

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

For a workers' government

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## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

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# Three days of action against Trident

By Pauline Bradley

**Trident nuclear submarines, each carrying about 120 nuclear warheads capable of mass destruction, have been held on the deep loch of Coulport, near the military town of Helensburgh, Scotland for over 30 years.**

A peace camp of many caravans and buses, was built 31 years ago near the base. Life can be tough there, some want to leave and there are discussions about keeping the peace camp open. It will close unless enough people willing to live there come forward.

Although Britain has signed a nuclear non-proliferation treaty the Tories want to renew Trident and spend around £100 billion on building and maintaining a new nuclear weapons system. Whilst ordinary people suffer their cuts the Tories would rather continue to be the imperialist big boys at the international table than keep us safe.

Trident is deeply unpopular in Scotland and the SNP are promising that if we vote for independence in September 2014, they will ensure Trident goes. This is very appealing (except in Helensburgh) so the Greens, Scottish Socialist Party, SNP, Radical Independence Conference and Women for Independence want it to be a central requirement of an independent Scotland. This could swing the result.

Between 13-15 April Scotland for Peace, Scottish

CND, Stop the War Scotland, SSP, Scottish Greens, Trident Ploughshares, Radical Independence Conference, SWP, ISG, Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre, and Scottish Women's International League for Peace and Freedom organised three days of action on the issue ending with a mass blockade of Faslane Naval base on 15 April.

Around 5,000 people attended a Glasgow demonstration on the 13th, buoyed up by the sunny weather and the news of Thatcher's death. A wide range of speakers and live music at the rally was followed by a social in the evening with the Stargazers the Carlton Jug band and some poets.

People had travelled from all over the UK and the world to attend workshops and non-violence direct action training on the 14th. I met an MP from France, people from Spain, a Dutch MP, an American man, and a wonderful Welsh choir, Cor Chocion Caerdydd. People who travelled stayed

in a large community centre in Glasgow, which was effectively the nerve centre of the whole operation.

Many peace activists have been arrested many times but don't brag or have big egos about it (like some on the left); this is just something they do. We took part in an enactment of a blockade and how it would feel to be arrested and were given lots of advice. There was no pressure to put yourself in the front line; you could be a supporter giving food, water, music etc. to the people sitting in the road. There is a quiet, understated strength among many peace activists who are dedicated to this as a way of life.

A satellite link was made with a peace group in the USA and communicated through Brian Larkin in Scotland. A Scottish disabled woman spoke to them saying, "We're gonnae fight eh and scrap the bedroom tax, ken..." She looked surprised as Brian conveyed, "I'll translate that as she's from Perth." Then it was early to bed for a 4.30am start the following day.

Buses took people from all over Glasgow to Faslane naval base for 7am on Sunday when people were due to arrive for work at the base. There are two big and two small gates at the base.

I have some questions over the tactics of blockading and would like to see more work done with unionised workers in the base. I understand there has been work done with Trade Union CND around how Faslane workers' engineer-

ing skills can be used for more peaceful purposes; I'd like to see this developed.

On arrival protesters unfurled large banners and sat in the road; some locked themselves to each other through drainpipes, and others had flags, banners, fiddles, percussion and voices.

The police were ready with their cutting team, cameras, vans and temporary police station nearby.

Soon protesters were asked to move. They refused to do so and so were arrested, or the cutting team carefully cut through their pipes and locks. Apparently the police like dealing with peace activists, as they are polite and do not shout or abuse the police. (There is a code of conduct activists are expected to follow).

A tail back of traffic soon began and the base was closed down for three hours.

47 people (including myself) were arrested; more than had been expected so the police station at Clydebank became full and the overspill were sent to Glasgow.

**Prisoners were detained for 13 hours and court cases are due to be held at Dumbarton Sheriff court from 1 May. Experienced activists say some cases may be dropped; we don't know how things will transpire.**

- To help or learn more: [faslanepeacecampsolidarity@gmail.com](mailto:faslanepeacecampsolidarity@gmail.com).

A gathering is taking place at the camp on 3-5 May.

- [www.scraptrident.org](http://www.scraptrident.org)

## Scrap the bedroom tax!

Almost a thousand people demonstrated against the "bedroom tax" in Leeds on 20 April (top picture), and there were smaller but lively protests in Stoke-on-Trent (bottom picture) and Birmingham.

The "tax", which came in on 1 April, is a deduction from housing benefit for tenants in social housing, of 14% if they are reckoned to have one "excess" bedroom, and 25% if they are deemed to have two "excess".

Under pressure from campaigners, some councils and housing associations have pledged to reclassify homes so that what would have been counted as "excess" bedrooms are instead called "studies" or "storerooms". Some councils have pledged not to evict tenants who are in arrears because of "bedroom tax".

Individual tenants can also appeal. Sheffield Law Centre has won a case for one family against the "tax". Large numbers of appeals can slow down the tax.

Some councils, however, will go for evictions. Campaigners should build labour-movement-based networks now of people committed to defend households against eviction, as households were defended against bailiffs during the poll tax battle. Strong networks of that sort can deter councils from trying to evict.

# Italy goes deeper into crisis

By Hugh Edwards

**“The scene supersedes the most hallucinatory fantasies of the masters of horror, Stephen King or Dario Argento. The putrefying, evil smelling corpse of a rotting system, corrupted and squashed by the weight of cliques, cabals and mafia of every sort, of bribes, blackmail and endless plots, barricades itself in the tomb, nailing the cover from within to prevent the stench and worms escaping. It attempts the impossible; to arrest the decay and recompose itself. And chooses a gravedigger in its own image...”**

**This is the description of Marco Travaglio, Italy’s finest radical journalist, of the decision of Friday 19 April by electors in Italy’s lower house to return 87 year old Giorgio Napolitano to the office of president, only weeks after a seven-year stint in the role ended.**

His election is but the latest deepening of the crisis resulting from the elections of nearly two months ago. This is near total stalemate in both houses of parliament, where the centre-left Democratic Party, PD, the centre-right People of Freedom Party, PDL, and the “Five Star Movement”, (M5S) of Beppe Grillo each have enough seats in one or the other of the houses to prevent the formation of

a government without them.

The job of forming a government fell automatically to Napolitano, in what seemed then to be his last weeks as president.

Negotiations between the PD and M5S barely got off the ground. The aspirations of Nichi Vendola of Left Ecology and Freedom Party (SEL) and others among the left outside parliament, for a left government were a fantasy.

## MONTI

**The PD was the party on which the technocratic government of Monti, and through him the Italian bourgeoisie, had most relied.**

Monti’s job, as he had said himself, had only begun. Still in office while the coalition-forming negotiations circus of “will they, won’t they?” was being played out, Monti was drawing up future plans for structural reform in public and economic life and further cuts of €40 billion, to be examined in Brussels and then returned to the prospective new government as a done deal.

Notwithstanding the relentless decline of the economy, the severely deteriorating conditions of life for millions, periodic waves of protest and dissent, and the backwardness in so many areas of cultural and political rights, bourgeois rule has never been seriously threatened. One

## Napolitano: president again

of keys to that has been increasingly prominent role of the President.

It was Napolitano who ruthlessly defenestrated Berlusconi as the financial crisis erupted 18 months ago. Along with his ex-Stalinist crony Bersani, Napolitano waved aside the automatic right to elections and ushered in the technocrats ordered by Brussels.

The election of a new president last week brought all this to the surface. Grillo had proposed a roster of impeccably liberal “neutral” candidates, from the spheres of law, academia, journalism, etc., inviting the belief that if Bersani would support their candidate (a radical jurist and former “independent” member of the Communist Party), support for a Bersani government might be on the cards.

The proposal had wider support in the PD outside parliament, but Bersani held back. On Thursday 18 April, he announced his se-

lection — a former Christian Democrat turned Democrat (after the Christian Democrats’ extinction), a devoted Catholic and ex-leader of the yellow Catholic trade union CISL — who, surprise surprise, immediately got the support of Berlusconi and the Northern League.

The utterly cynical stitch up, prepared well ahead by the parties concerned and with the connivance of Napolitano, revealed the desperation of the ruling powers.

## SMOOTHLY

**But it didn’t go smoothly. The base of the Democrats revolted, as did some of their new deputies.**

Ominously, so too did the Blairite wing led by Matteo Renzi, the “modernising” Mayor of Florence. Bersani’s and Berlusconi’s man didn’t get enough votes to win.

Bersani then proposed former Prime Minister Romano Prodi. That met with widespread opposition. Huge cracks began to develop within the PD, with many calling for a new leadership or even a new party.

To prevent an even worse fallout, Napolitano was invited back, and accepted, a gesture violating the constitution and flying in the face of his previous reiterated refusals to even consider such a thing.

The bourgeois media,

true to form, immediately sprung into action to repair the damage. Headlines sang hosannas to the return of the “national saviour”.

With the PD on the point of dissolution, Berlusconi will, though not directly, now play the major role whatever setup Napolitano will announce.

One thing is clear — Italy has inched further into a crisis whose disastrous effects at every level favour the growth of reaction in every form. The possibility of a victory for Alba Dorata, an Italian offshoot of Greek neo-Nazi party Golden Dawn, in local polls in one of the poorest parts of the Abruzzi region in the south, must be a wakeup call to the serious Italian left.

The many calls for the unity of the left in the past weeks signal the despair and confusion. Vendola call for the creation of a new “left party of government”, indicating his wish to head up a reconfigured PD — reformist from head to toe, like Vendola himself. The Party of Communist Refoundation (Rifondazione Comunista) too has called for a new united revolutionary left, premised on its leader’s admissions of the grave errors of tactics and strategy committed in the past.

**The situation is critical. Action now will be the proof that the tide can and must be turned.**

# Blair calls Labour to “centre ground”

By Martin Thomas

**Tony Blair, fresh from joining the praise for Margaret Thatcher and saying that as prime minister he sought to “build on” what she had done rather than reverse it, has again blasted Ed Miliband’s Labour leadership as being too left-wing.**

In the *New Statesman* (11 April), Blair urged Labour to “resist the temptation” to come back “as the party opposing ‘Tory cuts’.” Labour must “search for answers”, he said, instead of just expressing anger.

Blair offered no “answers” himself, but hinted

what he might support by insisting that, “paradoxically”, the crisis has brought no “decisive shift to the left”. Labour must remain on the “centre ground” (presumed to be pro-cuts).

Ed Miliband has replied to similar previous blasts from Blair by claiming that there is a “new centre ground” in British politics, “a new centre ground, for example, that says that responsibility in the banking system — which we didn’t talk about enough when we were in government — is relevant”.

But, according to the opinion polls, most people see Nick Clegg as more or

less exactly in the “centre” of politics, and they despise him: the Lib Dems have crashed in the opinion polls.

The Tories are seen as about as right-wing as they were back in the days of Michael Howard and Ian Duncan-Smith, when one Tory MP commented that the Tory leader had “something of the night” about him, and another that people saw the Tories as “the nasty party”.

Ed Miliband is seen as pretty much as left wing as David Cameron is right wing. Gordon Brown used to be reckoned as only slightly left wing, and Tony Blair (oddy for a Labour

leader, but perceptively) as to the *right* of the “centre-ground” of politics.

The figures show that it is futile for Labour to chase after shifts in the “centre ground”. Labour has plenty of political space to develop a left-wing alternative; the problem is that, despite the signals he gives of being in some vague way “left-wing”, Miliband doesn’t do that.

Left-wing political answers would start with, not be counterposed to, expressing anger at what the Tories are doing. The current Labour quarter-semi campaign against the bedroom tax is the first campaign that the Labour

Party has run against incumbent government policy since 1996 (except perhaps the tiny flicker of official Labour agitation on the NHS about a year ago).

The first in 17 years! And so feeble! Even now union and Labour banners are rare on protests against the bedroom tax.

**Activists should fight for Labour to do exactly the opposite of what Blair proposes: to start by being a vehicle for people’s anger against the Tories, and go on to make policies which do not track a nebulous “centre ground” of politics, but rather shift the spectrum.**

# Hong Kong dockers hold firm

By Ira Berkovic

**The Hong Kong dock strike is approaching the one-month mark, with workers holding firm on their demands and escalating their action.**

After unsatisfactory negotiations on 17 April, workers set up a protest camp outside the headquarters of Hutchinson Wampoa Ltd., the parent company of the Hutchinson Port Holdings Trust, of which Hong Kong International Terminals Ltd. is a subsidiary.

The Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions is demanding a 23% pay increase. Its members have faced a decade-long wage freeze and some workers earn an average hourly rate of less than £5 for shifts that can last up to 24 hours, including 12 hours of continuous crane operation without toilet breaks. One worker said: “We are overworked, not given enough rest time, and we don’t have proper toilet breaks. We have to shit in newspapers in our cranes.”

HIT bosses have said that the strike is costing HK\$5 million (£421,935) per day.

The LabourStart website has organised a solidarity appeal for the dockers.

**Visit [bit.ly/hongkongstrike](http://bit.ly/hongkongstrike) to support the appeal.**



# How the media lost the Thatcher PR battle

Press

By Pat Murphy

DAILY  
Mirror

**The battle to shape the contemporary public perception of Margaret Thatcher began immediately after her death on 8 April.**

The terms of the debate were neatly summed up in the contrasting front pages of the *Daily Mail* and *Daily Mirror*. “The Woman Who Saved Britain” announced the *Mail* whereas, for the *Mirror* she was “The Woman Who Divided a Nation”.

The Tories presented Thatcher as a figure of such immense stature that the whole nation could unify in remembering her with respect despite the passionate opposition she generated when in power. They drew the obvious parallel with Churchill. They knew she had created not so much division as extreme polarisation and that she was hated by many on the left. Their hope, however, was that expressions of that hate and contempt after her death could be marginalised. The risk of being associated with the haters would bind mainstream left politicians to a respectful consensus.

However, the Thatcherites lost the PR battle. To succeed they only had to get people to admit that, even if they disagreed strongly, Thatcher was a great leader. They didn’t succeed.

The anti-Thatcher street parties were sufficiently widespread and genuine to ensure national coverage. The success of the campaign to get the *Wizard of Oz* song “Ding Dong The Witch is Dead” to the top of the charts became one of the central stories of the week. Those communities most savagely hit by her brutal policies came to the fore with articulate, moving and unflinching accounts of the damage she had done and how her legacy continues to blight their lives.

It helped that less than half of Labour MPs turned up to the embarrassing and misjudged recall of Parliament to sing her praises. Those who did attend included Glenda Jackson whose blistering anti-Thatcher polemic took as many headlines as all of the predictable eulogies put together.

For the left, the anti-Thatcherites, to win the PR battle it was not necessary to persuade people that Thatcher was wrong on everything or that we had all the answers. That is a much more long-term and complicated battle. No, we just had to puncture the notion that she was undeniably great and deserving of respect from all sides.

As the funeral ended and the media shifted their focus, even some of the right-wing coverage began to accept that she was an immensely divisive figure. As when she resigned in 1990, they had to accept she was hated with a passion in large parts of the country and admired most by those people and that class who gained most from her greedy, get-what-you-can philosophy.

This is even more remarkable given that the leaders of the Labour Party went hook, line and sinker for the Tory strategy. Their message was “be respectful, this is not the time for reopening old wounds, don’t fall into the Tory trap of looking distasteful”.

The problem for Ed Miliband was that his message was overwhelmingly ignored in the Labour Party. This was not a sign of open rebellion so much as an outpouring of genuine emotion and feeling.

There were bits of the working-class response to Thatcher’s death that were considered in advance and theatrical, but there was plenty that was spontaneous and raw. We saw an outpouring of emotion that was a good deal more genuine and heartfelt than the mannered pomp and ceremony in Westminster, where those who forced her out rubbed shoulders with those who worshipped her every move, all of them better off and more privileged as a result of her reign.

The pressure to be respectful was easier to resist because it came from such transparent hypocrites. Supporters of the woman who famously declared that “there is no such thing as society” now wanted to click their fingers and have us all behave as if there was.

But only for a week. After that we could return to evicting our neighbours, hating immigrants and shopping benefit claimants.

And the record of the *Mail*, *Sun*, *Express* in respecting their dead political opponents was exposed as none too impressive. If you think they restrict their tendency to gloat to the more obvious mortalities, like Saddam or Bin Laden, then recall the response of the *Daily Mail* to the death of former Labour leader Michael Foot in 2010.

The paper that last week demanded respect for the dead whatever your politics described Foot in their obituary as “just another dangerously wrong-headed utopian leftie of no use to Britain”. That’s what they thought of him when alive, so it was only honest to say it when he died. The sanctimony and hypocrisy resides not in continuing to prosecute their ideological class war in the face of an opponent’s death, but rather in their demands that we behave differently.

## MEASURE

**We should not of course measure ourselves by their standards. There has been a useful, though not sufficiently widespread, discussion about the problems associated with using terms like “bitch” or “witch” to describe Thatcher.**

If we strip away all the hypocrisy and cant maybe we should be uneasy about celebrating or gloating about death.

It’s not a universal and uncomplicated idea though. There would be something morally absent from any human who didn’t feel some joy at the deaths of Hitler, Stalin or Pol Pot to mention just the premier league monsters. Saddam, Bin Laden, Pinochet (all supported by Thatcher at some point)? Where is the line drawn?

Truthfully there was no tragedy here, not even for the immediate family. Thatcher lived to the age of 87 and died in her suite in the Ritz hotel. What people were asked to do from 8 April until the funeral was respect and honour her memory for no other reason than that her body stopped functioning.

For the most part people refused. Above all, our class and our movement refused and instead chose to assert its different history, values and lived experiences. It was important that we did this, and it may well prove to be a small turning point. We found ourselves for a few days as a class and a movement and, above all, we rediscovered our fighting spirit.

**In the months ahead we should nourish that spirit and employ it to build some serious resistance to the modern heirs of Thatcher across all parties.**

## What kind of left unity?

Letters



**I broadly agree with your article “Left unity must be linked to real action” (*Solidarity* 280) and of course the mistakes of past must not be repeated.**

It is difficult to see how this can be avoided unless the sects learn lessons from the Socialist Alliance/Respect attempt for a left alternative and also the reasons for the dismal TUSC showings and its failure to grow anywhere

beyond the SP and a few fellow travellers. It does not look likely that this will happen. However, their involvement in any new project that they cannot control or do not set up themselves is also unlikely.

As for the timing of the initiative, the groundwork needs to be started. Although people are likely to turn to Labour in the immediate future, all signs point to any Labour government in 2015 continuing the austerity measures of the Coalition. They have refused to commit to the repeal of the Bedroom Tax and are setting themselves against benefit claimants, aping the Tories.

The important questions are left unity on what basis and if

it develops then what type of new party? Open and democratic for sure, but what does that actually mean in reality? There are many questions and it remains to be seen the trajectory that this initiative will take. Discussion, debate, education and socialism — unity in action and purpose.

However, the Labour Party cannot simply be ignored or bypassed. Shrill denunciations and claims that “all parties are the same” are lazy and weak. The relationship to the labour movement is one of the most crucial, as is the question of the Labour Party. What must also be avoided is any attempt to set up a Labour Party Mark 2, which appears to be the TUSC approach.

**Are the AWL taking part in or supporting the Left Unity appeal in terms of a new party formation, or does the perspective of work in the Labour Party preclude that?**

Steve S, Cambridge

## Aimless toddlers?

**Elizabeth Truss, Tory Childcare Minister says toddlers in nurseries “run around aimlessly”. She says they should be in a more structured environment, learning the skills they will need when they get to “big school” (i.e. reception class).**

Who is this woman? Has she ever met a toddler and what is she going on about?

Elizabeth Truss employs a nanny to look after her two chil-

dren. Possibly the only context she’s ever met a toddler is one in which they are fed, watered, shiny from the bath, and ready for bed. Many toddlers do indeed like to run around. But the activity is not pointless. Give them enough stimulating stuff to bump into, and you can relabel this activity experimental learning. Truss is either a fool or she is putting a Tory line.

It is not clear whether Truss is talking about Foundation level nursery education (free for all pre-school children between three and a half and rising five), or day-care for younger children (real toddlers). It seems the Tories would like to emulate some things about the French pre-school *École Maternelle* system of highly structured nursery education, usually attached to primary schools, though not the fact that places are free from the age of two years upwards.

In those schools the staff are graduates and there is a high child to staff ratio. Already the Tories have given the green light to higher ratios in nurseries.

In the UK a lot of pre-school education is already attached to schools and can be similar to the French system. In private nurseries the set-up may be different.

But what is so dispiriting about this story is the emphasis on regimenting very young children — demanding they sit up straight, don’t fidget, listen attentively etc. when they are not developmentally ready to do so. Such “skills” are only really necessary if one teacher has to look after 20-plus children.

**So it’s another cost-cutting exercise, where toddlers pay the price. How low can they go?**

Claire Denby, south London

# Stafford shows how to save the NHS

## Stafford Hospital demonstration, 20 April

**Fifty thousand people marched on Saturday 20 April to defend Stafford Hospital against threatened cuts in services and jobs and against private healthcare companies taking over their hospital.**

Fifty thousand people took to the streets in a magnificent display of support to defend their local hospital despite it having recently suffered some of the worst publicity of any hospital in the history of the NHS.

Fifty thousand people (in a borough with a population of 126,000) crowded into the town square, with a shared understanding that cuts and underfunding inevitably lead to excess patient deaths and poor care and conditions for patients and their families.

Jobs were cut, care reduced, and conditions impoverished to balance the financial books of the Mid-Staffordshire Foundation Trust. And now, 1,200 unnecessary deaths later, the Government declares Mid-Staffs Foundation Trust to be bankrupt.

More jobs to be lost, many more services to be cut, and Stafford and Cannock Hospitals to be downsized and primed for the private healthcare companies to rob services for profit.

This is the future that the Con-Dem government have planned for the NHS. And, increasingly, it is a future that tens of thousands of people actively reject.

The Lewisham demonstration in January and the Mid-Staffs demonstration on 20 April are the beginnings of a wave of local hospital campaigns that can mobilise significant numbers of people to defend the NHS. We need to mobilise hundreds of thousands of people in communities, unions and workplaces if we are to turn the tide on the wholesale destruction of our health service.

## LORDS

**On Wednesday 24 April, the unelected House of Lords will debate and vote on the latest draft of the regulations that will govern procurement and competition in the NHS (Section 75 NHS regulations).**

These regulations are essential to make the Health and Social Care Act work for the government and private healthcare companies. As Lucy Reynolds, a public health academic, put it in a video interview in early March: "The (H&SC) Act itself was the aircraft of privatisation, the structure that gave the idea the potential to fly. Section 75 of the regulations is the engine that will allow it to take off".

Section 75 sets the legal framework for competition in the NHS. It requires Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to put out to tender everything that could be provided by an organisation other than the NHS.

Under Section 75, GPs cannot keep care within the public

service unless they can prove that there is only one "capable provider" for a particular service. If the private sector can offer it too, CCGs will be forced into "competitive tendering".

This is a short step from a two-tier NHS. The whole process weighs heavily in favour of the big, rich corporations who have time, money and expertise to put together tenders. Big corporations with one-track minds and shareholders to keep happy will sacrifice safe, high quality care to profit. NHS and voluntary sector providers will lose out as the big corporations cherry-pick their way through the NHS, leaving behind the long-term sick, elderly, emergency care and anything else where provision is expensive and profit-making difficult.

Already, thanks to dogged campaigning and lobbying, the Government has been forced to redraft the competition and procurement part of the regulations. But the redraft is no better than the original and remains the great opportunity it was always meant to be for the greedy private companies.

This week's debate and vote in the Lords is the only real chance get Section 75 rejected. Since the redraft, campaigners in Lewisham have spent countless hours sitting in doctors' surgeries and health centres engaging hundreds of people in a personal letter-writing campaign. Thousands of letters have gone to various Lords from all over the country in an effort to put pressure on and shift opinion. This has gone alongside lobbying and meetings with various groups of Lords.

Section 75 is a weapon of mass destruction being dropped on the NHS. If it goes through it will be a huge boost to the enemy achieving its goal to privatise our health service. But the war will continue and every battle will count.

Mobilising communities, health workers and medical staff, and dragging the trade unions into action is our weapon of mass destruction against the rich, greedy profiteers and their political representatives in Parliament.

**Our strength lies in numbers: mobilising and organising these numbers is the key to us winning these battles and, ultimately, the war to save the NHS.**

• **Stafford Hospital Campaign:**  
supportstaffordhospital.co.uk

## Showing *The Spirit of '45*

Ken Loach's documentary film *The Spirit of 45* looks at the 1945 General Election through the eyes of the working-class men and women who voted for the Labour Party and why they supported the building of a new welfare state.

It makes a great film showing for local meetings.  
Order it at [bit.ly/sp-of-45](http://bit.ly/sp-of-45)

## Help us raise £15,000

**In two months, Workers' Liberty will host Ideas for Freedom, our annual weekend of socialist discussion, debate, education and training.**

It takes place at the University of London Union, and will feature lectures, workshops, film-showings, debates, and other sessions designed to give those who are already socialists a chance to discuss our politics, and to persuade those who are not already socialists to become so.

Many speakers will be Workers' Liberty members, but there will also be speakers from a range of other groups and backgrounds. We want Ideas for Freedom to be a space where genuine debate and engagement can take place, not just stage-managed expositions of our views.

If the event sounds good to you, please donate to our fund appeal. We can't make events like Ideas for Freedom happen without your financial support — to pay for materials, speakers' travel expenses, food costs, and more.

Last year's Ideas for Freedom attracted nearly 250 people and was the biggest for a decade. With your help, Ideas for Freedom 2013 could be even bigger.

**Help us raise £15,000 by May Day 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:**

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# Thatcher saved their B

Andrew Gamble is professor of politics at Cambridge University, and author of the major left-wing analysis of Thatcherism, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*. He spoke to Martin Thomas from *Solidarity* about Thatcher and her legacy.

**MT:** In your book on Thatcherism, *The Free Economy and the Strong State*, you write that Thatcherism was “a political project developed by the Conservative leadership... to re-establish the conditions for the Conservative Party to resume its leading role in British politics”; and then again of Thatcherism as “a project aimed at the replacement of the discredited social-democratic consensus of the postwar period by a new consensus for the 1990s”.

If we look back from now, Thatcherism won on one of those similar-seeming definitions, and lost on the other.

In the *Guardian* (14 October 2005), you described Thatcher as “ending the political hegemony [the Tory party] had enjoyed for 100 years”. (The Tories have since won the 2010 election, but not regained the dominance they had in 1886-1905 or 1922-45 or 1951-64). In your book *The Spectre at the Feast* you wrote of “the political intervention represented by Thatcherism” as having “established neo-liberalism as the new dominant common sense”.

Looking back, how would you assess Thatcherism on three levels — what Thatcher and her close associates thought they would do — what they actually did — and what they came to think they had done?

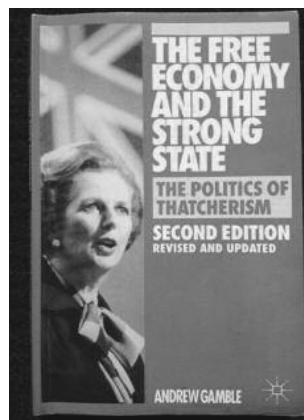
**AG:** Initially, there was no blueprint. But in the 1970s there was a ferment of radical right-wing ideas, which did create — at least amongst the true believers — very high expectations.

A lot of it was focused around plans to reverse economic and national decline, and with it to reverse the fortunes of the Conservative Party. That sprang from a quite widespread concern in the party that they were being marginalised, and were not able to govern effectively — partially because of the strength of the trade unions. It was against that sort of defeatism that Thatcher made her pitch for the leadership.

What they managed to do was in some respects more radical than some of them had thought was possible. The Thatcherites were remarkably opportunistic. They seized on events and were able to turn them to advantage, taking a lot of risks, most of which came off. In the “Winter of Discontent”, they switched their policy on trade unions to a much more hard-line one.

The split in the Labour Party in 1981 gave them more space to develop their ideas. The fiscal retrenchment in 1981, which was largely forced on them, gave them the opportunity to develop their policies. A lot of the privatisations were also carried out opportunistically. Privatisation was not in the 1979 manifesto, but having experimented with British Telecom they developed a rolling programme that was later hailed as a flagship policy.

They became more radical as they went on. That was partly about Thatcher’s shifting of the balance within the cabinet, although Thatcher never really got a truly Thatcherite cabinet. The biggest tax cuts and the Big Bang in the City came after 1983, and the big changes in education and the Poll Tax



**While the state saw Thatcher off with pomp and circumstance (top), crowds gathered in Goldthorpe (near Barnsley, South Yorkshire) to burn a Thatcher effigy.**

after 1987. They grew in confidence while in office and began to fashion a new economic model.

They were able to view with equanimity the rapid disappearance of the old economic model and the decline and destruction of the old manufacturing industries. What they didn’t understand was how that would, by undermining the compact of the union in the United Kingdom, make the party completely dependent on its heartlands in the south and south east.

The eulogies for Thatcher were all about how she “saved Britain”. This involves huge exaggeration of what the UK’s condition was in the 1970s, and quite staggering errors in the talk of Britain being a “basket case”, and the “sick man of Europe”. But that is the central narrative by which the Thatcherites now understand what happened — Britain in a position of terminal decline in the 1970s and being rescued, almost single-handedly, by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s.

The Thatcherites can’t disguise the fact, and indeed keep talking about it, that the Conservatives have not won a majority in an election since 1992. But their explanation for that is that Thatcher changed Labour. That becomes their alibi for why the Conservative Party itself has not fared so well since Thatcher left the scene.

**MT:** They must have quite a special definition of “saving Britain”. Britain’s rate of economic growth is lower than it was up to the 1970s and Britain’s share of world output and exports is lower. What they mean is that their class was in a position where it could not easily impose its will, and now it can. So it saved a particular group within Britain.

**AG:** Yes, it saved their Britain. It saved them. The Telegraph, on the day of the funeral, said words to the effect of “we have to thank Margaret Thatcher for saving Britain and creating the kind of country we are living in today”. That’s the key — she restored some of the privileges of her class and of capital as a whole.

If you look at the way income and wealth distribution has moved since the 80s, that’s the Britain that she saved.

**MT:** David Cameron says “we are all Thatcherites now”. Nick Clegg dissents. Tony Blair says that he thinks his job was “to build on a lot of the things Thatcher had done rather than reverse them”. When Blair was elected in 1997, Thatcher said that “Britain would be safe in his hands”; you have commented: “And she might have said, Thatcherism will be safe too”.

The coalition government is doing things, in the NHS for example, which Thatcher would not have dared to attempt. Are all mainstream politicians today Thatcherites? When Thatcher was prime minister, her government clashed sometimes with elements of the “Establishment”. Do you think the whole “Establishment”, the ruling corps in the state, economy, and society, is “Thatcherite” now?

**AG:** Thatcher did attack large parts of “the establishment”, but there is a sense in which she’s now been folded into it. The fact that she was given all but a state funeral, and that the Queen attended, is significant. Previously the Queen had only attended Churchill’s funeral, and no Labour prime minister’s funeral has ever been attended by the monarch.

## SYMBOLISM

**The symbolism of the monarch’s presence at Thatcher’s funeral indicates how Labour remains outside of, or marginal to, the British establishment.**

And it shows that although Thatcher was in some ways hostile to sections of the establishment, in terms of the core elements, Thatcher is seen as a true embodiment of the British state.

You can’t imagine any Labour figure ever being treated as Thatcher has been by the Conservative newspapers. The British leaders that are honoured in this way are almost always Conservatives, who affirm the core values of the social and political order. In that sense, Thatcher has been gathered back into the establishment.

**MT:** David Cameron, George Osborne, Michael Gove, Nick Clegg, Ed Miliband, and Ed Balls are just old enough to have a living political memory of the miners’ strike and Thatcher’s high days in 1985-7. (In 1984-7 their ages were between 18-21 for Cameron, the oldest, and 13-16 for Osborne, the youngest). All will have not much memory of the early Thatcher years of strict monetarism, in 1979-82, but strong political memories of the decay and end of Thatcher’s ministry, in 1987-90, when they were all in the formative period of their late teens and early 20s. Can we see how those different phases of Thatcherism shaped them?

**AG:** They were shaped by the Thatcher government because of both the length of her period in office, and the fundamental nature of the changes that took place. They all experienced those changes as an irreversible watershed.

For all of them, she came to embody a particular style of leadership (which is very much misrepresented, the misrepresentation being partly her own construction). It’s interesting how that has become a standard and ideal, within the Conservative Party, against which all of her successors have been judged and found wanting.

The myths around Thatcher have now become more important often than the actual facts of her period in office. They’re all in some sense in thrall to Thatcher.

Cameron thought he was breaking away from her when he said “there is such a thing as society”, but at her funeral the Bishop of London argued that she had been misunder-

# Britain, their privileges

to the changing circumstances of the international political economy.

Not all of those were “necessary”, and some were reversed. The particular social authoritarianism associated with Thatcher, for example, was partially reversed under John Major and certainly under Blair, Brown, and now Cameron. What was clearly not at all challenged by Major, or by New Labour, was the new economic model and the dominance of finance within the UK economy.

The link with the US was strengthened by Thatcher, and that was continued by Blair after a short hiccup under Major. 1997-2007 is the period of a revived Anglo-American “special relationship”, which had particular uses for the Americans in terms of the Cold War and the subsequent engagements of the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan. Thatcher gave priority to those ties with the United States rather than, for example, ties with the European Union. Those parts of her legacy have been enduring.

## OPPOSED

**MT:** In *The Free Economy*, you point out that “remarkably large majorities remained opposed to many of the policy shifts in welfare and social policy most sought by the Thatcher government”, and that remained true right up to 1997.

Can it be said that Thatcher pushed through the legislative changes and defeated the strikes, but it was the work of Blair and Brown to win ideological hegemony for Thatcherism, though in a modified form?

**AG:** All countries had to accept the neo-liberal framework if they wanted to stay within the US-dominated international order. But the problem with the way that had been applied in Britain was that it destroyed many of the institutions of local government and the provision of public service, and Thatcher in the 1990s became extremely unpopular.

What Blair and Brown did was to put together a programme that accepted all the major economic changes, but which added to it the idea of social justice — by which they meant greater “fairness”, not in terms of overall distribution of wealth but in terms of provision of public service. They used a large part of the proceeds from economic growth in the 1990s and early 2000s to increase spending on public services and infrastructure.

What Blair and Brown did had already been foreshadowed by the ideas of the SDP and David Owen, who talked about the need to combine economic efficiency with social justice. That market realism combined with enlarged state programmes for health, education, and welfare, is what Blair and Brown were able to deliver because the economy was performing better than it had been in the 70s and 80s, albeit not as well as it was in the 50s and 60s.

What Blair and Brown fashioned, which proved to be very electorally popular, had a big impact on Cameron and Osborne. Until the crash of 2008, Cameron and Osborne were basically accepting that the Blairite dispensation was a better way to govern Britain, within the broad contours of the changes Thatcher had brought about.

It’s only because of the crash of 2008 and its aftermath that Cameron and Osborne have had to change their policies.

**It’s quite interesting that they have received huge criticisms within their party, particularly from the old Thatcherite wing and from the new Thatcherites, because they are seen as being much too close to Brown and Blair, and wanting to continue their legacy.**

## The media eulogised Margaret Thatcher. What does her political legacy mean for the ruling class today?

stood, and defended her use of the phrase “there is no such thing as society”. Cameron’s attempt to detoxify the Conservative Party, by which he meant moving away from the Thatcher legacy, had some successes, particularly in terms of social policy, but he’s now being forced to move back in a Thatcherite direction in order to keep the support of his own party and of the Thatcherite newspapers.

Today’s political leaders were exposed to the myths created around Thatcher towards the end of her period in office. The manner of her downfall has intensified those myths, with a narrative around “betrayal”.

**MT:** So today’s Conservative leaders would see her removal from office in terms of “betrayal”, rather than that Thatcher went wrong at the end?

**AG:** A few Conservatives, like Ken Clarke, say she went wrong, but it’s difficult for people like Cameron and Osborne to openly criticise her. They tend not to.

They have hinted at criticism, in a coded way, before, but during the funeral Cameron was careful in every way to appear to be ultra-loyal.

**MT:** You have quoted Peter Riddell as writing: “If there was a Thatcher experiment, it was launched by Denis Healey”. With hindsight, unless there had been a great socialist transformation of the labour movement and the working class in the 1970s, many things would have gone the same way even if Callaghan had called an election in 1978 and Thatcher had lost and quit.

Britain would have been converted in the 1980s, one way or another, to a capitalist regime geared not to sustaining a relatively integrated national complex of industries and services, and a society round it, but to developing its territory as

a site for global capital, with systems to suit of trammelled trade unions, limited social overheads, easy access to profit opportunities in contracted-out public services, and tax favours for the rich.

How did the special political tacks of Thatcherism — the sharp rejection of equality (rather than acquiescence to increasing economic inequality as a supposedly inescapable trend), the brief period of strict monetarist dogma, the anti-feminism, the homophobia, the monoculturalism, the desire to reassert Britain as a big military power — intertwine with the global trends?

**AG:** Many of the changes would have happened under a government led by Willie Whitelaw, or indeed under a government led by Denis Healey and David Owen. The shift would have been accomplished; there was enormous pressure for it, including from the United States who wanted to reconfigure international political economy following the breakdown of Bretton Woods at the beginning of the 1970s.

But whilst that’s the general picture, there were different options in the 1970s and different paths Britain could have taken. There were different ways of adjusting to the new dispensation that was taking place, and other countries — Germany, and the Scandinavian countries — took different paths.

Thatcher took a particular path, which was based on boosting the City and financial services, accepting the destruction of manufacturing, and boosting the south east at the expense of the rest of the country. Huge alterations took place, leading to much greater inequality and polarisation.

That was coupled with increased political centralisation of power and the destruction of local government.

These were lasting consequences of the particular way in which Thatcher and her allies went about adjusting Britain

# Greece: solidarity with migrant workers

By Theodora Polenta

**Nea Manolada, some 260 kilometres (160 miles) west of Athens, is an area where thousands of migrant workers are employed in agriculture.**

On Wednesday 17 April, about 200 strawberry-pickers, migrant workers from Bangladesh, went to the company offices to ask for more than six months' wages they had not received.

Three foremen employed by the landowner, a big capitalist strawberry exporter, met the workers and stonewalled their demands. The workers protested.

Two foremen went to their car and took out their shotguns. A third took a revolver and began firing into the air. The first two then began to shoot to kill, injuring more than 35 people. Eleven workers were injured severely, and one is still in a critical condition.

The perpetrators, with the assistance of two drivers, left the site. The police arrested the landlord of the business, and then on Thursday the three foremen. Reportedly, one of the foremen is the same person who in the summer of 2009 tied two migrant labourers behind a motorbike and dragged them through the streets of Manolada on the suspicion that they might have stolen a few sheep from his flock.

Even Greece's fascist movement, Golden Dawn, and SEV (the Greek CBI) have mumbled condemnations of the shootings. But this brutalisation of labour relations affects not only immigrants or the agricultural production. It is being extended, bit by bit, and in different ways, to the entire working class, trashing collective agreements, trashing the right to strike, suppressing trade-union organisation.

The story is that the only way out of the crisis is for capitalism to become more capitalistic, i.e., more exploitative and

## Migrant strawberry pickers

more reactionary

According to the national Inspectors of Labour, not only the Manolada strawberry pickers, but over 30% of the Greek working class are owed six months' wages or more. Greek-born workers have not been shot by their capitalist bosses, but they have been bullied and terrorised into submission by the bludgeon of 27% unemployment.

## DEPORTATIONS

**Maria Kanellopoulou, an MP for the left-wing party Syriza, accused the government of arresting injured immigrants and their comrades in the aftermath of the Manolada massacre.**

Kanellopoulou stated that: "Migrants were sent for deportation because they have no legal documents to remain in Greece, aiming to eliminate the witnesses of the attempted mass murder against immigrants."

In a similar tone, the Greek Communist Party, KKE, denounced the government because the police of Amaliada had arrested six injured migrant workers, transferred them from hospital to the police security office in Amaliada, and threatened them with deportation.

Public Order Minister Dendias and the Government have denied the allegations and promised that they will not deport the injured illegal immigrants of Manolada.

The left-wing coalition Antarsya stated: "This crime must not go unpunished. The working class movement should break the immunity of the known exploiter of the workers from Bangladesh, and his henchmen. The labour movement and trade unions must embrace all immigrants from Bangladesh and every exploited Greek and 'foreign' worker."

Giannis Vroutsis, the Minister of Labour, Social Security and Welfare, has stated: "I condemn in the strongest terms the inhuman working conditions, violence and human exploitation."

As if we have the memory of goldfish! Giannis Vroutsis is a minister whose government has imposed the massive impoverishment of workers, sky-rocketing unemployment, destruction of collective bargaining agreements, massive reductions to the minimum wage, restrictions on the right to strike, and "civil mobilisation" orders against strikers.

The government proudly declares "zero tolerance" and the "reoccupation of towns" from the refugees, and promises day care nurseries without migrant children.

On 5 February, the Council of State, Greece's highest administrative court, ruled unconstitutional an earlier law granting second generation migrants the right to apply for Greek citizenship. Moves have also been made, unsuccessful so far, by the conservative ruling party New Democracy demanding that naturalised Greeks be banned from entering military academies or joining the armed forces and police services.

In August 2012, police in Athens, led by Public Order Minister Dendias, organised mass arrests of migrants. By early February 2013 about 4,200 people were being detained for lack of papers, and awaiting deportation. They are held in 30 special camps set up with EU financial support.

Undeclared "black-market" labour exceeds 36% of the total in Greece, and over 45% for immigrant workers.

Meanwhile, two groups of strawberry producers have protested about the "bad press" that Greek production of

strawberries is receiving. They say that in Turkey workers get \$6 a day, while they are obliged to pay 20 euros daily to the migrant workers. Even the diminished monthly minimum wage of 500 euros imposed by the memorandum government creates a competitiveness problem.

The immigrant workers are employed on strawberry production for about five or six months of the year. Around 12,000 acres of strawberries were cultivated this year.

Total production last year was approximately 42,000 tons, much of it exported to Russia, Bulgaria and Ukraine. Greece is 20th in strawberry production worldwide; the US is first (1.312 million tons), Spain second (514,000 tons) and Turkey third (302,416 tons).

Harvesting is done by hand, and approximately 75 workers are required per acre per year. Unofficial estimates are of 5-7,000 workers — mostly migrants from Bangladesh, the overwhelming majority without legal residency rights.

A May 2007 report on strawberry-pickers' conditions in the KKE paper *Rizospastis* found that workers worked from sun-up to sun-down, with a short lunch stop on hot days, for 22 to 25 euros daily, which they had no guarantee of receiving.

On hot days the temperature inside the greenhouses is over 45 degrees. If the migrant workers ease off while working, the foremen beat them, threaten them with guns, and sometimes shoot in the air.

The workers are accommodated in sheds with few facilities. They sit and sleep on wooden pallets. There is no electricity. For washing, cleaning and drinking they depend on a drill pipe, with stagnant water around it.

## STRIKE

**In April 2008 migrant workers in Manolada struck, demanding better wages and conditions.**

Squads organised by the bosses invaded their sheds, demolishing them and physically attacking the workers.

In 2011, two journalists from the newspaper *Vima* were beaten mercilessly while seeking to report from the fields of Manolada.

Manolada is not the only case. A few years ago it was revealed that the big peach producers in Northern Greece were hiring immigrants from Bulgaria to pick peaches; then, when the production season was over and the time had come to pay wages, they would ring the police to arrest and deport them.

A newly launched social media campaign urges a boycott of fruit from Manolada. It calls the region's produce "blood strawberries", in the same way as people talk about Africa's "blood diamonds".

An answer can only be given by a combative working class movement, which needs to enforce in practice the slogan "nobody on their own" and "Greek and foreign workers united". Despite good intentions, the class struggle cannot be conducted electronically or by boycotting a company's products, but in the workplaces, the neighbourhoods, the streets.

The issue is too serious to be left in the hands of the bureaucrats of the official trade-union leaders of GSEE. GSEE argues that "A working regime of modern slavery has been created in Manolada and especially in the strawberry fields". It calls for retribution against those employers who strangle "even the remaining labour and insurance rights and sink the pension funds by non-payment of the employers' contributions".

But GSEE complacency or inaction has facilitated the Government's anti-working class policies.

Neither this government nor any future capitalist government will confront the super-exploitation of immigrants or the rise of racism and fascist groups and parties such as Golden Dawn.

The arrest and conviction and exemplary punishment of the guilty strawberry producer and his henchmen is the minimum that should be demanded.

**The bosses will be loyal to their own "internationalism" that says "capital has no country". The working class should counterpose our own class solidarity and internationalism. With working class solidarity as our strength, with class unity as our compass, we aim for another world where the touchstone of humanity will be decency and respect for every worker, regardless of colour, of nationality, of religion.**

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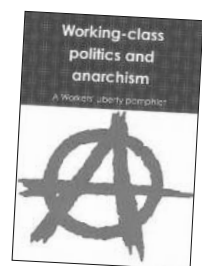


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# The ghetto fighters of Warsaw

By Vicki Morris

**Seventy years ago, in April 1943, the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto rose up against the Nazis.**

On 28 September 1939 Hitler's troops had captured Warsaw and taken control of Poland. Three million Jews lived in Poland as a whole: 350-400,000, a third of Warsaw's population, were Jews.

The Nazis herded the Jews into medieval style ghettos — smaller and smaller areas in 45 separate ghetto towns across Poland — where Jews worked for German war industries. The first was set up in Lodz in April 1940.

Immediately the Jewish quarter of Warsaw was put in "quarantine" and 80,000 non-Jews living in the district were ordered to get out. Adam Czerniaków, one of the old leaders of the Jewish community, was called to the Gestapo Headquarters on 4 October 1939 and ordered to set up a new Jewish Council which would have to recruit the work brigades.

A year would pass before the ghetto was set up, as Warsaw Jews managed to deflect the threat with large sums of money. But in September 1940, a 10-foot high wall around the Jewish district was started. It was completed in summer 1941.

Eventually it surrounded an area 3.4 square kilometres in size, 2.7% of the Warsaw area. It was cut in two by an "Aryan" road, crossed by a bridge which allowed people to pass between the two parts.

It included 1500 dwellings in about 100 blocks. Conditions were appalling. Twelve people lived in each room. They had a ration of 800 calories each per day — half of what an adult needs to stay healthy. Jewish refugees brought into the ghetto had nowhere to live and slept on the streets. The native Warsaw Jews resented them and the Jewish Council provided no relief to them. 66% died in the streets of the ghetto from cold, starvation and disease. Only youth organisations would help them and recruited from among them. By May 1942 430,000 Jews were living in the ghetto.

The Germans feared a ghetto revolt which might spread to the whole of Warsaw. So they successfully poisoned the relations between the Jews and the "Christian" Poles — helped by the strong tradition of anti-semitism in Poland.

Jewish Councils administered the ghettos in Poland; they compiled statistics for the Nazis, and conveyed their orders to the community. The Jewish Councils hoped that there would be some sort of future under Nazism. Perhaps if they were useful and compliant the Nazis would not think it necessary to kill large numbers of Jews. One ghetto leader, Chaim Rumkowski of Lodz, took great pride in the fact that "his" ghetto was self-sufficient and economically useful to the Germans.

## GHETTO SOCIETY

**Very rapidly, the Jewish Council became the centre of the richest Jews.**

In order to gain respect, the Council set up the Jewish police with 1700 men recruited from the sons of "good families". The Germans promised the Jewish policemen that members of their families would not be harassed.

This police became the centre of a protection racket — all-powerful to dispense (for ready cash) exemptions from forced labour and food rations.

When taxes had to be raised to pay the Nazis, or police wages, a 10% tax was levied on basic foodstuffs — the poor paid as much as the rich. In January 1942 the Council voted down a proposal to "take from the rich the means with which to feed the poor".

The role of the rich in the ghetto was shameful and they were rewarded with the hatred of the people. But the Nazis made vile propaganda from it to show in Germany. They photographed rich Jews enjoying their privileges, while, nearby, emaciated Jews died in the streets ignored. As if it were only rich Jews who behave like this and not rich people everywhere. As if the Nazis were not themselves responsible for ghetto conditions!

They do not know it, but some on the left who have made "anti-Zionist" and anti-Israeli propaganda out of the behaviour of the bourgeois Jewish puppet councils — Jim Allen, the socialist author of the play *Perdition* for example — stand

**Top: members of the Jewish Combat Organisation. In the front of the picture: Tosia Altman, who survived the uprising only to be captured by the Nazis later in May and die of burns. Bottom: entrance gate to the ghetto.**

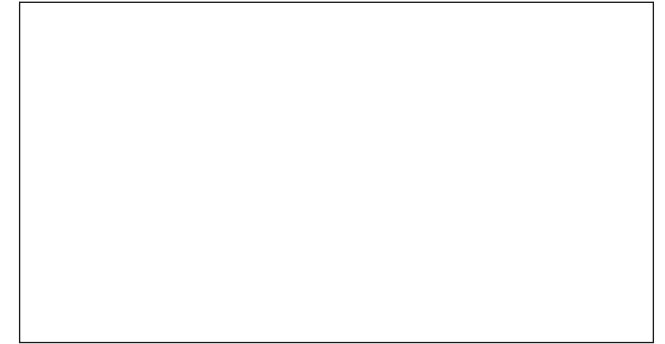
the direct line of descent from this vile Nazi propaganda.

To try to escape starvation 5,000 Jews volunteered to go and work in Germany, and 10,000 in Poland. The news was that the camps there were not too bad.

The Germans promised a safe life to the "productive" workers in the Wehrmacht workshops. Eventually they promised to each workshop a survival priority over the other shops, then to men, priority over women and children, to good workers priority over bad. These promises were all deceptions.

Despite it all, many Jews tried to keep up a sense of human dignity the Nazis were ripping from them. They held concerts; academic and religious life continued. Dr Korzchak, who ran the orphanage, sealed it against the ghetto and through three years protected his children from knowledge of life outside. This pretence of normality was the only form of resistance they had.

This desperate desire not to believe the worst was one of the reasons why those who from the beginning wanted the ghetto to fight could not gain the influence they needed.



**From the top: Nazi order calling for the "resettlement" of the Warsaw ghetto's Jews, 22 July 1942; a bunker where Jews hid, lived and fought from during the uprising; captured by the Nazis; after the uprising, the ghetto burns.**

Continued on page 10

# The pogroms did not end in 1945

Anti-Jewish pogroms continued in Europe after the defeat of the Nazis, as this report from the US "orthodox" Trotskyist paper, the *Militant*, of 11 August 1947, shows. The "orthodox" Trotskyists tended to argue that the Jews were soon doomed, whatever happened, short of socialist revolution: see the "Third Camp" heterodox Trotskyists' debate with them on that:

[www.workersliberty.org/mandel-glotzer](http://www.workersliberty.org/mandel-glotzer).

**Palestine last week witnessed a reign of terror against the civilian Jewish population that matched the goriest pogroms staged by the Nazis.**

Almost simultaneously those anti-semitic abominations leaped over to the "tight little island" itself, setting the stage for events that have not transpired in England since medieval times. The English Jews who were so confident that such things as happened in Germany could not possibly happen on enlightened English soil are now face to face with stark reality.

In Palestine the main assault took place in the all-Jewish city of Tel Aviv, where according to UP and AP dispatches from Jerusalem, squads of British soldiers and police manned "approximately eight armoured cars" and stormed the centre of the city "firing wildly and sending shots into shops and movie houses".

Passengers on a crowded bus were caught in a cross-fire and suffered the brunt of the casualties. Passers-by were assaulted by armed troopers and policemen. Store windows were smashed and looted. There are reports of hand grenades being used in addition to clubs and guns. As a result of this pogrom in Tel Aviv on 31 July, five were killed, 18 wounded, with two women reported among the dead.

Jerusalem, Haifa and other cities witnessed similar scenes.

On the next day, the funeral procession accompanying the victims of the previous day's massacre served as an occasion for another brutal assault in Tel Aviv. According to eye-witness reports, an armoured car manned by British police drove headlong into the funeral procession of 5,000 approaching the synagogue. Three separate bursts of gunfire poured into the defenceless mass, wounding 33 Jews.

**Oswald Mosley speaking in Dalston, east London, in the late 1940s. His followers organised assaults on Jewish communities in England.**

The British authorities have disclaimed responsibility for these outrages, depicting them as "spontaneous" reprisals for the hanging of two British sergeants by the Jewish terrorists of Irgun Zvai Leumi. These hangings were in their turn reprisals by the terrorists for the execution by the British of three Jewish youths implicated in organising the Acre Prison break of 4 May.

The denials of the authorities cannot be taken at their face value, any more than the original denials of both the police and the army that their men "were implicated in the affray which turned the streets into a veritable shooting gallery for several hours."

The method of "reprisals" deliberately inspired from above happens to be a favourite tactic of colonial "pacification". Far from being strangers to its use, the British have applied it on numerous occasions, in particular, during the 1936-39 uprisings of the Arabs in Palestine.

In any case, thinly veiled threats to employ this tactic had

been made several times. General Sir Allan Cunningham, British High Commissioner for Palestine, is reported to have told the head of the Jewish Agency that "the British had reached the end of their patience, and would not endure further insults, kicks, bullets and bombs without reprisals". This statement, made after the pogroms in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa, hardly requires comment.

The fountainhead of the anti-semitic outbreaks in England itself is quite clear. The incipient fascist formations there, headed by Mosley's scum, seized the opportunity to organise assaults upon the Jewish communities in London, Liverpool, Manchester and other cities. The most ominous note here is the apparent absence of popular resistance to the hoodlums.

A Jewish-owned factory was set ablaze in Liverpool. In Manchester thugs invaded the Jewish area, attacking passers-by, smashing store windows and inciting onlookers to loot. Synagogues in many cities, including London, were the targets for vandals who invariably raised the cry: "Down with the Jews!"

The extension to England of these fascist-like attacks on the Jews is not a passing episode. Jews in England provide as convenient a scapegoat for unbridled reaction as they did in Germany, so they will on the morrow in the United States as well. This is inherent in the decaying capitalist system, which breeds the most bestial reaction regardless of how "democratic" the traditions of a particular country may be. The English pogroms are merely the latest verification of this inexorable truth. Whoever tells the Jewish people otherwise is leading them blindfolded to the same horrible fate they have already suffered on the European continent.

The events in Palestine and England serve once again to underscore the utter futility of Zionism as a solution for the terrible plight of the Jews. *The Militant* has repeatedly warned that by its policies Zionism could not help but prepare a bloody trap in Palestine for the Jews who have been duped into believing they could find their salvation there.

**The pogroms in Palestine, the anti-semitic outbreaks in England, are an anticipation of what capitalism has in store for the Jews wherever they survive.**

## Warsaw ghetto

From page 9

In August 1942 the Nazis ordered Jews to be deported to camps in the east. They were told they would be settled and allowed to redeem themselves by work. No-one could know the full horror of the camps, but the Council had some eye-witness accounts. The knowledge was too much for Czerniaków, he committed suicide. The Council on the other hand encouraged Jews to volunteer for deportation. 20,000 Jews would go voluntarily to the Umschlag (the deportation place).

When political activists in the ghetto — left wingers and Bundists and Zionists — put out leaflets telling the truth about the death camps, people just did not believe them.

Between July and October 1942, 310,000 people were deported to camps, principally Treblinka, where life expectancy was one hour.

Only when the extent of the genocide was fully known (by the end of 1942), and the futility of passive hope was realised, and — most significantly — only when the Jewish underground began to obtain arms, did the ghetto go to war against the Nazis.

Until 1943 the Underground did not have the trust of the people. Until then, they set themselves the job of relief work, organising young people, holding meetings. They exposed the hypocrisies of the Council. Slowly they gained the respect of the masses who remained.

On 20 October 1942 the Jewish Coordination Committee was formed, bringing together five Zionist movements (Hachomer, Dror, Gordonia, Poale-Zion, Hechalutz), the Stalinists (PPR) and the socialists (the Bund). It drew up plans for a military organisation (Jewish Combat Organisation).

The mass deportations had stopped on 3 October but started against on 18 January 1943. There were only 40,000

Jews left.

They killed police informers. They demanded money off the rich to buy more arms. They organised the remaining dwellers, readying them for the Nazis' final assault.

In January they were able to thwart the Nazis for a few days and to persuade the remaining Jews that it was better to fight even against impossible odds than to give themselves up for deportation.

The final deportation was planned for April and on the 19th trucks arrived to take people to Treblinka. The Nazis and their trucks were attacked. Nazi tanks which guarded them were set on fire. For three days the fighters held running battles with the Nazis, forcing them to retreat. They had only limited support from the Polish resistance outside the ghetto; their arms were some rifles but mostly hand guns, grenades and molotov cocktails. The Germans had thousands of fully armed troops and sophisticated killing equipment.

Finally the Nazis won simply by dint of setting fire to the whole ghetto, burning the hidden Jews out of cellars. By mid-May the ghetto did not exist. 13,000 Jews had died in the fighting, 30,000 were captured and sent to Treblinka, others committed suicide. Hundreds of "rubble fighters" remained to carry out random attacks on the Nazis for months to come. A few hundred Jews crawled for twenty hours through the sewers to join resistance groups in the forests around Warsaw.

On 16 May the uprising officially ended. The SS demolished the Great Synagogue of Warsaw.

The persistence of the ghetto opposition, in spite of their almost unbearable fear and depression, their isolation, the indifference with which for years their warnings were met, is one of the most remarkable things in this story. They fought knowing that most of them would die.

It is easy to tell the story of the uprising. Understanding the full horror of Nazi genocide, and appreciating the courage of those who fought, takes an enormous leap of the imagination.

**After the crushing of the uprising, SS commander Jürgen Stroop pressed the button to detonate the explosion which destroyed the Great Warsaw Synagogue.**

We are also used to reading about the Jewish people having been treated as one homogeneous lump of expendable humanity. They weren't. Until January 1943 the ghetto was a cohesive society, massively oppressed and terrorised, but a society nonetheless, with classes and structures intact. The fact that the first priority of the ghetto fighters was to kill the policemen reminds us of this.

**We must organise people to fight for their own lives now. So that we will never — as the ghetto fighters did — have to organise people whose one remaining choice is to choose the manner of their deaths; to die on their feet, with arms in hand, so that they could feel, finally, liberated from fear itself.**

# Ford workers ballot for strikes

By Darren Bedford

**Workers at the Ford stamping and tooling plant in Dagenham have begun voting in a ballot for strikes over the closure of the plant.**

652 workers will take part in the ballot, which closes on 30 April. The closure of the plant, along with another factory in Southampton, was announced in October 2012. The ballot follows protests at both the Southampton and Dagenham plants, organised by Unite, on 18 April. The closures threaten 1,500 jobs directly, and more in Ford's supply chain.

A Unite statement said: "The workers at the stamping and tooling facility are furious over the way they are being treated by the company. Despite promises to find the displaced work-

ers alternative employment, the company is not keeping to its commitments.

"Over 100 toolmakers have not been found suitable jobs, and workers who are being redeployed are being given very little information about what work they will be doing once they are transferred."

It seems likely the demands of the strike will

focus on improving severance packages rather than halting the closure plans. Unite has highlighted the disparity between the severance payments offered to workers at the two plants — Dagenham workers are offered a package worth between £10,000 and £30,000 less than those in Southampton.

Unite national officer Roger Maddison said:

"Ford betrayed its workers when it announced the closure of its plants and now the company is rubbing salt into the loyal workers' wounds by treating them with contempt."

Ford bosses at Dagenham are threatening to withdraw the severance packages on offer if workers take action. Unite says such threats "only strengthen workers' resolve".

When *Solidarity* spoke to a union rep in the Southampton plant in November, he said: "We have been a little slow off the mark. The first day the closure was announced, we should have walked out and been demonstrating outside the plant."

At this late stage it would take extremely radical action — ongoing occupation and probably government intervention to

take the plants into public ownership — to prevent closure and job losses. A strike to win a better severance package is preferable to no action at all, and union reps who spoke to *Solidarity* did not report the mood from the shopfloor as one of workers desperate to take action immediately (even in November, a Southampton rep reported the greatest push for action came from contractors who wanted to fight for equal severance terms with directly-employed workers).

**But a public, visible campaign that began as soon as the closures were announced — including both whatever industrial action workers were prepared to take and external political pressure and campaigning — might have left the union in a stronger position.**

## Community fights fire cuts

By a south London trade unionist

**On Monday 22 April, 80 local residents and trade unionists attended a Fire Brigades Union (FBU) meeting to protest against the closure of Downham fire station in Lewisham, south east London.**

The local campaign is being driven by the FBU, led by local rep Kelly Macmillan.

The meeting was ad-

ressed by local Labour MP Heidi Alexander and London Assembly members Darren Johnson (Green Party) and Len Duvall (Labour).

The Tories are aiming to make £45 million in cuts to the fire service in London. They want to shut 12 of the 112 London fire stations, cut 520 firefighters, and 18 engines.

**The cuts will mean nearly five million Londoners will face longer response times to emergency calls.**

## More industrial news online

- Bromley Council workers blackmailed
- Gateshead steel strike
- More Post Office strikes
- BBC guides fight 17% pay cut

All at [bit.ly/indnews](http://bit.ly/indnews)

## Teachers strike against bullying

By Jonny West

**Teachers at Littlehampton Academy in Sussex struck on 17 April in the first of a series of planned strikes against management bullying.**

The workers, who include members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) say excessive observation and inspections have led to the development of a micro-managerial culture that makes it impossible for teachers to do their job.

There is recent precedent for teachers' strikes stopping micro-managing

bosses in their tracks. The threat of strikes from NUT members at Bishop Chaloner school in East London forced the headteacher to cancel a planned "mock Ofsted" inspection. There, the head is now victimising union reps in response. The school NUT group has voted in an indicative ballot for strikes.

Elsewhere, a planned strike at the Globe Academy in Southwark, south London, has been called off after the school (owned by the ARK chain which operates 18 schools around the UK) threatened legal action because of balloting irregularities.

**Teachers face eight compulsory redundancies.**

## Bosses' awards targeted

By Darren Bedford

**Anti-blacklisting campaigners staged a protest outside a construction industry awards ceremony at a prestigious London hotel on 16 April.**

The awards were being hosted by Kier Construction Ltd., one third of the BFK consortium (along with BAM Nuttall Ltd and Ferrovial Agroman) which runs construction work at the Crossrail sites in London. In September, BFK sacked 28 electricians after

their shop stewards raised concerns about safety abuses at the Westbourne Park Crossrail site. Since that time, sacked steward Frank Morris and supporters have been holding daily pickets at the site, as well as direct actions at the flagship Crossrail site on Oxford Street in central London.

The 16 April protest stopped rush-hour traffic outside the Lancaster Hotel. On Thursday 18 April, campaigners targeted the National Building Awards at the

Grosvenor Hotel on Park Lane, and on Friday 19 April the Westbourne Park picket succeeded in stopping some deliveries to the site.

**Anti-blacklisting direct actions are increasingly winning official backing from union officialdom and Labour politicians — a testament to the hard work of the rank-and-file led Blacklist Support Group in bringing the issue to prominence and taking the fight to the blacklists' doorsteps.**

• More: [bit.ly/blacklistsg](http://bit.ly/blacklistsg)

## PCS elections: vote Independent Left!

**Members of the Independent Left network within the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) are standing in the upcoming National Executive Committee elections alongside members of the Independent Socialists.**

**They are standing on a platform of transforming the PCS to make it a rank-and-file-led union with radical, imaginative industrial strategies.**

**For more information on the platform and the candidates, see [bit.ly/votepcs](http://bit.ly/votepcs)**

## Birkbeck cleaners fight pay cut

By Stew Ward

**Cleaners at Birkbeck, one of the constituent colleges of the University of London, face a 12.5% pay cut after management unilaterally announced a cut in their hours.**

Trimming time off workers' contracted hours is an increasingly common tactic for cleaning contractors looking to cut costs.

The cleaners' employer, Ocean Contract Cleaning Ltd., propose to cut 15 minutes from the working day of every cleaner. Most cleaners work two hours a day, usually alongside similar length shifts elsewhere, so a 15 minute cut in a given shift amounts to a significant loss.

Although cleaners at the University of London won the "London Living Wage" (currently £8.55/hour) in 2012, many still face attacks such as this, as well as inequality in terms of sick pay, holidays, and pensions with directly-employed University of London staff. Ocean Contract Cleaning's record as an employer speaks for itself; it did not pay the living wage to cleaners it employed at St. George's Hospital in south London until an industrial campaign forced it to. Ocean cleaners at Guildhall also struck to win living wages in late 2010 before the contract was transferred to Sodexo.

**Supporters of the Birkbeck cleaners have begun a petition to demand that university bosses pressure Ocean to reverse the cut. Sign it at [bit.ly/birkbeck](http://bit.ly/birkbeck)**



# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## IMF indicts Osborne

**All wrong: even the global institutions of capitalism are turning against Tory chancellor George Osborne**

**By Martin Thomas**

**Economic figures published on Thursday 25 April will show whether the UK is technically "in recession" again.**

Even if the figures escape the formal definition of a "triple dip" since 2008, jobs, services, benefits, and wages are definitely in a slump, and set to continue that way for years.

The coalition government claims this is an inevitable price for the supposed (but imaginary) "overspending" by the last Labour government on public services. Conservative and mainstream voices are questioning Osborne's "inevitability".

On 16 April the Interna-

91%.

A "growth tracker" graphic in the IMF report maps major countries' phases of slump, stagnation, and recovery since 2008. It shows the UK as doing no worse than most others until early 2011, and since then doing worse than any of the countries tracked except Greece and Portugal.

On 15 April, three US economists had exploded a famous bit of research which Osborne had cited to "prove" that cutting, and cutting again, until eventually government debt does decrease, is essential to restore economic growth.

### IMPOSSIBLE

**The Harvard economists Carmel Reinhart and Kenneth Rogoff published figures in 2010 claiming to show that government debt above 90% of annual output makes economic expansion difficult or impossible.**

Their critics have shown, unanswerably, that the statistical analysis was dodgy.

Historically, higher government debt levels tend to go together with somewhat lower growth. But the correlation is loose. Further analysis by another economist, Arindrajit Dube, shows that the correlation is probably mostly a matter of lower growth causing higher debt levels rather than vice versa.

On 19 April, the US rat-

ings agency Fitch struck a third, though symbolic, blow to Osborne's credibility and confidence by downgrading the rating it gives to US government bonds as a safe investment.

In truth, getting economic recovery, or even reducing debt, are not Osborne's priorities. He himself explains his policies as an effort to "make the UK the most attractive destination in Europe for businesses and investment", that is, to use the crisis to out-compete other European countries as a site for future profit-making. Thus the cuts in top income tax and corporation tax, and the continued zoom of top pay (chief executives' pay went up 16% in 2012), at the same time as wages are slammed down and benefits axed. If becoming "attractive for businesses and investment" means the UK also becoming horrible for workers and the unemployed, that's fine with George Osborne.

Labour's Ed Balls seized on the IMF criticism of Osborne. But in hard fact, still all he proposes is marginal changes from the Tory trajectory — a few tax tweaks here and there.

**In 2012 the TUC congress voted for public ownership and democratic social control of the whole banking system. The unions should demand that Labour take up that demand.**

## Danish teachers locked out

**By Bjarke Friberg, Red-Green Alliance**

**Since April 1, almost 70,000 Danish state school teachers have been locked-out by their employers. The lockout is the latest in a series of austerity measures initiated by the so-called centre-left government, led by social-democratic Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt.**

After its first year, which included some policy changes such as increased rights for migrants and LGBT people, enthusiasm for the new government has drastically waned and given place to resignation and repulsion as well as resistance.

After turning against the trade unions in June 2012 for failing to accept a longer working week, the government blocked with the right wing in parliament and agreed to lower taxes for the well-off while cutting benefits for the unemployed as well as disabled workers.

With the present indefinite lockout of the teachers' unions, the government parties have taken their next step in turning against their own working-class voting base.

Solidarity with the protesting teachers needs to be expanded to other groups of workers. The record score for the radical socialists of the Red-Green Alliance (RGA) in

the 2011 parliamentary election (when it won 6.7% of the vote and 12 parliamentary seats) must be converted into militant activism in the workplaces rather than tactical manoeuvres in parliament.

The 70,000 locked-out teachers have mounted a massive public campaign, complete with daily creative protests including singing, placards, YouTube videos, a 20-mile human chain between Copenhagen and Roskilde, and flash mobs all over the country. Meanwhile, 780,000 school children are spending their days at home or at their parents' workplaces. Frustration and exhaustion is increasing as the lock-out continues.

Meeting in the weekend of April 26-28, the RGA national congress is facing discussions on parliamentary strategy, including the party's stand on whether to pull the carpet from under the government or struggling to gain concessions from the politically-weakened coalition parties.

**With the Social Democrats down to a record low of 17% in polls, and a near melt-down for the supposedly more left-wing coalition partner Socialist Peoples' Party, the Danish PM should watch both her back and the streets outside the parliament building.**

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**For more info, and to book tickets, see [workersliberty.org/ideas](http://workersliberty.org/ideas)**

**The placard reads: "We know a lot about education. Who is listening?"**