Hollande: France will "amend" EU cuts plan

Fight to reverse Euro-cuts!

Rally the European left to defeat far-right nationalists

"They are reassuring the markets, but what about us?" French protest against austerity measures

See page 5
**NEWS**

**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, impersonal destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalist class, 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 bureaucracies 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 struggles.

**We stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
- A workers’ government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
- Workers’ control of workplace or community to global social organisation.
- Open borders.
- Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere are in this together 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 — and join us! 020 7394 9823 solidarity@workersliberty.org

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**Misssed chances in 3 May polls**

**By Colin Foster**

Tory MP Nadine Dorries said it: the Government is led by “two arrogant posh boys who show no remorse, no contrition, and no passion to want to understand the lives of others”.

As council elections and referenda on whether cities want elected mayors approach on 3 May, Labour has at last begun to pull ahead in the polls, leading the Tories by a margin variously estimated between 7% and 13%.

It would be much more if Labour’s leaders campaigned properly against the Tory cuts and against those whom Ed Miliband rightly calls “the preda tors.” But for 3 May Labour council candidates are saying they will comply with Government cuts, only softening them.

As a result, Glasgow City Council, long a Labour stronghold, looks in danger of being captured by the Scottish National Party, which for many has more credibility as an “anti-Labour”-type reformism than Labour currently has.

The Scottish Parliament elections later this year will again decide the composition of the Scottish Parliament, and Labour and SNP are neck and neck head to head.

Labour, however, has at last begun to pull ahead in the polls leading the Tories by a margin varying from 6% to 2%.

Although only 14% of people polled think John son is “in touch with the concerns of ordinary people,” he has outdone Livingston in the “charismatic leader” act. 50% say Johnson has “charisma,” and only 15% will say the same for Livingston. 38% judge Livingston’s mayoral campaign “poor” or “awful.”

George Galloway’s Respect party has been boosted by his Bradford West by-election success on 29 March. It was previously on the verge of shutting down, but its MPs will now hold a national conference in June.

Labour’s mistake has been to muddle 12 candidates for the 30 council wards in Bradford, but in Birmingham, where it has once had a number of councillors, it proposes a vote for the Greens.

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (a group! If you agree with us, please take some copies of Solidarity to — and join us! 020 7394 9823 solidarity@workersliberty.org

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**Anti-fascist success**

Anti-fascists in Brighton succeeded in blocking a notorious and disrupting the annual far-right “March for England” on Sunday 22 April.

Nationalists were reduced to a curtained march and tiny rally inside a police cordon, well away from their planned route.

The success is a vindication for direct-action anti-fascism, as against the let’s-have-a-festival-two-miles-up-the-road-from-where-the-fascists-are approach to combatting the far right.

More from Brighton Anti-Fascists and Schwarze at bit.ly/luMrM.

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**Stop anti-choice harassment!**

On Saturday 21 April Feminist Fightback and other pro-choice activists tried to prevent anti-abortion extremists from marching to a Marie Stopes clinic in Woodford, Essex.

A group calling themselves the “Helpers of God’s Precious Infants” attempted to stop women from attending their appointment at the clinic. They held up images of foetuses and blocked one side of the road, handing out flyers which claimed that abortion would “damage your eternal instinct and … bonding process with any other children you have” and can lead to “alcohol, drug abuse and eating disorders.”

When feminist activists attempted to intervene to stop this harassment they were met with aggression. One pro-choice activist was head butted by a particularly zealous “pro-lifer.”

Soon after reaching the clinic Feminist Fightback decided to leave in order to reduce disruption for service users.

Such extremist tactics, imported from the United States, have been on the rise in the UK in recent months.

Another abortion clinic, Bloomsbury, Lon don, was targeted through-out the whole of March by the 40 Days for Life campaign, which used similar tactics of intimidation and harassment.

Feminists and the pro-choice movement are stepping up to take on this kind of harassment. One of these activists, Katie Cruz from Feminist Fightback, comments that “these ex tremists are not simply expressing their opinion. They are preventing women from accessing health services and spreading dangerous misinformation. It is a woman’s right to choose whether or not to continue with a pregnancy. We need to remember why women fought for the legalisation of abortion.”

“Before the 1967 Abortion Act women were forced to resort to dangerous methods of termination. Today 1 in 20 women die undergoing unsafe backstreet abortions in places where it is still legal.”

Feminist Fightback

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**Save Sure Start!**

On Thursday 19 April a colourful and noisy protest of 250 women, children and men, plus teddy bears and balloons took place in opposition to cuts in Sure Start nursery care provision in Liverpool.

The council is planning to cut 10 of 26 Sure Start centres. This will mean job cuts as well as the devastation of child care services people rely on.

Private nurseries are over subscribed so many parent are worried they cannot continue to work. 

The protest took place at the consultation meeting called by Liverpool council — 100 people went inside to present a petition while the rest stayed outside and blocked the rush hour traffic.

Many of those on the protest were on health grounds: some were scared of being seen on the protest, having been giving petitions and joining with parents to oppose cuts to jobs and services.

Many of the workers said they went with family members and that there had been no meetings to let them know what was happening.

Consultation meetings will take place at each centre — parents and workers will be asked to attend all of these meetings making their opposition formally.

We now need union meetings to organise balance at Sure Start and a co-ordinated ongoing community campaign.

Merseyside Women Against the Cuts and Liverpool Against the Cuts will be helping with that co-ordination.

Jayne Edwards

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**Alfie Meadows**

On 16 April a jury failed to reach a verdict on whether Alfie Meadows, the student activist nearly beaten to death by a policeman on a demonstration in 2010, was in fact guilty of vio lent disorder.

His lawyers, Vrushna Wood and Jack Locke were arguing that Meadows was guilty of violent disorder, but Locke was found guilty of arson. The jury then held a verdict on Zac King.

Alfie’s refusal is unlikely to take place before October 2012.
Greece: the threat from the far right

By Theodora Polenta
Citizen Protection minister Michalis Chrio-
chidis claims that by being “tough” on “illegal” immigrants he will mar-
ginalise the far-right Xrisi Aygi (Golden Dawn). The Miltary regime has
been upping its prospecs of revenues from offshore gas fields and
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By Rhodri Evans

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Support our May Day Appeal. Would you like to build support for your dispute or campaign? Why not send a message to trade union and social activists by placing a May Day message in Solidarity?

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Other ways you can help
- Taking out a monthly standing order. There is a form at www.workersliberty.org/resources and below. Please post to us at the AWL address below.
- Making a donation. You can send it to us at the address below (cheques payable to “AWL”) or do it online at www.workersliberty.org/donate
- Organising a fundraising event
- Taking copies of Solidarity to sell at your workplace, university/collage or campus group
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL.

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Mail revives its murky past

Press Watch

By Pat Murphy

The Daily Mail, like the Tory Party, has been trying for years to rebrand itself on the issue of race. It professes to be at the very least liberal and tolerant, and, in better moments, a champion of racial equality.

Maverick editor Paul Dacre invested considerable energy in pursuing the murderers of Stephen Lawrence, in large measure to prove the Mail’s modern identity. Given the consistently right-wing attitudes promoted in the paper and its peculiar obsession with an outdated and mythical pre-1960s Britain of all-white, monarchically-respecting, nuclear families this is slightly odd.

In part the desire to parade its equal opportunities credentials has a commercial logic — the paper competes in a diverse market which includes a sizeable black middle class. But for the Mail there is also a matter of “living down” its history, its promotion of British fascism in the 1930s. The paper’s most infamous front page was published on 8 July 1934. The headline “Hurrach for the Blackshirts” accompanied a piece on Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF) that read: “If the Blackshirts movement had any need of justification, the Red Hooligans who savagely and systematically tried to wreck Sir Oswald Mosley’s huge and magnificently successful meeting at Olympia... would have supplied it.”

On 15 January 1934 the BUF was described as “a well organised party of the right ready to take over responsibility for national affairs with the same directness of purpose and energy of method as Hitler and Mussolini have displayed”. The Nazis were described as “Europe’s guardians against the Communist danger.”

On 10 July 1933, the paper’s proprietor Lord Rothermere wrote: “I urge all British young men and women to study closely the progress of the Nazi regime in Germany. They must not be misled by the misrepresentations of its opponents. They have started a clamorous campaign of denunciation against what they call ‘Nazi atrocities’ which, as anyone who visits Germany quickly discovers for himself, consists merely of a few isolated acts of violence such as are inevitable among a large army as big again as ours. The campaign has been sensationalized, multiplied and exaggerated to give the impression that Nazi rule is a bloodthirsty tyranny.”

The Mail’s support was much appreciated by Hitler, who wrote to Rothermere in 1933 to thank him. The paper is much less likely to go in for the nostalgic reporting of historic editions than many others. It is a history they would rather we all forget. Which makes the paper’s 20th July 2013 edition, which marks the 80th anniversary of the BUF’s founding, a timely reminder.

The Daily Mail has returned to the business of supporting the rise of fascism in Europe. The author of this piece, Les Hearn, suggested Richard Waghorne, the French National Front’s bastion that the Mail is the only party “advancing the case for an exit from the Euro” and for Le Pen’s “defence of French national identity in the country with Europe’s most numerous Muslim minority”.

As ever with this rag, it’s the colour of the fascist’s skin that seems to matter, not the poisonous and reactionary nature of their politics.

• Intervened in and absorbed them.

A “hand” led to running the “old” programme, and replacing it by no programme at all, by a vocal and militant tone on ‘left’ causes as defined by broad public opinion, rather than by a carefully-analysed revision in light of new conditions.

Now Martin Thomas is careful in weighing his words, but others are no doubt much less inclined.

We know what this means: liquidation of the programme! Capitalisation to Stalinstum! Fascism!

In reality the Gauche Unitaire has undergone an evolution followed by important sections of the European far-left, democratic socialists, and parts of the remaining Communist Parties.

This is towards a deeply democratic social republicanism — the political vehicle of a renewed socialist programme.

The Gauche Unitaire has no programme? Read the magnificent Front de gauche’s “L’Humain d’abord”. It is one of the most advanced programmes on the European left.

Read the Gauche Unitaire’s E-Mail newsletter. No programme? Please.

• Edited by: Andrew Coates, from tendencieusecret.com/wordpress

Blinging EU and Germany

We need to tackle those with economic power, but that is not the intention of Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s Left Front. At most its economists (some of them coming from the Socialist Party) adopt the language of the alternative-globalisation movement and denounce “financial” capitalism, “democratic globalisation”, and the remaining Communist Parties.

It’s the same old story of imagining a fair capitalism, a better Europe in capitalism’s terms, that will simultaneously exhaust fewer resources and submit to capital’s laws of reproduction, a kinder capitalism.

It is a nationalistic and protectionistic perspective which the Left Front proposes (and the Communist Party too, but that is not new).

• De-nunciation of the European Union, blamed for all the workers’ woes... and supposed to have produced “a new totalitarianism” headed by “Lady Ashton” and her 5,000 bureaucrats of the European foreign office...”

• De-nunciation of Germany. In his programmatic book, The Third Way all g’t, Mélenchon noted “The relations of the Germans with their neighbours are not sufficiently harmonised... It was a mistake to agree that the Germans should be more numerous in the European Parliament than the French.”

No, none of this language pleases some sections of the CP, long nourished on the poison of nationalism. It remains a fact that to suggest to workers that they could have national interests rather than class interests is to sustain a demagogy also used by the far-right...

www.guillempartenet.net

Uses of religion

While it was good to read the interview with Andrew Copson of the British Humanist Association (Solidarity 242), it was disappointing to see Richard Dawkins’ supposed views on religion.

Dawkins does not deny the concept of religious belief as merely a stupid, wrong idea. As he explains in The God Delusion, the ubiquity of religion strongly suggests that it either has some valuable tendency of children to obey their parents and elders, thus avoiding many dangerous situations. Why the trap of a formuic denunciation of Richard Dawkins’ supposed views on religion.

Dawkins thinks that religions may have spread through the trap of a formulaic denunciation of Richard Dawkins’ supposed views on religion.

He gives an example of such a by-product the tendency of myths to fly in the face of historical facts. Myths have involved in a way where for hundreds of millions of years the only light at night has been the Moon, by which they can navigate. Canid flames, a recent phenomenon, are brighter and nearer, overwhelming the myth’s navigational sense.

Dawkins thinks that religions may have spread through the valuable tendency of children to obey their parents and elders, thus avoiding many dangerous situations. Why the trap of a formulaic denunciation of Richard Dawkins’ supposed views on religion.

In other words, religious beliefs are a by-product of things that have survival value.

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4 SOLIDARITY
Francois Hollande — the Socialist Party's candidate for French president — has made policy commitments with implications for the future of economic policy throughout the Eurozone and Europe more widely. They have helped him to do better than the PS candidates in 2002 and 2007 and to beat the incumbent, Nicolas Sarkozy, into second place in the first round of the 2012 election.

Hollande wants to renegotiate the Fiscal Treaty decided by the EU in December and signed by all the EU states except the UK and the Czech Republic. The Treaty — which still requires ratification by 12 states to come into force, and faces a referendum in Ireland — requires states to limit their “structural” budget deficits to 0.5% of GDP. For 2010 the average deficit of the EU 27 was 4.7%. How much of that is “structural” is guesswork. Only Estonia and Sweden have had a “negative” (positive) budget surplus since 2010. Hollande’s policy of limiting taxes over one million euros at 75% is popular with voters, as is his promise to create more jobs in education, and spend more on housing.

Hollande says austerity is threatening economic growth and prosperity rather than nurturing it, in France and throughout Europe. Many people, even in the ruling classes, know that, and so a Hollande victory could shift the economic approach of Europe and particularly of the Eurozone as a whole away from right-wing fiscal austerity.

The collapse on 23 April of the strongly pro-cut Dutch government, unable even to meet a target of cutting its budget deficit to 3%, strengthens that possibility.

But his approach is not intended to challenge the rule of capital, not even slightly! It offers a more social-democratic management of capitalism and maybe some Keynesian attempts to stimulate demand. The response of socialists in France, the UK, Spain, Italy and everywhere in Europe should be to work for unity of the labour movement across Europe. Unity around a common programme, not of tinkering with the institutions of European austerity but of making the bankers and bosses face the crisis.

A programme that gives a clear answer to the far-right nationalist demagogues feeding on the crisis, like Le Pen in France and Xrisi Avia in Greece, and Wilders in the Netherlands. A programme that aims instead to reshape a united and more democratic Europe.

The French left and the election François Hollande scored 26.8% in the first round of the French presidential election on 22 April. With the second round, on 8 May, will be a run-off between Hollande and the right-wing outgoing president, Nicolas Sarkozy.

Marine Le Pen, leader of the far-right, anti-immigrant National Front, scored an alarming 18.0%.

On the left, Jean-Luc Mélenchon got 11.1% on the first round — less than the 17% he got on some opinion polls, but way ahead of the 5% which polls gave him at the start of the campaign. Philippe Poutou of the NPA (New Anti-Capitalist Party) got 1.2%, and Nathalie Arthaud of Lutte Ouvrière (LO), 0.6%. These are poor results compared to the scores of the revolutionary left in 2002 and 2007.

Almost all of Mélenchon’s voters will go for Hollande in the second round. According to polls, most of Le Pen’s voters will back Sarkozy in the second round, but many will abstain; the 9% who voted for the centre-right candidate François Bayrou will divide fairly evenly. These transfers look like giving Hollande victory on 6 May.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon is a former Socialist Party left-winger, a minister in the last SP-led government, who split away from the SP in 2009 to form his own splinter group, the Parti de Gauche (PG, Left Party).

The PG is small, but Mélenchon was the candidate not just of the PG, of the Front de Gauche, on Left Front, an alliance of the PG and smaller groups with the reduced but still large French Communist Party.

In the last presidential election, the PG got a dismal vote (1.9%) for the perfidious candidate of a CP apparatus, Marie-George Buffet. This time not only CP members but the young sector of the PG who split from the CP were not sympathetic to the CP to be mobilised for Mélenchon.

Mélenchon’s 11.1% seems to include many young voters. It rests on a large chunk of the electorate voted for full reimbursement (rather than partial, under France’s “social insurance” system) of health charges, renationalisation of public services, a return to full retirement ages at age 66, an increase in the minimum wage, etc., all summed up under the slogan of “a citizens’ revolution” and “a Sixth Republic”. This represents a constituency of great importance for the left.

What we say

There is a downside, however. The total vote to the left of the Socialist Party seems to be up a bit compared to 2007 (total 9%), but down on 2002 (13.9%) and 1995 (14%).

It’s difficult to be precise on this, for example because it’s difficult to tell whether we should count Green votes (low in 2012 and 2007, but 5.3% in 2002) as to the left of the SP. But the got is that the increased vote for Mélenchon, compared to recent CP candidates, had as flipside a decreased vote for clearly revolutionary socialist candidates.

This probably didn’t mean that the same people who voted for Mélenchon for NPA in 2007 and 2002 voted Mélenchon this time. Research has shown that a lot of the “far left” vote in France is fairly unstable — many people vote “far left” as a one-off protest against many Mélenchon voters were young. However, the “far left” dropped back and Mélenchon/CP advanced.

The drop in LO and LCR/NPA votes cannot plausibly be attributed to them running new people this time in place of their candidates in 2002 and 2007, Arlette Laguiller from LO and Caroline Gérin-Lajoie from the LCR. Besancenot at the start of his 2002 campaign, when he did a bit better than in 2007, voting for full reimbursement (rather than partial, under France’s “social insurance” system) of health charges, renationalisation of public services, a return to full retirement ages at age 66, an increase in the minimum wage, etc., all summed up under the slogan of “a citizens’ revolution” and “a Sixth Republic”. This represents a constituency of great importance for the left.

The French left and the election François Hollande — the Socialist Party’s candidate for French president — has made policy commitments with implications for the future of economic policy throughout the Eurozone and Europe more widely. They have helped him to do better than the PS candidates in 2002 and 2007 and to beat the incumbent, Nicolas Sarkozy, into second place in the first round of the 2012 election.

Hollande wants to renegotiate the Fiscal Treaty decided by the EU in December and signed by all the EU states except the UK and the Czech Republic. The Treaty — which still requires ratification by 12 states to come into force, and faces a referendum in Ireland — requires states to limit their “structural” budget deficits to 0.5% of GDP. For 2010 the average deficit of the EU 27 was 4.7%. How much of that is “structural” is guesswork. Only Estonia and Sweden have had a “negative” (positive) budget surplus since 2010. Hollande’s policy of limiting taxes over one million euros at 75% is popular with voters, as is his promise to create more jobs in education, and spend more on housing.

Hollande says austerity is threatening economic growth and prosperity rather than nurturing it, in France and throughout Europe. Many people, even in the ruling classes, know that, and so a Hollande victory could shift the economic approach of Europe and particularly of the Eurozone as a whole away from right-wing fiscal austerity.

The collapse on 23 April of the strongly pro-cut Dutch government, unable even to meet a target of cutting its budget deficit to 3%, strengthens that possibility.

But his approach is not intended to challenge the rule of capital, not even slightly! It offers a more social-democratic management of capitalism and maybe some Keynesian attempts to stimulate demand. The response of socialists in France, the UK, Spain, Italy and everywhere in Europe should be to work for unity of the labour movement across Europe. Unity around a common programme, not of tinkering with the institutions of European austerity but of making the bankers and bosses face the crisis.

A programme that gives a clear answer to the far-right nationalist demagogues feeding on the crisis, like Le Pen in France and Xrisi Avia in Greece, and Wilders in the Netherlands. A programme that aims instead to reshape a united and more democratic Europe.

The danger from the far right

The National Front/FN vote, though not as high as some opinion polls suggested, was high: 6.4 million people, 17.8% of the vote — the fascist party’s highest score in a presidential election. They seem to have done well among working-class and among young voters. In 2002 the former leader Jean-Marie Le Pen caused shock waves when he won through to the second round with 16.9% of the vote. 2002 saw a relatively low turnout for the first round, 5.5 million in the second round where he was trounced by Jacques Chirac winning the votes of almost everyone else on the political spectrum.

The FN was knocked back after that, although in the 2007 elections Poutou broke through to a high 3.8%.

One thing that has changed since then is the character of the main right-wing party, the UMP (the party is itself a merger of UDF and Rally for France) led by the long-serving Chirac, particularly in the second round in 2002, standing as Rassemblement pour la République (Rally for the Republic), presented himself as a president for all French people. Sarkozy is a far more abrasive politician, showily patriotic, anti-immigration and anti-immigrant, but less visibly fascistic, tone.

As with the other far-right Xrisi Aygi (Golden Dawn) in Greece, the FN score shows that popular anger against the crisis can be channelled in far-right and nationalist as well as left-wing and internationalist directions.

The far-right can be undercut and defeated only by an effective left.

The sceptical view on housing
The rate of profit in the UK between 2005 and 2011

The pensions dispute, paradoxically, has encouraged de-cline for the local anti-cuts committees which mushroomed from late 2010. Committees were swivelled towards focusing on “the next big thing” (26 March, 30 June, 30 Novem-ber), and then left limp after the “big thing”, or undercut by the focusing of activist energies on the pensions issue, on which, given the unions’ complete lack in practice of a polit-ical campaign to accompany their industrial action, the anti-cuts committees had little traction. In most though not all areas those local anti-cuts committees are significantly re-duced.

We must learn lessons from the shortcomings of the pensions campaign; Almost total lack of debate in the unions about strategy, indeed almost total lack of honest communication from union leaders to their members during the campaign. Bad effects of a trade-union approach which, amidst a vast welter of attacks by government and bosses on workers’ conditions, handed down from above a focus on one hoped-for “making-a-breach” issue (pensions) and a series of one-off protests on that issue. Lack of a public-political campaign, linking the issues of public-sector pensions with those of private-sector pensions and the state pension. Bad effects of a trade-union culture which has come to see strikes as one-off protests to strengthen union officials’ hands in subsequent negotiations, rather than as continuous action to force concessions. There has been a habit of seeing strikes, when they happened, as “about” pensions, rather than for specific demands. This culture also sees ballots on strikes more as gambits in negotiations than as instructions by the members to union leaders. The paralysing ef-fect of a doctrine, pro-claimed most vocally by the PCS leaders, that unions cannot hope to achieve any-thing even on the details of their own members’ pay, jobs, and conditions, unless they get other unions to strike along-side them.

Weakness of the major “left” or “rank and file” groups in all the unions involved STA and CDFU in the NUT, Left Unity in PCS, Unison United Left, Unite United Left — which failed to sug-gest strategies different from the top leaders’ and to promote debate.

Even hard-core ac-

UK unemployment & ILO measure (million)

POLICY

By Daniel Randall and Martin Thomas

Bankers’ and bosses’ pay and bonuses, share prices, and profits have recovered nicely since the sudden crash of 2008-9. This semi-recovery for the bourgeoisie does not come with any economic recovery for the working class. Real wages are going down, and set to go down further. Unemployment is high and not falling. The Government plans even heavier cuts for the next few years than it has made in 2010-2.

The economic picture globally (with a slowdown in China and high oil prices) and in Europe determines that the process is at best for a long period of economic pression, or possibly for fresh shocks which will crash even the super-ficial semi-recovery (for the bourgeoisie only) and the lim-ited revival of private-sector jobs.

Capitalist slumps coming after a period of relatively low working-class activity and confidence usually, in the first place, push down activity and confidence further. The milit-ant working-class expression of the anger, disillusionment, and enforced rethinking generated by the slump usually comes not in the midst of the slump, but in the subsequent economic recovery or general semi-recovery.

That is the general (though not invariable) rule, and it is no surprise that things have, broadly, worked that way so far in this crisis. Even so, it matters a great deal whether the setbacks in liv-ing standards, working conditions, organisation, confidence, and class cohesion suffered in the slump are limited or large. It matters whether partial victories, and limited initiatives to rebuild, can be established in the slump, or not. It matters whether the socialists can recruit the individuals pushed by slump times into re-thinking, and educate them, train them, integrate them.

The 30 June and 30 November strikes made the organised working class a visible social force in a way not seen in a generation. The great many young workers who struck for the first time on 30 June or 30 November will have learned about the power of organised labour.

The problem with the pensions dispute has not been that workers were unwilling to move. The 30 June and 30 November strikes, and even the 28 March strike (confined to London, and called as a “sop” by union leaders who had already overruled union member-ship surveys calling for a national strike), got good re-sponses. The demonstrations on those strikes days brought out large numbers of workers, especially young workers.

There is every reason to suppose that if the union leaders had allowed more honest and open communications, and real debate, then large suppressed resources of creativity, imagination, criticism, and militancy among the rank and file would have been released.

But the pensions dispute is now ailing, on life support with the 10 May day of action and vague talk of something more in late June. This is a significant setback. The union leaders have been found wanting; and, in certain ways, the movement as a whole has been found wanting too.

LESSONS

We must learn lessons from the shortcomings of the pensions campaign:

Almost total lack of debate in the unions about strategy, indeed almost total lack of honest communication from union leaders to their members during the campaign.

Bad effects of a trade-union approach which, amidst a vast welter of attacks by government and bosses on workers’ conditions, handed down from above a focus on one hoped-for “making-a-breach” issue (pensions) and a series of one-off protests on that issue.

Lack of a public-political campaign, linking the issues of public-sector pensions with those of private-sector pensions and the state pension.

Bad effects of a trade-union culture which has come to see strikes as one-off protests to strengthen union officials’ hands in subsequent negotiations, rather than as continuous action to force concessions. There has been a habit of seeing strikes, when they happened, as “about” pensions, rather than for specific demands.

This culture also sees ballots on strikes more as gambits in negotiations than as instructions by the members to union leaders.

The paralysing ef-fect of a doctrine, pro-claimed most vocally by the PCS leaders, that unions cannot hope to achieve any-thing even on the details of their own members’ pay, jobs, and conditions, unless they get other unions to strike along-side them.

Weakness of the major “left” or “rank and file” groups in all the unions involved STA and CDFU in the NUT, Left Unity in PCS, Unison United Left, Unite United Left — which failed to sug-gest strategies different from the top leaders’ and to promote debate.

Even hard-core ac-tivist left groups such as SWP and SP expressed a distinct view, chiefly through proposing that the actions promised or planned by the leaders (30 June, 30 November, etc.) be thought of in more radical terms as (a “one-day public sector general strike”), or thought of as leading straight into more radical action (“two-day general strike” or “all out, stay out”), or thought of as likely to bring down the government.

The major outcome to build on now is the beginnings of a rank-and-file network of school workers, with the confer-ence on 16 June called by the Local Associations for Action on Pensions as follow-up to their large fringe meetings at the Easter conference of the National Union of Teachers.

For AWL, building on the modest recent increase in our number of workplace and industrial-sectorbulletins is a pri-ority. Such bulletins are an indispensable tool of information and debate about strategy are to reach beyond the limits of earlist of key activists.

Over the next years and decades, we should conceptualise our work in the unions not just as mobilising the rank and file against the top leaders. It is also a matter of helping to develop, and working with, a new generation of younger union activists, with the aid of the best of the experienced older activists.

The average age of a workplace rep in the British trade union movement was in the late 40s on the most recent com-prehensive figures (2004) and will be older now. In other words, the average union rep is someone who probably came into activity around the time of the 1984-5 miners’ strike.

The number of workplace reps across the economy has, according to best guesses, dwindled from 335,000 in 1984 to maybe 150,000 in 2004-9 — faster than union membership has declined. On the best guesses available, the proportion of paid union full-time officials to members has increased somewhat, though the total number of paid full-time offi-cials remains small, perhaps 3,000 across the whole move-ment. On the latest available figures, 81% of paid union full-time officials are over 40.

Today’s older union reps who started activity in the 1980s are, in many ways, the best of their generation. They stuck with the movement while others fell away.

Yet many of them — on the evidence of the pensions dispute, a majority of them — have suffered an erosion of spirit, even if they are still nominally left-wing or revolutionary-minded. For twenty or thirty years they have been trained in union activity as damage-limitation — as primarily an ef-fort by assiduous union negotiators to get a passable out-come on individual grievances or on redeployments following job cuts. The predominance of older reps often means that younger reps are hegemonised by, and take their model of union activity from, the older ones.

UK unemployment & ILO measure (million)
The winning of union facility time, from the 1970s onwards, was a trade-union gain, linked with legal guarantees of right of affiliation to union representation for workers with grievances. We should defend facility time against the attacks being made by employers and government.

DOUBLE-EDGED

However, we should also recognise that facility time has been a double-edged gain, providing a basis for a sort of “trade union activist rank-and-file level”. We must drill down below the layer of long-standing facility-time trade-unionists to a wider range of workers.

We should strive constantly to draw newer, younger workers into facility-time activity and to combat assumptions that once older workers get facility-time posts, they more-or-less automatically keep them until retirement.

We should work wherever possible to generalise individual grievances into collective ones, rather than letting workplace union activity become an aggregate of atomised individual casework. We should insist on accurate, speedy, and full communication by facility-time reps to the members they represent, and well-organised and democratic meetings to decide policy and monitor their work.

That “trade union activist” usually connotes someone at least middle-aged is not iron law.

The French union movement collects statistics which give us a picture. At the Amiens congress of the CFTC in 1906, the average age of delegates was 36. Victor Griffuelhes became general secretary of the whole confederation at the age of 40. Around 1961 the average age of CGT congress delegates was 38. The average became markedly younger from 1968 through to 1978, and then rose again. By 2006 it was 48.

A rejuvenation of the corps of union activists is not only possible in the coming years, but necessary. The current generation will move on whatever we do. More and more of the existing activists will move into retirement, early retirement, or ill-health.

RATIONALISATION

So far, new young activists roused up by the “new anti-capitalism”, by environmental activism, or by the big anti-war mobilisations have not flowed into union activism in anything like the way the student and youth radicalisation of the late 1960s and early 70s flowed on. Some activists have moved into the NGO world, and others straight or almost straight from university into being full-time union officials.

Some have remained active in miscellaneous campaigns while relying for income on casual and short-term jobs where they don’t do union organising. Yet there must be a larger potential for developing new young union activists than has been realised so far.

The defeat over pensions does not at all wipe out the prospects for working-class struggle in the next year or so. In working-class history it has often happened that what looked in advance like the “main” issue passed with relatively little action; and then an issue which seems secondary or off-centre sparked revolt.

There are plenty of issues coming up: service cuts, pay freezes, radical marketisation of the Health Service, benefit cuts, “new standards” in schools... And there is plenty of discontent to supply the raw material for mobilisation.

The Tories are already following up on the pensions dispute with further attacks:

- The continuing social cuts, as detailed above;
- continued cuts in real wages in the public sector. The current two-year pay freeze will be followed by a one per cent limit on pay rises from 2013-4;
- plans to “regionalise” public sector pay;
- privatisation and marketisation in the health service and in education;
- possible moves in the public sector to cut union facility time, or even in some places to de-recognition unions.

The threat of new anti-union laws also remains on their desk, though currently dormant.

Regional pay will be hard to push through on a large scale. If the average public-sector pay rise is to be limited to one per cent, then it will be hard to open up large differentials between regions without actually cutting nominal wages in the regions destined for lower pay; and historically workers resist cuts in nominal wages much more fiercely than cuts in real wages brought about by price inflation.

Economist Richard Diwyse, a former IMF adviser who has been called in as an adviser by the Government and who says that regional pay is in general “a good idea”, declares: “If you were to do it, you should do it when people are getting 3 or 4 per cent increases and someone should have had the courage to recommend it a few years ago. I don’t really know how you do it now”.

The French union movement collects statistics which give us a picture. At the Amiens congress of the CFTC in 1906, the average age of delegates was 36. Victor Griffuelhes became general secretary of the whole union confederation at the age of 27; Leon Jouhaux succeeded him at the age of 30; even after World War Two, the crusty Stalinist Georges Seguy became secretary of the CGT railworkers at 22, and secretary of the whole confederation at the age of 40. Around 1961 the average age of CGT congress delegates was 38. The average became markedly younger from 1968 through to 1978, and then rose again. By 2006 it was 48.

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The defeat over pensions does not at all wipe out the
By Jon Lansman

...equality, and of the organisations of labour that created him to sustain it) is a rejection of the politics of class Labour.

equality of opportunity, that false hope that cannot be delivered back those five million voters. It may be hard for those who stand theneed for trade unions and solidarity, for collective under -
...resulting from their own involvement in his government.

...that Blairism pays lip service is the only equality to which Blairism pays lip service. This is not true of the traditional Labour right. They share 
...with the party's current economic policy.

AUSTERITY

Labour has overseen a policy of fiscal austerity and ultra-conservative economics that led to a worsening of inequalities, with the government's 
...austerity that hits the poor hardest and.

...the party herself, as alien to social democracy.

• From leftfuture.org

The wairin' of the green, the courtin' of the Queen

By Ruben Lomas

Sinn Fein members on Belfast City Council will be supporting celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee due to take place in the city in June.

...with Sinn Fein support the celebrations.

But naive “socialists” who think Sinn Fein are some kind of genuinely radical or progressive force have had another illusion shattered.

Blairite party-within-a-party is a structural obstacle to Labour’s revival

By Jon Lansman

In the face of defeat in Bradford, Ed Miliband has recognised the need, deep, genuine change to reconnect with the five million voters lost under New Labour.

At the same time, Labour right-wingers like Luke Akehurst are already saying “disgruntled” that other Labour members can put aside loyalty to their party to express solidarity not only with the voters of Bradford West who rejected Labour but even with Respect leader Salma Yaqoob. They fail to recognise that ...themselves to the same kind of genuinely radical or progressive force have had another illusion shattered.

Discontent in Irish Labour

By Neil Warner

The annual conference of the Irish Labour Party, (13-15 April) was the party's first conference as a party of government in fifteen years, and the conference of a party founded exactly one hundred years ago by, among others, the two great heroes of Irish socialism; James Connolly and James Larkin.

Some of us on the left, or even simply the cynical, the wing of the party noted that an ignominious mark this was, that the party's accomplishments in government have been and how far it has drifted from the principles of its founders.

Last February Labour achieved its best result ever and became Ireland's second largest party. This followed the collapse of the party's leader, Peter Robinson, and popular Fianna Fáil Labour's leadership subsequently agreed a grand coalition with the conservative Fine Gael. That was approved by about 90 per cent of the party membership in a show of hands after a heavily manipulated debate.

In light of Labour's success and genuinely excellent election of the party candidate Michael D Higgins to the largely symbolic position of President of Ireland last October, much of the media reported on the conference with headlines of 'triumphant Labour', outlining how 'all is rosy' in the party.

...for the first time at an Irish political event (unquestioned by most of the party).

But unless we make that break, we will not break through to a shift to the left.

What all those who share social democratic values, left and right, can demonstrate is that demonstrating a commitment to class equality and to solidarity, and to making a total break with Blairism, is absolutely essential to winning back the tens of thousands of people who are so determined to build a new Ireland. But unless we make that break, we will not break through to a shift to the left.

And they should also understand that the reason so many of those who have shared social democratic values are so unsympathetic towards Progress is not so much the money and the influence bought, not the lack of openness, internal democracy and transparency — we have grown used to these things under New Labour — it is that they see the values of Blairism, and Blair himself, as alien to social democracy.

8 SOLIDARITY

The wairin' of the green, the courtin' of the Queen

By Ruben Lomas

Sinn Fein members on Belfast City Council will be supporting celebrations for the Queen's Diamond Jubilee due to take place in the city in June.

Questions were raised in February, Sinn Fein councillor Conor Maskey said: "We took this decision not just as an act of generosity but to show that we are conscious of how important the jubilee is to the unionist community."

The anti-sectarian sentiment is indeed admirable and, as a bourgeois party entirely within the framework of "ordinary" bourgeois politics, why wouldn't Sinn Fein support the celebrations?

But naive "socialists" who think Sinn Fein are some kind of genuinely radical or progressive force have had another illusion shattered.

Michael D Higgins

...On the Friday evening, a suggestion from the standing orders committee to move motions relating to internal party matters to the end of Sunday afternoon was quietly slipped through. On Sunday afternoon it was announced that there was no more time for the remainder of motions, including one to reconsider the party's position in government at a special delegate conference next year. They were all "referred back".

Discontent was seen on two issues. The first was over the election of the anti-establishment figure of Colin Keaveney as party chair. Keaveney has been one of the more critical voices in the parliamentary party and his candidacy was generally opposed by the party establishment. Keaveney's election got the support of the unions, and others who dis -sent from the party's current approach. The unions are a much smaller proportion of the conference vote in the Irish Labour Party than in the UK Labour Party. But their block vote makes them a powerful voice when united with other groups. It is hoped that in his position Keaveney will be less amenable to manipulation of conference than outgoing chair Brian O'Shea.

DISCONTENT

More significant was the discontent shown over voting on motions and resistance to the clear attempts by the party leadership to override internal democracy. This culminated at one stage in a predominantly spontane ous revolt from the floor during economic motions.

Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Spending and Reform, proposed that a series of progressive motions be referred back. A recommendation to refer back a motion from the party, rejecting austerity and calling for expansive fiscal policy, got the support of the unions and Sinn Fein. O'Shea refused to count the vote and declared the reference back proposal following a "whisper vote", as the chair, Brendan Howlin, Minister for Public Spending and Reform, pursued the party's defence of the "Troika" following a "whisper vote", as the chair, was defeated by six votes. The announcement was greeted with enormous cheers.

Yet more farce followed when the substantive motion needed to be voted on. Briefly consulting a visibly frustrated O'Shea, Sinn Fein declared "motion fails" to a disbeliefing conference, without even putting it to a vote. In the wake of much outrage, O'Shea decided to be generous enough to put to the motion to vote. In the face of overwhelming support for the motion, O'Shea again declared that the motion fell, before further rounds of objection led him to vote the motion down and admit that it had passed.

Membership resistance to the leadership position should not be exaggerated. But the elements of resistance were very clear. Sinn Fein were putting up no opposition to government policies had developed within the party in the lead-up to conference.

In spite of a well-attended Labour members' forum in January organised around dissatisfaction with the government, and worthy examples of opposition to government policy from TDs (MPs) such as Patrick Nulty and Tommy Broughan, such opposition remained disorganised. Few coal ition groups have joined Unite and Labour Youth, the only two major organisations to oppose Labour going into government.

Unite is a smaller union in Ireland than in the UK. With larger affiliated unions such as IMPACT and SIPTU, potential for open opposition is mitigated by a government agreement not to impose further public sector pay cuts or lay-offs. They have not yet come out strongly against government policy.
Economists debate Europe

Italy’s Northern league implodes

By Hugh Edwards

In 1992 Italy was engulfed by the corruption scandal “Tangentopoli” (Bribesville). That, Italy’s most serious post-war political crisis, saw the end of the First Republic and all its big parties. Leading the mass protests outside and inside parliament was the Northern League, led by the populist figure of Umberto Bossi. He encapsulated the radical mood and spirit of his party’s programme as “surveillance without coordination” and “a frontal assault on the social models”. He explained how, as from 2011, each year the EU runs a cycle (“the European Semester”) under which each member state submits its budget and economic “reform plans” and has them approved (i.e. declared neo-liberal enough) or disapproved by the EU. A state which sticks to plans reckoned not neo-liberal enough faces a fine by the EU, though this punishment procedure has yet to be tested.

Chief among the specifications is that even EU leaders are aware they are floundering. Especially if “Hollande wins” the French presidency, “the fiscal pact will change... There will be an end to the euro”, predicted economist Engelebert Stockhammer. The revelations of systematic and massive corruption have unmasked this gang of ruthless, lying and murderous charlatans. The millions who voted for them, bought into the promise of their (neo-liberal) fantasies, echoed their xenophobic and sexist ravings, saluted their racist laws, cheered along with them as boatloads of immigrants lifted the burden from their backs. The coming administrative elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

In the crisis, as they sought to protect their bases of support by channeling resources their way. The arrival of the technocrat Monti and his government further deepened the problems for the party. Monti’s emergency budgets have savagely diminished the redistribution of resources from the centre to the regions and communities, where the effective political and administrative control of the League had orchestrated a gigantic machine of patronage, at the expense of the local chieftains in other regions seek to save their neck and their power. That is a different matter from setting euro-exit as the left’s first objective, and correspondingly posing immoderate demands in terms primarily of national policy. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Jerry Brown has already declared that he is opposing euro-exit “for the sake of the stable European Union”. The coming elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

The working classes of the worst-hit countries have more scope within the eurozone to begin to claw back ground, and not exit. Euro-exit should therefore be a first-line policy. Labour movements in the worst-hit countries cannot, of course, accept the conditions currently imposed by the EU. The ruling classes want to keep the euro; and are not budging policy EU-wide, and the only way to get a more or less stable situation is by setting euro-exit as the left’s first objective, and correspondingly posing immoderate demands in terms primarily of national policy. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Jerry Brown has already declared that he is opposing euro-exit “for the sake of the stable European Union”. The coming elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

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EUROPE
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By Martin Thomas

Current European Union policies will produce “Grievance depressions for a decade” in southern Europe, predicts economist Engelbert Stockhammer.

Stockhammer, speaking in an economists’ conference on the crisis in Europe on 19 April at King’s College London. Many of the other speakers were, like Stockhammer, members of the “Euro-memo” network of leftish economists from across Europe. European governments produce briefing each year arguing against the neo-liberal doctrine of EU policy and (on a broadly Keynesian basis, though some Euro-memo members are Marxism) for alternative policies.

Trevor Evans from the Berlin School of Economics summarised the current Euro-memo proposals: the European Central Bank should backstop bond issues by eurozone states, so they can use the collective creditworthiness of the whole eurozone to finance fiscal and monetary demands by eurozone states, focused on expanding market demand in the richer EU states rather than on shrinking expenditure in the poorer states; an audit of the government of debt-haunted states like Greece, and cancellation of layers of it; a wealth tax and a wage policy aimed at “levelling up”.

John Grilli from Middlesex University described the current EU policy as “surveillance without coordination” and “a frontal assault on the social models”. He explained how, as from 2011, each year the EU runs a cycle (“the European Semester”) under which each member state submits its budget and economic “reform plans” and has them approved (i.e. declared neo-liberal enough) or disapproved by the EU. A state which sticks to plans reckoned not neo-liberal enough faces a fine by the EU, though this punishment procedure has yet to be tested. The revelations of systematic and massive corruption have unmasked this gang of ruthless, lying and murderous charlatans. The millions who voted for them, bought into the promise of their (neo-liberal) fantasies, echoed their xenophobic and sexist ravings, saluted their racist laws, cheered along with them as boatloads of immigrants lifted the burden from their backs. The coming administrative elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Jerry Brown has already declared that he is opposing euro-exit “for the sake of the stable European Union”. The coming elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

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SOLIDARITY 9
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On the way out?

Trentin — a suffragist of the League — it has presided over the systematic and wholesale devastation of the public school system, health and welfare, as billions are sucked from the local state coffers to pay interest to banks and finance houses. It has overseen billions being funnelled to the schools and colleges of the Catholic Church and other unscrupulous tin-pot outfits. Ironically, at the point of its maximum success with the victory of the last Berlusconi government, when it extended power to the regions of Piedmont and Veneto, the onset of the financial and economic crisis signalled the beginning of the League’s decline.

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INDUSTRIAL
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The north and northeast industrial base had suffered as Italy lost out to the ruthless competitive dynamic of globalisation.

Unemployment began to rise in the heartlands of the League. Berlusconi and Bossi continued to deny there was a crisis, as they sought to protect their bases of support by channeling resources their way. The arrival of the technocrat Monti and his government further deepened the problems for the party. Monti’s emergency budgets have savagely diminished the redistribution of resources from the centre to the regions and communities, where the effective political and administrative control of the League had orchestrated a gigantic machine of patronage, at the expense of the local chieftains in other regions seek to save their neck and their power. The revelations of systematic and massive corruption have unmasked this gang of ruthless, lying and murderous charlatans. The millions who voted for them, bought into the promise of their (neo-liberal) fantasies, echoed their xenophobic and sexist ravings, saluted their racist laws, cheered along with them as boatloads of immigrants lifted the burden from their backs. The coming administrative elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

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BALKANISATION
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A process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Napolitano knows that if it survives, other alliances with the left-centre parties may be on the agenda, while the former Forum leader Berlusconi would be there, as well. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Jerry Brown has already declared that he is opposing euro-exit “for the sake of the stable European Union”. The coming elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.

The working classes of the worst-hit countries have more scope within the eurozone to begin to claw back ground, and not exit. Euro-exit should therefore be a first-line policy. Labour movements in the worst-hit countries cannot, of course, accept the conditions currently imposed by the EU. The ruling classes want to keep the euro; and are not budging policy EU-wide, and the only way to get a more or less stable situation is by setting euro-exit as the left’s first objective, and correspondingly posing immoderate demands in terms primarily of national policy. The process of “Balkanisation” might ensue, especially if Bossi is forced out — though without him it may be impossible to maintain the internal topographical sense of the “unity” of “Padania” that has defined the party’s revolutionary socialist program. Jerry Brown has already declared that he is opposing euro-exit “for the sake of the stable European Union”. The coming elections may give the first indication of the change. The mainstream parties are not莫须有the same as in the past. Many of them have been abandoned. The right has been contaminated by the wind of change, and the left too.
In December 1936 the POUM was ejected from the Catalan Generalitat (provincial government) on the orders of Stalinist consul in Barcelona, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseyenko (the man who led the Bolsheviks’ assault on the Winter Palace in 1917). At a party conference in February 1937 the POUM belatedly drew some of the same conclusions as Trotsky on the Popular Front. The POUM resolved to call for the formation of revolutionary workers’ democracy to consolidate the revolution and argued that to “maintain the bourgeois parliaments” was an anachronism that could be fatal.

However, they underestimated the extent to which revolutionary democracy had already been destroyed and held illusions in a “peaceful” transfer of power.

Moreover, there was no change in their relationship with the Bolshevik-Leninists. According to Bortenstein, Bolshevik- Leninist militants in the POUM’s militias were expelled from the ranks before the conference was convened.

Less than three months later the revolution was dealt a final death blow. During the “May Days”, the PSCU (Stalinist) controlled Assault Guards seized the Telephone Exchange in the centre of Barcelona from the anarchists. This sparked the final act of revolutionary drama; barricades went up and the most militant workers in Barcelona fought a doomed rearguard action to save what was left of the previous summer’s conquests.

As the CNT and POUM leadership hesitated, many of their militants fought bravely on the barricades, joined by the Bolshevik-Leninists and the Friends of Durruti (a group on the left of the CNT, named after the martyred anarchist leader Buenaventura Durruti). With the Friends of Durruti, the Bolshevik-Leninists drew up a programme for insurrection which called for a revolutionary front of the POUM, CNT-FAI. The collective defeat brought down the curtain on the revolution.

THE FATE OF ANDRÉS NIN
On 16 June 1937 the POUM’s executive met in Barcelona to discuss the upcoming party conference. After the meeting a comrade from the party headquarters warned the group that the police had orders to arrest the party executive.

Andrés Nin died that afternoon and in the full light of day, a car filled with police arrived and arrested Nin.

More arrests of senior POUM members followed, carried out by the Stalinist-controlled Madrid secret police. By now the Stalinists, in collaboration with Juan Negrín, were suppressing all genuine revolutionaryists. They used slander, denouncing revolutionaries as “traitors,” “fascists” and “spies”, torture, and even murder in a network of unscrupulous repression.

Nin was slandered as a fascist collaborator. Graffiti in Barcelona accused him of being “a traitor” to which the Stalinists replied, “In Salamanca or Berlin.” Nin was in fact being held in Alcalá de Henares, outside Madrid, where he suffered beatings, torture, and the weight of the Stalinist thugs.

According to former Communist Jesus Hernández: “Nin did not capitulate. He resisted, to his dismay. His torture, his prison, his imprisonment. He decided to abandon the ‘dry’ method. Now came the living blood, the rended flesh, the twisted muscles, which would put to the test the man’s integrity and capacity for physical resistance.”

“Nin bore up under the cruelty of the torment and the pain that refined torture inflicted on him. In a few days his human shape had been turned into a formless mass of swollen

flesh.”

Leaders of the POUM. Nin is second from the right.

On the night of 22 June, an armed group of German International Brigadists posing as “Nazi agents” sought to “rescue” Nin and took him away. The rescuers had been selected by Alexander Orlov, the Stalinist secret police, NKVD’s man in Spain, and led by Stalinist gangster Vittorio Vidali, who was later involved in the failed assassination attempt on Trotsky in May 1940 in Mexico City. Nin died at the hands of these Stalinist thugs without once being公司的omat or having his comrade:

Trotsky wrote of his old comrade: “When Andrés Nin, the leader of the POUM, was arrested in Barcelona, there could not be the slightest doubt that... at the end of a few days the GPU would not let him out alive... the members of the POUM fought heroically against the fascists on all fronts in Spain. Nin is an old and incorruptible revolutionary. He defended the interests of the Soviet and Catalan peoples against the agents of the Soviet bureaucracy. That was why the GPU got rid of him...”

At the same time Trotsky had words for comrades who uncritically supported in the POUM. It was, he wrote, in the aftermath of the May Days, “at this crucial moment that the Venecickers, the Sneevliets, the Victerr Serge have placed their cudgels between the spokes... The CNT and the POUM have done just about everything to assure the victory of the Stalinists, that is, of the counter-revolution. And Venecicker, the POUM, and Victor Serge have done everything to support the POUM on the road to ruin.”

BETRAYED

Now the Stalinists came after the remaining Bolshevik-Leninists. Munis, Carlini and others were betrayed by a Stalinist double-agent, a German political commissar in the International Brigades who operated under the pseudonym “Max Joan”.

They were accused of murdering International Brigade captain Léon Narvich and put on trial for terrorism. The trial was eventually scheduled for 26 January 1939, but with tragic irony, this was the date France’s forces entered Barcelona and the trial never took place.

Carlini escaped to France and later became a member of the Italian Trotskyist movement. Munis fled to Mexico, where he met with Trotsky, before getting involved with the international Trotskyist movement. He later became disillusioned with “orthodox” Trotskyism.

Like the German Revolution of 1918-23, the Spanish Revolution shows a combination of very favourable objective conditions with a monumental failure to construct a revolutionary Marxist party capable of leading the working-class to victory.

The revolutionaries in the POUM and the small Trotskyist movement had to deal with immense issues: they had to compete with other ideological currents with much deeper roots in the Spanish labour movement; the conditions of the Civil War made conducting political work incredibly difficult; the Stalinists were particularly efficient and ruthless cadres of the counter-revolution.

The “subjective” factor, the role of the revolutionary party, remains a vitally important discussion. Speaking of the revolutionary party, Antonio Gramsci’s wrote: “The decisive element in every situation is the permanently organised and long-prepared force which can be put into the field when it is judged that a situation is favourable (and it can be favourable only in so far as such a force exists, and is full of fighting spirit).”

Such a decisive force was lacking in the Spanish Revolution. The POUM did not subscribe to the principles of organisation worked out by Marxist socialists. People like Paul Healy, Leon Trotsky and many others had shared and clarified these principles in the course of momentous revolutionary struggles. Unity in action, freedom in political debate and absolute commitment to clarifying political ideas and testing those ideas in struggle was the basis of those principles.

Because it lacked such a political “background” the POUM consistently denied genuine factual rights to Trotskyists groups. Because it could not see the point of working at political clarification it cut off all real contact with the Trotskyists abroad.

INSULATIVITY

Some of this can be traced back to the insularity of the Nin’s group criticised by Trotsky in the early years; the rest is due to the peculiar centrist character of Maurin’s BOC.

Without the freedom to debate and criticise, and for majority opinions to be allowed to work towards becoming the majority, differences of opinion become entrenched and push towards organisational splits. In Spain many talented militants found themselves isolated, outside any substantial revolutionary organisation. Their advice and experience was ignored; that had disastrous and preventable consequences.

Yet the proper mechanisms for debate are especially important in a revolutionary situation, when discussions about tactics and strategy are literally a matter of life and death. As Trotsky wrote in Lessons of October: “No better test of view-points concerning revolution exists than the verification of how they worked out during the revolution itself.”

Tragically, brave and talented militants were to be found within all the revolutionary organisations but they never found the “unity in action and openness in debate” necessary to develop a revolutionary Marxist ideology, still less to reach out and win a mass following. That course was a possibility (the extent of which we will never know) , but it blocked, in part, by the substitution of bureaucratic methods for political debate.

The selfless heroism of the Spanish Revolution is an example of the best traditions of our class but the ceaseless squabbles about the tone of inter-party criticism, while big issues of policy were at stake, should stand as a lesson for today.

More than anything Spain demonstrated the dead weight of Stalinism on the working-class movement. It contrasts sharply with the rational, principled and revolutionary Marxism which faces outwards through the whole class in order to fight the battle for socialism.

Selected reading
- David Crotty (ed.), The Serge-Trotsky Papers (Pluto Press).
- Al Richardson (ed.), Spanish Civil War: The View From the Left (Merlin Press).
- Workers’ Liberty No. 50, “The Spanish Revolution”.

How do the revolutionary and Stalinist traditions of Marxism and anarchism relate to each other? What are the differences? How and where are the commonalities?

This pamphlet brings together articles, debates and exchanges between members of the Alliance for Workers’ Liberty and the Solidarity Network. These articles appeared in Solidarity newspaper during 2011.

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10 SOLIDARITY
Pressure for strikes mounts in tanker drivers’ battle

By Darren Bedford

A conference of oil tanker driver trade union reps has overwhelmingly voted to reject the deal offered by fuel haulage bosses in an attempt to avert a potential strike over safety and minimum standards.

“Although the drivers’ union, Unite, resumed talks at consultation centre ACAS, the decision piled pressure on the union to name strike dates, something it had been reluctant to do since drivers voted for action. In a nervy anticipation of a legal challenge, it has even begun re-balloting drivers at one company (Hoyer), meaning those workers cannot take part in any strike action until their second ballot is completed.

As Solidarity went to press, Unite’s strike ballot mandate was due to expire, with no announcement of strike dates as yet forthcoming from the union.

Unite officials claim “some progress” has been made in talks. The details of the offer have not been made public.

Workers are demanding cross-industry minimum standards on pay and health and safety, and the creation of a cross-industry forum to guarantee union oversight of whether standards are being enforced.

550 jobs on the line at British Gas

By Padraig O’Brien

550 workers could lose their jobs as British Gas plans to close its Southampton centre.

The company says it needs “to reduce costs” and than an increase in online customer services means fewer call-centre workers are needed.

Rather than committing to oppose the plans, the trade union Unison, which organises some British Gas workers – has said only that it will “examine the company’s business case” for the closures.

Train drivers’ pensions strike

By Darren Bedford

Members of the train drivers’ union ASLEF working for East Midlands Trains have voted by 76-4% to take strike action in defence of their pensions.

EMT bosses want to reduce employer contribution to the scheme.

ASLEF has scheduled strikes a series of one-day strikes through May, on the 3rd, 8th, 10th, 15th and 17th.

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One would not be pleased

BBC strike could hit jubilee coverage

By Clarke Benitez

Trade unions organising at the BBC have announced they will not be taking action to win a pay increase in line with inflation.

A joint statement from the National Union of Journalists, Unite and the Broadcasting, Entertainment, Cinema, Photography and Theatre Union (BECTU) on Thursday 19 April described BBC bosses’ current pay offer – a 1% increase – as “derisory”.

Unions also criticised the BBC management decision to write to workers individually to introduce the pay rise two months earlier than first planned. Unions believe this is a deliberate ploy to bide workers time to take strike action by putting extra money in their pockets sooner than expected. If BBC workers strike, coverage of the Queen’s diamond jubilee celebrations will be severely disrupted, as would coverage of the Euro 2012 football tournament and the London Olympic games. BECTU general secretary Garry Mornerry said unions would “wipe out” as much of “the jubilee coverage” as possible” in order to win a decent pay day.

Unions are demanding an increase of 2% above inflation, with a minimum increase of £3,000 for every employee.

Balloting will begin on 30 April, and the result will be announced by 10 May.

An orgy of pro-monarchist sycophancy being disrupted by strike action really should be something to celebrate.

| London school workers strike against cuts |

By a Tower Hamlets education worker

Teachers and support staff at Central Foundation Girls School in East London will strike on Wednesday 25 April as part of a battle to resist redundancies and pay cuts.

The school’s management announced a restructure in January 2012 that involves job losses and pay cuts of up to 10% for some support staff, and an increase in teachers’ work load. Current National Union of Teachers policy recommends an 80-20 balance between contact time and non-contact time, but CGFS management wants to reduce the time teachers have to do marking and administration. The pay cuts for support staff will have a knock-on effect on pensions.

Bosses claim they have to make these cuts because the school’s budget is in deficit. The deficit is because the school is a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) school, every year it has a £2m surplus and gives huge sums to private companies for running the PFI scheme.

Priveatisation

The scheme itself is in deficit, so the school has to make it up.

Staff are paying with their jobs and wages for mismanagement and financial incompetence of private companies.

The cuts are also about taking the union, which are relatively well organised at CGFS. Man 40 May feel that they can beat the unions now, they will be able to win future cuts with little opposition.

A recent letter from the Chair of the Board of Governors also argues that the cuts are necessary to allow the school to “compete in the context of a deregulated education system”. That gives the strike a much wider significance. As Tony plans to increase the number of Academies, Trust Schools and Free Schools continue, the CGFS cuts show how all education workers – even those working at schools that remain within community or Local Education Authority control – suffer from deregulation and marketisation.

“Some progress” has been made in talks. The details of the offer have not been made public.

Workers are demanding cross-industry minimum standards on pay and health and safety, and the creation of a cross-industry forum to guarantee union oversight of whether standards are being enforced.

Pressure for strikes mounts in tanker drivers’ battle

By Stewart Ward

The precise extent of the public sector pensions strike on 10 May remains unclear, as some unions are refusing to name the day and a mere “day of action”, while others emphasise walk-outs and picketing.

Unite promises “rallies and demonstrations” as “picketing” by its members in NHS, while the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) promises a strike ballot. A call to reject a proposal to the Union Executive by Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, at the TUC Public Services Liaison Group National Union of Teachers officials said NUT members would not take action on 10 May, and Unite officials were unclear on what their 10 May action will be.

The broader and more solid that action on 10 May, the more positive a role it can play in galvanising working-class confidence for ongoing industrial confrontation with the Tories. Trade union members, particularly in Unite and PCS, should push for more open and public communication from their unions to make the strike real, autonomous and owned by the membership.

Members of unions not taking part should discuss how to deliver effective solidarity.

Union busting in the new NHS

By Ira Berkovic

Private contracting giant Serco has unilaterally broken off relations with the GMB union at Plymouth’s Derriford hospital.

GMB members employed by Serco have been campaigning for nearly a year against the threat of cuts to terms and conditions. Now their employer is refusing to talk to their union, amounting to an effective de-recognition of the GMB, severing the rights to a collective bargaining.

Companies like Serco will have much greater control over the service contracts in the new NHS. If Serco is finding the struggle in Plymouth shows that privatisation leads to union busting, something to be avoided at all costs.

Solidarity

SOLIDARITY 21

BBC strike could hit jubilee coverage

By Clarke Benitez

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**Imigrants attacked in run-up to Greek elections**

By Theodora Polenta

Citizen Protection minister Michalis Chrysochidis, a member of Posok (rough equivalent of the Labour Party), is leading an attack "for the run-up to Greece’s parliamentary election in April..."

The last act of the Papademos coalition government was to pass legislation for the construction of 31 concentration camps (in former military facilities) for illegal immigrants, identified in the election campaign as threats to the economy.

Health minister Andreas Loverdos, also Posok, says that illegal immigrants should be kept in quarantine because they pose a health threat. "Germ migrants from countries where certain diseases are rife should be put in quarantine."

Georgios Kamnis, mayor of Athens, supports the Posok, saying that illegal immigrants should be kept in separate units in the hospitals and kept in isolation because they pose a health threat.

All immigrants from countries where certain diseases are rife should be put in quarantine.

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- What's wrong with conspiracy theories? with Jack Ferguson of the Scottish Socialist Party
- Roma communities and the rise of the far right across Europe

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**NHS cuts: “much more than closing the odd ward”**

The official NHS regulator, Monitor, has been under pressure to bring hospital managers (17 April) to a letter to NHS hospital managers saying that they need to cut budgets by 7 per cent a year from 2013-14 onwards.

A typical NHS hospital with an annual turnover of £800 million will need to cut £21 million. Health care costs generally increase faster than costs generally, because of an ageing population and longer survival by sick elderly people, and a greater number of expens...