



For a
workers'
government

Solidarity

For social ownership of the banks and industry

No 322 30 April 2014 30p/80p

www.workersliberty.org

Support the Tube strikes!

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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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Threat to raise student repayments

By Michael Jackson

According to the *Times Higher Education*:

"A sector-wide panel of experts is to look at ideas for reforming England's university funding system after an influential think-tank said that trebling fees has saved the taxpayer less than £400 a year per student."

The panel is convened by Universities UK, the club of university vice-chancellors, which previously lobbied for higher tuition fees.

"It will be chaired by UUK president Sir Christo-

pher Snowden, vice-chancellor of the University of Surrey, who said he wanted to seek a 'broad political consensus for a sustainable system of funding'.

"Other members of the Student Funding Panel include six other university leaders, economist and principal of Hertford College, Oxford Will Hutton, and Emran Mian, director of the Social Market Foundation and the former civil servant who was lead author on the 2010 Browne Review [which recommended the trebling of tuition fees]."

The over-riding purpose

of the panel is to reduce the cost of loans to the state, not to investigate a fairer or more rational funding system. Already there are hints that repayment rates should be increased. *TES*:

"According to the Institute of Fiscal Studies report, if graduates were asked to pay 12 per cent of their income over £21,000, instead of the current 9 per cent, the loan write-off rate would fall from an estimated 43.3 per cent to 35.6 per cent. A 15 per cent deduction would lead to a write-off of 30.9 per cent — close to the 28 per cent default rate orig-

inally predicted by ministers.

"Lowering the repayment threshold from £21,000 to £18,000 would also yield savings, but less dramatically, by lowering the write-off rate to 36.9 per cent."

The student movement should be demanding:

- No increase in the repayment rate
- No lowering of the repayment threshold
- The abolition of student debt and the introduction of grants
- Free education funded through taxing the rich

Make Marx and Engels free!

By Rachael Barnes

The Marxists Internet Archive has said it will delete the entirety of the Marx and Engels Collected Works on its site by 1 May, which ironically is International Workers' Day.

The publishing company, Lawrence and Wishart, which was founded in 1936 through a merging of the Communist Party's press and a family-owned anti-fascist publisher, is claiming copyright infringement, stating that it cannot afford to have the collection still provided as a free resource.

The very material that is

being removed argues against private property in such matters.

It is absurd to think that this company will continue to call itself radical, while making inaccessible resources which should be read and used by activists all over the world. It says they will make the online texts available — but only to academic libraries.

Yet, it could be argued that the Marx and Engels Collected Works has brought the company more custom by making more people aware of the printed books.

Prioritising profit over anything else is not a "left-wing" thing to do, and it

stings all the more when Lawrence and Wishart are selling a hardback version of the entire MECW for a massive £1500, around £50 for individual volumes.

It is certainly no coincidence that Lawrence and Wishart was funded for a period by the Soviet Union, and that influenced the first English-language collection of *MECW*.

A petition is being circulated to stop the privatisation of the writings of Marx and Engels, which at the time of publishing had over 4000 signatures.

- Petition: chn.ge/1hOp0Qa.

Police protect far-right march

For a seventh consecutive year, the March For England descended upon Brighton for St George's Day.

While claiming to simply be a celebration of England, it is an extremist right wing march organised by fascist groups such as the English Defence League and Casuals United. They choose Brighton for it being contrary to the England they want, as for the most part it is an incredibly tolerant city.

On the years when there has not been a large counter demonstration by anti-fascists, residents of Brighton have been racially abused, so a large counter demonstration is necessary.

Around 100 fascists descended on Brighton with around 600 anti-fascists.

Outnumbering both sides were the police, who in a £500,000 operation had police dogs out, a helicopter overhead, mounted police, huge metal barriers erected to restrict movement within the city and around 1,000 police officers drawn from all over the south including Devon and Cornwall, London and Hampshire police.

Police had control on the streets, so the fascists did march. However there were

confrontations later in the day when fascists and anti-fascists clashed. At one point anti-fascists took Brighton station and held it with makeshift barricades causing the police to draw batons.

Around 27 people were arrested, with a surprisingly even amount of fascists and anti-fascists.

Brighton anti-fascist

Open debate?

By Beth Redmond

A "revolutionary unity" conference with the International Socialist Network, the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, Workers' Power, Revolutionary Socialists in the 21st Century and Socialist Resistance was held on Saturday 26 April.

Members of Workers' Liberty were refused entry on the grounds that we had not been invited by any of the organising groups and were not members of ISN.

Organiser Simon Hardy apologised, admitting that the wording on the website around whether the meeting was open or not was "confusing".

Liam MacUaid of Socialist Resistance was not so polite; he rudely exclaimed that the decision to exclude us was "non-negotiable".

Two ISN members invited us back in, describing the event organisation as a "car-crash", something they were not happy with. They thought that debate was healthy, and limiting the intake of the meeting to a certain number of groups was stifling that debate.

The reasoning behind the exclusion is unclear. The ISN website says "if you want a direct confrontation of differing views on the revolutionary left, and a genuine attempt to build real and lasting unity, come along".

But only if you are in with the leadership...?

Support the Tube strikes!

By Gerry Bates

London Underground workers in the RMT union are striking on 28-30 April and 5-8 May against job and service cuts.

The dispute is better and stronger than other recent campaigns because it is against the principle of cuts. Even if London Underground can find a way to axe 900-odd front-line jobs and increase managerial posts by redeployment and voluntary redundancy, Tube workers oppose the cuts.

They oppose them because the cuts mean that many workers will be pushed into lower-paid jobs, losing up to £12,000 a year pay. They oppose them because many workers will face disruptive changes in shift patterns and work locations.

And they oppose them because they believe jobs and services should be defended. Underground passenger journeys are growing at over 5% a year and will continue to grow. More passengers mean that more, not fewer, workers are needed.

London Underground bosses say that ticket offices are no longer needed, now that there are many automatic ticket machines. Tube workers point to the long queues at ticket offices.

LU bosses pretend that the cuts will improve services. Disabled people's campaigns say that the cuts will make the Tube network less accessible to disabled and elderly people, who need

more help from staff.

Bosses call the cuts "modernisation". Tube workers say that "modernisation" should be about making the network more accessible to a wider range of people.

Tory MP and chief whip Greg Hands told the *Daily Mail*: "This is economic sabotage from militant trade unionists holding my constituents and Londoners in general to ransom. And all, it seems, in an effort to prove their leftist credentials in advance of a leadership election".

Tube workers point out that elected members of the Greater London Authority had called for a public consultation on the cuts. RMT had said it would recommend suspending the strike if Tube bosses agreed to a full and proper public consultation.

RMT suspended strikes when the bosses promised negotiations in early February. But then the bosses

spent twelve weeks showing union negotiators one presentation after another on how good their plans were, and if anything revealed that the cuts they are seeking are even worse than thought.

SABOTAGE

The bosses and the bankers are carrying out "economic sabotage" of working-class people's lives every day. They demand "ransom" every time their greedy tricks cause economic chaos, like in 2008.

The Tory MP's other complaint seems to be that the RMT union is too democratic. It is having an election for general secretary. Of course, all the candidates support the strike, though none of them decided it. That was done by democratic vote.

London Mayor Boris Johnson, on the other hand,

table urgently and sort this out as quickly as possible".

These strikes are the sign of failure by London Underground bosses to respect the interests of passengers and workers. They should be supported by the whole labour movement.

From the financial crash in 2008 to early 2013, 3.7 million people in Britain got made redundant. The total of job cuts will have been even bigger, since many cuts are made by leaving vacancies unfilled and then deleting the jobs.

About 2.3 million people are unemployed. Some of those made redundant have retired. A lot of them have found other jobs. Some volunteered to be made redundant, reckoning that the job would go anyway and volunteering would get them a payout.

But the overwhelmingly dominant pattern is that those made redundant end up in worse jobs, more insecure, lower-paid. Vast numbers are now nominally "self-employed". Many are working part-time when they would prefer to work full-time, or at least more part-time hours. Many have joined the million on zero hours contracts.

This driving-down of workers into worse jobs is one of the major reasons why wages are still lagging behind price rises (unless you factor in bonuses, a big proportion of which are scooped by a high-paid few in high finance).

To resist job cuts is to resist the driving-down of services, job security, and wages being carried through by bosses so that they can "use the crisis" to shift the balance of forces between the classes and pave the way for high profits in an eventual economic recovery.

Since 2008, trade unions have generally been on the defensive, and winning "no compulsory redundancies" — that is, job cuts carried out by voluntary redundancies, deletions of unfilled posts, and early retirement — has seemed like the peak of aspiration.

Although the revival of economic activity is much weaker and more unequal than George Osborne says, it exists. It provides better conditions for unions to fight back. All workers will benefit if the Tube workers manage to put down a marker and defeat the job cuts.

Student solidarity

On Tuesday 29 April, student activists from University College London, University of the Arts London and Goldsmiths College came to the London Road Bakerloo Line Depot at Elephant and Castle station to show their support for striking tube workers and to help RMT pickets distribute strike leaflets to the public.

Shelly Asquith, President of UAL Students' Union and one of the organisers of the action, told *Solidarity* "I'm here because it's important to defend jobs in London for everyone: it's important that students show their support. London Underground are sitting on vast reserves and don't need to make any cuts at all. Boris Johnson should keep to his election promise of not shutting ticket offices."

Tom, studying at UAL, said "I am here to support the strike any way I can, and help out. Students have to stand together — this is linked to all the other cuts that are going on and we need to support each other."

Steve Spurgin, Health and Safety rep for the RMT's Bakerloo Line Branch said, "From a health and safety point of view, these cuts are terrible. When the CCTV fails, drivers need "assisted despatch", where station staff come and wave us off. If there aren't enough staff to do that, then stations will be closed. If there aren't enough staff to be emergency brakemen,

there will be delays.

"Station staff are vital for safety — they led the rescue efforts during the bombings, because emergency services didn't have the expertise to do things like switch off the current on the tracks.

"The cuts are hitting track workers, too, meaning cuts in inspections of the rails, checking for broken rails or failures at the points. We know from Network Rail disasters what that can mean.

"The first strikes were an overwhelming success and it looks like this strike is, too. Looking at the dot matrix boards, very few services are running. The pickets are solid and at this depot we're also getting a certain amount of support from our sister union ASLEF."

New support for Shahrokh Zamani

By Sacha Ismail

On 23 April, after officials at Gohardasht prison made a written commitment to transfer him to a wing reserved for political prisoners, jailed Iranian trade unionist Shahrokh Zamani ended his hunger strike — after 47 days.

During the hunger strike, Workers' Liberty, our Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency comrades, and others supporting the campaign stepped up the pressure for Shahrokh's release.

Hundreds of new people signed the petition, includ-

RMT solidarity with Shahrokh ing many activists at the UK National Union of Teachers and National Union of Students conferences. Dozens of student union officers, including a majority of NUS national executive, signed a statement which is being sent to the *Guardian* as a letter for

May Day.

We are working on a statement from labour movement leaders, which so far has been signed by people including Len McCluskey of Unite, RMT President Peter Pinkney and Katy Clark MP; planning a protest in London; and exploring various other avenues to step things up.

Although Shahrokh's hunger strike has ended, the campaign for his release — and for the release of all labour movement prisoners in Iran — continues.

• <http://freeshahrokh.wordpress.com>

From precariat to proletariat

How I became a socialist



These excerpts from autobiographical notes by Alice, who joined our movement in 1978, at the age of 23, tell something general about how people become committed to socialist activism, and also something about left politics in the 1970s.

Alice came from an unprosperous and conflict-ridden working-class family, and had attended school only patchily since the age of 14. In March 1973, aged 18, she took advantage of an offer of a lift to leave her home country and to come to London, unfluent in English, with no job or home to go to, and in her pocket the equivalent of £160 in today's money.

She found odd jobs, lived in squats and shared houses, and after a while moved from London to Liverpool and Lancaster and then to Edinburgh: a member of the precariat before the word was invented.

She had become a rebel. In juvenile prison at the age of 17, she told the social worker and the priest who tried to "put her on the right path" that "it wasn't me, but my environment, my father, and the world that were on the wrong path".

Looking back on the situation today, Alice would say that in the situations she faced, her strongest points were to see human conditions in an interconnected way and not let herself be blamed for circumstances which she didn't initially cause. She was determined not to let others stereotype her, as she was also determined not to stereotype others.

But she had come across left-wing politics only glancingly, shortly before leaving her home country, through a friend's father who was a Maoist.

"That was when I first started getting into real political discussions. I didn't understand everything, but it opened my eyes to a new world.

"I went to a demonstration for the first time... against the war in Vietnam. Seeing that, and feeling so many people coming together who wanted a change, who wanted to fight for something and to express their discontent, their anger and their indignation... that made a very big impression on me. It was good energy.

"Naturally, I didn't know anything at all about the trench warfare between the different leftwing parties and groups..."

In Britain she was immersed in "counter-culture"; she was feminist and anti-racist; but she was outside political activity until she fell in with a group of young people in Edinburgh.

"They were all students, or had been students. Philosophy,

politics, art, sociology... there were big debates over this and that, Marx, Sartre, Hegel, Trotsky — again, a new world to me. I wanted to know more, I read new books".

She spent time with one activist in particular, G.

"G studied philosophy and could talk like a book. I think that we found each other quite hard work. I was a handful for him, because I had very intense emotions, and he grated on me because he was always talking about stuff that I couldn't keep up with unless I went away and read up on it. I could read all sorts of stuff, understand it and pose smart questions, but I didn't have the academic background, so some things still escaped me."

But: "After many discussions and when the group realised that they could trust me, I was allowed in, so to speak. They were almost all members of a party which at that time was called the International-Communist League (ICL), a Trotskyist group [forerunner of the AWL].

"Naturally, there was a party programme, which I got to grips with. It fascinated me that there was a group of people who all actually wanted to find a way to overcome all the physical suffering in the world. The other thing that fascinated me was that there was a way of doing this, which could be put into practice. I found a structure and definition of social and political conditions that was very satisfying — and I became a member.

"All my activities of the preceding years, different groups, and efforts to change things, were still things I was very proud of — to me, they were all part of a greater whole. But now it seemed to me that my previous efforts had just been arbitrary and directionless, which were all linked, but fell short of being organised and purposeful action. The argument that humans needed a material basis that would allow them to liberate themselves from their wretched and en-

slaved condition was like a light turning on in my head.

"I took a job at British Rail, cleaning sleeper cars. In Edinburgh there was a British Rail depot, which became my workplace. We (we were all women on the job) worked in three shifts and were 'proper workers', proletarians. This was very well-received by the party, because we wanted to be implanted in all sections of society. And, to cap it all off, the final and obligatory act, like saying 'amen' in church, was to join the union.

"The work was hard, and the women, who were more 'properly proletarian' than I was, were very hearty and stuck together. They made sure no-one was left out. Mae, our forewoman, kept a watchful eye on our work, but also kept tabs on us. If anyone wasn't doing too well, perhaps because of 'women's problems', she would assign them less work to do, or might get someone else to cover for her.

"New workers were looked after as well. It was clear that they couldn't finish up a carriage as quickly as the old hands could. We wanted to get all the cars cleaned as soon as possible, so that we could all meet up in the mess room before we went home. We would drink tea, and chat and joke about work and so on.

"These were very straightforward women, who would liberally sprinkle their sentences with 'fuck', 'fucking shit' and 'cunt' — but I felt a unique kind of solidarity with them, which drew them all into my heart and which I shall never forget.

"We elected workplace representatives. Because I would often talk with the women about political things and sometimes I got very heated about one thing or another, they elected me to be their rep.

"One thing that was very important to me was that women should be reps themselves, and not always just be represented by men.

"Later I would be elected as a delegate to the Edinburgh TUC. I found taking part in meetings of that body very difficult. I had already got some experience in speaking in front of small groups, but the TUC meetings were really big. I can still remember very clearly how at my first 'appearance' my knees were shaking.

"There were endless meetings. Labour Party, union, women's group, Edinburgh ICL branch, national ICL meetings, and there were weekend schools on top of that. All that on top of the job. I was always busy with something. After the meetings we'd generally go to the pub."

Alice withdrew from socialist activism after returning to her home country, where politics similar to ours were very weak. Her story still tells us a lot.

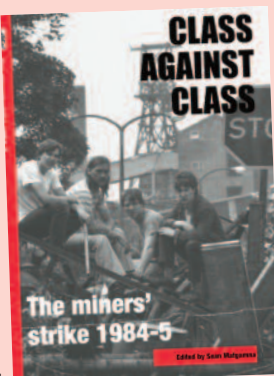
Class against Class

To mark the 30th anniversary of the 1984-5 miners' strike, Workers' Liberty has reprinted our history of the strike.

The defeat of the miners paved the way for the dramatic triumph of neo-liberalism in Britain and the wider world. Yet it is from these defeats, wrote Rosa Luxemburg, that we draw our "historical experience, understanding, power and idealism."

Class Against Class seeks to re-acquaint an older generation and educate a new generation in this historical experience and its lessons for the class struggle today.

Buy it online at www.workersliberty.org/miners — £9.60 including p&p. Or send a cheque (to "AWL") to 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.



Along with lambs, daffodils and chocolate eggs, the coming of spring heralds the approach of trade union annual conferences. Despite its decline in size and bureaucratic, often conservative leadership, the trade union movement still organises millions of workers. Workers' Liberty members take part in the conferences of unions where we are active. We run bulletins, argue for left-wing policy and chat to people about socialist ideas. Where possible, we co-operate with others on the left to build rank-and-file initiatives, like the LANAC network in the NUT. But all of this takes money! Donate what you can to help us fight for democratic, militant trade unions that can fight and win.

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment from your bank to: AWL, sort code: 08-60-01, account: 20047674, Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB). Or send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL"). Or donate online at workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

This week we have raised £140 from book sales.

Grand total: £2950.



Self-determination for Ukraine!

As *Solidarity* goes to press on 29 April, the conflict in Ukraine is deadlocked. The Ukrainian government has said it will re-take city halls in east Ukraine seized by pro-Russian groups, but has made few moves so far.

Evidently the Ukrainian government is worried that any armed clash will give the Russian army an excuse to invade and claim it is only keeping the peace.

The US and the EU have announced new sanctions aimed at making Russia back down and use its influence to unwind the city hall coups in east Ukraine. But they have been unable to reach agreement. The US and the EU are targeting different lists of individuals, and both, so far, have limited themselves to targeting individuals. The Western big powers are worried that larger sanctions would hurt them — through loss of gas supplies from Russia, and of lucrative financial dealings with Russia — more than they would hurt Russia's government.

Their diffidence was highlighted on 28 April, when former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder celebrated his 70th birthday in St Petersburg with Russian president Vladimir Putin as a favoured guest. The German government dissociated itself from Schröder, but the celebration highlights the large Western capitalist interests linked to Russia for whom Ukraine is an embarrassment rather than an issue of principle.

The Ukrainian cabinet (24 April) has formulated a law for local autonomy for districts within Ukraine, and promised it will keep Yanukovich's law allowing for Russian to be used

as a second official language. These concessions have had no visible effect in east Ukraine.

The Russian government has said that it has no intention of invading east Ukraine, and that it is withdrawing the 40,000 troops massed on the border. But the Russian government had already denied that it had troops massed on the border. NATO chiefs say that they see no evidence of large troops withdrawals.

The mayor of Kharkiv, the largest city in east Ukraine, was shot and seriously injured on 28 April. He had previously been pro-Yanukovich, but is anti-separatist: we have no news of why he was shot, and by whom.

We have no fresh news of the Ukrainian left, either. In Moscow, Russian leftist academic Madina Tlostanova has condemned "an alarming revival of old-fashioned geopolitics with its familiar notions of lebensraum and heart-land and rim-land, and once again, an attempt to transcend the downtrodden contemporary reality of Russia as a paradoxical poor North through some sacred imperial mission".

Solidarity proposes:

- Support for Ukraine's right to national self-determination, and self-defence if necessary'
- Demand the Western governments cancel Ukraine's foreign debt
- **Support the Ukrainian left in its efforts to build a "third force" against both Russian imperialism and the oligarch-dominated Kiev government.**

Government building occupied in Donetsk

Ukrainian miners strike for higher pay

From the website of the Russian Socialist Movement (23 April)

A strike broke out on 22 April in the coalmines belonging to Rinat Akhmetov in the Lugansk region (in the south-east of Ukraine).

Two thousand miners besieged the management offices and demanded a pay rise. Is this a sign that the direction of the Ukrainian protests is changing?

According to Andrei Ishchenko, a member of the united-socialist organisation "Left Opposition" and co-ordinator of the Workers' Defence Committee of Odessa:

"Until now it was difficult to call the protests in the south-east class protests. They were dominated by Russian-nationalist slogans and reactionary-abstract ideas. But now the situation can change radically."

"In my opinion, the pro-Russian direction of the protests in south-east Ukraine is beginning to dissipate, and there are objective reasons for this."

"Initially, the main goal of the protestors was unification with the Russian Federation. All the talk about a referendum and federalisation — with a Russian flag in the background — was, of course, nothing more than an attempt to give the protest the appearance of a certain legality."

"But the real role of Russia has become clear to many participants in the 'anti-Maidan' protests. It is intervening in the situation just as much as it needs in order to keep the protests half-alive for the purpose of accomplishing its geopolitical tasks."

"The unrest in the south-east can be used (by Russia) for bargaining with the west, and as a means of putting pressure on the weakened authorities in Kiev."

"It seems that the miners in Krasnodon (city close to the mines) have understood who their real enemy is."

"Few people now believe in unification with Russia. The pro-Russian protest has exhausted itself from within. Deprived of goals and of any meaning, it is simply dying away. But at the same time, Ukraine is in the grip of a profound economic collapse."

"The participants in the protests are disappointed now not just in the policies of the Kiev authorities but also in those of Putin's Russia. More and more they are turning to

their own basic problems: the exchange rate of the hryvnia (Ukrainian currency), local rates of pay, and prices in supermarkets and petrol stations."

"These are of much greater concern to people than problems of language or big questions of geo-politics. Let's hope that protests will now gradually take on a different meaning."

Additional information about Rinat Akhmetov and the miners' strike:

Rinat Akhmetov is the richest man in Ukraine, worth somewhere between \$7 billions and \$17 billions. He claims

that he accumulated his wealth through commercial risk-taking.

Investigations by the Ukrainian government have identified him as the leader of an organized crime syndicate.

Akhmetov is also a prominent member and financial benefactor of Yanukovich's Party of the Regions, and a former MP for the party. Like all good Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs, he owns a football club (Shachtar Donetsk).

The strike involved miners in five pits owned by "Krasnodon Coal", one of Akhmetov's many business subsidiaries.

The separatist movement in south-east Ukraine has also been condemned by Nikolai Volynko, leader of the Independent Trade Union of Donbas Miners:

"As far as separatism is concerned, these issues could have been closed off a long time ago, if it had not been for these anti-terrorist campaigns, with their opening phases, medium phases, concluding phases, stops and postponements. And with every phase, more and more regional offices are seized."

"The local authorities are on the side of the separatists because they have unofficially been promised that they will all remain in their posts if anything changes in terms of Russia. The time has come to be open in our resistance."

"The central authorities are behaving indecisively, very indecisively. The local forces are not helping the army. What is left for us, the people of the Donbas, to do? Are we to wait until the authorities are kind enough to conduct another anti-terrorist operation? But what phase, or what stage, will the pregnancy be at the next time?"

"We will resist!"

25 April update:

According to a statement issued by the company, production has resumed in all pits bar one but talks are still underway. A "mutual understanding" has been reached on 15 of the 16 issues raised by the miners, but there is no agreement on the demand for a pay rise.

On the square in front of the company offices miners are collecting signatures for a petition calling for a return to the old version of the collective agreement in operation in Krasnodon Coal from 1998 onwards, but gradually whittled away by management over time.

Immigration Bill: scapegoating and creating subordinate workers

By Dale Street

The Tories' Immigration Bill will receive its third and final reading in the House of Lords on 6 May.

The bill panders to many of the worst myths and prejudices about migrants — myths and prejudices whipped up by the Tories themselves, by successive Labour governments before them, and by the right-wing press.

According to the Home Office website: "It is too easy for people to live and work in the UK illegally and take advantage of our public services. The appeals system is like a never-ending game of snakes and ladders. The winners are foreign criminals and immigration lawyers."

According to Tory former Immigration Minister Mark Harper, the bill will end this supposed state of affairs: "It will stop migrants abusing public services to which they are not entitled, reduce the pull factors which draw illegal immigrants to the UK and make it easier to remove people who should not be here."

And according to the Tory Home Secretary Theresa May, the bill "will create a really hostile environment for illegal migrants." In fact, the bill will create "a really hostile environment" for many more people than just "illegal migrants".

HEALTH MYTH

Pandering to the myth that declining standards in the NHS are the result of too many foreigners abusing the system — rather than the result of cuts and New Labour's outsourcing to the private sector — the bill introduces an "immigration health charge".

The charge — £200 for each year of permission to be in the UK — is to be paid by anyone applying to enter the UK, or applying to extend their stay here. By definition, it will be paid only by legal migrants — but not by the Tory bogeyman of "illegal migrants".

The charge is directly discriminatory. The NHS is paid for out of general taxation. Like anyone else, foreign workers pay taxes, such as income tax and VAT. But only foreign workers will have to pay an extra "health charge".

Rich migrants will be able to afford the additional £200 a year. But poorer migrants will not. It would mean that the cost for a spouse to join someone already settled in the UK, for example, would rise from £850 to over £1,350.

In any case, migrant labour is generally younger and therefore in better health than the UK population overall. (On average, more than a quarter of all healthcare consumed in someone's lifetime will be administered in the last year of their life.) Migrants are therefore less of a "burden" on the NHS than the indigenous UK population.

And, of course, the Tories have not given any commitment that money raised from the "immigration health charge" will actually be spent on the NHS.

HOUSING MYTH

Pandering to the myth that the shortage of affordable accommodation is the result of too many foreigners snapping it up — rather than the result of the slump in council-house-building and government cuts for social housing in general — the bill aims to make private landlords auxiliary immigration officers.

Private landlords face a fine of up to £3,000 per tenant if they fail to check immigration documentation and let out their property to anyone without permission to be in the UK. Landlords will also be fined if they fail to check the immigration documentation of anyone sharing the accommodation with their tenant.

Like much else in the bill, the new duty imposed on private landlords is unworkable (as well being wrong in principle).

Over 400 different forms of identity document are in use in

the European Union. (To complicate matters even more, most of them, unsurprisingly, are not in English!) The UK Visas and Immigration guidance for employers who have to carry out similar checks runs to 89 pages. Its list of acceptable documentation runs to 23 pages.

Few, if any, of the UK's private landlords — 71% of the UK's four-million-plus private lettings are owned by individual private landlords — are going to wade through great tomes of guidance.

Far easier to discriminate: to avoid the risk of a fine by not letting properties to anyone who "looks" or "sounds" a bit foreign.

In any case, while it is true that migrants are far more likely to live in the private rented sector than in social housing, recent research by the Housing and Migration Network found migrants to be the victims of poor housing rather than the cause of it:

"Recent migrants frequently live in poorer properties... New migrants often enter the market through the least desirable accommodation, often in disadvantaged areas or where demand for housing is lowest, filling voids created by people who have moved on to better conditions."

"There are widespread reports of poor and exploitative housing conditions experienced by many migrant workers. Overcrowded or unsuitable private lettings include the use of attics, shipping containers and garden sheds as accommodation."

Other agencies to be transformed into auxiliary immigration officers also include banks and building societies (to carry out immigration status checks on new applicants for current accounts) and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (to do likewise on new applicants for a driving licence).

But banks, building societies and the DVLA already carry out identity and documentation checks on new applicants. The government has provided no evidence to suggest that existing checks are inadequate, and no guidance about how the new checks are to be carried out.

The only purpose served by the new checks is to reinforce the illusion that the UK is a "soft touch" for "illegal migrants" and that the government is taking action to "reduce the pull factors which draw illegal immigrants to the UK."

(Even if it is not clear why the possibility of obtaining a driving licence from the DVLA counts as a "pull factor".)

The most likely result of the new checks will be racial discrimination, with anyone who "looks" or "sounds" foreign being subject to a greater degree of scrutiny than indigenous white UK nationals.

LEGALITY MYTHS

Pandering to the myth that the only beneficiaries of immigration appeals are "foreign criminals and lawyers" — rather than acknowledging that the high level of successful appeals (between 40% and 50%) reflects the poor quality of initial decision-making by UK Visas and Immigration — the bill radically curtails appeal rights.

All but four of the seventeen grounds on which a decision to remove someone from the UK can be challenged are being scrapped and replaced by an "administrative review system", in which decisions taken by UK Visas and Immigration will be reviewed by ... UK Visas and Immigration.

The four remaining grounds of appeal are ones which the UK government must leave in place either by virtue of international conventions (such as on human rights and refugee rights) or by virtue of its obligations as a member state of the European Union.

But even the right to appeal on human rights grounds is curtailed by the bill.

Bigots not welcome!

Over 200 people turned up to the "Migrants Welcome, Bigots Aren't" protest outside UKIP's Nigel Farage north east rally in Gateshead on Wednesday 23 April.

The protest, initiated by Workers' Liberty supporters in the north east, brought together political activists as well as artists, musicians, feminists and LGBT campaigners.

At an "open mic" meeting, speakers from a range of left-wing political groups spoke alongside community campaigners and several people read political poems.

A small counter protest of 15 or so members of the EDL

attempted to attack our protest but were held back by the police.

Unfortunately there was a lack of serious support from trade unions. Though many at the protest were trade union members, no branch or regional union banners were there with the exception of some Unite flags.

If the labour movement had seriously mobilised we could have outnumbered the 800-strong UKIP rally.

Union support for Labour has so far failed to win a commitment from Labour to fight for rights for all migrant workers and precarious workers.

We need to regain the ground from both the far-right street fighters and the creeping anti-migrant racism in our workplaces, and estates.

UKIP billboard in Newcastle ripped down to prevent spreading of racist ideas. This is happening across the country.

Also if you get leaflets from UKIP through your door you can return them at UKIP's expense: UKIP FREEPOST, RLSU-HZBG-UBBG, Lexdrum House, Heathfield, Devon, TQ12 6UT

Ever since Theresa May falsely claimed at the 2011 Tory Party conference that an “illegal immigrant” had been allowed to remain in the UK because he had a cat and his removal would therefore breach his right to family life (guaranteed under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights), Article 8 has been a bogeyman for the Tories.

The new bill lays down criteria against which appeals based on Article 8 rights should be judged (and, thereby, less likely to be successful).

“Little weight” should be attached to any private or family life established by someone at a time when their immigration status was “precarious” or unlawful. Anyone who is not financially independent and/or cannot speak English should be more liable to removal. And the maintenance of effective immigration controls is defined as “in the public interest”.

Even where removal or deportation decisions remain subject to appeal rather than “administrative review”, the bill will result in a greater number of those appeals being heard after the person’s removal from the UK, with a consequent reduced chance of success.

Where a claim to stay in the UK on the grounds that removal would breach a person’s human rights is “certified” by UK Visas and Immigration as “clearly unfounded”, then any appeal against that decision must be lodged and heard after the person’s removal from the UK.

Similarly, any non-British national who is subject to a deportation order after completion of a prison sentence will be able to appeal against that decision only after removal from the UK. (The only exception to this is if the person would face “a real risk of serious irreversible harm” if deported.)

Success rates in anti-deportation appeals — currently running at around 30% — will slump as a result of this change. Appealing from abroad makes it more difficult to gather evidence, obtain appropriate legal representation, and respond to evidence presented in court by the Home Secretary.

The sweeping abolition of appeal rights contained in the bill will be further exacerbated by staffing cuts in UK Visas and Immigration (a cut of 22% between 2010 and 2015), which will result in even lower-quality decision-making, and by cuts in legal aid for challenging removal decisions, which will result in more migrants being denied legal representation.

Despite the UK already detaining more immigration offenders for longer periods of time than any other country in Europe, the bill places even more obstacles in the way of immigration detainees being granted bail.

A detainee is not to be released on bail without the permission of the Home Secretary if removal directions have already been set for fourteen days or less after the date of

release. And at least 28 days must elapse before a new bail application can be lodged following an unsuccessful one.

Such measures amount to an attack on the independence of the judiciary (which, despite its class background, is seen by Tory traditionalists as far too liberal in matters of immigration and detention).

When deciding whether or not to grant bail a judge will, in any case, take account of the future proximity of removal and the past proximity of an earlier bail application. This discretion is effectively overridden by the restrictions imposed by the bill.

Other provisions of the bill consist of a variety of miscellaneous measures geared to make life even more unpleasant for migrants and would-be migrants.

There are increased powers for immigration and police officers to search individuals and premises. The state’s powers to record, use and retain biometric information are enlarged. And naturalised British citizens can be deprived of their citizenship if they have acted in a manner “seriously prejudicial” to vital UK interests.

RICH WELCOME

The Immigration Bill — which, to its shame, the Parliamentary Labour Party decided not to oppose — is the latest in a succession of similar pieces of legislation. On average, since 1997 legislation about asylum and/or immigration has been passed every two years.

To one degree or another, all such legislation has covered the same ground: making it more difficult, and more expensive, for migrants to enter the UK; making life more difficult for them while in the UK; and making it easier to remove them from the UK.

But such an approach has not been applied to all migrants. Rich ones are still welcome, with plans under consideration to “auction” the right to reside in Britain to the highest bidders, and to give the right to remain to those wealthy enough to donate seven-figure sums to hospital and university endowments.

UK Visas and Immigration has also set up the invitation-only “Great Club” (sic), membership of which is restricted to “top business executives and global business leaders”. Members of the Great Club are allocated their personal “account manager”, who provides them with “a bespoke visa service, tailored to each individual’s needs.”

And in contrast to scare stories about the UK being overwhelmed by immigration from Bulgaria and Romania, the Tories have promised to open up the UK to immigration from China. On a visit to the country last year George Osborne declared:

“Let me make this clear to you and to the whole of China,

there is no limit to the number of Chinese who can study in Britain. There is no limit to the number of Chinese tourists who can visit. No limit on the amount of business we can do together.”

(The total population of Bulgaria and Romania is 29 millions. The population of China, the most populous country in the world, is 1,384 millions.)

In any case, media and Tory claims about migrants and/or illegal migrants abusing public services to which they are (supposedly) not entitled and about supposed “pull factors” attracting migrants to the UK do not stand up to scrutiny.

Between 2001 and 2011 migrants made a net contribution to UK public finances of £25 billion. UK welfare benefits — supposedly a “pull factor” — are amongst the lowest in Europe. EU-migrants are 60% less likely to claim benefits than British nationals. The UK is the only EU country in which unemployment amongst migrants is lower than among indigenous nationals.

According to figures produced by the Department of Work and Pensions itself, in 2013, 6.7% of non-UK nationals were claiming a working-age benefit, compared with 16.4% of working-age UK nationals.

Migrant labour frequently meets skills shortages. 36.8% of GPs and 40.4% of other health specialists gained their qualifications outside the UK. Migrants are more likely to have degree-level education: in 2011, 21% of UK adults, 32% of EU migrants and 43% of non-EU migrants had a university degree.

SCAPEGOATING

The Immigration Bill, like its predecessors, is designed to meet a problem that does not exist: “too much” immigration, “abuses” of public services by migrants, “benefits tourism” and “health tourism”.

The driving force behind the Immigration Bill and its predecessors is to be found elsewhere.

On the one hand, such legislation scapegoats migrants for social problems such as poor-quality housing, inadequate NHS care, low wages and high unemployment. These are certainly real problems. But they are not caused by migrants. In fact, migrants themselves are more likely to be found in low-paid jobs and poor-quality housing.

Such problems are the result of the policies of successive Tory and Labour governments. The solution to such problems is not to witch-hunt migrants but to challenge and reverse government policies.

On the other hand, the impact of such legislation is arguably to create a regulated and controlled labour force which corresponds to the demands of the modern globalised and deregulated labour market.

Migrant labour is, by definition, mobile and precarious. Just as modern capital moves across borders in search of profit-maximisation, so too migrant labour crosses the same borders in search of a buyer for its labour power.

Its right to reside in any given place is largely dependent on its ability to find a buyer for that labour power. And its social overheads are lower. While working, it “puts more into” the economy than it “takes out”. If it loses its employment, then it is more likely to look for work elsewhere than claim welfare benefits.

The permanently transient nature of its employment makes it less likely to be organised in trade unions. Its scapegoating for social problems exposes it to isolation from the indigenous labour force. And legislation such as the Immigration Bill denies it even the limited rights enjoyed by the latter.

In that sense, migrant labour is not a “supplement” which fills in the gaps in the indigenous labour force but a specific form of labour fashioned by the demands of contemporary capitalism. It is what capitalism wants the working class as a whole to be: entirely subordinate and vulnerable to the dictates of capital.

This underlines the fact that recruiting and organising migrant labour into the trade union movement is not “just” a matter of solidarity but also part of the struggle to defend the rights of all workers against capitalist encroachment.

- Next issue, UK’s migrant detention regime

Construction death traps in the Gulf

M worked as an architect on construction sites in Dubai. He told *Solidarity* what daily working life is like on those sites.

The major difference between a construction site in Dubai and one in Europe is the number of hours that they work. The workers are present on site from 7am to 7pm — twelve hours a day for six days a week, sometimes seven.

They usually only have short breaks. The formal site regulations are all normal by international standards, but the hours are not. And the wages are completely sub-standard. The workers get £600 or £700 a month for 70 or 80 hours a

Death toll

The International Trade Union Confederation estimates at least 4,000 workers will die on construction work for the World Cup in Qatar in 2022. That estimate is based on statistics collected by two embassies only — Nepal and India — which account for around 50% of the total migrant workforce.

The figure is in a different league from construction deaths for other major sporting events:

2014 Brazil World Cup: 7 workers killed

2014 Sochi Winter Olympics: 60

2012 London Olympics: zero

2008 Beijing Olympics: 10

2004 Athens Olympics: 40

2000 Sydney Olympics: 1.

The Gulf, especially Qatar and Dubai, is a major centre of construction. In 2006 *Gulf News* reported that 30,000 tower construction cranes were operating in Dubai, one-quarter of all the cranes of that type in the world.

A BBC report in 2009 estimated that there were one million migrant workers in Dubai.

week.

The workers are at the mercy of their employers. When they enter the country, their boss gets their passport and gives them a working visa. If the employer isn't satisfied with a worker, he or she can be terminated with as little as one month's notice and shipped out of the country, because they lose their visa.

The workers are scared. There are no laws to defend them, there are no trade unions, no bargaining, no negotiating. This goes for other countries in the Gulf region too.

The workers live in labour camps with up to 20 people in one room with bunk-beds. The BBC has made a few documentaries which shows the way the construction workers live. A bus picks up the workers from the labour camp, drops them off at the site for 12 hours and then picks them up and takes them back. That's it. It goes on and on and on, day after day.

During the summer months the temperature becomes very high. It can go up to 50. [In Australia, regulations advise construction workers should have a 30 minute break in every hour if the temperature is above 34, and work should stop if it's above 36]. In Dubai, workers get a longer lunch break in the very hot months, of around three hours, during which they usually sleep in the shade.

In the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, also, the workers are allowed to finish work at 2pm or 3pm, so it is more or less a half day. They get the a full day's pay, but it is still peanuts.

The construction companies are mostly locally-owned, and the majority of workers on a site will be employed by the main contractor [unlike on a site in Europe, where most will be employed by sub-contractors].

The top managers on the sites are usually Europeans or Australians or Americans, and automatically their salaries are maybe 20 times more than standard workers. Even for the same work, an architect from Europe will get three times the salary of an architect from the Philippines.

Exhausted migrant construction workers take advantage of a break

The middle ranks, the engineers, surveyors, technicians, and tradespeople, are mostly Indians, Filipinos and Arabs, usually Egyptians or Palestinians.

There are many more labourers than there would be on a site in Britain, maybe three times as many. On a site where I worked, we had over 1000 workers. And the managers push to get jobs finished very quickly — in three to four years, when in Britain the same job would take 10 years.

The working language of the sites is English, and each group of labourers is supervised by a foreman who speaks both English and the language of the labourers, who usually come from South Asia — Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal.

The foremen are very tough and very rude to the workers. You can hear them swearing, shouting, and intimidating workers all the time.

They do that in order to keep their own position. They get paid more than the workers but their visa situation is the same

They get the privilege of not doing manual work, and to keep their position they scream and shout abuse at the workers.

A whole new ball game?

After three years of negotiations secular nationalist Fatah and political-Islamist Hamas have announced a deal in which they say they will soon form a unity government for the Palestinian Authority. Israel's right-wing Likud government has accused Fatah of seeking to destroy the possibility of peace through the current US-sponsored negotiations. As this abridged article by Adam Keller points out, that accusation is hypocritical. The deal also points to a mood of despair among Fatah leaders at the possibility of a meaningful two-state solution.

Last year, Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas) entered with obvious reluctance negotiations with the Netanyahu Government.

The Palestinians had all the reasons in the world to assume that Netanyahu himself does not want an agreement including withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. And even had Netanyahu wanted it, he could not have gotten such an agreement through his cabinet, with his extreme right coalition partners and his no less extreme fellow members of the Likud Party. Abu Mazen was pressured to enter negotiations under the threat that otherwise the Palestinians would be denounced worldwide as rejectionists.

Abu Mazen was required to oblige himself not to go to the United Nations and not to take any unilateral steps on the international arena, while Netanyahu was given the freedom to continue unilateral settlement acts on the ground. Housing Minister Uri Ariel, an incomparable expert in settlement construction, made the maximum use of this opportunity.

The only sweetener given for the Palestinians' bitter pill was the release of 104 prisoners — 104 out of some 5000 in Israeli prisons, 104 held even before the Oslo Agreements, twenty or even thirty years behind bars. This prisoner release was divided by Netanyahu into four batches, each one accompanied by a massive propaganda campaign in the Israeli media on "the release of murderers" and a demonstrative settlement building surge for "counter-balance".

For a few months, one could cherish some hope that this process might nevertheless bear fruit. If there was any

chance, it would have been by forceful American mediation — putting a frame agreement on the table, which the parties could not afford to refuse; directly confronting Netanyahu, with the Europeans acting as the "bad cop", making a credible threat of steps which might hurt the Israeli economy.

It is very possible that these were always false hopes and illusions. Kerry and Obama never seriously intended a head-on confrontation with Netanyahu and his supporters in the American political system. It was left to the "persistent" John Kerry only what seemed the path of least resistance — to cut a deal with Netanyahu and bring it as "take it or leave it" to the Palestinians.

According to leaks in the Israeli media, the deal was supposed to be palatable to Netanyahu on quite a few key points: clear-cut formulations about long-term Israeli presence in the strategic Jordan Valley, and the demand for Palestinian recognition of Israel as "a Jewish State", and conversely deliberately vague formulations about the 1967 borders and the Palestinian capital in East-Jerusalem.

CUT KNOT

This was probably the dish which Kerry presented to Abu Mazen at their stormy meeting in Paris — and the Palestinian President rejected it out of hand, and rejected it again when it was warmed up again by President Obama in the White House.

Then, there was left the Americans only the choice between declaring failure — and in that way handing Netanyahu on a silver platter the victory in the "blame game" — or trying at any price to buy more time and extend the negotiations beyond the defined deadline of 29 April.

Perhaps Abu Mazen would have agreed to extend the talks until the end of the year, as Kerry asked — though in the Palestinian society there were increasing calls for ending the farce. But Netanyahu's right-wing partners cut the Gordian knot when they intensively pressured the Prime Minister — forcing him to cancel the fourth batch of prisoner release, scheduled for 29 March. This was a blatant violation of an ex-

plicit Israeli commitment and which released the Palestinians from the suffocating siege of negotiations leading nowhere, providing them a sudden gust of fresh air, the freedom to take their own initiatives.

First came the public and demonstrative signature of the request for Palestinian adherence to fifteen international organisations and treaties.

Then the proposal to extend negotiations beyond April 29 — but provided that they be purposeful talks, aimed at determining the borders of Palestine-to-be, and that settlement construction be completely frozen during talks.

Then, the threat to dissolve the PA and "hand over the keys" to Israel.

And finally — the agreement on reconciliation and ending the deep division among Palestinians, separating Fatah from Hamas and the West Bank from the Gaza Strip.

All these rapidly interchanging initiatives carried a single message — to the Israelis, the Americans, the Europeans, and the entire world. From now on, the Palestinians are taking initiatives to which others will have to react.

To his own Palestinian people, the message of the initiatives emanating from Abbas' office is no less important: it is possible to take the initiative and advance Palestinian interests - without resorting to violence, such as deteriorated into a bloodbath following the failure of Camp David fourteen years ago.

One can think of at least one more step which might materialize soon: a candidacy for the Palestinian presidency presented by Marwan Barghouti — the most famous Palestinian prisoner, and the leader considered as the having the greatest chance to succeed Abbas. He may well be elected President in his prison cell — and on the day after, the Palestinian security personnel would notify their Israeli counterparts: "For security coordination between us, you have to apply to our President who is in your jail."

• <http://adam-keller2.blogspot.co.uk>

Mussolini and Italian fascism

Part 2. By Dan Katz

Part 1 of this article was in *Solidarity* 321.

Unlike Hitler, Mussolini had made compromises with the monarchy and the Church (in 1929 he gave the Vatican the status of an independent state and allowed the two-million-strong Catholic Action to continue to function). Mussolini also had to manoeuvre between, balance, and play-off several competing cliques inside his own movement. Regional fascist organisations were organised through powerful local bosses often linked to organised crime.

These structures and problems placed additional limits on his dictatorship which was authoritarian, but never totalitarian. Mussolini was a vicious thug – capable of setting gangs on unarmed political opponents, using poison gas on African villages and having prisoners of war shot – but he never had a vice-like grip over Italy in the way that the Nazis had in Germany, or used terror as the Stalinists did in Russia. In particular the fascists never had complete control of the state machine – the police, army and civil service remained, in the final analysis, in the hands of the old, pre-fascist ruling elite.

The German Nazis had had a much longer, harder road to power – and they ended up as a more coherent, consistent party. Aside from grandiose imperialist scheming, and repression at home which destroyed the opposition – especially working-class opposition – there was little consistency in Mussolini's policy.

For example, until 1925 the fascist economic policy was classically liberal: inheritance and other taxes were abolished, so were rent controls; state industries were privatised. The rich who had backed Mussolini benefited from stability and an ending of most strikes. But later in the 20s the fascist state had developed the idea of "corporatism", allegedly modelled on the guild system, and involving heavy state control. Later, when Mussolini rediscovered contempt for the bourgeoisie, he advocated nationalisation of industry.

The German Nazi-Italian fascist alliance was, in fact, problematic. In 1935 Italy formed a bloc with France and Britain against Germany (the Stresa front). Despite collaboration to help the Spanish military defeat the Republic (Italy sent 75,000 troops in total, and vast amounts of armaments) there were serious barriers in the way of a German-Italian alliance.

The Nazis regarded the Italians as an inferior race and the German stereotype was that Italians were lazy and disloyal. And, for his own strategic reasons, Mussolini was opposed to the German seizure of Austria.

Over twenty years the relationship between Hitler and Mussolini had developed. In 1922 Mussolini, in power, could consider Hitler to be almost insignificant. The two men first met in 1934 and Mussolini thought himself to be the more important, senior partner – dismissing Hitler as "a mad little clown". By 1938 Italy was very much in Germany's wake, being swept along towards world war. When Hitler visited Italy in May 1938 some of the guns mounted on antiquated military vehicles were made of wood. As war started Italy was weak, unprepared – very much Germany's junior partner.

It seems that Hitler did genuinely admire Mussolini, at least until Italy's humiliating military defeats of 1941-2. During their final meetings in 1943-4 Mussolini sat in silence, for hours, listening to Hitler ramble and rant, seemingly trapped, now too frightened of Nazi power to discuss a way out of the war that was being lost.

ITALY IN WW2

As the war opened Italian capitalism was backward compared to all the other major European powers.

Car production was 15% of that of Britain and France; Italy produced tiny fractions of the coal, iron ore, steel and oil of Britain or Germany. Mussolini only declared war on France and Britain on 10 June 1940 after the German army had smashed into France and the British had evacuated at Dunkirk. He was expecting a short and victorious war.

Although Mussolini had invaded and – eventually – defeated the Ethiopians in 1935-6 with half a million troops and civilian workers using a "systematic policy of terrorism and extermination," the British and American armies were a dif-

ferent matter. By 1942 the war was going seriously wrong for Italian fascism, beaten in the Balkans, and in east and north Africa.

There had been sporadic strikes during 1942, but the first big strikes since 1925 took place in March 1943, coordinated by Communist Party cells. On 5 March at 10am Fiat workers in Milan stopped work. The Communist paper, *Unita*, had been re-established in June 1942 and in the lead factory, Fiat Mirafiori, there was a CP organisation of 80. In three other Turin factories the CP cells had 30, 72 and 60 members.

On 8 March the local secretary of the Fascist Confederation of Industrial Workers estimated 30-35 000 workers had joined token strikes at 10am that morning. Four days later the Communists claimed 100,000 had stopped work. On 14 March the underground committee of the Lombardy region of the CP met in Milan and announced a strike for 24 March when Pirelli and Falk workers followed Turin.

For the fascists there were many alarming facts about the workers' action. Although the formal strike demands were economic (getting enough to eat was now hard, and the cost of living had increased by 75% over the previous three years), the underlying mood of the workers was opposition to the war. The workers that had struck were all involved in the war industries. Cianetti, a minister, spoke of fascist workers who "showed themselves to be completely passive [as the strikes took place], or had even fomented the strikes." And Roberto Farinacci, a fascist leader, wrote to Mussolini, "The Party is absent and impotent... everywhere in the trams, the theatres and air-raid shelters ... people are denouncing the regime."

The fascist militia had failed to act against the strikers, despite prior warnings; many fascist party members had taken part in the action. Some hundreds of strikers were arrested in Turin and Milan, including the central CP cadre at Mirafiori.

By early 1943 Italy had only 400 modern fighter planes left, and three-quarters of Italian ships had been destroyed or were out of use. In January Libya had been lost and by May '43 the Axis had been defeated in north Africa. On 10 July US and British forces invaded Sicily, and nine days later the Allies bombed Rome for the first time. This series of events pushed Mussolini into isolated depression and political paralysis. Among the old ruling class, and even in leading fascist circles, there was widespread discussion about the need to break from Germany and make a separate peace.

On 24 June 1943 the latest fascist party secretary, Carlo Scorza, reported 4.77 million PNF members, 1.2 million in the party's women's organisations. In the 1930s PNF membership had become mandatory for all those needing work or welfare. Scorza added that these impressive figures would have "no absolute value if they do not represent spirit and will." The events of the next weeks showed just how hollowed-out fascist power had become.

The fascist Grand Council met on 24-25 July and voted by 19 votes to 7 for the King, parliament and ministers to be given back the powers Mussolini had taken from them. Mussolini, in the state of passive confusion that had gripped him

for many weeks, quietly accepted criticism during the ten hour meeting, effectively allowing the motion against him to be passed. Later on the 25th Mussolini visited the King, Victor Emmanuel III, and was arrested on the King's orders, while leaving. The King appointed Marshall Badoglio as prime minister.

There was no serious fascist resistance to what amounted to the reassertion of direct political control by the old ruling class. The fascist militia failed to react; even Mussolini's own paper *Popolo d'Italia* accepted the change, replacing Mussolini's photo on the front page with Badoglio's. Mussolini wrote to Badoglio offering, "every possible collaboration."

For Hitler the overthrow seemed to provide a worrying example to others closer to home and Mussolini was moved regularly as the Germans tried to find him. Victor Emmanuel, however, resisted handing Mussolini over to the Allies and continued to tell the Germans the Italian war would continue – out of fear of the Nazi reaction – as his government secretly attempted to negotiate a separate peace with the Allies, which was eventually announced on 8 September 1943.

The King and Badoglio then ran from Rome, leaving their forces in chaos. In response the German army – which had expected and planned for this overturn, and moved more troops into Italy during August – took control in central and northern Italy, seizing Rome on 10 September. Parts of the Italian army began to resist, but piecemeal, without central direction.

There was fighting in Rome. And on the Greek island of Cephalonia 12,000 Italian troops fought German attempts to disarm them. After ten days of fighting the Italians surrendered and thousands of prisoners were massacred. Generally, captured Italian troops were given a choice: either fight under German command or be disbanded. About 100,000 chose to fight, most (perhaps 700,000) were disarmed and then deported to Germany as slave labour.

The Germans tracked Mussolini down to a hotel in an Apennine ski resort and freed him in a commando raid on 12 September. Mussolini was taken to Germany and soon after a German puppet Republican Fascist government was set up in northern Italy led by Mussolini. The Social Republic – or Salò Republic, after a town north of Verona where some of the administration was based – had little power. Mussolini was surrounded by SS guards who read his mail and vetted his visitors, and he was deprived of an army which the Nazis believed would be inevitably unreliable.

Blaming the King and the old ruling class for his downfall Mussolini declared his neo-fascist statelet to be republican and socialist. Mussolini wanted to nationalise armaments and electricity, plans that were never implemented and partly declared to build a base of support among the workers for re-founded fascism.

A series of overlapping, chaotic, fascist militias were created or expanded. Some were heavily tied to organised crime. Pietro Koch's Banda Koch group, which had its own prisons and torture chambers, was eventually suppressed by the regime using the Muti gang in Milan. Despite its criminal links the Muti gang was tolerated as an effective strike-breaking force.

The Allies were already on the Italian mainland, the British having crossed from Sicily on 3 September. In Sicily the Allies had been greeted as saviours, and now Naples was liberated from below as the Allied armies fought their way north.

ITALIAN JEWRY AND MINORITIES

On the edge of Italy's borders the fascists had, from the start, persecuted non-Italian minorities. The Slovene language was prohibited, although half the people in and around Trieste were Slovenes. And German was banned in Alto Adige, where 90% spoke German as a first language; teaching German was banned, even in private, and German papers were suppressed.

The French army under Napoleon had invaded in 1797 and – as in France – Jews were granted equal rights. Following Napoleon's defeat, in 1815, the Jews were thrown back into the ghettos and their rights were repealed.

The Italian revolution of 1848, which unified the Italian states under the House of Savoy again granted the Jews civil and political equality, without religious distinction.

Continued on page 10

What to do about union corruption?

By Bob Carnegie

The problem of corruption and misuse of union funds has plagued workers' organisations almost from the heroic beginnings of trade unions.

More than 100 years ago my hero (we all have a few) Eugene Debs, in a famous speech about the emancipatory nature of organised labour, pleaded that the labour movement had been "betrayed by traitors, bled by leeches and sold out by leaders." 100 years on it is time we of the left tackle this problem and use a powerful moral argument to start bringing this problem to heel.

We need to put systems in place to stop corruption and end its bedfellow careerism.

Of the points chosen below the great majority are mine, with input from Janet Burstall and Martin Thomas.

The most important point overall is rotational leadership. Why I place such importance on it, is because it has a tendency to force the point of what a person should stand for — either doing the best one can for working people or to become an official who is there for him or herself and to make sure the job has all attendant trappings.

Let's all fight to make our unions accountable to the members.

PROBITY AND DEMOCRACY

Trade unions in Australia are about to be ruthlessly examined by a Royal Commission headed by probably Australia's most brilliant conservative legal mind, Dyson Heydon. The Heydon Commission began its work on 9 April, and is due to report in December.

We need trade union structures that are more democratic and which by their very structure can be more open, honest and put probity at the top of the list rather than at the bottom.

1. Union officials should be elected, not appointed. Unions may of course appoint people to "back-room" jobs, but not to official positions with authority in the union.

2. Elected positions are for a maximum of two terms and then one must go back to the rank and file for a term at least. To union officials who say "Bob, you are crazy, the union must have experienced leadership", my reply is this: "The President of the USA is elected for two terms maximum".

With all due respects to any union official, complex as they think their job is, they don't have the capacity for annihilating the human race. Elected officials should also be subject to recall at any time.

3. All policy-making bodies and conference delegations should be made up of elected lay members only, and their agendas should be organised around proposals from elected members and from the rank and file, not around reports from full-time officials. Policy-making bodies should meet sufficiently often to have real control over the full-time officials, and all full-time officials' reports should be sent to members at least a week in advance of meetings, with exceptions only for emergencies.

4. Minutes and voting records of policy-making bodies should be posted on the union website. Members of policy-making bodies who vote against majority decision should be free to explain to members why they have done so.

5. Union officials' wages. Wages must be linked to the industry in a simple, transparent formula. Some of the wages and benefits paid to many union officials are ridiculous and offensive.

The leader of the Queensland public services union Together is on a \$300,000 package, when if he was a public servant paid on his skill and commitment to his class he would be lining up at the Salvation Army to get food to supplement his wages. He is only one of many.

6. An end to honoraria and excessive expenses for union officers and conference delegates. A full account of all expenses received by union officers and delegates and the claims on which they are based should be available for inspection by members.

7. Union officers should be banned from accepting gifts to

Extreme example: Jimmy Hoffa, president of Teamsters Union, imprisoned for corruption

themselves or to relatives offered in connection with their union activity.

8. Union accounts. Union accounts should be open to all members to observe how their dues are being spent. All unions should have elected financial probity committees made up of at least four rank and filers elected for set terms.

Auditors should be changed every four years. The Maritime Union of Australia have had the same auditors for the best part of 70 years!

People get into bad habits that perpetuate themselves.

9. Union vehicles. Union vehicles should not be status symbols. They should be 4 cylinders, hybrid and practical. The current CFMEU construction president in Queensland drives a \$110,000 V8 Toyota Land Cruiser. It consumes more fossil fuel than a small Asian city and is purely a type of phallic status symbol. It is an example of treating members' finances with contempt.

Mussolini and Italian fascism

Continued from page 9

At the beginning of Mussolini's rise, many Italian Jews supported the fascists. And Mussolini had a long affair with a Jewish woman, Margherita Sarfatti, from 1911 to 1938, when Sarfatti left for South America. Sarfatti was a propaganda advisor to the PNF in the 1920s and the party was open to Jewish members.

However, in 1929, Mussolini passed the racist Falco Laws, contradicting the freedom of religion sanctioned by the Italian Constitution. In 1938 he declared the Italians to be part of the "pure race", along with the Aryans. Jews were expelled from all public services and schools. Although Mussolini believed the idea of a "pure race" was nonsense, he adopted Nazi ideas out of political opportunism.

In 1931, there were 48,000 Jews in Italy. By 1939 nearly 4,000 Jews had been baptized and thousands more chose to emigrate, leaving approximately 35,000 Jews in the country. During World War II, Jews were interned in labour camps in Italy, but when the north of the country — where the Jewish communities mostly lived — became occupied by the Germans in 1943, the threat became critical. In October 1943, the Nazis raided the former Ghetto of Rome and deported 2000 Jews to death camps. In November, they sent the Jews of Genoa, Torino, Florence to Auschwitz.

Perhaps 7,500 Italian Jews became victims of the Holocaust.

Strikes broke out in Turin on 1 March 1944 and spread to

Milan and Genoa.

The German reports stressed, "The movement has political aims, and a Communist character", "Communist" meaning dominated by the (pro-Stalin) Communist Party. The strike was called by the CP-dominated Committee of Agitation in Piedmont, Lombardy and Liguria and was coordinated with sabotage and disruption on the rail network. On 6 March, on Hitler's personal orders, 600 workers at Fiat were arrested. The Committee ordered a return to work; 200,000 workers across northern Italy had struck.

In the strike's aftermath many strikers were deported to Germany as forced labour. The Nazis also decided to dismantle the key factories and move the machinery to Germany. The authorities began to move equipment in June and were met with further strikes — colluded with by Fiat managers — to prevent them. Over ten days 40,000 workers struck. The fascist-German state made concessions on wages and assurances the machinery would not be touched.

PARTISANS

In mid-1944 there were about 70,000 fighters in partisan formations (40% in Communist-led units). The partisans were numerically strongest in the hills where many young men had fled to avoid being conscripted.

The Garibaldi Brigades were Communist controlled, the Matteotti Brigades were Socialist and the Justice and Freedom Brigades were affiliated to the liberal Partito d'Azione. Other groupings also existed (monarchist, anarchist, unaffiliated local groups). The Committee of National Liberation (CNL) was the umbrella group that had the support of most of these militias.

In mid-1944 there was a generalised rising across northern Italy led by the CLN. The German armies were being pushed

northwards in a series of East-West defensive lines across the width of Italy. And they faced a partisan war in the rear of their front lines, which had liberated large areas of the north. Over the summer of 1944 Kesselring, the German military commander in Italy, estimated partisans had killed 5,000 German troops, with larger numbers missing or wounded.

Using terror and Italian fascist units the partisan rising was largely crushed by the end of 1944. In total the partisans lost perhaps 50 000 fighters during 1943-5.

As the German armies collapsed and the Allies renewed their offensive the CLN called an uprising. Turin and Milan were liberated by partisans on 25 April 1945. The 14,000-strong German-Italian forces in Genoa surrendered to the CLN on 26-27 April.

The end came in April 1945. Mussolini had half-intended a last stand with thousands of fascists in Valtellina, north of Milan, near the Swiss border. But his support vaporised. He was caught by partisans from the 52nd Garibaldi Brigade attempting to escape northwards dressed in a German airforce coat and helmet. Communist partisans shot him and his mistress Clara Petacci on 28 April. Their bodies were hung up by their heels, with other leading fascists, from the roof of a petrol station in Milan. In the aftermath of the war some thousands of pro-German collaborators and Italian fascists were killed in revenge for acts during the war.

In June 1946 Italy held a referendum on the monarchy. 12.7 million (54%) voted for a republic and the heavily compromised monarchy was abolished. In the general election held on the same day 35% voted Christian Democrat, 20% Socialist Party and 19% Communist Party. The CP had 2.3 million members in 1947. But it used that strength to help reconstruct Italian capitalism, while seeking bureaucratic niches for itself.

Council workers prepare for strike ballot

By Ed Whitby Unison Children's Services Convenor Newcastle City branch (personal capacity)

Unison members who work in local government have voted by 70% in a consultative ballot to reject the employers' meagre 1% pay offer. As reported in previous issues of *Solidarity*, workers have faced a real-terms pay cut of 20% in the last four years.

A formal strike ballot will take place from 23 May to 23 June. Strikes could begin on 10 July.

The union leadership's plan appears to be for a one-day strike in July, potentially followed by a further two days of strikes in September, where it could be possible to link up with our Health section, whose conference recently voted for action over their even worse pay offer (1% or increments for those not at top of the scale).

We have our local government and national delegate conferences in late June, and activists will attempt to get emergency motions on the agenda for both of these to pressure the leadership to offer a more thought-out and ambitious strategy (see box).

While there is a strong sense of opposition to the 1% pay offer, there isn't a great confidence that our

leadership is in touch with its members and can deliver a strategy to win. Four years of pay freezes and massive job cuts, with very little opposition, has had its impact on morale.

We need to take every opportunity to turn the anger over another proposed pay cut into a confidence that we can win against, not just against pay cuts but also job cuts. In the National Union of Teachers, activists formed the rank-and-file LANAC network to develop a fighting industrial strategy and tackle on the conservatism and caution of the union leaders head-on.

Workers' Liberty members in Unison will be working with other activists to try and replicate that model of rank-and-file organising and develop a network that can offer an alternative strategy and leadership.

We are aiming to get emergency motions proposing alternative strategy onto the floor of both local government conference and the national delegate conference.

A STRATEGY TO WIN ON PAY

To win the current pay dispute, we need a sustained and escalating programme of industrial action which moves beyond one-day strikes.

The current local government pay dispute should begin with a two-day national strike, with the union announcing an ongoing timetable of action beyond this, with the dates for further strikes set and announced in advance, and including:

- Selective action involving groups of workers to maximise impact (e.g., parking inspectors, caretakers, revenue staff, etc.)
- Programmes of action-short-of-strikes in between national strike days, including a work-to-rule and overtime ban
- Attempts to coordinate where possible with teachers' unions
- A commitment to coordinate and distribute hardship payments, levied from both branch and national funds
- Encouraging branches to convene local, cross-union strike committees to inform regional and national SGE strategy

IN FUTURE, FIGHT SOONER!

The current timetable for pay claims means that members wait several months for new pay deals to come into effect, hitting lowest-paid members hardest, and means lower-paid workers are more likely to accept whatever pay deal is offered at an earlier stage.

In future years, Unison should begin its pay claim process earlier, and demand that employers respond to the union's claim at least four months before any pay award is due to come into effect. If employers fail to do this, Unison should commit to launching a dispute to win the pay claim through industrial action.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Build for a yes vote in your branch. If you're not a Unison member, get in touch with local government branches and offer support
- Could you submit a version of either policy above through your Unison branch? Get in touch: unison@workersliberty.org

An alternative for teachers

By an NUT activist

Two out of every five teachers leave the profession within their first five years of teaching - a shocking indictment of what we are up against.

Most teachers cite excessive workload and the oppressive culture at work as the main reason for quitting, though having to work longer and pay more for a worse pension, and having a real term pay cut hardly helps.

With performance pay coming in big-time in September, more rocky times lie ahead. So we need to call a spade a spade.

The Stand Up For Education campaign has failed to galvanise our staffrooms in such a way as to give

teachers the confidence to stay around to fight Gove's attacks.

It might be unfair to put all the blame for this on the current General and Deputy General Secretary, but where leadership was called for, instead we have prevarication and demobilisation.

So the GS and DGS elections provide an opportunity to urgently discuss a serious alternative strategy to the current impasse.

In seeking re-election to GS in her letter to Divisions and Associations, Christine Blower makes the "unprecedented" and "historic declaration of joint working with the NASUWT".

In contrast, the letter from Lewisham NUT seeking nominations for Martin

Powell-Davies for GS points out the lack of a clear plan following 26 March and that "we need a far firmer stand from our union".

Likewise, the letter from Leeds NUT which invites nominations for Patrick Murphy for Deputy General Secretary highlights the lack of momentum in our campaign, "the result was that Michael Gove felt emboldened to attack our national pay arrangements.

"Unprecedented attacks on pensions and our pay required a different approach to NASUWT. The desire to persuade the NASUWT to join our action campaign is wholly understandable. This has, however ... been allowed to override the need to de-

velop a plan of action powerful enough to win.

In four years of attacks we have had one national joint strike with NASUWT. Since the launch of the partnership ... we have had not a single day. By any measure that is a failure."

Both the GS and DGS elections can be seen as a barometer on the campaign. On the one hand, is the non-strategy of limping along with an occasional one-day strike which at best is a "protest" action against the Government.

The other alternative provides an opportunity to give leadership to this campaign, to help revive it, and to really "Stand Up For Education".

- <http://bit.ly/1ixYDhB>

Indefinite strike in Lambeth

By Daniel Cooper

On 1 May UCU members at Lambeth College in South London will begin indefinite strike action to block attacks on their conditions.

These attacks include increased working and contact hours, cuts to annual leave, additional duties for no extra pay, reduced redundancy notice and drastically reduced sick pay.

Management are attempting to impose the new contracts on new workers, current staff who are promoted, and hourly-paid staff. They have also said that these new conditions may be rolled out to cover all staff.

Unison members, part of the Lambeth Council branch, are also balloting, but are not yet ready for action due to foot-dragging by the union's regional machine. There is a

community campaign supporting the workers, which is also fighting against management's plans to sell of most of the college's Brixton site.

In a Further Education sector being devastated by cuts, frequent restructuring and huge workloads and pressure on staff, this is an extremely significant dispute. We need to mobilise solidarity to help the Lambeth workers win.

You can donate to the strike fund. Make cheques payable to J. Eldon and send to Mandy Brown c/o Lambeth Trades Council, Hambrook House, Porden Road, London SW2 5RW. Or transfer to: Halifax, Acc Name: J Eldon. Sort Code: 11-01-07. Acc No: 11242869

Messages of solidarity, requests for speakers etc, to UCU branch secretary Mandy Brown mandybrowncow@yahoo.com

Crown Post Office deal

By Darren Bedford

The Communication Workers' Union (CWU) has settled the long-running dispute involving its members in Crown Post Offices, which has involved several strikes since it began over a year ago.

Workers will receive a

7.3% pay rise over three years, with an immediate 3.9% increase backdated to 1 April 2014, which will be paid as a £2,300 lump sum.

CWU officials described the Crown Post Office pay fight as "one of the most protracted disputes this union has ever been involved in."

SOAS cleaners win

By Ira Berkovic

Cleaning workers at the School of African and Oriental Studies (SOAS) in central London are celebrating a victory after workers voted to accept an offer from their employer, ISS, which significantly improves their terms and conditions.

The deal, which was won after a years-long campaign and three days of strikes, guarantees 27 days' annual leave, six months' full sick pay, and access to an ISS pension scheme with increased employer contributions. These represent

significant material gains for workers who previously had access to statutory rights only.

Worker activist Lenin Escudero said: "We would like to share with you our joy that overwhelms us right now that we have won the first battle towards equality and justice because we have won improved holidays, sick pay, and pensions for all ISS staff."

The workers, who are members of Unison, have vowed to continue their struggle for full equality between outsourced and directly-employed staff.



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683 sentenced to death in Egypt Oppose this slaughter!

By Tom Harris

On Monday 28 April, 683 people were sentenced to death in the city of Minya, Egypt. The same judge then upheld the death sentences of 37 others, with life sentences for 491 more.

Amnesty International say "This is the largest single batch of simultaneous death sentences we've seen in recent years, not just in Egypt but anywhere in the world."

Most of those sentenced are supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood, including the head of the organisation, Mohammed Badie. They were accused of killing two police officers last year, during violence following the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood and President Mohamed Morsi.

Once the army had deposed Morsi, it proceeded to violently suppress the Brotherhood. It is estimated that 900 Brother-

hood protesters were killed by the military in one incident alone. It is during this period of protest and repression that those sentenced to death are alleged to have killed two policemen.

Monday's decision was the second batch of mass sentencing in Minya in two months. Like the first case in March, the trial was grossly unfair. The judge did not review evidence, nor allow the defence to cross-examine witnesses. Hundreds of those sentenced to death were not even allowed to appear in court. Amnesty International say the court "displayed a complete contempt for the most basic principles of a fair trial" and warned that the Egyptian judicial system is becoming "just another part of the authorities' repressive machinery."

The court's ruling has nothing to do with justice and everything to do with an authoritarian military

regime cracking down on its opponents. The mass death sentences used against the Muslim Brotherhood are part of a broader picture of repression which includes the arrest and prosecution of journalists for "espionage", and the banning of the "6 April" movement, a liberal youth movement that played a key role in the revolution of 2011.

BROTHERHOOD Socialists have nothing in common with the politics of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is a right-wing, Islamist movement with a programme that runs counter to the aims of labour movement activists and genuine democrats.

When it held power last year, its authoritarian government implemented an agenda of privatisation and attacks on workers' rights. Their politics also threatened women's rights and

those of Egyptians of minority or no religion.

Indeed, it is in part because of the bitter popular memory of the Brotherhood's time in power, as well as revulsion at their attacks against the Christian minority and alleged involvement in terrorist attacks, that has allowed the government to get away with its brutal treatment of Brotherhood members.

Nevertheless, it is essential for the left to oppose these barbaric death sentences. Egypt's military rulers are attempting to stamp their authority on the country, to kill off what remains of the revolutionary mood that erupted three years ago. The wave of repression has already spread beyond Brotherhood activists to liberal and leftist activists.

As strikes and workers' discontent spreads, the left must demand an end to persecution, executions and political trials.

The rich rake it in

By Colin Foster

On 24 April, Scott London, the former head of the southern California audit practice for KPMG, one of the world's "Big Four" audit companies, was jailed for 14 months.

He had pleaded guilty to leaking information to cronies so that they could profit in share trading. He got bribes in return, including packs of money wrapped in paper bags and handed to him in car-park rendezvous.

The "Big Four" used to be the "Big Five". The other giant audit company, Arthur Andersen, collapsed in 2002 after being found guilty of criminal charges about its auditing of the energy company Enron.

Auditors are supposed to be the special detachment of the capitalist class which restrains and prevents the possible sharp practices of the rest. Evidently they are as shady as the rest.

The next day, the government-owned bank RBS had to abandon plans to pay top bankers bonuses twice their annual wages. They will have to make do with bonuses equal only to their annual wages.

Overall, bankers' bonuses worldwide have increased about 29% this year, compared to last. And the UK has 2,108 investment bankers getting more than one million euros a year. The next highest number in Europe is for France, with just 117.

And now bankers are being paid "allowances" as well as bonuses. As Jamie Robertson of the BBC puts it: "Bankers' bonuses... haven't shrunk in any way. Far from it. But nowadays they are called 'allowances', and as such slip neatly out of reach of... the new rules from Brussels on bonus capping" (24 April).

Meanwhile, wages in Britain still lag behind pay rises, unless you count in bonuses which most workers don't get.

Against Jobbik and anti-semitism

On 27 April, 25,000 people protested against anti-semitism in Hungary. Every year, a march takes place in Budapest to commemorate the Hungarian Jews killed in the Holocaust. This year, a record number joined the march, with many marchers protesting against the rise of anti-semitism in Hungary. Just three weeks earlier, elections had seen the far-right, anti-semitic Jobbik party win 21 percent of the national vote.

600,000 Hungarian Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. Hungarians constituted the largest nationality amongst the victims of the notorious Auschwitz death camp. Sadly, anti-semitism was not merely a German import — the scapegoating and persecution of Jews was practised by the dictatorship of Miklos Horthy, and this tradition of anti-Jewish racism has been exploited by the modern hard-right.

Jobbik blames poverty and economic crisis on "Zionist" control of the economy, and has demanded the publication of a list of Jews in positions of power. Its paramilitary organisation also carries out physical attacks on Roma and other national and ethnic minorities.

The rise of racist scapegoating and anti-semitic conspiracy theory are not just a terrible threat to Jews and oppressed



nationalities — they are also deadly poison for the workers' movement. The demonstration is a hopeful sign of a potential to fight back.

Ideas for Freedom 2014

Their class war and ours

**4-6 July, University of London Union,
Malet Street, London, WC1E 7HY
Book online at www.workersliberty.org/ideas
Facebook: Ideas for Freedom 2014**