



Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 356 11 March 2015 30p/80p

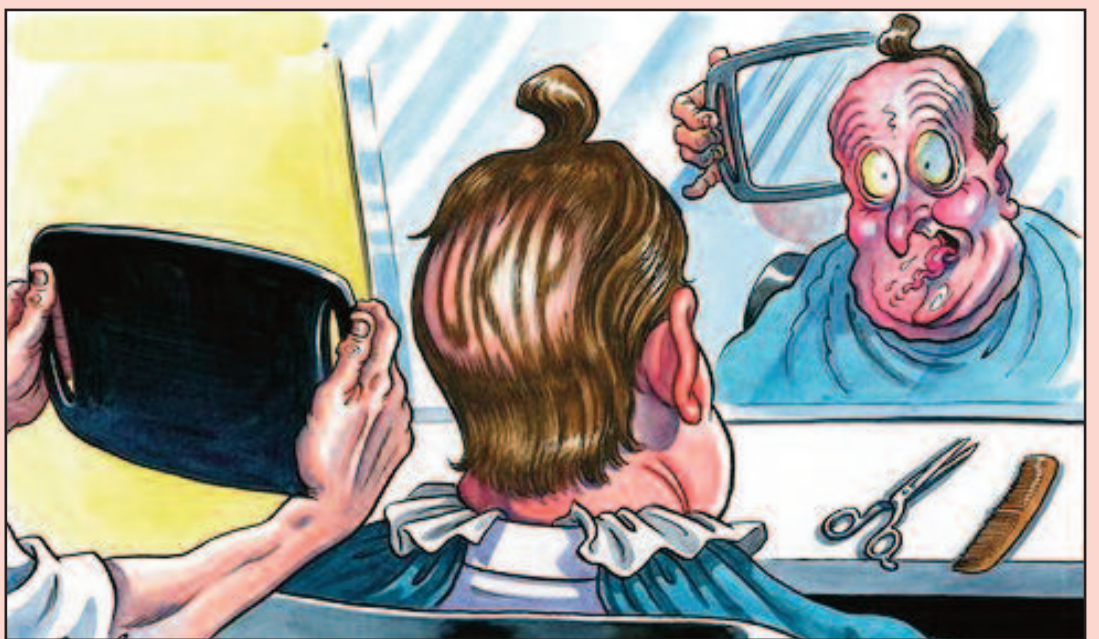
www.workersliberty.org

STOP TORIES AND UKIP

A socialist voice in Labour's campaign

- **Confiscate the banks**

- **Tax the rich**



- **Make unions fight** See page 5

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

- Trial sub, 6 issues £5 ☐
- 22 issues (six months). £18 waged ☐
£9 unwaged ☐
- 44 issues (year). £35 waged ☐
£17 unwaged ☐
- European rate: 28 euros (22 issues) ☐
or 50 euros (44 issues) ☐

Tick as appropriate above and send your money to:
20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG
Cheques (£) to "AWL".

Or make £ and euro payments at workersliberty.org/sub.

Name

Address

I enclose £



Class interest, not patriotic interest!

By Ann Field

On Saturday 6 March a special conference of the Scottish Labour Party (SLP) voted by 69% to 31% for a constitutional amendment declaring the SLP to be a party which "works for the patriotic interest of the people of Scotland."

The bulk of the opposing votes came from Unite and Unison, plus a scattering of local parties. According to unconfirmed reports, the GMB voted for the amendment, and the CWU and ASLEF abstained.

Winning a third of the conference to a vote against the amendment was no small achievement.

Local parties and affiliated organisations had been subject to the emotional blackmail of the need to be seen backing the SLP leadership in the run-up to the general election.

Eight of the nine speakers called from the floor to speak on the proposed amendment spoke in favour of it.

To create the right "atmosphere" at the conference, a thousand people were in attendance, but only a small minority were actually voting delegates.

The constitutional amendment also contained all manner of references to "the Scottish people" and things Scottish and had been presented by the leadership as the way to undercut support for the SNP.

Anyone on the left — apart from those who have pitched their tent in the pro-independence camp — will share that aim of defeating



Jim Murphy's patriotism is squalid opportunism

the SNP, but this will not help.

Modelled on Blair's re-writing of the party's Clause Four, which had committed the party to the "common ownership" of industry, the amendment was meant to be newly elected SLP leader Jim Murphy's very own "Clause Four moment".

As Murphy put it last December: "It's the biggest change in Scottish Labour's history... I want to rewrite Clause Four of Scottish Labour to bring us closer to the centre of Scottish life."

Blair's rewriting of the Clause Four was a genuine political statement — it was part of his mission to destroy the Labour Party as the political wing of the workers' movement. His actions dominated news headlines for months.

Murphy was not even amending Clause Four! He was amending Clause Two of the SLP constitution, nothing more than a sentence stuck in between Clause One and Clause Three.

Murphy's announcement

created no more than a ripple of media coverage.

Most media coverage mentioned the constitutional amendment only as a footnote to its coverage of the conference. (That includes the SLP's own website reports of the conference.) The remaining media coverage (including LabourList) did not mention it at all.

OPPORTUNISM

Murphy's re-writing was a transparent exercise in squalid opportunism.

Despite losing the referendum, the SNP is on course to wipe out the SLP in the general election. So, runs Murphy's logic, the SLP needs to be more Scottish than the SNP. Yet only a few months earlier Murphy's Chief of Staff John McTernan had warned that "you can't out-nat the nats".

(McTernan himself is hardly best placed to "out-nat the nats". In 2002 he e-mailed a Labour MSP about to visit Sweden: "I think you'll really like it. It's the country Scotland would be

if it wasn't narrow, Presbyterian, racist, etc., etc.)

The new "Clause Four" is irrelevant to reversing Labour's fortunes.

Insofar as anyone takes it seriously the commitment to "the patriotic interest of the people of Scotland" will be positively damaging to the SLP.

The SNP lost last September's referendum. But its great achievement in the referendum campaign, apart from thoroughly poisoning political debate in Scotland, was to push class and social issues to the sidelines of political argument, and replace them with "Scotland's national interests".

Instead of poverty and inequality being identified as a product of class and capitalist oppression, they were presented as the product of "Westminster rule" and a distant "Westminster establishment".

Murphy seeks to challenge the SNP on its own territory: which party is best placed and most suited to representing Scotland's national and patriotic interests. Given the nature of the SNP as a narrow Scottish-nationalist party, the answer to that question will always be: the SNP.

Apart from reinforcing the nationalist element in Scottish political discourse (and, consequently, the SNP's electoral prospects), Murphy's attempt to put patriotism centre-stage is also a challenge to the rationale for the SLP's existence.

As the one anti-amendment speaker called at last Saturday's conference put it:

"Patriotism is an essential tool in presenting class interest — the ruling class interest — as the interest of all of us.

"The primary purpose of the Scottish Labour Party should be precisely the opposite of that. It should be exposing the class nature of Scottish society. It should be attacking austerity. It should be increasing redistribution of wealth. It should be promoting equality.

"On the basis of this kind of programme we should be fighting tooth and nail to halt the nationalist offensive.

"So let's stop talking about patriotic interest and start talking about the class interest instead."

Same old circus...

1 March was a National Day of Action called by Disabled People Against Cuts to protest against the Work Capability Assessment, which has led to thousands of disabled people being wrongly found capable of work and subject to job-seeking sanctions and loss of benefits.

Protests at 31 locations across the country under the slogan "Same old circus, new clowns" were aimed at US firm Maximus, which has taken over the WCA after ATOS gave up the contract as a result of public pressure, a backlog of appeals and a failure to make a profit out of disabled people.

The central London demo in Westminster called at Maximus' offices and the HQ of the Department of Work and Pensions before blocking Victoria Street. John McDonnell spoke and a suitably clownish entertainment made for a loud and fun demonstration.



Death of a troublesome neo-liberal

By Dale Street

Exactly a year to the day (27 February) after Putin commenced his annexation of the Crimea, Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov was murdered in Moscow.

Five men (reportedly Chechen Islamists) have been arrested in connection with the murder.

Nemtsov was no critic of Putin from the left.

In the early 1990s he had been Governor of the Nizhny Novgorod region. He pursued aggressive neo-liberal and privatisation policies, winning the admiration of Margaret Thatcher when she visited the region in 1993.

In the late 1990s he served as Yeltsin's First Deputy Prime Minister and oversaw the sweeping "free market" reforms which impoverished broad swathes of the Russian population.

An article on the website of the Russian Socialist Movement sums up Nemtsov's early political career:

"In the late 1990s it was impossible to imagine Nemtsov as an icon of the protest movement. His name was mentioned in connection with countless dodgy financial deals of the privatisation period. He was surrounded by figures with openly criminal backgrounds.



Nemtsov

"His style as Nizhny Novgorod governor was often characterised as authoritarian... Nemtsov was seen as one of the creators of the neo-liberal socio-economic policies which resulted in the financial default of 1998."

Nemtsov resigned from his post following the 1998 financial crisis. When Yeltsin appointed Putin as his successor, Nemtsov backed the new President.

But Nemtsov soon moved into the opposition camp. He helped found the Union of Right Forces, an electoral bloc committed to the continuation of the "free market" and privatisation policies of the 1990s and to the implementation of liberal-conservative social policies.

Nemtsov became increasingly critical of Putin's authoritarianism. When the Union of Right Forces split in 2008, he co-founded "Solidarity" in an attempt to unite the liberal opposition to Putin. In 2007, 2010 and 2011 Nemtsov was ar-

rested on anti-Putin protests.

Nemtsov was subsequently one of the founders of the "For Russia Without Lawlessness and Corruption" party, later renamed the People's Freedom Party, but refused registration as a political party by the Ministry of Justice in 2011.

Despite the limitations of Nemtsov's own politics and the limited support he was able to attract, Putin's propaganda machine built up Nemtsov into a major hate figure.

FIFTH COLUMN
Routinely denounced as an American spy, Nemtsov was branded a "fifth columnist" by the Putin-loyal media.

Nemtsov's name figured prominently in the lists of "fifth columnists" and "national traitors" circulated by ultra-nationalist organisations. A huge banner-portrait denouncing him as a traitor was on permanent display outside a Moscow bookshop.

Less than a week before the murder 35,000 Putin loyalists marched through Moscow on a Kremlin-organised "anti-Maidan" protest, denouncing the Ukrainian government as a "fascist junta" and Russian liberals as the accomplices and agents of Ukrainian "fascism".

Demonstrators carried

pictures of Nemtsov, identifying him as the leader of the "fifth column" in Russia, and would-be "organiser of the (Russian) Maidan".

The linkage between Nemtsov and Ukraine was no accident. At the time of his murder Nemtsov was writing a report exposing Russian involvement in the conflict in south-east Ukraine. And two days after his murder Nemtsov was to have led an anti-war demonstration in Moscow.

(The material gathered by Nemtsov is unlikely to see the light of day. It was seized by the Russian security services as part of their "investigation" into his murder.)

Russian opposition leaders have been murdered (Nemtsov), imprisoned (Navalny), and driven into exile (Kasparov). Nemtsov's murder — whoever bears ultimate responsibility for it — underlines the ruthless nationalist authoritarianism employed by Putin to maintain his grip on power.

• Statement by Open Left (Russia) editorial board: bit.ly/1886ZPn

Fake anti-fascism and fake trade unions Apologism for Russian imperialism from Solidarity with the Anti-Fascist Resistance in Ukraine
bit.ly/1BnlMjG



Rahm Emanuel's tenure has seen the closure of many public schools

Election upset in Chicago

On 7 April, Rahm Emanuel, Chicago's mayor, and Barack Obama's former chief of staff, will face a run-off election against challenger Jesús "Chuy" García.

Chicago's city elections are officially non-partisan, and mostly the contests in the first round were between leftish Democrats like Garcia and stridently pro-business ones like Emanuel. Nevertheless, the run-off — forced because Rahm Emanuel failed to get 50% in the first round of voting, on 24 February — signals a real revolt.

The US *Socialist Worker* (unconnected with the British paper of the same name) reports: "The mayor's allies on the City Council had a hard time, too, with as many as 19 of 50 races for alderman (city council member) heading to a runoff, including one candidate independent of the Democrats, Chicago teacher Tim Meegan. A non-binding referendum to have an elected school board — it is currently appointed by the mayor — got almost 90 percent support from voters".

The results reflect reverberations from the 2012 strike by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) which forced Emanuel to drop his plans to gut the teachers' union contract. CTU President Karen Lewis had planned to challenge Emanuel for mayor herself before ill-health forced her to step aside, and the CTU, through a group called United Working Families, endorsed Garcia.

Tina Beacock, a Chicago socialist, told *Solidarity*: "Part of what you're seeing is an explosion of electoral activity pushed by the Chicago Teachers' Union. Someone did a study of wards where schools had been closed, and wards where Rahm Emanuel did not get 50%, and they were pretty closely correlated.

"Chuy Garcia? I'd describe him politically as a long-term liberal machine Democrat".

Italy: youth resist, unions retreat

By Hugh Edwards

The news that employers like Fiat are taking on hundreds of workers, that unemployment is falling, investment rising and the public finances are getting the nod of approval from Brussels is all true. Why wouldn't it be?

The Jobs Act alone has pulverised the conditions of protection workers won 40 or so years ago; now in return for hiring new staff bosses get €24,000 per head, plus the right to impose any conditions they fancy. They can fire one or all of the workforce if the spirit moves them.

At three of Fiat's major plants across the country, after a call for strike action by the FIOM metalworkers' union to demand the abolition of overtime and guarantee more jobs, only 10 out of a 3,000 workforce downed tools.

These facts speak eloquently of a profoundly dark and deep mood of defeat, demoralisation and bewilderment suffocating the working masses of Italy, of a condition where, as with the Roman Empire, the bourgeoisie have "made a wilderness and call it peace".

Two weeks in Cervia a "Social Coalition" was launched by the metalworkers' union and its leader Maurizio Landini. Left-talking Landini was, along with his fellow CGIL Confederation union leader Susanna Camusso, the architect of the humiliating political campaign against the Jobs Act.

There Landini stated "the epoch has changed, requiring a change of direction. The Democratic Party under its new leader is now the instrument of the industrialists. To challenge it demands going beyond the idea of a single union or

confederation strike perspective."

And the instrument to politically focus, guide and achieve victory over Renzi and his government? Yes, strikes would be part of it, as he announced details for half day protest strikes. But these and all the concerted mobilisations of the Coalition would be aimed at mounting support for a petition for a "popular" legal alternative Statute of Labour to the Jobs Act, and, if Camusso agrees, for a referendum on the issue.

All that labour for such a mouse of a proposal.

Landini intimated that the question of political representation might have to be at some future unspecified point be addressed by the coalition.

The last thing he has in mind is the call for the creation and building of a new workers' party in Italy. But he has his sights on replacing Camusso as head of CGIL.

Meanwhile in Rome's Piazza del Popolo Matteo Salvini and the forces of his Northern League rallied. The major trade union confederations and its leaders maintain a criminal silence about the mounting racist attacks.

However, more than 30,000 of Rome's young, alongside thousands of immigrants and their families, marched as one in an inspiring block of militant solidarity against the filth contaminating Piazza del Popolo.

This must be the model to inspire every serious class fighter to believe that the retreat can be halted and a politics of resistance that challenges the cowardly union leaders to unite the Italian working masses in battles with Renzi and the system over which he and his ilk preside.

• Abridged. Full article bit.ly/1994nSG

Cops shoot two more

By Gemma Short

19 year old Tony Robinson was shot dead by a police officer in Madison, Wisconsin, on Monday 9 March.

Tony, a biracial man, was unarmed. Police had been called to an incident involving an "African-American man" jumping in and out of traffic and a reported assault. The lone responding officer broke into an apartment and shot Tony after what the police say was a scuffle.

Protests against the killing continued overnight on Monday. Slogans on demonstrations highlighted stark inequality in Madison. The city prides itself on being a good place to live. However, a report released in 2013 showed that unem-

ployment amongst black people in Dane County (which includes Madison) is 25% compared to just 5% amongst the white population. The percentage of black children living in poverty was 58% compared to 5% for white children.

On Sunday 1 March police shot dead a homeless black man known as "Africa" on Skid Row in Los Angeles. Police say they were responding to a suspected robbery and in (another) scuffle Africa reached for an officer's gun. At that point Africa was shot five times.

When police continue to routinely carry guns, and racial targeting of petty crime, and harassment of black communities continues, black people will end up dead.

The “good old days” are gone

Letters



It's ironic that Andy Forse begins his article “Why I am not voting Green this May” (*Solidarity* 355) by saying that the world he wants to live in “would have things ... like rail...socialised”.

He then goes on to advocate NOT voting for a party that DOES propose the socialisation of the railways and voting FOR a party that not only does not want to socialise the railways but actually ignored its conference policy when it voted for renationalisation!

This party (Labour of course) also continued the selling off of industries started by Thatcher, even the RAF air and sea rescue service wasn't immune, flogged off last year in a process which Labour began when they were last in office.

Labour backs Trident, initiated the PFI rip-off, encouraged the greed of financiers and bankers that led to the crash of 2008, will probably support the outrageously expensive white elephant High Speed 2 rail project and has yet to come clean on the Iraq war and the reasons why we went headlong into that murderous debacle. I could go on ... and on, but how many bodies, how many blighted and ruined lives, how much wasted money does it take, before the light dawns?

All that Forse offers, in essence, by way of criticism of the Greens, is that they arsed up local government in Brighton (which they did). No mention of the appalling record of Labour local governments in everything from child protection services to wide scale cuts, capitulation to the interests of big business, sweeping redundancies of council workers and disgusting examples of corruption too numerous to mention (see just about any issue of *Private Eye*).

So what is Forse left with? He offers up the tired old formula about the so-called “conduit” through which “the specific interests of the working class majority can potentially be channelled” (to parliament). This once masqueraded as the “organic link” between the unions and the Labour Party and was one of the major reasons, much discussed at the time, for the “turn” to the Labour Party which a number of left activists (myself included I must say) went through in the early seventies. This link may have existed once but it is difficult to find much evidence of it now.

It is difficult to see how this “conduit” actually works when the majority of working people are not in trade unions and most worrying of all, many young people are uninterested or hostile seeing trade unions as bastions of self-interest or at best

irrelevant. How does the “conduit” work for pensioners, for shopkeepers, for zero-contract workers, for what is increasingly being called the precariat, migrants, for the disillusioned and embittered now turning in their droves to UKIP?

The world is changing and the figures speak for themselves: trade unionism is on the decline and it seems unlikely it will ever revive, possibly membership will “plateau” at something around its present levels. In September 2012 trade union membership in Britain dropped below 6 million for the first time since the 1940s. Nor is the picture abroad that different – in the USA only 8% of workers in the private sector are unionised, while in France the figure is a paltry 8% for all sectors of workers. A number of trade unions are not even affiliated to the Labour Party. The RMT's break with Labour is probably the best known example but my own union – the UCU – remains steadfastly non-aligned to any party.

Even if they are affiliated, a fat lot of good it has done them. Britain has, for a number of years now – under Labour and Conservative governments – been the most anti-trade union country in Europe. Membership figures for the Labour Party are as equally dismal as for the trade unions, from a high of approximately 1 million in 1953, membership (in Jan 2015) was down to 190,000 (although this decline is the same for all the three major parties). It is hard to imagine this figure reviving very much in the future.

DESPERATION

In what looks like an act of desperation to bolster up his threadbare argument Forse evokes the memory of the Clay Cross councillors and their resistance to housing charges.

But this was 43 years ago (and just for the record I helped organise meetings and marched through the village in support of them). This is history as nostalgia for a supposed “Golden Age”, not history as a pointer and lesson for the future. Where are the Clay Cross rebels of today? More to the point why was Clay Cross so isolated? Why did other councils, potentially much stronger than Clay Cross, not follow suit?

Sheffield Council made a lot of noise, as did Lambeth, Liverpool went further (although many criticisms can be made about the role of the Militant here) but ultimately Clay Cross was on its own. The Clay Cross rebels were indeed heroic and inspirational at the time but what about the myriad of other Labour councils around the country? Their record, to put it mildly, stinks.

Forse speculates that “there may well come a time when the Blairite coup inside the Labour Party is completed”. The use



of the word “coup” suggests a sudden, unprecedented storming of the palisades but, like it or not, Blair – and Brown – were merely the logical progression of years of Labour hesitancy, timidity, sell-outs and accommodation to the status quo. In other words the coup has been signed, sealed and delivered and no amount of conduits, pipes, U-bends or other types of theoretical plumbing will wish this sad fact away. As Berthold Brecht once remarked (I'm paraphrasing) it's no good thinking about the “good old days”. We have to start from the bad new today.

So, Andy – thanks for the advice, I read your article in best comradely fashion but I find it wanting in many aspects and, worst of all, mired in a world view that is hopelessly formulaic, out-of-date and strangely unconnected to the real world which, actually *Solidarity* usually reports on and discusses with much intelligence and insight.

I will, probably, vote for the Greens although I remain a socialist. If I had a crystal ball I would try to suggest how things might pan out but all I can say, in summary, is that the world is changing rapidly, the Greens are part of that flux and I think they could (as they have in Germany) become an important part of the social and political upheaval we so desperately need. Their politics are actually closer to my socialist beliefs than Labour.

You say I should ignore this, but how can I when the alternative is so utterly dismal? Political choice and motivation is more than just a cold calculation about “conduits”, it is also, surely, about being inspired, moved and angered by the injustices that permeate the society we live in.

Quite frankly I am more inspired by my cat than Ed Miliband and his clapped out crew of creeps, bribe-takers and toadies. Time will tell and I may be wrong but I do know that I have no wish to follow the Labour Party and social democracy to its inevitable grave.

Len Glover, Lancashire

BOOKS BY WORKERS' LIBERTY

In 1984-5, mining communities all over Britain fought a year-long battle against Thatcher's Tory government. Their fight remains a source of inspiration for the labour movement, and for those who want a democratic socialist world free of exploitation and oppression.



This new edition of *Class against class* features an addition on the role of Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners during the strike.

A few bold strokes by an artist can convey an idea more vividly and fix it more firmly in the viewer's mind than an editorial or an article would. The cartoons collected here depict US politics, workers' struggles, America's “Jim Crow” racism, Roosevelt's “New Deal” and Harry Truman's “Fair Deal”, and Stalinism in its era of greatest prestige and triumph, as revolutionary socialists saw them at the time.



www.workersliberty.org/books

Yes to free speech, no to anti-semitism

A concert by the controversial Israeli-born jazz saxophonist Gilad Atzmon has been cancelled by the Royal Northern College of Music on the spurious grounds of threats to “safety” of the audience. This followed a petition from the North West Friends of Israel calling for cancellation on the basis of Atzmon's anti-Semitism.

This attack on the principle of free expression should be condemned, particularly as it is part of a growing wave of actions by University authorities responding to speakers or acts that may cause controversy or protest by banning them. It also precedes government moves to criminalise undefined “extremist” views on campuses. “No platforming” should be reserved for organised fascists, those who incite violence and are a direct threat to minority groups.

Defending freedom of expression should not be confused with defending Atzmon or his views. Atzmon believes anyone who claims a Jewish identity is “tribal” and necessarily racist and reactionary. His condemnation of an ethnic group as a whole for supposedly shared negative traits is racist and leads Atzmon to some particularly unsavoury conclusions, as an examination of his website shows. For example, sympathetic posts on Holocaust deniers (“I agree 100 percent with everything Ahmadinejad said about the Holocaust”) go alongside blaming “Jewish misbehaviour” for anti-Semitism:

“If anti-Semitism is defined as the Goyim's [Gentiles'] reaction to Jewish misbehavior, Benjamin Netanyahu provides us with an incredible opportunity to observe such transgressions in action... Jews as an ethnic and ideological collective lack the means to restrain itself and its destructive powers

from within. This may help to explain why the Jewish past can be construed as a chain of Shoahs”. [A Hebrew word meaning ‘catastrophe’ used for the Holocaust]

The left should clearly have nothing to do with Atzmon rather than giving him and his music a platform, as the SWP did in 2005. But we should not advocate that the state or public spaces ban him. It is not merely wrong, opening the doors to wider bans but also counter-productive: the RNCM ban has allowed Atzmon to paint himself as a victim (of a Zionist conspiracy, of course). He is also able – generally truthfully, I think – to argue that he does not present his anti-Jewish views as part of his musical performances. This is strange for someone who describes himself as a political musician and whose political views would probably be ignored if he wasn't a well known musician.

The reason is clear. If his detailed views were better known, he would probably lose much of his audience. And that suggests how those opposed to Atzmon should act: make sure that as many people know what he really believes and advocate a boycott of his music. To ignore it is to ignore anti-Semitic racism.

Bruce Robinson, Manchester

Footnote

A petition has been launched on Change.org condemning the RNCM ban and asking for the concert's reinstatement. As Atzmon is presenting it as a petition in support of him, socialists should not sign it. Better to write a letter to the RNCM making the arguments.

A socialist voice for the general election

New anti-union laws which would effectively ban large strikes in public services by requiring impossibly high ballot votes for them. A drive to abolish union check-off and facility time. 153 new free schools.

About £50 billion further cuts in the next five years, including £21 billion welfare cuts (according to analysis by the conservative Institute for Fiscal Studies: bit.ly/ifs-50).

A renewed pledge to cut immigration, and maybe, by referendum, to tip Britain out of the European Union and end free movement of people between Europe and Britain.

If, after all they've done since 2010, the Tories win in May 2015, they will take it as a mandate for even more uninhibited spite.

Yet the polls show Tories level with Labour, and around 15% for the ultra-Tories of Ukip.

Since the collapse in December 2011 of the public service unions' battle over pensions, three trends have chased each other in a vicious spiral.

Unions have become more defeatist. Even the self-proclaimedly left-wing unions like PCS and NUT no longer talk of any general ongoing campaign of industrial action to beat pay freeze and cuts.

Working-class people have not ceased to be angry, but have often slipped into seeing the cuts as inevitable.

As the cuts hurt more, and more obviously fail even to reduce government debt, the Labour Party leaders have adapted to them, softening their "too far, too fast" criticism more and more. Now Labour councils are passing cuts budgets without even their attempts of 2010 and 2011 to claim that the cuts are evils imposed on them by bad Tory policy. Not one says it will resist, or even finesse or evade cuts in the expectation that a Labour government after 2015 will remove the bad Tory imposition.

Each of the three trends accentuates the others.

The combination of claimed economic recovery — indeed, real economic recovery for some — with a continued squeeze on pay, jobs, and benefits, lays the basis for revolt to reverse that spiral.

Official statistics show the net rate of profit for manufacturing companies in late 2013 as the highest since 2002, and for service companies the highest since 1997.

The real earnings of chief executives of the top 100 companies have gone up 26% since 2010, or by £700,000 a year on average. Median (middling) real pay of full-time workers has gone down by proportions ranging from £3940 in London (10%) to £1663 in the North-East (6.3%).

We can see the beginnings, as yet only the beginnings, of a pay revolt. A bigger pay revolt will spill over into demands and action against cuts and inequality.

DIFFERENCE

How does what socialists do in the May general election fit into this?

To say it makes no odds whether the Tories get back is to say that it makes no difference whether calls by the unions and by Labour (in which the unions still have a large say, if only they have the will to use it) to "make work pay" and win "a pay rise" are slapped down, or Labour is put on the spot about them.

To shrug and vote Labour as the lesser evil, without working to mobilise the labour movement to force Labour to come good on such promises (and to improve its promises!) is to opt out of active politics.

Solidarity is supporting the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV), which will combine a Labour vote with agitation on the streets and in the unions for taxing the rich, for expropriating the banks, and for migrant rights and open borders. The aim of the campaign is to use election time not

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is campaigning to elect a Labour government in May 2015. The SCLV wants to combine campaigning for a Labour government with clear working-class demands, to boost working-class confidence, and strengthen and transform the labour movement so it is fit to fight.

Sign the statement

Pass a motion supporting the campaign through your union branch

Write for the blog:

socialistcampaignforalabourvictory.wordpress.com



Labour's first election poster of the campaign

just to win votes, but to rally and organise activists.

We want a Labour government after 7 May to face insistent, rigorous demands. We want a re-elected Tory government, if that comes, to face radical resistance. We want to encourage activists to see their political aim — obviously not achievable on 7 May, but valid as a measure and a guide — as a workers' government, a government created by and loyal to the labour movement which acts with the working class against capital.

The archetype is a campaign of the same name in 1978-9. That SCLV got six local Labour Parties, and activists in many more, to use its leaflets. It attracted wide interest, and became a driving force in the Labour left rebellion which erupted after the 1979 election.

REVIVAL

There wasn't much of a Labour left when that SCLV started in 1978. Even so, successes are obviously more difficult to get now.

We can't know the speed of the revival of the labour movement, and it may be slow. The question is what we can do — with limited resources, within unconducive structures — to use the election campaign to accelerate revival rather than reinforce despondency.

Others on the left will work for a variety of anti-Labour left candidates on 7 May. In principle, the idea of promoting socialist organisation directly through socialist candidates is a good one. In 2001 we were an active, indeed an initiating, part of the Socialist Alliance, which united almost all the revolutionary socialist left to run 98 candidates in that year's general election.

But in 2003 the Socialist Alliance was scuppered by the SWP, which dissolved it in order to chum up with George Galloway in an ignominious venture which ran in elections as "Respect (George Galloway)".

Many gimcrack coalitions, alliances, and splits followed by the splitters then proclaiming themselves as representing the only valid "unity", have followed. They have discredited socialism by presenting the electorate with a series of ever-more-minimalist, ever-more-evanescent platforms.

For 15 years after quitting the Labour Party (where they organised under the name Militant), the Socialist Party had a respectable small sprinkling of councillors across the country, elected as socialists. Now, running in elections as TUSC and No2EU, with the socialist message reduced to "anti-cuts" or even contradicted by Europhobia in order to win votes, they have none. TUSC has no real internal life, but is a cartel of the SP and the leading officials of the RMT union.

Thus we see the TUSC effort for 7 May as a much inferior way to build socialist awareness than the SCLV. TUSC is also running in many marginals (something previous minority socialist election campaigns have generally avoided), and that disdain for the labour movement's wish to oust the Tories cannot help.

The Left Unity group, launched by Andrew Burgin and

Kate Hudson after they quit Respect, will also run a few candidates, but in general it is a small group pretending to be a "broad left" party like Die Linke in Germany, and neither politically nor organisationally better than TUSC.

If socialists are to use the election time to help socialist awareness and working-class consciousness develop, then the best way is to avoid cluttering our work with such ventures, and to argue clearly and simply that we want the labour movement to win, but the labour movement also to be transformed in a socialist direction.

What will unions do in the election?

Unions could fund a newspaper pushing a vote for Labour and demands on Labour — bit.ly/1HtyoaZ.

A celebration of women in class struggle



On Saturday 28 February women in Workers' Liberty hosted All the Rage — a socialist feminist conference. Over 130 people attended the event and took part in a broad range of discussions, including: Women against Fundamentalisms, Greece, women and austerity, women in India and how to organise a community fightback.

In the evening we held a social jointly with the Kurdish and Middle Eastern Women's Organisation with poetry from Janine Booth and Emily Harrison, as well as theatre performances and music. We raised over £100 for Kurdish women.

Recordings of some of the sessions can be found at : bit.ly/Beth-speech and bit.ly/women-workers

The resistance in Rome

How class-struggle erupted in World War 2

David Broder reports on his research into the left in Italy, 1943-5

The year before last, President Napolitano gave an address on the anniversary of the Liberation of Italy, remarking “When the country is at a crucial juncture, and in times of crisis, memory is fundamental”. He insisted the coalition administration he’d appointed the previous day would “need courage, resoluteness and a sense of unity, all of which were decisive to winning the Resistance battle”. Cynics might suggest that this coalition of the Democratic Party, neoliberal technocrat Mario Monti and Silvio Berlusconi embodied a rather different idea of courage and unity than the partisans.

This identification of the Resistance with “national unity” is a mainstay of both official commemorations and mainstream historiography. But my research follows in a tradition instead focusing on competing Resistance forces’ efforts to impose their stamp on postwar Italy. For example, Cesare Bermani’s work on the continuity of state, namely the Italian ruling class’s attempt to abandon Fascism better to conserve the fundamentals of the Italian establishment.

Such an analysis was central to the 1970s extraparlimentary Left view that Communist Party leader Palmiro Togliatti’s Salerno Turn, aligning the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale with ex-fascists and the King in the name of fighting the Germans, had paralysed working-class opposition to these conservative efforts, ushering in decades of Christian-Democratic rule. Yet while it blamed the PCI leadership for failing to exploit Italy’s rulers’ wartime crisis, rarely did it examine how grassroots communists tried to organise for revolution.

That is precisely what my research is about. Taking the case of Rome’s largest partisan formation, Bandiera Rossa, I want to talk about the Resistance-era transformation of Italian communism. While Communist Parties all over Europe were emerging from clandestinity in 1943–5, nowhere as in Italy was communist strategy so hotly contested by competing centres of authority.

Simply put, this was because Mussolini’s crushing of the Left in 1926 cut short the Stalinisation process turning Communist Parties in other countries into hierarchical parties on

the Soviet model. Communists remaining in Italy across Mussolini’s twenty-year rule were almost completely cut off from the international movement, while Comintern-affiliated Italian Communist leaders in Paris or Moscow had no base in their own country.

Yet by the time these hierarchs started returning to Italy, long-isolated militants had already begun setting up communist organisations of their own, without instructions from exiled cadres. Take the example of Scintilla, a clandestine circle formed in Rome soon after Italy joined the war in June 1940, and which was at the origin of Bandiera Rossa. Named in homage to Lenin’s *Iskra*, its prominent members included the tailor Filiberto Sbardella, secretary of the Rome camera del lavoro during World War I; Orfeo Mucci, a carpenter and son of an anarchist bakers’ leader; Raffaele de Luca, a Socialist mayor in 1920; and Communist florist Agostino Raponi.

MECHANICAL

Scintilla, which produced a newspaper from August 1942, rather mechanically assumed that if Fascism was capitalism’s ultimate rearguard action, as early 1920s Comintern policy had it, then its defeat in war meant revolution.

Paris-based PCI leaders instead advocated cross-class national unity in the name of maximum mobilization for the Allied war effort. This popular frontism had a history in France and Spain in 1934 to 1939: it sought to encourage the democracies to ally with the USSR against Nazi Germany, by showing that the Communists were not trying to seize power and thus dispelling anti-communism in the West. Such a strategy had not been applicable to Italy in the Mussolini period; it was literally foreign to communists on the Italian peninsula.

So, setting up a cell in Rome around the end of the Spanish Civil War, the PCI preferred not to rely on the long-isolated comrades of yesteryear, but rather created an anti-fascist student circle trained in Croce and Gentile rather than specifically Marxist ideas. These new cadre drawn from regime student organisations did not much impress Scintilla; Filiberto Sbardella was shocked that PCI students “tied to aristocratic circles and the Savoy monarchy” told them that “we had no right to debate their directives but only to accept and implement them”.

Scintilla were not Trotskyists — a label they angrily rejected — but were chastened by their first brush with the PCI’s now Stalinist organisational norms. Ironically, their objections to the “national unity” policy fed on the cult of Stalin. If socialism had triumphed in Russia and was now almost single-handedly defeating Nazi Germany, then European revolution could not be far away. And since the Mussolini regime claimed to be resisting the imminent Bolshevikisation of the continent, and labelled all opposition communist, Fascist propaganda only fed this mythology of the Soviet state. Of course this kind of triumphalism also affected the PCI; Rome PCI organizer Agostino Novella would complain in December 1943 that he was struggling to get his com-

rades to believe that the popular front was not a mere ruse, a prelude to seizing power.

The palace coup against Mussolini on 25 July 1943, followed by the German invasion on 10 September re-establishing Fascist rule in the North and Centre of Italy, turned these rival vanguards into the leaders of partisan movements resisting the German occupation.

While the Amendola student group and returning exiles founded a new Rome PCI federation, Scintilla morphed into Bandiera Rossa, linking up with other clandestine circles committed to a class-against-class policy. Bandiera Rossa stood apart from the Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale that united Communists with Socialists, liberals and Christian Democrats in a patriotic cause. As the 5 October 1943 first issue of Bandiera Rossa’s newspaper put it, “We fight not for a nation but for the proletariat, much as we do not fight against Germans but against Nazism and fascism as the ultimate expression of bourgeois-capitalist dictatorship. Our only fatherland is the world; our only enemy, capitalism, whatever mask it wears.”

While the Communist and Socialist leaders were joining in a CLN alliance whose president, Ivanoe Bonomi, had in 1921 attempted to suppress the Arditi del Popolo, leading figures from that anti-fascist militia were now taking prominent roles in Bandiera Rossa. In addition to veteran communists it also rallied most of Rome’s organised anarchists, as well as Socialists like the sons of murdered MP Giacomo Matteotti. This strong start in 1942–43 uniting the historic currents of the Roman left, as well as its military officers’ role in coordinating resistance to the Wehrmacht on 10 September 1943, provided Bandiera Rossa with the necessary organizational basis to draw in hundreds of disbanded soldiers and others evading conscription by Mussolini’s new regime. As of November 1943 Bandiera Rossa thus had about 3,200 members, as against 2,500 for the official Communist Party in Rome.

ROOTS

Bandiera Rossa’s strong local roots were also its limitation. It never expanded beyond the Lazio region, though politically similar groups existed in other cities, not least Stella Rossa in Turin.

However, unlike that organization it failed to negotiate a merger with the official PCI, having insisted that the Communist Party first abandon the CLN alliance. Its paper thus explained on 22 October 1943, “the *L’Unità* communists and we are distinct organisations but not in two different parties: we shall meet on the via maestra, the higher path of revolution”. Yet without ever taming its glorification of Stalin, Bandiera Rossa did over time develop deeper critiques of the PCI, for instance the claim that “the bureaucracy ruling the party empties its cause of its social content” or attacking its insistence on the need for workers to rally behind national reconstruction even under capitalism.

This related to the social context of the Roman Resistance. Though Italy’s capital and largest city, Rome had no big factories, weakening the significance of the industrial working class to the Resistance mobilisation.

And Bandiera Rossa’s conception of class politics was not the PCI’s productivist popular-front model — where industrial workers would become a truly “national” unifying force by driving economic reconstruction — but a more flatly class-against-class approach based on mobilizing the excluded and dispossessed. Moreover, because Rome was not a centre of German war industry, the occupying regime largely abandoned the population of its borgate slums. Never part of the Fascist national community, during the German occupation these populations faced chronic food and power shortages,



Bandiera Rossa’s newspaper

and had to fend for themselves.

Indeed, the borgate areas were Bandiera Rossa's power base — tramdriver Tigrino Sabatini even half-jokingly spoke of a partisan republic of Torpignattara and Certosa, the south-eastern neighbourhoods where they took over the police stations. A great deal of their activity was devoted to food distribution, such as expropriations masterminded by anarchist tailor and former Palermo Arditi del Popolo leader Gabriele Pappalardo. Other efforts to meet Romans' immediate needs included squatting public buildings to house the dispossessed; mass-producing false papers for draft resisters and Jews; and, together with other anti-fascist employees at state statistics agency ISTAT, a doctored census reporting that 90% of the Roman population were women.

While the German army was of course fully able to control this territory, it largely abandoned the population while making occasional raids to deport workers to the Reich's war industry and smash centres of Resistance organizing. After all, German tanks and supplies heading down the Via Casilina or Appia to the front were particularly at risk of attack from partisans based in these areas. Aside from its borgate activity Bandiera Rossa also had some workplace-based groups coordinating with its armed bands. Take the incident where Bandiera Rossa partisans derailed a German petrol tanker train and then members of its seventy-strong fire brigade unit hurried to the scene of the crash, hosing the blaze in order to fuel the inferno.

At the moment of the Allied landings at Anzio, 35 miles south of the capital, in January 1944, Bandiera Rossa seemed to be making headway in the accumulation of cadres and weaponry, as it prepared for insurrection at the moment the Germans withdrew. There was a constant exchange of branches and members between Bandiera Rossa and the PCI, but more importantly a split in the Socialist party. Its Rome military commander Carlo Andreoni left the CLN that same month, criticizing a body lacking any unity of principle and instead advocating a "Free Republic of Italian Workers". His new "Movimento Partigiano" now collaborated with Bandiera Rossa, as did small Christian-Socialist and republican circles.

Yet the Allied landings were a false dawn: and over the next five months Bandiera Rossa was hit hard by Nazi repression and then its own political disorientation. A further problem for the group was that while even in November 1942 — when ex-Vichyites in power in Algiers ditched to the Allied side — Scintilla had understood that there would be a battle within the Resistance camp between conservative, ruling-class forces and revolutionary ones, it tended to overemphasise the importance of the Resistance in general, as if being a group of a few thousand armed men bigger than the other partisan forces meant that it had any serious possibility of leading a revolutionary insurrection.

As we have described, unlike Left-Communists paralysed by their unwillingness to aid the Allied camp, Bandiera Rossa was very militarily active in the occupation period. This invited heavy reprisals: between September 1943 and the liberation of Rome in June 1944 some 186 Bandiera Rossa members were killed — a third of total Resistance casualties in Lazio. This figure included 68 deaths at the Fosse Ardeatine massacre of 24 March 1944, most of whose 335 victims were jailed partisans.

Just days after that Nazi atrocity, on 1 April 1944 news reached the Roman communists that Palmiro Togliatti had returned to Naples with a new PCI strategy. With this so-called Salerno Turn, the CLN parties entered government under ex-Fascist general Pietro Badoglio and the King, for the sake of maximum war mobilisation. Rather than the CLN setting itself up as an alternative to the historic Italian state, it now directly participated in its reformation. Yet it would be inaccurate to portray this as the moment when Togliatti abandoned turning Resistance into revolution; indeed groups like Bandiera Rossa had since September 1943 predicted that this was the logical extension of the PCI's "national unity" policy, since they were already allied to other conservatives.

Historiographical debates have focused on whether Togliatti decided this new policy himself — with a specifically Italian, Gramscian vision of transitioning to socialism by hegemonising cross-class alliances — or dictated by Moscow.



In the Cold War years, when the PCI had to vaunt its patriotic Resistance record, it denied that the Kremlin had dictated its positions. Yet the same was not true during the war, as we see in the self-critiques the Rome federation PCI leaders wrote in April 1944 rationalizing Togliatti's position and denouncing their own past sectarian approach toward the King and Badoglio. These documents are very telling.

The Rome PCI organisers assumed that Togliatti's position was indeed determined by Moscow, and that they had been mistaken not to see Soviet diplomatic recognition of the royal government as a signal to change their policy.

Typically of Togliatti's apparatus, they outlined their arguments in terms of tactical choices rather than appeals to Marxist orthodoxy — but they did identify Soviet foreign policy goals with advancement of the revolution in Italy. So they portrayed the Salerno Turn as "the USSR's first move on the 'Italian terrain' in its diplomatic offensive against the Anglo-Americans conservative policy". Why? Because the Western Allies thought "they could isolate the CLN by resting on the authority of the King and Badoglio" thus dividing the "live forces of the nation" and allowing imperialism to take over Italy. In opposition to this, the PCI should ally with even ruling-class elements who sought "to save their own economic power from Anglo-American imperialist exploitation".

SPHERE

If the most conservative parts of the state and army were prepared to stand up for an independent Italian imperialism, a thorn in the US's side in its own sphere of influence, then all the better for the USSR.

We might imagine that Togliatti's initiative would have encouraged a leftist opposition in the PCI. Many Communists hated to ally with the Fascist King, and some branches split. Yet the largest dissident currents — Bandiera Rossa in Rome and Stella Rossa in Turin — were weakened. The CLN parties were now in government, while they were marginalized; and it was clear that Togliatti's strategy, not their own, had Soviet approval. Bandiera Rossa weakly insisted that Yugoslavia showed that Stalin would give the Communists alone diplomatic recognition, if they proved in action that they were the only real Resistance force. Aside from the relative ineffectiveness of the Italian partisan movement as compared to Tito's forces liberating large swathes of territory, this analogy was false insofar as in Yugoslavia there was no Anglo-American occupation, and in Italy unlike in the

Balkans there were few military confrontations between Communist and royalist partisans.

Shattered by Nazi repression, and now having lost any hope of breaking the PCI from the CLN, Bandiera Rossa's plans to rise up and seize power when the Germans withdrew from Rome lay in tatters. It became increasingly clear that when the Anglo-Americans came it would be the state they backed, and not partisan militias, to establish control. This would be no repeat of the end of World War I when the chaotic collapse of defeated states like Russia, Germany and Hungary had allowed for revolutionary upheavals.

The Allies' arrival in Rome at the start of June 1944 was a liberation for those who had long suffered Nazi violence, deportations and starvation, if not a total change in working-class conditions. Yet the new authorities were also careful to keep control of the unruly partisans. Most conspicuously, the re-establishment of the historic Italian state saw the criminalization of much of the Resistance's activity, notably including occupation-era expropriations and the squatting of public buildings. Haughty British intelligence operative Antony Ellis described Bandiera Rossa as "principally recruited from the criminal classes", lamenting that they had tricked New Zealander and Canadian troops into trafficking them fuel and weapons. As soon as the Anglo-Americans arrived they banned Bandiera Rossa's newspaper as well as the Armata Rossa militia it had sponsored, indeed jailing some among its leaders for failing to disarm their men.

To put it simply, with Bandiera Rossa's insurrectionary strategy defeated and its activities radically restricted by the Allies, most members accepted the invitation to join the official PCI; few of its most prominent organisers were allowed to do so.

Naturally I am not saying that Rome's borgate population were all conscious dissident communists, even the few thousands in Bandiera Rossa. Obviously plenty of individual decisions to join this or that partisan group had all sorts of accidental reasons — friends, family, timing, etc. But what I do want to show is that class struggle was not just a spur to joining a generic CLN-led Resistance, but exceeded its narrowly patriotic framework. And that the establishment of a parliamentary Republic was not the beginning and end of partisan aspirations.

And as opposed to accounts speaking vaguely of a Red Resistance or postwar arguments that the PCI could have done more, I want to root such a discussion in the activity of grassroots communists who were actually a force on the ground during the occupation.

Rediscovering Rosa Luxemburg

Peter Hudis, editor of the new English-language *Complete Works* of Rosa Luxemburg, reports on the project.

Few adherents of the radical tradition need to be convinced of the importance of Rosa Luxemburg.

A committed Marxist who opposed the dead-ends of both parliamentary reformism and “revolutionary” dictatorships imposed from above, her writings have been read and reread by generations of activists striving to find a pathway out of existing society. A brilliant economist who authored the most in-depth treatment of the integral connection between capitalism and imperialism, her *Accumulation of Capital* and *Anti-Critique* is pivotal in understanding the dynamic that explains capital’s proclivity for global self-expansion.

And her irrepressible and vibrant personality has awed and inspired thinkers and activists inside and outside the Marxist tradition for decades, not the least because of the insights found in her correspondence. As the foremost women theoretician produced by the Marxist movement, she has become a subject of discussion by many feminists in recent years. Given the widespread attention given to her life and work, it may seem that we know all that needs to be known about Luxemburg’s life and thought. But that is quite far from the truth.

Although much of Luxemburg’s work has been available in English translation, much of it is untranslated or unknown. At least 75 per cent of her articles and essays, written in German, Polish and Russian (with a few in Yiddish), have never appeared in English. Only in 2013 did the first full English translation of her second most important book, *The Introduction to Political Economy*, finally appear in English, in *Volume 1 of The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg* (Verso Books).

This impressive 220-page study is one of the best overviews to Marxist political economy and should be required reading for anyone trying to understand the historical origins of capitalism, its drive for global expansion, the relation between pre-capitalist and post-capitalist forms of social organization, and the nature of wage labour. Meanwhile, less than 20 per cent of her correspondence has appeared in English — even with the publication of the 600-page *Letters of Rosa Luxemburg* in 2011, the most comprehensive collection of her letters to date, which sparked considerable discussion in the mainstream and radical press.

At issue is not simply the amount of writings that have (or have not) been translated from the five-volume German-lan-

guage *Gesammelte Werke*. Recent scholarship has turned up hundreds of previously unknown or unavailable articles, lectures and manuscripts. It is no secret that Luxemburg taught political economy, sociology, anthropology, economic history and Marx’s *Capital* at the German Social-Democratic Party’s school in Berlin from 1907-14, but it was only relatively recently (in the late 1990s) that Prof. Narihiko Ito discovered the texts of these notes and talks. Eight of them are now available, for the first time in full, in *Volume 1 of the Complete Works*.

It is also no secret that Luxemburg was not only an important theorist of revolution but also an active participant in the 1905 Russian Revolution (she went to Russian-occupied Poland at the end of 1905) and 1918-19 German Revolution.

Yet it is only recently that many of her writings on these revolutions have come to light. Thanks to the tireless efforts of Luxemburg scholar and biographer Annelies Laschitza, Dietz Verlag last year published a supplementary *Volume 6 of Luxemburg’s Gesammelte Werke*, containing previously unknown writings from 1893 to 1906 (many of these are unsigned articles that Laschitza determined, based on meticulous research, were written by Luxemburg). The volume consists of 900 pages. Laschitza is currently working on a further (and equally large) volume of previously unknown political writings that will cover 1907 to 1918.

EXHAUST

Even this does not exhaust the new archival discoveries. Holger Politt (continuing the earlier work of Felix Tych in Warsaw) has been working to compile Luxemburg’s writings from the Polish revolutionary press, many of which have never appeared in either German or English (and most never reprinted in Polish). This material amounts to another 2,000 pages.

Clearly, there is much still to learn about Rosa Luxemburg! All of this material — indeed, everything she ever wrote — will appear in *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg*, in 14 volumes. Each volume will be published according to the highest scholarly standards, containing up-to-date editor’s notes that refer the reader to contemporary writings on the subjects covered by Luxemburg as well as the background for many of her historical, literary, and biographical references. Each volume will contain a detailed glossary. We will provide new translations of all the material, including those that have appeared previously in English, and ensure that the translations are checked against the original to ensure that each work is presented in its entirety.

A bitter dose of reality

By Vijay Jackson

***Bitter Lake* is a highly unconventional documentary, in equal parts haunting, chilling and moving. Like some of Adam Curtis’ earlier pieces, narration is kept to a minimum — quite fitting, considering the touching meta-narrative it tells. At over two hours long, it is like falling down the rabbit hole.**

Bitter Lake is titled after the one-time meeting place of President Roosevelt and the Saudi royalty. Curtis painstakingly puts together an array of scenes like a jigsaw puzzle, to create the story of our lives, with all of modern western civilisation and global socio-economic geo-politics as its backdrop. Curtis adeptly uses music and archive footage to create an audiovisual experience which draws you in and refuses to let go. This is a visual essay, even a manifesto of sorts.

Film clips jump about from locale to locale, era to era, in a non-linear fashion as bewildering as the death and destruction they portray. Curtis has a storyteller’s voice, a voice of reason, yet his tone is that of a doctor soothing a dying patient.

The film reminded me of Hansen and Rubin’s “Listening Post” art installation at the Science Museum in London, the eerie, unnerving feeling of being privy to dangerous knowledge. But Curtis is no crackpot conspiracy theorist — he merely blows the dust from parts of the recent historical record, bringing new light to areas that we (or at least our

leaders) have chosen to forget. The plot itself is so convoluted that I won’t even bother to describe it, but I can sum it up with snippets as tangled as the film itself.

Mystery and intrigue, love and war, cloak and dagger, religion and oil. Opium and dams. The Cold War. Social engineering. Arms deals. Attempts at anti-communism failing, the fundamentalist and extremist “cure” being worse than the Stalinist disease. The balance of power. Psychotropic slow pans over beautiful landscapes. Petrodollars and banking. How the neoliberal Tories and Republicans replaced wage growth with lending and easy credit, an illusion of progress. Self-perpetuating violence, a vicious circle. How Kabul was destroyed in the post-Soviet power vacuum. Bribes and corruption. Why the 21st century brought a simplification of everything into perceived black and white, good versus evil, a fatally flawed moralisation.

If you want to know more then I’ll leave you with a quotation from Thomas Paine, which is paraphrased by Reagan near the film’s conclusion: “We have it in our power to begin the world over again.”

I must warn you that his film contains graphic imagery; Curtis is not afraid to show a brutal and unflinching depiction of the past 70 years in Afghanistan, which includes harrowing images.

If you only see one film in 2015, make it *Bitter Lake*. Everything else is irrelevant. This is something you should watch as if your life depended on it.

Bitter Lake is available on BBC iplayer.

Such considerations have not always characterised the publication of Luxemburg’s work in English. To give one example, the earlier English translation of *The Accumulation of Capital* (in 1951) left out its sub-title, “A Contribution to the Economic Theory of Imperialism” as well as its Foreword, which stated that “the present work should have some implications for our practical struggle against imperialism.” It also failed to include over a dozen other sentences or passages from the original. The new, complete translation of *The Accumulation of Capital* will appear in *Volume 2 of the Complete Works*, which will be published this spring. It will also include a new translation of her *Anti-Critique* — one of her most powerful writings — as well as an essay chapter on Volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital* that originally appeared as an unattributed chapter in Franz Mehring’s *Karl Marx*. (Mehring, who was not proficient in Marxian economics, had asked Luxemburg to write the chapter in his stead).

The Complete Works is divided into three rubrics — 1) her economic writings (two volumes), 2) political writings (seven volumes), and 3) complete correspondence (five volumes). Since her overall contribution cannot be grasped without engaging her work as an economic theorist, we have begun the series with her economic works. Admittedly, separating her oeuvres into economic and political writings is somewhat artificial. As she indicates in her correspondence, her initial approach to economic theory was largely stimulated by a political problematic — the expansion of European imperialism into Asia and Africa. Meanwhile, many of her “political” writings — such as *Reform or Revolution* — contain brilliant analyses of the economic law of motion of capitalism and its proclivity for cyclical crises. Yet given the amount of time, care, and attention that she gave to developing her major economic works, it makes sense to begin the Complete Works with her contributions to the field of Marxian economics.

We are now in the process of beginning the work on her political writings. At first we planned on issuing these in chronological order — beginning with her earliest writings within the Polish Marxist movement and ending with her writings of 1918-19. However, in light of the discovery of her many previously unknown or unpublished writings we have decided to structure the volumes around specific themes.

The first three volumes of the political writings will be devoted to “On Revolution.” Clearly, revolution was the central theoretical and practical occupation of her political life, and her writings on this subject reveals her most important contributions. The first of these (Volume 3) will consist of her writings on revolution up to the end of 1905. Volume 4 will cover 1906 to 1914 and Volume 5 material related to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and German Revolution of 1918-19. The political writings will be further rounded out by being organised around additional themes, such as nationalism, imperialism, etc.

We do not, however, envision creating a separate volume devoted to the question of organisation. Why not? The reason is that unlike other Marxists (such as Lenin), Luxemburg did not create a specific theory of organisation that was distinct from her concept of revolution. “Organisation” was not some separate and isolated branch of inquiry, but rather integral to her understanding of class-consciousness and its role in social transformation. In my view, this represents one of her greatest strengths, which can greatly aid the left’s effort to work out a viable concept of an alternative to capitalism.

The Complete Works will conclude with a five-volume collection of her correspondence.

The issuance of *The Complete Works* would not be possible without the assistance of the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, who has been of tremendous aid in all stages of our work on this project. The cost of translating these works is not inconsiderable, even in light of the relatively modest level of compensation that our translators have accepted. The RLS has been of great assistance in this regard, but it cannot cover the entire cost of translation.

We therefore encourage those interested in seeing this project through to its completion to make a contribution to the Toledo Fund; all contributions sent to aid the issuance of Luxemburg’s Complete Works will be used solely for that purpose.

To make a contribution go to:
toledotranslationfund.org/project/the-complete-works-of-rosa-luxemburg.

Syriza heads for a crossroads

By Theodora Polenta

On Thursday 5 March European Central Bank (ECB) President Mario Draghi refused to increase the limits on the Greek government's issuing of treasury bills. He extended the provision of emergency liquidity to Greek banks via the ELA by only 500 million euros, to €68.8 billion.

Draghi reiterated that "Greece will not participate in the QE program [Quantitative Easing, that is, ECB buying-up of government bonds]... a country in an economic program [i.e. Memorandum] under evaluation cannot be included.

"The ECB cannot until July or August purchase Greek securities under the program of QE since already the securities held by the ECB are beyond the limit set".

Martin Gegker, representative of the German ministry of finance, stated in the run-up to the 9 March meeting of eurozone finance ministers that "the sooner the Greek government implements the program of reforms the sooner the money will be released... the process cannot last beyond the end of June."

It is now apparent that the 24 February "Eurogroup agreement", with the "creative ambiguity" and "fuzziness" proudly described by Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, has strengthened and emboldened the lenders, rather than easing the pressure on the government.

Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras told the German magazine *Der Spiegel* (7 March) that "the ECB is still holding onto the rope that is around our necks". Thus he confesses that the four month extension has not granted the government breathing space but in fact has increased the appetite of the EU leaders for further blackmailing and scaremongering about bankruptcies, bankruptcy and Grexits.

BLACKMAIL

The government has been blackmailed by the leaders in the European Union and the European Central Bank to follow Memorandum policies unswervingly.

It is not allowed to implement its further-chopped-down version of Syriza's Thessaloniki declaration, despite its election victory and its 70% approval rate. It is stated in all tones, from the softest to the hardest, by the EU leaders that the government must comply with the rules, which are beyond and above parliamentary elections and programmatic pledges.

At the same time Brussels and Berlin are signalling that they are not happy with the "seven points" of the government. They are not enough. They must be supplemented by other measures.

The German government is interested in advancing privatisations in Greece and grabbing the fourteen regional airports. Spain insists on increasing the VAT rates on Greece's islands (currently 30% below mainland rates) because of tourist-industry competition, and other states are interested in that increase in VAT to get more revenues for loan repayments.

The government has established its line of defence. It has submitted its proposal to the "institutions" reassuring them that it will meet all its financial obligations in a timely way and that all its measures to address the humanitarian crisis will not create a fiscal gap, but will instead be financed by a drive against tax evasion, tax avoidance, and corruption.

The government has not ruled out the possibility of handing over the regional airports and increasing VAT on the islands. But Minister of the Interior Nick Voutsis says that the government and our country are "at war", "a social and class war" in the negotiations.

Finance Minister Varoufakis has sent proposals to the other 18 eurozone finance ministers, to be discussed at the Eurogroup on Monday 9 March.

Varoufakis's proposal to recruit informers who with cameras and tape recorders will record tax offences in tourist areas is ridiculous.

The Greek state is owed around €76 billion and the government is hoping to collect around €9 billion. The €76 billion are owed by 3.67 million individuals and 447,000 businesses. 3.7 million debtors, owing up to €5000 each, account for a total of €2.3 billion. The remaining 400,000 have debts of €73.7 bn, and just 6,500 (4,000 companies and 2,500 individuals) owe a total of €60.4 billion, over €1 million each.

The question that faces the government is whether they will try to collect "small amounts" from the 3.7 million debtors or target the 6,500 big debtors. The government seems to be going for the first line, which presents as a "service" to the



many poor debtors "enabling" them to repay their debts.

The government talks about an expenditure of around €200 million to address extreme problems of poverty, and about €500 million to restore the "13th month" of pensions for low-income pensioners on less than €700 per month, a total of €700 million. This is one-third of the €2.6 billion projected to be collected by the government from maintaining what is euphemistically referred to as the Special Contribution Solidarity tax in wages (1% to 3%), i.e. annulling the previous government's commitment to reduce the tax hike by 30%.

This means an internal transfer of resources from the poor to the poorest, leaving intact the upper middle class and of course the capitalist class, media barons, financial oligarchs, shipping capital, military and church property.

The ship-owning section of the Greek capitalist class enjoys numerous tax reliefs which remain intact. The value of the Greek-owned merchant fleet is about €106 billion, while the GDP of Greece does not exceed €180 billion. Greece ranks first in the value of purchases of new ships for 2014: €8.5 billion, with the US second at €3.5 billion. The maximum tax rate for corporations has been cut from 45% to 25% and there is not talk of raising it.

Yet the Syriza government still maintains its connection to the masses and still remains the repository of working class expectations. Also, it still retains a huge potential for taking policy initiatives in Greece and abroad. Syriza's government has not yet registered a full strategic defeat, through the government falling, or through Syriza undertaking the active management of a new memorandum program and formally abandoning the Thessaloniki agenda.

Syriza's leaders have a sincere commitment to their promises to overthrow austerity, but also the illusion that this can happen smoothly, with "security" within the eurozone framework.

The question now is not what space of manoeuvre the government has within the straitjacket of the existing relation of forces within the eurozone, but what program should the government implement despite and against the eurozone deal, and how should the Syriza rank and file mobilise to demand that program.

The Syriza government's position should be Syriza's congress decision: "No sacrifice for the euro". That would signify a qualitative break from the negotiating practices of the previous pro-Memorandum governments (ND, Pasok, Laos, Dimar), for whom all claims had as their political boundary the representations of the interests of the ruling class codified under the slogan "within the eurozone at all costs". The political boundary of this government should be: no return to the anti-working class memorandum policies. Instead of "within the eurozone at all costs" — "at all costs get out of the Memorandum".

In today's political and economic conditions such a program may lead to Greece being expelled from the eurozone.

The likelihood of this scenario is debatable. However, actions that may result in a forced "Grexit" will require the government of Syriza to deepen the popular mandate with a referendum question, "abandon the anti-working-class Memoranda or submit to the eurozone leaders' requirements".

If Syriza does not develop a dynamic that reinforces the radical nature of its policy and strengthens its bargaining position against the EU neo-liberal forces, then at the next stage the Syriza government will be crushed by the political class enemy. The most likely variant would be the dissolution of the left government and the pro-Memorandum mutation of a section of Syriza into a national coalition with the other ruling class pro-memorandum forces of ND, Pasok, Potami, etc. That development would be a total defeat for the Greek left and strengthen right-wing forces.

The political context is one where the working class and popular strata have achieved a first and important victory against the reactionary Pasok-ND forces, and it is now necessary and possible for this victory to deepen and obtain a more concrete and coherent radical working-class direction.

PREPARING

It is the duty of the radical Left in and outside of Syriza to organise open general meetings in the unions, in the community, in the neighbourhood, in the popular assemblies, informing the people about the real possibilities that lie ahead.

The radical Left and the Syriza government should be preparing the working class movement and politically, organisationally, and ideologically for the consequences of a Grexit.

Greece has an economy which can provide most of the necessities for survival such as food, housing, medicine, energy, and transport, provided that workers' control is implemented at all levels of production and distribution.

Without spreading illusions about the benevolent nature of other non-Eurozone capitalist governments, and without disguising the fact that tough negotiations would need to take place, the government should seek alternative credit lines.

As a minimum, the government, before the next negotiations, should install a new Governor of the Bank of Greece and replace the top management of all the four big banks. The government should implement Syriza's policy of nationalisation of the banks under workers and social control.

The government should be ready to issue special tokens in euros from the Ministry of Finance (without approval from the institutions), with collateral the wealth of the Greek state. It should force the banks to maintain reserves in cash so they

Continued on page 10

Syriza heads for a crossroads

Continued from page 9

can make cash advances of at least €200 per week per family to cover subsistence needs. It should ban bigger cash withdrawals at least 15 days before and after the initiation of the next negotiations.

The government and Syriza have only one way out of the impasse of the neo-liberal European straitjacket: a big drive forward.

It should declare an internal “Memorandum against the rich”, while improving the living conditions of the working classes and popular strata. The slogan “Make The Rich Pay For The Crisis” is more timely and appropriate than ever.

In a society where the loss of 25% of GDP and the poverty and destitution of a large segment of the population is only the visible face of the rapid intensification of social inequality, in a society where massive unemployment is the complement of an extended medieval working conditions, in a society of multiple contradiction and high expectations, the “popularity” of the government will not be maintained at 87% or 80% for a long time.

For the Syriza government to retain its hegemony on the working class and the majority of the Greek population, it is essential to unilaterally defend and support the working class majority against the EU neo-liberal framework and the national capitalist class. The margin for “nation-centred” policies that generally and vaguely defend everything “Greek” or “European” does not exist, and they can never be part of the political and ideological manifesto of the Left.

The left should “confront” the government with demands for decent wages and pensions, decent education, transportation and health care, and also prove through mobilisation that there is “another way” of dealing with the lenders besides capitulation. The call of an anti-Memorandum united-front government of the Left should be re-raised by Syriza activists.

Responsibility also lies with the international and especially the European Left. In Spain, France and Italy, in Germany itself, policy initiatives should be taken which would prevent the “institutions” strangling and overthrowing the government in Greece.

Syriza is a party of the radical left that in its congress voted for a united front and an anti-Memorandum government of the Left as a vehicle to overthrow austerity in Greece and in Europe. It is a party that in recent years has clashed with the Memoranda and the Troika in the streets together with the working class. It is the party of the cleaners and ERT workers.

The party of Syriza should be first and foremost the exponent of the collective consciousness of the working class, the organizer of their “anger and impatience”. The party should not advise the working class “to be patient”, but “to organise together to fight for our demands and advance working-class interests”.

The main task of Syriza is not to welcoming the government's work and become the government's spokesman, but the other way around. The party should be the representative of the working class and its guarantor by controlling the government and ensuring that its pro-working class program is implemented.

Long-distance race in Greece

By Sotiris Martalis, a member of the Greek socialist group DEA (Internationalist Workers Left)

The government portrayed the agreement with the Europeans as a matter of necessity, caused by the position it was left in by the previous government and the imminent expiration date on the bailout of February 28.

They claim that they won time — four months to prepare for further negotiations where they can make more gains.

But the truth is that they didn't prepare for any other option... They signaled their willingness to compromise from the beginning, with the formation of the government. The alliance with the Independent Greeks was a unilateral decision of the party leadership, without any input from its elected bodies. The same is true about the appointment of people with a social-democratic, and not a radical, outlook to positions of authority in the new government, particularly in the area of the economy and the banks. Plus, there is the nomination of a right-winger as president of the republic.

These decisions gave a very clear signal of what the government was willing to do — of the compromises it was prepared to make. Needless to say, the leaders of Syriza didn't prepare the party or society at large for the likelihood of rejection by the Eurogroup, or the possibility of a break with the euro...

There was a meeting of the Syriza parliamentary group [on February 26] that lasted 11 hours, with 140 of the 149 members of parliament speaking. Many objections were expressed, and in the end, more than 30 members of parliament voted against or abstained among the 120 who were still in attendance by the end of the meeting.

At this point, there are still no planned protests by the unions or the social movements. The forces of the Left Platform within the unions are adding their voices to the call for the government not to give in and to keep its promises... To be honest, workers are still waiting to see what the government will do next...

This isn't a 100-yard dash, but a long-distance race. The government is also moving in the other direction by announcing... legislation [which] will provide free electricity and food subsidies to the poorest 300,000 households, and it will create a housing program to help 30,000 people who are currently homeless.



Another law would bar imprisonment for debts up to 50,000 euros... There are planned proposals to tax and otherwise restrict the financial activities of those who transferred large sums of money abroad...

Another would restart ERT, the public radio and television station that the former government led by New Democracy closed down, laying off all employees.

Apart from these proposed laws, the government announced it was setting up a parliamentary committee to investigate how Greece entered into the Memorandums with the Troika, and whether those responsible are guilty of criminal wrongdoing...

Syriza is a nationwide network of union militants and political activists who in previous years fought within the working class and popular resistance.

Now, in the new conditions, these members can lead the way and open up the paths of resistance to others, by putting forward radical left politics and insisting on the objective of overthrowing austerity.

• Abridged with thanks from the US *Socialist Worker* (unconnected with the British paper of the same name): bit.ly/sotiris-m

Advice or class struggle?

By Martin Thomas

The *Guardian* has published (18 February) a talk from 2013 by Greek finance minister Yanis Varoufakis in which he declared himself an “erratic Marxist”.

Varoufakis praises Marx's account of how capital both develops labour's creativity and energy, and simultaneously cramps it within rigid, quantifying limits. But, he says, he himself seeks “a modest agenda” to “save European capitalism from itself”.

He learned to avoid more radical aims, he says, when a student in England in the early years of the Thatcher government. At first he thought the “short, sharp shock” of Thatcher's attacks would bring about “a new political revolution”. In fact the working class's defeats by Thatcher “permanently destroyed the very possibility of radical, progressive politics”.

Varoufakis claims that Lenin declared: “Things have to get worse before they get better”. Not to my knowledge he didn't. Trotsky argued the opposite. He wrote that capitalist economic downturn, following setbacks for the working class, brings worse (though not “permanent”) setbacks.

In his first preface to *Capital*, Marx wrote: “In England the process of social disintegration is palpable... It will take a form more brutal or more humane, according to the degree of development of the working class itself”.

The long-term interests of the capitalists themselves, he argued, called on them to allow space for the free political and cultural development of the working class. Nothing could bypass “the obstacles offered by the successive phases of development”; but it could “shorten and lessen the birth-pangs”.

In Britain we, the working class, had not developed sufficiently to beat Thatcher. And so the “disintegration” took more brutal form.

There is always, or almost always, some softer way out for capitalism which could be devised by an authority above the contending classes. But revolutions, or brutal regressions, happen when the class conflicts have made such detached policies unworkable.

The Greek working class put Syriza in office and Varoufakis in the finance ministry because it is not yet ready for revolution. It wants to try for relief through negotiations.

But by committing himself to the role of the modest adviser to save capitalism, Varoufakis shackles himself to the capitalist leaders who would have to take his advice. They are too scared to go for the “humane” forms which would encourage further political and industrial revolts across Europe. He risks ending up as an enforcer, with mild amendments, of “Europe's current posture”, which as he writes “poses a threat to civilisation as we know it”.

Our answer, as Marxists, is not to invoke revolution as the instant, off-the-cuff answer. It is to propose policies and paths of struggle, at every point, which maximise the independent political and cultural development of the working class.

After the Russian revolution, workers' real wages went down for several years — in 1921, to only 32% of what they had been in 1913 — before rising in 1926-7 to 60% above the 1913 level (and then, as the Stalinist counter-revolution triumphed, crashing in 1932-3 to only a fifth of what they had been in 1926-7). Thirteen years after the French Revolution of 1789, travellers were dismayed to see long grass growing between the stones of the once-busy quays of Bordeaux.

Revolution is not a short-cut to economic improvements, which can be invoked in abstraction from the development of the working class. It is just the only means — more costly or less costly depending on the degree of development of the working class, and the ferocity of capitalist resistance — to open the road to a new society.

It will take many further stages for the Greek workers to reach that conclusion. One of those stages will be the one in which they learn that Varoufakis's “modest agenda” of advice to capital is unworkable.

The job of socialists is to help workers learn that lesson in a way that takes them on to more realistic aims, not backwards to despair.

NUT needs a new turn

By Patrick Murphy

At its February meeting the National Union of Teachers (NUT) National Executive definitively ruled out further national strikes between now and the election.

NEC members who support rank and file campaign LANAC proposed that the Union call a strike for March 24, but were defeated by 24 votes to 13 with 2 abstentions.

This decision effectively brings to an end the action phase of the campaign since 2010 and the mandate of the current ballot as far as national strike action goes. Local strikes and action short of strikes will continue, but after the election there will almost certainly need to be a new ballot before further national strikes.

It is undoubtedly true that it is harder now to mobilise teachers for national strikes. The fundamental reason for this is that we have been demobilised by the vacillation and indecision of the national leadership. The continuing willingness of members to support one-day strikes whenever they are asked by the Union is a testament to their resilience and anger. But no union can repeatedly turn members on and off like a tap for token one-day strikes over four years without it having an impact on their confidence and sense of direction.

- We need to rebalot
- We need specific focused demands which members can see as popular and re-

alistic. In the immediate term, key demands which could galvanise teachers are an overall limit to teachers' working and teaching hours, a reversal of performance-related pay and a £2000 increase for all teachers.

- There must be a period of education, rebuilding confidence through winning and publicising local victories, and popularising our demands, before any ballot
- We need an organising drive across the union, but above all in academy chains and individual academies, so that we are in a fit state to deliver the kind of campaign needed to win. This should be an organising drive in the sense of a drive to level up conditions, based on clear and timely union information about the best conditions won, rather than just an effort to sign up more members and reps.
- An action strategy must be built from fresh so that demands and deliverable action are more closely matched
- The national campaign needs to include agreed instructions on specific workload pressures which will help NUT school groups win the tangible (if small) victories which rebuild confidence.

In the period ahead, including at NUT Conference, union members, school reps and activists should work with LANAC in ensuring that the future of the campaign is shaped around those key ideas.

Essex fire controllers escalate

By Darren Bedford

Fire control operators in Essex have escalated strike plans to eight days this week in an increasingly bitter row over cuts and shift changes.

FBU control members walked out at 07:00 on Tuesday 10 March and vowed not return until 07:00 on Wednesday 18 March.

A new imposed shift system has seen some emergency control operators having to leave their jobs or drastically reduce their hours and pay, with many



more considering their future with the service.

The majority of strikers are women, who say these shift changes are unfair and completely unnecessary as there are alternatives on the table that cost the same but

would be more manageable for all those working in the control room today and in the future.

Jo Byrne, FBU executive council for control members said: "We celebrated International Women's Day this past Sunday. These shifts disproportionately affect women with young families, and a number of our members have been forced to leave the service, whilst others have had no choice other than to reduce their hours and pay to fit in with available childcare."

The strikes follow a 24-hour strike across England

over pensions on 25 February. Some 3,000 firefighters rallied at Westminster, taking over the streets around parliament for several hours and blocking traffic. The FBU argues that the fire minister Penny Mordaunt misled parliament in December by claiming no firefighters would lose their jobs over the pension changes, despite fire service employers admitting the guarantee is not a guarantee at all.

The FBU said the pensions fight is not over and more action was likely.

Lewisham school students strike

By a Lewisham teacher and a Hilly Fields parent

The struggle against the plans to turn four secondary schools in Lewisham into academies is escalating.

On Wednesday 24 February over 70 people agreed at a public meeting to push the schools to ballot parents of pupils at each school over whether they want the schools to be converted. It also organised campaigning and publicity to spread the message about the threat to our education service.

This was followed on 4 March by a very impressive students' strike at Hilly Fields school. Around 100 students convened at the nearby park during their

lunchtime and didn't return to lessons until half-an-hour after the lunch-time break had ended. This strike occurred despite management at the school harassing the students who were organising it.

A day later, on 5 March, the school was closed and the other schools severely disrupted as members of the NUT, NASUWT and GMB struck together to stop the academisation. After the picket lines a large and noisy delegation handed in a letter to the Leathersellers' Company at their headquarters in Garlick Hill. The Leathersellers' Company runs the Prendergast Federation, which contains three of the four schools with are pushing for conversion. Outrageously, Leathersellers' have indi-



School students on strike on 4 March

cated, that they are moving the consultation period to before the Election — leaving just 6 weeks (instead of 6 months).

Unions are discussing escalating to a two-day strike. The students have responded and organised, not just on social media — a sit in at Vale school on

Monday 9 March led to 11 students being internally excluded. Ladywell school has threatened 5-day exclusions for student organising.

More information: bit.ly/Stop-academies

Anger on the Tube

By Ollie Moore

Members of RMT union on London Underground will meet on Monday 16 March to plan the union's next steps in the fight against job cuts and ticket office closures.

Tube workers have not taken industrial action in their "Every Job Matters" dispute since April 2014, but the proposed new rosters — which drastically reduce workers' number of week-ends off, increase long working, and introduce "cover weeks" where workers could be told to work anywhere within their group on almost any shift pattern — have been met with significant anger and look like provoking new

strikes.

Meanwhile, RMT's campaigns against the unfair sackings of several of its members continue. *Solidarity* has reported on the case of Alex McGuigan and Noel Roberts. LU has also now sacked long-standing cleaner activist Clara Osagiede and Karen Guyott, a station worker on the London Bridge Group.

Supporters of the rank-and-file bulletin Tube-worker, published by Workers' Liberty, will be attending the meeting on 16 March to argue that the union call new strikes as soon as possible.

For information on reinstatement cases see bit.ly/tube-victimisations

Pay offer in QEH dispute

A planned strike by outsourced workers at Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Woolwich, South London, on Monday 9 March was suspended after bosses made a pay offer.

The workers, members of GMB union, were due to strike for five days in a long running dispute which has seen strikes since October last year. GMB also successfully resisted attempts by the outsourcing contractor ISS to get an injunction against strikes in the High Court in November.

The offer sees the lowest paid ISS workers receive a rise to the new minimum NHS rate of £7.72 per hour from next month, meaning an 8.7% rise for lowest paid workers. GMB says that in-



creases in pay for higher banded staff have yet to be resolved. The deal also does not completely deal with the two-tier workforce, leaving issues of other terms and conditions such as sick pay and unsociable hours payments unsolved.

GMB will be balloting members on the offer.

More information — bit.ly/QEH-interview

Other industrial news

Unison health workers vote to accept 1% pay deal — bit.ly/NHS-pay

National Gallery workers to strike 14-15 and 24-18 March — bit.ly/Nat-Gal-strike

Cleaners at the Royal College of Art will stage protest about poverty wages Friday 13 March — bit.ly/RCA-cleaners

UCU ballots members at Salford University over victimisations — bit.ly/Salford-UCU



Stop blaming children for abuse!

By Charlotte Zalens

A report by the Oxford Safeguarding Children Board has said over 300 children and young people in the city may have been sexually exploited between 1999 and 2014.

The report, a serious case review, condemns police and social services for not doing enough to stop abuse and even deliberate and systemic lack of belief of girls who reported abuse.

Similar to police and social services in Rotherham, Thames Valley police repeatedly treated girls as if they had chosen to adopt a “lifestyle”.

The report says in 2006 alone the police received four complaints from some of the victims about some of the men involved. One girl made two reports of abuse in 2006, neither was taken seriously. She told officers: “They are doing it to other girls, little girls with

their school uniforms on.”

Rotherham and Oxford are surely not isolated cases, yet the senior investigating officer in Oxford’s Operation Bullfinch says councils are falling over themselves to insist that they do not have a problem with child sexual exploitation. He said, “If you think you haven’t got a problem in your city or town, you are just not looking for it.”

As with Rotherham, social worker posts in many cities sit empty while councils use agency staff to plug gaps — leaving services and workers overstretched. Social workers report unmanageable levels of bureaucracy and bullying managers.

Many working on the ground with victims of abuse, such as Risky Business in Rotherham, feel ignored and their concerns pushed aside.

The culture of blaming children for abuse, la-



belling them as “out of control”, and the pervasive sexism within authorities has to stop.

With the continuing investigation into historic

sexual abuse by establishment figures in Westminster, focusing on the apartment complex at Dolphin Square, the government is casting around for

quick answers.

As the report into abuse in Oxford was released, Cameron announced that professionals who work with children and council-

lors could face jail sentences if they are found to turn a blind eye to abuse. Legal measures will not change a culture of sexism and lack of care for vulnerable working-class children. Nor will they change chronic understaffing and underfunding of services.

While it is right that those with power who willfully ignore reports of abuse be held to account, many fear such people will not be challenged while people on the front line will be scapegoated.

This week Education Secretary Nicky Morgan announced plans to extend sex education in school to a younger age and to include issues around consent and rape. This should be welcomed.

Too often sex education in schools is limited, badly taught, sexist, and prone to victim blaming when discussing rape.

Iranian teachers fight poverty pay

By Iranian Workers’ Solidarity Network

Earlier this month, as part of a two-month-long campaign against low pay and pay disparity, hundreds of teachers protested outside the Iranian regime’s “parliament”.

In addition 600 teachers in Tehran, thousands more demonstrated in provinces throughout Iran.

One of the teachers’ slogans was: “We complain due to disparity, not poverty” (Ma az fargh minimal na az faghr) – a play on the words fargh (difference or disparity) and faghr (poverty). The teachers want an end to the pay discrimination they have endured for many years, and are demanding the same pay as other state employees who have bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees.

One of the teachers gathered in Kermanshah, western Iran, told IRNA (Islamic Republic News Agency) that despite having a doctoral degree, his monthly salary of 1.4 million toman (\$505) is much less than the pay of other state employees with a similar degree.

Some teachers have also protested against the low budget allocated to the Ministry of Education in 1394 (the New Year beginning on March 21). Although the health budget for next year is set to rise by 70 per cent, the education budget faces a budget deficit of five trillion toman.

With even the underestimated official inflation rate standing at 16.2 per cent, the teachers are demanding a pay rise higher than the 14 per cent announced by the Education Ministry.

IDEAS FOR FREEDOM
2-5 JULY 2015
IMAGINING THE FUTURE
CENTRAL LONDON

TICKETS £30 WAGED, £15 LOW-WAGED/STUDENT, £6 UNWAGED BEFORE 1 MAY

WORKERSLIBERTY.ORG/IDEAS 0207 394 8923 OFFICE@WORKERSLIBERTY.ORG