

For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 326 4 June 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

AFTER FAR RIGHT SURGE IN POLLS

STAND UP FOR

SOCIALISM!

DEFEND MIGRANTS

FIGHT BOSSES AND BANKERS!



What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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



We stand for:

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

Contact us:

● 020 7394 8923 ● solidarity@workersliberty.org

The editor (Cathy Nugent), 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.

● Printed by Trinity Mirror

Get Solidarity every week!

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

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

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

Name

Address

I enclose £



Selling out Ukraine?

By Martin Thomas

According to the *Financial Times* (1 June), reporting on upcoming meetings between Barack Obama and David Cameron and Russian leader Vladimir Putin, "US officials acknowledge that one of the crucial next steps is for Ukraine to devise a more decentralised constitution that satisfies some of Russia's concerns. That will ultimately involve coming to some sort of agreement with Moscow about Ukraine's future..."

The Russian minority in Ukraine should have minority rights. That may well mean increased autonomy for the areas in eastern Ukraine where the Russian minority is large. The hitch is that the US officials want to placate not the Russian minority, but the Moscow government.

On 25 May Petro Poroshenko was elected president of Ukraine, with 55% of the vote. The runner-up, Yulia Tymoshenko, got 13%. The turnout was 60%, not bad when pro-Russian militias systematically prevented voting in



large areas of the country.

Poroshenko is not a fascist (the far-right Svoboda movement, presented by some as the dominant evil genius in Kiev since the flight in February of the pro-Russian president Yanukovich, got 1.2% in the poll). But he is an oligarch and a neo-liberal.

As yet the Ukrainian left is not strong enough to unite workers across Ukraine, east and west, in a battle for jobs and against the corruption and profiteering of the oligarchs which blights them all.

Putin, keeping his options open, did not declare the 25

May poll invalid. Equally, he is not planning to meet Poroshenko when both of them are in France on 6 June. It looks as if he will talk with the US and EU powers, and try to get them to lever Ukraine into accepting Russian demands in return for Putin winding down the coups in eastern Ukraine.

In Donetsk on 29 May, a paramilitary group, the Vostok Battalion, reported to include many Russian-organised Chechens and Ossetians, ousted the previous pro-Russian ruling group there, and installed a new one, led by Alexander Boro-

dai [see page 9].

A few days before, the group which had seized power in Donetsk and the group in Lugansk declared an intention to unite as "Novorossiia" (New Russia: an old Tsarist term for most of southern and eastern Ukraine, and a term also used by Putin).

Poroshenko is making efforts to regain areas of control in the east, but it looks unlikely that he can do that without causing bloodshed on a scale which would give Putin a good pretext for sending in Russian troops.

Contrary to the story told by some on the left, that Putin is merely responding defensively to US and EU aggression, the drift now is towards the US and EU acting as agents to secure Putin's wishes in Ukraine in return for pacifying the crisis.

Socialists should obviously not wish for the US or the EU to go to war over Ukraine, even apart from the fact that they are not likely to. But we should support the Ukrainian people's right to national self-determination.

Military tighten grip in Thailand

By Rosalind Robson

On 22 May Thailand's military declared martial law. 24 May they took power in a coup.

They have suspended the constitution, banned demonstrations and detained politicians including Yingluck Shinawatra who, until very recently, was prime minister. The head of the military, General Prayuth Chan-ocha, has appointed himself the new prime minister.

The coup follows a court ruling early this month removing Shinawatra from her position as prime minister on the grounds that she had acted illegally by moving her national security chief to another position.

For many months now Thailand's two main political parties have been at war.

There have been anti-government protests and counter-protests. The anti-government force — the bulk of whom are Democratic Party supporters,

also known as "yellow shirts" — said the government was corrupt. They represent a section of the Thai bourgeoisie, with backers in the military, and their goal has been for the military to "step into" a situation of political chaos.

An election called in February this year was never completed because contests where voting had been disrupted had to be restaged.

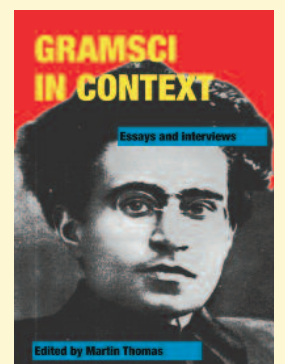
The coup is somewhat of a re-run of 2006, when the army acted to replace the previous administration of Thaksin Shinawatra. Yingluck Shinawatra is Thaksin's sister, and her party, the Pheu Thai Party, is seen as a successor to her brother's Thai Rak Thai party. Pro-government supporters are known as "red shirts". They have a support base among the mostly rural poor, but also represent bourgeois interests.

The bourgeois forces behind the "yellow shirts" wanted to stop the possibility of Thaksin Shinawatra returning to Thailand and

his supporters in rural and Northern Thailand gaining the upper hand. They also oppose policies that have brought in greater access to healthcare for the rural poor and have improved the living standards for many of Thailand's poorest. Pro-Thaksin parties have won every election since 2001.

The military could meet opposition from the "red shirts". There could even be civil war. The immediate crackdown looks severe, with arrests of political leaders, a curfew, and a media black out. Political meetings have been banned, social media have been restricted, and journalists have been banned from interviewing academics with a critical stance towards the government.

The army's promises to implement political reforms are false. Even if they were not, such reforms would be undertaken in the worst of circumstances.



A revised and 50%-expanded edition of the 2012 booklet *Antonio Gramsci: working-class revolutionary, summarising Gramsci's life and thought*.

The new edition is 50% enlarged, with a "Gramsci glossary", critically reviewing concepts and terms from Gramsci now widely used or misused in political discourse.

It also engages in debate with Peter Thomas's big study, *The Gramscian Moment*; disputes the "post-Marxist" readings of Gramsci; discusses the relation between Gramsci's ideas and Trotsky's.

Price £6, or £7.60 including postage.
Buy online at workersliberty.org/gramsci-2nd

English literature Gove-style

By Patrick Yarker

In a document made available in November last year, Michael Gove set out his policy towards the new English Literature GCSE, an exam he intends to be taught from September 2015. This is what the policy document says:

This document sets out the full range of content for GCSE specifications in English literature. Awarding organisations may, however, use any flexibility to increase depth, breadth or context within the specified topics or to consolidate teaching of the subject content.

In addition to the content in the "Detailed study", the examination must include questions on texts that students have not read previously ("unseen" texts).

Students should study a range of high quality, intellectually challenging, and substantial whole texts in detail. These must include: at least one play by Shakespeare; at least one 19th century novel; a selection of poetry since 1789, including representative Romantic poetry; fiction or drama from the British Isles from 1914 onwards.

All works should have been originally written in English.

To broaden their knowledge of literature, and enhance their critical and comparative understanding, students should read widely within the range above to prepare them for "unseen" texts in the examination.

DfE 11 November 2013 (revised from July 2013, after consultation)

Exam boards ("awarding organisations") have recently begun to release de-

tails of the set texts students must study under the new framework. Some long-established texts have been dropped, in accordance with Gove's view that at least in its modern form it is only acceptable to study prose fiction written both in English and within the British Isles.

This is a shift from the previous position, which allowed prose-fiction written in English, but from (potentially) anywhere. Prose texts from the USA or Australia, for example, have routinely been set for study in the past, and some boards specifically include a choice of texts in English from "different cultures and traditions".

The loss under the new rules of John Steinbeck's Depression-era novella *Of Mice And Men* helped spark a furore in the media. This text, reportedly a pet dislike of Gove's, has been widely used in schools for decades.

Hostility directed at Gove seems to have stemmed from confusion about what exactly has happened. Gove did not ban any named book, for he is not directly responsible for the specific detail of the exam. But his new framework has re-drawn the parameters within which exam boards can operate, and this has meant a change to the texts available.

Exam boards are regulated by a body, Ofqual, which is legally required to "have regard to such aspects of government policy as the Secretary of State may direct".

Gove claims his reforms



will enable students to read a wider range of texts than has previously been the case. We shall see. His new framework requires the exam contain questions on "unseen" texts (albeit such texts must still meet Gove's parameters). This is a way to steer teachers towards engaging students with a choice of texts in addition to those named by the exam-board.

TEACHERS

It is important not to dismiss the extent to which teachers can still, despite Gove, decide the overall shape of the English Literature course, and choose what their students study.

In a two-year course, it would seem possible that teachers will have some space to introduce texts (or parts of texts) which they think best suit the needs and interests of their students, regardless of the new parameters.

Equally, the room for manoeuvre shouldn't be exaggerated. Constraints placed

on schools by the wider accountability and performativity regimes in operation, most notably the pressure to ensure students secure a grade in line with imposed floor-targets, will have an impact.

There is an established body of evidence to show that the backwash effect of any high-stakes exam generates intense teaching-to-the-test. Such teaching tends to limit what pupils are offered since teachers opt to focus (perhaps exclusively) on what will be tested.

There is some counter-evidence (notably via the Cambridge Primary Review in relation to KS2 SATs) that a broader and richer curriculum-offer raises attainment for all. But to expect secondary schools suddenly to let a thousand flowers bloom in the English classroom is naive. A crucial factor will be whether or not the revised English Literature course figures as one of the subjects used to determine a school's League Table posi-

tion.

Wariness about Govian exam-reform is sensible. Gove has a reactionary view of what teaching and learning should be, and a dogged determination to change the prevailing mindset of the profession, which he regards as pervaded by "progressive" ideas. His decision to do away with any coursework element in the English Literature exam, and to prevent students from having access in the exam to the texts they have studied, is likely to see students rehearse stock responses and memorise only an all-purpose set of quotations to deploy in any answer. Such strictures prevent students from demonstrating informed, responsive and authentically-personal rejoinders to questions, and from exploring ideas during an exam in close and detailed engagement with the text.

Gove's new policy raises again the issue of who should decide the parameters, if not the specific content, of what children learn? This issue is bound up with arguments about the National Curriculum (NC), from which, under Gove's destructive regime, increasing numbers of English schools can opt out.

In such circumstances, what is left of the argument for common entitlement which underpinned broad acceptance of the NC as originally introduced?

In relation to English Literature, what texts ought students to be able to meet, who should decide, and how?

Tenant evictions reaches record high

By Tom Harris

The number of tenants being evicted has reached its highest level for over a decade.

According to the Ministry of Justice, between January and March this year, landlords made 47,220 court claims to repossess property — and average of over 500 repossession claims a day.

The rise in evictions comes from welfare cuts, housing shortages and stagnant wages.

The Bedroom Tax, which docks housing benefit for

those with a spare bedroom is also responsible.

Some Labour councils have attempted to soften its impact by implementing it leniently, or promising to circumvent it. Nonetheless, many people who are unable to find new housing have been forced to stay put with reduced housing benefit, causing them to fall further and further behind with the rent.

And the Bedroom Tax is ineffective even in its own terms. A report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation reveals that the measure has been unsuccessful

in moving people into smaller homes and freeing up large homes for larger families.

On the whole, those affected by the tax have stayed put, but with less money to survive on.

Pressure is also being applied to tenants through the change in Jobseekers' Allowance. New powers to sanction claimants, as well as stricter requirements for signing-on, mean that the unemployed face losing both their Jobseekers' and housing benefit for months if they make even a small administrative error. The

sudden loss of income can abruptly dump people into rent trouble.

The fact that the large majority of repossessions were made by landlords of social housing is particularly striking.

In a report by the *Guardian*, lawyer Daniel Fitzpatrick said this was down to the shortage of council housing and the length of the housing lists. Councils were acting "ruthlessly" in a bid to force out some tenants to clear space for new ones, thus shortening the lists.

A depressing cloud of

farce and futility surrounds Britain's increasingly acute housing crisis.

Demonising and persecuting tenants is of no benefit to anyone, other than to rip-off landlords and Tory ministers who want to slash welfare spending. The only humane, rational solution to the housing crisis is for councils to build more decent, affordable homes and to be enabled to take possession of and renovate empty properties.

Socialists and the labour movement must raise these demand with renewed urgency.

One million out on 10 July?

By Darren Bedford

Over one million workers could join a strike on 10 July against the public sector pay freeze.

A set-piece confrontation between public sector trade unions and the government could help reignite wider resistance to the Coalition, and galvanise workers' confidence.

The PCS civil service union looks like joining the 10 July strike (More: page 11).

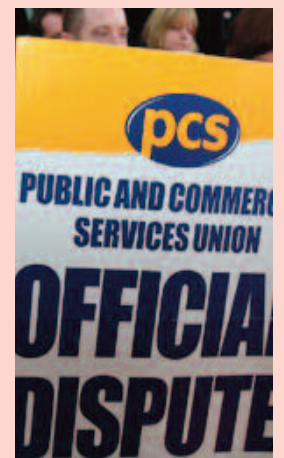
The National Union of Teachers already has a legal ballot mandate and says it will join a 10 July strike. The Fire Brigades Union is another possible participant.

The date 10 July originates with the Unison in local government. Their ballot started on 23 May and closes on 23 June. Unite and GMB in local government and schools are balloting in June.

Unite did a consultative ballot of members in the NHS, but looks unlikely to do a full ballot in June, as does Unison in the NHS.

The strike should not be allowed to become a one-day-only exercise in letting off steam.

We must strive to make it the start of an ongoing programme of escalating strikes and other action.



Anger is not enough

Letters



In the left's comment on UKIP "surge" there is much about the anger and disenchantment with mainstream politics.

It is true that there is an understandable revulsion against the politicians and parties whose policies and ideology accelerated the effects of the greatest economic crisis since the 1930s.

Tom Walker talks about that anger in his article for Left Unity (leftunity.org/a-party-for-the-pissed-off)

Walker sees UKIP's support as primarily a repository for anger with the mainstream that is channelled against migrants, minorities and Europe by UKIP. He argues that a strong "populist" party of the left could channel that anger to progressive ends.

Other left commentators have argued a similar thing about the nearly two thirds of voters who abstained in the election. That many of them could be won over by a convincing left party, if it existed.

I think this is dangerous wishful thinking that ignores ideology. Neo-liberal, pro-austerity and anti-migrant ideas are



UKIP voters and non-voters will not be won over by pretending they are just "pissed off"

the ruling and largely unchallenged ideas of the age. It would be patronising and wrong to think those working-class voters who voted UKIP were duped into voting for a neo-liberal anti-migrant party. They must to some degree be convinced by, share and reproduce those ideas.

We would also be kidding ourselves if we thought that non-voters shared a form of left wing anti-austerity politics rather than reflecting the balance of ideology amongst those who do vote.

We can win these people to independent working class politics, but we must face facts squarely. Those who vote UKIP or are so despairing that they do not vote are much further from socialism than most Labour voters or Green voters.

Anger is not enough to win people to socialism. We must consciously build a socialist mass movement, a socialist press, a system of socialist education.

To do this the fight to transform the existing organisations of the working class, the unions, is key. It will also require a fight in the political organisation most left-wing workers still look to, the Labour Party.

Dave Kirk

Traditional values

Like millions of British television viewers, I have had many weekday evenings ruined by Kirstie Allsopp, self-satisfied co-presenter of the achingly tedious property programme "Location, Location, Location".

Allsopp has recently taken to the *Telegraph* to advise young women on how to plan their careers. She advises women against going to university as a waste of valuable time — they should instead go to work straight after school, meaning they can meet a "nice boyfriend" and "have a baby by the time you're 27."

Far be it from me to suggest that Allsopp's Victorian perspectives on the value of education and independence for women might be a touch skewed by her position as the daughter of a millionaire baron, the beneficiary of a public school education and a close confidante of the Tory leadership.

Louisa May, south London

Kool-Aid or truth?

Since 23 May, debate has raged among economists about an attempt by journalists on the *Financial Times* to refute the claim by Thomas Piketty, in his best-seller *Capital in the 21st Century*, that wealth inequality is rising and likely to continue to rise in the USA and Europe.

Most economists, even quite conservative ones, reckon that Piketty has come best out of the row.

There are other elements to the dispute, but the core argument is about wealth distribution in Britain, specifically, in recent decades. The background is that official figures for wealth are patchy and inconsistent.

Piketty explains that he collated evidence from a number of data series, and made adjustments for the differences in methods of calculation and to cope with the problem of discontinuities in data series.

For their central claim against Piketty, *FT* journalists Chris Giles and Ferdinando Giugliano rely on a single data series from the Office of National Statistics. In a response to Piketty (28 May), Giles says that he made his criticisms because he was puzzled by the ONS figures not matching Piketty's, and then "dug deeper".

His own Twitter feed gives a different picture. On 16 May, the day after the latest ONS figures were published, and without "digging deeper", Giles was denouncing Piketty's argument as "coolaid".

The reference is to the mass suicide of the Jim Jones religious cult in 1978, when cult members consumed poisoned swigs of a branded fruit drink, Kool-Aid.

"You need to think before you drink the Piketty coolaid on rising wealth inequality", tweeted Giles, implying (before any deep digging) that Piketty's message was so aberrant as to bring brain death.

"Not quite a refutation", Giles also tweeted, "but short-term trends contradict Piketty's predictions of rising wealth inequality". He cited figures which (even apart from their unreliability, which Piketty discusses in his book) were really no more than a snapshot, not of comparable weight to Piketty's large documentation of longer-term trends across many countries.

Even the ONS figures showed a sizeable rise in inequality of financial wealth (the main form of wealth for the very rich) in the period covered, 2006-2012.

Giles may have done us a service by getting more people to read Piketty's book.

• Review: bit.ly/pikty

Working-class history at Ideas for Freedom

The AWL believes that socialist organisations must be the "memory of the working class". A big part of our job is to preserve, rediscover, discuss and spread the lessons and inspiration of past struggles, victorious and defeated.

Our annual event, Ideas for Freedom (3-6 July), will include many discussions on working-class history, with a focus on the First World War and the 1984-5 Miners' Strike.

IFF will open on the evening of Thursday 3 July with a Radical Walking Tour of East London, looking at how working-class, socialist and women's liberation activists organised in the East End in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Our Friday night meeting on "One hundred years of women's struggles, 1914-2014" will include speakers on the women's movement during the First World War and women's role in the Miners' Strike, as well as the 1976-8 Grunwick workers' struggle.

On Saturday 5 July, we will discuss "How world war became world revolution", the "Shop Stewards' movement and workers' struggles during the war", and "How could the miners have won?"

Sessions on 6 July will include the "Miners' strike and liberation politics", with a speaker from Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners, and the "Miners' Strike and the state", as well a history of migration and migrants' struggles in Britain and a look back at the history of Revolutionary Jews and its lessons for radical politics today.

From the Ruby Kid's talk on the History of Revolutionary Jews

The unions that Jewish workers in London formed were often unstable, due to the extent of piecework and the precariousness conditions of employment for many.

But the broad Jewish labour movement was a real movement that mobilised thousands of workers.

In 1900 there were around 135,000 Jews in London, a figure that had trebled over the previous two decades. In response, the British government introduced the 1905 Aliens Act, the first ever "modern" immigration control in British history.

Much of the agitation of Jewish revolutionaries concerned opposition to immigration controls, and agitation within the indigenous labour movements to see migrant Jewish workers as class brothers and sisters rather than hostile aliens.

There are myriad parallels with contemporary politics. Immigration controls are seen as something fixed, and politics which advocate their abolition are seen as wildly fantastical.

But they date only to 1905.

Immigration controls are a modern phenomenon, and the work that Eleanor Marx, Rudolf Rocker, and others did — fighting against racism,

and for solidarity between migrant and indigenous worker — is very much necessary today, particularly in the context of renewed racist agitation from the right-wing media.



Ideas for Freedom 2014 : Their Class war and Ours will take place at University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1E 7HY.

Free creche and accommodation (get in touch to book) and cheap food. For more information or to book online: www.workersliberty.org/ideas or email awl@workersliberty.org or ring 07796 690 874

Stand up for socialism!

Hard-right and far-right parties surged forward in several countries in May's Euro-elections.

France's Front National, Britain's "zombie-Thatcherite" anti-immigrant Ukip, and the Ukip-like Danish People's Party, all topped the polls in their countries.

That does not mean that things are hopeless for those who value democracy, equality, and liberty. It is a loud alarm call for the left.

Since the 2004 Euro-election, the last one before the world economic crisis broke in 2008, the parties of mainstream neo-liberal orthodoxy have sunk from 75.6% of the vote across Europe to 62.4%. Most of the drop came between the 2009 election (which came just after the financial crisis of 2008 had segued into debt crisis for several European states) and 2014.

Syriza triumphed in Greece. In Spain, Izquierda Unida went up from 3.7% to 10%, and the new Podemos movement got 8%. In Ireland, Sinn Fein, which would predominantly have attracted a leftist vote, went up from 11.2% to 19.5%.

But the hard right gained most.

Broadly speaking, the right-wing nationalists gained most in the richer countries, less hard-hit by the economic crisis, and the left-wing or leftist parties gained most in the poorer and harder-hit countries.

In Portugal, the Left Bloc lost ground, and in Italy a coalition of groups to the left of the Democratic Party got fewer votes than the total of its components in 2009. But the gainers in those hard-hit countries were not the far right. The Socialist Party (similar to Labour) and a green party gained in Portugal, and the Democratic Party in Italy.

Why has the hard right scooped so much of the discontent? Because the "official" left — the Labour Party leaders in Britain, the Socialist Party which runs Francois Hollande's administration in France, and the others — is wretched.

Because too many people of left-wing sympathies have been cowed by the aggressive power of global capital, and fear to campaign boldly for their ideas in public.

Because the left-wing oppositionists who still exist within the "official" left parties have been too weak and timid.

GRAND

Because the activist left has not found a way to cohere the tens of thousands of the left-minded into a political force which offers a grand narrative to broader millions.

Too often our activists are submerged in detailed campaign or trade-union work. Too often our public profile is mediated through catchpenny campaigns and "fronts". Too often we opt for bland and limited messages for fear that more radical ideas will isolate us. Too often all the socialist groups roll along in parallel, each with its favoured set of little schemes and tactics, without discussing and arguing with each other, and without uniting in the large areas where we agree.

The discontented, looking for a grand narrative, hear a seductive scapegoating story from the right which appeals to basic feelings of identity and territory.

The right proposes to blame and exclude worse-off, insecure people who have no entrenched power. To soured and demoralised people, that sounds like an easier way of "doing something" than battle against global capital.

In the 1930s, fascist parties used much social demagoguery. The Nazis in Germany, for example, after stating their nationalist and anti-Jewish aims, called for full employment, "abolition of unearned incomes", "breaking of debt-slavery", "confiscation of all war profits", extensive nationalisations, division of profits, and "expansion of old age welfare".

Ukip, by contrast, offered no social demagoguery. Only now is Nigel Farage scrambling to collate a little. The Front National offered relatively little.

These far-right parties promise not to solve social ills, or even to challenge the EU's neo-liberal policies, but only to penalise immigrants.

Few Ukip, FN, or DPP voters can really think that battenning down the borders is a "practical" solution.

Migrant workers contribute disproportionately to the public services and housing construction which xenophobic myth portrays as "overstretched" by migrants. Areas with fewer migrant workers generally have lower wages than those with many. Migrant workers are an enlivening part of the potential for a working-class fightback against the bosses and bankers.



Far right parties promise little except penalising immigrants

But the far-right voters listen to the noise about restoring national identity and national culture and "taking control of our own borders", and think that in that direction at least "something will be done".

The Front National in France has a clear fascist lineage, and many hardened fascist cadres, though it has softened its image in recent years. Ukip and the DPP are more orthodox hard-right nationalist parties.

A fascist seizure of power, as in the 1930s, would mean the crushing of the labour movement and the suppression of free speech and debate.

That is not just round the corner. None of the far-right parties, except on a small scale Golden Dawn in Greece and maybe Jobbik in Hungary, has the militant street-fighting base that the fascists of the 1920s and 30s had.

And there are no irresistible demographic trends propelling the far right.

Where social destruction is worse, in Greece and elsewhere, the sour scapegoating of the far right had less grip in the May polls, and people were driven more to look for real solutions which involve combatting capitalism.

With Ukip we also see a common pattern for far-right parties: its supporters are disproportionately male, elderly, little-educated, and they live outside big cities and the main areas of migrant population.

It does not follow that the far-right parties are sure to decline as the elderly fade, education levels rise, and more people live in cosmopolitan big cities. Far-right parties can extend their support beyond an initial base much faster than demography marginalises that base.

The Front National in France has been building its base, with ups and downs but an overall upward trend, for over 30 years now since it first made its electoral breakthrough, in 1983. Its electorate is now younger than the average, and almost gender-equal.

This or that right-wing group may rise or fall. This year the Lega Nord, the main hard-right party, went down from 10% to 6%. In Britain, the BNP lost the two Euro-seats it won in 2009, and is marginalised.

But without active and adequate intervention by the left, the far right can continue to advance overall. And advances by a more "moderate" far right can provide a strong base for later advances by outright and militant fascist forces. (The Nazis in Germany in the 1930s built on previous advances by the more mainstream conservative, nationalist, and anti-semitic DNVP).

The mainstream parties are responding to the surge of the nationalist right by anti-immigrant gestures.

Soon after the Euro-poll France's Socialist Party government evicted a migrant camp at Calais, and a group of Labour MPs (some with left-wing backgrounds) called for a harsher anti-migrant line from Ed Miliband. Such anti-migrant gestures will feed, not deflect, the desire of far-right voters for "something to be done".

There remains time and political space for the left to regain the initiative, if only we have the energy and confidence to do so.

The political implications of the economic crisis have not yet played out. Nor even has the crisis itself. It is usual in history for the political implications of an economic crisis to develop with large delays and through twists and turns.

In the same period as the electoral surge of the far right has developed, the Occupy movement "against the one per cent" won sympathy from many millions. At the same time as the right's triumph in May, Thomas Piketty's 600-plus-page tirade against spiralling inequality and plea for a drastic global wealth tax became a best-seller.

But the left has been unable to organise adequately. The revolutionary socialist left in France is probably the strongest in Europe, and has sustained a more consistent profile than the revolutionary socialist left in Britain.

Yet it slumped from 6.1% of the vote in the 2009 Euro-election to only 1.6% this May. One of the major organisations of the French revolutionary socialist left, Lutte Ouvriere, has retreated into appealing to voters to support it "in order to reconnect with revolutionary communist traditions". The other, the NPA, failed to educate and tighten up after being formed by a self-expansion of the old LCR in 2009. Large chunks of its activists have split away to join the Front de Gauche, an alliance around the French Communist Party. The FG itself stagnated, getting a little over 6% as it did in 2009.

SHORT-SIGHTED

In Britain, the short-sighted search for "broadness" and gimmickry which drove the NPA splits has affected much of the left.

There was the Respect fiasco. Then the Socialist Party scrapped its independent political presence in favour of a limited anti-cuts platform (TUSC). This May TUSC, standing in the council elections, was tainted by its association with No2EU's candidacy in the Euro-poll.

No2EU was theoretically distinct from TUSC, but in fact the same people, the SP and leaders of the RMT union, just wearing a different hat. For immediate anti-cuts resistance, they offered TUSC; if you wanted general political answers or broad political philosophy, they offered No2EU.

No2EU got only a joke-candidate score of 0.2%, one-fifth of the already-poor 1% it got in 2009.

Left Unity, which in 2013 claimed it could catapult the left to fortune through clever soft-soaping able to win electoral support from many people who would be "put off" by talk of socialism or working-class interests, did nothing in the Euro-elections. It stood just 12 candidates in the council elections, seven of them in Wigan, and none got good votes.

We start on the back foot. We also start in a situation where tens of thousands of people, currently politically inactive or only minimally active, are responsive to the vision they see in movements like Occupy or books like Piketty's.

All precedent tells us that the drastic squeeze on wages since 2008 will, some time soon, generate a backlash and an explosion of wage struggles. Those wage struggles will not automatically push people to the left, but they will reinstate solidarity as an option.

Workers' Liberty and Solidarity will do three things. We will step up our agitation for social ownership of productive wealth and for a workers' government, and resist the pressure on us to scale down to exclusive focus on more "realistic" demands.

We will get ourselves out on the streets and doorsteps more, and resist also pressure to "hide" in small-scale political and trade-union busy-work.

We will approach the rest of the left with a demand for discussions about unity in action — unity in piecemeal campaigns, and also in joint activity to assert the basic ideas of socialism.

300 at global link-up

By Vicki Morris

LabourStart's "Global Solidarity Conference" in Berlin on 23-25 May 2014 was its fourth major gathering and, with more than 300 participants, its biggest.

The conference was hosted by the German trade union ver.di, and comprised nearly three days of plenaries and workshops covered a range of themes.

A substantial chunk of the conference examined "Digital communications" — how unions can use electronic media to build themselves and their campaigns: LabourStart's raison d'être!

In an introductory session, Derek Blackadder, who works for the Canadian Union of Public Employees, described the work and structure of LabourStart as a network of more or less prolific correspondents who only have to accept LabourStart's founding principle: unions are good. There is an infinitesimally small amount of editorial interference in who posts and what they post.

Workshops included:

- "Fair play? Working conditions at mega-sports events" discussed using the interest in conditions for workers in the run-up to events such as the 2022 World Cup in Qatar as a way to boost longer-term union organising in those countries — no small task!

- "Union strategies toward migrants" was a fascinating workshop which included migrant cleaner Henry Lopez describing the UK-based IWGB's "3 Cosas" campaign.

- Another workshop described campaigning for the release of jailed Iranian trade unionists, including Shahrokh Zamani.

There was controversy in some workshops. In "Workers' rights and labour organisations in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries" a row broke out over the attitude to take to events in Ukraine. The Ukrainian participants, who were, in the main and broadly speaking, "third campists", were told by some German and Russian participants that the country was run by fascists.

A Canadian participant who lives in Ukraine pointed out in reply that in that day's presidential elections, the far-right Svoboda and the "right sector" were likely to get 2-3% of the vote, significantly less than the expected vote of fascists in many countries in the EU on the same day's elections to the European parliament.

One participant questioned why some people are ready to accuse Ukrainians of "fascism" while at the same time supporting the actions of the Putin government.

Despite the very heated and emotional debate it remained — by and large — comradely, as a speaker from the IUF union federation confirmed in the closing plenary. Sharp debates are necessary for the workers' movement to develop.

In the closing ple-

nary — discussing the way forward for LabourStart — speakers emphasised the potential for the labour movement in the region to fight the slide into nationalism and war among Ukrainians and Russians, partly through emphasising social demands against the ruling classes on both sides.

We were urged to follow the LabourStart website for news from Ukraine and give as much solidarity as we could.

Other highlights of the conference included a demonstration supporting workers from the supermarket chain Edeka who are fighting for union rights along this multinational's global supply chain, including in Brazil and Germany; and a multilingual singing of the socialist anthem "The Internationale" at the end of the conference.

The venue for the next LabourStart conference is in discussion. (LabourStart's founding editor Eric Lee expressed his wish that one day the conference could be hosted jointly in Jerusalem and Ramallah — sadly, a long way off.)

It is clear that LabourStart has a productive future though its shape is still evolving. It was initially set up to promote the use of social media by trade unions through demonstrating a variety of means:

- its news website;
- an experimental trade unionists' social networking site;
- online solidarity email campaigns run jointly with national and international trade union bodies.

What LabourStart clearly has become and hopefully will develop further as is a vital tool for building solidarity between workers around the world.

In one important speech, Kivanç Eliaçık of the Turkish union federation DISK, speaking on the Soma mining disaster, found a moving way to express the need for this global solidarity: "There are some words that all workers know, whatever language they speak: Soma, Rana Plaza, Qatar..." We need solidarity in order to end the class relations that lead to disasters like these.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty was well represented at the conference and we sold a good range of our publications.

- LabourStart: <http://www.labourstart.org/>

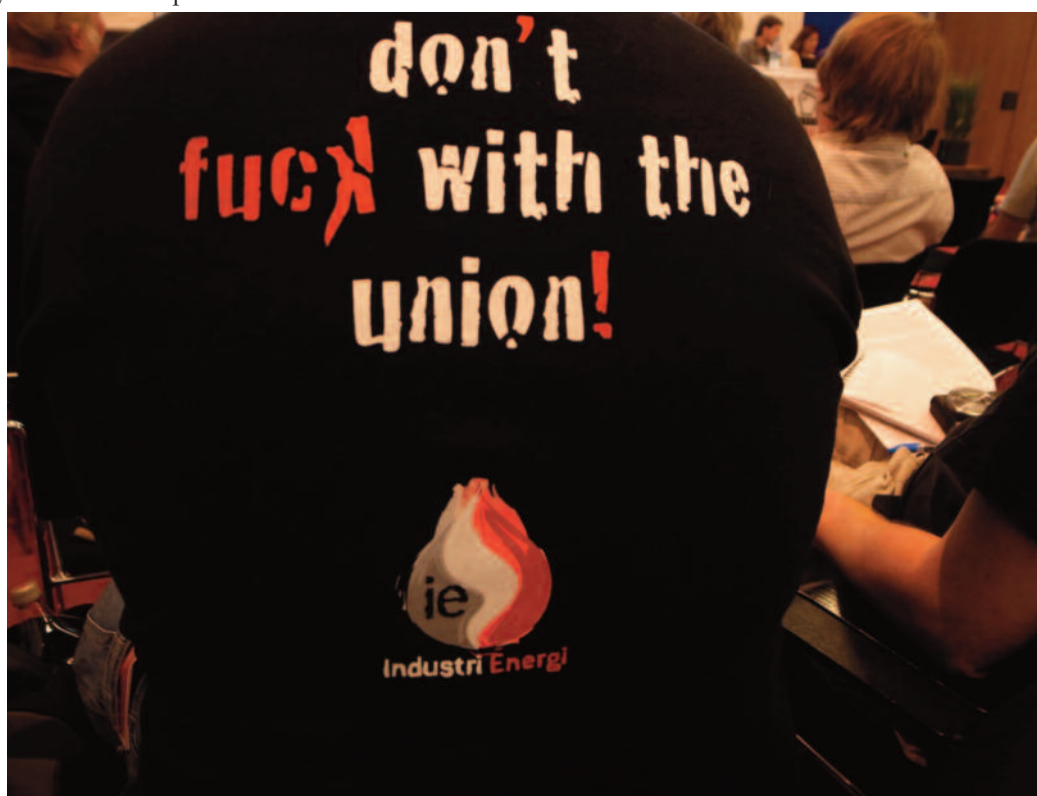


Photo: Matt Heaney



On Wednesday 28 May French police began dismantling and bulldozing just days after the anti-immigrant, far-right Front National topped the FN won 34 per cent.

The action, ordered by the prefect for the region, was justified by armed conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan as well as poverty will go now, is r

Migrants coming to Calais are hoping to cross the Channel and will impossible to treat the scabies. Many will try to resettle in the area b

In the meantime a large group has occupied the food distribution ce

Migrant solidarity groups have called for equipment to be donated

• For how to donate: <https://www.facebook.com/events/7026539497/>

• <http://calaismigrantsolidarity.wordpress.com>

How to defeat the

Article [abridged] from the website of the French group "Le Militant": bit.ly/fn-lemil

Bit by bit, while the majority of the working class, both the young and the old people among the traditional "people of the left", increasingly refuse to vote, the FN has made inroads among new layers of workers and the worse-off. In the first place it gains from the crisis of the UMP [the mainstream right-wing party].

The FN's political machine is the heir of the [World War 2] collaborators and the OAS [far-right terrorists who resisted Algerian independence], but labelling its actual or potential voters "fascists" or "Nazis" or "dickheads" just helps the FN.

The current strategy of Marine Le Pen is not at all today to build a French version of the [Nazis'] storm troopers)... She rides the tide from election to election, helped also by "anti-fascist" jeremiads, and the FN is now hailed by the media as the "first party of France", although her actual vote was lower than her father got on 21 April 2002 [in the first round of that year's presidential election].

The real earthquake in France is not the FN's Euro-election score as such. It is the crisis of the regime that the election reveals and promotes. That crisis has two centres...

- What one commentator has called the "decline of the President"

- And the crisis of the UMP [damaged by repeated internal rows and scandals].

When he responded to the local government election results [in March, when the SP and its allies lost 160 large local government districts, and the FN gained eight] by promising a "fighting government", against his own social base, [president] François Hollande doubtless hoped for something of a "Valls effect" such as polls on the popularity and image of the Prime Minister seemed to indicate. [Hollande sacked the prime minister and replaced him by Manuel Valls, former interior minister, well-known as anti-immigrant, and relatively well rated in opin-

Italy: Renzi triumphs

By Hugh Edwards

The Euro-election result in Italy was different from anywhere else in Europe. The governing party, the Democratic Party (product of a merger of most of what was left of the old Communist Party with sections of the old Christian Democrats), increased its support and got 41% of the vote.

Beppe Grillo's Five Star Movement got much less than it expected: 21%. The old right-wing ruling party, Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, was down to 17%. The hard-right Lega Nord was down to 6%, and the left-wing "Other Europe" slate got 4%.

The victory of Matteo Renzi, leader of the Democratic Party and prime minister since February 2014, has been hailed by the media as a model of how bourgeois governability can defend itself against the barbarian hordes of populism. In fact it is the very opposite. Renzi-ism represents a cold, deliberately calculated, and cynical exercise of typical populism.

Despite the predictions of disaster from other party leaders, industry, and bankers, he announced a "permanent" bonus of 80 euros a month for millions of workers - repeating the gesture and extending it to millions more lower-paid and precarious workers when a Grillo victory seemed possible in the elections.

The audacious gamble has paid off. It was not a victory for the government, nor for the Democratic Party. It was Renzi's victory! The Italian bourgeoisie are delighted, believing they can at last see political stability.

In parliament, within the majority Alfano's group [former Berlusconi followers] is vastly weakened, and that around Monti ["technocrat" prime minister 2011-13] wiped out. Within the Democrats Renzi's opponents have been systematically routed.

Millions of workers swallowed the con trick of the 80 euro bonus. That was the result of two decades of impotence and

complicity by the unions in the face of successive governments.

The unions have signed a "patriotic pact" with the employers (Confindustria), signalling to the Democratic Party that they will do little or nothing to rock the boat.

Now the confident Renzi has branded the union leaders as conservative reactionaries, out of touch with their members and with the demands of a new economy and a new epoch.

The unions remain terrified of initiating any resistance to Renzi's policies. Their silence renders them accomplices to Renzi's cynical seductive lies and promises to an ever more desperate and divided working class movement.

After six or seven years of the most grave political instability for decades, Italy's ruling class has been able to transform its crisis of consent. That opens the door for their long-term plans for arresting the historical and structural decline of capitalist Italy to take a significant step forward.

The only genuinely left force in the elections was the "Other Europe" slate, billed as supporters of the Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras's candidacy for president of the European Commission. It comprised Nicky Vendola's SEL, the Federation of the left headed by Communist Refoundation, and a medley of radical intellectuals. In Emilia and Tuscany it polled 8 or 9%, a very positive performance.

Tsipras's appearance in Bologna's Piazza Maggiore saw a large turnout, as did his speeches in Turin and Milan. Regrettably, instead of arguing to build a working-class-led struggle everywhere across Europe, he resorted to pandering to residual Stalinism.

When he invoked the names of former Communist Party leaders Berlinguer and Togliatti as models of proletarian probity, the square erupted in applause, and the leaders of the so called Marxist groups regrettably joined in.

Now the pro Tsipras forces are already splitting. SEL is most likely, under weasel phrases, to opt for a "constructive" opposition to the government. On the other side Rifondazione is angling to ally with Grillo, and supporting his candidate in the second round of the local administrative vote in Livorno.

Grillo has made overtures to Farage and Ukip. That has opened a chasm of dissent in his movement, with such people as the famous writer Dario Fo condemning it as a capitulation to racism.



Matteo Renzi



g three campsites housing up to 800 migrants in Calais. This came out a poll in European elections and in a district, Pas-de-Calais, where the

n outbreak of scabies in the camps. Where these migrants, who have not our concern, say the authorities.

risk their lives to do so. The dismantling of the camp will make it out a likely to be harassed for some time.

**entre.
including tents, sleeping bags, blankets and men's clothes.
B1042**

the FN in France

ion polls]. There has been no such effect: the crisis deepens.

In the same period, the Left Front [Front de Gauche, an alliance of the French Communist Party (CP), the Parti de Gauche (PG, a splinter from the SP, and some smaller groups] has been weakened:

- Firstly because of the CP's support for the government of the PCF leadership — the common lists [for the local government elections] with [Anne] Hidalgo [successful SP candidate for mayor of Paris] in the first round [French elections take place in two rounds, and it is common for left groups to rally to better-placed left candidates on the second round, but less so to form a coalition with them for the first round], or the vote for the Peillon law [redefining state-school autonomy and state-school teachers' conditions], were not acts of unity, but acts of division of the social movement in favour of the government.

- And because [PG leader] Jean-Luc Mélenchon and PG, nervously combining verbal batoning on their left and overtures to the EELV [Greens], and insulting the Breton proletarians in struggle for their jobs [a movement in Brittany, mainly in October and November 2013, combined workers' protests against job cuts and small bosses' protests against government plans for an "eco-tax": Mélenchon denounced it outright], have not advocated a policy of unity for an alternative majority. They constantly waver between aggressive verbal denunciation of the "Socialists" and opportunist politicking...

If we really want to respond to FN and the right, then we must take action against the government's cuts policies. The "antifascist" jeremiads, which extend to a possible call by the leadership of the CGT [biggest trade-union confederation] for a day of action on 26 June 26 against ... the result of the Euro-elections, will only widen the communication gap. It is as if they actually want to the greatest possible number of workers to vote FN.

Fascism is not upon us, but poverty, and lack of a future for our children, are. The [government's] "pact of responsibility" is the policy that allows the FN to grow.

Sinn Fein gains

The European elections in Ireland saw Sinn Fein top the poll in Northern Ireland and pick up three seats in the Republic.

In the North, it is cementing its position as the leading party in the nationalist community, putting yet more distance between itself and the beleaguered SDLP, which continued its downward trend in the polls.

The Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) also dipped below its 2009 European and 2011 Assembly totals, leaving the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) as the largest unionist party, despite a strong showing for the hard-line Traditional Unionist Voice (TUV).

In the Republic of Ireland, Sinn Fein has been the main beneficiary of increasing anti-austerity sentiment, opportunistically positioning itself to the left despite its record of implementing cuts in the Assembly in Stormont.

The election in the south was a disaster for the Irish Labour Party, as voters punished it for maintaining a coalition with the right-wing Fine Gael party. Labour lost 8.6% of its vote from the last European elections, losing its three MEPs and polling fewer than 7,000 ahead of the Green Party.

Labour's deputy prime minister, Eamon Gilmore, has now resigned, and will most probably be replaced by the party's deputy leaders, Joan Burton.

On the left, sitting Socialist Party MEP Paul Murphy scored 8.5% but lost his seat. He wasn't helped by the SWP-backed People Before Profit (PBP), who stood against Murphy and picked up 6.8%.

The local elections were better for the far-left, where pacts delivered 14 seats each to PBP and the Socialist Party's Anti-Austerity Alliance (AAA), and a slew of left-wing independents.

Greece: after Syriza's poll victory

By Theodora Polenta

The slogan "First-time victory for the Left!", chanted on the evening of 25 May, denoted a genuinely unprecedented event: for the first time in 180 years of the existence of the Greek state, a leftist party had come out first in nation-wide elections.

In the Euro-election, Syriza got 26.6%, and the ruling conservative New Democracy party 22.8%. The results create a new post-election political landscape. In fact the election results represents a major policy reversal of quality, substance and political orientation.

Now the call for a united front of the radical left in all areas (the trade unions, the neighbourhoods, the councils, the regions, the parliament) becomes more urgent. That united front largely took place, in an unofficial way, in the second round of the municipal and regional elections (voting on 18 May and 25 May 2014 for 13 regions and 325 municipalities).

Syriza and Antarsya both supported the best-placed Left candidates in the second round of the elections. The KKE [Greek Communist Party] stuck to its self-absorbed sectarian politics and denounced Syriza and all other left candidates, but with KKE's rank and file and supporters refused to follow the leadership's line.

Across Europe, we saw a "two-speed" Left — some groups making gains like Syriza, and some losing ground. The unevenness shows that the European left lags both in developing an overall strategy and in terms of the development and coordination of a pan European anti austerity working class movement.

Syriza achieved something that seemed unthinkable four years ago. (It won just 4.6% of the vote in Greece's October 2009 parliamentary election, and subsequently suffered a split by its right wing, who formed the Democratic Left).

However, Syriza did not achieve the second objective summarised in its election slogan: "On 25 May we vote, on 26 May they are overthrown". That was the call for the elections to be the great political event — like a great political strike or a vast radical movement on the streets — that would overthrow the wretched coalition government.

The results of the European elections and the second round of local elections show the shift of a significant part of society to the left, but also the contradictions of the left as to whether and how much it can inspire such confidence in the working class and popular strata as could lead to big changes.

The official slogans of Syriza for the European elections included, among other things:

- an end to the policy of austerity
- increasing the EU budget and strengthening the weaker countries
- a "New Deal" for Europe with massive public investment to find new jobs and revive the economy
- a European conference on the debt similar to that of 1953, where Germany was relieved of its financial burdens.

The leadership of Syriza also advocates measures to strengthen democratic institutions in Europe.

The problem with this program is that it does not correspond to reality and the current context of national and international capitalism in crisis, although it is presented by the leadership as a "realistic" program.

Neither in Europe, nor in any other country in the world, is a comprehensive "Keynesian" public investment program like the "New Deal" of the 1930s likely to be implemented. Nor are the strong European capitalists of the North likely to agree to put "their hands deeper into their pockets" to help southern Europe. For now there is no force that can convince the Germans and the other northern capitalists to give more money to Greece and Southern Europe for social policies.

The European conference on the debt for 1953 Germany was motivated by the USA's desire to create a strong capitalist Europe as a counterweight to the USSR. No factor like that operates today.

On the other hand, it is important to highlight that the problem for the workers in Greece is not the EU but the crisis of the capitalist system. The euro is not the cause of the crisis. A return to national currencies under present conditions, without replacing the foundations of capitalism, would deepen the crisis. It would lead to the collapse of the currency, inflation, and expansion of the debt burden.

Neither with the euro nor with the drachma with there is



Syriza won 27%

a solution for the working class under capitalism. The left in and outside Syriza should fight for a socialist program that will overthrow the rotten capitalist system.

A united front of the left, and predominantly of Syriza, KKE and Antarsya, under a socialist program, would directly open the prospect of power for the working class in Greece. One such example would find itself quickly imitated throughout Europe, making possible the realization of the slogan for the United Socialist States of Europe, as the first big step for the Socialist States of the World.

New Democracy and the government suffered a major political defeat. New Democracy has lost a large chunk of its voters and is now four points behind Syriza, and Pasok has gone down from 44% of the vote in October 2009 to 8% for the coalition it took part in for these Euro-elections.

But the coalition government is not yet falling apart. During the next period the government will force through the implementation of more unpopular measures and possibly a new memorandum, and simultaneously work towards creating a "success story" and "primary surplus" narrative on the short legs of a possible anaemic economic semi-recovery. The government will try to implement all its Troika commitments then hold on until the presidential elections in February 2015.

GOLDEN DAWN

The neo-Nazi Golden Dawn scored just under 10% at the European elections and got double digit results in most of the regional and council elections.

Ilias Kasidiaris, on bail from prison and facing charges of leading the training of Nazi paramilitary squads, polled 16.62% in the municipality of Athens. Ilias Panagiotaras scored 11.13% in the region of Attica.

In the area of Keratsini, and in the neighbourhoods where the anti-fascist rapper Pavlos Fyssas lived and was murdered by Golden Dawn members in September 2013, Golden Dawn scored double-digit percentages.

Not all Golden Dawn voters should be treated as hard core neo Nazis. Among Golden Dawn voters there are hard core supporters of Nazism. But in research suggests that this core does not exceed 2% of voters -the ideological descendants of the Nazi-collaborator "Security Battalions" during the Second World War, and those nostalgic for the days of the military junta in Greece (1967-74) - people who believe that the Jews are behind everything, that foreigners are taking our jobs and that the junta did the soundest work in construction for Greece's future.

There is a layer of Golden Dawn voters who think of the Golden Dawn vote as an anti-systemic and anti-government vote.

Golden Dawn has reached a level of strength that the criminalisation and imprisonment of its leadership, the uproar around the revelations of its criminal, murderous activities, and the scandal around the cold blooded murder of Pavlos Fyssas cannot reverse.

The first focus should be to rally the anti-fascist movement which today should be able to win the overwhelming majority everywhere. In Athens the 16.2% of Kasidiaris was alarming. On the other hand, the left in Athens (Syriza, KKE, and Antarsya) exceeded 30%.

If that force had been united and had the right program would have inspired a large chunk of the population that abstained (50%) and would have rallied the immigrants ruled out of the electoral process.

The biggest responsibility lies within Syriza as the biggest party of the left. Syriza's positions include clear reference to the importance of the fight against neo-fascism. However, in practice Syriza has not taken the necessary political initiatives and organizational measures for the development of a massive nationwide anti-fascist movement.

The youth of Syriza has a very serious involvement in the anti-fascist movements and initiatives, and overall Syriza's rank and file is involved in anti-fascist committees and demonstrations. But it is the duty of the party as a whole to develop the fight against fascism in a centrally-organised and planned way, fusing it with the anti-austerity anti-memorandum struggle.

For the leadership of the KKE [Communist Party] the antifascist movement virtually does not exist, especially when it is not under their control. KKE has made no serious initiative by itself to build the anti-fascist movement, and no attempt at united action with the rest of the anti-fascist movement.

The result of KKE (6.1% in the Euro-election, up on its 4.5% in the 2012 parliamentary election, though down on its 7.5% in the October 2009 poll and similar results in previous elections) may indicate a degree of survival and stabilisation of its influence, but not in any degree a radical change in the balance of forces within the Left. KKE's electoral results were enough to stabilize the position of the new leadership team installed in April 2013, but only for a while.

A key element of KKE's political orientation is to pose as the "anti-capitalist fortress" against the "onslaught of Syriza"; which is treated by KKE as the new Pasok. KKE denounces equally the class enemies of Pasok and ND and the supposed "enemy in disguise" of Syriza.

There is an old saying in the Greek radical student movement that there is a revolutionary way to talk about your school library and a counterrevolutionary way to talk about the revolution. The KKE leadership unfortunately confirms this saying. When KKE chooses to postpone the battle until new working class struggles fit in with the party's requirements, when everything is confined in the straitjacket of party patriotism, when it does not actively participate in the struggle to translate the people's rage into a positive working class perspective, then its formally revolutionary-sounding political manifesto and analysis are of secondary importance.

The result for Antarsya [a coalition of radical left groups, including SEK, linked to SWP in Britain, and NAR, a left split from KKE] was negative. It got 0.7% in the Euro-elections. The argument that this result was due to being squeezed by the main parties is inadequate, because despite the political polarization over 17% of voters chose parties that could not have electoral representation.

The ideological and political rearmament of the Left, overall, should be at the top of our agenda. Syriza's problem is the refusal to adopt a clear socialist program to break with the status quo. KKE's and Antarsya's major issue is their refusal to form a united front with the rest of the left in order to build broad social fronts and movements.

There are many thousands of activists inside and outside the Left parties who understand those deficits. The struggle of all these should be coordinated in order to bring results. The Left has an obligation to see the issue of cooperation of the Left as a priority.

Syriza should be pressed to persist on the call of a united front with KKE and Antarsya, aiming at forming a government of the left and gaining power. KKE and Antarsya must be pressed to abandon their "isolationism" and "sectarianism".

New Donetsk ruler is fascistic

By Dale Street

In mid-May the previously unheard-of Aleksandr Borodai was declared Prime Minister of the so-called “Donetsk People’s Republic”.

This fact alone should disabuse anyone deluded enough to believe that there is anything “progressive”, “anti-imperialist” or “left-wing” about the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and its Lugansk counterpart.

In 1992 Borodai fought as a volunteer in the war in the predominantly ethnic-Russian Transnistrian region when it broke away from Moldova. In 1993 he took part in the defence of the Russian Parliament after its dissolution by Yeltsin.

Borodai went on to write for the Russian newspaper *Zavtra* — poisonously anti-semitic, full of nostalgia for Stalin, rabidly Russian nationalist, and arguably outright fascist. According to the newspaper’s owner and editor, Aleksandr Prekhanov:

“I’ve known him (Borodai) since 1991. In terms of his ideology he is a Russian nationalist. He is a supporter of a strong Russian state... He’s always been close to me, and has preached the idea of a Russian national white — not red — imperial consciousness.”

Apart from turning his hand to running his own PR consultancies and working as deputy editor of the magazine *Russian Businessman*, Borodai helped Prekhanov to launch the Djen television channel in 2011.

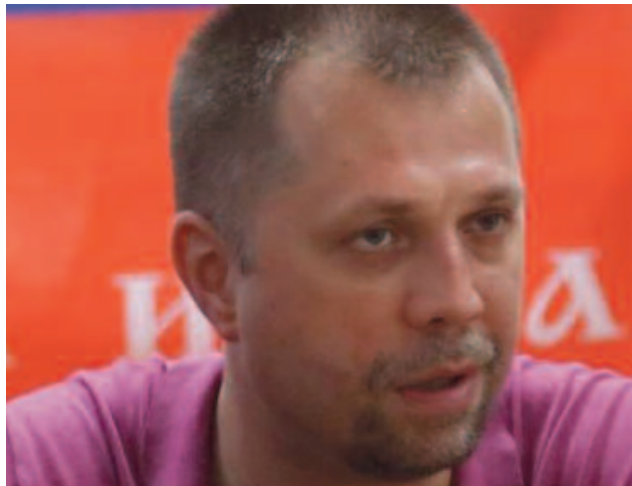
Like *Zavtra*, the channel’s output consists of anti-semitism, Russian nationalism, conspiracy theories, homophobia, misogyny, denunciations of the decadence of European civilisation, and, more recently, treatises on the “fiction” of a Ukrainian national identity.

From the Crimea Borodai moved directly to south-east Ukraine: “The territory of the Crimea is quite closely connected to the Donbass, and naturally the people who set up these popular movements are the same people, they are connected to each other. So when I finished in Crimea, I automatically came here.”

More information about Borodai’s politics can be found in an interview recently published by *Russkaya Vesna*, the website of the Donetsk and Lugansk “People’s Republics”:

“Aleksandr, how did it come about that it was you who ended up as the head of the republic’s government?”

“Fate decreed it to be so. I cannot answer any differently. I was prepared to take this responsibility on myself and to take up this role simply by virtue of my personal characteristics.



“I see what is happening as a confirmation that history has not ended, contrary to the claims of fashionable philosophers. Today it is happening in front of our eyes. And the most important thing is that it is the history of my native country.”

“You are a product of the Faculty of Philosophy of Moscow State University, the son of a philosopher. You’ll recall Plato’s idea that philosophers must rule. I know you fought as a volunteer in Transnistria and defended the Russian Parliament in 1993. What are your opinions?”

“To put it briefly and simply, I am a Russian patriot. I consider that the extent of the Russian world was artificially reduced as a result of certain circumstances, and that the Russian world was divided by artificially created borders. Those borders divide people of Russian culture ...

“Is it true that you were personally acquainted with the philosopher Lev Gumilev (see below). Could one say that his creativity has influenced your own views?”

“Many early but valuable memories link me to this mystic. I highly value his contribution to Russian culture and science. Absolutely, he has influenced me.”

“In that case, could what is happening in the Donetsk Republic be regarded as an eruption of passionarity (see below)?”

“What’s happening confirms that the Russian cultural archetype is far from having exhausted his vitality. Just as in Transnistria, so too in the Donetsk Republic we are confronted with the process of the self-organisation of the Russian world, in response to the uncompromising challenge it faces.

“What is happening in the south-east of Ukraine can be characterised as a Russian uprising. Russian in the broad sense of the word — in terms of culture, mentality and civilisation. But I’d also like to point out that ethnic Ukrainians are massively involved in the resistance movement. This process is not to be stopped.”

The Lev Gumilev praised by Borodai was a Russian ethnologist and anthropologist (and anti-semitic) who theorized that ethnic groups went through a particular life-cycle. Such groups expanded, through conquest, when their national “passionarity” reached maximum heat.

“Passionarity” is stimulated by external, mostly natural, events (such as oscillations in solar radiation levels). Similarly, it is natural events which set cultures apart. Hence, according to Gumilev, the border between Russia and the West coincides with the negative isotherm for January.

Gumilev contrasted the “passionarity” of the Russian “super-ethnos” with “parasite states” which exercise only “chimera statehood”. Examples of the latter states were America and France, both of which have been created by Jews (who, lacking a “passionarity” of their own, are necessarily parasitic on other peoples’).

But whereas Gumilev, who died in 1992, thought that the life-cycle of the Russian “super-ethnos” had entered into a period of decline (as manifested in the collapse of the Soviet Union), Borodai believes that the Russian “super-ethnos” retains its vital force of “passionarity”.

On 23 May Borodai’s “Donetsk People’s Republic” opened its first foreign “consulate” — on the premises of the Moscow branch of the Eurasian Youth Union (EYU).

The EYU is the youth wing of the Eurasia Party, headed by fascist ideologue Aleksandr Dugin. Like its mentor, the EYU’s politics are anti-semitic, Russian-imperialist, authoritarian and “Eurasian” (i.e. in favour of the creation of a new Eurasian Empire, centred on Russia).

The consulate is to assist “the cause of re-unifying the territories of historic Russia which were artificially split up in 1991” and has already been recognised by a number of Russian “patriotic organisations”, including Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s Liberal-Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR — another Russian-imperialist, semi-fascist, etc., etc. party).

The next time British Stalinists want to stage a protest about fascism in Ukraine — perhaps they could direct their anti-fascist endeavours towards Prime Minister Borodai and his supporters? Or are they incapable of recognizing fascism when it comes draped in a Russian tricolour?

A visit to Putin’s camp

The Left

By Michéal MacEoin



Workers’ Liberty members attended the “Solidarity with the Antifascist Resistance in Ukraine” meeting on 4 June, organised by the SOAS Marxist Society (Socialist Appeal).

On the panel were Russian leftist Boris Kagarlitsky, Sergei Kirichuk from the Stalinist Borotba via Skype, Richard Brenner from Workers’ Power, Lindsey German from Counterfire, Andrew Murray from the Communist Party of Britain, and Alan Woods from Socialist Appeal. It was chaired by Joy McCready, a member of Left Unity.

All the panel, whether so-called “Trotskyist” or die-hard Stalinists like Murray, shared variations of the same basic position: the Ukrainian government is a Western-backed fascist regime; the coups and seizures of buildings in the east are “anti-fascist resistance”; the main threat to Ukraine is not from Russia, which recently amassed tens of thousands of troops on the border, but the European Union; and the best thing we can do in Britain is to focus on opposing our own government.

There were some differences of nuance. German said she supported “Ukrainian self-determination” but her speech was mostly concerned with denouncing NATO, and pre-emp-

tively scoffing at any idea that there was an inter-imperialist context to the situation in Ukraine.

In other words she endorsed the mentality which holds that only the US and its allies can be “imperialist” — an attitude which lets Putin and Russia’s regional capitalist interests off the hook.

In his opening speech, Richard Brenner raised the presence of Svoboda in the government in Kiev. It is right to be worried by the presence of fascists in western Ukraine, and the rise of right-wing nationalism more generally.

However, there is a double-standard amongst much of the left. It denounces the government in Kiev as fascist-shaped, but it somehow wishes to explain away or fade out incidents such as the alleged attacks on the Romani population and the presence of figures such as Pavel Gubarev as “People’s Governor” of the Donetsk Region, a former member of the neo-Nazi paramilitary organisation Russian National Unity.

There were outright denials that Russia was involved in eastern Ukraine from Alan Woods and others. Woods at least made reference to the labour movement, but only as a wooden after-thought. Much of his speech was a bizarre paean to the Soviet Union, and he outdid everyone by saying the problem was not that Russia is intervening too much, but that they’re not intervening at all!

Drawing out the two-camp logic, Woods ended by saying that if Angela Merkel and other Western leaders are on one

side, then he knows which side he is on — which can only mean Putin.

Due to the high number of top-table speakers, time for discussion was limited. One contributor spent most of his time plugging a demo in Bristol and saying how glad he was to be in a room full of people he already agreed with.

Most contributions, however, came from Ukrainians involved in London Euromaidan, who were horrified by the pro-Russian line of the meeting. All the Ukrainian speakers were howled down by the audience, which is an indictment of the degenerate culture of some sections of the left.

Workers’ Liberty attempted to argue, over the hubbub, that self-determination for Ukraine does not depend on the character of the Ukrainian government. Though we oppose the government in Kiev, we should not whitewash the actions of the militias and Russian agents in the east.

Russia is a capitalist power with regional imperialist ambitions in Ukraine, Chechnya and elsewhere, and the proposed campaign is hopelessly one-sided and objectively pro-Putin.

The meeting voted to establish a campaign which hopes to seek support in the labour movement. Any campaign run by these “useful idiots” for Russia would be a retrograde step.

Instead, socialists should counterpose solidarity with Ukrainian leftists and workers, east and west, against the oligarchs, and support for Ukrainian self-determination against Russia.

Ireland after the civil war

Matt Cooper reviews 'Jimmy's Hall'

'Jimmy's Hall' is in many ways the sequel to director Ken Loach's (and screen writer Paul Laverty's) 2006 film 'The Wind That Shakes the Barley'.

In the previous film Loach depicted the Irish War of Independence (1919-21), siding with the losing republicans in the subsequent civil war (1922-1923). It was a compelling film, although Loach was criticised in this paper for oversimplifying the politics of the situation and finding no way of marrying large scale politics to a more intimate human story. 'Jimmy's Hall' shares its predecessor's strengths and weaknesses.

The film, based on real people and events, opens in 1932 with the election into government of Éamon de Valera's Fianna Fail, a party rooted in the republican movement vanquished in the civil war but nonetheless becoming an increasingly conservative force. The new government allows the film's central character, Jimmy Gralton (Barry Ward), a veteran of the left-wing of Irish republicanism, to return from the USA to his home in rural County Leitrim in the north west of Ireland.

Here, the film is vague on the politics. Gralton's opponents refer to him as a communist and copies of *Workers' Voice*, the paper of the Irish Revolutionary Workers' Group (RWG) (which formed the Irish Communist Party in 1933), are seen, but only in the hands of Gralton's opponents. Although it would appear that the real Gralton was a leading member of the RWG in Leitrim, the film portrays him as a community activist with socialist ideas but no political affiliation.



The heart of the film is, as ever with Loach, a human story. Gralton re-opens the community hall that a rather ill-defined group of locals had built ten years early. This is portrayed as little more than a community resource, although it is also a challenge to the Catholic hierarchy which claimed a monopoly on the welfare of the citizens. The film is more convincing in this latter theme — the icy fingers of the church, acting in concert with the big landowners, close around the heart of the rural poor in Ireland. This conflict is played out between Gralton and the local priest, Father Sheridan (Jim Norton)

who leads the local establishment against Gralton and his allies.

While Gralton is portrayed as a secular saint without fault or personal ambition, here making a speech about how the poor must not pay for the financial crisis of 1929 (with the obvious parallel), and there introducing the locals to the sophistication of the world beyond rural Ireland in the form of New York jazz, it is the priest who has depth as a character.

He is an old man who long ago chose to serve a church rooted in a culture of privilege and inequality, but the questions that Gralton poses to him are ones that he cannot resolve, only attempt to repress and control. In contrast no complexity is shown in Gralton's character; when the priest challenges him on Stalin's famines and political persecutions, Gralton brushes this aside as something for later.

Loach's films from 'Kes' (1969) onwards, are at their best when he tells of people and their struggles, leaving the greater political context implicit. The less successful side of his film-making comes with movement from personal stories to the larger political picture. This film is no exception. So in Jimmy's Hall there is an awkward didactic discussion amongst the hall's trustees about whether they should support a campaign against the eviction of a tenant-farming family. It is much like the uncomfortable discussion about agrarian reform in Loach's Spanish Civil War film, 'Land and Freedom' (1995).

Loach has suggested this may be his last film (he will be 78 later this month). This is a moving film, and he will be a much missed voice in British film making.

Boko Haram and Nigerian capitalism

By Mark Sandell

Although Boko Haram's terror campaign hit the world headlines with its kidnapping of school girls, this group's hatred of education is not new. Earlier this year they attacked a boy's school, killing the children in their beds and burning down the school. What conditions have given rise to the Islamist group?

Boko Haram is based in the northern Nigerian states of Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano. They want to end all secular education, and their name roughly translates as "Western education is forbidden". They also want to impose a stricter sharia law on the people of Nigeria. A majority of the nine northern states have introduced sharia law, which supports the stoning of women for adultery and other restrictions on human rights.

The group's origins go back to 1990, but its military campaign against the security forces started in 2009. Since then thousands have been killed, including the founder, who was beaten to death by the police. The group has now retreated into isolated rural areas, from which they run a terror campaign against civilian targets as well as the security forces.

In the year when economists have gushed about the MINT economies (Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria, and Turkey), it seems strange that the north of Nigeria is being thrown into crisis by a medievalist religious insurgency. One reason often cited is the desperate poverty of this part of Nigeria, but this is only part of the picture.

A rich source of raw materials, the area that is now Nigeria was exploited by The Royal Niger Company (founded 1879). After Britain defeated the ancient state of Benin and other states, colonial Nigeria was created under British rule at the end of the nineteenth century. Much of the north had a long history of caste-based Muslim rule. The south, with a majority of Christians, had the biggest urban centres.

The British were keen to keep Nigerians divided, especially as a radical movement for independence grew across Africa. The British favoured the Muslim rulers in the north and in the run up to independence (1960) lined them up to run the Nigerian state and military. Since independence Nigeria has suffered from military rule in 1966-1979 and 1983-1998.

In Nigeria access to wealth and power is through the state. In the south a capitalist class has developed rapidly. The mas-

sive oil revenues of Africa's biggest oil producer remain a magnet for corruption within the state. Getting elected is the way to get your nose in the trough; often it involves ballot rigging and getting your ethnic or religious group to vote for you.

Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan suspended the central bank governor Lamido Sanusi earlier this year in what many saw as revenge. Lamido Sanusi had raised concerns about 10-20 billion dollars going missing from the state-owned Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation. Exports of oil and petrol are huge (35% of GDP, 70% of exports), but little of the income makes its way to the wider population.

CIVILIAN RULE

The last military junta gave way to civilian rule following a movement for democracy that included oil workers' strikes.

The leaders of all the oil unions, even those set up by the government, were locked up. The leading opposition politician, M K O Abiola, a southern millionaire who credibly claimed he had won the Presidential election in 1993, was arrested and kept in solitary confinement until 1998 when he died in suspicious circumstances.

In 1999, in a widely criticised election, Olusegun Obasanjo, the former military head of state was elected president. Obasanjo won in another "unfree and unfair" election in 2003. In 2007 Umaru Yar'Adua of the People's Democratic Party (PDP) won another flawed election. When he died in 2010, his Vice President, Goodluck Jonathan, became President.

The sharing of the spoils of the state between the ruling classes of the south and the north has now been formalised in an agreement within the PDP. The "zoning policy" rotates the presidency — eight years to a leader from the south and eight years to someone from the north.

Umaru Yar'Adua was a northerner, and the zoning policy demanded another northern Muslim PDP candidate for President after he died, but Jonathan is a southerner.

In 2012 Jonathan decided to remove fuel subsidies. After five days of national protests and strikes, Jonathan announced that the pump price of petroleum would be 97 naira per litre as against the 147 naira he planned.

Jonathan is a homophobe. In January 2014 he signed a

Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act into law.

The workers' movement in Nigeria has a proud history of uniting across the divisions of region and religion. In 1945 a nation-wide general strike held out for 52 days and won a major victory. The union movement also united in a successful national strike in 1964. In 1994 oil unions united in a strike for democracy and struck again in 2012 against austerity.

The organised working class has often led other sections of the population in national mobilisations especially in the growing cities of the south. But still the ruling class can stoke divisions to stay in power.

Northern states are more rural and poorer than those in the south. Agriculture (60% of the economy) has progressed little, but changes have led to greater unemployment in the northern states. The theft and corruption that has taken most of the oil wealth and left little to be used for development has created a political space for those who hate modernity. The ruling class in the north has used traditional Islamic structures to impose sharia law and further oppress women and minorities in the north.

Zamfara state in the north was the first to reintroduce sharia law. As Lola Shoneyin, a Nigerian novelist and poet, wrote in the *Guardian* "...in Zamfara state, only 5% of the girls between five and 16 could read and write. This is the state governed for eight years by Ahmed Yerima, a member of the All Nigeria People's Party, after which he became a senator. As a senator of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Yerima replaced his fourth wife (herself a teenager) with a 13-year-old Egyptian child. The ceremony was held at the central mosque in Abuja attended by several of his senate colleagues."

It is not difficult to imagine that those looking for more power for the northern religious elite and a more religiously fundamentalist future for Nigeria quietly cheer on or even help Boko Haram. Buba Galadima from Congress for Progressive Change lost to Goodluck Jonathan in the 2011 elections sparking riots and 100 deaths in Northern Nigeria.

With politics dominated by all sorts of ruling class sectarianism, only the Nigerian working class can provide an answer. That must end the mass theft of oil revenues and the poisonous medieval agenda of Islamic fundamentalism in Nigeria. A first step would be to put the oil industry under workers' control.

Doncaster care workers fight on

By Max Munday

Doncaster Care UK workers struck for 14 days in May in a fight against a 50% cuts in wages and massive reductions in sick pay.

A strike committee has now been formed for the 80 out of 120 rank-and-file Unison members who have refused to accept these conditions

Gina Beaumont, a member of the committee, told *Solidarity* how the workers have learned to run the dispute as they have gone along; have for example made decisions about mobilising strikers to demonstrate at Care UK offices across the country from Newcastle to London, while keeping a picket in Doncaster; about gathering



support from unions to sustain the strike fund and morale. Gina said “the strikers are leading now; we’ve taken this in to our own hands!”

Care UK has told workers they must accept the new terms and conditions by 16 June or be sacked. After over a month’s worth

of strike days and with time running out, the committee want and need a strike ballot so they can legally take action. Gina said, “we don’t want a consultative ballot, we should go for a straight vote, we want to go out again!”

Unison is pushing the consultative ballot but this would delay action and risk losing momentum at a critical moment in the dispute when they need more action to win.

The mood at the end of the strikers’ last two weeks of action was buoyant and fuelled by support from meetings they attended as part of what they have dubbed their “UK tour”.

Having withdrawn an original offer of transitional payments, Care UK has come back with a second

bribe to get workers to accept the permanent reduction of pay. With ongoing court action to prove the company has breached TUPE regulations and unfairly dismissed staff, this may be Care UK’s last ditch attempt to buy workers off before a legal decision.

The strike committee believe that they cannot rely on the law to protect them; the court case is alongside, not instead of, a militant and democratic campaign.

- Send donations payable to Doncaster, District and Bassetlaw Health Branch 20511 via the Unison Office, Jenkinson House, White Rose Way, Doncaster DN4 5GJ along with messages of support to admin@unison-dab.org.uk

Rep wins in court

By Jonny West

Mark Harding, a prominent rep for Tube union RMT, has faced criminal charges since February 2014, relating to allegations about his conduct on a picket line during the 4-6 February Tube strikes. Mark finally heard his verdict at Hammersmith Court on 2 June and was found not guilty.

The pursuit of the case against Mark was obviously politically-motivated, and designed not merely to victimise him but undermine effective picketing.

Mark was supported outside the court by a large demonstration of activists from RMT and other unions.

That a trade unionist could be dragged through the courts for three months shows the need for a real labour-movement fightback against the anti-union laws which Cameron’s Tories are determined to tighten and extend.

The trade union movement needs to build on this victory.



Tube day of action 13 June

By Ollie Moore

The Hands Off London Transport (HOLT) campaign, a coalition including student activists, Disabled People Against Cuts, Occupy London, and Tube union RMT, plans a day of action on Friday 13 June to protest against staff cuts and ticket office closures on London Underground.

The RMT is still negotiating with LU management over their plans to axe 953 jobs and close every ticket office on the network. Strikes in February and April secured concessions around station supervision and salaries, with management forced into a guarantee that no worker affected by the changes would be reallocated to a lower-paying grade. But the union remains

opposed to the cuts plan as a whole, and is working with HOLT to build public political pressure.

The union also plans a labour-movement and community conference on 26 July to engage with unions, passenger advocacy groups, community organisations, and others about the future of the Tube. LU bosses have refused to carry out public consultation over their plans, as they know the closure of ticket offices is deeply unpopular. As Boris Johnson committed in his election *not* to close *any* ticket offices, LU management and the GLA are politically vulnerable on the question.

The RMT still has a live ballot and industrial dispute with LU, and could strike again in the near future.

- rmtlondoncalling.org.uk

Garden Halls workers to strike

Members of the Independent Workers of Great Britain (IWGB) at the University of London have voted 100% in favour of strike action over the loss of more than 80 jobs at the Garden Halls, student halls of residence near King’s Cross.

The IWGB has served notice of five days of industrial action against the two main outsourcing companies at the University, Cofely which runs cleaning and maintenance services, and Aramark who employs catering staff.

The strike will begin on Friday 6 June and will continue from Monday 9 June to Thursday 12 June.

Refurbishing of the halls begins at the end of June

and will last around two years. Current workers will be laid off.

There is also a danger that the University of London plans to hike rents or, ultimately, to sell off the halls.

Students and others are organising solidarity with the strikes, and are asking supporters to visit the picket lines from 7.30am on each of the strike days. In recent weeks, activists have occupied the head offices of Cofely in London and targeted the company’s prestigious contract at the Shard near London Bridge.

The University of London Union (ULU), the IWGB and the 3 Cosas Campaign have also gave notice of a

“summer of disruption” to the University’s summer conference season.

The University of London IWGB and the wider 3 Cosas campaign have always been willing to go on the offensive and fight to win. A two-day strike in November 2013 won major concessions on sick pay and holiday pay, and the momentum was continued in January with three days of strike action.

Central to the union’s strategy has been the use of strike funds. The strike fund will be crucial to sustain these five days of strike action, and those wishing to donate can do so at: iwgb.wordpress.com

PCS goes for 10 July

By a PCS activist

The leaders of the civil service union PCS have agreed a consultative ballot of members for a 10 July strike over pay alongside other public sector unions.

Activists should now organise to turn out the vote for action as the necessary prelude to delivering an enthusiastic strike on 10 July.

The union already has a legal mandate for strike action from the ballot held in February-March 2013, which it has kept live since then. However last year’s dispute was poorly prepared, lacked any real industrial strategy to win, was characterised by a marked lack of explicit demands, and was waged by a leadership that does not really believe PCS can defeat the government on its own.

Predictably the dispute petered out as the leadership consulted branches about the “next steps” in the campaign in the summer of 2013. There has been no national action or national “next step” in the “national” campaign for a year now.

The Independent Left in the PCS has been alone in its consistent criticism of the lack of explicit demands around which members could be mobilised and the leadership held to account.

The Executive is only now, rightly, advancing a clear demand for a £1,200 or 5% pay increase. It has dropped its previous vague suggestion that the strike is also about “jobs” and “pensions”.

Activists must ensure that the pay demand is at the forefront of all PCS campaigning, and does not morph into the earlier nonsense of a demand for “talks”. Strike action should not be abandoned if and when talks with the government do take place, as that will enable the Tories to demobilise the dispute without even granting a single meaningful concession.

The PCS leadership has no discernible plan for winning the dispute. Activists must seek to shape that plan.

Despite last summer’s consultation telling the leadership that selective action should be a weapon in our armoury

and that a voluntary levy should be launched to help fund it, to date the Executive has not collected one penny in levy. That must now be rectified in difficult circumstances but with determination and speed.

At PCS’s recent annual conference, the leadership stated that members did not want yet more one day protest strikes and that public sector wide action had to be on the basis of a programme of coordinated action that is designed to win. Activists need to know what that programme is and what commitments the various union leaders have signed up to.

If the PCS leadership repeats the mistakes of the past — campaigning for public sector wide strike action but failing to develop its own independent strategy to win on PCS issues — it will once again place the fate of PCS and its members in the hands of the unreliable leaders of other unions. The best way of building the pressure on the likes of the Unison leadership is to fight with them where possible and be able to fight without them if necessary.

If the dispute is sold to members as a public sector wide dispute then any collapse in the common front — as there was in the pensions dispute — will disorientate and demoralise members. Coordinated strike action must be presented as *one* weapon in PCS’ campaign to win on pay in the civil service and wider public sector.

The PCS leadership should have a plan in place to keep the union going if the Tories now move to end check off. Activists need to know that the Executive does indeed have such a plan.





El-Sisi win strengthens counter-revolution in Egypt

By Phil Grimm

Abdel Fatah El-Sisi has won the Egyptian presidential elections and will become the next head of state.

El-Sisi, the senior general in the Egyptian armed forces and former Defence Secretary, won over 90% of the vote in an election involved mass intimidation by police and crack-downs on opposition activists and protesters. The election was the first to take place since the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood government in July 2013.

Abdel Fatah El-Sisi was the leading commander of the Egyptian army when it deposed former president Mohamed Morsi. Much of the military and state establishment has come to rally around him as its champion. The military council backed him as presidential candidate, and numerous bourgeois political parties declined to stand their own candidates, giving support to El-Sisi.

Democrats and leftists fear his victory cements and secures the full return to power of the old state-military bureaucracy of the Mubarak regime, the regime which the initial revolution of 2011 had hoped to overthrow.

El-Sisi's huge 90% majority was achieved on a turnout of just 46%. Yet the turnout was an improvement on the number who took part in the 2012 elections. El-Sisi's support has some popular roots with some Egyptians hoping for stability and prosperity after three years of near-constant political turmoil.

Some liberal forces in the Tamarrod movement which organised against Mohamed Morsi have backed El-Sisi in recognition of the military's role in removing the hated

Muslim Brotherhood.

But in no way does El-Sisi have a truly democratic mandate. The state media, as well as most of the corporate news outlets, flooded the country with propaganda for El-Sisi. The army, an enormously powerful force in Egyptian life, backed El-Sisi's campaign. In a bid to make the electoral turnout more respectable, the polls were opened for an extra day, and a national day off from work was declared to up the numbers voting.

Meanwhile, the opposition faces severe repression. Thousands of political prisoners are jailed in Egypt, many of them Islamist supporters of the Brotherhood, and also hundreds of left-wingers, secularists, democrats and even critical journalists who have fallen foul of the regime. They include Al Jazeera journalist Abdullah Elshamy, who was arrested last August while covering protests and has been on hunger strike for more than 130 days.

A grim cycle has been established whereby those who protest against the imprisonment of activists are themselves arrested and imprisoned. Given these authoritarian conditions, it is unsurprising that many political parties, decided against risking a candidate against El-Sisi.

Activists for the only other party contesting the poll, the Nasserist Popular Current, were met with police harassment. A number of them were arrested when making complaints regarding electoral fraud.

When the army toppled Morsi a year ago, some in the left and labour movement welcomed the move. It is now bitterly clear that military rule represents counter-revolution. Independent working-class politics is necessary.

Support the Lambeth College strike

By Gerry Bates

Teaching staff at Lambeth College began an all-out strike on 3 June 2014.

The workers are fighting new contracts which attack pay and conditions and which would affect all new workers and create a two-tier workforce at the college. These are contracts that college bosses are looking to impose across the further education sector.

Picket lines will be at all three college sites, and both of the college unions are encouraging solidarity visits from local students and workers.

UCU members backed the indefinite strike action by an 89% yes vote on a 72% turnout, in a second ballot called after the first was the subject of an injunction under the anti-trade union laws.

Unison members at the college have also voted for strikes and plan to start their action next week. They have produced a letter in support of strikers after college management tried to divide the staff and trade unions against each other.

Ruth Cashman, Unison Lambeth local government Branch Secretary said "We are fully behind the UCU. Our members want to be out and they stand in total solidarity with teaching staff. Unison members will strike alongside the UCU, unless the management back down on these proposals. The Principal has no interest in the future of the College beyond making a name for himself as a 'modernising' union buster.

"He has consistency sought to divide the workforce, sending increasingly bizarre diktats out to all staff attacking the unions and calling people to cross picket lines. He's used the anti-union laws, he sought to bully his staff, but every time he comes for these workers, they just come back ready to fight on."

If the unions at Lambeth College want to win the strikes against such a defiant management they will need to ensure their members are not forced back to work. UCU and Unison members should argue for a national strike levy. This dispute has national significance.

- Motion in support. See here: bit.ly/1coll.
- Solidarity messages to UCU branch secretary Mandy Brown at mandybrowncow@hotmail.com or UNISON branch secretary Ruth Cashman at ruthycashman@gmail.com
- Donations. Make cheques payable to J. Eldon and send to Mandy Brown c/o Lambeth Trades Council, Hambrook House, Porden Road, London SW2 5RW. Or transfer to: Halifax, Acc Name: J Eldon. Sort Code: 11- 01- 07. Acc No: 11242869

