

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

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FOR ALL

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:

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An injury to one is an injury to all. Defend Bob Carnegie!

By Colin Foster

On 11, 12, and 13 February, as Bob Carnegie faced trial, thousands of construction workers walked off the job to show Bob that he had their full support. Bob is extremely grateful for that support.

However, the trial has not finished, not by a long way. On 2 April there are further submissions. Some time after that the court will give its verdict. Should Bob be found guilty, sentencing will follow a little time later again.

There is a very real possibility of Bob Carnegie being jailed for his support of the QCH workers.

All this started soon after 2 October 2012, when CFMEU and BLF members voted to return to work at the Queensland Children's Hospital (QCH) construction site.

That was after Abigroup (part of the Lend Lease empire) finally agreed to scrap their non-union, John-Howard-era, Enterprise Bargaining Agreement

(EBA) and replace it by a union agreement with a subcontractors' clause guaranteeing equal pay for equal work.

That victory for construction workers did not come easily. The QCH workers went more than eight weeks without pay, and many workers suffered many hardships.

After the victory, working-class people who supported the QCH workers during the dispute are being hounded in the courts by Abigroup.

CHARGED

Bob Carnegie, who played a significant role during the dispute, was charged with 54 counts of criminal contempt of court, 36 hours after the CFMEU and BLF members decided to return to work.

This vicious and spiteful attempt by Abigroup to punish Bob Carnegie is a blatant attempt by corporate Australia to intimidate any community support for union workers involved in

struggle.

Since initially being charged, Bob Carnegie has had to face court four times.

If Abigroup gets a guilty verdict and a heavy sentence on the contempt charge, then they will be encouraged to pursue aggressively other court proceedings they have already started, suing both Bob Carnegie and the unions for damages over the dispute. That case will be heard after the contempt case.

It could potentially lead to damages and costs of many millions of dollars being awarded against the unions. It could set a precedent so that even in disputes, such as QCH, where the bosses finally conceded to workers' demands, those bosses can use the threat of huge damages to deter unions from pursuing those demands.

We realise, as does Bob, that 2 April falls in the middle of the Easter break for construction workers. Bob hopes that unionised construction workers will enjoy the break with their

loved ones.

However, there are many things we all can do to make it known that we view the attack on Bob Carnegie as an attack on all of us: "touch one, touch all".

The following motion could be moved at union, work, site, or shipboard meetings.

"This meeting of union men and women calls upon the ACTU and respective state organisations, and our own union, to fully support a campaign of industrial and political agitation against Lend Lease (who own Abigroup) to demand it drops its vindictive and spiteful attack on Bob Carnegie, a community activist".

Motions should be forwarded to ACTU President Ged Kearney at ACTU, Level 6/365 Queen Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000.

- bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com
- facebook.com/defendbobcarnegie
- defendbobcarnegie@gmail.com

Revolutionaries at work



The Workers' Liberty workplace activists' school took place over the weekend of 2-3 March in central London.

The school, which is held at least annually by the AWL, brings together members and supporters of the organisation to discuss and develop socialist political activism in their workplaces and trade unions.

Saturday 2 March was a day of practical skills workshops for workplace activists.

The "Beyond 'organising'" workshop discussed whether "the organising agenda" had replaced partnership as the new orthodoxy of the union bureaucracy and looked at the positive aspects, and limits, of "organising" as

Materials from a bulletins workshop

understood by trade union leaders. Participants shared their own experiences and worked together to develop socialist responses.

A second workshop, "real life problems", looked at building collective culture in workplaces based on real grievances felt by workers, no matter how small, and discussed how to build links between those issues and "bigger" political questions.

Another workshop fo-

cused on arguing for socialist ideas in the workplace, looking at both positive and negative experiences of raising revolutionary arguments in often hostile workplace environments.

There was also a stream of workshops on writing and producing socialist workplace bulletins, in which activists involved in *Tubeworker*, *Tower Hamlets Class Struggle*, and *Lewisham Hospital Worker* — three of Workers' Liberty's

regular industrial bulletins — shared experiences and took part in exercises aimed at improving the bulletins' contents and organisation.

The second day of the school was dedicated to political discussion: assessment of the situation in the class struggle, and practical plans for AWL's industrial work. Much of the discussion focused on how our comrades in other industries and unions can learn from the work of AWL members in the National Union of Teachers, who played an integral role in launching the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC), one of the only genuine rank-and-file initiatives in the British labour movement in decades.

For workshop notes from the Saturday of the school, see bit.ly/XU55WY

Why has UK been downgraded?

By Martin Thomas

What are the UK government credit ratings which were recently downgraded?

A bit like your personal credit ratings which decide whether you get a mortgage or a credit card or a bank loan.

But government's (and big corporations) credit ratings are published, and they are not yes/no ratings, but a long scale from AAA (top rating) downwards.

What are the consequences of the downgrade?

Many other countries, including the mighty USA, have been marked down from AAA, and can still sell their bonds (IOUs) without trouble.

A drastic downgrade would matter economically, because banks are often constrained by rules to keep a certain proportion of assets in the form of highly-rated bonds. But a small downgrade like the UK's has small economic consequences.

Politically, the consequences are bigger. George Osborne made a big deal of his "success" in keeping Britain's AAA rating. He is now discredited.

What are the credit rating agencies?

There are three main agencies, Standard & Poor's, Fitch, and Moody's, all US-based. They are paid by governments and corporations to give a rating to their bonds.

The agencies were discredited in 2007-9 when mortgage-based and other bonds which they had rated highly turned out to be junk.

However, the reasons for downgrading UK bonds are clear enough. Despite all the government's talk, the British government's debt is increasing, and its annual deficit (the amount added onto the debt each year) is probably increasing too.

There is little chance of the British government not making payments due on its bonds. If it comes to it it can just print more pounds. However, there is some risk that Britain's economic

crisis might worsen relative to other countries', and that financiers wanting to sell British bonds quickly might be able to do so only at a loss.

How can the debt and the deficit be increasing if the government is making so many cuts?

By making cuts, the government is pushing the whole economy down. As a result, its tax income decreases. Some welfare spending increases even despite cuts in benefit rates.

What do socialists say?

The "Keynesian" answer of increasing, rather than cutting, government spending would probably improve things.

That worked in Britain after 1945 (when the government's debt was much bigger than now). It may work in Japan (where a new and quite right-wing government is trying it).

The immediate hitch is that Britain depends heavily on selling its bonds (IOUs) in international financial markets. Britain in 1945, and Japan now, have a much bigger proportion of their bonds held by banks and other institutions within the country which can't or won't dump them to buy other countries' bonds instead.

The international financiers might respond to increased public spending by panicking and dumping British bonds. If they did that, even on economic calculations which were "wrong" to start with, they would then make those calculations "right" by crashing the prices of British bonds and making it harder and more expensive for the British government to borrow.

Fear of the financiers is probably the reason why Ed Balls, who argued the "Keynesian" line strongly in 2010, has become more and more mumbly about it the more his argument is vindicated.

The answer is to expropriate the financiers — preferably through an integrated European scheme of public ownership and democratic control, failing that country by country.

Hull councillors defy cuts

By Stephen Wood

200 people protested both in and outside the council hall in Hull throughout the day on 28 February as the ruling Labour group passed its cuts budget.

The protest was called by the local government unions and backed by Hull Labour Representation Committee and the three Labour councillors who were committed to voting against the budget.

After five hours of dire speeches from all the parties, the budget passed with 38 Labour councillors voting through 600 job cuts and a spending cut of £350 per head of population

Three councillors — Dean Kirk, Gary Wareing, and Gill Kennett — took a stand and voted against the budget, urging their colleagues to join them.

After each speech by the three, the public gallery cheered, clapped and stamped its feet in approval.

Each of these councillors stood up in favour of what they were elected on

and have committed to building a broad campaign within the community and labour movement to defend jobs and services and defend their right to remain Labour councillors.

The councillors spoke to a packed meeting of local activists after the vote. The platform also included John Dunn, a member of the Clay Cross Labour council which, in 1972, defied the Tory government over council rent rises.

In Warrington, councillor Kevin Bennett also defied the Labour whip and voted against cuts.

Gill Kennett said: "I send my support to Councillor Kevin Bennett for his great stand against the cuts. Having been in the same position I am aware of how difficult it is and want to say we in Hull are wholeheartedly behind him."

• Councillors Against Cuts meets for its first conference in Birmingham on Saturday 16 March. councillorsagainstcuts.org

Where dissidents are "terrorists"

By Eric Lee

When George W. Bush proclaimed his "War on Terror" more than a decade ago, there was some concern in the USA and its allies that the war might not be confined to fighting actual terrorists overseas and could also be directed against ordinary dissidents at home.

For that reason, civil liberties groups were particularly concerned about any "anti-terror" legislation that could be seen as curtailing human rights.

The good news is that the democratic rights we had pre-2001 are largely intact in countries like the USA and the UK. The intelligence services no doubt have larger budgets and electronic spying on all of us has probably increased, but the fears of an all-pow-

erful "national security state" emerging have thankfully not been realized.

It's not as if armed riot police would storm Unison's headquarters on the Euston Road, arresting hundreds of activists, accusing Dave Prentis of "terrorism" because he'd spoken out against some government policy.

But that's precisely what's happening today in Turkey, one of the junior partners in the US-led "war on terror".

Two weeks ago, police stormed the Ankara head-

quarters of KESK, the public sector union, arresting over 100 activists. Over 160 arrest warrants were issued. Fifty were arrested in Istanbul. The teachers union Egitim Sen was also subjected to a wave of arrests.

The leaders of KESK and Egitim Sen were accused of involvement with terrorism.

The arrests were, it was claimed, part of an investigation into a suicide bomber's attack on the US embassy in Ankara at the end of January in which one guard (and the

bomber) were killed.

We have to admit that Turkey does in fact suffer from a lot of political violence — on all sides.

Kurdish fighters of the PKK, far-leftists angry at the USA and Israel, and others have from time to time engaged in horrific violence. So has the Turkish state.

TERRORISM

It's not like the Turkish government is making up the idea of "terrorism".

The problem is that it appears to be using a genuine security situation to justify attacks on organisations that it doesn't like for other reasons, such as unions of teachers and other public sector workers.

This is, of course, reminiscent of the McCarthy era in the USA when the gen-

uine threat of Stalinist domination of Europe was used to justify a crackdown on any form of dissent.

In Turkey, the organization the government is blaming for the US embassy bombing is known as the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front, or DHKP/C. The DHKP/C is listed by the US State Department as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO).

But KESK is not. And Egitim Sen is not. And it's an important distinction.

Amnesty International says it "has long campaigned against the abuse of Turkey's overly broad and vague anti-terrorism laws to prosecute legitimate peaceful activities."

Note that Amnesty isn't saying Turkey shouldn't combat terrorism. It's saying that the laws are overly broad and vague. And

they're being abused by the state to persecute legitimate dissenters, like the unions.

Unions around the world have rallied to the defence of KESK and Egitim Sen.

The Brussels-based International Trade Union Confederation, representing 175 million organised workers, was the first to issue a strong statement. They were followed by the global union federations for public sector and education workers, Public Services International and the Education International.

All three groups have teamed up to launch an appeal on LabourStart which has been signed — so far — by over 8,000 trade unionists.

• LabourStart campaign: <http://bit.ly/13QoD18>

What is the 5 Star Movement?

Beyond the net?

Beppe Grillo's 5 Star Movement (M5S) is tapping and now successfully channelling outrage, anger and hatred, has fabricated a massive internet-based "anti political radical populism" unique in Europe and it is now the largest single political force in Italy, with 108 seats in La Camera and 54 in the Senate. It won more than a quarter of all votes cast.

M5S pledges to reject austerity and eradicate corruption from political life. M5S has tapped into, and now successfully channelled, outrage, anger, and hatred of the political establishment.

It has built a massive anti-political radical populism", unique in Europe. It is now the only genuinely national force geographically, with its support coming in relatively equal measure from all over Italy.

In contrast, the 10 million or so votes lost between them by the Democrats, Berlusconi, and The Northern League has seen their respective power bases shrink, especially where they were formerly strongest, and their support is now concentrated in specific regions.

While Grillo correctly exposes the obscene disparity of the incomes and corrupt privileges of the corrupt political-establishment "caste" and their cliques in the social administration of the country, little is said of the same obscenity among bosses like Marchionne, head of Fiat. Instead, M5S's rhetoric appeals to a vision of a utopian petty-bourgeois, pre-modern self-sufficiency.

It is fatally open — as Grillo has already shamefully

demonstrated — to the poisonous currents of nationalist, racist reaction, incarnate among Italy's multi-millioned small and medium-sized producers, to say nothing of its hordes of outright fascists.

Furthermore, M5S has no physical roots in the trade unions, workplaces, or communities — the indispensable bedrock for any democratic mass resistance to emerge. Rather, it defines itself as an exercise in "liquid democracy", whose electoral success underlines the débâcle of a stagnant, bureaucratic workers' movement in tandem with a radical left stuck in one opportunist cul-de-sac after another.

M5S's difficulties are further complicated by the figures of Grillo and Casaleggio, not only as the legal proprietors of the M5S website, but also because of the latter's murky relations with international financial foundations and think-tanks, which raise questions about accountability and democratic control within the movement.

Grillo has rejected the offer of entering government with Bersani's Democratic party, an offer that contained an agreement to initiate a number of the key reforms demanded by M5S.

Grillo stated that if Bersani and Berlusconi were now "converts to honesty", they should form a government and demonstrate it.

Most M5S supporters want another election to "finish the job". The current president, Napolitano, was due to leave office in May, but is now preparing to stay, as no successor is possible without a government in place. He will no doubt summon Mario Monti back once more to save the state from further implosion. The mighty arsenal of bourgeois propaganda is being unleashed to sow confusion and doubt on Grillo and his newly-elected "citizen" deputies.

The M5S's success thus far rests on its campaign against the corrupt political establishment as a whole. Demands to cut their incomes drastically, raze to the ground their privileges, abolish public funds to all political parties, render transparent and accountable all political activity, disqualify owners of the media from political office...

These are just some of the measures which are, as far as they go, progressive reforms. But they have not gained the M5S overwhelming support from the working class, in millions still abstaining or backing Bersani via the orientation of the trade unions, especially the CGIL confederation. Worse, large swathes of the South, like Calabria, backed Berlusconi.

But the vast bulk of these are anti-austerity! They can be won! To overcome their doubts and reservations, M5S has to widen its demands, political, economic, and social. It must demand massive tax increases on the rich; nationalisation under workers' control the poisonous steelworks at Taranto and other similar plants; an end to public funding to all church and private schools; increases in public funding for state schools, universities, hospitals etc.; an end to tax exemptions for church, business, and financial activity; an increased minimum wage and state-provided unemployment benefit; public ownership and democratic control of all businesses declaring mass redundancies.

It must also go beyond the net, to the workplaces, streets and squares, the hub of popular political life in Italy, and seek to bring back into struggle all the forces at the mercy of the hideousness of capitalist existence in Italy today.

Hugh Edwards

No excuses for Grillo

Hugh Edwards (Solidarity 277, 27 February) is probably less enthusiastic about Beppe Grillo than some on the Europhobe left, who adore Grillo's demand for an immediate Italian exit from the Eurozone and return to the lira.

Socialist Worker describes Grillo's Five Star Movement (Movimento 5 Stelle, M5S) as "leftwing", CPBers like Brian Denny rejoice in Italians' apparent rejection of the Euro by voting for Berlusconi or Grillo, and Counterfire members such as James Meadway compose longer and more elaborate intellectual apologies.

Nevertheless, I was shocked to find absolutely no mention of Grillo's appalling racist stance on immigration, opposing citizenship rights for children of immigrants born in Italy, and his willingness to publicly consort with the neo-Nazis of Casa Pound (who, amongst numerous other violent actions, mounted a physical attack on an election candidate of the radical left Rivoluzione Civile in Lazio a few weeks ago) in Edwards' article.

Grillo has also openly stated his desire to "wipe out" the trade unions and believes workers should be content with representatives on company boards — presumably in the manner of Mussolini's 1930s corporate state, as CGIL leader Susanna Camusso rapidly pointed out.

Grillo's demands for egalitarian anti-hierarchical transparency in public life would be more credible if M5S were not itself run in a totally top-down way.

Whilst it may be that the quotations from and images of Mussolini that Grillo recently used to back up anti-parliamentary rants on his blog are mere posturing and not part of a drift towards classical fascism, there can be no ambiguity in our own opposition to this right-wing demagogue, even when we need to understand why M5S got 37.9% of the under-30 vote, 54.8% of the student vote, and 41.1% of the unemployed vote. Xenophobic, racist, nationalist and semi-fascist answers to an international capitalist crisis must be firmly rejected and austerity fought on a Europe wide basis.

The partial success of the southern European general strike of 14 November 2012 shows how we can build a real fight back.

Toby Abse, south London

Another "new mood"

Left

By Martin Thomas



***Socialist Worker* (26 February) hailed the success in Italy's recent general election of "the left wing, anti-corruption, Five Star Movement" of Beppe Grillo.**

Revolutionary socialists in Italy do not agree that Grillo's movement is "left-wing". Franco Grisolia of the PCdL (Workers' Communist Party) writes: "There is nothing to celebrate in this vote, which... expresses all the recent defeats and confusion in the labour movement and its vanguard".

Grisolia concedes: "We know that there are contradictions, that some of the political personnel entering parliament today with the 5 Star Movement are not reactionary".

But Grillo says that: "The unions are outdated. We no longer need them. We should do as the US does".

The programme of Grillo's movement has two main elements: denunciation of corruption, especially among politicians; and enthusiasm for the internet. One of its main demands is for free internet access for all.

DEMANDS

It has a spread of other demands, some very detailed, the axis of which is a hope that smaller capitalist enterprise, using the internet and providing for shareholder participation, can clear away the congealed corruption of the Italian state and big business and make Italy "like other countries".

Thus Grillo calls for: "Reduction of public debt with strong cost-cutting measures of the state by cutting waste and with the introduction of new technologies"; and the "abolition of monopolies, particularly Telecom Italy, Highways, ENI, ENEL, Mediaset, State Railways".

Conservative commentators are not worried that Grillo's electoral success will feed anti-capitalist mobilisations. Their chief worry is Grillo's call for a referendum on Italian membership of the euro. Grillo, however, is not anti-EU.

He says: "We want to bring honest people to the head of our country. Just as it is in the rest of Europe, but not in Italy. I am a convinced European... I want a united Europe..."

Grisolia notes: "Grillo has repeatedly reaffirmed his posi-

tion on immigration by declaring, in terms often used by the Northern League: 'Italy can not take responsibility for the problems of the world'... he has spoken out against... the granting of citizenship to children of immigrants born in Italy".

Grillo has flirted with the neo-fascist movement Casa-Pound.

To party politics Grillo counterposes his "movement" — in which, however, the only central authority is his own personal blog, run by computer businessman Gianroberto Casaleggio. There are no committees, conferences, or branches.

Italian Trotskyist Enrico Pellegrini comments: "The M5S is based on simple adherence to [Grillo's] blog... The 'new' movement is only the will of a single man" and his inner circle.

Casaleggio, as a businessman, has had close links with the American Chamber of Commerce in Italy and the Aspen Institute think-tank, whose board members include Madeleine Albright, Queen Noor of Jordan, and Condoleezza Rice.

Socialist Worker's demagogic hyping-up of miscellaneous "new moods of anger" — Hamas, Hezbollah, Muslim Brotherhood, Grillo, you name it — is no service to working-class politics.

And it squares ill with SW's sectarian dismissal of Syriza.

• More: bit.ly/pellegr, bit.ly/grisoli

Stop rise of Ukip

its working-class supporters.

It would be patronising and complacent, though, to believe that working-class people who vote Ukip do so simply to express a vague "protest" without any real understanding of or belief in what the party stands for. It is dangerous to imagine that if some left-wing electoral vehicle can replicate Ukip's populist pitch (but from the left), we can repeat their success.

The Socialist Party-led Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) stood in the Rotherham, Middlesbrough, and Eastleigh by-elections on as "populist" a pitch as one could wish for — a lowest-common-denominator anti-cuts appeal. TUSC came out of the "No2EU" coalition, an attempt to tap into anti-EU and anti-migrant sentiment "from the left". TUSC polled 620 votes *in total* across the three by-elections, less than half of Ukip's lowest single score. Unfortunately Ukip's vote represents a layer of anti-migrant, anti-Europe feeling amongst working-class people — which the left needs to relate to with a serious long-term political campaign based on socialist ideas and emphasising working-class unity.

Peter Woodhouse, a Ukip-voting train driver and former Labour supporter interviewed in the *Guardian*, said: "One of the reasons I voted for Ukip is immigration. I'm worried about the dropping of the barrier in January. I fully expect 2-4 million Bulgarians and Romanians to come over. What's it going to be like? We're a small island." Sarah Holt, a shopworker, said: "They have talked to me about their policies and I agree with a lot of what they have told me. There's going to be more and more foreigners coming in and taking everything from us. It's diabolical."

Although senior Tories like Kenneth Clarke have warned against a rightwards lurch in response to Ukip's success, a cabinet committee met on 5 March to examine "wide-ranging plans" to restrict Bulgarian and Romanian immigration to Britain without breaching EU law.

LABOUR

But, critically, where is the Labour Party, the wider labour movement, and the left? Eastleigh was a dismal showing for Labour, finishing fourth in a by-election while in opposition for the first time in nearly 15 years.

Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper was set to unveil a new immigration policy on Thursday 7 March, and while it is focusing on "crackdowns" on employers who exploit migrants, previous "crackdowns" have been used as cover to deport migrant workers rather than level up their conditions.

The far-left is politically hamstrung on the issue, having been desperately attempting to give a progressive gloss to anti-EU sentiment for years. The "No2EU" coalition even attacked "the so-called 'free movement of labour'", and "the social dumping of migrant labour". A speech by the then-RMT President Alex Gordon to a 2011 conference of the "People's Movement" (an Irish anti-EU coalition) argued for restrictions on immigration on the basis that continued "mass migration" would "feed the poison of racism and fascism".

The left needs more than a change of approach or tactics; it needs a change of politics. Attempting to convince Ukip-supporting workers that their anti-migrant and anti-EU feeling would be better and more progressively expressed by voting for some left-social-democratic electoral formation (Respect, No2EU, TUSC, next?) than for Ukip is a dead-end.

We need to convince workers of an *alternative set of ideas*, that the enemy is not "Europe" but capitalist austerity, and that the answer to fears about increased migration putting a strain on jobs, wages, and services is not to restrict migration but to organise all workers — British-born and migrant — to fight for the levelling up of conditions to provide living wages, decent jobs, housing, and public services for all. The labour movement needs an emergency plan that can unite workers across Europe to fight for working-class policies against the policies of austerity.

Winning working-class people to that fight is the only way to stop and reverse the rise of Ukip.

• Sign this statement — "Equal rights for migrant workers!" lrcyouth.org.uk/eqrworkers

The United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip) has seen support surge, most recently in the 28 February Eastleigh by-election where it won 11,571 votes — 27.8%, an increase of 24%, and enough to beat the Tories into third place.

Last year, in the Croydon North by-election, Ukip polled 1,400 votes, an increase of 4%. In Rotherham, it won 4,648 votes (21.67%), coming second. In Middlesbrough, it also finished second with 1,990 votes (11.8%).

In a recent YouGov poll the party showed 12% overall support — equal third with the Liberal Democrats.

The trends suggest that Ukip stands a good chance of gaining the most votes of any party at next year's European Parliament elections.

A great deal of debate has taken place in the mainstream press about whether Ukip's recent electoral gains were just "protest votes", rather than indicators of the party consolidating a longer-term, loyal base. If the vote was an expression of "protest", the questions are: who was doing the protesting, what were they protesting about, and in the name of what alternative?

A study into Ukip's vote at the 2009 European elections, where they came second to Labour and won 16.1% of the vote, argued that Ukip's "core supporters" are "a poorer, more working-class, and more deeply discontented group who closely resemble supporters of the BNP and European radical right parties."

BNP

The BNP would sometimes pitch "to the left"; leader Nick Griffin claimed in 2002 that his party was "the only socialist party in Britain", and the BNP's local work often has an explicitly "working-class" edge and includes opposition to cuts to local services. Ukip's pitch is different.

Where the BNP might demagogically and disingenuously attack Labour for abandoning white workers, Ukip's leader Nigel Farage focuses on attacking David Cameron for not being conservative enough. The Tories failed in Eastleigh, Farage said, because "traditional Tory voters look at Cameron and ask themselves: is he a Conservative? And they conclude, no, he is not. He is talking about gay marriage, wind turbines, unlimited immigration from India, he wants Turkey to join the EU." The *Daily Mail's* Peter Hitchens described Ukip as "the Thatcherite Tory Party in exile". Ukip wants compulsory "workfare" schemes for *anyone* on benefits, greater privatisation in education, and a part-privatised "national health insurance" model to replace the NHS.

But despite its right-wing pitch, figures in the *Independent* show that more than 40% of Ukip supporters oppose the Tories' cap on tax credits and benefits, 43% want increased spending on public services, and more Ukip supporters than Lib Dem supporters believe that "the government is cutting too deeply". There is a potentially unstable contradiction between Ukip's ultra-Tory policies and the instincts of some of

Help us raise £15,000



Carlos Slim Helú, the world's richest man

According to *Forbes* magazine, there are now 1,426 billionaires on the planet with a total net worth of \$5.4 trillion (around £3.5 trillion).

What does £3.5 trillion mean? The entire UK budget deficit is less than 0.01% of that amount. A global tax of just a few percent on the wealth of the super rich could wipe out the alleged economic "need" for austerity policies across the globe. The world's rich, and the governments that serve them, have used the economic crisis to screw down social costs. They have increased their wealth while the rest of us suffer.

Workers' Liberty exists to fight for a world in which the immense wealth that modern, globalised capitalist society has created is not concentrated in the hands of a tiny elite but democratically managed by those who produce it.

Workers' Liberty has, of course, written to all 1,426 of these worthy individuals to ask for donations to our fund appeal. We'll keep you informed as the replies come in. But in the meantime, why not donate some money yourself, just in case our letters to the billionaires get lost in the post.

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

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

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

● Organising a fundraising event.

● Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

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

Total raised so far: £8,017



We raised £735 this week. This comprised £105 in donations at our Industrial School, £30 at a recent London forum, and individual donations. Thanks to Dave and Alistair.

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

..... (its address)

Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

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

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

Date

Signature

Anti-capitalism in Bulgaria

In Bulgaria there have long been active, but small anti-capitalist groups; they have had major weaknesses and lacked connections to the working class.

The unions have been crushed by the successive right-wing governments of 1997-2005. Individual contracts were signed and trade unionism was almost illegal, regarded as an activity punishable by dismissal. Some small organisations of the revolutionary left and the anarchist milieu were oriented towards the ecology and social rights movements.

But in December 2008 Bulgarian anti-capitalist groups protested outside the Greek Embassy in solidarity with the December 2008 uprising in Greece.

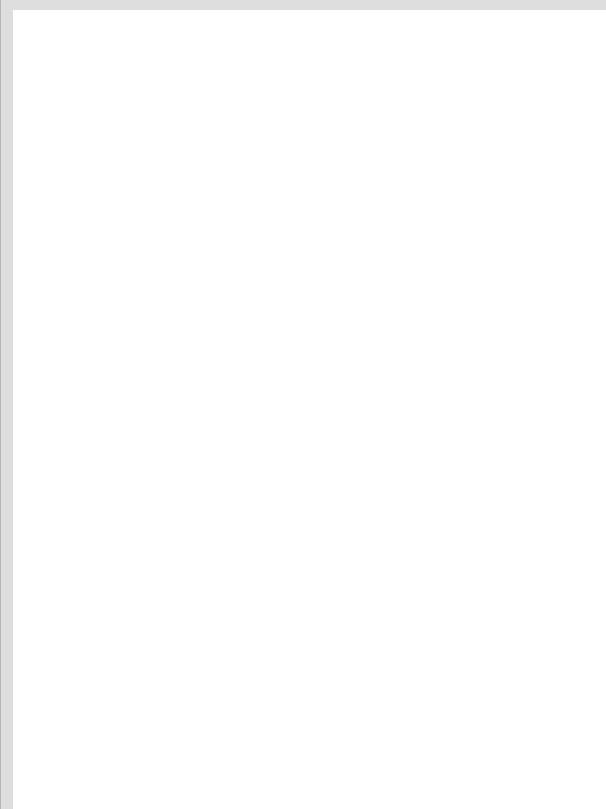
Channels of communication were opened between the Bulgarian anti-capitalist activists and the left-wing anti-capitalist and anarchist organisations in the north of Greece.

From 2010, industrial and ecological/social movement struggles have erupted in Bulgaria. There have been mobilisations against landfills and a squatters movement.

There has been a long term strike at the Litex plant against decreases in wages, a hospital workers' strike against the privatisation of health and starvation wages for hospital workers.

More recently there has been a major railway workers' strike against the privatisation of the railways.

Bulgarian protesters care unemployed and precarious workers, educated youth who are "looking forward" to having to leave Bulgaria, discredited industrial workers with starvation wages, doctors and teachers who are daily experiencing the plundering of their public infrastructure, sweatshop workers of multinationals without rights and starvation wages, and pensioners.



Demonstration against shale gas

Lessons from Bulgaria

By Theodora Polenta

In Greece, a place all too familiar with poverty and the results of "austerity", Bulgaria is renowned for starvation wages (although the cost of living is far cheaper), the host country for Greek companies looking for cheap labour and as the site of dangerous nuclear power plants.

"You do not want to become like Bulgaria" has been the cry of the Greek's mainstream politicians and media acolytes - although recently the most "adventurous" of the Greek politicians and capitalists have been flirting with the idea of the Greek minimum wage and workers' rights sinking to Bulgarian standards.

Then the Bulgarian working-class stormed into the news with their militancy and defiance in overthrowing the right-wing government of Boyko Borisov on 20 February. Borisov had pushed through austerity measurements and privatised all the country's resources condemning the majority of the population to extreme poverty and destitution.

For over ten days last month Bulgaria was saturated with demonstrations in all of Bulgaria's cities.

In the last twenty years successive neoliberal governments in Bulgaria have privatised all the country's utility companies — water, energy, power, communications, banks, hospitals, transport, roads, airports, ports and even a part of social insurance, has been handed over for peanuts into the hands of private companies, a majority based in Germany.

In July 2012 the three private companies monopolising Bulgaria's electricity network, the Czech CEZ and the Austrian Energo Pro and EVN, announced increases of 13% in electricity bills. The average Bulgarian would have to fork out 25% of his/her wages to pay for electricity.

Youth and workers began to organise against the increases with massive protests holding placards with slogans like "We will not pay". The movement grew rapidly and the protesters' demands started to include the elimination of all hikes and regressive taxes.

From 10 February the government was faced with a series of demonstrations of thousands and sometimes tens of thousands all demanding the government's resignation.

On Sunday 17 February, 100,000 protesters flooded the centre of Sofia while tens of thousands marched in Blagoevgrad, Varna, Plovdiv and other major cities.

On the same day thousands of protesters attempted to occupy the central offices of the Power Company.

On Monday 18 February tens of thousands took to the streets of Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna again, this time seeking nationalisations of all Bulgaria's utility companies. The next day Borisov sacked his Finance Minister and hinted that he would reduce the electricity prices. He even pledged to revoke the licences of the three electricity companies.

But that evening tens of thousands of protesters demanded the downfall of the government and clashes with riot police took place in the centre of Sofia near the parliament. Eleven were arrested and dozens were injured. Borisov resigned on Wednesday afternoon.

This ten-day nationwide protest was enough for the government of Borisov — who wanted to become a pragmatist Putin of the Balkans — to collapse. "Another victim of auster-

ity" wrote the German magazine *Der Spiegel*!

"The most important aspect of those days was that people no longer fear to challenge state power," said sociologist Haral Alexandrov.

"When the refrigerator overpowers TV". This was the phrase used by a Bulgarian journalist and aptly describes the social explosion that struck Bulgaria. On the one hand, a government that implements a rigid austerity plan fixated by fiscal numbers. On the other hand, the masses of youths, workers, and pensioners who are "opening their fridge" to see their stocks being depleted day-by-day.

The 53-year old Borisov tried to portray himself as a hero, saying that he was forced to resign because "I could not participate in a government, where citizens are beaten by police and threats of demonstrations replace the political debate".

The truth is very different. As revealed by news agency Focus, Borisov, resigned on the recommendation of the US embassy in Sofia and to defuse the popular explosion. Ultimately, it was the wrath of Bulgarian voters, the momentum and militancy shown by the movement against the increases in the electricity prices, that led to the resignation of Borisov.

At the heart of the government was the "centre-right" party GKERM (Citizens for European Development of Bulgaria. GKERM literally means "crown"). It was created in 2006 by Boyko Borisov when he was Mayor of Sofia.

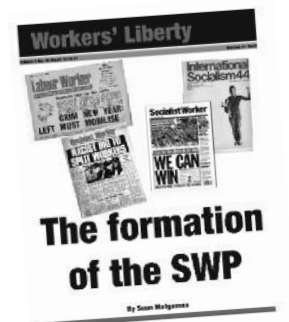
BORISOV

Borisov's CV is as follows. A karate athlete in his youth, he was the bodyguard of Stalinist dictator Zivkov in the 80s. He became an arms dealer and founder of a "Sports Club" (companies of "security"/bodyguards), taking advantage of a 1996 bankruptcy to establish himself as a "businessman".

Borisov was in charge of the "protection" of former king of Bulgaria Simeon Saxe Coburg Gotha, who when he be-

The Formation of the SWP Report of a participant

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Mass protests have seen off Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borisov (bottom right)

came prime minister in 2001 assigned Borisov to the Interior Ministry.

In 2005 Borisov broke with Simeon and became the Mayor of Sofia, winning the council elections under the agenda of “Law and Order” and plenty of doses of racism against Roma and Turkic speaking minorities. He founded GKERM and won the election in 2009. As a prime minister Borisov comes from the classical neo-liberal right which emerged from the countries of the former Eastern bloc. Initially he was very popular. In parliament he is supported by the fascist party Ataka (“Attack National League”).

During his time in government, Borisov fully served American interests in the region (blocking the Burgas-Alexandroupolis pipeline in full collaboration with George Papandreou), but also tightening Bulgaria’s link with Germany.

The huge hikes in electricity prices were brought in by the three large private companies, with full government consent. Needless to say, this demonstrated clearly to the Greek people what the “miracle” of the purported release of electricity and the sale of DEH had in store for us!

With his resignation, Borisov wanted to buy time, but also to leave the opposition unprepared for the election battle ahead. The elections, scheduled for July, will now take place in late April. But the economic situation is bleak and it would be difficult for Borisov to regain the support of his voters. The harsh austerity imposed by his right wing government, has balanced the budget, drastically reduced the deficit (1.5%) and public debt at 19.6% of GDP in 2012. But unemployment reached 11.9% and the average family monthly income does not exceed 400 euros.

The Bulgarian government has been a role model for and the most obedient student of the IMF and EU. They have faithfully fully executed the orders of Brussels and Washington, causing jubilation to both political leaders and technocrats in the two imperialist organizations. Privatization? Excellent performance — the country’s electrification has not only been given over to private companies, but these companies are foreign!

The Bulgarian economy has some of the “best” indicators in Europe. It has the third lowest debt in the EU; inflation is at 1.61%; the national currency has been “locked” into a fixed parity, 2:1 (approximately) with the euro, and it is expected to be the next country to join the Eurozone.

This is all in stark contrast to Greece who, so say EU and IMF propaganda, have not applied correctly and quickly enough the Troika’s orders.

But Bulgaria is still the poorest country in the EU. The minimum wage has long been just €380 per month, the vast majority of Bulgarian workers take home no more than €500 and the average pension is around €150 per month. Bulgaria is bottom of the EU league table for per capita income. Degrading and slashed down salaries for the workers and hunger pensions for the elderly, while all the country’s resources and wealth — the water services, electricity, telecommunications, etc — are fully privatised.

But that the Bulgarian people overthrew an unpopular, ultra neo-liberal, EU-US biased government should be food for thought for the European and the Greek left in particular. In politics we need to take up the slogan “We should all become Bulgarians!” The victory of the Bulgarian working class/people was the result of the large, continuous, and united mobilisations of the people.

When working class people and popular strata are united and determined, then no government, no troika, no media acolytes, no monied interests, no repression can stop them.

The protests in Bulgaria were organised by social media following in the footsteps of Spain’s indignants. Thousands of Bulgarians are still in the streets.

LESSONS

From the struggle of the workers in Bulgaria we can draw the following rough conclusions:

1. It has emphatically demolished the stereotype of “the defeated and inactive workers of the former Eastern bloc”. The resistance movements in Romania, Slovenia and now in Bulgaria, demonstrate that the emergence of new anti-capitalist left organisations is at a preliminary stage but on the agenda.

2. It has emphatically demolished the stereotype that “we can not do anything” and “austerity is unbeatable.” Our working class brothers and sisters in these countries, where the anti-capitalist left is in its infancy and with no prior historical experience, where trade unionism is almost forbidden and where the working class have experienced the full exploitation of capitalism, are showing us the path of resistance.

3. It highlights the influence of instinctive internationalist class solidarity and the inter-linkage of movements from

country to country. From Bahrain to New York, the working class is resisting the barbarity of capitalism.

4. It exposes in all its “glory” the result of the memorandum/austerity programmes: selling off public utilities and public services, the causaliation of labour relations, the abolition of collective bargaining agreements, tax breaks on capital, reductions in wages and pensions, and increases in direct and indirect taxation for the working class. These things have one sole aim — the impoverishment of the working people in order to enrich and preserve the profits of a handful of local and foreign capitalists.

The only solution lies with independent working-class organisations — trade unions and political struggles. The Bulgarian workers need political representation — their own political entity ready to clash with the vested interests of the ruling class, with a revolutionary and ecological programme that gives perspective and goals to their struggles and ties these with the struggles of other workers in nearby countries.

Stable and permanent solutions cannot be achieved at an isolated national level. For this, the ultimate goal of the Bulgarian working class and popular strata can only be the struggle against the EU of capital and multinationals and for socialism in the Balkans as part of a socialist federation of a democratic, equal and voluntary Europe.

Ultra-right intervention

The neo-Nazi party Ataka tried to intervene in the protests, as did the nationalist VMRO.

Ataka adopted the demand for the nationalisation of the electricity grid, as Borisov promised to renegotiate the contracts to exploit the energy market in the country!

A similar view was also expressed by the VMRO, stating that it is seeking to prosecute and expel the foreign companies from the region of Pirin Macedonia.

VMRO did not specify if the goal is to nationalise the local network, or to hand it over to local private Macedonian capitalists.

Inequality kills!

Science



Average life expectancy in the UK is one of the lowest among comparably affluent countries in the world. Government fixes focus on life style. But that would be to ignore some of the complex underlying causes as well as political responsibility. Les Hearn reports.

In 2008, the WHO reported that life expectancy not only varied widely between countries (a girl in Lesotho has a life expectancy 42 years less than one in Japan) but within countries also (children born eight miles apart in the Glasgow area have 28-year differences in life expectancy).

These facts come from the report of the WHO's Commission on the Social Determinants of Health, a three-year investigation whose findings are truly shocking.

One commission member was Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health at University College, London. He has been involved in one of the longest-running studies of the health of workers, the Whitehall Studies, following civil servants' health since 1967 (male workers) and 1985 (both male and female).

This and many other studies throughout the world reveal a "social gradient" in health. We might expect the poorest sections of society to have worse health than the well-off but Prof Marmot shows in his book *Status Syndrome* that the picture is rather more complex. He shows that the social gradient in health is only partly due to absolute poverty. Also, it is only partly due to more unhealthy behaviours. Incidentally, his findings are the same as but predate those of the more well-known book *The Spirit Level*. Both conclude that it is our relative level that is crucial.

Put simply, Marmot concludes that we all live in hierarchical societies and where you are in the hierarchy, at work or in society in general, affects your health. This is still true even after taking all other factors into account.

Now, in different societies, or in the same society at different times, different diseases are prevalent. In 19th century Britain, tuberculosis was a widespread killer: nowadays, it's heart disease. But there is a social gradient in both. Then, 16% of gentlemen were "consumptive", while 30% of labourers were. Tradesmen were in between at 28%. Now, heart disease affects those lower down in the hierarchy more than those in the next rank...and those in the next rank... and so on.

The Whitehall studies divided civil servants into Admin, Executive, Clerical and Other. The last group, porters, door-men, drivers and so on, had the greatest risk of dying of coronary heart disease (CHD); then came the clerical staff; then the executives; and lastly the senior, administrative, grades. The lowest grade had an 80% higher chance of dying from CHD than the top grade. They also had the highest rates of smoking, blood cholesterol, blood sugar and raised blood pressure, all consequences of unhealthy eating. But, crucially for Prof Marmot's argument, the health gradient persisted after these were taken into account, the lowest grades still having a 50% higher chance of death from CHD.

The same pattern is found in the whole population: life expectancy increases steadily from Class V (lowest) to Class I. Of course, as health treatment has improved and people have become more health-conscious, life expectancy has increased. For men in England and Wales, Class V life expectancy increased from 65.5 to just over 68 in 20 years (between 1972-6 and 1992-6): for Class I, it rose from 72 to 77.5. The gradient not only persisted but even got steeper over a period that included Thatcher and her attacks on unions and workers' rights.

There are a whole lot of social gradients which nearly all mirror the health gradient. They include education, social class of parents, job prestige, and income (*The Spirit Level* goes into more, like social mobility, violence or women's status). Do these cause the health gradient? Or is it the other way round? Do one's genes explain it? Marmot goes to great lengths to tease out the chain of causality.

While unequal access to health care is no doubt a factor,

Marmot shows that it does not explain the health gradient. The Whitehall Studies showed that there was a social gradient in the incidence of disease (i.e. first occurrence, before health care was involved). In any case, thanks to our health service, civil servants received appropriate levels of health care.

A similar social gradient was later found in women, despite the different ways that social status might be attributed.

So what explains this? For a scientist, it not enough to show a statistical relationship between two things. Does one cause the other – or is there a third factor that explains both? And the answer has implications about what, if anything, should be done.

It is simplistically thought that it's merely a matter of money – or of lifestyle choices. Marmot quotes a colleague reviewing the evidence for the social gradient in health as coming from two studies of free-living primates: British civil servants and baboons in the Serengeti! As Marmot points out, baboons don't have money and neither do low-ranking baboons smoke, consume junk food, or fail to attend doctor's appointments. But like civil servants, they do have a social gradient in health which mirrors their position in the hierarchy of baboon society.

Does this mean that, since hierarchies naturally form in primate societies, the health gradient is a fixed fact, determined by evolution? No, says Marmot. Hierarchies are a fact but "what it means to be high and low in a hierarchy varies". Biology and society are interacting and can interact differently in different situations. In money-based societies, it is the relative income that reflects one's status. This shows in self-report of happiness, with richer societies such as USA reporting no change in happiness in a period where the economy grew by 50%.

CONTROL

If it is not income that determines happiness, what does? Or, more to the point, what is it about one's position in a hierarchy that ultimately gives rise to the health gradient?

Marmot identifies the degree of control one has over one's life circumstances as the key factor, with stress as its inverse. There are five aspects to this — "control, predictability, degree of support, threat to status, and presence of outlets" — which can modulate the effects of a psychological threat.

Marmot illustrates this with a hypothetical low-paid working couple, already poor, one of whom loses his job, becomes depressed and starts drinking, instead of helping to look after the children. The other's job is also under threat as the factory she works in is being undercut by cheaper imports. Both face loss of status if they end up on benefit. Outlets to relieve the stress would cost money they no longer have. The boss, in this example a caring individual who does not want to lay off staff, may have to move production off-shore. He however has his community work which enhances his status, his support from a wife with a professional job, and his outlet of golf.

Can lack of control or power over life cause illness? Marmot gives diverse examples to show that it can.

In 1981, a major earthquake struck Athens. The death rate from heart attacks shot up by 50% over three days. In 1991, in the Gulf War, Iraq bombarded Tel Aviv with Scud missiles. During the first week, heart attacks increased significantly. In 1996, 60% of the Dutch population saw on TV their team lose on penalties to the French in the European football championships. The rate of deaths from heart attacks and stroke on that day rose by 50% in men (but not in women).

Marmot as a scientist is not satisfied with the vague diagnosis of "stress" causing these excess deaths or the other health problems linked with status. He wants to understand how external factors ("control, predictability, degree of support, threat to status, and presence of outlets") "get into" the body and cause illness. Here he refers to Robert Sapolsky's studies of stress in animals on the East African savannah.

Sapolsky describes a lion chasing a zebra, a life-and-death situation for both. Energy release must be maximised so that the muscles can work best. The sympathetic nervous system is activated and hormones released to increase heart rate, blood pressure and blood glucose levels. Unnecessary activities, energy storage, digestion (hence a dry mouth), growth,

For most people being "in work" is important to our sense of status and that has implications for our health

reproductive functions, inflammatory responses, tissue repair and immune response, are postponed.

Referred to as the fight or flight response, these changes involve release of the hormones adrenalin and cortisol. Adrenalin increases heart rate and breathing rate, causes release of glucose from the liver and in the muscles. Cortisol suppresses the immune system, increases glucose levels in the blood, and suppresses inflammatory responses.

This is appropriate for an immediate threat but, maintained over a long time, has the following effects. Insulin's action is inhibited, risking diabetes; fat is deposited round the waist, rather than the hips; there are low levels of "good" cholesterol; blood pressure is high: these changes are associated with developing CHD. Marmot comments that, in people with CHD, acute stress, such as an earthquake or losing a football match, could easily trigger a fatal heart attack or stroke.

To show the link, he refers to studies on rhesus monkeys, social primates that form hierarchical groups. The monkeys were fed a diet high in saturated fats and cholesterol, known to cause atherosclerosis, narrowing or "furring up" of the coronary arteries that supply the heart muscle with blood. However, not all the monkeys developed atherosclerosis: those of lower rank were significantly more likely to get it. And this was only due to their rank as was shown by changing their groups: when top ranking monkeys were put in a group by themselves, a new hierarchy developed and those now lower down started developing atherosclerosis.

Studies on baboons found that low ranking ones had higher cortisol levels and lower "good" cholesterol levels in their blood. Measurements were taken after shooting the baboons with tranquiliser darts. Marmot remarks that they decided not to "dart" civil servants but were able to show that, the lower the grade, the lower was the level of "good" cholesterol, the higher the blood glucose, and the more fat round the waist, changes linked to high levels of cortisol and predisposing people to CHD and diabetes.

Clearly, status affects health and the steeper the differences in status the more health is affected. Broadly, this is the same thing as inequality and, in *The Spirit Level*, it is pointed out that in both UK and USA inequality, as measured by the difference in incomes between richest and poorest, increased greatly in the 1980s. It is no exaggeration to say that the attacks on workers' rights spearheaded by Thatcher and Reagan which have persisted till now are responsible for a great deal of disease and death. Now Cameron's government is cutting benefits and demonising claimants. Does the lesson of this need to be spelt out?

- www.who.int/social_determinants/thecommission/final-report/en/index.html
- Michael Marmot, *Status Syndrome: How Your Social Standing Directly Affects Your Health*, Bloomsbury, 2004.
- Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*, Allen Lane, 2009.

A manual of revolutionary socialism

Paul Hampton begins a review article looking at the main documents and themes in John Riddell's *Toward the United Front: Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International* (Haymarket 2012).

***Toward the United Front* is a tremendous work of scholarship in the tradition of David Riazanov. Its 1,300 pages repay reading – it is a manual for revolutionary socialist strategy, in the words of many of its finest representatives.**

The Fourth Congress of the Communist International (Comintern), which took place in Russia in November-December 1922, was perhaps the greatest gathering of Marxists ever to assemble. Present were Lenin, Trotsky, Radek, Zinoviev, Preobrazhensky, Krupskaya, Marchlewski, Bukharin and others from the Russian Communist party. They debated with Zetkin, Gramsci, Rosmer, Serge, Souvarine, Meyer, Nin, Thalheimer, Tresso, Eberlein and Murphy from European Communist parties, Cannon and Swabeck from the US, as well as Asian Marxists such as Katayama Sen, Chen Duxiu, Tan Malaka, Liu Renjing and MN Roy. The clash of ideas was evident throughout, with “left” criticism from Bela Kun, Varga, Bordiga, Fischer and Urbahns. In total, 350 delegates from parties in 61 countries met for a month to hammer out global socialist strategy.

The African-American poet Claude McKay confessed with too much hyperbole that he feared speaking to “such an intellectually developed and critically minded world audience” more than facing a lynch-mob. In his closing speech, Zinoviev said that it was the first time the Comintern had met as “a genuinely international world party” and that the congress was “a great university for us all”. Arguably the Fourth Congress was the most important Comintern meeting, with the greatest relevance to today’s socialists, because it discussed strategy and tactics in circumstances of retreat but before the Comintern itself was ossified and cauterised by Stalinism.

Riddell’s volume contains for the first time in English all the speeches and resolutions from the main proceedings. These texts are particularly important for the Marxist tradition developed by Workers’ Liberty. Our forerunners published translations of parts of the congress record in the 1970s, when the texts were hard to find in English, in an effort to learn from the experiences of these revolutionaries. Reading the volume helps understand why we use terms like transitional demands, the united front and the workers’ government.

The watchword of the congress was, in the words of Clara Zetkin, “Clarity, clarity and again clarity!” The sentiment was echoed by the youth leader Richard Schüller, who recalled the old slogan: “First clarity, then majority”. Their underlining conception of hegemony was clear: Communist Parties sought to win the majority of the organised labour movement to their ideas as part of a strategy to win the majority of workers to self-liberation. But Communists did not stop at that: the intention was to win the leadership of all struggles against oppression and for democracy; they discussed the role of peasants, women’s liberation, anti-imperialism, racism and the national question.

There were a number of areas where the congress refined important Marxist ideas.

Delegates elucidated the meaning of perspectives in terms of the global political-economic situation, the balance of class forces and the conjuncture they found themselves in. From this assessment of reality, in which large and sometimes mass Communist parties had been formed but nowhere outside Russia did they represent more than a minority of workers, they elaborated strategies to win the majority of workers, as well as other oppressed groups.

A further field of development was the Marxist “holy trinity”, of the programme (including transitional demands), the united front and the crowning demand for a workers’ government. These informed assessments of fascism, of relations with other workers’ parties as well as work in the trade unions.

The discussion of the international political situation at the Fourth Congress took place on the same ground as laid down by the Third Comintern Congress in June-July 1921. The basic assessment, made by Leon Trotsky, was that the post-war revolutionary wave had ebbed, capitalism had temporarily

stabilised, the working class was on the defensive and the Communist parties were in a minority. At the Fourth Congress, Trotsky expressed it in the following way: “An Italian journalist once asked me how we assess the world situation at present. I gave the following banal answer: ‘Capitalism is no longer capable of ruling... The working class is not yet capable of taking power, that is the distinctive feature of our time’”.

Karl Radek shared this assessment. He said: “What characterises the world we live in is that although world capitalism has not overcome its crisis, and the question of power is still objectively the core of every question, the broadest masses of the proletariat have lost the belief that they can conquer political power in the foreseeable future.” Tersely, he told the congress: “The conquest of power is not on the agenda as an immediate task”.

In his report of the Comintern executive committee, Gregorii Zinoviev proposed that “the Fourth Congress merely confirm the theses of Trotsky and Varga at the Third Congress on the economic situation”.

There was however some difference of emphasis among the Bolsheviks about the time-scale of these perspectives. Zinoviev argued that “what we are now experiencing is not one of capitalism’s periodic crises but the crisis of capitalism, its twilight, its disintegration”. The resolution On the Tactics of the Comintern stated that “What capitalism is experiencing today is nothing other than its downfall. The collapse of capitalism is inevitable”. However, Trotsky warned that “if the capitalist world lasts another several decades, well, that would be a sentence of death for socialist Russia” and Radek stated that the policies of the Communist International “embrace a perspective for an entire epoch, but must still be cut to the shape of the next immediate period”.

IMPERIALISM

Another aspect of assessing the global capitalist system at the congress was the comments about imperialism.

The Second Congress in 1920 had largely adopted a Leninist analysis of imperialism, dividing the world mostly into oppressor imperial states and oppressed colonies. What was noticeable at the Fourth Congress was the virtual absence of references to Lenin’s views, even though his pamphlet *Imperialism: the Highest Stage of Capitalism* had been published in German and French in 1920 (it was first published in English in 1928).

Instead, most contributions appear to have been influenced by Rosa Luxemburg’s very different theory of imperialism. Willem van Ravesteyn, the main reporter on the “Eastern Question”, made this connection explicit: “Comrades, our unforgettable pioneer and theoretician Rosa Luxemburg provided proof in her greatest and best theoretical work that the process of capital accumulation cannot take place without a surrounding non-capitalist territory, on which it acts destructively. In other words, without older, precapitalist modes of production that it destroys”. He added later: “Because the liberation of the Islamic and other Eastern peoples signifies that their tribute to European capitalism immediately ceases. The accumulation of capital cannot proceed without this tribute”.

Similarly, August Thalheimer quoted Luxemburg and criticised Kautsky, Hilferding and Lenin on imperialism. Even Nikolai Bukharin, who had criticised Luxemburg’s book on imperialism, argued that the growth of capitalism was based “essentially on bourgeoisie’s colonial policy and the flowering of industry on the European continent was rooted mainly in the exploitation of the colonial peoples”.

Some of these conceptions were also articulated in the supplementary theses at the Second Congress in 1920. The author of those theses was the Indian Communist MN Roy. However at the Fourth Congress he introduced some dissent. He argued: “Imperialism is right now making the attempt to save itself through the development of industry in colonial countries... India... was during the war permitted adequate industrial development... Of course we can raise the objection that this cannot happen, because it is in imperialism’s interests to keep the colonial countries backward in order to absorb all goods produced in the dominant countries. Well and good, but that is a very mechanical way to view the question”.

This rebuke is an important counter to dependency-type

theories of imperialism that have carried over to today. Capitalism has been able to develop without colonies since World War Two and capitalist development has not been confined to core European and North American states. To deny capitalist development across the globe, or that many states are not really politically independent, that they remain neo-colonies are both theoretically wrong in the present but also effectively arguments used to justify workers’ subordination to nationalist forces.

FASCISM

A somewhat underdeveloped assessment was made of the nature of fascism. The discussion was highly prescient. A month before the gathering, Mussolini had organised his march on Rome and had come to power in Italy. Getting to grips with this development was vital for the whole international.

A number of comments at the Fourth Congress indicated that a specific analysis of fascism was still lacking. Amadeo Bordiga, leader of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), argued that “fascism does not represent any new political doctrine” and that “our analysis leads to the conclusion that fascism has added nothing to the traditional ideology and programme of bourgeois politics”. In his opening report, Zinoviev gave unstinting praise to the Italian party despite the defeat it had suffered: “If we were to develop a policy manual for Communist parties, then Italy will provide the most important chapter, the most important example”.

However, this line was contested. Two days before the opening session, the German Communist party (KPD) adopted a motion instructing its delegation to urge an international campaign against fascism. Delegates from Germany, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia raised the issue during the congress proceedings. Bukharin argued that “fascism is not merely an organisational form that the bourgeois had in the past; it is a newly discovered form that is adapted to the new movement by drawing in the masses”. Similarly, Radek said that the fascists represented bourgeois counter-revolution, were wreckers of workers’ organisations who maintained the power of the bourgeoisie. He said: “I believe Mussolini is something different [from other bourgeois politicians]... and his distinctive character is extremely important”.

By the time it came to the debate on Italy, Zinoviev had changed his tune and adopted the main points of his adversaries. He criticised the PCI for making “gross errors” such as failing to work with the Arditi del Popolo to form workers’ defence guards. Instead he said the united front against fascism was needed. However, Zinoviev still managed to equate social democracy with fascism, in terms that would be adopted disastrously by Stalin’s third period during the rise of Hitler.

Although some progress had been made, it was still a long way from Trotsky’s more sophisticated assessment in the early 1930s.

A month before the Fourth Congress Mussolini had come to power

The two sides of Abraham Lincoln

The following article, by black socialist CLR James (writing as GF Eckstein), was first published in the US Trotskyist paper *Militant*, on 14 February 1949

One part of the 1948 election platform of the Socialist Workers Party [US] read as follows:

"In 1860 William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips, John Brown and Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln and Thaddeus Stevens, personified the forces which waged merciless war against the slaveowners' attempt to perpetuate their 'outmoded system, halt the expansion of our economy and destroy the liberties of our people."

But in 1948 the Republican Party, the Progressive Party of Wallace and the Stalinists and even President Truman, the Democrat, all to one degree or another sought to relate their policies back to Lincoln. They are trying to fool the workers. It was not so with us.

To the name of Abraham Lincoln we added Garrison, Phillips, John Brown, Frederick Douglass and Stevens. We hailed them for waging 'merciless war' against the reactionary south. It is obvious that when we talk of Lincoln we are poles apart from Dewey, Truman, and Wallace.

What is it that the working class must remember about Abraham Lincoln? He himself expressed it best in his second inaugural address when he said of the Civil War: "Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether'"

RECOGNITION

Here was the recognition at last of what the Negroes had done for America, and of what America had done to the Negroes, the determination at whatever cost to break the power of the reactionary slaveholders.

All idle chatters and fakers can be made to turn green and look another way, simply by asking them to explain these words of Lincoln as part, of what they call the "democratic process" and "the American way."?

Abraham Lincoln was a genuine democrat. When in the Gettysburg address he said "government of the people, by the people, for the people," he meant it. In those days monopoly-capital did not exist. A great percentage of the population in the North consisted of small farmers, mechanics and artisans. It seemed to many men that on the boundless acres that stretched beyond the Mississippi there was room and opportunity for everybody to acquire independence and exercise self-government from the town-meeting to the presidential elections.

But today, with a few giant corporations owning and dominating the economic life of the country and the lives of whole nations abroad; with tens of millions of workers beginning to punch the time-clock at the age of 18 with no other perspective for the rest of their lives until they are thrown out as infirm or incompetent; with press, radio and a vast government bureaucracy controlled by a few hundred people, to talk about government "of the people, by the people for the people" is a mockery and hypocrisy of the worst kind.

Lincoln and others used to say plainly that if the people were dissatisfied with the government it was their revolutionary right to overthrow it. If he had returned and said that on any platform in 1948, [US politicians] Dewey, Truman, Wallace and Norman Thomas would have united at once to denounce him.

The FBI would have tapped his telephone and investigated him. And unmitigated scoundrels ... would have had him up before some House Committee and tried to jail him for his "un-Americanism".

Believer in democracy and in the people, determined enemy of slave-power, from these Lincoln drew the power which made him a great war-leader, a writer and speaker whose best efforts will last as long as the English language, a genuine national hero.

Enemy of the slave-power, a believer in the people. That was one side of Lincoln. But there was another which was widely known and commented upon in his own day.

The viciousness of the slave-power, its cruelties and its crimes, its ambition to suppress liberty all over the United States in defense of its precious hordes of slaves, these things

were brought and kept before the American people for thirty years by the constant rebellions among the slaves, by the Underground Railroad, and those elements in the North among the whites who supported these revolutionary actions.

Lincoln bitterly opposed all this. He was prepared even as President to use the power of the federal government to capture and return fugitive slaves.

One of the great chapters in American history is the abolition movement of Garrison, Phillips, Douglass and the others who, often hounded, stoned and beaten, called incessantly for an end to slavery, denouncing it as a crime against civilization and the American people.

Lincoln hated the Abolitionists as trouble-makers, and expressed his approval of their being beaten up.

REPUBLICAN PARTY

The formation of the Republican Party was a triumph of the creative power and energy of the American people. Suddenly in 1854, all over the country, party units sprang into being and in 1860 it swept into victory.

Lincoln had nothing to do with this. Only when it was clear that the Whig Party was doomed, did he throw in his lot with the new party.

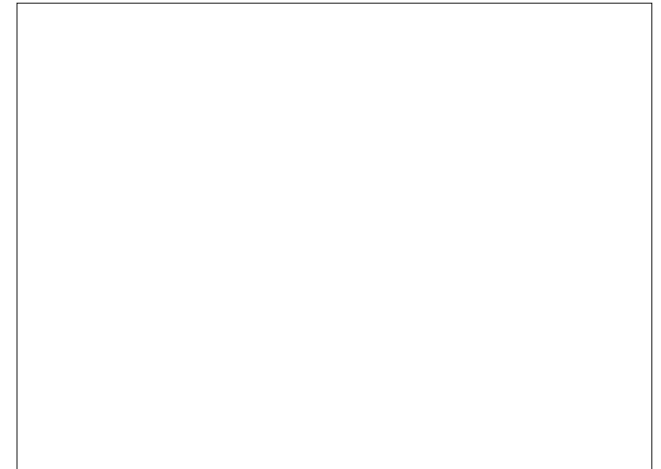
Not only was Lincoln driven to emancipate the slaves by force of circumstances. He was ready to consider the formation of a Negro republic in Texas. He would have sent all the slaves to Africa if he could have managed it.

Thus with all his virtues he shared to the full the reactionary capitalist prejudices of his day. And it was precisely these that blinded him to the truths which the escaping slaves and the abolitionists taught the American people for thirty years. In the end he had to follow the direction in which they pointed: civil war, arming of Negroes, total emancipation, crushing of the slave-power.

Lincoln could make these mistakes and still triumph as a leader because John Brown, Garrison, Douglass and the others had to limit themselves to carrying on a revolutionary propaganda and aiding escaping slaves.

Brown's isolated attempt at a slave-insurrection was doomed to failure. The workers did not have the numbers, the organisation, the social power, the political experience to offer an independent road. The revolutionaries were right as against Lincoln but had no concrete programme to place before the country. Thus like Lincoln, when the Republican Party came [in 1856], they turned to it.

Today we live in an entirely different situation. The enemy



John Brown believed in armed insurrection to end slavery

is plain — monopoly-capitalism, the modern slave-holders. The class that is to be emancipated is the working class; the workers with the poor farmers and their allies, the great majority of the nation. The party that is to be formed is a great mass party of the proletariat, that will do for American society today what the Republican Party did in 1860-1865. The revolutionaries today are those who will carry on the traditions of Garrison, Douglass and John Brown — brutal statement of the facts, refusal to pretend that there is any way out except by the destruction of capitalism, struggle for the independent action of the masses, refusal to compromise on principles.

We can do this and do this better than they did, because we have before our eyes the mighty power of the American proletariat and behind us the great traditions and experiences of Bolshevism.

We take a Marxist view of Lincoln. We pay him the tribute due to him as a great historical figure, with a place in the struggle for human emancipation. But for us he is no model.

Rather, in the failures of his career and particularly in the men who were so consistently right against him, we find the points of departure to struggle for the unity, not only of North and South, but of all the nations of the world, for the emancipation not only of chattel-slaves but of the vast majority of the peoples of the world, the workers, farmers and all the exploited and oppressed.

**Songs of
Liberty
& Rebellion**



Reckoning Song

Samiya Bashir's poem stakes a claim to universal access to joy and freedom. It takes the form of a series of questions, but there are no question marks, and the lack of the formal interrogative turns the poem from a tentative wondering into a series of demands for the way things *should* be.

Samiya Bashir is an African-American poet born in Somalia and the founder of "Fire & Ink", an organisation supporting and promoting the work of LGBT writers of African descent.

Several of her poems appear on her website as photo-art pieces. We reproduce "Reckoning Song" here as it appears on her site. For more, see www.samiyabashir.com.

The Ruby Kid

NUT delays on strikes

By Darren Bedford

The National Union of Teachers (NUT) Executive met on 27 and 28 February to decide whether to strike this term against proposals from Michael Gove to abolish national pay bargaining for teachers.

Unfortunately, the Executive chose to prioritise a continued focus on pursuing joint action with NASUWT, the other large teaching union, rather than striking now. There is no indication that the NUT, with or without NASUWT, will take action in time to fight Gove's proposals properly.

Supporters of the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC) on the NUT Executive submitted proposals for early strikes as part of a wider campaign of action, and argued for that decision to be ratified and launched at the upcoming NUT national conference (29 March – 2 April). However, this pro-

posal was defeated.

Executive members were instructed not to report the outcome of the meeting or its decisions, allegedly so as not to compromise a negotiation meeting with NASUWT on Monday 5 March. But Monday came and went and no further information was forthcoming. This indicates a lack of regard for the right of NUT members to know what decisions their union's leading body is taking. Strategic negotiations with other unions should not take precedence over members' right to hold their elected leaders to account.

NUT members at "pay briefings" around the UK

in January and February made it clear that there was a mood for an early fight on pay and that they felt action was necessary immediately – with NASUWT if possible, but without them if not. The Executive majority has shackled NUT members to the pace of a slower, more conservative union, meaning that there may not be any action against Gove's plans until September 2013, by which time the new pay arrangements will already be in place.

LANAC supporters are now mobilising to submit policy amendments to NUT's conference to reverse the Executive's de-

cision and announce a programme of strikes and other action beginning as soon as possible (which, given the current timeframe, is likely to be May).

Local Associations National Action Campaign

A rank-and-file network for teachers

www.nutlan.org.uk

John Lewis cleaners to strike again

John Lewis cleaners strike in June 2012

By Ira Berkovic

Cleaners at John Lewis's Oxford Street store are balloting for strikes to win the "London Living Wage" of £8.55 per hour.

John Lewis cleaners struck in summer 2012 and, although they did win a 10% wage increase, they are still paid well below the amount that the GLA deems the minimum necessary to live a decent life in the capital. The cleaners, who are employed by the contractor ICM Ltd., are paid £6.72 an hour.

On 7 March, John Lewis will announce the annual bonus for directly-employed staff ("partners"). The company is expected to announce a 17% increase in annual profits in the year to January 2013.

Cleaners, however, are excluded from the staff "partnership" scheme on which John Lewis prides itself and will not receive a bonus.

Alberto Durango, an organiser for the Industrial Workers of Great Britain, said: "The John Lewis cleaners each earn just above the minimum wage; in London that is poverty wages. When the campaign started last year the workers realised they can win. Now our union is stronger and more confident. Management are trying to divide us, but we're not stupid, we have one voice. Other unions are also helping us and with solidarity we will win."

The IWGB served ICM with official notice of the dispute on 1 March, and will begin balloting on 8 March.

Tories attack civil servants' union rights

By a civil servant

The government has begun reducing facility time (paid time off from work duties in order to carry out trade union activity) within the civil service.

By the end of this year, we expect facility time will be reduced by about 50% and many, if not most, union activists currently on a 100% facility time will be on 50% or less per cent.

There are good union arguments for nobody to be a full-time rep. But there is the world of difference between the labour movement deciding that and a Tory minister cutting overall time off for all activists. This government is obviously hoping to weaken the union movement within the civil service.

It is noteworthy that the government relies heavily on guidance found in the

relevant ACAS code of practice to argue that there should be no time off for union activities (e.g. attendance at union conferences). During the "good" years under New Labour, the TUC made no attempt to get this changed or to strengthen rights for reps to have time off. This reflects the ambivalence that union leaderships always have towards lay officials, and the lack of foresight that unions generally have in failing to fight to strengthen and extend existing rights.

If the government tries to operate a rigid cap on the amount of facility time used, it would probably lose a legal challenge as current laws give reps time off to carry out union duties. Depending on those duties, particularly around personal cases, reps should, in theory, have as much time off as needed to carry them out. So the law, as

presently drafted, does not readily lend itself to a cap on facility time.

Compared to many countries where union activity is met with violence, a cut in facility time is much less of a threat and can be overcome. It certainly will not be easily initially, as civil service trade union activity has been based on having ample facility time and so past practises will have to be partly unlearned. But it could lead to there being a wider base of activists than now, each on a small amount of facility time as opposed to a handful of "100%ers" doing everything.

Whether things turn out that way is yet to be seen. Union activists should resist attacks on facility time, while fighting at a workplace level for better distribution of the time currently allocated.

Defend Jawad, Max & Steve
STOP THE WITCH HUNT

Defend Jawad, Max, and Steve. Stop the witch hunt!

A new website has been set up by the campaign to win reinstatement for Jawad Botmeh, Max Watson, and Steve Jefferys, three workers at London Met University victimised by a management with a long history of anti-union activity. Visit the site, support the campaign!

stopthewitchhunt.wordpress.com

Uni staff fight attacks on union

By a UCU activist

A packed extraordinary general meeting of over 90 University and College Union (UCU) members at Sheffield University voted on 28 February to fight management attempts to partially derecognise the union.

UCU currently represents admin, library, and computing staff on higher grades (earning £24k and above) as well as academic staff. The University had threatened to restrict UCU's negotiating rights only to academic staff on grades 7, 8, and 9 — excluding not only the academic-related staff but the most senior academic staff (professors on grade 10) too.

Though the derecognition proposal has now been withdrawn, the issues are not resolved. That this was even proposed shows a determination on the part of the University to divide academic staff from their colleagues and weaken our collective bargaining power. Alongside this attack on the union, the University is trying to remove the enhanced protection against redundancy and the independent disciplinary procedures that underpin the commitment to academic freedom in the University Statutes.

The meeting voted to endorse a formal dispute with the University if that becomes necessary and to launch both a campaign to inform members of these threats and to recruit new members within UCU's existing membership remit.

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Portuguese march against austerity

Portuguese demonstrators say: "Screw the Troika. We want our lives back!"

The demonstrations that took place on Saturday 2 March in Portugal once again beat all the previous records for participation in this country that is on life support, severely affected by the crisis, and austerity measures imposed by the "Troika" (the IMF, European Union and European Central Bank).

Under the banner "Que se lixe a Troika!" (an expression that can be translated as "screw the Troika!"), the wave of anger brought together more than 1.5 million people in towns both large and small. As far as the eye could see a veritable tidal wave where several groups in struggle (artists, pensioners, unemployed, work-

ers...) converged.

In Lisbon, 800,000 people demonstrated singing "Grândola, Vila Morena" (a famous song of the Carnation Revolution of April 1974) and chanting slogans such as "The people united will never be defeated", "Down with this government now", "Spain, Greece, Ireland and Portugal: our fight is international", "The street belongs to us" and "The struggle continues, down with the Troika".

In Porto, 400,000 people took part in the largest demonstration in the city's history. In Coimbra, 20,000 people demonstrated. In Braga, 7,000 people, likewise in Aveiro.

In Vila Real, 1,800 people

also demanded the resignation of the government made up of PSD [Social Democratic Party — despite its name, a centre-right party] and CDS-PP [Democratic and Social Centre-People's Party — a centre-right, Christian Democrat party].

In Caldas da Rainha there were nearly 3,000 people, likewise in Leiria, and 3,500 in Marinha Grande; 2,000 in Viseu; 6,000 in Faro and 5,000 in Portimão.

• From Esquerda.net

Portugal: why people are demonstrating

The demonstrators are protesting against the government's austerity measures, which include:

- Cutting wages
- Laying off 1,000 civil servants
- Cutting pensions
- Increasing the retirement age
- Reducing unemployment benefit
- Abolishing benefits paid to hundreds of thousands of children and young people
- Increasing fees in Higher Education

French car strike continues

A strike at the Citroen car plant in Aulnay, to the north-east of Paris, started on 16 January and is now in its seventh week.

Factory owners PSA group (Peugeot Citroën) plan to close the Aulnay factory, causing large job losses. The company plans to shed 8,000 jobs overall in the next few years.

The strikers' logo

Around 400 workers, out of a workforce of 3,000, organised by the CGT union, are on strike, but also some workers who are not striking are taking part in some of the protest actions and the general assemblies.

The strike has largely succeeded in stopping production at the factory and held strong in spite of an eight-day lockout in February.

The strikers also visit other car plants, including of rival car manufacturer Renault, and are being warmly received. The whole industry faces problems and there are other industrial disputes throughout the sector.

Tripartite negotiations between the union, Citroen management and the government have so far not produced any results.

The strikers and supporters are busy collecting money to support the strike; on 22 February, for example, they collected €10,000 at the St-Arnoult toll.

- Strike website: <http://cgt-psa-aulnay.fr/>
- Detailed report on Marxist Revival website: <http://alturl.com/qmyx8>

Demonstration in support of the CGT Aulnay strike

"Born in Lewisham" demonstration

Support the campaign against cuts to Lewisham Hospital maternity services

Saturday 16 March, 2pm

"Hands around the hospital"

www.savelewishamhospital.com