the role of money. But these were not the critical decisions which led to the conquest of Russia and the Communist International by Stalin. Decades later the Russian and allied economies collapsed not because they still used money (more for accounting purposes than as a symbol of real value), but because they were so economically stagnant and unproductive.

An alternative to capitalism will not be supported in a democratic society unless it can better develop productive forces, and build on what is progressive in capitalism. This means that production will need to be dynamic, evolving, able to produce a higher standard of living with less labour. This doesn’t necessarily mean consuming more natural resources.

A society with democratic control of production would be able to redefine a good standard of living away from consumption of commodities or things, towards experience and free time to do as one wants.

**But the extensive interchange of goods and services on a global scale, and complex industrial production will be necessary and desirable parts of that future, which *Life without money* tries to imagine away.**

# Learning about our tradition

Mike Wood reviews the new online archive of the first series of the *New Politics* journal

**The American website UNZ has recently made available the entire run of the first volume of *New Politics* journal, from 1960 to 1978. This is a valuable resource for those interested in the history of the socialist movement and should ensure a wider readership for a tradition of thought that has largely been forgotten by the left today.**

*New Politics* was started by Julius and Phyllis Jacobson in 1960, following the collapse of the Independent Socialist League in 1958. The right wing of the ISL, led by Max Shachtman, had negotiated to take the ISL into the loosely reformist Socialist Party. Julius Jacobson had been the editor of the ISL’s theoretical journal, *The New International*. This

had been a highly regarded publication in the international Trotskyist movement since 1934, and its closure along with the ISL in 1958 left many former ISL members concerned about the hole it might leave in the American left wing scene.

The Jacobsons sought to create a broad, anti-Stalinist, revolutionary, journal of socialist thought. The initial editorial board was broad, and included Hal Draper; the leader of the left wing of the ISL that had opposed Shachtman’s move to the right. The Jacobsons approached Shachtman himself about being involved, but he declined.

Until now, *New Politics* has only been available in a few University libraries and private collections. Despite this, some articles here will be well known, for example Draper’s 1966 version of “The Two Souls of Socialism”. Other pieces are only now widely available thanks to the UNZ archive, such as the debate following the publication of the “Two Souls” between Draper and Max Nomad. Anyone interested in Draper’s idea of socialism from below should read this exchange in the Spring, Summer, and Fall 1966 issues, in which he clarifies many of his views.

Other less well known works that I think deserve a wider audience include the transcript of a debate in the Winter 1965 issue between Draper and Nathan Glazer, a Berkeley academic, on the subject of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement. The FSM was one of the first significant movements that can be clearly defined as part of the “New Left”. The *New Politics* current was unusual in regarding and engaging with the New Left sympathetically whilst maintaining strong ties to the “Old Left” of the 1930s and 1940s. There is also a lengthy symposium on the New Left in the Fall 1965 issue, including a contribution from Mario Savio, the most prominent leader of the FSM.

***New Politics* represents an important part of the anti-Stalinist revolutionary tradition that Workers’ Liberty identifies with. Anyone interested in learning more about that tradition will find this archive very helpful.**

• Visit the archive at: [unz.org/pub/newpolitics](http://unz.org/pub/newpolitics)



## Mick Shaw

**Mick Shaw’s death robs the labour movement of one of its finest representatives. He was a socialist, internationalist and trade unionist who devoted his whole life to the working class and the left.**

Mick was best known as a firefighter and Fire Brigades Union member, where he rose to become the national president. His work in the FBU started with the 1977 firefighters strike and finished with picket duty during the London strikes in 2010. He was the London representative on the FBU executive for a decade and was a perceptive, critical voice during the 2002-03 pay strikes. He was proud to have been on a regular firefighter’s wage throughout his time as a union official.

Mick was rightly well regarded for his wider labour movement work too. He took part in dozens of campaigns. He was an avid reader of the left and bourgeois press and had a keen understanding of socialist debates. He was well informed and always willing to discuss politics. Even when we disagreed about Cuba and other international and national questions, I always learned something new from the engagement with him.

Mick was a force for culture in the labour movement. He was an articulate speaker who enjoyed both theory and strategy. He devoted countless hours to organising and activism. He was a gifted chair who could hold any meeting with calm authority. He was the sort of person you would want to be alongside in a struggle — solid, dependable and cool under pressure.

**He has influenced thousands of workers and his contribution was valued by everyone who knew him.**

Paul Hampton

## Working class politics and anarchism



How do the revolutionary anti-capitalist traditions of Marxism and anarchism relate to each other? What are the differences, and where are the commonalities?

This pamphlet brings together articles, debates and exchanges

between members of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty and various anarchist writers and activists. Many appeared in *Solidarity* newspaper during 2011.

£5 online at <http://alturl.com/fh5j6> or post a cheque to “AWL” to AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

# Why I became a third-camp socialist, and what I've done

In this week's *Solidarity* we begin a serialisation of a symposium on the "third-camp" left in America — the organisations which opposed both Stalinism and western capitalism, focusing on the tradition originating with the Workers' Party led by Max Shachtman, which split from the "orthodox Trotskyist" Socialist Workers' Party (no relation to the British group of the same name) in 1939/40.

We have interviewed activists from a range of backgrounds, most still active on the left, about their recollections of involvement in or around the Workers' Party and its successor organisations — the Independent Socialist League, and later, the Independent Socialists and the International Socialists (IS).

We begin the serialisation with a piece from Dan La Botz, which discusses the debates in IS about "industrialisation", and around questions of organisation. Further contributions will appear in future issues.

By Dan La Botz

**I grew up in a working-class neighbourhood on the South Side of Chicago. My family's politics as I grew up, however, were anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist, pro-socialist, and staunchly pro-union. My mother Betty, a grocery clerk, was fiercely loyal to her union, the Retail Clerks.**

While still a junior high school student, then living in the small town of Imperial Beach, California, on the U.S.-Mexico border, in 1958 or so, my father bought me a subscription to *Liberation* magazine which had a third-camp perspective. I first became aware of actual national politics during the Civil Rights era, but I did not become an activist until I graduated from college in 1968, when I began to participate in anti-war activities. I became a member of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) while studying literature in graduate school at the University of California at San Diego.

Teaching English literature for a year at Humboldt State College in northern California, I joined a local socialist discussion group, and most of us then joined the International Socialists (IS), a third-camp socialist organisation. I was recruited to the IS by Walt Sheasby and by two pamphlets he gave me: *The Two Souls of Socialism* by Hal Draper and *The New Era of Labor Revolt* by Stan Weir. I felt that the IS's third-camp slogans summed up my views: "Neither Washington nor Moscow!" "The 'Free World' is not free and the 'Communist World' is not communist!" "For democratic, international, revolutionary socialism".

In 1968, the IS began a new debate on the question of how to take socialist ideas into the working class. There were many different ideas about this, influenced by European experience, past American experience, and by our own efforts in the few cities where we existed.

## UNIONS

**Once the idea was raised of attempting to get jobs in certain industries in order to be involved in certain unions, then the question of the nature of the unions was raised.**

Once again, there were a wide variety of ideas — from one comrade who thought the unions were reactionary institutions that needed to be "smashed", to others who thought it possible to work within union structures. Eventually, most of the group was won to the position that we should seek jobs as rank-and-file workers, become union members and attempt to influence the unions and workers that way. We arrived at the conclusion by the early 1970s that we would build rank-and-file groups in the unions as a way of building a revolutionary party.

Within a year, the group had arrived at a strategic idea of targeted "industrialisation". This involved moving to selected cities, going into certain industries, and attempting to become members of key union locals [branches]. The group persuaded and encouraged members to carry out this plan. In some cases pressure was applied, but we could not and did not force anyone to do it. I became convinced that the IS strategy made sense, dropped out of graduate school at UCSD, and moved to Chicago in 1971. I worked as a librarian, a social worker, a steel worker, and finally a truck driver.

Over the first few years, as the group industrialised, we turned attention in our meetings and conventions to the work of those comrades who were carrying out this industrialisation strategy. This was both to offer them moral support and to provide political guidance.

That meant that we tended to neglect those members who hadn't carried out the strategy and continued to be students, or to work as teachers or social workers. Some former members later told me that they felt rejected, or even that they were told by some IS leader or other that they were not longer wanted and were driven out of the group at that time. I think there were very few cases of that.

After 1970 or so, our discussions focused on strikes, contract negotiations, and union elections at the local union and national level, and we turned away from most other topics, with the exception of work on African American criminal justice issues (particularly the Gary Tyler case). We also continued to analyse and discuss the developments in Southern Europe and in Angola, Mozambique and South Africa. We attempted to make our branches habitable to the few workers who we now invited to our meetings, which meant focusing on the labour topics where they as workers were often more knowledgeable than us, at least about local issues.

Once industrialised, our strategy was to find allies in the unions — usually the dissidents who had been fighting against the companies and also against the union bureaucrats. Sometimes those were organised groups, sometimes not.

## RANK-AND-FILE

**We did not organise socialist groups in the union, but rather rank-and-file groups open to all. These rank-and-file groups generally published a newsletter in the workplace or a newspaper for the union.**

Most of us identified ourselves as socialists to our closest coworkers and some of us sold the IS newspaper *Workers Power* in the workplace. IS members often sold *Workers Power* outside of plants and workplaces, both those where we worked and others in the same industries or unions, or in other industries or unions.

In the auto industry, our original idea was to join the Black Power movement in the plants — the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement (DRUM) and the other groupings. But by the time we got jobs in the plants, that movement had been partly crushed and partly co-opted, and no longer existed. So our auto workers formed an alliance with a group of older (white) Trotskyists who had been in the skilled trades for decades. In the telephone industry, our members found allies among various other leftists and activists.

Hal Draper, the long time socialist activist who had been the intellectual leader at the centre of the IS during its first couple of years, came to disagree with the IS's self-conception and organisational strategy.

He felt that the IS, like other groups of the era (Fidelista or Guevarista, Maoist or neo-Stalinists), was on its way to becoming what he called a "micro-sect". Draper left the group with a few other members to create the intellectual and publishing centre which he saw as more consistent with the Bolshevik tradition.

Draper's resignation — the loss of our senior intellectual — was a serious blow to our young group. Draper's long-time comrade, Stan Weir, who had decades of experience in

industry and in unions, stayed with the IS. Recognising how Draper's resignation might demoralise the group, Weir toured the United States speaking to our branches and encouraging us to continue on the path to the working class that we had adopted.

Draper's position attracted few followers among our young members who were either working on the staff of our organisation or getting jobs in industry. They had already made their commitment to a certain course.

We IS members in the Teamsters' union worked with rank-and-file activists to create a democratic and militant union reform organisation. We succeeded in inspiring protest demonstrations around the National Master Freight Agreement in 1975, forced the union to call a national strike, and then some of us led wildcat strikes in freight and at UPS in some cities. Based on that work we founded Teamsters for a Democratic Union. I later wrote a book, *Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union*, about the movement.

The recessions of 1973-75 and 1979-81 took the wind out of the Teamster rank-and-file rebellion of that era, just as auto plant closings and steel mill shutdowns stifled activism in those unions for years. When its perspective collapsed, the IS splintered into three groups which became the IS, Workers Power, and the International Socialist Organization (ISO). The split was partly manufactured by Tony Cliff and the British Socialist Workers Party. I remained loyal to the IS, but had many friends in Workers Power, both third-camp organisations.

Unable to continue with its earlier party building strategy, in 1979 IS members who wanted to continue rank-and-file industrial organising had created *Labor Notes*, first a newspaper and later also an educational centre. I wrote for *Labor Notes* and I also wrote the very popular organising manual, *The Troublemaker's Handbook*.

In 1986, the IS re-merged with Workers Power and also joined with former Socialist Workers Party members to create *Solidarity*, a multi-tendency organisation, amongst which were many third-camp socialists like myself.

As the American left began to revive with the "Battle of Seattle" in 1999, I subsequently took a more active role in *Solidarity*, joined the editorial board of *New Politics*, and in 2010 while remaining a *Solidarity* member ran as the Socialist Party USA candidate from Ohio for the US Senate. In 2011, when Occupy Wall Street appeared, I joined the Occupy movement in Cincinnati.

Capitalism has grown more powerful (if more crisis ridden) during my lifetime, but Stalinism, in both its remaining state systems and in various political parties in many countries, remains a threat to the future of democratic socialism.

**The third-camp political principles of opposition to capitalism and bureaucratic collectivism, the understanding of the centrality of the idea of democracy, and the vision of a revolutionary transformation to a democratic socialist society remain central to my life and action.**

*Dan La Botz is an American labour movement activist, journalist and writer. He is a member of the Solidarity group. This is an abridged version of his contribution to the symposium. The unabridged version can be read online at [tinyurl.com/labotzpiece](http://tinyurl.com/labotzpiece)*



## "The Treason of the Intellectuals, and other political verse" by Sean Matgamna

**A collection including items previously published in *Solidarity* and forerunner publications over the last 25 years.**

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## A mass paper of the labour movement

By Edd Mustill

“Let the landlord go hang for his rent, I am sending it to you.’ Would this be done for a Liberal newspaper? Would it be done for a Tory newspaper? Not likely.”

*Daily Herald*, 26 October 1912

“The marvel is that the paper was ever produced at all.”  
George Lansbury, *The Miracle of Fleet Street*

**15 April will mark the centenary of the founding of the *Daily Herald*. The *Herald* was first founded as an ad hoc news sheet by striking print workers in 1911. After it folded, discussions began in labour movement circles about the possibility of bringing it back as a daily.**

The idea of a daily labour movement paper had been around for some time. The existing left-wing press was deemed inadequate by many. The Social Democratic Federation’s national organ, *Justice*, was at the centre of a long-running dispute within the organisation. Although a “party paper”, it was actually owned privately by party leader Henry Hyndman. Similarly, the most popular paper associated with the Independent Labour Party, the *Clarion*, was privately owned and run by maverick socialist Robert Blatchford.

The first decade of the century saw the emergence of the modern tabloid press, popular newspapers with a mass circulation. Some of the papers set up in the decade before the *Herald* appeared, like the *Mail* and *Express*, are unfortunately still with us. These are the dailies the *Herald* would be directly competing with, rather than political weeklies or monthly magazines like the *New Statesman*, launched in 1913.

### EARLY YEARS

**The *Herald*’s first big story was on the sinking of the Titanic, which happened as the first issue went to press. Under the headline “Women and Children last”, the paper covered the disproportionate death rate among third class passengers and slammed the White Star Line.**

Soon afterwards, the paper’s questions around the Marconi corruption scandal would prompt Lloyd George to describe it as “the limit.”

After a quick succession of early editors, popular socialist George Lansbury was convinced by dockers’ leader Ben Tillett to take charge, naming the publishing company after Lloyd George’s remark.

In these years, the *Herald*’s organisation and finances were chaotic. Sometimes last minute appeals resulted in one-off donations which kept the paper going for a few more days. Lansbury once left London to speak at a meeting in Crewe, having agreed with the committee to wind the paper up. The next day he was sold a copy of the *Herald* outside his hotel:

“Some of the workmen, knowing we were likely to stop, looked round the paper store and found some part-reels of paper and some old out-size reels... The paper for this particular day was all sorts of shapes and sizes, but we did not care.”

On another occasion Lansbury, Tillett, and Robert Williams blocked the door of the office to keep out bailiffs while some money was found. There were rich sympathisers who donated, including soap magnate Joseph Fels, but the paper’s policy was to not let money dictate content. Most individual donations came from working-class people, responding to Lansbury’s constant call-outs for money.

An organisation, the Herald League, was founded to popularise the paper and raise funds. It developed into a political network which many syndicalists and trade unionists joined during the Great Unrest.

During the Dublin Lockout, the League helped organise large public meetings across England at which James Connolly and James Larkin spoke. Lansbury successfully resisted demands from some in the League that it should assume control of the paper’s editorial policy.

One of the points of the early *Herald* was to provide a national forum where the key issues in the Labour movement could be debated. Syndicalists, Guild Socialists, Christian Socialists like Lansbury, industrial unionists as well as moderates all found space in its pages. Lansbury spoke of the paper’s “anti-official” policy, but still wanted the *Herald* to be a paper for the whole movement.

Will Dyson’s cartoons brought the *Herald*’s free, rebellious spirit to life. “A Fantasy (Labour Leaders at their Devotions)” shows Labour Party leaders bowing down to a huge top hat. “Peace and Future Cannon Fodder” from 1919 shows the allies celebrating their Versailles Treaty while a child labeled “Class of 1940” weeps in the corner.

All this made the paper a more interesting read than the TUC’s official *Daily Citizen* which was set up later in the same year. Although the *Herald*’s circulation rarely topped



**Daily Herald front page of 1919, criticising the government for economic sanctions on Austria in pursuit of war reparations**

the *Citizen*’s, it outlasted its moderate brother. The *Citizen* folded in 1915, suffering from a lack of political will to keep it going on the part of the trade union leaders.

During the First World War, the *Herald* went weekly, and managed to survive a time when left-wing papers like the *Glasgow Forward* and the SLP’s *Socialist* were being shut down under the Defence of the Realm Act.

Its attitude followed that of most radical socialists; although anti-war, it did not speak out with the same forceful voice that had supported the strikes of the Great Unrest. Instead, it concentrated its efforts on exposing how class divisions in society were deepened by the war. One *Herald* journalist was dispatched to the Ritz just before food rationing was introduced, to expose the continuing decadent lifestyle of the rich in the face of Germany’s submarine blockade.

During the Russian Revolution of 1917, which gave a huge new impetus to anti-war and socialist activity, the *Herald* resumed its role as the movement’s debate chamber. All sorts of views on the pro- and anti-Bolshevik spectrum were given column inches.

The paper also resumed its activism, sponsoring public meetings on the revolution and co-organising the Leeds Conference at which the labour movement re-emerged as a political force. The paper’s lengthy report of the conference covered all the speeches in detail, including Ramsay MacDonald’s uncharacteristic call for workers’ councils.

Circulation reached new heights in 1919, as another strike wave rocked the country, and the pull of huge international events sent *Herald* journalists like H N Brailsford across Europe in search of stories. In 1920, a year when Lansbury visited revolutionary Russia, the paper threw itself into supporting the anti-intervention Hands Off Russia movement.

### OFFICIALDOM

**Back home, the paper’s anger at union officialdom remained. The paper’s leader after Black Friday, when the Triple Alliance of powerful unions fell apart, described the fiasco as “the heaviest defeat that has befallen the Movement within the memory of man.”**

Predictably, lots of coverage was given to the Poplar rates struggle, during which not only Lansbury but also *Herald* journalist John Scurr went to prison.

As class struggle receded, financial problems worsened. An open debate about whether to accept Russian money (which was eventually brought into the country in the form of pearls hidden in a box of chocolates) drew predictable derision from the right. Lansbury was fiercely resistant to the idea of selling the paper to a new private owner, preferring the idea of a labour movement buy-out — which was achieved, after much wrangling, with the help of Arthur Henderson.

From 1922 the paper was the property of the movement, but of its leadership, the TUC General Council and the Labour Party NEC. Henry Hamilton Fyfe was appointed editor. He was left-wing, but more journalist than activist. Fyfe told his journalists to keep comment out of news pieces. The paper was rebranded from May Day 1923, attempting to broaden its content from politics in order to get a larger readership.

During the 1923 dock strike, which was a result of dockers rejecting an agreement that their union had signed, *Herald* coverage was at best ambivalent. One leader compared unofficial strikers to scabs, because they were breaking union discipline. In 1925, Lansbury left the paper to start his own, Lansbury’s *Labour Weekly*, but this folded by 1927.

While the paper had lost its radical edge, it still supported the movement’s left-wing, giving favourable coverage to the ILP and Communist-led National Unemployed Workers’

Movement and Minority Movement.

*Herald* staff joined the general strike in 1926, but many regular writers contributed to the TUC’s strike sheet, the *British Worker*. After the strike, despite the editorship of left-winger William Mellor, the paper’s praise of official Labour leaders and criticism of Communists became more overt. It became loyally supportive of Ramsay MacDonald’s 1929 government. Huw Richards argues this late-1920s period marked a key shift in the *Herald*’s politics.

In 1930 the TUC sold 51% of the paper to Odhams Press, publisher of, among others, the nationalist magazine *John Bull*.

The *Herald* remained a Labour paper, but the importance of political news was once again downgraded. It was starting to look more like a normal mass-circulation paper. The Odhams *Herald* broke the one million circulation mark and Lansbury’s dream of a northern edition was finally realised. Victory in a fierce circulation war with the *Express* made the *Herald* the world’s biggest-selling daily for a time in the mid-1930s. But it was a somewhat pyrrhic victory, pushing up the costs of publication to unsustainable amounts.

Post-war, the *Herald* began to lose readers to the more plain-spoken Labour-supporting *Daily Mirror*. Circulation dropped below two million in 1951, the year Labour was voted out of office. Loyalty was still the watchword; the paper supported Gaitskell against Bevan, and rallied back to the leadership after a brief flirtation with the anti-bomb movement.

Without strong politics, neither a tabloid nor a broadsheet, the *Herald* struggled to carve out a purpose for itself in the post-war market and entered into terminal decline. It did not last to see Labour returned to power. The final issue appeared just a month before Wilson won the 1964 election. Its successor, the *Sun*, also struggled until it was bought by Rupert Murdoch in 1969.

### WHAT WAS THE HERALD?

**If the *Herald* ended its life as an ordinary newspaper, it certainly did not begin as one.**

With just £300 of capital, it seemed unlikely to ever get off the ground. Even in its more successful periods, the paper had problems getting advertising income because of its political stance. It was only ever sustained by the loyalty of its readership and their own sacrifices. Lansbury called the paper “one of the finest achievements of the rank and file of our Movement,” although he would always complain that people never gave enough.

Political newspapers are always in precarious positions. In the early years, circulation always rose and fell with class struggle. Strike waves and elections saw spikes in readership. At other times, cuts were made. The *Herald* was not a co-operative, still less a venture run by workers’ control. It did not by any means pay equal salaries to its employees, and it did sack staff. It wavered between financial stability and political independence, arguably achieving the former by sacrificing the latter.

But although the politics got dampened down by official TUC control, were Lansbury and co. wrong to want a paper owned by the movement? This is a question worth considering. It is difficult to think of the *Herald*’s modern-day successor or equivalent.

Which party papers or union websites provide the socialist movement with, as Lansbury put it, “the stimulus which independent thought and expression alone can give”? Where can activists engage in genuine debate about political tactics and ideas? Indymedia? UnionNews? *Socialist Worker*? *Solidarity*?

None have anywhere near the mass appeal that the *Herald* managed. “No paper,” *Herald* historian Huw Richards argued, “was more consistent in offering a voice to those who are excluded, derided or both by the bulk of the mass-circulation press.”

On the *Herald*’s birthday, it might be worth asking ourselves whether the socialist movement is capable of launching a successful multi-platform media outlet. Are we too hampered by sectarianism and a lack of resources? Would the politics of the project descend into a Counterfire-esque mesh of incoherent ideas? Would it be doomed to eventual transformation into something like Murdoch’s *Sun*, or the ignominious end suffered by the *News on Sunday* in the 1980s?

**With the *Herald*’s history in mind, perhaps these are questions we can revisit.**

### Further reading

*The miracle of Fleet Street*, George Lansbury  
*The rise and fall of the Daily Herald*, Rajani Palme Dutt  
*The Bloody Circus: The Daily Herald and the Left*, Huw Richards



# Trotskyism and Spain

“There is nothing so destructive as illusion, whereas nothing can be of greater use to the revolution than naked truth.”  
Rosa Luxemburg, *The Spartacus Programme*

By Liam McNulty

**The Spanish Revolution was the last great confrontation in the Europe-wide class war sparked by the triumph of the Russian Revolution in 1917. It inspired workers from all over the world and its tragic defeat was a source of controversy for decades after the events. The debates between the Spanish left, Leon Trotsky, other “Trotskyists” and writers such as Victor Serge are worth revisiting. They highlight important lessons about Marxist organisation.**

The debates of Trotsky and others centred on assessments of the different political tendencies in the Spanish workers’ movement: the anarchists, the reformist socialists and the communists.

Until the period following the First World War, the Spanish labour movement was relatively weak. Although anarchism had deep roots in Spain by the turn of the twentieth century it was faltering under the weight of severe state repression.

After a failed general strike in 1902, union membership in Barcelona fell from 45,000 to just 7,000 by 1909. The anarcho-syndicalist Confederación Nacional de Trabajo (CNT) was formed in 1910, shaped by working-class alienation from the state following the massacre of an anti-colonialist rebellion in Catalonia in 1909. But initially it was small, with no more than 50,000 members.

Spain’s neutrality in the First World War reaped substantial war profits for Spanish capitalism, causing a boom and a subsequent slump. The anarchists who reaped the whirlwind, attracting the most militant workers with promises of immediate and direct action. Repression of the CNT followed a general strike in August 1917 — yet it grew from 107,096 members at the end of 1918 to 345,000 a year later in Catalonia alone. They were also beginning to make inroads in traditional Socialist areas such as Asturias and Vizcaya.

The fortunes of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and the socialist-led union federation, the Unión General de Trabajadores (UGT), offer a stark contrast. Spanish social democracy had long flinched from action which would bring it into conflict with the state. For instance, the Madrid-based PSOE-UGT leadership, led by the moderate reformist Pablo Iglesias, had opposed turning an important miners’ strike of 1913 (Rio Tinto) into a general strike and ceded much ground to the new CNT in Catalonia. The party’s combination of revolutionary rhetoric and conciliatory actions could not even be explained by a desire — like that of the German Social Democratic Party leaders — to preserve a large party apparatus at all costs.

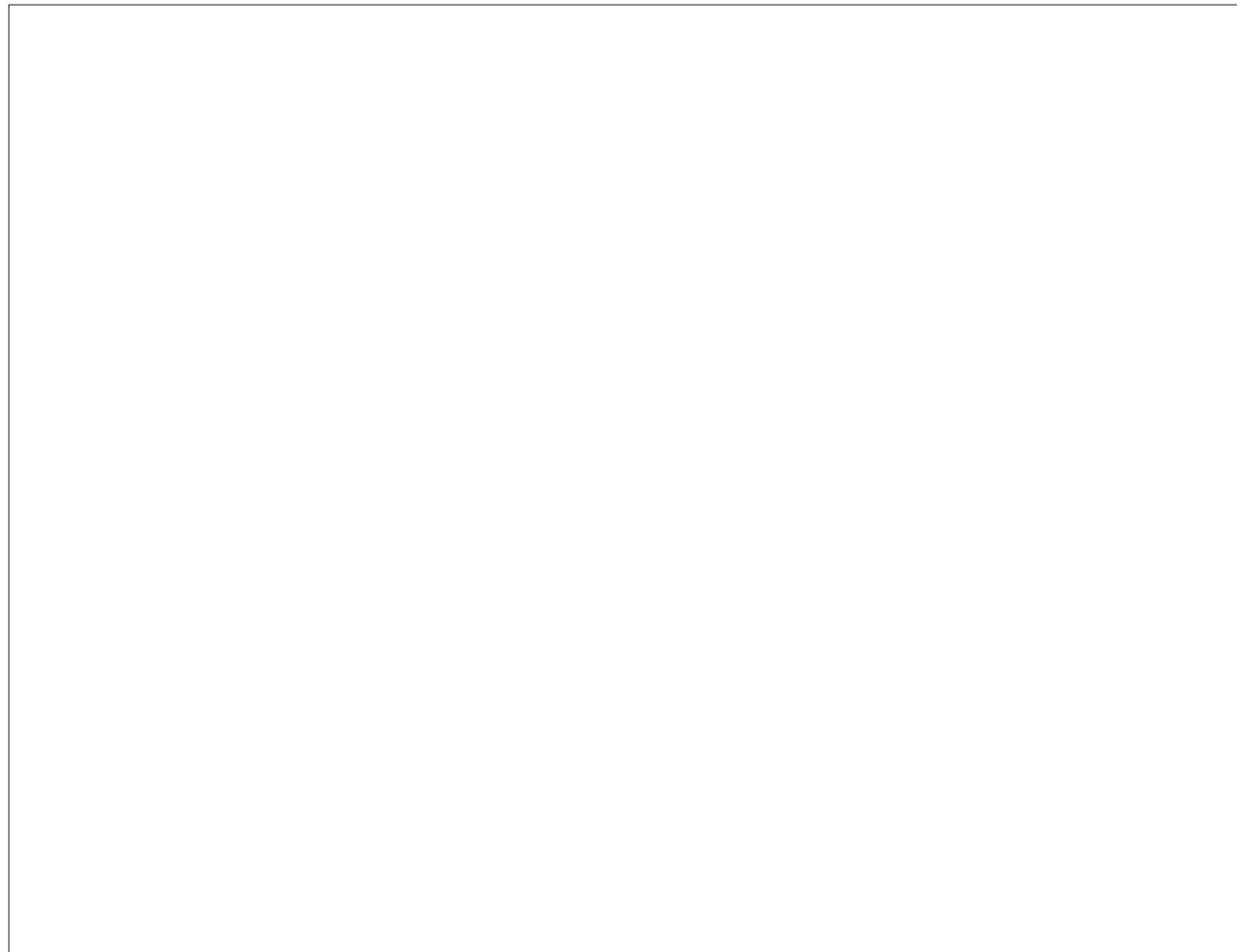
## PSOE

**The PSOE was weak, registering only 45,000 votes in 1910.**

Spanish social democracy had always been also ideologically weak — it did not take part in any of the controversies over political strategy within the socialist Second International at the turn of the century. It made few attempts to relate Marxist theory to Spanish realities, and its leading theorist Julian Besteiro, a former liberal republican and Professor of Logic in the Universidad Central de Madrid, was an extreme example of “vulgar Marxist” dogmatism. Besteiro’s analysis of Spain was highly deterministic: he thought that the country was in a semi-feudal condition; that the Second Spanish Republic declared in April 1931 represented a stage of the bourgeois-democratic revolution; and that PSOE should step aside and allow the liberal republicans to govern alone. He advocated abstentionism from the 1930 Pact of San Sebastián (a coalition of republicans and socialists agreeing to overthrow the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and declare a republic).

The revolutionary general strike of August 1917, vividly captured in Victor Serge’s semi-autobiographical novel *Birth of Our Power*, had been the beginning of a wave of militant class struggle which ended in defeat for the workers and the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in 1923. Primo’s dictatorship was a cold winter for the working-class movement. The anarchist movement was outlawed, and driven underground, precipitating a split in 1927 between the more moderate and syndicalist wing around Angel Pestana, and the more ideologically pure anarchists such as Buenaventura Durruti who formed the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI).

At the same time the PSOE split over the whether or not



## Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM), founded in 1935

to adhere to “Twenty One Conditions” for membership of the new, Third International, set up after the Russian Revolution. The left-wing left to form the Spanish Communist Party (PCE). The remaining leadership of PSOE began to collaborate with Primo de Rivera, and the trade union bureaucrat Francisco Largo Caballero even joined the dictator’s Council of Ministers in return for the UGT being allowed to take part in state arbitration committees designed to mitigate industrial disputes. The PSOE’s stance only changed when living standards began to decline in the second half of the 1920s.

After the 1931 elections the PSOE became the largest party in the Cortes.

Against the wishes of Besteiro and others, it decided to share power with the Spanish republicans and the centre-right Radicals. Largo Caballero became the Minister of Labour, charged with tackling the problem of the highly inefficient Spanish agriculture, characterised by starvation wages and seasonal unemployment.

Caballero’s mild-1932 Agrarian Reform Law created a Land Registry, and laid the basis for the compulsory purchase of large estates. The Law of Municipal Boundaries hindered landowners’ ability to import labour from one municipality to another in order to depress wages in times of regional unemployment.

The agrarian question was at the centre of left-right political polarisation during the Second Spanish Republic. Agrarian reforms met stubborn resistance from landowners because they cut into already low profit rates. They were often delayed by unsympathetic officials on the ground. The right mobilised pious Catholic smallholders against the apparent threats to private property.

## PROGRESS

**In December 1933, the right came to power in Navarre, promising to halt progress on the agrarian question; they initiated harsh repression against the working-class.**

Stalled and obstructed on land reform, sections of the PSOE-UGT shifted to the left. The Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de la Tierra (FNTT), the agricultural section of the UGT, grew rapidly. Founded in April 1930, it had 275 sections of 36,639 members two months later. Two years later it had 392,953 members and made up 38% of UGT membership. The UGT has been transformed from a union of skilled craftsmen to one with a large base of landless labourers.

Alert to rank-and-file radicalisation, and knowing that the

UGT needed to fend off a resurgent anarchist movement, Largo Caballero shifted to the left, adopting bellicose revolutionary rhetoric. After 1935, when the Spanish Stalinists adopted the Comintern’s popular front policy of allying with reformist socialists and bourgeois democrats, they crowned Caballero the “Spanish Lenin”.

A left tendency around Luís Araquistain in the PSOE emerged.

Araquistain had worked with Caballero on the land question before becoming Spain’s ambassador to Germany. With Hitler in power (after 1933) Araquistain helped evacuate Jews and leftists from certain death.

Araquistain’s journal *Leviatán* (founded May 1934) became a vehicle for relentless ideological attacks on Besteiro. The journal contained articles by Italian, German, Austrian and Portuguese socialists in exile and gave space to Leon Trotsky’s analysis of fascism.

Arguments about the bankruptcy of the Comintern’s popular front strategy also found a voice in *Leviatán* through contributions from the Workers’ and Peasants’ Bloc (BOC) (led by Joaquín Maurín), and Izquierda Comunista Española (ICE), (led by Andrés Nin). Maurín and Nin founded the Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista (POUM) in 1935.

Maurín developed the idea of working-class united fronts called Alianzas Obreras (Workers’ Alliances). Such projects did get off the ground and were to play a role in the October 1934 rising in Asturias. However the PSOE would be mainly interested in using them to promote their own hegemony in the workers’ movement and, with the exception of Asturias, the CNT remained aloof.

## OPPOSITION

**The ICE was the Spanish Section of the Left Opposition. Formed originally as the Oposición Comunista Española (OCE) by a group of Spanish exiles in Belgium on 28 February 1930, it was eventually led by Nin.**

Nin was an experienced revolutionary. As secretary of the national committee of the CNT, he had travelled to Moscow in 1921 for the founding conference of the Profintern, the international organisation to co-ordinate communist trade union work. In Moscow he first met Victor Serge and the French syndicalist leader Alfred Rosmer. Unable to return to Spain until 1931 because he was wrongly linked to the murder of the Spanish prime minister Eduardo Dato, he resolved to stay in Moscow to assist the work of the Profintern. He became an ally of Leon Trotsky, joining the Left

Continues on page 14



From page 13

Opposition and spending time in Stalin's prisons for his efforts in fighting the growing Soviet bureaucracy after Lenin's death.

The problems and shortcomings of the Spanish Left Opposition are discussed in Trotsky's correspondence with figures such as Nin and Victor Serge, and in the Internal Bulletin of the Left Opposition.

The disagreements centred around two issues.

First, Trotsky thought the Spanish section was too insular. It was, he said, not participating fully in the debates within the International Left Opposition. Its leaders "have persistently kept their organisation away from the internal life and the internal struggles of the other sections, and thereby have shut it off from access to an irreplaceable international experience."

Second, Trotsky questioned Nin's relationship with Maurín and his followers. In September 1931 Trotsky had written to the Spanish Left Opposition opposing moves to enter Maurín's BOC on the grounds that the Opposition internationally had not yet given up on reforming the existing official Communist Parties. In December 1932 Trotsky held an informal meeting in Copenhagen with several sections of the Opposition. The Spanish section was unable to attend so Trotsky concluded they had let "friendly personal relations" with Maurín take the place of "principled struggle against petty-bourgeois nationalism and thereby put a break on the development of the Left Opposition in the most decisive period."

The situation for the Left Opposition changed after Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. As the Nazi power grew the Comintern pursued a policy of attacking social democrats as "social fascists"; the Trotskyists called for a united front of workers' parties against the real fascism. The communists refused. Trotsky gave up hope of reforming the Stalinist parties and proclaimed the need for a political regrouping, a Fourth International.

The historian of the POUM, Victor Alba, sees these events as a vindication of Nin's policy of joining the BOC as a faction, especially as the PCE barely existed in Catalonia. It is reasonable to have some sympathy with this position; Trotsky's subsequent volte-face, combined with his distance from Spain, weighs against his position on the Spanish Communists.

Nevertheless, the BOC political programme was weak. The BOC shared the Stalinists' "two stage theory" — "every revolution has two stages: the democratic and the Socialist revolution".

Alba admits that the BOC had little implantation in the working-class; its main success was among white-collar workers in Barcelona. Trotsky's warnings proved correct. Bit by bit, the Catalan BOC's anti-Trotskyism came to the fore within POUM.

In France, too, the social democratic party, the Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO), was shifting to the left in response to the threat of fascism, opening up a new arena of struggle. In June 1934, Trotsky proposed to the French section of the Left Opposition, the Communist League, that they work inside the SFIO (the "French Turn").

He recommended a similar policy in Spain. Nin opposed the "French Turn" and in September 1934, his group, now called the ICE, broke with Trotsky. Talented militants such as Esteban Bilbao and Manuel Fernández y Grandizo (known as "Munis") left the ICE; Munis joined the PSOE. The left of the PSOE, especially the youth movement, led by the future PCE leader Santiago Carillo, were increasingly receptive to Trotsky's ideas. Carillo wrote to the BOC's *La Batalla*, inviting them to join the PSOE to fight the party's right, as a step to creating a revolutionary party to fight fascism. Maurín, concerned about losing influence, refused.

The Socialist youth movement eventually fused with the youth wing of the Stalinist PCE, making it much more difficult to win over that generation of militant young socialists to genuine revolutionary socialism.

## FORMATION OF THE POUM

**In March 1935, the BOC brought together the ICE, the official Communists, the Catalan section of the PSOE, and some other minor Catalan leftist parties to discuss Marxist unity.**

Only Nin and Maurín were interested. The others later forming the basis of the United Socialist Party of Catalonia (PSUC) which acted as a de facto branch of the Stalinist PCE.

The International Left Opposition (ILO) initially approved talks with the BOC, as long as the ICE could remain a faction inside any new party. Jean Rous, the ILO Secretariat member sent to Spain in the summer of 1935, was initially optimistic. The ICE promised to re-establish links with the Munis group inside the PSOE; this would open up the possibility of a faction inside a new open Marxist party in Catalonia, and entryist work inside the PSOE in areas where the ICE and BOC were both weaker.

However, the BOC was not prepared to tolerate factions. In a letter to the French historian Pierre Broué in the 1970s, Maurín summed it up: "The only concession the BOC made to the ICE was the change in the name of the party."

Maurín later recounted to Victor Alba the course of the fu-

sion talks: "There were no problems. Nin had officially broken relations with Trotsky and I was persuaded that Nin was sincere and did not seek infiltration in the classic Bolshevik manner. The central topic was: international independence, no contact with Trotsky. Nin assented." "International independence" meant in practice, membership of the centrist "London Bureau" which was the international grouping including the British Independent Labour Party.

The early POUM made some good noises, criticising the disastrous Stalinist "Third Period" policy, adopted a position on the Spanish Revolution similar to Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, and called for a united front of workers against fascism. They did not, however, remain steadfast.

In the elections of February 1936 the POUM's executive committee decided to join the Popular Front electoral list with the republican parties. Convinced itself that it was a circumstantial electoral pact, the POUM were spreading illusions in the merits of the Popular Front by their very participation in it.

They had signed up to a programme which was described by EH Carr as a "mild and anodyne document, evidently designed to rally a wide coalition of divergent interests and sections of opinion, united only in their commitment to the republic and to some form of democratic government." In fact, parts of it were anything but anodyne, committing the parties to support for the League of Nations, previously attacked by the POUM as "the united front of the imperialists", and rejecting any radical solutions to the agrarian question.

It was almost impossible for the POUM to argue for their formal position of a workers' united front without spreading confusion; yet at this time spontaneous land seizures and factory occupations were spreading through Spain. Later, when civil war began after right wing generals staged a coup on 17 July 1936, the POUM joined a bourgeois coalition anti-coup government in Catalonia.

After the fusion Trotsky accused his former ICE comrades of the "debasement and prostitution of Marxism" for forging "a political alliance with the leaders of a reformist party on the basis of a deliberately dishonest program serving to dupe the masses and cover up for the bourgeoisie."

The polemics created disquiet in the Dutch and Belgian sections of the Trotskyist movement. The respected Dutch revolutionary Hendricus Sneevliet, in the name of the central committee of his party, criticised Trotsky's attacks on the POUM as exaggerated and overly sharp. Trotsky's criticisms led to a lengthy correspondence with Victor Serge and others. Alfred Rosmer and Serge accused Trotsky of being "sectarian", to which Trotsky replied, "If it is sectarianism, then all of Marxism only sectarianism, since it is a doctrine of the class struggle and not of class collaboration."

Alba writes that the "official Trotskyists wasted more ink and saliva attacking the POUM than they did the official Communist Party". This is untrue but also misses the point.

Whereas the PCE were following the orders of the counter-revolutionary Kremlin bureaucracy, the POUM were sincere if mistaken revolutionaries, potentially open to persuasion. That was Trotsky's view when he wrote to Serge that "if Nin today were to pull himself together...if he should draw all the necessary conclusions, then we would help him as a comrade". Trotsky never underestimated the individual bravery of POUM militants, he wrote to French comrades, "it is precisely their battle and their sacrifice that forces us to tell the truth and nothing but the truth." It was a matter of helping the Spanish comrades to work out the best possible Marxist political line for the situation they found themselves in.

But Nin did not listen to advice. The July 1936 military coup was followed by a revolutionary explosion. Workers occupied factories and peasants invaded large estates; workers' control in industry was established in large parts of Spain; the Republic's governmental institutions existed only on paper. Meanwhile, the armed workers who had successfully repelled the military in Spain's major cities ruled the streets. Dual power was a reality, especially in Catalonia — bourgeois government and workers' organisation existed in parallel.

Now the Catalan premier, Luís Companys offered power to the CNT. In reality it was power that he no longer had to offer, yet the CNT persuaded Companys to stay on, resuscitating bourgeois legality as it lay on its death bed. In sidestepping the question of political power and failing to face up to the need to construct the basis of a workers' state, the CNT opened the way to the counter-revolution.

The POUM followed the CNT into the re-organised Catalan regional government, the Generalitat, in October 1936. Then the Stalinists, acting alongside the bourgeois republicans, placed the collectivised factories under the control of the bourgeois state, paving the way for the eventual re-establishment of private property. Nin, as Minister of Justice, oversaw the dissolution of the revolutionary workers' committees and the re-establishment of the old municipal government.

An opposition in the Barcelona POUM, the "Cell 72" group led by José Rebull, fought the collaborationist policy. They said, "we do not accept the reformist position according to which the social overturn can take place by the 'conquest' of the bourgeois state. In this case the problem of dual

power could be laid aside. But if you look at reality, you must recognise the necessity for destroying the bourgeois state and replacing it with a new organ that has nothing in common with the state of the exploiters."

Members of the POUM in Lleida also opposed entry into the Generalitat and Nin led a government delegation to persuade them to support the decrees. As Alba admits, "this was, unquestionably, a low point for the party... On 16 November, with all resistance now vanquished... the Generalitat decreed the suppression of 3,000 official posts in committees, people's tribunals, commissions, etc., the majority of them held by workers. The structure of working-class power was thus eliminated."

The Munis group of Trotskyists, who stayed with the International Left Opposition, were joined by around 100 foreign Bolshevik-Leninists who volunteered to fight in the civil war. Jean Rous, sent by the ILO in August 1936 warned the POUM, to no avail, about the consequences of liquidating the revolutionary committees in Catalonia.

After this, the Bolshevik-Leninists constituted themselves as the official section of the International Left Opposition and published their own paper, *La Voz Leninista*. The group lost many militants in the defence of Madrid in the autumn of 1936. In the "anti-Trotskyist" purges carried out by the Stalinists and the government of the right-wing PSOE premier Juan Negrín after May 1937, many Bolshevik-Leninists disappeared, including Erwin Wolf, who was the secretary to Trotsky during his exile, and Hans Freund (alias Moulin).

After the arrest of Munis in 1938, Mieczyslaw Bortenstein, a Polish member of the French Communist League, led the Spanish Trotskyists. He served in the CNT militia from the very beginning of the Civil War, and helped to edit *La Voz Leninista*. Later he managed to escape from Spain, only to be later arrested in France and to die in the Auschwitz death camp.

Writing a political memoir as "M Casanova", Bortenstein recounts how the Spanish Trotskyists applied to join the POUM in November 1936, promising to respect party discipline in return for factional rights. Nin, speaking on behalf of the POUM's Central Committee, told them he required "a condemnation of the campaigns of the so-called Fourth International" among other things; suspected sympathisers of the Fourth International were later expelled for "deviating from the political line of the party."

Another Trotskyist group, led by the Italian Nicola di Bartolomeo (alias "Fosco"), was aligned with the short-lived French International Workers Party (POI) of Raymond Molinier and Pierre Frank and did initially work inside the POUM. This group published *El Soviet* and was very critical of the Bolshevik-Leninists for their alleged "sectarianism". Di Bartolomeo, along with another Italian, Virginia Gervasini, was given the task of registering foreign militants for the POUM when they arrived in Spain.

In the POI's bulletin in 1938, di Bartolomeo condemned the official section for proposing to distribute a letter from Trotsky in the summer of 1936, although he admitted it contained correct criticisms of the POUM's policy on the Popular Front. He blamed the leadership of the ILO, and especially Rous, for a sectarian policy which repulsed the Trotskyist sympathisers within the POUM.

## NUANCES

**75 years on it is difficult to disentangle the nuances of the disagreements between the Trotskyists inside and outside the POUM.**

Di Bartolomeo had a contradictory position — agreeing with the Bolshevik-Leninists entering the POUM as a faction, but unwilling to work with them because he disagreed with their leadership outside Spain.

Di Bartolomeo's 1938 polemic does not address Bortenstein's belief that Nin set impossible conditions for the entry of the Bolshevik-Leninists into the POUM in November 1936. According to a first-hand account by the Italian Trotskyist, Dominico Sedran (alias "Adolfo Carlini"), di Bartolomeo told the Bolshevik-Leninist volunteers on their arrival in August 1936 that the POUM had refused their request for factional rights. After a spell on the Huesca front in Aragon and after suffering casualties, the group returned to Barcelona, and was again refused by Nin on the grounds that the ILO leadership had "slandered" the POUM.

Sherry Mangan from the Socialist Workers Party (USA) was sent to Perpignan in 1939 to interview revolutionary exiles escaping across the frontier to France. His article is a gripping account of the escape of the surviving POUM members and Bolshevik-Leninists from the wreckage of Barcelona, now captured, having been left to rot in Stalinist prisons to await the arrival of Franco's troops. Mangan recounts:

"Fourth Internationalists have grave political differences with the centrists of the POUM; but when they are ruthlessly hunted by the bloodhounds of French imperialism at the very time it is making friends with the butcher Franco, it is not these political differences, but our class solidarity which is uppermost in our minds."

**If only they had managed to reach a workable arrangement when the civil war and the Spanish revolution were still winnable in the summer of 1936.**

*Article continues next week*

## Nottingham teachers fight five-term year plan

**By Tom Unterrainer, President, Nottingham City NUT (pc)**

**Nottingham teachers struck for a second day on 17 March in their campaign of industrial action against the Local Authority.**

Inspired by Michael Gove's plans to change school holiday patterns, the Labour-controlled council has attempted to force through a change to a five term year in Nottingham city schools.

Implementation of the five term year will mean a shortening of the six week summer holiday to four weeks and a regular pattern of eight week terms.

Members of all teaching unions — including a majority of head teachers in the city — and the body representing school gover-



nors have rejected the plan. Nottingham city National Union of Teachers balloted its members for strike action after an overwhelming response from ordinary teachers. NASUWT and other school based unions are yet to act, although there are some signs that they could join action shortly.

The NUT's opposition and the subsequent industrial action are not simply a response to the shortening of the summer holiday. The union does argue that a long summer holiday is necessary for both teachers

and young people. Necessary for teachers because they need time to recover and recuperate from an emotionally, intellectually and physically exhausting academic year. Necessary for young people for exactly the same reason. Additionally, the NUT argues that young people need time away from school, time to play, time to interact with others in a non-academic setting and time to learn and experience the things that school cannot teach.

If Nottingham Labour councillors succeed in

changing to a four week summer break, young people in the city will have the shortest summer break in the world bar South Korea. South Korea has the highest recorded child suicide rate in the world.

### DIRECT

**In addition, the change would only affect schools under direct control of the city council.**

This means the majority of secondary schools — Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Academy schools — will retain a different holiday pattern to the majority of city primaries. Additionally, schools in the county, some of them across the road from neighbouring city schools, will retain the traditional holiday patterns. This in turn means that brothers and sisters attending different schools could have

completely different holiday patterns. Not only that, but teachers who happen to be parents could end up seeing very little of their children!

Despite significant pressure from the local press, the unions and building pressure from the local community, Nottingham city council has so far refused to budge. Councilors and local education officials seem determined to go it alone, using Gove's Tory proposals as a political tool to whack teachers, children and their families over the head.

The NUT has a third day of industrial action planned and may well take further action in the short term to see off these proposals.

**This is a fight not just for teachers but for the well-being, mental and physical health of the young people they teach.**

## Tube Lines: strike for pensions justice

**By a Tubeworker supporter**

**Workers employed by Tube Lines, the company which provides essential maintenance and repair work across London Underground, will strike for three days from Tuesday 24 April.**

The workers are fighting to win a levelling-up of pensions rights and travel concessions. Tube Lines was a private consortium formed to take up maintenance of the Piccadilly, Northern and Jubilee Lines (as well as emergency response services across the whole network) as part of the disastrous Public-Private Partnership scheme which the Labour government imposed in 2003. Following the collapse of PPP, TfL brought Tube Lines back in-house in 2010, giving its shareholders, Ferrovial and Bechtel, a £310 million payout.

Workers who have been working for Tube Lines since before the PPP sell-off have the same pension and travel rights as all other directly-employed London Underground workers, but Tube Lines staff employed since then have worse conditions. Their union, the RMT, has been making renewed demands for conditions to be levelled-up since the PPP ended, but bosses have been intransigent.

One excuse from management has been that they can not grant the union's demands until the future ownership of Tube Lines is determined later this year. This is a clear signal that TfL intends to re-privatise it, the most likely new owner being Amey (owned by Ferrovial), which was kept on to help run Tube Lines when it was brought into public ownership. The prospect of re-privatisation is even more reason for Tube Lines workers to fight on this issue now.

Workers voted by 81% to take strike action, and by 90% to take industrial action short of a strike.

**A walkout by Tube Lines workers could cause widespread disruption, as it could make large parts of the network unsafe to use.**

## Tanker drivers' ballot extended as talks continue

**By Darren Bedford**

**Unite officials and fuel industry bosses have negotiated a deal to extend the legal validity of a drivers' strike ballot until Friday 20 April as talks continue.**

Peter Harwood, "Chief Conciliator" at arbitration service ACAS, has told the press that "the intention is that no industrial action will be called in that period". The period in which Unite would have had to announce industrial action in order to keep the ballot live was due to expire at 4pm on Monday 16 April.

Under the new agreement, Unite could call a strike any time from 21 April to 27 April (they are required to give at least

seven days notice).

Drivers are fighting to impose minimum standards on safety, pay, terms and conditions across an industry fragmented by sub-contracting and outsourcing. Haulage and fuel company bosses have scoffed at their demands, claiming that they are equivalent to asking Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda to guarantee across-the-board minimum conditions for their check-out staff (an eminently sensible demand that the labour movement should fight for when it becomes better-organised in the supermarket retail sector).

**Representatives of the management of six of the seven companies involved in the dispute have attended talks.**

come for workers and should be rejected.

*Red Pill*, an industrial bulletin for healthworkers produced by members and friends of Workers' Liberty working in the NHS, is campaigning for rejection.

**To download the latest bulletin to distribute in your workplace, visit [tinyurl.com/redpillaprilmay](http://tinyurl.com/redpillaprilmay)**

## First BMW strike in 28 years looming

**By Stewart Ward**

**Workers at BMW's Oxford plant have voted by 97% to oppose management's latest pay offer.**

The consultative ballot, which was conducted by the Unite union, polled 2,000 employees.

The pay deal included a basic increase of 2.21%, of which nearly 2% was contingent on working extra

hours. Since the ballot, BMW bosses have offered further talks. While "welcoming" the talks, Unite has said it will press on with plans to move to a full ballot for industrial action to win a better deal.

Unite officer Roger Maddison said: "There are more strings to this deal than a puppet show and the workers at BMW will not accept it."

"The majority of the

workforce works 11 hour shifts, and more and more productivity demands are being made by BMW. The union never closed the door on talks and we are happy to get back around the table but we are also making preparations to ballot our members for strike action."

**If strike action was to take place, it would be the first at the plant since 1984.**

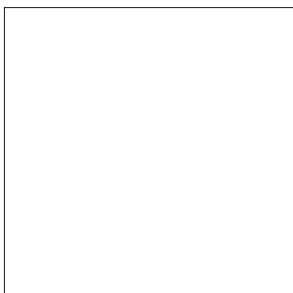
## Unilever pensions fight ends in "bitter disappointment"

**By Clarke Benitez**

**Members of Unite and USDAW at Unilever have accepted a new pensions offer from bosses, with members of the GMB currently balloting.**

If the deal is accepted it would end the long-running battle over the closure of the company's final salary pensions scheme which saw Unilever workers take unprecedented industrial action.

The new deal does not reverse the closure but make what Unite claims are "significant improvements" to the new career-average scheme which will replace the existing final-salary scheme. The deal also commits Unilever to not making any further changes to the pensions scheme until 2018, and that any future changes must



be subjected to full prior consultation with trade unions before being announced.

Ultimately, the deal represents a mitigated defeat for workers.

**USDAW official David Johnson said: "While we have achieved some important improvements to the replacement scheme, our members remain angry and bitterly disappointed by Unilever's decision to close the final-salary pension scheme."**

## Bullying investigation at Swindon hospital

**By a GMB activist**

**An enquiry into endemic bullying and harassment of workers at a hospital in Swindon — which has led so far to 18 days of strike action — is set to conclude on 27 April.**

Over 100 workers employed by Carillion as auxiliary staff at Swindon General Hospital have been interviewed as part of the investigation, which was one of the strike demands of the workers' union, the GMB.

**The GMB has said that if the investigation does not result in satisfactory measures for dealing with and preventing future management bullying, further strike action is likely.**

## Mobilise to reject the deal!

**By a healthworker**

**NHS members of public sector union Unison are currently voting on whether to accept the government's deal for reforming their pension scheme.**

Despite the 30 November strike action, the deal remains a "work longer, pay more, get less" out-

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## Syria: killing continues as ceasefire falters

By Dan Katz

Following significant diplomatic pressure, and faced with the possibility of losing Russian and Chinese backing, the Syrian government signed up to a UN ceasefire plan.

For now, in some regions, there is an uneasy peace. In other areas the truce has collapsed already.

Between the "ceasefire" formally coming into force on Thursday 13 April and the arrival of the first UN observers four days later,

at least 41 people, mostly civilians, were reported killed.

Syria has signed up to remove its tanks, weapons and troops from urban centres — but it has failed to do so. And the army was shelling Homs, and fighting the armed opposition in Idlib, on Monday. Assad knows if he removes the army the opposition will take over many Syrian cities.

The emir of Qatar said he believed there was little chance of the plan, brokered by Kofi Annan,

working. He again advocated arming the opposition fighters of the Free Syrian Army. Qatar and Saudi Arabia are the most prominent and powerful of the Arab Sunni states in open opposition to the Syrian leadership. They are no democrats, but are looking to shift power in the region and deal a blow to Syria's backer, Iran.

Scepticism about the prospects for the Annan plan is also common among anti-regime activists — and with good reason: Assad has reneged

on deals before, and if he carries out this agreement to the letter (and despite the fact that it formally leaves open the question of government) he will in fact be relinquishing power.

Russia has been central to forcing the regime to accept the Annan deal. They — together with the Western powers — are eager for some sort of settlement.

**They fear all the more likely futures facing Syria — full scale civil war with the possibility of a rapid growth of an Islamist insurgency.**

## "Greek youth will arm themselves"

By Theodora Polenta

On Wednesday 4 April a 77 year old pensioner, Dimitris Xristoulas, committed public suicide in Syntagma Square, Athens. He left a militant political note denouncing his "murderers".

His murderers are those who have robbed the pensions and salaries of Greek workers, who have dismantled and destroyed public services who have indebted Greece until at least 2020 through an austerity program.

Xristoulas' note reads: "The traitors' government of Tsolakoglou (referring to the first Prime Minister of a Greek collaborationist government, during the Axis Occupation in 1941-1942) has taken away ... my right of a decent pension and a decent survival although I have been paying for my pension during 35 years of hard work.

**KALASHNIKOV**  
"My old age does not give me the opportunity of militant resistance (without excluding the fact that if one Greek person was armed with a Kalashnikov I would be the first to join).

"I cannot find another solution apart from giving a decent ending to my life before I was forced to search at the dustbin for my food.

"I believe that the young people with no future one day will arm themselves and will hang at Syntagma Square the nation's traitors, in the same way that the Italian people hanged Mussolini in 1943."

The 77 year old pensioner was neither defeated nor intimidated by the barbarism of the capitalist system. He did not overdose in the privacy of his room or jump off his balcony. He chose to put an end to his life at Syntagma square, where last summer masses of people gathered every day defending their right to struggle and to direct participatory democracy.

The response of his daughter confirmed the meaning and symbolic status of Xristoulas' stance: "For the people of his generation ... the stubborn kids of the left ... during the current political and economic climate, the act of suicide is considered not an act of escapism but as an act to spark and re-invigorate the resistance ... it is a cry for everybody to join the struggle and overthrow the coalition government".

Immediately a spontaneous call to gather at Syntagma square domi-

nated the social media and internet and was passed from mouth to mouth. The gathering quickly became hundreds and thousands as the day went on. The citizens of his neighbourhood community movement called for a demonstration and protest on 7 April, the day of his funeral, with the slogan "Let's transform our anger into organised collective political struggle".

But on 7 April the police forces, including riot police, encircled Syntagma square in order to stop the mobilisation.

A heavily-armed force, using as an excuse minor attacks by anarchist forces, suffocated the protesters (among them a lot of elderly people) with gas, injured a female journalist, and arrested at least 10 of the protesters. A murderous attack was made on photographers' trade union leader, Marios Lolos, bashed on the back of his head by the police.

The pro-austerity forces can only govern by the power of fear and attempting to silence those who can tell the truth about what they are doing.

**CONFRONT**  
The working-class movement needs to confront both the political measures of the government and the state being employed to enforce them; it needs to embolden its struggle and politically annihilate Pasok, New Democracy, and all their acolytes and misleading political "alternatives".

The mainstream politicians could not hide their frustration about Xristoulas' suicide because it spoiled their electoral plans (set for 6 May).

They excelled themselves in dishonouring his memory by trying to downplay the political character of his act. Pasok spokesman Panos Beglitis made the preposterous statement: "We do not know who has misspent the deceased's money, his kids or the victim himself". Outraged people in his neighbourhood destroyed Beglitis' political office. The cynicism of all mainstream politicians is another proof of their detachment from the wants and beliefs of the whole of the Greek society.

**The best way to pay tribute to Dimitris Xristoulas's memory is to respond to his call and make reality the cause for which he has given up his life — the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a socialist society.**

• More on the Greek election, see page 6

## Ideas for Freedom 2012 What is capitalism, and can it last?

29 June — 1 July, Highgate  
Newtown Community Centre,  
London N19 5DQ

Sessions include:

- How do we make socialism a force again? A panel discussion with Owen Jones (author of *Chavs*), Rosie Woods (health worker activist and Workers' Liberty member) and more tbc
- Is Greece in a pre-revolutionary situation?
- 33 Revolutions Per Minute: author Dorian Lynskey and hip-hop artist/spoken-word poet The Ruby Kid on protest songs
- Activists from the New Anticapitalist Party's L'Étincelle (Spark) faction on the changing shape of France's far left
- What's wrong with conspiracy theories? with Jack Ferguson of the Scottish Socialist Party
- Roma communities and the rise of the far right across Europe
- The NHS we had, the one we have and the one we want
- Understanding the Eurozone crisis
- Iranian socialists on war and class struggle in Iran
- The Marxism of CLR James
- Is boycotting Israel a good way to help the Palestinians? Michael Chessum, NUS national executive, debates Sacha Ismail of Workers' Liberty
- Introduction to Marxism sessions.



A solid strike could help rebuild labour movement confidence

## Strike on 10 May!

By Ira Berkovic

The National Executive of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) has voted to strike on 10 May in the battle against government pensions reform.

Its decision follows the announcement of the health section of the Unite union to "aim for" a strike on that date. Unite now says its 100,000 NHS members will be "staging protests and industrial action" on that date. The Executive of the University and College Union (UCU) meets next week to decide on its participation. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) Executive also meets next week, and will discuss further action.

Although this strike comes long after many of the government's reforms will already have been introduced, a solid action on 10 May could help rebuild

labour movement confidence.

The strike should be focused around specific industrial demands (rather than a tokenistic expression of displeasure at what the government is doing), and situated in a wider, ongoing programme of action that includes rolling, selective and escalating action to keep up a constant level of pressure on the employers.

Activists in all public sector unions should push for the maximum action on 10 May — that is, an all-out strike, rather than simply "protests" which may include "industrial action" — and for a comprehensive programme of ongoing action around specific demands. Unions should also set up strike levies to finance sustained action.

**A one-day token strike is only a protest; to claw anything back from this government, a sustained fight will be necessary.**

Book your ticket online now at  
[workersliberty.org/ideas](http://workersliberty.org/ideas)

Weekend tickets bought before the end of April are £22 waged, £14 low-waged/HE students, £6 unwaged/FE/school students. Day tickets also available. Send cheques payable to "AWL" to 20E Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London SE1 3DG. For more information, email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) or ring 07796 690 874

Ideas for Freedom will open on Friday 29 June with a meeting to celebrate the massive workers' struggles which convulsed Britain in 1972.