

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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CLOSING

OUR A&ES!

Horn End Nurseries held a "mini march" to save Stafford A&E. The campaign has set up a shop in the town's Guildhall and plans a "night of light" protest on 18 May. supportstaffordhospital.co.uk

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

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Cyprus left goes for euro-exit

By Theodora Polenta

On 29 April the Central Committee (CC) of AKEL, the Communist Party which until 28 February 2013 held the presidency of Cyprus, declared that "the only choice for Cyprus is a solution outside the loan agreements and Memorandum.

"The implementation of such a solution is likely to constitute a decision for exit by Cyprus from the Euro".

The next day, 30 April, the Cyprus Parliament ratified the Memorandum, an economic agreement with the European Union (EU) and European Central Bank (ECB), by 29 votes against 27.

The new governing party, the conservative and Christian-Democratic Democratic Rally, voted for. So did the Democratic Party (centrist liberals) and the President of the European Party.

AKEL, EDEK (social democratic), the ecologists, the other members of the European Party, and one independent voted against.

AKEL is the first mass party of the left in Europe to raise exit from the euro, and its decision has caused considerable debate in the Greek left and especially in Syriza.

It is a challenge to the Syriza leadership's stance, which refuses even to consider that its programme might lead to sharp clashes with the eurozone authorities.

At the same time, AKEL's decision is quite limited and in no way raises the issue of an alternative economic model beyond and outside the framework of capitalism.

AKEL, when in government, implemented a series of cuts, and last November brought Cyprus into a first Memorandum. Even now the AKEL CC implicitly evaluates positively AKEL's Memorandum. It says that the new Memorandum constitutes "a serious negative qualitative differentiation" from the previous one, and declares "its readiness to support the government in the difficult task of tackling the economic crisis, provided that it is moving in the right direction".

AKEL's euro-exit proposal is addressed primarily to Cyprus's new right-wing Government,

Selling lottery tickets in Nicosia

inviting it to negotiate an exit and to put the plan to the people in a referendum.

Far from AKEL proposing euro-exit in association with a refusal to meet debt payments, it declares that "the importance of a coordinated euro-exit is interwoven with the process of negotiating the repayment of Cyprus's foreign debt with its lenders".

The European Party, EDEK, and ecologist MPs that voted against the Memorandum also expressed concern over the loss of "national sovereignty", but no intention to challenge the capitalist system.

CONFLICT

In Greece, the Syriza leadership is trying to avoid conflict with the ruling class of Greece, in the mistaken hope that a smooth, conflict-free scenario will fast-track its ascent to government and increase its support among the scared middle layers.

Safeguarding Greece's position within the Eurozone is a key choice for the vast majority of Greek capitalists.

The greater part of AKEL does not want to come into conflict with the Greek Cypriot capitalists, and AKEL repeatedly proved that during its time in government.

However, because the EU/ECB/IMF Troika has chosen to demand serious measures against Cyprus's swollen banking system, thus hitting a very large part of the ruling class of Cyprus, a large chunk of the Cypriot capitalist class is seriously discussing exit from

the euro.

That is why AKEL can propose to exit the euro, without coming into conflict with the Cypriot capitalist class.

Back in March a major survey by the Cypriot TV channel Sigma recorded 67.3% of Cypriots endorsing a euro-exit and closer relations with Russia.

This survey showed a sharp rejection of the handling of the crisis by the new president, Nicos Anastasiadis.

The question of exiting the Euro is no longer taboo in Cyprus, partly because of the experience of social regression in other EU countries caused by the implementation of successive Memoranda, but also because the Cypriot ruling class has important international alliances that go beyond the eurozone and the EU.

INTERNATIONAL

The AKEL CC did identify a need to establish international alliances to address those parts of the Cypriot and international capitalist classes that would fight against euro-exit, and to guard against a reaction from Turkey in relation to Cyprus's gas resources.

However, AKEL did not specify who its potential allies are. Are they Samaras's Greece, Rajoy's Spain, or the working-class movement in Europe and the Middle East?

The replacement of the current Memorandum by another more patriotic Memorandum, and reliance on negotiations and agreements with the neoliberal

leadership of the eurozone to organise a euro-exit, are not part of an answer for the Left and working-class people to the crisis.

A class approach requires building alliances with the workers and peoples of the Middle East and Europe, especially southern Europe, who have been fighting against the onslaught unleashed by international capitalism.

After the experience of Cyprus, the leadership of Syriza has shifted a bit, from a stance of "at all costs stay in the euro" to "stay in the euro, but not at all costs".

The Syriza leadership still does not have the courage to take up the slogan of Syriza's left: "No sacrifice for the euro". That means fighting for a working-class programme without any "self-censorship" in the name of the euro.

Neither Syriza nor anyone else on the left will find a way forward if they continue to see the euro as a fetish, either negative ("There is no life outside the Eurozone") or positive ("Exit from the euro is the answer").

There is life outside the euro. There is austerity outside the euro too. There is austerity and capitalist cannibalism inside and outside the eurozone, inside and outside the EU. The culprit is the universality of capitalist crisis and capitalist domination!

Exit from the euro could mean an even more unbearable austerity if the leading force is the bourgeoisie or a government of the Left with the illusion that the decisive choice is the currency itself.

Despite dominating the political discussion, the currency is not the "big choice".

The big choice for the Left is the revolutionary programme of transitional demands of rupture and anti-capitalist overthrow, and the decision to raise class struggle and be prepared for an all-out confrontation with our class opponents for its implementation, by all means and under all circumstances.

We need a workers' government, which would be based on workers' democracy, workers' and social control, self-organisation, and workers' militias.

Stop the Tories closing our A&Es!

By Todd Hamer

Accident and Emergency departments are at crisis point. One patient in every ten admitted to A&E now has to wait more than four hours to be treated or discharged — double the figure this time last year.

Royal College of Nursing spokesperson Patricia Webb described the situation in the East of England: "Patients are woken up at three in the morning and moved around the hospital — cupboards and catheter laboratories are being used to house patients."

In Oxford University Hospital there is now a "queue nurse" who looks after patients in the queue waiting to be triaged.

In Wales patients have been waiting on trolleys in corridors for over 24 hours and nurses struggle to find places to wash patients.

The crisis in A&E is a symptom of a much bigger problem in the health service. Successive governments have been trying to achieve two contradictory goals: to cut spending and at the same time to privatise the NHS and create a viable for-profit health sector.

All healthcare experts agree that the key to reducing costs in the NHS is to reduce the number of emer-

gency admissions. Early intervention, public health campaigns and beefed up GP surgeries could help.

However, instead of increasing community services and then making savings, government tried to achieve the goal with artificial market mechanisms.

First New Labour ordered £11.6 billion of hospitals to be built using PFI schemes. In return we will pay £79.1 billion — mostly to tax-dodging millionaires.

Then the coalition decided to freeze spending at 2010 levels for five years, creating a funding gap of £20 billion. NHS managers had to come up with clever ideas to save money. But when these savings are added to the mounting PFI debt, the only clever ideas left were to shut down the hospitals. There are now 24 A&E departments under threat.

Then they legislated to punish any hospitals that have too many A&E admissions. Under the internal market Primary Care Trusts pay a set rate for A&E admissions. However, if more people turn up to A&E than in 2008/9 then the hospital only gets 30% of the going rate. The more admissions the hospital gets, the more money it loses.

Then the Tories shut down the PCTs and gave

the money to new Clinical Commissioning Groups run by GPs who could use their control of NHS budgets to invest in community services. But why would they? At the moment they are getting 70% discount on A&E admissions!

Currently, A&E departments are subsidised from money gained from other parts of a hospital's work.

An NHS hospital is paid for every treatment it performs. Low-risk treatments are generally "profit" making and high-risk procedures "loss" making. As long as all of these procedures are performed by the same organisation the costs balance out. But, with the Health and Social Care Act, many of the low-risk, profit making services will be lost to the private sector.

The more money hospitals lose, the more services they will have to close, putting further pressure on A&Es.

These innovations create a downward spiral where every failure is punished. Access to free NHS services will be increasingly restricted. A&Es will be increasingly overstretched. Departments will close.

"Profitable" treatments will be cherry picked by private providers. "Expensive" emergency services will be left to a rump NHS.

Longer waiting times will cause a middle-class exodus to private health insurers.

NHS providers will start offering multi-tiered services, where those who can pay top-ups will be able to skip the queue.

The scale of this crisis has so far not impressed itself on the minds of the Labour Party leadership. Labour is the only political party capable of reversing some of this destruction, but Labour politicians have been mealy mouthed about what they are prepared to do.

In contrast, the view of the Labour rank-and-file and the broader labour movement is clear. Last year at Labour Party conference, delegates voted to scrap PFI debt and reinstate the duty on the Secretary of State to provide comprehensive healthcare.

We can build a mass campaign. Our movement should be spurred on by the campaigns to save A&Es in Stafford, Lewisham and elsewhere.

The community campaigns and union rank-and-file will have to drag the union and Labour leaders into effective action.

- Join the Hunt for Hunt in Farnham, Surrey, 15 June. Details: savelewishamhospital.com/the-hunt-for-hunt

Save ULU!

By Omar Raii

On Friday 3 May, University of London management decided to abolish the University of London Union (ULU), which represents more than 120,000 students and is the only cross-London student representative structure.

ULU officers have vowed to fight the closure, and support has come from non-University of London institutions.

Susuana Antubam, ULU Women's Officer-elect, in a statement signed by liberation activists across the UK said: "ULU makes a massive contribution to liberation campaigns across London. Through its recently established London Liberation Network and its efforts to co-ordinate LGBT campaigns, ULU is a vital tool for liberation activists. It also provides much-needed space for liberation events, this year hosting a London Student Feminist conference and many other meetings."

"Through supporting a wide range of campaigns and initiatives, from Save the Women's Library and the International Transgender Day of Remembrance, to local action to increase the accessibility of universities, ULU has been a consistent fighter for liberation."

Shreya Paudel, President

of Middlesex University Students' Union, said: "ULU is a democratically elected organisation and it should not have been dismantled in this way. If the students thought it was not worthwhile keeping it, there should have been a democratic process or referendum to find out their opinion. However, a management decision dismantling a student-led organisation shouldn't be condoned. We should be against the undemocratic process as it does not set a good precedent for other student unions."

James McAsh, NCAFC national committee member and President of Edinburgh University Student Association, said: "We should defend students' unions wherever they are attacked. ULU plays a unique role in the student movement. I am based 500 miles from ULU but it has nonetheless had a profound impact on the work I have been able to do as a student activist and officer."

"ULU is the political centre of London student activism, which means a huge amount for a capital city. The loss of ULU would be a tragedy not just for London students but for students everywhere."

• Wednesday 22 May, lobby the University of London's Trustee Board. Assemble: 2pm, ULU.

Brighton council workers fight pay cuts

A GMB member working for CityClean at Brighton Council spoke to Solidarity about the battle against pay cuts.

Talks between Brighton Council and our union, the GMB, about threatened cuts to our pay have been ongoing for months.

From the start, our position has been "not-one-penny". We won't accept any outcome that sees us earning less money than before.

The council made their final offer two weeks ago. The council's Chief Executive sent an email to all union reps threatening mass dismissal and re-engagement if the offer wasn't accepted, which we knew would make people livid. That email went round the day before a mass meeting that management had called to officially announce

their pay proposals, so when our manager came to our canteen on 8 May to announce the deal people were already incredibly angry and ready to act.

We have a strong culture of holding mass meetings in our workplace. Many of our workers have literacy issues, and we have many colleagues for whom English isn't a first language. That means that, although we use memos, bulletins, leaflets and posters, we can't rely on them, so we regularly hold mass meetings in the canteen before work to discuss any issues and make sure everyone can have their say. Mass meetings help build a sense of responsibility and ownership amongst the workforce rather than a passive sense of being told what to do by union officials.

At the meeting on Wednesday 8, the manager

was booed out of the canteen. People felt that if we went out to work after the announcement, it would look like tacit endorsement of the deal, so we held a discussion about what sort of unofficial action we could take. We voted unanimously to hold a sit-down strike in our canteen.

Our first demand was for the Chief Executive to come and speak to us; that happened at lunchtime. She was booed out too. We went home at the end of the day but called a mass meeting before work on 9 May. Again, we voted unanimously to occupy the canteen for a second day. We received written confirmation from the Council that they would re-enter negotiations on the pay deal; we voted to end our occupation and march to protest outside the full Council meeting that afternoon.

Since Friday 10 May, when we went back to work, we've been operating a work-to-rule. We normally work on the Saturday after a Bank Holiday, but no-one came into work on 11 May.

We're now preparing an official ballot for strikes which will hopefully begin on 22 May. The ballot is for action up to and including an all-out, indefinite strike. No-one here thinks we can win anything with a one-day strike. We've never had a ballot that's returned less than a 90% majority for strikes, so I'm very confident that we'll win.

The Greens are trying to portray what they're doing as being about achieving "fairness" for low-paid, women workers. People aren't buying that, but they're not allowing the workforce to be divided either. There's no resentment



Brighton cleaners occupy their canteen

towards low-paid female staff, everyone is clear in demanding levelling-up. The workplace is certainly male dominated and there are problems with sexism, but we've fought that over the years. Council leader Jason Kitcat's wife is a former lingerie model, and some people wanted to make an issue of that in demonstration. But we had a discussion, and the majority wasn't happy with it. Male workers have also taken down posters of her put up in the canteen. There's a long way to go but we've made progress; it

shows that being in struggle is the best environment for changing people's ideas. The fighting culture and the level of democracy and engagement we have can't be replicated overnight. Partially we've been able to build it because of our economic strength; if 300 refuse workers don't work, people notice.

But it was also built up through hard work over the years to win people to a culture of solidarity.

- Full article: bit.ly/bri-cu
- Petition: bit.ly/gmbcityclean

How to marginalise Stalinism

Letters



I share Eric Lee's revulsion at the portraits of Stalin on banners at the London May Day march (Solidarity 285), but disagree with his proposed solution: a "no-platform" for the Stalinists.

London's May Day march is different from other cities' because the organising committee insists

on holding it on 1 May, usually a working day, rather than on a nearby weekend or holiday.

In these times there is no possibility of large numbers of workers striking to join the march. No-one even tries to organise that. Consequently the march is small. Union banners are often carried by full-time officials or retired people. Turkish and other Stalinist groups which focus their effort on this annual event can dominate, even though they are no visible factor in any other labour movement mobilisation in London.

Because of the Turkish and other Stalinist domination, few even of the trade-unionists and leftists who could get to the march because they work odd hours, or can take the day as annual holiday, bother to do so. The march becomes even smaller, the prominence of the Stalin banners even greater...

The first remedy is to move the march to a weekend or holiday. After many years of small May Days, to get reasonable labour-movement mobilisation will take effort; but it is not impossible.

With a sizeable labour-movement mobilisation, the Stalin banners will automatically become marginal.

Although Stalin's repression of the working class was fascistic, the people carrying the Stalin banners are not fascists. They reckon themselves left-wingers, and on the direct struggle of workers against capitalists in Britain or in Turkey they are in fact left-wingers, of a sort.

To ban them would get us into murky waters. Exactly what is banned? Stalin's portrait? The name of Stalin? Any organisation known to be Stalinist? Reference to other rulers of despotic nationalised economies? Mao? Castro? Che Guevara?

What of the risk that the union officials would respond to pressure for a ban in a typical bureaucratic way, by simply outlawing all political banners or slogans on the march?

Much better to go with an open policy. An attempt by fascists to join the march should be repulsed: but that attitude can be limited to fascists.

In that framework, and with a bigger march, there would be scope for us to do with the Stalinists what some AWL comrades did in 2009 with a contingent of the Sinhalese-chauvinist JVP on the London May Day march: challenge them, heckle them, demand answers. (The JVP quit the march).

It might also be workable for the march organisers to exclude the biggest Stalin banners — some are huge — by a simple rule that no banner on the march should be bigger than the lead banner.

Much better to deal with the Stalinists politically, by mobilisation and argument, than by an administrative ban.

Martin Thomas, London

• May Day 2009: bit.ly/may-09

Let us eat, drink and be merry!

Kate Harris



A few weeks ago the BBC published an article on how to eat for less than £1 a day, in reference to the Global Poverty Project's challenge to "Live Below the Line".

Others have explained better than I could why the diet suggested in the article is totally unrealistic (for example, it is not possible to buy a quarter of a courgette). There's a good blog-post on atheltheunread.wordpress.com.

Last week, the BBC published a follow-up article with "Readers' Stories" of living on little money. A few of the stories included phrases like "my dog eats better than me", "porridge week", "it is very lonely and boring", and "I am suffering from depression as a result of having little or no social contact with friends due to a lack of money for travelling or doing anything." But one story was from someone who had lived on very little whilst "couch-surfing" around Europe and claimed, "there are... many incredibly happy people who live on next to nothing."

Couch-surfing, i.e. staying somewhere for free whilst on holiday, is somewhat different to a daily grind of going to work (or looking after kids or going to the Job Centre), coming home, feeding oneself, sleeping and doing it all over again — not being able to afford to travel. Regardless of the happiness levels of individuals, poverty does not make people happy. Poverty tourists who travel to the global South to "find out who they are" should have therapy, not search for affirmation in the poor masses.

As a low-paid worker in London in an unstable job who has recently had to take unpaid time off due to illness, I have absolutely no time for people seeing poverty in the UK or

anywhere else as a "challenge" or, worse, as something virtuous. Living on little is only a choice for those who can afford not to.

As an ex-Methodist, I am fully aware of the clerical overhang in this country that says we should avoid feasting, avoid drinking and avoid having sex for pleasure, that we should work hard because work itself is good, and that poverty is a virtue.

As an ex-aid worker, I am fully aware of the various methods of fundraising for charities in the global South and the prevalence of trying to get people in the global North to empathise through challenges such as "Live Below the Line".

As a socialist, I reject all of those. There is plenty enough food in the world to go around for everyone to feast if they so wish, and to have a varied and nutritious diet. It is capitalism that is the problem.

There is nothing wrong with those on a low wage who spend outside their means in order to avoid having absolutely no social life or no enjoyable meals. It is an entirely logical thing to do, particularly if poverty has contributed towards mental health problems. Those who can live for a long time on little without becoming extremely unhappy are very lucky, very strong, or have exceptional support networks.

Pretending to be poor in order to raise money is a self-righteous and artificial waste of time. Living on poverty meals for a week is nothing like living on them for a lifetime, with little to look forward to and no way out.

As socialists, we advocate the redistribution of wealth, the means of production in the hands of workers, and the needs of everyone being catered to — not a poverty-chic, anti-consumerist type of moralism.

Living in comfort, having a well-filled stomach, eating the best foods and drinking the best wines (or other preferred beverages) should be for everyone.

Hawking and the boycott

By Chris Reynolds

Stephen Hawking's decision not to attend an 18-20 June conference in Jerusalem has caused much celebration among advocates of an academic boycott of Israel.

Hawking himself has made no statement on the issue, but the academic-boycott campaign has published a letter from him to the organisers saying: "I have received a number of emails from Palestinian academics. They are unanimous that I should respect the boycott". They claim it as a boost for their line that academics, writers, and cultural figures of all sorts should boycott Israel and Israelis across the board.

Yet, as US professor Noam Chomsky said, in an interview done when he visited Gaza City in October 2012 to express solidarity with the Palestinian people:

"A call for an academic boycott on Tel Aviv University will strengthen support for Israel and US policy because it's not understood..."

"In the case of any tactic, you ask yourself, what are its consequences, ultimately for the victims, and indirectly for the audience you are trying to reach... Those are the questions you ask if you care about the victims, if you don't care about the victims, you won't bother with these questions and you just do what makes you feel good".

The boycott has hit and will hit those Israelis most interested in communicating with leftist and liberal opinion across the world. It strengthens the Israeli right in its siege

mentality. It undercuts work towards the solidarity between Israeli internationalists, Palestinian campaigners, and activists across the world, on which real progress towards Palestinian liberation depends.

A telling fact about the boycott campaign is that its most visible Palestinian proponent, Omar Barghouti, far from boycotting Israeli academia, has been registered for Ph D study at Tel Aviv university.

The boycott has an ugly anti-semitic undertone, in that, to the (small) extent it gathers momentum, it marginalises and targets Jewish people across the world who, for reasons of family ties or Jewish identity, value links with groups inside Israel (but may yet be very critical of Israeli government policy). In real political terms it is a propagandist annexe to the Arab League boycott of Israel, and before it of the Jewish community in Palestine, a boycott in operation since 1945 which has never been a force for progress.

The twist to the story is that the conference Hawking has withdrawn from is not an academic conference. Israeli government supporters have accused Chomsky of encouraging Hawking not to attend, and if Chomsky did that he was right to do so.

The event is an Israeli government junket, the "Presidential Conference". Rather than debating questions of theoretical physics, it is billed as about blah-blah such as "whether the quality of leadership — in all realms of human activity — can make a difference. What is the desired dynamic in relationships between people and leaders in the face of powerful processes of change?"

It is chaired by Israeli president Shimon Peres and attended by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton, none of them likely to have an interest in physics.

Hawking's attendance there would be more like his appearance in the TV ads for the financial services comparison website, "Go compare", than an academic connection with an Israeli physicist.

Left must avoid anti-EU trap

of that. It was evidently embarrassed by No2EU in 2009, but stuck with it.

The left needs a rational assessment of what is going on among the Tories.

The economic crisis since 2008 has forced the eurozone to integrate further or to break up. It is moving hesitantly and slowly towards further integration: banking union, regulation of member-governments' budgets, etc. The move may turn out to be too little, too late, to avert break-up, but evidently people like Lawson think not. They think the eurozone will hold together and become more integrated.

Since 2010 Cameron and Osborne have oddly combined demands for a renegotiation to loosen Britain's ties with the EU with support for closer eurozone integration.

From a capitalist point of view, the question of Britain joining the euro or remaining out of it is a balance of costs and benefits. There is a British bourgeois argument of some substance for remaining outside the eurozone, namely, that Britain has closer economic ties with the US than other EU states do, and so benefits from the pound being able to track between the euro and the dollar rather than its money being exclusively Euro-linked. The flipside of those considerations is the USA's outspoken opposition to Britain quitting the EU: the USA wants its close ally to be on the inside.

CAMERON

Cameron and Osborne, and probably the majority of the British capitalist class don't want Britain in the euro any time soon. They want a two-speed EU, with a more closely-integrated eurozone core, and Britain in an outer circle.

Lawson and others doubt that's possible, and doubt it's worth trying. Other Tory figures have shifted halfway towards Lawson — ex-Chancellor Norman Lamont, London mayor Boris Johnson, education minister Michael Gove — and so has former Thatcher minister Michael Portillo, who says he is no longer a member of the Tory party.

The option of a capitalist Britain outside the EU is now no longer what it was in the 1960s and 70s, when minority bourgeois voices envisaged a Britain which would be a big economic power in its own right, or via links with the Commonwealth (ex-Empire).

The options now would be Norway or Switzerland. Norway is part of the European Economic Area, which means that it is engaged to follow all the EU's economic regulations without having a voice in them. It pays no contribution to EU budgets, and receives no subsidies from EU funds.

Switzerland is an inch less integrated. Rather than having a once-and-for-all agreement to economic integration with the EU, it negotiates that integration step by step. The result is not hugely different.

Despite the desires of Ukip people and right-wing Tories (and apparently some left-wing No2EU people), the Norway or Switzerland options would not mean a halt to European migration. Norway and Switzerland are both inside the European free-movement, no-passports-needed Schengen area, though Britain isn't. Fully 25% of Switzerland's entire workforce are migrant workers.

British withdrawal from the EU would probably lead to a more hostile environment here for workers from the EU, and greater difficulties for them in getting social provision — and thus to worse divisions in the working class — but it would be unlikely to reduce migration much unless it led to a sharp economic slump in Britain.

That sharp slump would be a possibility if British withdrawal happened in conditions of great economic turmoil and it became impossible to negotiate a Norway-type or Switzerland-type deal with the EU.

The priority for socialists, in all the variants, must be for workers' unity across the borders and across national divisions. Attempts to construct an imaginary "left" version of Lawson's and Ukip's programme can only harm that priority.

Solidarity skips a week on 22 May, and Solidarity 287 will be out on 29 May

Spanish trade unionists march against austerity.

Bob Crow and the leadership of the RMT rail union have joined the chorus for British exit from the EU led by Nigel Lawson, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer for Margaret Thatcher.

Crow argues the right-wing anti-EUers "are now only raising the issue of withdrawal out of pure political opportunism". Lawson, at age 81, is a bit beyond careerism and vote-catching. He lays out a straightforward pro-capitalist case for EU exit.

He values free trade with Europe, but dislikes EU social regulation. He thinks British capitalism could fare better as an offshore site with lower social overheads and weaker unions than the EU itself.

Lawson's case makes sense in his (capitalist) terms, which Crow's doesn't in his.

Britain already has harsher anti-union laws and weaker social provision in most areas than the main EU states. It has resisted the Social Charter, the Working Time Directive, and the Agency Workers' Directive. Given free rein, British governments would reverse their limited implementation of those EU provisions, and scrap other limited measures of worker-protection such as Tupe.

In the meantime the workers' movement would have been weakened by the nationalist demagoguery accompanying EU exit — the nonsensical claims that British workers' difficulties are due not to our capitalist bosses but to this or that official in Brussels — the replacement of worker-versus-boss agitation by Britain-versus-Brussels.

Crow claims to set out a "left-wing, pro-worker case". But when Crow, with the Socialist Party, ran a "No2EU" slate in the 2009 euro-election, that slate denounced "the so-called freedom of movement of labour" in the EU — in fact, the real, and welcome, freedom for workers in the EU to work and live where they wish.

Another phrase it used to denounce EU migrant workers was "the social dumping of exploited foreign workers in Britain". It was only a phraseological variant of the right-wing Ukip's rants against Bulgarian and Rumanian workers.

No2EU folded fast after its ignominious showing in 2009 (1% of the vote, less than the 1.1% for the practically-defunct Socialist Labour Party of Arthur Scargill, despite large part of the RMT's political funds being spent on No2EU). However, we understand Crow now talks of resuscitating it for the Euro-elections in May 2014.

Presumably the proposal would be to fold TUSC, the electoral front run by the Socialist Party and supported by Crow, into No2EU at least for the duration. We will have to wait to see what the SP thinks

Trying to put a "left-wing" gloss on anti-EU arguments helps the anti-migrant right.

Help us raise £15,000

On Saturday 11 May, Workers' Liberty ran a stall at the London Radical Bookfair, hosted by the Alliance of Radical Booksellers.

We sold copies of our latest books — *Working-Class Politics and Anarchism*, *What is Capitalism? Can it Last?*, and *Antonio Gramsci: Working-Class Revolutionary* — as well as older volumes like *How Solidarity Can Change the World* and *The Fate of the Russian Revolution*.

The next outing for the AWL bookstall will be on 18-20 May at the Fête de Lutte Ouvrière, near Paris, the largest gathering of the revolutionary left in Europe. Attending the Fête is not only a good opportunity to sell our literature, but a way to make direct links with other socialists from around Europe and across the world.

With your support, we can not only expand our bookstall but send more comrades to the Fête, and events like it, each year.

Help us raise £15,000 by 21 June 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.
- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.
- Organising a fundraising event.
- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.



**Total raised so far:
£10,804**

We raised £154 this week. Thank you to Jean, Ella, Rob and Oliver for donations/standing orders. We also raised money from extra literature sales.

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

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Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

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

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

Date

Signature

How Stalin destroyed communism

70 years ago, on 22 May 1943, Stalin announced the formal shutting-down of the Communist International, the association of revolutionary socialist parties across the world set up after the Russian Revolution. Although Moscow retained close control of the Communist Parties until the 1960s, the shutting-down was a symbolic disavowal of socialist revolution. This is how socialists commented at the time.

He long ago destroyed it as an instrument of socialism!

By Albert Gates (Al Glotzer)

The announcement by the Executive Committee of the Communist International that it was proposing its dissolution came with the suddenness we have become accustomed to expect from Stalin's Russia.

The parties affiliated to the Comintern were not advised beforehand that its Praesidium had such a proposal under consideration. In a completely totalitarian manner, the proposal was given to the capitalist press and the "Communist" parties learned of it from this source. As was to be expected, those parties which continue to exist have declared their complete agreement with the Moscow action.

With the advent of Stalinism, the Communist International ceased to be an organisation devoted to the task of fighting for the establishment of a world socialist society. With the degeneration of the Russian Revolution and the destruction of the workers' state, Stalinist society has evolved a new type of state, a state of bureaucratic collectivism — the rule of a new class of bureaucrats owning and controlling the nationalised property.

Stalin's Russia is a nationalist society; it is the enemy of socialism and any movement which seeks to establish the socialist society — the free order of the exploited peoples of the world.

Under Stalin, the Communist International was made to conform to the nationalist interests of Russia. Every situation which developed in other countries, promising to further the new world order of socialism, was brutally destroyed — not only by the forces of reaction and fascism, but by international Stalinism acting through its agents in the "Communist" parties of other countries, and through the GPU, which operates throughout the world.

The Communist International was formed in March of 1919 in Moscow. The victory of the Russian workers in the Revolution of November 1917 made it possible to convene the representatives of the revolutionary socialist parties of the world and to form this once brilliant international of socialism. But its real origin lay in the ruins of the labour movement brought about by the chaos of the First World War. The men responsible for the convening of the 1919 Congress were Lenin and Trotsky and their international co-thinkers.

They regarded the victory of the Russian workers as only the first step in the triumph of world socialism. As Marxists, they knew that socialism could exist only as a world society, and that the task of the Communist International was to gather the independent revolutionary socialist parties of the world into one united organisation, to exchange ideas and experiences for the single purpose of advancing the international interests of the oppressed.

This concept was not based on the idea that the problems of the workers were the same in all countries. On the contrary, the leaders of the Communist International understood full well that the problems of the various parties were quite different and that their specific tactics would be different. What, then, would bind these parties in one international organisation?

This bond was the recognition that the principal aim of the workers everywhere — that is, the establishment of the power of the workers as the first step toward socialism —

was the same, that it was an international problem. Moreover, the concept of socialism as an international social order based on the cooperative relationship of the peoples of all countries made such a world organisation necessary.

This was the outgrowth of the conditions prevalent in capitalist society. Marxism pointed out that in an economic sense, capitalism was itself an international order. Modern capitalism is based upon world trade, a world division of labour, and the interdependence of nations. One of the main contradictions of this capitalist order is that while it is international in character it remains national in form. Thus the national capitalist states remain in competition with each other, reaching periodic stages of crisis, war, destruction, poverty, and unemployment.

Because capitalism had outlived its usefulness, that is, its progressive function, socialism was on the order of the day.

To realise socialism, an international organisation of the revolutionary socialist movements was indispensable. This was the underlying purpose behind the organisation of the Communist International of Lenin and Trotsky.

Thus, when the Stalinist International declares the contrary, it lies. In this lie, it pays verbal allegiance to the idea of internationalism while it carries out in practice the reactionary doctrines of nationalism, a nationalism based on a new type of ruling class (the Stalinist bureaucracy) resting upon a new type of property (nationalised property). Listen to what the Comintern says about the reasons which prompted its action:

"But long before the war it had already become increasingly clear that to the extent that the internal as well as the international situation of the individual countries became more complicated, the solution of the problems of the labour movement of each individual country through the medium of some international centre would meet insuperable obstacles.

"The deep difference in the historical roads of development of each country of the world; the diverse character and even the contradiction in their social orders; the difference in level and rate of their social and political development, and finally, the difference in the degree of consciousness and organisation of the workers, conditioned also the various problems which face the working class of each individual country.

"The entire course of a century, as well as the accumulated experiences of the Communist International, have convincingly proved that the organisational form for uniting the workers as chosen by the First Congress of the Communist International, and which corresponded to the needs of the initial period of the rebirth of the labour movement, more and more outlived itself in proportion to the growth of this movement and to the increasing complexity of problems in each country; and that this form even became a hindrance to the further strengthening of the national workers' parties."

The three paragraphs are filled with distortions. What it actually says is that the organisation of the Communist International was a mistake! Reading it, one would believe that the Communist International was formed because it believed the conditions in all countries to be alike, that the rate of political development was the same internationally, and that the problems of the workers' organisations everywhere were the same. This is an utter falsification.

When the Communist International was formed it was also extremely difficult to maintain good relationships between the parties and the international because of the persecution of the movement and the objective situation in which Soviet Russia found itself. That, however, did not prevent the formation of the International and its functioning.

The outbreak of the present war did not prevent Stalin's International from functioning. Witness how well the Communist Parties in Great Britain, France, and the United States carried on a struggle against the war during the Hitler-Stalin pact. Communicating its decision to sabotage the Allies was found to be quite easy.

Recall the First World War. The Socialist International destroyed its basis for existence when the national parties supported their respective imperialist governments. The International could not meet, and it too experienced "difficulties," but not even the Social Democratic misleaders of that body dared to "formally" dissolve it.

In its founding Congress, the Communist International clearly stipulated the reasons for its formation. It was based on world conditions not unlike the present. "The internal as well as the international situation of the individual countries" was "complicated," and "the solution of the problems of the labour movement of each individual country through the medium of some international centre met insuperable obstacles." At that time there also existed a "deep difference in the historical roads of development of each country of the world." Their characters were "diverse" and even their social orders were "contradictory." The whole Communist International understood that capitalism developed "unevenly," that the degree of consciousness and organisation of the workers in all countries were different, and that their problems were different.

Here is what Lenin had to say about the formation of the Communist International:

"The Third International was in reality created in 1918, after the protracted struggle with opportunism, and 'social chauvinism,' especially during the war, had resulted in the formation of a Communist Party in various countries. The formal recognition of the International dates from the first congress of its members held in Moscow in March, 1919. The most prominent feature of the Third International, namely, its mission to carry out the principles of Marxism and to realise the ideals of socialism and the labour movement, manifested itself immediately in that this third international association of working men has to a certain extent become identical with the league of socialistic 'soviet' republics.

INTO LIFE

"The First International laid the basis of the international struggle of the proletariat for socialism. The Second International marked a period of preparation, a period in which the soil was tilled with a view to the widest possible propagation of the movement in many of the countries.

"The importance of the Third Communist International in the world's history is that it was the first to put into life the greatest of all Marx's principles, the principle summarising the process of the development of socialism and the labour movement and expressed in the words, the dictatorship of the proletariat" [the democratic workers' state].

Lenin added:

"Any Marxist, nay, anyone conversant with modern science, if asked whether he believed in the probability of a uniform, harmonious and perfectly-proportioned transition of various capitalist countries to the dictatorship of the proletariat, would undoubtedly answer that question in the negative. In the capitalist world there had never been any room for uniformity, harmony and perfect proportions. Every country has brought into prominence now one, then another, feature or features of capitalism, and of the labour movement. The rate of development has been varied."

In the early years of the Communist International, this was the prevailing theory. Difficulties of communication, objective difficulties of functioning, uneven development of capitalist countries, different tactics for different parties, varying rates in the growth and activities of the national parties, had nothing whatever to do with the necessity for the existence of the international organisation of the revolutionary socialists of the world. It only stressed the nature of the problems which had to be overcome, and the general difficulty of ushering in the new society of genuine freedom and security for the whole of mankind.

But this Communist International died a long time ago. Only the formal structure and the name remained. For it truly

became a Stalinist International, interested only in the preservation of the rule of Stalin's bureaucratic regime in Russia.

Its chief role has been to act as the shock troops of Russian diplomacy. The national parties enjoyed no independence. Their policies were decided in Moscow; their leaderships were changed at will. The question which interested Stalin and his cohorts was simply this: What service can these organisations render me? And thus the International was completely subordinated to the interests of the new Russia of Stalin!

When it was first formed, the Communist International was a democratic body. Its statutes required that it meet at least once every two years, to examine its policies, to correct them if necessary, to adopt new ones, and in general to take an inventory of the condition of the world organisation and to elect its international leadership.

Between the years 1919 and 1922, four congresses were held. The Fifth Congress met in 1924. Under Stalin, however, the Sixth Congress met four years afterward in 1928, and the Seventh Congress, or the last held by the Comintern, convened in 1935. Thus, in a period of almost nineteen years, the Communist International, under Stalin, met only twice!

ALLIANCE

The war has undoubtedly changed Stalin's mind about how to use his international apparatus, in what form it may further be employed.

For his present purpose, the establishment of a closer working alliance with Great Britain and the United States, the formal existence of the Comintern seems to be cumbersome and expensive. Moreover, in the present campaign to make Stalin and his state acceptable to millions in both countries and to enhance the alliance which is being worked out by these nations, the Comintern is a stumbling block. Thus, if it stands in the way of the national interests of the bureaucratic collectivist state in Russia, then there is nothing left to do but to dissolve it.

How? By the simple expedient of killing it at the top.

The Communist parties will in their "new form" continue as they have in the past to serve the best nationalist interests of Stalinist Russia. That is, the only basis for their existence: as the international arm of the Stalin dictatorship.

When the Comintern says that it hopes the end of the war will make possible the reorganisation of an International upon a new basis. It merely signifies that the present Stalinist organisations throughout the world will hold themselves in readiness for whatever order will come from Moscow. Thus the present "dissolution" is merely a subterfuge to improve the international position of Stalin in the war, and in preparation for a post-war period.

Nothing has fundamentally been changed by the action of the Comintern. One of the greatest menaces to the international working class remains organised Stalinism throughout the world, whether in a functioning international or in one formally, but not actually, dissolved.

The future of the workers' movement, the future of socialism, depends upon the quickest divorcement of the labour movement from the cancerous influence of international Stalinism — that enemy of the free society of world socialism.

The future lies in reorganisation of the International movement of the oppressed of the world, in the re-establishment of a true socialist international based on the teachings and the spirit of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, those valiant fighters against oppression, exploitation, war and poverty.

• The articles are from the 31 May 1943 edition of *Labor Action*, the newspaper of the dissident American Trotskyist group the Workers Party.

Contrary to both the Stalinists and the "orthodox" Trotskyists, *Labor Action* did not see the USSR as any kind of progressive society but rather a form of class exploitation to be resisted just as much as capitalism.

Solidarity and Workers' Liberty agrees, and believes that attitude is instructive for how to relate to China, North Korea, Cuba, and Vietnam today, as well as other forces ostensibly oppositional to western capitalism such as Latin American populist-nationalism or political Islam.

Stalin and his allies, Roosevelt and Churchill

What next?

By Emanuel Geltman

Nobody in his right mind believes that the "dissolution" of the Stalinist International actually means that Stalin is going to dispense with the services of his servants in the various Communist Parties throughout the world.

It is true that Stalin has an infinite contempt for them. He always has had. Long before he completely fastened his hold on the International, and converted it into an arm of the Russian Foreign Office, Stalin spoke contemptuously of the International and the parties in it. However, it is not at all unusual for masters to have an utter contempt for their servants even where these servants are most indispensable.

Stalin needs his servants. For example, he finds it most useful to have parties which will be for or against war in their respective countries, according to what Russia's national interests dictate. Further, these parties are useful to him as supplements to the GPU and as destructive instruments inside the working-class movement to prevent its development on a socialist path. Socialism is as great a menace to Stalinism as it is to fascism and international capitalism.

Thus, the first point to establish in connection with the "dissolution" is that in one form or another the Stalinist parties will continue to operate — and to operate under the orders of the Kremlin.

Why, then, the gesture of formal dissolution? There are many reasons, among which the most important are:

1. It is a gesture to the United States and Great Britain designed at helping these countries counteract Hitler's "anti-Bolshevik" propaganda. Hitler knows that Stalin is as much a Bolshevik as he himself is — which is to say, no Bolshevik at all. However, he finds it a valuable propaganda weapon. Roosevelt and Churchill, therefore, welcome a gesture which enables them to counteract Hitler's propaganda among those unregenerated and die-hard sections of their own capitalist class which are irked by the alliance with Russia.

2. It is a half-promise that in the occupied countries the Stalinists will string along with the Roosevelt-Churchill plans for those countries — for the present, anyway. The occupied countries are a thorny problem for the Allied imperialists. They confront a multitude of problems — conflicts of interest between the would-be rulers. Not the least of these problems is the potential influence of the Stalinists who have the only forces that approximate disciplined organisation.

3. It is, consequently and in general, a token of good will given to Roosevelt and Churchill in return for similar gestures, and concrete assistance, given Russia. No doubt this

dissolution has been under discussion for a long time — not with the Stalinist parties (which, in this country, at least, were yelling up to the day of the announcement that the demands in the capitalist press for the dissolution of the Stalinist International were the inspiration of arch-reaction), but with the Allied diplomats.

Under lend-lease, Roosevelt has sent Stalin such offerings of good will as the production of that monstrosity of monstrosities — the movie, *Mission to Moscow*. He even sent Joseph Davies, who helped the movie producers commit mayhem on his bad-enough book, on a second mission to Moscow — together with a print of the movie. (Stalin on viewing it said it is "wonderful." It is for him!)

We are not saying that the movie led to the dissolution. Imperialist politics are not that simple. But the sequence of events, which include the production of the movie and the second visit of Mr. Davies undoubtedly are related to the gesture. Far more importantly, of course, more substantial agreements were no doubt exchanged — possibly boundary agreements, possibly agreements on the locale of the second front (Stalin is dead-set against the Balkans as the place), possibly offers of increased supplies. [...]

4. Finally, of equal importance, the dissolution of the Stalinist International is probably part of a scheme to integrate the Stalinist parties into other mass working class movements or parties — socialist or general peoples' parties — with the aim of directing them into Stalinist channels. In England, the Communist Party has already asked for admission to the Labour Party. In France, the Stalinists have officially affiliated with the De Gaulle movement. It is possible that, at a later date, with France freed of Hitler's rule, and with the certain development of a mass socialist party, the Stalinists will seek to fuse with, or enter into, such a party. In this country there is no mass party for them to enter, unless they create such a party through something like the American Labor Party.

Many left-socialist leaders and ranks may welcome such a move as a rebirth of the socialist movement. It must consequently be pointed out that this is an incalculable menace. To allow the Stalinists into the socialist movement is to give them an opportunity to behead it. They are the mortal enemies of socialism — not the ranks who may have been misled into believing that the Communist Parties stand for communism, but the Stalinist parties themselves which stand for nothing else but for a particular brand of reaction. Regardless of the "dissolution" it is as certain as death that Stalinists the world over will continue to be organised and will continue to work under the directives of Moscow through some committee or front organisation.

Thus, dissolution or no dissolution, the menace of the Stalinists remains — and it remains the task of socialists and other militants to drive these union wreckers, GPU assassins and Kremlin servants out of the labour movement.

Preobrazhensky: ABC and NEP

Our movement

By Micheál MacEoin



Yevgeni Preobrazhensky (1886-1937), was a Bolshevik, economist, and one-time member of the Trotskyist Left Opposition against Stalin.

From 1904, Preobrazhensky sided with the Bolshevik faction in the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, becoming a member of the Ural provincial bureau of the Party. During 1917, he was a delegate of the Chita Soviet in south-east Russia, and became a candidate member of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party.

In 1918, Preobrazhensky sided with Bukharin and the Left Communist faction against signing the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty with Germany. In 1919, the two men wrote *The ABC of Communism*. Immensely popular and the most widely-circulated pre-Stalinist exposition of Bolshevism, the book reflected the heady optimism of “war communism”.

After the Russian Civil War wrought economic collapse, the Bolsheviks were forced to reckon, practically and theoretically, with the problems of maintaining the “dictatorship of the proletariat” in an isolated, economically backward, and overwhelmingly peasant country. In the ensuing debates, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky found themselves occupying polar opposite positions.

Bukharin made a virtue out of the limited market reforms of the New Economic Policy, and embraced the possibility of “socialism in one country”. Bukharin reasoned that if the middle and wealthy peasants could produce not only enough to feed the towns and themselves, but also a marketable surplus, it would be a source of tax revenue and would create domestic demand for the products of state-owned industry. He urged the peasantry to “enrich yourselves, accumulate, develop your economy.”

Though he withdrew this slogan, it revealed an inherent problem in his approach. An overly “sectoral” focus on the relationship between industry and agricultural failed to take account of the risk of accelerating social differentiation between the poor, middle, and wealthy peasants (kulaks). Wealthy peasants would accumulate at the expense of other classes, by paying low wages to agricultural workers, or through charging high prices for food and increased rent for land. This also threatened the Bolsheviks’ promises to the poorer peasants and agricultural labourers.

Preobrazhensky provided an alternative policy. In the NEP period, much focus was placed on recovering from the temporary destruction of the civil war. Preobrazhensky was more concerned with Russia’s underlying backwardness, and with expanded industrialisation. He said resources for

sustained industrialisation could not come from within the state industrial sector; during an initial period large sums of necessary capital would need to be transferred from other sources — from the peasant economy.

Preobrazhensky used the unfortunate metaphor “primitive socialist accumulation” to describe this initial phase. It was an allusion to Marx’s argument in *Capital* that the pre-history of capitalism was characterised by “so-called primitive accumulation”, in which the peasantry was forcibly dispossessed.

In *The New Economics* (1924), Preobrazhensky did not advocate coercion against the peasantry, but insisted on the “exploitation” of the peasantry, in the technical Marxist sense of extracting surplus value. The state should use its monopoly over foreign trade and its position as the major supplier of industrial goods to pump surpluses out of the peasant economy by means of “nonequivalent exchange” in market relations between the two sectors. His emphasis on the need for a more rapid pace of industrialisation was vindicated by the growing realisation that the key bottleneck was not an under-consuming peasantry but a “good’s famine”, in which the state industrial sector struggled to meet consumer demand.

This analysis, and the Opposition’s warnings against the “Right danger” inherent in Bukharin’s programme, was borne out by events. On 15 February 1928, *Pravda* was forced to admit that “the village has expanded and enriched itself... [The kulak] has established an alliance with the city speculator who pays higher prices for grain.” It was the lack of industrial products which “permits the peasants in general and the kulak in particular to hoard grain.”

The Opposition understood the factional battle in the Soviet Union as one between the “Left”, representing the interests of the working class, and the “Right”, channelling the interests of the new proprietors — kulaks and NEPmen (private traders and merchants). The “Centre”, represented by Stalin, vacillated between the two poles.

In understanding Stalinism, Trotsky made an analogy with the Kerensky period in 1917, which lay between the March Revolution and the Bolshevik seizure of power in November. He wrote that: “Upon [Stalinism’s] back the power is gliding over from the proletariat to the bourgeoisie; in general the post-Lenin leadership is unwinding the October film in a reverse direction. And the Stalin period is this same

Kerensky period moving toward the Right.”

The perspective of a weak, vacillating, Stalinist faction in the apparatus, paving the way to the “Thermidorian” restoration of capitalism by the “Right” elements within and outside the party, culminating finally in “Bonapartist” capitalist rule, was shattered by events. The Stalinists embarked on a superficially “left” turn of forced collectivisation and breakneck industrialisation.

It is often argued that Stalin’s Five Year Plan Was the implementation of the “Trotskyist” programme of industrialisation. However, the Left Opposition never argued for the “extra-economic” coercion, violent requisitions, and arbitrary targets of the Five Year Plan. The proper social regulation of economic life, they argued, required soviet democracy, rather than arbitrary bureaucracy.

Nevertheless, as Max Shachtman wrote, Trotsky’s prediction that the Stalinist “left” turn would quickly give way to a “right-wing” appeasement of capitalist elements “was wrong and misleading. The bureaucracy struck out on a road of its own, neither back to capitalism nor forward to socialism... it proved to be the inauguration of an organic course towards the independent development of the bureaucracy as a new ruling class.”

ISOLATED

Exiled and isolated, the ranks of the Left Opposition began to drift apart. After Trotsky’s deportation to Turkey in February 1929, the Opposition’s internal divisions widened.

Preobrazhensky and Radek, concerned at the social crisis engulfing the country, sought a return to the ranks of the party. They believed that Stalin was implementing some of the Opposition’s ideas, albeit through repugnant means.

In April 1929, Preobrazhensky published an appeal “To All Comrades-in-Opposition!” arguing that the Opposition had done its duty to the party by opposing the Central Committee’s course up until then but should now return to the fold.

In May, he was allowed to return to Moscow. The following month he was joined by Smilga and Radek, and in July the three men announced their “ideological and organisational break with Trotskyism.”

Stalin then crushed all opposition to the rule of the bureaucracy. In early 1933, after a new wave of expulsions from the party, Preobrazhensky, Smirnov and “many other capitulators were once again expelled and imprisoned; they were persecuted even more cruelly than the Oppositionists who had never surrendered.”

On 20 December 1936, Preobrazhensky was arrested again. He refused to confess and on 13 July 1937 was sentenced to death and shot. He was rehabilitated in 1988 by Mikhail Gorbachev’s government.

“There is a special bond between dockers”

My Life At Work



Steve Biggs, a dock worker and Unite rep at Southampton Container Terminal, spoke to Solidarity about his job.

The main issue facing dockers in all UK container ports is overcapacity.

With the new port at London Gateway opening this year, and no new volumes coming into the UK, the fear is shipping lines leaving Southampton, Felixstowe, Tilbury, and Thamesport and going to there. London Gateway is selling itself as a non-union port and offering lower wages and terms and conditions. Last year was a difficult time for us. There were redundancies at South Coast Port Services, our contractor company. They were all union members.

Containerisation came in during the 1970s and changed everything. Now the role of the docker is less labour intensive and more skilled, with more time spent driving cranes and straddle carriers.

There is still a special bond between dockers, and we all work as a team together and have some great characters.

There is also the great tradition of family members working together — many of our dockers work alongside fathers, brothers, uncles etc., and now we have daughters, sisters, and wives working with us too.

Automation is a very topical issue. There was a conference in Australia at the end of April to discuss the issue. If you look at [the automated port of] Rotterdam, for instance, the union there has been proactive in making sure the dockers that have been replaced by machinery have been retrained, maintaining their numbers and reducing hours of work. This is a good example to learn from. Employers want to reduce their costs by driving down wages and terms and conditions. The question is: do we resist change, or make agreements now to ensure we are ready to deal with change when it comes?

I am employed by Southampton Container Terminal. That has about 550 staff. All of our dockers, controllers, and engineers are union members and number about 420. That leaves managers and office staff, and we are having a recruitment drive in June to get office workers into our union. We also have South Coast Port Services. They are a contract stevedore company who have about 200 staff. The vast majority are union members. We are all in the same union branch and are working closely together

Dock workers can be better organised by working together in these difficult times. That means establishing links not only in their own ports but with other UK and international ports. We must ensure that all shop stewards receive training in organising, as I believe organising is more important than recruitment. If you are organised, recruitment will follow. The effectiveness of winning in the workplace is the key to sustaining a strong and influential union

There is international solidarity between dockers’ struggles through the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF) Dockers’ Section Committee that meets regularly and discusses disputes and solidarity. There is also the Global Network Terminals campaign against the four giant companies — APM Terminals, DP World (which operates Southampton Container Terminal), Hutchinson Port Holdings, and PSA International. These four companies control over 50% of the ports around the world but have different standards in every one.

The ITF are trying to engage with these companies to enter into a global framework agreement to improve these standards.

• For more “My Life At Work” interviews, see bit.ly/MyLifeAtWork

Marxist ideas to turn the tide

This year's Ideas for Freedom — the annual weekend of socialist discussion and debate hosted by Workers' Liberty — will focus on how Marxist ideas can help turn the tide of class struggle.

For five years the ruling class, in Britain and all over the world, has been using the crisis of their system to their advantage — to ride roughshod over our living standards, our rights, and our resistance. Capitalism is widely discredited, but the tide of struggle is running strongly in the capitalists' favour. We'll be discussing how to change that.

Transforming the labour movement

To turn the tide, we need to turn the labour movement around. With almost seven million workers in trade unions, the British labour movement is still strong — so why has it made so little difference in stopping the Tories' offensive?

What battles, both from the our movement's past and going on today, suggest ways to revive and rebuild?

On the Friday night of IFF, we will be showing Ken Loach's film *The Spirit of '45*, about how workers gained the NHS and welfare state after World War 2.

Jill Mountford, a Workers' Liberty member on the steering committee of the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, and Daniel Cooper, Vice President of University of London Union, will lead a discussion focusing on how and why a determined working class won so much but failed to overthrow capitalism — and what we can learn for our fight today.

The Labour Party of today is very different from the Labour Party of 1945: Ed Miliband is unwilling even to commit to repealing Tory cuts. Yet the bulk of our trade union movement remains affiliated, and there is no large alternative working-class political force on the scene. What does that imply for socialists, who want the working class to have its own political voice? IFF 2013 will feature a discussion on what's happened to the Labour left, with left-

Jill Mountford

wing Labour MP John McDonnell and Jon Lansman of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. And at a time when there is much discussion about Labour councilors defying cuts, but relatively few actually doing so, Edd Mustill will speak about his new play *The Rest of the Cod*, about the victorious struggle of Clay Cross council against Edward Heath's government in the early 70s.

John McDonnell MP

Most of the Tories' cuts have yet to go through. From benefit cuts to higher education, from the destruction of local government to the privatisation of the NHS, how can we stop them in their tracks? Edd Bauer of Birmingham Communities Against the Cuts and Ruth Cashman, secretary of Unison in Lambeth Council, will be among our panel speakers.

Cleaners' struggles have been a major feature of the last few years, particularly but not only in London. Why is that the case? Could these struggles be something like the beginnings of the "New Unionism" movement of the 1880s and 90s? How can other workers, both similarly precarious and more secure, support these inspiring campaigns, and what can they learn from them?

Workers from the "3 Cosas" campaign will speak about their struggle

We will be holding a forum on "The cleaners' revolt" with speakers including Robinson, a University of Lon-

don cleaner involved in the Tres Cosas campaign for sick pay, holidays and pensions, as well as activists from the IWGB union and Richard Crane, a cleaner and RMT rep on London Underground. And our Saturday evening social will be a Latin-themed fundraiser for Tres Cosas, as part of their summer of action to win their demands.

How should we understand the "working class" today? Is it a disappearing force? Are most people in Britain workers? Martin Thomas of Workers' Liberty and Scott Lash of Goldsmiths University will debate the issues.

Scott Lash

Socialist feminism

Struggles like the cleaners' revolt pose many issues about oppression and liberation in our movement.

So do recent controversies about sexism, sexual and violent abuse and women's oppression on the left and in the broader labour movement. To provide a space for working-class activists to discuss these issues, we will be holding a forum on "Fighting sexism in the labour movement". Confirmed speakers include Becky Crocker, an activist in London Underground RMT, and Maria Exall, a telecoms worker and Communication Workers' Union activist who chairs the TUC's LGBT committee.

Maria Exall

Other socialist feminist discussions at Ideas for Freedom will include Camila Bassi speaking on the fight against gender violence worldwide, with a focus on India, and Hannah Thompson leading a workshop on the ideas of feminist theorist and "queer" theorist Judith Butler.

Camila Bassi

The role of Marxist ideas

Marxists trying to help develop class struggles do not simply repeat "More militancy!"

There is a rich tradition in Marxism about how to formulate goals for struggle and how to organise a fight — including the early years of the Communist International, before the rise of Stalinism, when workers inspired by the Russian revolution set out to win the majority of the world's labour movements for socialist ideas.

Ideas for Freedom will include a series of workshops on the fundamental ideas discussed at the 1922 Congress of the Comintern, the last Congress before it began to be corrupted by the Stalinist counter-revolution: "transitional demands", "united front" and "workers' government". We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these ideas, how they have been misused and their relevance today.

The opening plenary of the event will also look at the role of "transitional demands" today, with RMT activist Janine Booth, Unite activist Elaine Jones and Unison activist Ed Whitby highlighting different aspects of a "workers' plan" to fight back.

The SWP is the biggest "Marxist" group in Britain today, and it is in a deep crisis that shows no sign of ending. Sean Matgamna of Workers' Liberty and journalist John Palmer, both of whom sat on the national committee of what became the SWP in the 1970s, will discuss the "International Socialist" tradition which generations of SWP have been

taught is the pride of their organisation. The "IS tradition" was supposed to provide an alternative to Stalinism and Stalinist-influenced Trotskyism — how did things go so badly wrong?

The SWP claims to be "Leninist". What does that mean? Cathy Nugent will look at myths about Lenin's ideas and the claims of "Leninist" groups. We will also be continuing our reassessment of the contribution of Antonio Gramsci to Marxist ideas.

Learn from revolutionary history

Every year Ideas for Freedom features a stream of introductory sessions on particular aspects of Marxist ideas.

This year, we decided to do that slightly differently, looking at revolutionary struggles around the world which we think were particularly significant for socialist politics.

Instead of looking at the non-working class revolutions sometimes lauded on the left — China 1949, Vietnam, Cuba — our choice highlights the ideas of socialism as working-class self-liberation. Rosie Huzzard will lead a workshop on the Paris Commune; Heather Shaw and Stephen Wood on China in 1925-7; Tony Byrne on the rise of Solidarnosc in Poland.

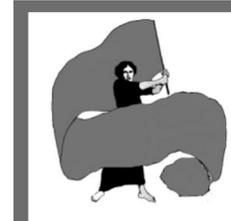
Other sessions on revolutionary history will include Vicki Morris and Chris Marks on the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and Sacha Ismail discussing the role of African American soldiers in the US civil war, illustrated with clips from the film *Glory*.

Other sessions

Other sessions will include a speaker from the rank-and-file workers' organisation UID DER on working-class organising in Turkey; a radical East London walking tour, led by David Rosenberg of East End Walks; debate on Hugo Chavez's legacy; victimised Australian trade union militant speaking by Skype; and Sarah Weston

Turkish rank-and-file network UID DER

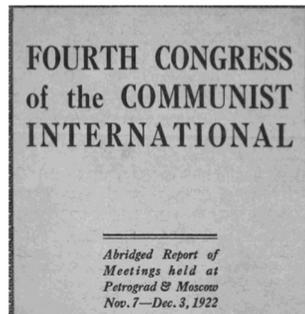
and Ellie Clarke leading a discussion on socialism and theatre.



Weekend tickets are £30 waged, £18 low-waged, and £8 unwaged until 1 June. Ticket prices

include food. A free creche is provided and free crash space is available.

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



Left Unity: make space for debate

By a delegate

Left Unity is billed by its key organisers as filling a gap in the political market for Left politics; the thousands of people who signed the appeal for a new party billed as an expression of the widespread yearning for anti-austerity politics in Britain.

Unfortunately, defined politics noticeably took the back seat at Left Unity's first delegate meeting on 11 May, attended by almost 100 people.

The debates started with an incredibly long discussion on a procedural motion by Nick Wrack and Simon Hardy not to take decisions on the statements and key political motions. The argument was that this would enable discussion in groups. Most motions had not been distributed prior to the delegate conference and there would be no democratic mandate on them.

The procedural motion was carried, and so the conference did not debate the statement put out by Kate Hudson, the amendments to it, or the more left-wing statement of principles submitted by Nick Wrack.

The key theme of the day was the suspicion of the existing organisations of the left. The need to enact "safeguards" and "policing" against left groups dominated the first session of the day which was nominally report backs from local groups on the progress of Left Unity across the country.

The debate came to a head in the proposal by the *Weekly Worker* that existing organisations of the left who support Left Unity should be allowed to send observers to the National Co-ordinating Group. Some suspicion of SWP and SP is understandable given what they've done in the anti-cuts movement and in the Socialist Alliance, but the discussion did not focus on honestly assessing previous attempts at left unity and learning from our past. The speeches against the *Weekly Worker* proposal, loudly and enthusiastically supported by the majority of the meeting, smacked of Stalinism and paranoia.

"The sects will use the information gained [in observing the Co-ordinating group meetings] to try and destroy us" — nobody elaborated on what secrets are discussed in the co-ordinating group which cannot be gained by intervening in a local Left Unity group and why those secrets exist. "You can't have one foot in and one foot out... You have to give you heart and your soul". This is a new initiative yet to develop

its politics or form of organisation, and you want my heart and my soul before I can engage in it?

The suspicion and blocking of existing left groups is not consistently applied by the key players in Left Unity. Socialist Resistance, who seem to have made a decision to wholly subsume their own politics to the bland, reformist politics of "against austerity and war", have been welcomed with open arms into the project.

There was a lot of bigging up Syriza and the parties of the European left in a vague and apolitical way — and with no recognition was made that Syriza's structure, explicitly guaranteeing democratic rights to left-wing minority trends like DEA and Kokkino, is somewhat at odds with Left Unity's policy on the involvement of existing socialist groups. No assessment was made of where Syriza came from and of the difficulty of wishing a party of the Syriza type into existence. The "European left" was celebrated with no critical assessment of who the European left are and what they have done.

The meeting was incredibly chaotic. At various points it had to be clarified four or five times what was being voted on. Often that clarification came from various delegates from the floor rather than the chair or standing orders. Amendments were put which weren't amendments to anything in particular, points of order were made which were in face speeches for or against, in any given vote a substantial section of the room had no idea what was being voted on.

PROCEDURAL

This was in part due to Left Unity's cult of inexperience. One of the chairs of the debate on the procedural motion was described as never having been to a political meeting before.

This is not a copy error — although he seemed to be 40-ish, it was said not that he'd never chaired a political meeting before, but that he'd never even been to one.

So his first experience of a political meeting was chairing a procedural debate between veteran manoeuvrers of the left, with two amendments made from the floor. This was clearly not a good idea. Yet many of the local organisers are celebrated as having been inactive for 15 years or never having done anything before.

It is a good thing to revive older comrades who have dropped away, and even better to bring new people into the left. That does not mean that we should sneer at those who

have been active (being active even when things are bleak is a good thing) or that we should dismiss the usefulness of skills and experience. You want a chair for a key debate? Get someone who has chaired a meeting before. You want to set up local meetings? Ask people who have organised meetings before to help set them up, or tell people what it involves.

By far the most political intervention of the day was when Ken Loach was brought in to address the conference as a guest speaker. His speech cut through the double speak of people trying to hide their politics and intentions behind a veneer of broadness and not scaring people off.

He spoke against the idea we should abandon the old language of the left — words like "socialism" and "working class". We should be careful to be understandable, but that the language we use to describe the world we live in and its horrors has been developed over hundreds of years to allow us to discuss ideas. He said the party must explicitly not be one of social democracy. It must be a party which looks to end the horror of capitalism and replace it with a new society, based on the democratic common ownership of the wealth and the means of production. It's a shame that this debate was not had out on the floor of the conference.

Some of the lines of difference in Left Unity are already clear. Is the problem just neo-liberalism or capitalism? What does socialism mean? Does a new party need to be more than an electoral project? Reform and revolution. What is a democratic way of organising?

If Left Unity is to become anything other than another failed attempt it will take time and effort. It will take an honest and reasoned argument. In local groups people must start having that argument.

More on Left Unity

- **Wrack and Hudson statements:** bit.ly/wr-hud
- **Left Unity website debate on Labour:** bit.ly/fix-act
- **On Alex Callinicos's new perspectives article:** bit.ly/flounders
- **Italy's left searches for unity:** bit.ly/ita-unity

Debate takes time and effort: join in!

By Nick Wrack

Your reporter writes: "If Left Unity is to become anything other than another failed attempt it will take time and effort. It will take an honest and reasoned argument. In local groups people must start having that argument." I agree with that.

It was for this reason that I moved the procedural motion to not take any votes on the political statements, resolutions and amendments, at the meeting.

Anyone with any experience of resolution-based conferences, let alone a conference of left-wing activists, should have realised the impossibility of having a genuine debate on the documents, all but one of which most people would not have seen until they arrived at the meeting, in the time available. This was especially so, given that there was no real democratic basis for the meeting to take any decisions.

The meeting recognised this and demonstrated a serious attitude to these important issues by deciding to allow the debate to go back to the local groups before taking any decisions and pre-empting the discussion.

I was not at all seeking to avoid a discussion on the issues. In fact, I had drafted an alternative "statement of principles" and an amendment to Kate Hudson's statement and would

Nick Wrack

have relished the opportunity to speak in support of them. However, most people would not have seen them before arriving at the meeting. They certainly wouldn't have been discussed in any but a few of the local groups.

In moving the procedural motion I argued that all the statements, etc., should be motivated and then taken back to the local groups for consideration.

Understandably, some of those attending were impatient and wanted to move more quickly. Those from the majority on the co-ordinating committee who pressed for the debate to proceed to a vote without proper discussion should have known better.

Now, we have the opportunity to have a real debate. The points raised by Ken Loach go to the heart of the issue we have to discuss. They coincide with the points I raised in the morning session — that it is a question of how our class responds to a crisis of capitalism, not just of neo-liberalism; of how we fight not just for reforms but for a society in which there are no rich and poor but where the resources of society are owned collectively and run democratically, with production for need rather than for profit.

Should the Left Unity project be about establishing a social democratic party, which opposes "neo-liberalism" and "austerity", or a socialist party, which fights against capitalism, the system that gives rise to "austerity", and which poses a complete alternative to it?

This is a real debate, that will take "time and effort". It is a debate which socialists of all hues should welcome and in which they should participate.

Nick Wrack was commenting on our website on the report above.

PCS dispute needs real demands

By a delegate

The Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) meets in Brighton from 21 to 23 May for its annual conference.

Individual departments, or Groups, will be meeting over the Monday and Tuesday, with a national conference following. Conference is shorter this year due to combination of facility time cuts (delegates from DWP are having to take annual leave to attend) and financial constraints facing the union.

This comes hot on the heels of the National Executive Committee election results being declared. There were three candidates for President: the incumbent Left Unity candidate, Janice Godrich; the right-wing candidate Diane Breen and the Independent Left's Christine Hulme. These were the

same candidates as in 2012, so it is instructive to compare the results. In 2012 Godrich polled 15,471 (57.3%) compared to Breen's 7,839 (29%) and Hulme's 3,690 (13.6%). This year Godrich polled 11,590 (51%), Breen 6,956 (30.6%) and Hulme 4,112 (18%). Turn out in 2012 was 10.7% compared to merely 9.5% this year. This year, just under 4,000 fewer ballot papers were sent out due to loss of members through job cuts.

Four right wingers were elected to the Executive. But of greatest concern is that fact that over 90% of members did not vote, during a period that has seen extensive strike action. For sure the anti-trade union laws on postal balloting play a role, but this cannot be the only reason why so many members feel disengaged.

Conference will start

with a debate on the ongoing national dispute. Independent Left supporters have submitted an emergency motion that says that we should change the focus of the dispute. The campaign's slogan ("They won't talk so we must walk") is wrong – rather than simply demanding more negotiations, we should formulate specific demands on pay and other issues. Otherwise, the government could agree to talks simply as a tactic to get our industrial action

called off.

Some controversy has been caused by the Standing Orders Committee's decision not to print motions that call on PCS to include non co-operation with benefit sanctions by members in Jobcentres as part of any industrial action. Under PCS rules, motions are not published if they could lead to legal action being taken against the union if carried and implemented.

INJUNCTED

PCS's solicitors have said that such action could lead to the union being injuncted, as this would be a "political" act, and not in furtherance of a trade dispute.

While that may be the case if the motion were enacted, that is no reason to prevent it being printed and this important debate taking place. While Jobcen-

tre workers currently lack both the consciousness and the confidence to take such action, beginning a discussion around it is essential in order to build links between claimants and workers, and get to a point where non-cooperation could be made a reality.

Independent Left members have submitted a motion instructing the NEC to ensure that pay rates of senior full-time officers (currently, maximum £89,847) are closer to the rates received by the vast majority of PCS members.

An NEC motion seeks authorisation to enter in to merger discussions with Unite, if approached.

Whatever the NEC's reasons, any merger should be judged on the basis of industrial logic and the democratic ability of rank-and-file members to exert control over any merged union.

Unison branches must fight pay deal

By a local government worker

On 7 May, Unison representatives on the National Joint Council (NJC, which negotiates local government pay) voted by 14-13 not to recommend rejection of the latest pay offer of 1%.

It was agreed it would be made clear that this is the best that can be achieved by negotiation, but not to make a recommendation either way.

When inflation is running between 3-4% and in the context of previous years' pay cuts and freezes, this offer is another cut.

Local government bosses initially offered 0.6%, or 1% with some strings. These

were both rightly rejected by Unison.

The "strings" were essentially further attacks on our terms and conditions: cuts in car allowances, sick pay, annual leave, and a reduction in continuous service provision.

REJECT

Whilst Unison was right to reject the offer with the strings, it is clear that 1% in itself isn't acceptable.

Part of the problem was that Unison's pay claim was unclear – it was for an unspecified "substantial" amount. Unison should have put in a percentage claim with an additional flat rate for lower-paid workers.

Despite the Unison leadership's distortions, it is not

true that branches are not allowed to distribute material contradicting national recommendations (or lack of them).

Some branches campaigned for rejection of the shoddy pensions deal in 2011. We need to campaign for rejection of this pay offer.

A position of rejection has already been agreed by Unison regions in London, the North West, Scotland, and Wales. Campaigning will be difficult, as postal ballots are by their nature individual and isolating. We need to have arguments about the alternative in our workplaces, and hold meetings on this issue.

There are members who think that if we accept a pay cut, we'll save jobs – but the job cuts we have faced in local government (which some estimates put as high as 20%) at the same time as a pay freeze show this isn't the case.

We need to produce literature that shows people how much they have lost since 2008 and start building confidence for a fight-back.

Air traffic workers face cuts

By a NATS worker

Staff in National Air Traffic Services (NATS) face job losses of between 275 and 475 staff at control centres and headquarters sites.

At its upper limit, this cut represents more than 13% of the targeted workforce, and over a tenth of NATS employees overall.

The news comes just weeks after members of Prospect and PCS, the unions organising in NATS, voted (on the recommendation of their union leaderships) for a pay deal tied in with further detrimental changes to the Defined Benefit pension scheme. As a result of the deal, Prospect and PCS Executive reps will be joining with management in recommending to the pension trustees that the indexation be changed from RPI to CPI. Support for such a change contradicts the national policies of both of these unions, but the justification given is that this action is required to mitigate a £1bn deficit. Also cunningly written

into the deal is the commitment that the unions will not lobby the Trustees otherwise without first consulting NATS. Effectively, this would mean any union policy seeking to reverse the recommendation to the Trustees would have to be run past management before being enacted. The emphasis in union communications has been on avoiding compulsory redundancies, with no discussion of the possibility of fighting the cuts.

Across Europe there is a different picture. On 12 June, air traffic staff will be holding a day of action, led by the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF), to protest against cost reduction targets and introduction of competition into new areas of air traffic service provision.

The time could not be more apt for unions to mount a defence against air traffic cuts, by refusing cuts in NATS and standing in solidarity with European colleagues.

Strikes due across London Underground

By Jonny West

Workers across London Underground in the RMT union could strike in a series of disputes over a variety of issues.

Cleaners working for the contractor ISS returned a 100% vote in favour of strikes to demand the payment of the London Living Wage from day one of employment, and against management abuse of sickness procedures.

Electrical engineers and contractors employed by Mitie voted by a nine to one margin for strikes to stop redundancies and unilateral changes to working conditions.

Hammersmith and City, Metropolitan, and Circle Line drivers also voted to strike in a dispute around issues arising from the introduction of new stock. Demands include more time for train preparation.

Drivers and driver instructors on the Piccadilly Line will also ballot for strikes against management's abuse of agreed procedures.

London Overground workers employed by STM Security will take further action in a long-running dispute over management bullying.

They will begin action short of a strike on 17 May, including refusal to submit incident reports.

• For up-to-the-minute information, see the blog of Workers' Liberty's *Tubeworker* bulletin – workersliberty.org/twblog

Reinstate Oscar Alvarez!

Oscar is an Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union rep at the West Perivale bus garage in London.

He has been sacked on spurious charges as part of a wave of sackings of Metroline bus drivers which has targeted union activists.

Another sacked union rep, Gerry Downing (Unite), has already won reinstatement.

Support the campaign to reinstate Oscar at tiny.cc/REINSTATEOSCARNOW (case-sensitive)

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Tories push kids into poverty: Labour says “give up”

By Chris Reynolds

Share prices are going up. Profits are increasing. Top bosses' pay is soaring. And child poverty is rising, almost as fast.

According to a new report from the conservative Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS): “Tax and benefit reforms introduced since April 2010 can account for almost all of the increase in child poverty projected over the next few years using the absolute low-income measure; using the relative low-income measure, child poverty would actually have fallen in the absence of reforms as a result of falls in median income”.

Coalition government policies will continue to drive up child poverty until 2020-1 at least. But Labour's reaction? Jon Cruddas, the policy supremo appointed by Ed Miliband, has said: “the existing child poverty target needs rethinking”. Nick Pearce, a wonk at the IPPR, a former Labour government adviser, and still influential in Labour circles, says flatly that “Labour must drop its child poverty target”. He brightly proposes “freezing child benefit in cash terms for a decade” because the money could pay for more day-care.

IFS: “Relative child poverty is projected to increase by six percentage points between 2010-11 and 2020-21, reversing all of the reductions between 2000-01 and 2010-11. In 2020-21, child poverty is projected to be 23.5% and 27.2% using the relative and absolute low-income measures respectively... This translates to increases across the

decade of 1.1 million in the number of children in poverty according to the relative low-income measure, and 1.4 million in the number of children in poverty according to the absolute low-income measure”.

IFS predicts 3.4 million children in relative poverty in 2020-1, and 3.9 million in absolute poverty. The relative measure defines children as in poverty if their household has less than 60% of the median income of households of similar composition; the absolute measure, if less than a fixed figure, 60% of the median in 2010-1.

The absolute poverty figure is higher than the relative one because the IFS predicts median incomes (not top incomes, of course!) will be lower in 2020 than in 2010-11. Because the average person will be worse off, the defining line for relative poverty will fall.

The IFS's figures are not scaremongering worst-case scenarios. IFS has assumed

both “relatively strong economic growth” after 2016-7 and that the coalition government's Universal Credit scheme works well and thus increases take-up of means-tested benefits above the rates in the present system where those benefits must be claimed piecemeal.

One element in the IFS figures may overstate child poverty: IFS uses predictions of the RPI measure of inflation to estimate values of money incomes, rather than of the lower CPI measure. The IFS authors point out that “it would not be sensible to simply use the CPI in place of the RPI to deflate incomes, as it excludes certain important housing costs”, and so for their purposes there is no better index than RPI.

A factor driving increased poverty will be the new government policy of increasing benefits in line only with CPI, not RPI. In addition, some 200,000 children will be pushed into poverty by the additional cap of annual benefit rises

at 1 per cent for three years from 2013.

The Child Poverty Act, which is supposed to bind future governments to cut child poverty to 10% (relative) and 5% (absolute), was passed only in March 2010. The Tories and the Lib Dems then supported it, and said they would keep its promises. But they have driven up child poverty ever since!

Measures of the Blair and Brown governments, especially tax credits, did decrease child poverty, though not as much they promised. Now that limited progress has been put into reverse.

Labour should drop not its opposition to child poverty, but its unreasoning aversion to expropriating the banks and taxing the rich.

• IFS report, entitled *Child and Working-Age Poverty in Northern Ireland from 2010 to 2020*, also contains the IFS's latest forecasts for Britain: bit.ly/chil-pov

BANGLADESH

Workers oppose the Islamists

Badrul Alam from the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist) spoke to Solidarity

There have been very big demonstrations by the religious extremists, but their demands are illegitimate.

They are not rational. Mostly their demands are against the rights of women — they are demanding that the government pass a law restricting women's rights.

Their demands are medieval. They believe in the rule of the Qu'ran, in the rule of Allah; their organisation is called “Protection of Islam”.

They claim to be non-political and non-partisan, saying that they're only for Islam, but they've said that the government should accept and implement their demands, or it'll be removed or forced to resign.

On 5 May, the Islamists set up barricades in the streets. They initially said they would leave, but then committed to stay until the government resigned. In the early morning of 6 May, the state moved in to disperse them, and many Muslim militants were killed in these clashes. The government is claiming around 20 people were killed, Hifazat-e-Islam is saying that thousands have been killed, Amnesty International says 44 have been killed.

On 11 May, progressive women's organisations gathered in front of the National Press Club and declared that women will not be bound by Hifazat's demands. Since our independence in 1971, women have achieved a lot and they are not ready to lose it.

There were around 20,000 on that demonstration, with 100,000 Hifazat supporters demonstrating on 6 May.

Where is Hifazat's support drawn from?

Many of them are young students from madrasas. A lot of them don't know that much about the political demands; they go to the demonstration out of loyalty, or because they hear that someone might be saying something about the Prophet or about Allah.

We spoke to some of the young students, and they told us they didn't know that much about it. They said they were called by their Huzur, the senior scholar of their madrasa, and told they would be given travel and food expenses for a trip to the capital city. A lot of them come from different districts and remote areas.

How have workers reacted to the demonstrations?

Workers are also protesting against Hifazat. Most garment workers are women, so if Hifazat win their demands their rights will be severely restricted and they may not be able to go to work.

They have used the example of Reshma Begum, a garment worker who survived for more than two weeks in the rubble of Rana Plaza. They have said that this shows how women workers can survive in very difficult conditions, and will not accept being ignored or repressed by any corner, including Islamist militants.

• **“No more deaths for profit: solidarity with Bangladeshi workers” AWL London forum, Wednesday 29 May, 7-9pm, University of London Union, Malet Street. Includes live link with Bangladeshi labour activists.**

Brands bow to pressure

Proving that protest gets results, major retailers, including Primark, have signed the Bangladesh Safety Accord. Hundreds of thousands around the world had called on the brands to sign.

The Safety Accord is a commitment by companies to pay for the renovations necessary to make factory buildings in Bangladesh safe.

Safer working conditions can only be guaranteed when workers have strong unions. But this step is a victory!