

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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elections

BOSSES, NOT

MIGRANTS!

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!

Contact us:

- 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org
- The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.
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Stalin in Clerkenwell Green

Eric Lee



It was a beautiful May morning, one of the first warm and sunny days we've had all year. In Clerkenwell Green, hundreds of people were assembling for the annual official London May Day march...

Many of you will not have been there — in fact there were very few trade unionists at all on this year's march.

So let me tell you who was there — the twentieth century's greatest serial killer, Joseph Stalin. Stalin was on several banners, and not only his image side by side with Lenin and Mao, but huge banners just with his picture alone — and quotations from his writings.

As I marched along with some trade union leaders and a traditional brass band, I could not help feeling ashamed at what the march would have looked like to onlookers, of whom there were many along the route. Ashamed and disgusted.

It's disgusting because holding aloft iconic images

of Stalin at a trade union march shows a complete lack of moral judgement. Seventy years ago, it may have been understandable — the second world war was raging, the Soviet leadership had not yet acknowledged Stalin's crimes. But after 1956, anyone who still believed that Stalin was a great revolutionary leader was delusional.

Many of the marchers holding hammer-and-sickle flags or Stalin images would have been from various far-left Turkish organisations and maybe in Turkey, there is no strong anti-Stalinist left. (Not that that's an excuse for their ignorance.)

But there were also British far-leftists, supporters of tiny fringe groups proud of their adulation for a man who is responsible for millions of deaths of innocent people, a man who contributed so much to destroying everything the Russian revolution had achieved, killing off the entire Bolshevik party in the process.

The British anti-Stalinist

left was represented by "Trotskyist" groups like the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party, who were there in strength, manning their book stalls, selling their newspapers.

But there was no evidence that they challenged the Stalinists or even politely asked them to put their repulsive banners away. It seemed as if the Trotskyists and Stalinists were happy to march side by side, letting bygones be bygones.

This is intolerable. If there are some, few individuals with personal "issues" who need to express themselves through things like the "Stalin Society", that may be their right. But that doesn't mean that they are welcome at our May Day celebrations.

We must make an effort to ensure that this disgrace never repeats itself and that in 2014, there will be no banners with Stalin's picture at the London May

Day march and rally.

How do we do this? We begin by debating and confronting the Stalinist left, demolishing their arguments and educating their members and periphery. We fight them on their turf and we fight them seriously. This is a fight over historical memory, over truth, and it is a fight we must win in order to cleanse and revitalise the left.

At our own events such as a May Day march, we must take a firm stand of no platform for totalitarianism — no portraits of Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot or Kim Jon Il to be displayed. Enough is enough.

And finally, we must compel the leadership of the TUC and the unions to take May Day seriously. They must wrest it from the hands of the lunatics and the fringe. They must bring the hundreds of thousands of trade unionists who have marched under the TUC banner in recent years to come out on May Day too. The trade union leadership must help us to reclaim the holiday.

Stalin's portrait must never again be paraded through the streets of London.

Iraqi union leader's court case postponed

By Ruben Lomas

A court hearing on a "criminal complaint" against Iraqi oil workers' leader Hassan Juma'a has been postponed until 19 May.

The complaint is being brought by lawyers working for the Southern Oil Company, against whom Juma'a's Iraqi Federation of Oil Unions has a long history of organising.

However, SOC lawyers have so far failed to present

any evidence or witnesses to support their complaint. They blame the Ministry of Oil for failing to provide them with requested material, but the court judge has told the SOC that 19 May is its last chance. He has also affirmed that, based on evidence he has seen, Hassan Juma'a's involvement in workers' demonstrations has been entirely lawful.

Juma'a says he feels positive about the case, and cites the international solidarity as a key factor.

Labour movement bodies — including the AFL-CIO, the TUC, and the FWCUI and GFIW (the two major union federations in Iraq apart from the IFOU) — have signed an open letter to Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki demanding the charges against Juma'a are dropped.

- Sign the petition, organised by US Labor Against War, at bit.ly/hassanj
- Get your union to back the open letter — bit.ly/hj-openletter

Hong Kong dockers win wage increase

By Ira Berkovic

Hong Kong dockers have secured a 9.8% pay increase after a 40-day strike.

450 crane operators and other dock workers struck on 28 March, citing low pay and oppressive working conditions as the factors behind the strike.

The Hong Kong International Terminal is the world's third-biggest port, and is owned by Li Ka-Shing's Hutchinson Port Holdings Trust, one of the four giants of the port industry. Li Ka-Shing is the

world's eighth richest man.

Although the final settlement is nearer to the bosses' offer of 7% than the workers' demand of 23%, it still represents a significant concession. Workers have faced years of pay freeze and say their wages now are lower in real terms than in 1995.

The 9.8% increase will see wages rise to around HK\$60 per hour, still extremely low for one of the world's most expensive cities.

Analysts estimate the strike has caused a backlog of up to 90,000 containers.

Brisbane May Day

Over 1,000 construction workers walked off the job in Brisbane, Australia, on Labour Day, 6 May.

They demonstrated at the Attorney General's office to demand an end to court proceedings against Bob Carnegie, who faces criminal charges for his role in organising solidarity with a construction workers' dispute in 2012.

The verdict in Bob's case, which was due late May, is likely to be moved to late June to allow Bob to undergo and recover from a major medical operation.

International support continues to grow, with a Unite branch in Middlesbrough, England recently donating £1,000.

● For more information, see bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com and facebook.com/defendbobcarnegie

Cuts will undermine drugs progress

By a drugs worker

The Independent Drugs Commission for Brighton and Hove has recommended, among other things, an investigation into setting up a "Consumption Room" in the city. This is a place where users can inject drugs safely.

Such a facility could help prevent HIV and hepatitis C infection and respond to overdoses.

Such moves are undoubtedly progressive and will improve the health of drug users.

But government cuts now being imposed by local authorities undermine more enlightened policies (including facilities like that proposed in Brighton) and tend to impose a low regard for drug users' safety and their liberty.

Right now government funding targets heroin and crack users to bring them into (predominantly pre-

scribing) treatment services. This has accompanied a decline in heroin and crack use, with estimated numbers down below 300,000 at the start of 2011 for the first time — a 33,000 drop from a peak in 2005/6.

What is the reality behind the figures?

Since the late 90s governments have emphasised the role of criminal justice services in bringing drug users into treatment, with the expansion of CARAT (Counseling, Assessment, Referral, Advice and Throughcare) workers in prisons and drug intervention programmes linked to local police and courts. More people are being seen by a drugs worker and referred into treatment.

However the continued availability of drugs in Britain in prisons, and the high risk of overdose of those using after leaving prison, remains a threat to recovery.

That leaves community



treatment services, such as those prescribing methadone and subutex as substitute legal drugs to prevent withdrawals from heroin and other opiates. Questions need to be asked about the long-term fate of those in treatment.

For short periods substitute prescribing can be really useful. But thousands of people, mostly over 40, remain physically dependent on very high doses of prescribed methadone for many years, and not necessarily supported to move forward.

The argument goes that as they don't need money to buy drugs, they commit less crime; but they are also at risk of overdose when drinking alcohol, or using other stimulant and depressant drugs on top of their script.

Counselling and group therapies need to be more readily available alongside prescribing treatment.

Meanwhile little impact is being made on the supply of drugs including those such as ketamine and novel psychoactive substances (legal highs). And even with improved surveillance technology, tackling domestic production of skunk is a struggle as the amount of cannabis being grown in the UK has now reached 50% of that which is consumed here.

However, the prospect of a well integrated treatment system that encompasses the best of professional and peer-led support, such as SMART (Substance Abuse

and Addiction) recovery groups, is undermined by an increasingly target-driven culture in which local services are expected to move individuals through a linear pathway of the funding money that justifies the planning of the commissioners rather than meeting the needs of the drug user.

The latest initiative from this Government is Payment By Results (PBR), a funding settlement that is being piloted in several areas in England and Wales.

Under PBR services will only get a small part of the funding money they need to operate up-front, with the rest following if service users leave the service having met targets such as being drug free for a certain number of weeks.

But people don't get better to order. And whilst it is reasonable to want quality services, if charities have to get bank loans to cover their costs — which they may never be able to repay —

many services will not function.

Supporting service users in the way they need is being undermined by an impersonal funding regime and one that will lead to more disengagement from services and greater risks.

Portugal decriminalised the possession of illegal drugs in 2001. Professor Alex Stevens of the University of Kent says data suggests that between 2001 and 2007 the most problematic form of drug use fell and there were significant reductions in drug related deaths, HIV infections and prison population. The policy was also founded on expanding treatment options.

However, Portugal's successes are being undermined by cuts in public spending. Elsewhere in Europe, a spike in the HIV rates following the withdrawal of drug services in Greece further underlines the importance of stable funding for services.

Militant trade unions save lives



By Todd Hamer

In a row with Jeremy Hunt, the Royal College of Nursing has rejected calls for it to split into two organisations — a professional body and a trade union.

Hunt, parroting the conclusions of the Francis Report into the Mid Staffordshire Hospital scandal, argues that the RCN was complicit there because they "allowed their trade union responsibilities to trump their responsibilities as a Royal College to raise professional standards." But this conclusion was nothing but Francis' own bourgeois prejudice.

In fact, the problem was that the RCN did *not* behave like a trade union. As the report documents RCN had a very cosy relationship with management and barely any with members.

The RCN sang the praises of management and ignored concerns raised by staff.

The report paints a de-

pressingly familiar picture of trade unionism in the NHS. RCN had only a handful of reps at the hospital and was heavily dependent on paid, full-time officials. Out of a membership of 600 they rarely got more than 10 people to a meeting.

Like many health union branches they favoured a "partnership model" of trade unionism where the officials become cheerleaders for management. The main convenor even wangled herself a job in the senior management team! The approach pulled the reps up into management's ivory tower where they remained willfully ignorant of the horrors on the wards.

A strong union telling the truth about the reality on the ground could have smashed through the management's collective fantasies. It could have stood up to bullying managers hell-bent on meeting financial targets and organised an industrial battle over safe staffing levels.

The RCN and the other unions at the hospital failed because they failed to act as militant trade unions.

111 call centre deaths

The introduction of the 111 call centres, replacing NHS Direct, has been chaotic and has cost some patients their lives.

The national NHS Direct line was replaced by this 111 service which is run by 46 different (mostly private) providers.

The new centres have cut down on staff, waiting times have gone up and patients are being referred to the wrong services. The RCN report that while NHS Direct had a ratio of two call centre staff to one qualified nurse, the new system operates on 15 call centre workers to one nurse.

The backdrop to this story is the closure of A&E departments. Due to multi-billion pound PFI debts and multi-billion pound "efficiency savings", hospitals are being forced to merge and close the departments.

The government is trying to change our attitude to A&E. Hospitals have erected signs outside their gates: "STOP — do you really need A&E? If your con-



dition is not a serious, life-threatening emergency you may be directed to more appropriate health services." "More appropriate" services are the 111 call centres or local pharmacy.

There are now 24 A&E departments under threat across the health service. Health Economist Allyson Pollock explains: "The accident and emergency department ... is the last point of entry to funded care when all other routes are closed, the canary in the mineshaft: when A&E admissions rise, it is a signal that there are problems in all the other parts of the system."

The government is deliberately culling the canary in the mineshaft and allowing the toxic atmosphere of capitalist market relations to kill off the rest of the NHS.

Royal Mail sold off in 2014

By Stewart Ward

The government plans to sell off Royal Mail, in what will be the largest privatisation since British Gas 26 years ago.

Labour MPs have branded the proposals "desperate". The government hopes to raise £3 billion from the sale, with some Labour figures suggesting it is a quick-fix attempt to claw back some of a £245 billion overspend in government borrowing.

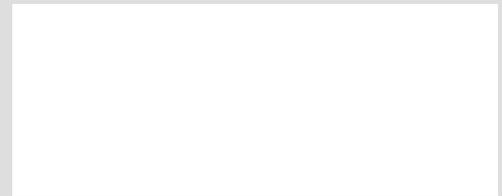
10% of Royal Mail shares will be distributed to employees. It is not clear whether they will be given the shares for free or have to pay. The rest may be sold off on the open share market or as a lump to a big company.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) which represents Royal Mail staff runs a "Save Our Royal Mail" campaign, and its April 2013 conference decided on a campaign to boycott Royal Mail's private competitors.

However, socialists in CWU have warned against a "company-unionist" response to the attacks. Postal workers need a positive campaign for democratic public ownership under workers' and service users' control.

The government hopes to finalise the flotation of Royal Mail by April 2014. We have less than a year to organise a fightback.

Any campaign must include pressuring the Labour Party to explicitly oppose the move (rather than criticise detail) and commit to renationalising Royal Mail if the privatisation goes through and Labour is elected in 2015.



The left must debate its “big” differences

The left

By Martin Thomas



Many of the people who left the SWP recently, and some others who quit SWP longer ago, have formed an “International Socialist Network”.

ISN said it was interested in left unity and broad discussion on the left, and many local ISNers are genuinely open-minded, so AWL wrote to ISN proposing discussions.

ISN secretary Tim Nelson wrote back on 30 April:

Dear AWL,

In response to your email. We will not be holding talks with your organisation. Although we are devoted to unity on the left, we believe there to be far too many issues on which we differ. We see the anti-imperialist struggle as one of fundamental importance to the working class, and your continued support for Israel, and for the Western occupation of Iraq, is something which we cannot reconcile with principled socialist politics.

Furthermore, we believe your position on Islam is exceptionally right-wing, to the point of being racist.

We believe these problems are rooted in the Zionist position your organisation has adopted. Zionism is a racist ideology, and cannot, in our opinion, be adopted by socialists. Such differences cannot be resolved in round table talks, and we believe to attempt it would be futile.

This just states the position of the Steering Committee, not the entire organisation. We will be having a national meeting soon, which can of course overturn any decisions we make. In this case, however, we think it very unlikely that that will happen.

Kind regards,

Tim Nelson, IS Network Steering Committee

We responded immediately:

Thanks for your letter. You seem to have accepted SWP misinformation about our politics. One of the advantages of discussion is simply to find out what others’ real views are.

More should be said.

The idea that any difference that cannot be “resolved in round-table talks” should rule out discussion is, for a start, a recipe for closed-off sects. The differences between Marxists and mainstream Labour people, for example, are “big” in the sense that they will not be cleared up in an evening round a table; and yet we not only allow, but positively wish for, discussion. Over time, helped by the experience of class struggle,

people’s ideas change in “big” ways.

All the existing groups with a clear political profile are separated from each other by “big” differences. If “big” differences rule out discussion, then the groups will never discuss with, but only curse, each other. And when the groups develop “big” differences inside their own ranks, which they surely will if they are politically alive, what then?

Your idea that the way to deal with “big” differences is to exclude discussion is borrowed from the SWP, but “more SWP than the SWP”. The SWP did discuss with AWL between 1998 and 2003, when we were in the Socialist Alliance and its forerunners. Was that a mistake? Should the SWP never have agreed to join the Socialist Alliance?

Even when we can’t discuss, socialists need an accurate picture of our adversaries’ ideas — even Tories’ ideas. If we shelter ourselves by caricaturing our adversaries’ views, then we fail to educate ourselves, and we fail to equip ourselves to reason with workers influenced by our adversaries.

TALK

Okay, Tim Nelson doesn’t want to talk to AWL. But how would he deal with the many ordinary workers whose picture of the activist left has been shaped by the SWP, and who consequently reject the left as people who enthuse for Hezbollah and Hamas more than they concern themselves with the plight of the workers around them in Britain? Scream “racist” and refuse to talk?

AWL is anti-imperialist. Imperialism is not just the USA and its allies. We supported the Kosovars against what Trotsky, back in 1913, called “Serbian imperialism”, and the Kurds against Iranian and Iraqi sub-imperialism.

We support the right of the Israeli Jews to a state of their own. We are vigorous opponents of Israeli governments, and supporters of the Palestinians’ struggle to have a state of their own alongside Israel.

Zionist? Historically, Zionism meant the project of building up a Jewish nation in Palestine and a state for it. Marxists argued for Jewish workers instead to join the revolutionary socialist struggle where they lived. They certainly discussed with Zionists: there was a Zionist unit in the Red Army which saved the Russian workers’ state from the assault of the Russian counter-revolutionaries and 14 invading armies.

“Zionist” became a curse-word, deemed akin to “racist” or “fascist”, thanks to a campaign by the Stalinists from the late 1940s. You, like the SWP, rely on the residual influence of that campaign rather than thinking about the issues today.

Against “zapping” the SWP

Letters



Mr. Scruffles thinks the SWP should be politically confronted by being shouted down (“Zap’ the SWP?”, *Solidarity* 285), e.g., when SWP members are speaking at events and demonstrations.

She sees this as a way of holding that organisation to account, as a tactic that many people are on board for (and thus is effective). It is not really “no platform”, she says, but is more equivalent to a direct action tactic of “zapping” — “shaming” people over something specific (in the case of the SWP, over its handling of a rape allegation against a leading member).

Our difference is not over whether the SWP should be held to account — they surely should be. But is this the right way to go about it?

Direct action is good but, in my view, it should have a reasonably defined and clear purpose that does not undermine other things you want to do. On those points, “zapping” fails.

Is the point that every SWP member should feel shame at the behaviour of their organisation? Fair enough. But we also have to understand why they don’t already, or do not openly state it. Some may be cynical, but others will be naive, defensive, reluctant to give up on a project they sincerely believe is changing the world for the better, or believe that the SWP has learned lessons from these events. In other words, SWP mem-

bers are human beings. Tactics such as this — aggressive, physical rather than verbal — are likely to make those SWP members more defensive and less likely to be convinced they are wrong.

There is a case for not inviting particular SWP members (e.g., its leaders, those most responsible for the recent abuses of power) onto labour movement/campaign platforms. But in most cases, this tactic is not being used selectively, it is being used against *all* SWP members. We should try to convince SWP members to think again, not to defend their organisation — to fight to change it, or leave.

Is this tactic primarily about the fact that activists, women activists especially, do not feel “safe” (comfortable and happy participating in political activities) while the SWP is around? I can sympathise with this feeling, up to a point. But, I repeat, most SWP members (and even their leaders) would be mortified to think that their organisation triggers such a feeling. The likelihood of them replicating such abuse must be very small.

If it is the presence of SWP members, *as individuals*, which makes us feel genuinely unsafe we ought to refuse to work with them if there are SWP members in our workplaces, stop our children from going to their homes, cross the street to avoid them. Or is it the SWP as an organisational entity? It is just not clear.

There are three other things which make this tactic wrong. First, since it could be used as a shaming policy against *any* SWP member, it is possible that it will be used against those who have themselves suffered sexual or other violence. Sta-

Now there is a Jewish nation in Palestine. It is a fact, not a project. If “Zionist” means that we uphold that nation having the same right to a state of its own as every other nation, then we are “Zionist”. The curse-word does not clarify. If “anti-Zionist” means favouring the conquest and suppression of that nation by Arab or Islamic armies, then “anti-Zionism” should be rejected.

During the US and UK troop presence in Iraq, we marched in demonstrations against it, but our slogan was solidarity with the Iraqi working class against both the occupation troops and the sectarian militias in Iraq, including the “resistance” militias. “Troops out” was a bad slogan because it implied support for, or desire to give free rein to, the “resistance” militias which threatened to crush the infant Iraqi labour movement and tear Iraq into sectarian statelets. There was nothing “principled”, and even less “socialist”, about it when the SWP made that support for the “resistance” explicit.

We are against Islam as we are against other religions. We are not sectarian secularists who would allow the battle against religious ideas to block or disrupt solidarity between workers of different religions or of none. We understand the need for a unsectarian approach to Muslim workers in Britain in face of the racist right-wing demagogues who target Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities under cover of criticising Islam.

We also support the women and young people in mainly-Muslim communities who rebel against religious and patriarchal authority. We are for secular schooling and against “faith” schools, Christian or Islamic. The disgrace here is that around 2001 the SWP abandoned long-established socialist principle and started to condone the Blair government’s drive for “faith” schools.

The political trend of Islamism, or political Islam, or Islamic fundamentalism, is not at all the same as Muslim religion. Political Islam is, as Tony Cliff wrote in 1946 (about the Muslim Brotherhood), “clerical fascist”, of the same political species as the Catholic-coloured far-right movements of the 1930s in Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Croatia, etc. The main victims and opponents of political-Islamist movements are... Muslims.

The SWP shouts “we are all Hezbollah”, recommends votes for the Muslim Brotherhood, and excuses that by representing political opposition to political Islam as sectarian intolerance of Muslim religion.

Do you really want to remain “stuck” with that post-2002 SWP position, refusing discussion with anyone who’d oppose it?

tistically, it is likely. To “zap” such people is wrong.

I also think it is wrong to use aggressive behaviour against people who have less power than yourself. Older people should not shout at young people for instance. We risk repeating the “abuse-of-power” failings of the SWP.

Second, this tactic is likely to hinder rather than help create an atmosphere where people who have suffered violence, abuse, and bullying feel they can come forward and be supported to speak out.

Third, how widespread do people who advocate this tactic want it to be? How long will it last? If it goes on for any length of time it will be, logically, a genuine “no platform” policy for the SWP. It will treat them as if they were an organisation akin to fascists. Unarguably they are not. That would be a very authoritarian policy. It will give succour to the right who care nothing for our civil liberties, who want to ban, proscribe, suppress, and depict the left as “extremists”.

We find a situation where the SWP seem to be “getting away with it” frustrating? Okay. Let us then discuss and democratically agree upon tactics together (and where exactly was “zapping” discussed and decided upon?)

Let us think how to reach SWP members (reportedly more are thinking of breaking away). We could organise a protest/lobby/leafleting outside Marxism this year and much else.

“Zapping” is not the way to go.

Cathy Nugent

Don't blame migrants

"Within a year", says a typical scaremongering Ukip leaflet, "29 million Romanians and Bulgarians will gain the right to live, work and draw benefits here".

Ukip try to paint a picture of Britain being flooded. But the entire population of France, Germany, Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy have the right to live, work and draw benefits here, as they have had for decades.

The entire population of Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle have those rights in London. Is London "flooded" with people? Would Britain be better if the government controlled where you could live and seek work?

Since Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU, for a transitional period their citizens have faced serious and complicated restrictions on their right to work in the European Union, including Britain. From the beginning of 2014 they will have the same rights as other Europeans.

It is very unlikely that huge numbers will come to Britain. Migrants from Bulgaria and Romania have favoured Italy, Spain and Germany.

There are 750,000 British people living in Spain who can get jobs or claim benefits there, and 200,000 in France. Should all the British people living abroad be "sent home"?

TAX, BENEFITS, WAGES

Migrants contribute £2.5 billion more in tax than they claim in benefits. The average British citizen eligible to claim benefits is far more likely to take them up than an average eligible migrant.

The majority of migrants are of working age and so contribute more to the social provision that children and elderly people depend on.

In the year to April 2009 migrants from Eastern Europe were 59 per cent less likely to receive welfare benefits than UK natives; or 49 per cent if they had been here for more than two years. They were 57 per cent less likely to live in social housing.

Careful economic analyses show that more immigration increases average wage levels in a country, rather than pushing them down. Generally, countries with more immigration are economically more dynamic and prosperous.

A study by Christian Dustmann and Tommaso Frattini (<http://bit.ly/immig-w>) found that between 1997 and 2005 middle earners gained 1.5p an hour and upper earners 2p from the effects of immigration.

Wages of the lowest-paid (the worst-paid 5%) have suffered in periods of high immigration — becoming 0.7p an hour worse than they would have been without immigration.

The effect for some groups of particularly vulnerable low-

Ukip poster

paid workers (who often were the previous wave of immigrants...) may be greater. It is still tiny compared to the positive effect of workers of all origins uniting to win a living wage.

Small compared to the negative effect of anti-immigrant demagoguery making migrant workers too fearful to insist on their rights, or reducing support from already-settled workers for migrant workers' struggles.

Workers' unity is the way to win decent wages.

IMPACT

Steve Nickell, economics professor at Nuffield College, has studied whether immigration increases unemployment.

He concluded that it was "very hard to find a significant impact of immigration on participation or unemployment by region, by skill or by age. ...there is very little evidence that they are taking jobs that would otherwise exist and be filled by natives".

Immigration expands the economy and increases the total number of jobs. The government's cuts in public services, the depression imposed across industry by the fall-out from the bankers' binge up to 2008, and employers' insistence on making sure of high profits and squeezed, speeded-up workforces before they will expand and hire new workers — all of those cost jobs.

The answer is workers' unity to demand public ownership of the banks and high finance under democratic social control, and the redirection of investment into expanding public services and creating useful jobs.

• Thanks to Redbridge Equalities and Community Council for some of the data here.

An alarm-call to young people

Who votes Ukip? Ukip support correlates highly with refusal to have children vaccinated for measles, mumps, and rubella. 71% of Ukip supporters are over 50. 57% are male.

75% of them voted Tory or Liberal Democrat in 2010, only 7% Labour, and the other 18% voted for no-one or for BNP, Ukip itself, etc.

Only 3% of Ukip supporters are seriously concerned about the environment. Ukip supporters are much more likely to see "controlling immigration" as the big concern. Oddly, since these are plainly people dissatisfied with the status quo, Ukip supporters are somewhat *less* concerned about "the economy and jobs" than other people.

The score Ukip got in the 2 May county council elections, equivalent to 25% in a general election, was mainly got in smaller towns and villages, rather than the more cosmopolitan big cities.

Ukip's economic policy is to build twice as many prisons, increase military spending, cut taxes, and assure us that they'll find some trick to balance the budget. The frustrated, fearful, bewildered older people that vote Ukip don't care much about the incoherence.

The Ukip surge could help Labour win a parliamentary majority with a poor vote in 2015, by poaching Tory and Lib-Dem votes in marginal constituencies and letting Labour in. But complacency about it would be foolish. Whatever about 2015, right now Ukip is pushing the bigger parties to the right, including Labour. It is diverting anger generated by the

economic crisis into mean, rancid hostility to immigrants and into the superstition that the problem is not capitalism itself but that capitalism coordinates itself across borders in Europe (the EU) rather than being old-fashionedly national.

The larger body of opinion which is young and of internationalist and socially-generous leanings is not making the same impact.

This is the first time ever that people in their 20s have been, on average, worse off than people in their 60s. Many young people are socially aware, and maybe even active in this or that way. Yet relatively few are active in a regular, organised way to advocate and argue for a different society, a socialist society, a society based on solidarity rather than competition for profit.

That is why the coalition government's cuts are skewed to hit younger people harder than older people.

The Ukip surge is an alarm-call to young people — that if they want to shape the world in which they will grow up, then they must thrash out their ideas, become organisers and advocates, do politics.

It is also an alarm-call to older socialists. If they drown in trade-union routine, or single-issue activity; if they do not use the skills and knowledge they have learned over years or decades to reach out to young people, and convince and help them to fight for a different society, and not just on separate issues; then they too will make no impact.

Don't leave the future to Ukip!

Help us raise £15,000

As the weather improves, Workers' Liberty members will be increasing the number of street stalls we organise around the country.

Even in the age of smartphones and social media, a face-to-face conversation and exchange of ideas about politics is irreplaceable.

Our paper has a print run of around 2,000 each week. That's not a bad stat for a small revolutionary group, but selling *Solidarity* isn't a big money-spinner for us. It's not a mass circulation publication, and even at the "top" price of 80p, the quantities we shift aren't likely to have the coffers overflowing.

If you donate to our fund appeal, extended until the beginning of Ideas for Freedom (Friday 21 June), you can help us expand that communication. You can help us produce more books and pamphlets, and improve the quality of our paper. Workers' Liberty's fundamental reason for existing is to convince working-class people to become socialists, not just in a passive sense but to take ownership over socialist ideas and become persuaders and educators for them.

Your financial support helps us do that more effectively.

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

✦ Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.

✦ Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

✦ Organising a fundraising event.

✦ Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

✦ Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

Total raised so far: £10,650

We raised £290 this week. Thank you to Jean, Mick, and Pat, and the union branches and other labour-movement organisations which took out May Day greetings/adverts in our last issue.

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

..... (its address)

Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

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

Amount: £ to be paid on the day of (month) 20 (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

The Nazis' book-burning campaign

By Dale Street

Eighty years ago this week — 10 May, 1933 — organised book-burnings took place in university towns throughout Germany. The objects of this literary auto-da-fe were the writings of anti-war, Jewish, socialist and liberal authors, both German and non-German.

The Nazis (NSDAP) had been in power since the end of January. In the following three months one and a half million new members had flooded into the party. A ban on new members had had to be imposed on 1 May in order to protect its ranks from "dilution".

State and party organs had been merged into a single apparatus of repression which set about the systematic elimination of all opposition and targeted first and foremost the German labour and Communist movements, alongside of attempts to organise boycotts of Jewish businesses.

But the book-burnings and the campaign which preceded them, were not organised at the behest of the government or NSDAP. They were an initiative of the Deutsche Studentenschaft (DS), the German Students Association.

The DS had been dominated by ultra-nationalist politics. In 1931 this had resulted in the election of NSDAP member Ger-

hard Kruger as DS president, with 44.4% of the votes.

After the Nazis had come to power Kruger moved quickly to demonstrate the DS's value to the new regime. On 6 April the DS issued a circular to all its local affiliates announcing the launch of a new campaign:

"In the light of the odious agitation by foreign Jewry the DS is planning a four-week campaign: in opposition to the corrosive effects of the Jewish spirit, and in support of an outlook and emotion in German writing which manifests the consciousness of the German people."

"The campaign begins on 12 April, with the public display of 'Twelve Theses Against the Un-German Spirit' and ends on 10 May with public rallies in all German towns where there are universities."

Another circular issued two days later went into more detail about the campaign. Public burnings of "corrosive Jewish writings" were to be organised. Students were urged to "cleanse" their own collections of any such works, to check the bookshelves of their acquaintances, and to "free public libraries of any such material."

Four days later the campaign was launched by the DS's publication of its "Twelve Theses Against the Un-German Spirit", distributed both as a leaflet and as a poster attached

to the doors of university buildings (in the "tradition" of Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses). The Theses said:

"Our most dangerous opponent is the Jew, and whoever is in bondage to the Jew. The Jew can think only in Jewish. If he writes in German, then he lies."

"We demand... Jewish works are to be published only in the Hebraic language. If they are published in German, then they are to be labelled as a translation."

"For the most energetic action against misuse of the German [Gothic] script. The German script is for the use of Germans only."

"We demand from the German student the will and the ability needed to overcome Jewish intellectualism and the manifestations of liberal decay in German spiritual life ..."

"We demand the selection of students and professors on the basis of the certainty that their thinking is rooted in the German spirit. ..."

On 19 April the campaign against "un-German" literature was extended into a campaign against "un-German" professors and lecturers. Students were urged to denounce teaching staff who had "spoken abusively of national leaders, the movement of national awakening, and soldiers who had fought at the front" or whose "academic method (reflected)

Chen Duxiu: Trotskyist critic of Stalinism

Our movement

By Micheál MacEoin



Chen Duxiu (1879-1942) was a founder of Chinese Communism and, later, a Trotskyist critic of Stalinism and Maoism.

Born into a wealthy family in Anhui, Chen participated in the Xinhai Revolution in 1911 which overthrew the Qing Dynasty and established the Republic of China. Like many intellectuals, he was dissatisfied with the dictatorial rule of President Yuan Shikai and was part of a new generation who proclaimed the need for profound cultural renewal in China.

From the pages of his *New Youth* magazine, Chen wrote that the task was "to fight Confucianism, the old tradition of virtue and rituals, the old ethics and the old politics... the old learning and the old literature."

This new cultural movement promoted ideas of democracy, modern science and women's liberation.

However, demands for national self-determination soon collided with Japanese imperialism. Illusions in the US President Woodrow Wilson were cruelly dashed at Versailles, when the imperialist powers handed over to Japan Germany's rights to the country's Shandong Province.

Chinese youth rose in fury against the weakness of the Peking Government on 4 May 1919; the "May Fourth" movement spread across the country, attacking traitorous ministers and held mass demonstrations.

As Harold Isaacs has written, the "the October revolution offered [the youth] an example and an inspiration more compelling in its reality. With it came to China belated tributaries of all the main currents of European social thought, democracy, anarchism, syndicalism, and Marxism."

Radical ideas flourished in journals and societies in schools and universities. It was in this context that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was formed in 1920, with Chen, then a professor at Peking National University, amongst its founding members.

In a nation under the grip of foreign imperialists and

ripped apart by feuding warlords, the young CCP faced the problem of how to relate to the bourgeois-nationalist movement in China, led at the time by Sun Yat-sen's Kuomintang (KMT).

The policy of the Comintern was for the CCP to enter the KMT as a "bloc within" and seek to win influence in that nationalist movement. However, the policy downplayed Lenin's warning at the Second Congress in 1920 that even in a national-revolutionary movement the independence of proletarian organisations must be preserved, "even in their embryonic form".

The development of the working-class movement quickly took a secondary position to the Soviet Union's diplomatic relations with Sun Yat-sen, and when Michael Borodin took his post as an adviser to Sun in 1923, it was as a representative of the politbureau of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union rather than the Comintern. His brief was to boost the KMT.

As Stalinism took hold in the Comintern, it declared that the immediate task facing China was the national revolution against the imperialists, and it accorded a central role to the KMT. As Isaacs wrote, the "elevation of the 'national united front,' or the 'bloc of four classes,' into a mystic fetish to be preserved at all and any cost, had served to bind the Chinese Community Party securely to the bootstraps of the Kuomintang, the workers and peasants to the bourgeoisie." The latter was increasingly militarised with Russian support and equipped with Soviet methods of agitation.

Chen's misgivings at this strategy deepened as the working-class movement in China began to develop in its scale and militancy. As Trotsky put it in September 1926: "The revolutionary struggle in China since 1925 has entered a new phase, which is characterised above all by the active intervention of broad layers of the proletariat... The peasants are unquestionably being drawn into motion to an increasing degree. At the same time, the commercial bourgeoisie, and the elements of the intelligentsia linked with it, are breaking off to the right, assuming a hostile attitude towards strikes, communists and the USSR."

Chen insisted on breaking with the nationalists to form a "bloc without", though his demands were consistently re-

buffed by the Comintern. Despite his doubts, he reluctantly implemented Comintern policy.

In April 1927 the Comintern demanded that CCP militias in Shanghai disarm in the face of Chiang Kai-shek's approaching armies. The KMT put an abrupt end to its alliance with the CCP by massacring thousands of Communists and purging them from all areas under KMT control.

Chen resigned as General Secretary and was scapegoated by the Stalinists for alleged "opportunism" when he opposed the Comintern's new policy of forcing uprisings in the second half of 1927 from a position of extreme weakness. The new leadership of the CCP ignored his opinion.

A Trotskyist opposition soon developed in the CCP. They began to issue underground publications and form independent organisations. In 1929, Chen and his followers were expelled from the CCP and led a separate existence until 1931, when all the oppositionists merged under the banner of the International Communist League.

The Trotskyists were few and struggled to play a major role in the class struggle, though they conducted patient agitation in the factories and raised the democratic slogan for a National Assembly against the KMT's military dictatorship. For this they were denounced by the Stalinists as "agents of Chiang Kai-shek" and at the same time lost many of their best comrades to Chiang Kai-shek's terror. In 1932, Chen and 11 others were arrested and sentenced to heavy prison terms.

According to Pierre Broué, while in prison in 1936, Chen "proposed to call into question the Trotskyist characterisation of the USSR as a degenerated workers' state. He stressed that in the USSR the working class had been driven completely out of the state apparatus, and proposed the new definition, a 'bureaucratic state'."

Though Chen drifted from the Trotskyist section in China upon his release from prison in 1937, Broué insists he should not be "regarded as a renegade who abandoned the ideas of his whole life on the eve of his death."

Rather, "he is the symbol of a generation which carried the Communist International on its shoulders to storm heaven and then was crushed under the load of its degeneration".

their liberal or, in particular, their pacifist opinions.”

Jews, former members of Communist Party organisations and former members of the Reichsbanner (paramilitary wing of the German social-democrats) were particular targets of boycotts, disruption of their lectures, and physical attacks.

The second phase of the campaign began on 26 April: literary works deemed to be “corrosive” were stockpiled in preparation for burning. DS members, sometimes accompanied by the police and the Nazi SA, visited bookshops and libraries to check their stocks.

There were few or no public manifestations of opposition to the activities of the DS, especially from the university authorities. Where objections were raised, they did not necessarily challenge the politics of the DS’s campaign.

Although the lists used to decide what constituted “un-German” books varied from one town to another, they were all based on a list compiled by Wolfgang Hermann, a 29-year-old librarian based in Berlin.

Hermann had first worked as a librarian in Breslau, where he had lectured on the “poisoning” of local libraries by “liberalism and communism”, and had ensured that NSDAP newspapers were stocked in the libraries’ reading rooms. In 1931 he joined the NSDAP.

After the Nazis’ seizure of power he was appointed head of the newly formed “Committee for a New Order in Berlin Municipal and Popular Libraries”. Its role was to take forward the struggle against “cultural Bolshevism” and impose “a ban on the lending of Bolshevik, Marxist and Jewish literature.”

Hermann list of works were grouped under headings, such as “Belletristic Literature”, “Art”, “History” and “Miscellaneous”. Herman had “only” intended that books in his lists should be removed and replaced by “healthier” literature. But once he had passed on his list to the DS, in their hands it became a list of books for ritualistic burning.

In fact, although the DS used Hermann’s list local affiliates could use their own discretion in deciding which books to select. As one speaker put in at the Bonn book-burning of 10 May: “If one book too many is thrown onto the fire tonight, then that is nowhere near as harmful as one book too few... For all that is healthy will rise again of its own accord.”

The DS was backed not only by their academic staff, the police and the SA, but also by the “Newspaper of the German Book Trade” and the “Association of German Librarians”.

By early May the DS campaign had proved so successful, in terms of the number of students that it had been able to mobilise, that the Nazi government gave it its official backing.

The government had initially kept a distance from the campaign. The boycott of Jewish shops which it had organised on 1 April had been a failure. It was anxious not to be seen to be backing another high-profile but unsuccessful campaign.

GOEBBELS

But on 9 April a letter was sent to the DS on behalf of Nazi Propaganda Minister Goebbels:

“The Minister is prepared to make a speech at the (book) burning on 10 May, taking place at midnight on the Opera Square, Unter den Linden (Berlin).”

The same day the DS issued a circular, signed by Kruger and his colleague Hans Karl Leistriz, which provided its local affiliates with a list of slogans to be recited by DS members while throwing the banned books onto the fires. The slogans issued by the DS included:

“Against class struggle and materialism, for one united people and idealism! I put to the flame the writings of Marx and Kautsky.”

“Against decadence and moral decay, for discipline and morality in family and state! I put to the flame the writings of Heinrich Mann, Ernst Glaeser and Erich Kastner.”

“Against intellectual vagrancy and political treason, for dedication to people and state! I put to the flame the writings of Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster”

“Against a soul-corroding over-evaluation of human instincts, for the nobility of the human soul! I put to the flame the writings of Sigmund Freud.”

“Against journalism of a democratic-Jewish character which is alien to the people, for responsible co-operation in the task of national reconstruction! I put to the flame the writ-

Youth are encouraged to burn books

ings of Theodor Wolff and Georg Bernhard.”

“Against literary treason against the soldiers of the World War, for the education of the people in the spirit of militarism! I put to the flame the writings of Erich Maria Remarque.”

“Against insolence and insubordination, for respect and reverence for the immortal German popular spirit! Consume too, flames, the writings of Tucholsky and Ossietzky.”

Heinrich Mann, brother of Thomas Mann, was Jewish, anti-war, and an outspoken critic of fascism and social conformism. Glaeser had been a critic of German society and a Stalinist fellow-traveller but in later years became a Nazi sympathiser.

Kastner’s writings had attacked militarism and social bigotry, but he too was later criticised for remaining in Nazi Germany. Foerster was another outspoken critic of German militarism.

Wolff and Berhard were both Jewish, liberal, and defenders of democratic rights in their journalism. Remarque was the author of the anti-war classic *All Quiet on the Western Front*.

Tucholsky and Ossietzky were the two most prominent socially engaged journalists of the Weimar Republic. Tucholsky had left Germany in 1924 and was repeatedly taken to court in his absence for his writings. He committed suicide in 1935. Ossietzky had been arrested by the Nazis as early as February 1933 and subsequently died of ill-treatment at their hands.)

The following day the DS staged its ritualistic book-burnings in more than 60 towns, with reports of the biggest ones broadcast live by radio. Where they had to be postponed as a result of bad weather, the book-burnings continued to be organised into late May and June.

The works of some of the greatest names of German contemporary literature were reduced to ashes: Thomas Mann, Bertolt Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, Ben Traven, Arnold Zweig, Stefan Zweig, Ernst Toller, Alfred Doblin, Anna Seghers, Johannes Becher...

So too were the writings of selected foreign authors: John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Henri Barbusse, Maxim Gorki, Upton Sinclair, Ilya Ehrenburg, Isak Bebel...

Speaking at the Berlin book-burning Goebbels was ecstatic about the success of the campaign.

“When the national-socialist movement conquered power on 30 January this year,” he announced, “we could not know at that time that Germany could be cleansed so quickly and so radically.” The book-burning, he continued, marked the end of “the age of an exaggerated Jewish intellectualism” and “the breakthrough of the German revolution”.

These were neither the first nor the last book-burnings organised by the Nazis.

In March and April of 1933, when the offices of trade unions, the SPD (German Labour Party) and the Communist Party had been seized by the Nazis, their libraries had been publicly burnt.

“Kristallnacht” — the anti-Jewish pogrom of 1938 — saw the public burning of synagogues’ libraries. And when Ger-

many invaded Austria the same year an “Anschluss”-book-burning was staged in Salzburg.

Following the outbreak of war, libraries were also publicly burnt after the German occupation of France, Poland and parts of the Soviet Union. In Alsace-Lorraine French books were ritualistically burnt as part of an “Entwelschungsaktion” (de-foreignification action).

Many of the authors whose writings were burnt on 10 May had already fled Germany. Others went into exile soon afterwards, although some who made the mistake of fleeing to the Soviet Union were subsequently imprisoned and executed by the Stalinist regime.

Only a few of the writers remained in Germany, either dropping out of literary activity or, in some cases, going over to the side of the Nazis — “literary war criminals” as they were called by one of the exiled authors.

ERNST TOLLER

Some responded defiantly. Ernst Toller, President of the short-lived post-war Bavarian Soviet Republic, had been sentenced to five years in prison. Out of solidarity with his fellow prisoners he had rejected a pardon and insisted on serving the full sentence.

Toller turned up at the international PEN congress held in Dubrovnik (Croatia) two months after the book-burnings. The German delegation — “cleansed” by the NSDAP regime and Nazi-loyal to a man — had walked out of the congress even before Toller had begun his speech:

“I am speaking as an author not against Germany but against all power throughout the world. During the world war I fought on the German side. Only when I recognised that war was a disgrace did I rebel.”

“... What did the German PEN Club do against this act of destruction (the book-burnings)? What has the German PEN Club done against the ousting of the most outstanding German professors and men of letters?”

“What has the German PEN Club done for artists prevented from performing in Germany? What has the German PEN Club done in the cases of well-known painters who today cannot work in German academies?”

“Millions of people in Germany may neither speak nor write freely. I am talking for those millions who, today, have no voice.”

“We are living in an era of nationalistic madness, a madness of race, of hate. Madness rules the time, cruelty the people. Let us not be deceived. The voice of the soul, the voice of humanity, is only noticed by people in power when it serves as a front for their political purposes... Let us conquer the fear that crushes and humbles us. We fight in many ways. But may there be one way where, though we stand on opposite sides, each of us dreams of a utopia in which freedom from barbarism, lies, social injustice and slavery will prevail.”

However many books the Nazis burnt, they could not silence the voices of the “un-German spirit”.

Greek CP makes fake-left turn

By Theodora Polenta

In the run-up to its 19th congress, on 11-13 April, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) pleasantly surprised us by publishing much debate, mainly in its paper *Rizospastis*.

On paper it appeared as a disagreement between the advocates of the “theory of stages” from the KKE’s 15th congress (1996) and the leadership’s new “revolutionary” line of socialism as an immediate demand,

In reality a large chunk of KKE members had understood the duty to form a united front with Syriza aiming at a government of the Left, dialectically linked to working class struggle and organisation. The large losses for KKE in the elections of May and June 2012 opened up discussion. As workers’ struggles erupted and Pasok’s support collapsed, the KKE went from 8.2% in the 2007 elections, and 7.5% in 2009, to 8.5% in May 2012, and 4.5% in June 2012. A significant number of party members attributed the poor electoral results to KKE’s sectarianism.

The two articles that most openly criticised KKE’s sectarianism and refusal to participate in a united front with other left wing organisations were those of Antonis Skylakos (a veteran member of KKE and a KKE MP for years) and Nikos Bougiopoulos (a *Rizospastis* journalist and author of the book *It is Capitalism, Stupid*, who has an appeal far beyond KKE).

Antonis Skylakos stated: “If the Party wanted to rally wider masses, it should encompass and form a united front with all those layers that were affected or destroyed by the monopolies and imperialism, who have experienced state repression in their ‘skin’.”

Bougiopoulos stated: “the party can approach Socialism only as a mirage. The ‘popular alliance’... is an ‘alliance’ only with ourselves”.

“On the ‘non-payment movement’, we said: Do not pay, but first workers’ power. Debt: we said: No to debt, but first workers’ power... Memorandum: we said: It is not the memorandum, but capitalism, the crisis and the fact that we do not have not workers’ power”.

Mentekas, a member of the KKE Central Committee, replied to the dissent: “Some articles by former CC members of KKE and certain *Rizospastis* journalists... rest on lies and vile slanders and exploit distortions hurled against our party by anonymous internet factionalists and our political class opponents... It is obvious that these writers do not care to convince the members of the Party, but with their writings to offer the capitalist class a weapon against the Party... Let the plutocracy and the system, aided by the forces of opportunism, rage. No matter how hard they try, KKE will not be disarmed politically and ideologically. KKE has confidence in the working class and its strengths”.

The congress itself saw almost no opposition. Prominent members of KKE who had openly expressed dissent failed to get elected as delegates.

KKE general secretary, Aleka Pappariga, in her opening speech, claimed that 96.8% of party members had voted in favour of the Central Committee positions and the new program, 97.3% in favour of the KKE constitution, and 98.9% for all three texts!

The harmony was so great that the conference ended a day early. All votes were completed on Saturday night, 13 April, although the congress had been planned to continue to Sunday 14th.

The congress elected a new Central Committee, which elected a new general secretary, Dimitris Koutsoubas. But the departure of Aleka Pappariga after 22 years at the helm of the party did not signify any change in political line. Koutsoubas is considered to be a hard-liner and an advocate of the party’s “purity”.

The KKE proposes a “Popular Alliance”, but to be made up from KKE, PAME (KKE’s trade-union front), PASEVE (KKE’s front for craft workers, merchants, small shopkeepers etc.), PASSY (KKE’s front for peasants and small farmers), MAS (KKE’s youth front in university students and colleges), and OGE (KKE’s women’s front). “The Popular Alliance is in agreement with the position proposed by the Communist Party for the rallying of all anti-monopoly, anti-capitalist forces within society, striving for workers’ power — a rallying expressing and serving the interests of the working class

KKE members rally

and its social allies. The Popular Alliance today [is] determined via the action of PAME, PASEVE, PASSY, MAS, OGE. The Popular Alliance is not a coalition of political parties”.

Even on the trade-union or community level, KKE excludes any possibility of a formation of a united front with forces that are outside its orbit. As for the united front on a political level, that is postponed until future parties arise which “express the position of petty-bourgeois strata” but nevertheless defer to the KKE.

On paper, the theses of the 19th congress were a shift to the left, a clean break from the “theory of stages” and the supposedly anti-imperialist duties of the working class, counterposed to and prioritised above the anti-capitalist socialist struggle.

The KKE abandoned previous strategies which gave priority to “overcoming Greek capitalism’s feudal delays”, or to the achievement of national independence, democracy and development of heavy industry in Greece, as a first stage before socialism.

The shift should create the basis for a serious discussion of the great defeats of the popular movements and the left in 1944-45, and of the opportunistic choices of KKE’s party leadership in the 1960s, 70s and 80s, which culminated in 1990 with participation in an (emergency) coalition government led by ND (Greek equivalent of the Tory party).

However, when the Central Committee of the KKE sets transition to socialism as a direct aim, it proposes no “indications and road plans” on how to achieve the aim. All that was spelled out in the theses was to avoid untimely struggles (such as the slogan of the government of the Left) and to wait until “the objective conditions of the socialist revolution come onto the working class’s daily agenda.”

STAGES

The KKE’s rejection of the theory of stages is not a shift towards Trotskyism, the theory of permanent revolution, and the program of transitional demands, but a response to KKE’s tactical needs and its anxiety to survive.

The KKE’s leadership self-preservation instincts were triggered by the pressure from its rank and file for a united front with Syriza. Instead of the tactics to be determined by the strategic aim, the strategic aim has been constructed and “fabricated” in order to justify the pre-decided tactics.

After the October Revolution, in the years up to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern in 1922 and before Stalinism blighted the movement, the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern devoted attention to the question of how to prepare and gather the forces of revolution under non-revolutionary conditions.

They developed two precious concepts: United Front and Transitional Program. KKE rejects them both, replacing them with caricatures.

In the place of the United Front, the Central Committee of the KKE counterposes its “Popular Alliance” between KKE and KKE fronts.

Rather than adopting the method of the Transitional Programme, KKE denounces as “reformism” every struggle, movement or point of view that does not pose in a direct way, the question of ownership of the means of production! We wait to learn of any strikes or struggles led by KKE and PAME which postulated the ownership of the means of pro-

duction as an immediate demand.

In the whole of the theses, KKE says nothing on how to achieve the transition from the current level of consciousness and struggles of the workers to the seizure of power by the working class. And so the reference to the socialist revolution becomes absolutely harmless to the system, a promise of a religious type.

If the KKE were really a revolutionary and communist party, it would adopt the tactic of “united front” with Syriza. The KKE should have responded positively to Syriza’s call for electoral cooperation after the May elections in preparation of the elections of June.

Then workers would have listened more carefully to KKE’s often-justified criticism of Syriza’s reformist programme. Even if cooperation with Syriza had turned out to be impossible, KKE could have come out publicly to say: “because Syriza refuses to adopt a socialist program of transitional demands-as the only response to the crisis, we refuse to form a government with Syriza, but we will grant Syriza a vote of tolerance, we will support every positive measure of the Government of Syriza, but we will vote against any anti-working class measure”. That would be more like the united front tactics adopted by the Bolsheviks and the Comintern in its the early years.

In the 19th Congress theses there is not one word about the revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt and the rest of the Arab world. Nothing about the movements of “indignant citizens” inspired by those revolutions in Spain, Portugal, Greece, Israel, the USA and Russia.

And in Greece itself it says: “With the exception of the portion of the labor movement who rallied in PAME, the self-employed in the PASEVE and the peasants in PASSY, the working class and popular masses were significantly unprepared to the new offensive of capitalism...”

“The labour movement was not prepared to fight back... Some manoeuvres were made by the compromised trade union bureaucracy, who were dragged into successive strikes, although not substantially supporting them...”

Yet in the last two and a half years the working class movement in Greece has organised over 20 general strikes, three of which were 48-hour general strikes within 8 months. In the summer of 2011 over two million people took part in the “indignant citizens” demonstrations and Papandreou was driven to the brink of resignation.

The wave of strikes and occupations of public buildings in October 2011 had as its climax the 19 October general strike and a protest with over half a million protesters in Syntagma Square. Anti-government demonstrations in the 28 October “national celebrations” led to the resignation of Papandreou and the formation of the three party coalition government led by the banker Papademos.

We have also seen the mushrooming of non payment movements (tolls, transportation and most significantly regressive property tax), the “potatoes” movement and other movements of direct basic food product distribution by small farmers which bypass the middlemen and provide relief to the people’s hunger...

But the KKE Central Committee concludes: “the labor movement was not prepared to counterattack the new circumstances. Its struggle did not measure up to the size of the attack... The so-called indignant citizens movement and occupation of the squares was... dominated by reactionary slogans, slogans of micro-bourgeois democracy, with the aim of hitting the class-orientated combative working-class movement”.

If the Left really wants to be a party of struggle that “dares to fight and dares to win”, it must reply with great seriousness to the basic question posed by working-class people and by the circumstances: what would itself do, if in power, to counteract the financial ruin and social disintegration, not in the distant future ideal socialist conditions, but here and now.

The answer, the transitional program of the Left, should not be understood as a collection of demands and development projects, but as a roadmap, with key stations, prioritizing objectives, description of forms, which will establish a convincing left “narrative” for the transition from the social jungle of today to the socialist society tomorrow.

The window of historic opportunity opened for the left by the big capitalist crisis is still open.

Workers' centres nourish new culture

By Ed Maltby

In mid-April 2013, I visited Istanbul to meet a group of socialist activists involved in building a workers' support group, Uluslararası İşçi Dayanışması Demeği (Association of International Workers' Solidarity, UID DER). My visit coincided with feverish campaigns to prepare for May Day celebrations.

UID DER runs six community centres in rented-out shopfronts in different working-class neighbourhoods of Istanbul and Ankara; they want to open offices in other places.

On the morning of my arrival we went to see the office in Sarigazi, a diverse neighbourhood, where Turks and Alawites live together. The district has a lively political life: the walls are covered with posters and graffiti from an array of different socialist tendencies.

As we arrive at the centre workers of all ages are preparing for an afternoon May Day event. Newly-made wall displays about the history of May Day have been tacked up.

Half a dozen activists clear a space among the ruckus and assemble a trestle table and chairs: one organiser, Devrim, explains that the comrades had planned to set a few minutes aside to talk to me. The combination of a relaxed atmosphere, apparent chaos and a deceptively high degree of co-ordination, discipline and precision is a trademark of UID DER.

Devrim explains the centre's work. Contacts of UID DER are invited to get involved — those who want to support the work of the association are asked to join one of the work groups which carry out all the functions of the local branch.

Contact with workers is forged through workplace interventions. The centre has split Sarigazi up into two areas and has assigned a working group to each, to monitor struggles and the work of UID DER in factories in either area. The aim is to set up a working group for each large workplace.

Factories are visited and the UID DER bulletin, *İşçi Dayanışması* (Workers' Solidarity), is distributed. The work groups also visit workers' homes to hold small meetings and discuss problems of daily life, politics and local struggles.

Devrim outlines other activities: "We have a football group, a library group and a press group.

"Our football group tries to promote collectivism in sport instead of individualistic bourgeois football culture. We organise matches between teams from the local factories. Before every game we make speeches, to underline that our game isn't just about football, but friendship, solidarity, unity and helping each other.

"Our press group reports for the national bulletin from our local factories, on problems in daily life. We do interviews with workers about different issues and we encourage our readers to write in to our letters page.

"The press group also organises training for workers in how to write.

"The library group promotes reading books among workers. We've amassed the best collection we can. We mainly use novels about working-class life, we read them and discuss them in groups.

"We also have videos, films and documentaries which we show in workers' homes.

Adalet, sitting next to Devrim and rocking a pram back and forth as she speaks, explains how she brought workers in her factory into contact with UID DER: "I work in a car components factory with about 1,000 workers. They announced plans to close our plant down, saying that labour costs in Turkey were twice as high as labour costs in Romania, and they were moving production there.

"We tried to organise a workers' committee to oppose the closure. But the recognised union in our plant, *Türk Metal*, is run by sympathisers of the fascist Grey Wolves. They collude with management to get you sacked if you're seen as a militant. We had to go to UID DER to ask for advice.

"We put forward demands for a severance bonus equivalent to two years' salary on top of the usual redundancy deal. The company told us it was illegal and unprecedented — but our friends at UID DER helped us do research to find a precedent and to find legal advice.

"We made links with other employees of the same company in Romania and the Czech Republic.

"They've now backtracked and offered us a severance bonus of to eight months' wages, but we're not accepting it.

"Workers have got confidence in UID DER because the advice we gave has been proved right in the struggle."

Alaraiye, a shop steward in a school, picks up where Adalet leaves off: "We are observing the difficult situation for trade unions and looking at ways of organising workers in spite of it. We have created a pole of attraction for workers — our centre is somewhere where they want to come, to discuss problems in daily life."

The comrades are keen to emphasise how, as much as formal political positions, the tone, feel and style of their work is what is unique about UID DER's approach. This means a tremendous attention to detail and a high level of organisation to make sure that as well as offering correct advice, the tone and pace of UID DER's work is calculated to maximise the participation and a feeling of closeness and familiarity with those who join the activities.

LAUNCH

UID DER was launched in June 2006, at a 1,000 strong public meeting to commemorate the famous workers' uprising of 15-16 June 1970.

But the work of building up the association had been going on for ten years before then.

After the 1980 military-fascist coup Turkish socialists were scattered and demoralised. 650,000 people were arrested, most were tortured, and hundreds died. When the regime thawed in the mid-1990s, a group of socialist activists started re-examining their methods of work and political ideas. They harshly criticised their old, Stalinist politics, and chose a course of action — setting up workers' self-education groups.

The first group was set up in about 1997. As Turkey experienced a long upswing of development the tamed and broken trade unions stagnated under the influence of a doctrine of social partnership called "Modern Unionism". But there was an upsurge of wildcat strikes. These socialists, learning from a small group of cadres from the communist movement of the 1980s, made contact with wildcat-striking workers.

"We proposed to the more advanced workers, the organisers of the strikes, that leading workers from the different disputes meet up and exchange experiences. We held informal meetings to talk through what was happening in the different struggles and draw lessons from them. We wanted our self-education groups, first and foremost, to be a source of good advice for workers in struggle. We described our work under the slogan, 'Education for organisation'. We proposed that the meetings take place every week.

"Another term that we used then was 'sharing life'. Sharing the lives of the workers you are organising with is vital to creating a real link. When you share in workers' problems and celebrations, that is when you know you are beginning to make an organisation which is really rooted in the workers' movement. When advanced workers invite you to their houses, that is a crucial step forward in making a relationship with them and developing their confidence in your whole organisation. We were invited to weddings and funerals, we helped organise childcare.

"Most of this work was done without any printed materials. Partially that was a security concern. And the direct human contact was more important than literature distribution at that stage.

"We also organised concrete solidarity work. For example,

many striking workers had little or no health insurance, so we got a van, and had sympathetic doctors and nurses come and do free health check-ups.

"I think the 'style' and the approach that we have employed throughout is the same — but as the self-education groups grew, we expanded the remit of the education we carried out."

Devrim signals that the time set aside for discussion is running out and we move on, driving out of town to another office in Gebze, where the May day meeting will shortly start.

The Gebze office is on a busy street, in an office space above a shop, with more rooms than the Sarigazi office. Trestle tables have been set out in the hall and piled high with salads and cakes. A crowd of mostly young men is filing in — most of them workers at factories in the nearby Organised Industrial Zone. I later learn that about half the crowd is Kurdish. Many of the organising cadres leading the event are women: a conscious effort is being made to promote women leaders.

The stage is set up with red UID DER posters on the back wall, and a projection screen, across which are sailing images of past May Day demonstrations. A five-piece acoustic string band, with guitars and bağlamas, sits at the back, all in red polo shirts, and two compères, in red shirts and caps with microphone headpieces, stand on the stage. All are members of UID DER.

The compère explains that May Day is a unifying event for workers all over the world. A film is projected on the wall behind her, with footage of demonstrations around the world that took place since last May Day, from China and Bulgaria to the UK and Portugal.

REFORMS

UID DER has run a campaign in the run-up to May Day for the last few years: last year's was a petition campaign against projected government reforms to take away the right to redundancy money. The campaign got around 100,000 signatures and featured on TV and radio.

This year, the campaign will be about workplace accidents. The cases of particular workers, such as a horribly-burned Azerbaijani sailor, are picked out to highlight the inhumanity of the situation with workplace safety. Turkey has the highest number of workplace accidents in Europe and the third highest in the world. As well as poor industrial practices, low wages are to blame, which oblige workers to take overtime work: twelve-hour days are the norm in much of industry.

The meeting is concluded with speeches about the Kurdish question, songs and poems, and closing remarks about the global capitalist crisis, for which images of starving children are projected alongside pictures of astronauts.

I go to eat some of the food with a group of young workers, who tell me about their union organising efforts.

The right to form unions in Turkey exists only on paper — there is a very high threshold of density that workers have to achieve in order to get recognition, and most bosses will sack workers if they are seen to be recruiting to a union. Moreover, unions themselves are complacent and slow-moving.

The 1980 coup regime permitted the tame, mainstream federation *Türk-İş* to organise and in some workplaces union membership was encouraged or required by the employer.

The more radical union, DISK (Turkish Confederation of Revolutionary Unions) broke from Türk-İş in 1967.

DISK survived a series of confrontations with alarmed Turkish bourgeoisie and incubated a broad layer of revolutionary-minded socialist workplace militants. In 1970, the Türk-Metal union was set up by the government, with CIA advice, to compete with DISK. The symbol of this union was the fascist Grey Wolf, and its leaders were members of the fascist MHP party. Türk-Metal got nowhere with workers until the coup of 1980, when the founder of DISK, Kemal Türkler, was killed in his home by MHP militants and the military regime dissolved the union. All of its assets — and its membership — were transferred to Türk-Metal.

DISK re-emerged with the opening-up of the regime in 1992 but it wasn't the same. The revolutionary workplace activists had disappeared. The leadership of the union, once aligned with the now-defunct Turkish Workers' Party (a multi-tendency leftwing labour party), was now dominated by the left-ish wing of the Kemalist CHP, or Republican People's Party. It has assimilated the doctrine of social-partnership to a lesser extent than Türk-İş or the openly fascist union, but it is a sad, broken shadow of its pre-1980 self.

"So by and large the unions never organise. Joining a union is a declaration of war, an invitation for the boss to attack", the comrade continues. "Before you can have a union, you need to build up a strong, fighting organisation in your plant. That's where UID-DER comes in to help."

A worker called Umut explains: he works in a local metal plant, where sudden and inhumane changes to the shift pattern (two night shifts followed by two day shifts) roused workers to organise. The workers formed a secret committee with representatives across two plants. They co-opted management's hand-picked 'labour representative' onto the committee. "That way, we could get to speak to him before management did, and he felt confident in disobeying management instructions when they told him to shut down protests or spread their line."

The workers' committee began organising lunchtime protests. The committee was, of necessity, a secret to workers. "Committee members would go to their workmates and tell them what time the next protest would be; some of their number knew more than others — but they didn't know about the committee. Management also knew something was up, but they couldn't see who was organising it or how!"

Throughout the dispute, active workers had been coming to the UID DER office at all hours to sit and discuss the dispute collectively.

PRESS

The next day, we head over to the İşçi Dayanışması editorial offices, which is also the headquarters of the İşçi Tiyatrosu (Workers' Theatre) company.

The walls are decorated with pictures of Brecht, Hikmet, and past workers' theatre performances.

The editorial team break off work to explain the bulletin to me. The editor, a retired leatherworker, explains how it is the collective work of all the different UID DER branches. "We have a network of voluntary worker-reporters who report, follow the press, write interviews, and tell us about struggles and workplace accidents.

"The frontpage article is always about a general political issue. We want to create a rounded world view for workers.

"On page three there is normally a piece about trade union politics... We have short snippet-reports of goings on in industry around Turkey, and internationally too — we want to use the international news to demonstrate to workers that we are part of a global class."

"We also have three pages of letters — and our friends and reporters encourage workers to write full articles about issues that are on their minds — so for example, here is a piece one worker wrote in about widespread anti-depressant use"

Another editor, with big hair and leather elbow patches, speaks about the organisation of the bulletin: "We teach activists about how to be reporters. The training is not only about how to report an event technically — but also stylistically, in a way which is plainspoken and appealing.

"Reporting is not just about choice of words but also about attitude — we must avoid an arrogant tone and always aim to encourage.

"Constantly educating our activists in how to approach and win workers in an open-minded way is very important. For example, UID DER participates in an anti-NATO front. Another participating organisation is a group of anti-capitalist Muslims, who are religious, but quite genuine. Other petit-bourgeois left groups are reluctant to organise with

them, regarding them as a lost cause. But we turn out for joint actions with them, and succeed in having a positive effect.

"The small acts of resistance that our bulletin helps engender can intimidate bosses — sometimes into giving concessions and pay increases to stave off further unrest. Our readers call these 'UID DER bonuses'."

The bulletin is used to make contacts with trade union organisations.

Esra tells me about the work of the women's committee, which has recently made a collection of written and video-recorded interviews with working-class women.

The women's committee has chosen the following slogans: "A crèche in every workplace", "No to harassment and violence", "Equal pay for equal work" and "Longer maternity leave". Recorded interviews underscore the importance of these demands, as women describe the conditions of life for working-class women: one makes a heartfelt speech about how her children don't recognise her because of the lack of childcare in the workplace and the punishing shift rotas.

Bosses in Turkey are not afraid to lean on backward, traditional attitudes on gender to break strikes. Esra tells me of how they will send agents from house to house during strike meetings, to intimidate women and rouse them against their husbands' union activities. "Getting wives and family members organised in support of mostly-male disputes is crucial to their success."

MARCH TOGETHER

Esra says, "we are not 'feminists' — we believe that women need their own organisation, but as part of the broader class struggle, where men and women march together".

In Workers' Liberty we would counter that what is needed is a synthesis of socialist and feminist ideas — what we call socialist-feminism — and while I didn't discuss the issue for long with the comrades, my feeling is that our differences are much smaller than a disagreement over the use of the word "feminist" might suggest.

Later we visit the UID DER audio-visual suite, where recording and graphic design hardware and software is used to put together videos and recordings of UID DER events.

The video technician calls up the films they have mixed together to project at public meetings. He shows the dubbed and edited footage of the 1995 Liverpool Dock Strike, which was used in an educational film for the strikers at the Mersin docks, where a struggle has just been won against casualisation. The UID DER played a prominent role in the strike and the trade union opposed the more militant tactics which UID DER helped foster, such as a 53-hour crane occupation.

"The trade union branch tried to counsel individual vanguard workers, to tell them to go slow, to take a softer line with the management, to forget about reinstatements and concentrate on signing a collective contract. It was on our proposal that the committee was set up, not the union's."

In a film of one of UID DER's meetings with the Mersin dockers a room full of young men wearing red clap along to the music while a slide-show plays. The unofficial workers' committee chair gets up to say "The port belongs to us because we are united. We are united as workers — whatever other identities we might have come second: Kurd, Alawite, Turk — we are all workers first. Capital knows no nation, race, colour, gender, and neither should our solidarity."

The following evening, we go to the local office in the working-class suburb of Tuzla. A working group of about 20 young activists is preparing placards for the UID DER contingent at the coming May Day rally.

The working group breaks off its preparations to sit down and speak to the English visitor. I ask how people decided to join UID DER and get more involved.

Bariş says, "I first came to know UID DER through a wildcat strike demanding union recognition. UID DER came and visited us. Back then, in 2010, we knew nothing about how to conduct the struggle. Then we started to see who our real friends were. UID DER was always there for us."

I ask: didn't he find UID DER strange?

"Yes, with their aprons and caps, I found them... very striking", he says diplomatically, and others laugh. "What was really strange was the word 'international'. We're here, in Turkey, not anywhere else. They explained that our class and our fight are international."

Meryem speaks up: "The first thing which is important about UID DER is its discipline and humane relations. People value each other and teach you to value yourself. UID DER has clear class politics and they make you think about your place in class society, how you can be useful for the

working class. They educate you properly. I see people my age sitting around doing nothing all day, but I feel like I'm realising my potential here."

Safiye speaks: "Some of our friends have had to wage a hard struggle with their families to get involved. My family hated it. Some of us have been beaten — I was beaten. But I stuck it out, so they had to put up with me coming here. You walk through that door and suddenly gender relations are equal for a change. You see men doing the washing and cooking. This is Turkey. To see something like that made me want to make a commitment."

Ceyda from the women's committee: "I work in a metal factory with more than 300 people who've mostly come from the Black Sea region. They're very conservative people. They're religious women who wear headscarves and vote fascist. In our work at the factory, we shared daily life with them. I am known as an irreligious woman, but I helped them prepare their Iftar meal at Ramadan, which surprised them, and shook some of their prejudices.

"So when I started inviting some of them to visit this centre, they were hesitant at first but they came to see that we are their real friends, supporting them in their difficulties. When some were sacked, we supported their struggle for re-instatement, offered legal support. In the end they won.

"Then I was fired for my part in the campaign — and I started doing a picket, on my own, outside the factory. These Black Sea women workers would come and bring me food, and join my protest, on their breaks. They were hard nationalists. They generally viewed any leftwing activity as 'terrorism'. And when the women came to help me, other backward workers started calling them 'terrorists' too, which taught them a lesson."

I think that what the comrades in UID DER have created is inspiring, and unique in my experience of the anti-Stalinist socialist left in Europe and North Africa. It is like a resurrection on a small scale of some of the best aspects of the west European Marxist movement of the early 20th century. That movement, which now lies submerged under a sea of failure and Stalinist and capitalist distortion, created a network of social, cultural, artistic and sporting organisations which bound together and carried the ideas of the mass socialist workers' movement — Clarion cycling clubs, workers' athletic societies, colliery bands, women's newspapers, the Labour Colleges movement. The patient, well-planned, purposeful work of UID DER shows the way that genuine Marxists might begin to rebuild this city in the 21st Century. It is an example, I think, of something we talk about in terms of Gramsci's ideas — activities to be undertaken by Marxists in "the quiet times". And let's remember that Turkey is not a backward country, Istanbul least of all. UID DER is not successful because Turkish workers are short of alternative forms of cheap entertainment!

The social and cultural work of UID DER is not, however, undertaken as an alternative to the class struggle, in the way that some demoralised activists or certain sorts of anarchist in the West pose semi-philanthropic food distribution, individual artistic endeavour or cultivation of community gardens and so on as superior avenues of activity to direct class struggle. UID DER's activities are organised around a single goal — coalescing, educating and expanding a socialist proletarian leadership, and rooting it in a broader milieu of conscious workers.

I don't think that there is a simple and direct way of summarising and applying the lessons of UID DER in Britain. But there are certain slogans and approaches that we might usefully take up and consider. The first and most obvious is the necessity of creating a framework which offers a variety of low-intensity, easily-accessible political activities for contacts and sympathisers which falls short of the relatively high requirements of AWL membership.

Another is the value of creating a social and cultural milieu around advanced workers and communists, and which serves as another means of tying together advanced workers and communists. The various slogans which socialists in UID DER use to describe their "style" — "sharing life" and "any advance which is not prepared will be lost" — are important and valuable, although they need to be interpreted to fit British realities and the culture and nature of the British labour movement.

I think above all, the concern for "style" is the thing which we should take away from the UID DER method — and we should look at the serious, meticulous, open and humane culture that the comrades are working to develop, and measure ourselves against those criteria.

Teachers plan strikes against bullying

By Ollie Moore

Teachers at Bishop Challoner school in East London are balloting for strikes against management bullying.

Union activists say that the atmosphere in the workplace has become so bad that many of the school's most experienced and longest-serving teachers are considering leaving.

Since the appointment of a new head three years ago, and subsequent management restructure which replaced the old senior management with new managers loyal to the head, and with no ties to the staff, workload and stress has steadily increased.

Members of staff spoke to *Solidarity* and told us about a litany of smaller and larger scale intimidations and attacks from the

management, including a change to absence procedure that triggered a back-to-work meeting with the head after just one day's absence. All out-of-school activities were stopped for a year, locks were changed on the lifts (demonstrating management's lack of trust in the teachers), and the counselling service for students was wound up. Most recently, audio capture has been installed on hallway

CCTV cameras.

A strong campaign by the National Union of Teachers group in the school stopped the head's plan to hold a "mock Ofsted" inspection in autumn 2012. Union members voted to strike if any mock inspection took place and the head eventually backed down. As a consequence, prominent NUT reps have been victimised.

STRIKE

In December 2012, several union meetings voted overwhelmingly for strike action in informal votes, and an indicative ballot of NUT members returned a 90% majority for strikes on a turnout of over 66%.

The NUT has now sanctioned a formal ballot for discontinuous (i.e. extendable) strike action. The ballot began on Wednesday 8 May and runs until 23 May, with a strike due to begin in the first week of June if the expected majority is returned. The demands of the strike will focus on changing the culture in the workplace as well as winning justice for victimised reps.

One school worker told *Solidarity*: "We want our school to be a good place to work where the children and staff are properly treated; that's what Bishop Challoner teachers are fighting for."

How Gove's scheme will work

By Jonny West

The Department for Education has issued guidance to schools on how to implement the planned performance-related-pay regime from September 2013.

Automatic pay increases will be replaced with discretionary rewards based on teachers' annual appraisals. The national pay scale will be retained only as a point of reference. The new system will also abolish teachers' right to retain the same pay level when starting a job in a new school. The guidelines also say the opinions of pupils and parents can be taken into account when appraising teachers' performance, as well as

participation in after-school activities and whether a teacher works longer hours.

Some Academies, which already have the right to set their own pay scales, already operate a form of performance-related-pay. The Capital City Academy in Brent, northwest London, pays up to £1,400 a year to teachers who take part in three or more hours of extracurricular activity each week.

In a letter to the School Teachers Review Body, Education Secretary Michael Gove has indi-

cated he plans further attacks on terms and conditions as well as pay. The 1,265-hour annual limit on directed hours, limits on covering for absence, and teachers' guarantee of at least 10% preparation, planning, and assessment time could all be under threat.

Members of the NUT and NASUWT teaching unions in the north west region will strike on 27 June against the performance-related-pay regime.

Activists in LANAC, a rank-and-file network with NUT, are pushing for the strike to be expanded and escalated as soon as possible.

• LANAC — nutlan.org.uk

Brighton council workers fight Green cuts

By Ollie Moore

Brighton Council's ruling Green Party group has blocked with the Tories to attack workers' pay.

Their "final offer" to unions on 29 April would see some of the lowest-paid staff lose £95 per week.

The offer comes after months of negotiations, following a decision by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee in January to implement a "modernised pay and conditions package" for staff. Labour councillors voted against the decision.

On Tuesday 7 May, the council emailed workers threatening mass dismissal and re-engagement if they did not accept the new terms.

The GMB union is preparing for industrial action against the cuts.

It has also organised a public petition, which will be presented to the Council. To sign the petition, visit bit.ly/gmbbrighton

Local government unions are preparing to recommend acceptance of a 1% pay offer. Unison voted by a majority of one to recommend the deal as "the best achievable". Activists are organising to overturn the recommendation and fight for rejection.

Fourth Post Office strike

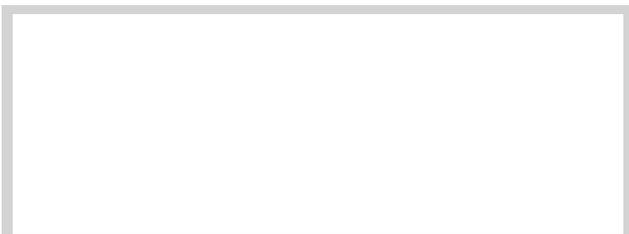
By Darren Bedford

Crown Post Office workers struck for a fourth time on Tuesday 7 May as their dispute over 800 job losses and an ongoing pay freeze continued.

The Communication Workers Union wants a pay increase of 3.5% in year one followed by a further

increase of 3.25%. The union also wants to prevent the closure of 75 Crown Post Offices.

Accepting the offer would cost the Post Office £5 million; it was recently forced into an embarrassing climb-down when it had it admit an internal circular claiming the CWU's claim would cost £12 million was incorrect.



DWP workers in Sheffield struck on Tuesday 7 May to demand reinstatement for sacked Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) rep Lee Rock. For the background to the dispute, see bit.ly/reinstatlee

Northern Rail: Sack the agencies, not the workers!

By Stewart Ward

Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT) members working for Northern Rail have begun balloting for strikes in a dispute against casualisation.

Northern Rail bosses have increased their use of agency and sub-contracted labour for core railway work, which the union argues should be carried out by properly-trained staff. RMT argues that Northern Rail's use of the Trainpeople and G4S agencies breaches workplace agreements.

RMT general secretary Bob Crow said: "There is a cynical drive to use casual, agency staff to undermine job security, pay, and working conditions on Northern Rail and our members are furious that not only have the company refused to stop this practice but they are driving it forwards."

"RMT has made it crystal clear that casualisation and a breach of our agreements are an outright attack on all of us and will not be accepted in any way, shape or form. This union will not allow Northern management to

carry on with these practices which are divisive, exploitative and solely about maximising profits."

It is vital that the strike is fought on the basis of securing in-house employment and proper training for agency staff, rather than simply booting them off the job. A recent and ongoing dispute involving Trainpeople staff on London Underground is instructive; when 33 Bakerloo Line workers employed by Trainpeople were sacked when London Underground cancelled the agency's contract, LUL bosses were able to point to a union-negotiated policy that called on them to get rid of the agency at the earliest possible opportunity, but did not explicitly commit them to taking the agency workers (some of whom had been in the job for five years) into direct employment. The "Justice for the 33" campaign's slogan has been "sack the agency, not the workers". The RMT must fight the Northern Rail dispute under the same banner.

The strike ballot closes on Monday 20 May.

Picture from Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUK). The placard reads "Birkbeck cleaners are here".

Celebrating May Day

Cleaners from several University of London colleges held a lively rally on May Day that visited SOAS, Birkbeck, and the university's flagship Senate House building to hear testimonies from cleaner militants about ongoing struggles.

They included activists from Unison and the Independent Workers' union of Great Britain (IWGB, formally Industrial Workers of Great Britain).

A cleaner from the University of London IWGB branch involved in the 3 Cosas campaign also spoke at the May Day party organised by trade union campaign website LabourStart on Saturday 4 May.

• [facebook.com/3coca](https://www.facebook.com/3coca)
• twitter.com/3cosascampaign
• labourstart.org.uk

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Bangladesh unrest grows as death toll rises

By Ruben Lomas

The death toll from the Rana Plaza factory collapse has now passed 700. It is one of the worst industrial disasters in recent history, and the worst ever in Bangladesh.

A government building inspector has confirmed that the building, which housed five factories, was built with inadequate, weak materials that could

not withstand vibrations caused by electricity generators on the top floor. The building's architect has said it was intended to house residential or light commercial properties rather than heavy industry.

Primark, one of the western suppliers which sourced textiles from the factory, has agreed to compensate the victims' families. Mango, Matalan, and Bonmarche, which also had

links with factories there, are yet to do so. None of the companies have so far signed up to the Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreement.

Social unrest has increased in the aftermath of the tragedy, with garment workers striking and demonstrating in response, including on May Day (see picture). There have also been deaths following mass Islamist demonstrations in

Dhaka. Islamists are demanding the passing of an anti-blasphemy law and have called for the execution of atheists.

Workers must organise to prevent their struggles being confiscated either by Islamists or by the right-wing bourgeois opposition.

- NGWF appeal — bit.ly/ngwfpetition
- IndustriALL appeal — bit.ly/savar-ls

Students fight ULU closure

On Friday 3 May, the University of London bosses voted to shut down its students' union from summer 2014.

The University of London Union based in Malet Street, Euston, represents more than 120,000 students, and is the only London-wide representation that students have. The union has been at the centre of the student movement for many years, and is in the process of establishing a London-wide tenants' union. It has also recently expanded its democracy, establishing a full-time Women's Officer post.

The building and union are a base for clubs and societies, political and cultural meetings, sports and entertainments.

Under the plans, ULU

would be stripped of its building, services and resources, and its representational wing would be farmed out to an as yet undefined and unresourced future.

ULU's officers are now planning to set up a London-wide student assembly to fight the decision as part of a broader plan to create a pan-London Union.

- Demonstrate to save ULU: lobby the University board — Wednesday 22 May, assembling 2pm at ULU. More: bit.ly/uludemo

"This decision is totally illegitimate: no student sat on the review panel, no student got a vote on the decision, and student responses have been ignored or brushed aside throughout. It's not that we won't go down without a fight. We simply won't go down."
— **Michael Chessum, ULU president**

Protest at Primark!

AWL members in London and Sheffield organised protests outside Primark on Saturday 4 May.

We petitioned in support of the National Garment Workers Federation and demanding that Primark force their suppliers to recognise independent unions.

Further protests are planned for Saturday 11 May.

Ideas for Freedom 2013:

Marxist ideas to turn the tide

A weekend of socialist debate and discussion

Friday 21-Sunday 23 June, University of London Union

Highlights include: Workers' control, workers' government, expropriate the banks: Marxist ideas to turn the tide • Turkish

socialists speak about building the rank-and-file UID-DER network in the Turkish labour movement • Martin Thomas and Scott Lash discuss "what's happened to the working class?" • Camila Bassi looks at "sexual violence: the global picture" • Victimised Australian trade unionist Bob Carnegie speaks via Skype • Sessions on the key ideas of the Fourth Congress of the Comintern • A radical walking tour of London's East End with David Rosenberg to open the event on Thursday 20 June • Antonio Gramsci: a Marxist for difficult times • Learn revolutionary history — sessions on: the Paris Commune, 1871; Chinese workers' revolution, 1926-7; South African workers against apartheid; Solidarnosc 1980-81 • Fighting sexism in the labour movement • Paul Hampton discusses the legacy of Chavismo • A film showing and discussion on *The Spirit of '45* • and much more...

For more info, and to book tickets, see workersliberty.org/ideas

Book before 1 June for cheaper tickets — £30 waged, £18 low-waged, £8 unwaged for the weekend. Ticket price includes food.