

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

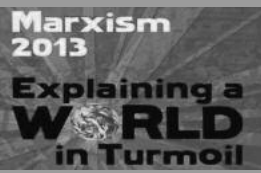
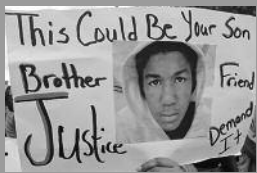


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For a workers' government

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# Yes, unions should rule Labour



**WORKERS NEED UNIONS AND  
A POLITICAL VOICE SEE PAGES 5-8**

## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

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## Jimmy Mubenga was "unlawfully killed"

By Ira Berkovic

The inquest into the death of Angolan deportee Jimmy Mubenga returned a verdict of "unlawful killing" on Tuesday 9 July.

Mubenga was killed in October 2010 when he was handcuffed, belted, and restrained in an unsafe position aboard a British Airways flight by G4S guards. Following his death, the guards colluded with G4S senior manage-

ment to write up and collate their accounts of the event, in which they claimed Mubenga forced himself into the unsafe position, thus causing his own death.

Evidence from passengers, however, attested that Mubenga had been forced, face-first, into the doubled-up position by the G4S guards, who the inquest also exposed had shared racist texts.

**The verdict cannot bring relief or justice for**

**the family Jimmy leaves behind, but it can help us expose the brutality at the heart of Britain's immigration system and immigration controls themselves.**

## Malta plan to "push back" refugees halted after protests

By Alan Thez

A Maltese government plan to send back Somali refugees from Libya has been halted, for now, by protests, just hours before their midnight Air Malta flight to Tripoli's military airport.

Dozens of people who had gathered outside the police HQ at Fontiana (just outside the capital Valletta's city gates) in a "stop the trucks" demo, cheered as they heard that the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) had issued an interim measure to stop the deportations.

Over 1,000 black African refugees fled Libya over two days in a mass escape by sea in dingies and rafts. Many of Libya's country's already-notorious detention centres are now possibly even more dangerous,

taken over by armed militias who have survived the struggle for power between Gaddafi and anti-Gaddafi forces.

Malta rescued 170 of them on Monday 8 and Tuesday 9 July, but the government planned to return all but the "most vulnerable" until the ECHR intervened at the request of a coalition of anti-deportation and civil rights groups.

Malta's Labour prime minister, Joseph Muscat, claimed, "This is not push-back, it is a signal we are not push-overs" — a reference to Silvio Berlusconi's 2003 "Push Back" agreement with Gaddafi to return 200 Somali and Eritrean refugees to Libya. The ECHR recently declared this Italian push back to be a violation of human rights, as asylum seekers were not inter-

viewed and processed properly, and Maltese lawyers have challenged the government on this basis.

This has given the refugees a breathing space, but does not guarantee their safety. The weakness of a purely legalistic approach is exposed by the opposition National Party leader Dr. Simon Busitti hypocritically calling Muscat xenophobic — yet defending his own party's 2003 decision to deport Eritrean refugees back to their dictator-led homeland on the grounds that international law was different then!

**Meanwhile the small "Alternativa Demokratika" party has criticised PM Muscat for spoiling Malta's "good name" in the world's eyes.**

## Bailiffs evict Brixton flats

cadres on 15 July to resist eviction by bailiffs and police from the homes they had lived in for 13 years.

Police raided an apartment block on Rushcroft Road, Brixton, to evict residents who had been squatting the building since 2000.

Lambeth Council plans to create 22 socially-rented homes in the blocks, but also plans to sell off three of the six blocks for luxury housing, to generate what

the council calls "a significant capital receipt".

The council claims it is supporting residents in finding alternative housing, but a local resident said: "A letter a few weeks ago suggesting eviction proceedings would begin from [15 July].

**"No warrants or eviction notices have been given, and many of the residents, with lifelong medical conditions, have had virtually no help with being re-housed."**

## Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (OTJC) has been established to campaign for an independent public enquiry into the policing at Orgreave Coke works during the 1984-85 Miners' Strike.

The campaign focuses particularly on events of 18 June 1984, when 95 miners were arrested and later charged with riot or unlawful assembly; the former charge carrying a possible life sentence at the time. The cases were subsequently dropped, but no apology has ever been offered. Campaigners also believe an independent enquiry could reveal the truth about the policing operation at Orgreave.

Sign the campaign's petition at [bit.ly/otjc-petition](http://bit.ly/otjc-petition), and promote the campaign (including by inviting a speaker) in your union branch/community group.

**For more info, visit the campaign website at [www.otjc.org.uk](http://www.otjc.org.uk)**

## Anti-Fascist Network mobilises

Anti-fascists in Croydon, south London, have called a counter-mobilisation against a planned action by the English Volunteer Force, a right-wing splinter from the EDL, on Saturday 27 July.

The official assembly point, announced by local unions and UAF, is 11.30am at Lunar House, 40 Wellesley Road, CR9 2BY. The South London Anti-Fascist group, which is independent of UAF and affiliated to the national Anti-Fascist Network (AFN), will also have a presence on the day.

**AFN is also calling for a direct-action mobilisation to counter a planned EDL action in Tower Hamlets, East London, on Saturday 7 September. There will be a public meeting to discuss the mobilisation on Tuesday 30 July, 7.30pm, Oxford House, Derbyshire Road, E2 6GH. For more info nearer the time, see [antifascistnetwork.wordpress.com](http://antifascistnetwork.wordpress.com)**

By Jonny West

Residents in Brixton, south London, built barri-

# The verdict on American racism

By Keeanga-Yamahitta Taylor

**Shock, horror and then rage. These were the feelings experienced by tens of thousands of people across the country as they struggled to comprehend the meaning of George Zimmerman's acquittal.**

How could Zimmerman be free? It was he who stalked Trayvon Martin, confronted him, pulled out a gun and ultimately murdered the unarmed teenage boy.

The facts surrounding this case, from its beginning to its shocking end, show the depth of racism in the United States.

It took more than six weeks for George Zimmerman to even be arrested and charged with any crime.

The police immediately and instinctively accepted Zimmerman's version of events — that he acted in self-defence. His arrest only came after weeks of protests that brought thousands of ordinary people into the streets to demand justice.

## JUSTICE

**The Zimmerman trial was supposed to show that the system could work in achieving justice for African Americans.**

Instead, lazy prosecutors — who are used to rail-roading boys like Trayvon — proved not to have the same vigour in prosecuting someone like Zimmerman. Meanwhile, Zimmerman's attorneys methodically employed every racist stereotype about young black men they could conjure up.

There are those who insist the outcome of the Zimmerman trial isn't about race, but the intricacies of the law — about what's permissible in court and other legal mumbo jumbo. But the Trayvon Martin case has proved once again how racism is woven into every aspect of the justice system, including the courtroom.

If anyone doubts the answer to the often-asked hypothetical question — what would the outcome have been if Martin was white and his killer African American — consider the case of Marissa Alexander.

Alexander is an African

American resident of Jacksonville, Florida, who was put on trial in Florida — by the very same state attorney in charge of Zimmerman's prosecution, in fact — for aggravated assault because she fired a warning shot into a wall in order to scare off an abusive husband. Alexander even used the same Florida "Stand Your Ground" defence that allows someone fearing for their life or safety to use a weapon in self-defence.

So what happened? Zimmerman was acquitted of any responsibility in the death of Trayvon Martin. Alexander, who was accused of firing a single warning shot that didn't cause the least harm to anyone, was found guilty by a jury that deliberated just 12 minutes, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Justice in Florida is never colour-blind.

The outcome of the Zimmerman case... [is] about how the demonization of African Americans — and in particular, young African American men — has become so widely accepted and normalised that a teenager can be hunted down and murdered because he is Black, and no one is punished.

The insistence that race is only an issue in US social and political life when race is mentioned isn't just the erroneous belief of the misinformed Florida judge who presided in the Zimmerman case and banned the discussion of race from

the trial.

It is now widely accepted throughout the US that the absence of racial language means the absence of race or racism. This was recently confirmed by the US Supreme Court when it struck down significant sections of the Voting Rights Act — one of the central achievements of the civil rights movement — because, as Chief Justice John Roberts put it, "our country has changed."

## CONCEDED

**While Roberts conceded there were still some instances of racial discrimination, the thrust of the court's ruling was to claim that the country had moved past the era of systematic discrimination.**

This was the claim made by the professional media in 2008 as well, as they celebrated the election of the country's first Black president, Barack Obama. Commentators repeatedly suggested Obama's election meant the US was entering a "post-racial" era.

Obama and a handful of other economically and politically successful Black individuals are often held up as a vindication of American democracy.

In his last run for president, Obama was fond of saying, "My story is only possible here in America — the belief that here in America, if you try, you can make it."

This narrative about the

American Dream and the wonders of US democracy isn't some folksy tale about self-empowerment and the rise of a Black president. It's a legend designed to redirect attention from structural inequality, racism, imperialism, genocide and all of the other ingredients that constitute the real story of America. Obama is held up as a prime example of how it's possible to advance under American democracy — and those who fail to rise and become successful are therefore told it's their own fault.

The Zimmerman trial confirmed this when Trayvon Martin was systematically blamed for his own death. That ugly scapegoating is connected to the way African Americans are regularly blamed for all sorts of things — their unemployment, or

disproportionate levels of poverty, or higher levels of imprisonment, or harassment at the hands of police, or higher levels of foreclosures and evictions, or the mass closures of the schools they send their children to. It's always the individual's fault — and never the system that creates and perpetuates inequality.

But every once in a while, something happens that tears the mask off, revealing the ugly face of US society. The murder of Trayvon Martin and now the acquittal of his murderer confirms again that racism is so tightly packed into the blood and marrow of American democracy that it cannot live without it.

One of the jobs of those who would like to see some measure of justice for Trayvon Martin and all the other victims of discrimination in this society is to bring the word "racism" back into the nation's political lexicon.

Racial discrimination — and the consequence that greater numbers of African Americans endure poverty, unemployment, poorly funded schools, housing insecurity and the rest — is not, in most cases, caused intentionally, as it once was.

Today, inequality is the outcome of centuries of racial oppression and economic exploitation. This is a country built on the enslavement of people with black skin and then, at slavery's end, the imposition of 100 years of legal discrimination against African Americans. So no one can simply decide, some 40 years after the last

explicitly racist law was taken off the books, that racism is no longer an issue in American life.

Next month will mark the 50th anniversary of the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," where Martin Luther King Jr. gave his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

The murder of Trayvon Martin suggests that while many things have changed since that historic march, many things have not. The lives of black men, women and children were cheap in the Jim Crow South, and civil rights activists often looked to officials in Washington, DC, to step in and prosecute cases that local redneck officials wouldn't. Today, we make the same call for the federal government to do what local and state officials in Seminole County, Florida, wouldn't and couldn't.

## FIGHT

The fight for justice for Trayvon Martin doesn't hinge solely on getting a coveted guilty verdict against George Zimmerman.

It must be about vindicating his humanity and dignity — that he did not die in vain. We should support calls for federal prosecution of Zimmerman on the grounds that he violated Martin's civil rights. But we must also heed the words of Martin Luther King in 1963, when he called on the nation to act for a broader understanding of justice:

"We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children.

**"Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood."**

• This article appeared in *Socialist Worker*, the newspaper of the International Socialist Organisation in the USA, on 15 July. It is available to read online at [bit.ly/iso-verdict](http://bit.ly/iso-verdict)

# SWP under pressure

The Left  
By Ed Maltby



**On the edges of the SWP's annual "Marxism" weekend (11-15 July), oppositionists who had remained in the SWP talked with Workers' Liberty activists.**

The opposition had held a hundred-strong caucus shortly before the festival. They decided not to walk until a second lot of charges of sexual harassment, against formerly leading SWP organiser Martin Smith, by another SWP woman, is heard.

They admit that under the SWP's regime they have little chance of replacing the current leadership, but hope that through keeping up the argument they can isolate what some called the "Smith faction", the hardcore circle of Martin Smith's defenders and cronies, and force an opening for a full revision of the SWP's constitution.

Oppositionists said relatively little about what they thought of the SWP's political line on Egypt, or the half-hearted demagoguery of its occasional general strike slogans. They argued that the SWP leadership has failed to "grasp important recent changes in the composition of the working class", and that therefore the recent activity of the SWP has been lacklustre compared to what they saw as a high point in the marches against the invasion of Iraq.

They have in mind the increase in precarious work and low pay, and a tendency by the SWP to equate "the working class" with a few groups of public-service workers among

whom it holds some trade-union positions.

The event looked smaller than in previous years — at some estimates, half the size. Inside the sessions, the weight of opposition forced some opening-up. Alex Callinicos was forced to allow oppositionist and SWP veteran Ian Birchall to speak, and to reply to him, insisting that the Central Committee's suppression of public dissent is necessary to "defend Leninism".

The forced liberalisation extended only so far. In the run-up to "Marxism", AWL members had (successfully) argued with members of the executive of the University of London student union, where some of the SWP's sessions were held, who wanted to cancel the SWP's booking, and explained that we disagreed with ripping down "Marxism" posters.

On the weekend, however, SWPers repeatedly went round tearing down posters advertising the AWL fringe meeting. Some older SWP hacks met AWL activists with threats and abuse, though they were less bullish about that than in previous years.

Student feminists from the University of London Union and UCL Students' Union who came to put up posters protesting about the SWP's handling of the first charges against Martin Smith of sexual harassment and rape had their posters ripped from their hands and torn up by SWP stewards.

**A fringe meeting sponsored by ULU with UCLU women's officer Beth Sutton and two AWL women, NUS exec member Rosie Huzzard and RMT activist Becky Crocker, went ahead, and yielded useful discussions, mostly with non-SWPers attending the weekend.**

**Student feminist posters were ripped down and ripped up.**

## SWP debates "Leninism"

By Cathy Nugent

**In the February edition of *Socialist Review* Alex Callinicos took on the internal and external criticism which followed the SWP's mishandling of a complaint of rape within their organisation ([bit.ly/cal-len](http://bit.ly/cal-len)).**

It was the only such public political statement to be made; a mainly weary defence of the SWP's model of democratic centralism, tying it to Lenin's political legacy. The SWP's organisational regime was, Callinicos claimed, fully democratic and still relevant. We published a critique of Callinicos's piece at the time ([bit.ly/cal-reply](http://bit.ly/cal-reply)).

Members of the SWP's new internal opposition ([revolutionarysocialism.tumblr.com](http://revolutionarysocialism.tumblr.com)) have since responded to Callinicos. In *Socialist Review* Ian Birchall argued definitions of Leninism could not be taken for granted ([bit.ly/bir-lenin](http://bit.ly/bir-lenin)). And Pat Stack has critically discussed the evolution of the SWP's democratic centralism ([bit.ly/stack-d-c](http://bit.ly/stack-d-c)). Callinicos replied to Birchall defending Central Committee domination of the SWP ([bit.ly/cal-party](http://bit.ly/cal-party)). There have been other related articles on the opposition blog.

It has all been too polite — to my reading a debate where there are obscure subtexts and unexpressed criticisms. That makes the debate difficult to unpick. Nonetheless it is interesting and important.

Birchall wants the SWP to be more aware of the Stalinist distortions of Lenin's legacy. Other myths (some Stalinist in origin, some created by right wing historians) have been usefully corrected by Lars Lih (in *Lenin Rediscovered* and elsewhere). When it comes to democratic centralism Lenin was no great innovator. It was something the whole of Russian Social Democracy, including the Mensheviks, took for granted.

But for Birchall, "It is unlikely that any of the models of party organisation adopted by the Bolsheviks would fit the very different needs of the world today." Unfortunately Birchall does what he accuses Callinicos of doing — fails to explain himself. Perhaps there is some subtext here about the nature of the working-class in the 21st century? Watch this space, I guess...

Birchall's particular criticism of the SWP's internal regime

is that it relies too much on unthinking discipline. The Central Committee no longer tries to win political arguments — it should restore a respectful attitude to the views of the members. We might argue that it is highly doubtful that the SWP leadership has ever, or will ever, respect its members!

In his reply, Callinicos insists that he too has read Lars Lih (and other books which give a balanced picture of Lenin, such as Neil Harding's *Lenin's Political Thought*). Okay, he's read the books but what has he learnt?

Apparently that he is right! That centralism is necessary, because it enables the party to "move quickly". He invokes (in a not overly respectful way) Cliff's ghost on this point.

It is true, at times of heightened class struggle a revolutionary group may have to move quickly and time-limit debate on particular actions. But Callinicos is making a demagogic point. The SWP Central Committee has a standing licence to *always* "move quickly", to make as many twists and turns that it likes, whenever it likes, without meaningful reference to any wider constituency in the SWP.

### STACK

**Pat Stack discusses the origins of the current regime in the early 70s up to 1975, when a series of factions were formed and expelled.**

Stack's argument is that the post-1975 regime (rule by a Central Committee directly elected by the SWP conference but under a "winner takes all" slate system, and with factions allowed for only three-month pre-conference periods) was necessary to stop political "mischief making", but is no longer appropriate. Stack favourably reviews the functioning of the SWP in the 1970s but fails to describe its overall context — Cliff had made a turn to "party building" in reaction to and partially modelled on the Healyites. The expulsions were ultimately high-handed and instrumental to Cliff's own political vision.

Stack believes that the "tight" regime helped the SWP stay together through the long years of the downturn; a cadre was built as it fed off the political experience of the leadership. An unfortunate downside was a habitual lack of democratic interplay between members and leadership. It is time to correct that, Stack says.

This is progress but only up to a point. The overall narrative of the opposition is faulty. They seem to be saying that the overall level of democratic liveliness in a democratic centralist organisation should vary according to conditions. The idea comes from Cliff, who sharply contrasts the Lenin of 1902 and *What is to Be Done* with the Lenin of 1905 when the Bolshevik faction was "opened up" to new members, working-class members and local initiative.

But this is not the lesson of Lenin's political career. Democratic liveliness (i.e. political debate) was always a *given* for Lenin and just about everyone else in Russian Social Democracy (even, with big qualifications, under the pressures which followed the 1917 revolution).

In 1905 Lenin (and, as Lih argues, most of the Bolsheviks) were in favour of "opening up" the faction because it was *possible* to do that under the more relaxed conditions following the 1905 revolution. It was not a lesson Lenin learned about the working-class or political organisation from the 1905 revolution. To repeat, full political debate was always a given for Lenin and it should be for us.

Stack's commitment (and apparently Birchall's too) to the notion that permanent (or longer than three month long) factions are necessarily irksome is equally nothing to do with the Marxist organisation of Lenin's time. The presence of factions, groupings and tendencies *could* be counter-productive to rational discussion but not *necessarily* so. In the AWL we give factions full freedom to organise, the better to get serious, clear and coherent debate.

What no one in the SWP quite yet gets is that for revolutionary Marxists organisational forms are there to *service* political clarity and the constant evaluation of political strategy. Much more about that is explained on page 9 of this paper.

It is noticeable that the opposition has so far had very little to say about the disastrous political zig zags of the SWP, the attempts to re-create the "glory years" of the Anti-Nazi League with one politically-debased front organisation after another.

**Maybe that will come out in time, maybe these re-assessments of Leninism point to a future "liberalisation" of the SWP's regime. Or maybe (as the report above hints) there will be little left of the SWP to "liberalise" in a few months' time.**

# Keep Labour's union link, and democratise it!

**On 9 July Labour leader Ed Miliband proposed that the link between unions and the Labour Party be reorganised so that individual union members must "opt in" to Labour affiliation.**

"Opting-in" seems speciously democratic. But really it enlists pressures from the billionaire press, and all the built-in biases of capitalist society, against collective working-class intervention in politics; and immediately it threatens to break up unions' political action.

Despite what Ed Miliband and the press say, no individual is "automatically" affiliated to Labour now. Unions decide affiliation to Labour, or not, in the same way as all their other affiliations, by conference debates. Every individual trade unionist can opt of the collective decision by opting not to pay in to the political fund.

There are collective union decisions, and collective union representation in the Labour Party.

The Labour Party has always been different from parties which only have individual members. In fact, before 1918 Labour had no individual members at all. You could be part of the Labour Party only by being a member of an organisation affiliated to Labour.

The purpose of the Labour Party's founders was to muster the collective resources of the working class, a class which lacks the individuals who can sustain a big party through individual donations, so as to create a collective working-class counterweight in politics to the parties funded and run by the rich.

For the Labour Party to work properly for that purpose, the working-class organisations which underpin it must be democratic, and they must democratically control the politicians. The movement has never been that democratic. Since Blair it falls short more than ever.

The answer is to fight to democratise the organisations and the link — to fight, if necessary, through to an open break with the middle-class Labour politicians who refuse to ac-

**Early Labour candidates stood on the principle of independent political representation for working-class interests. That principle needs to be revived.**

cept accountability to the working class, and to the creation of a "real" party of labour by way of a fight within the real labour movement, not by the hiving-off and self-proclamation of a small minority.

That fight requires the self-organisation of revolutionary socialists into a coherent collective which argues systemati-

cally within the labour movement for democracy and for class-struggle policies, and which finds ways to get its ideas across even when Labour officials try to suppress them. But that collective operates within the labour movement, to transform it, not as a group building "its own" little labour movement alongside the one produced by history so far.

Collective union decisions to affiliate to Labour mean that union members who are apathetic or unsure contribute, by default, a tad to the collective effort. Is that undemocratic? No: in a class society, democracy is essentially measured by whether the openings are broader or narrower for the exploited class, those starved of income and leisure and trained to "know their place", to intervene.

Suppose every individual's union membership lapsed next year unless, against a headwind of anti-union media agitation, she or he personally signed a form to "opt in" to continuing. Everyone who failed to sign, from inertia, confusion, unshureness, whatever, would be counted "out". Union membership would plummet. Democracy would wither.

Suppose that when unions affiliate to other bodies — the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, or War on Want, or No Sweat, or whatever — they could pay money over only as and when individuals had signed forms for part of their dues to go to that specific campaign. Campaigns which require union money to make headway would wither. Individual activism would shrivel, not expand.

Before 1909, it was simply a collective decision by unions whether to affiliate to the Labour Party. If the union decided, then it paid to the Labour Party out of collective funds and gained collective representation within the Labour Party. That's all.

A 1909 court ruling, the Osborne Judgement, made all union donations to Labour illegal. The Liberal government of the day needed Labour support in parliament, so passed a law in 1913 to make union political funds legal as long as individuals could opt out.

In 1927 the Tories passed a law to make payments to all union political funds (Labour or not) illegal unless individuals opted in. In 1946 the Labour government returned the law to "opt-out".

## Miliband undermines the link

**In 1927 the Tories introduced a law that workers could pay into union political funds only if they individually "opted in", instead of failing to "opt out".**

Labour Party affiliated membership fell from 3.2 million in 1927 to 2.0 million in 1928. That was a big fall, but limited because the labour movement had hundreds of thousands of activists formed in the battles of the 1920s, was responding to an obviously vindictive Tory measure, and had a Labour Party more union-friendly and less discredited than today.

Since 1993 Unison members can opt to pay into Labour Party affiliation or into a non-Labour political fund. 31% are Labour levy-payers.

The sideswipe from that Unison system is that Unison's political decisions are supposed to be taken not by the regular union conferences and structures, but by a parallel and inaccessible system of APF committees and conferences. That insulates the top officials from democratic pressure on political questions.

"Opting-in" now is likely to produce a percentage of trade unionists affiliated to the Labour Party more like the 7.5% who cast non-spoiled

ballots in Labour's 2010 leadership vote.

Unison's 31% is unlikely to be reached because it depends on members who came from Nupe and Cohse into the merger which created Unison and were by default enlisted as "opting-in" if they didn't object (while those who came from Nalگو were by default "opted out"). Many new Unison members tick neither "in" nor "out" on their form, and are then allocated by Unison offices in line with existing proportions.

Miliband seems to propose a system where those who tick neither "in" nor "out" are "out".

Unite got an 87% majority on a 19% turnout to keep its political fund in a ballot in May 2013. Unions got bigger turnouts, more like 50%, in the political fund ballots forced on them by the Tories in 1984-6.

More than 7.5% could be got "in" now if union leaders campaigned properly, mobilising members in an effort to win working-class policies. But the actual leaders are deficient in both will and capacity to do that.

The immediate effect of "opt-in" might be to reduce the flow of union money to the Labour Party which is affiliation fees, but increase the flow of union money which is grace-and-favour donations decided by union leaders.

**But that change, in turn, would generate very heavy pressure to cut the union share of the vote at Labour Party conference, and probably also pressure to end the system of union branch delegates to Constituency Labour Party committees.**

# The Blairite plot against the

## The movement should decide

By Martin Thomas

**Aside from “opting-in”, on 9 July Ed Miliband proposed:**

“A new code of conduct for those seeking parliamentary selection”.

No information on what it will say. Nothing to do with even what’s alleged against Unite in Falkirk: the Unite-backed candidate Karie Murphy has been suspended from the Labour Party, on what

charges we don’t know, but presumably under current rules.

“New spending limits for Parliamentary selections to include for the first time all spending by outside organisations”.

And spending by the Tory press, which seems to have called the tune on the Falkirk selection?

“The Labour Party will establish standard constituency agreements with each trade union so that nobody can allege that individuals are being put under pressure at local level”.

This reads like a move against what Unison did before the 2010 general election. It cancelled all its “Constituency Development Plan” contributions to CLPs, and said it would restore them only case by case where candidates and constituencies backed key Unison policies.

In some regions the old contributions were restored in a fairly perfunctory way, but in some, for example the East Midlands, the policy was carried out properly. It is precisely the job of the local labour movement to “put pressure at local level” on candidates, MPs, and councillors!

“For the next London Mayoral election Labour will have a primary for our candidate selection. Any Londoner should be eligible to vote and all they will need to do is to register as a supporter of the Labour Party at any time up to the ballot”, and Labour leaders could “pioneer this idea elsewhere too”.

The problem alleged in Falkirk was of people getting rights in the Labour Party without making any real commitment to it. So Miliband proposes to make that problem general! Any unscrupulous candidate could just get a bunch of their friends who had no sympathy with or commitment to the Labour Party signed up as supporters, and win a “Labour” selection that way.

The “registered supporters” scheme has been in operation for a while, and has so far flopped completely.

“New limits on outside earnings” for MPs.

Miliband occasionally referred to his plans as “proposals”, but the tone of his speech was simply to “announce” them. He is so embedded in top-down, media-facing ways of doing politics that he just can’t see that such a coup, or attempted coup, “from above”, is the very opposite of democracy.

**Unions and CLPs should remind Miliband that democracy means the majority, not just a single leader, or the single leader’s backroom boys and girls, deciding.**

By Jon Lansman

**Let’s be clear — the shift from opt-out to opt-in is what the Tories have long wanted, and what [Labour’s right-wing faction] Progress have campaigned for inside the party. The Tories wanted it because it will damage the party’s finances, and weaken the party.**

And Progress want it because they want to eliminate union influence on the party, and they have no interest in challenging class-based inequalities of wealth and power. Whatever took place in Falkirk doesn’t begin to justify it.

The contents of the secret report into what happened in Falkirk have now been revealed. According to Seumas Milne:

“The most significant allegations are that a handful of members were signed up without their knowledge (by family members), and that ‘there are discrepancies in the signatures’ of four others (suggesting some may have been forged)”.

It isn’t right to sign up family members to a political party without their knowledge but it undoubtedly happens in every winnable constituency in the country in every party. It clearly isn’t what Unite intended, and you can’t expect Unite’s leaders to have been aware that it happened.

Nor is it right to “forge” signatures but, if the person concerned wanted and intended to join the party, it isn’t “serious wrongdoing”. This is the action of one or two individuals rather than Unite and it certainly isn’t something to waste police time over.

So we can now see why Unite centrally had no idea what they had done wrong. And what was done wrong certainly doesn’t justify the biggest-ever shake up of the party-union

**The Labour leadership is moving against the unions and their right to**

relationship by a Labour leader.

No mention was made about the actions of the Progress-backed contender to be Labour’s candidate in Falkirk, Greg Poynton, who in June 2012 according to Michael Crick on C4 News: “recruited 11 new members and submitted a cheque

## Blairites: politics and money

By Gerry Bates

**The Tories and the Labour right decry Labour getting money from the unions, though the process is highly visible and open to regulation or change by union conferences.**

The Tories get their money more murkily, from companies and the rich. So does Labour’s right.

Labour’s hard-Blairite faction Progress has been given about £2 million by Lord David Sainsbury, and hundreds of thousands by other plutocrats. Sainsbury continues to fund Progress at the rate of £260,000 a year. He used to give money to the Labour Party, but stopped when Ed Miliband became Labour leader.

The Blairites look to the rich to fund politics... and they look to politics to make them rich.

Since being prime minister, Tony Blair has become a multi-millionaire. He is not paid for his post as representative of the “Quartet” (USA, UN, EU, Russia) in the Middle East. However, while achieving nothing in that post for peace in Israel-Palestine, he has used it to get lucrative contacts and contracts in the Middle East.

His chief activity in Palestine has been successful lobbying on behalf of a Palestinian mobile phone company to get the Israeli government to allot it some wavelengths (previously reserved by another Palestinian mobile phone company, which had bribed the Israeli government to keep its monopoly).

Blair has also won close links with the monarchy in Qatar, and contracts:

to provide advice and publicity to the monarchy in Kuwait.

to advise the Abu Dhabi monarchy’s investment fund.

Outside the Middle East, Blair’s money-making includes contracts:

to puff the government of Kazakhstan and advise it on “good governance”.

to advise Mongolia’s leaders on “good governance”.

to advise the Chinese government’s foreign-investments fund,

to advise a South Korean oil firm.

to advise J P Morgan and Zurich Insurance (who paid him £630,000 for one hour’s work on one deal).

to advise the Colombian government.

to advise the state government of Sao Paulo.

There are probably more. Blair’s empire is opaque. Its office (in a posh building in Mayfair, London) employs 200 staff, and he plans to expand that to 500.

Blair is only the most successful of the Blairites at converting money into politics and politics into money. Patricia Hewitt, soon after being health minister (2005-7), cashed in with a job as a “consultant” for Alliance Boots Holdings Limited. She is also an adviser for the private-equity firm Cinven, a director of BT and of Eurotunnel, and chair of the UK India Business Council.

John Hutton moved straight from being defence minister to a well-paid job for a US nuclear power company, Hyperion.

**He then did the Tories’ dirty work, designing the public sector pension cuts, and now lists the following paid jobs: adviser, Eversheds law firm; chair, Nuclear Industries Association; adviser, Bechtel Corporation; chair, MyCSP Ltd; advisory director, Dimensional Fund Advisors; adviser, PricewaterhouseCoopers.**



# the unions

## A fighter for the Third Camp in Ireland

### Our Movement By Micheál MacEoin



**Matt Merrigan (1921-2000) was a socialist, trade unionist and one of very few Third Camp Trotskyists in Ireland.**

Born into poverty in Dolphin's Barn, Dublin, Merrigan left school at 13 and worked for twenty years at the Rowntree-Mackintosh chocolate factory. He became a shop steward with the Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union (ATGWU), rising to be its national secretary in 1960, a post he held until 1986.

Merrigan's first contact with the Trotskyist movement came in 1942, when he met Jim McClean and Bob Armstrong, members of the Revolutionary Communist Party [the British Trotskyist group], who were operating in Belfast. Armstrong was a former Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) member and Spanish Civil War veteran who had witnessed first-hand the Stalinist betrayal of the Spanish working-class.

Merrigan, along with Johnny Byrne, organised a small complementary group in Dublin. Though both the Belfast and Dublin groups were small, they attracted the attention of Special Branch, and the clergy, who visited the houses of the younger members to scare them off involvement.

In early 1944, both groups came together to form an Irish group, the Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP), with about 20 members. Upon going public, existing members of the Labour Party resigned their membership, though Merrigan had reservations about the efficacy of open work with such small forces.

#### WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

**The RSP published a weekly newspaper, the *Workers' Republic*, though it ran out of money after six issues, and the group financed its activities through the sale of literature from the British and US sections.**

It maintained contact with the British Trotskyists through meetings in Belfast because travel to wartime England was difficult. As Merrigan later recalled, the most heated debate among Trotskyists was over Shachtman's position that the USSR was "bureaucratic collectivism" and that the bureaucracy represented a new exploiting class. Armstrong and Merrigan defended the Shachtmanites in the debates in the Fourth International. In a discussion article, "In Defence of Revisionism" (1947), the pair called for the British section to circulate the documents of Shachtman's Workers Party to facilitate a proper discussion, citing the one-sidedness of the SWP's collection *In Defence of Marxism* and James P. Cannon's *The Struggle for the Proletarian Party*.

In the article, the RSP members denied that acceptance of Shachtman's theory led towards abandoning Marxism. Their political conclusions were focused on independent working-class politics: "Today in the struggle waged between the major powers, wars of conquest, followed by the suppression of productive forces, are unavoidable. The victory of either Stalinist imperialism or finance-capital imperialism in a future war would lead to industrial suppression and political enslavement. Should the proletariat be too weak to prevent the outbreak of a third world war then the task of the workers on both sides of the military frontiers will be the revolutionary overthrow of their own immediate oppressors."

In Ireland at the end of the 40s the RSP argued to win the

Irish labour movement, North and South, to a democratic programme for a united, secular, and republican Ireland, with a "wide degree of Protestant autonomy in Northern Ireland", and linking the national question to the overthrow of capitalism.

Around this time that Armstrong returned to Britain, becoming active in the anti-partition movement. The British RCP, floundering in its response to the 1945 Labour Government, fell apart, and Merrigan recalled the mood: "The entrenchment of Stalinism throughout Eastern and Central Europe on the bayonets of the Red Army and the development and dropping of the atom bomb on Japan created a mood of despair, as the long political night fell on what was to have been a brave new world!"

In the 1950s, Merrigan joined Labour and remained a persistent left-wing critic of its leadership. He opposed the formation of the Fine Gael-Labour government in 1973, and was expelled from the party in 1977. Along with another left-wing critic and former Minister of Health, Noel Browne, Merrigan formed the short-lived Socialist Labour Party, which allowed factions including the Socialist Workers' Movement (now the Irish SWP), the Irish Workers' Group and People's Democracy.

Throughout the so-called "Border Campaign" (1956-62), Merrigan had no truck for the physical force republicanism of the IRA, whose leadership was "petty bourgeois and fringed with fascists", and the movement "a conspiratorial cloak and dagger sect [whose] basic approach to national unity is emotional and hysterical." (*Labor Action*, 19 September 1955).

He recognised, however, that "labour unity is sorely hampered by the national question" and denounced the Irish Labour Party and the Irish TUC for failing to adopt a principled position on the issue.

In these years Merrigan's influence was mostly felt as a trade unionist, and as President of the Irish Congress of Trades Union (ICTU) from 1986. He was often opposed to the social partnership agenda of many other union leaders, insisting that: "Economic and social consensus is not possible in a society riven by property and class differences."

**When Merrigan died in June 2000 he was still a principled socialist and a fighter for our class.**

• The "Our Movement" columns now have a dedicated page on the AWL website, and their own Facebook page. See [facebook.com/ourmovementcolumn](http://facebook.com/ourmovementcolumn) and [workersliberty.org/history/our-movement](http://workersliberty.org/history/our-movement)

### Workers' Liberty Summer Camp



**8-11 August, Height Gate Farm, West Yorkshire**

**Socialism, sun (hopefully), drinking, etc. in beautiful countryside setting. For more info, see [bit.ly/awl-camp](http://bit.ly/awl-camp) or ring 07775 763 750.**

**Places cost £25 (waged) and £15 (unwaged), which includes accommodation, food, and drink. (Prices will come down depending on numbers attending.)**

#### have a political voice. Union must stand up for themselves!

for £130 to pay for their subscriptions. The report does not criticise or condemn Mr Poynton for this, simply because nobody complained about his activity. And Mr Poynton was not contacted by the inquiry to respond... Mr Poynton is married to the MP Gemma Doyle, and Ms Doyle is a member of Jim Murphy's defence team".

This is not good enough. The party has a responsibility to act fairly and transparently in the eyes of its members, not merely quickly and decisively in order to appease a hostile media.

The changes have been announced as if they were a decision. "Here are the first, concrete steps I am taking", said Ed in his email to party members about the plans, which (according to the BBC's Nick Robinson) were made with the threat of disaffiliating unions who do not comply. A decision at conference in September, no doubt, on a take it or leave it basis, just like Refounding Labour, without real discussion on any of the detail. And the devil is in the detail.

Ed says: "I want a mass membership party not of 200,000 but of many more". In his speech he says "with this change I invite you to be at the centre of what this Party does, day in day out, at local level." So does that mean with equal rights and status as individual members, able to participate in selections and internal elections as do individual members?

Would these members continue to be represented at a regional and national level through their unions? Would Len McCluskey, Paul Kenny and other general secretaries continue to lead delegations at Labour's conference in an affiliates section that still held 50% of the votes? Would the affiliated sections of Labour's executive and national policy forum remain as at present?

The numbers of affiliated members will plummet. The party will lose much of its revenue.

Unfortunately, Labour's stock is not very high with union members. That is a large part of Labour's problem. It became too distant from its core voters under New Labour, and in spite of Ed Miliband's commitment to change, not enough has been done to reconnect since.

**That is why Unite and other unions have found it so difficult to recruit to Labour. Unite's political strategy was to recruit 5,000 members in a year and it has actually managed a tiny fraction of that, Falkirk notwithstanding.**

• Abridged from posts on [leftfutures.org](http://leftfutures.org)

# Labour representation, not “payment-by-results”

By Daniel Randall

**In a letter to the *Evening Standard* on Tuesday 9 July, Jerry Hicks, Len McCluskey’s challenger in the 2013 Unite general secretary election, set out his view for how trade unions should seek political representation.**

He believes Unite should give money to the Labour Party on a “payment on results” basis, effectively giving them financial rewards for delivering political favours in office. Hicks said this approach would “make it easier for Ed Miliband”, presumably by ending the permanent, structural (and financial) link between unions and the party. Hicks must have his tongue in his cheek when he makes this remark, but it’s very near the truth.

Hicks’s view is the most starkly-posed version of what has become a consensus amongst much of the labour-movement left about how unions should relate to organised politics. That is, rather than having a fixed, permanent relationship with a political wing, directly accountable to and controlled by unions and their members, unions should incidentally line up with (that is, bankroll) external political initiatives that, it is hoped, will be more union-friendly if elected. I wrote about and critiqued this approach in a letter in January (“Fight for real workers’ representation”, *Solidarity* 231, 25 January 2012).

Advocates of such an approach are using the Falkirk incident to boost their case. In a response to Ed Miliband’s speech (in which the Labour leader blustered about reforming the Labour-union link but proposed very little in concrete terms), RMT general secretary Bob Crow claims his union has “increased [its] political influence” since its expulsion from Labour in 2004, as it has “the freedom to back candidates and parties who demonstrate clear support for this trade union and its policies.” He advocates other unions break their links with Labour.

## POLITICAL INFLUENCE

**But what does this “increased political influence” look like? In electoral terms, the candidates RMT has backed have won almost universally tiny votes.**

In political terms, the TUSC initiative it backs (despite increasing opposition — one third of delegates at its 2013 AGM voted against continued support for TUSC) is bland, lowest-common-denominator anti-cuts populism, and the No2EU slate it ran in the 2009 European election (and plans to resurround for 2014) was reactionary and quasi-nationalist.

The Fire Brigades Union, the only union to have disaffiliated from Labour, rather than to have been expelled as the RMT was, did next to nothing politically (aside from passively backing some desultory TUSC efforts) until the London Assembly elections in 2012 when it ploughed its resources into backing... Labour, so Andrew Dismore could unseat the arch-Tory head of the Fire Authority, Brian Coleman.

The “break the link now” narrative relies on the entirely false idea that the affiliated unions have spent the years since the Blairite takeover of Labour being oppositional and dissenting, and finding themselves blocked, with the latest outrage representing some kind of final straw. The opposite is the case. In 2007, for example, when a series of rule changes disenfranchised CLPs and unions (essentially abolishing party conference), GMB, CWU, T&G, and Amicus all voted for the changes, despite bluster in advance that they would fight them. The 2007 changes have since been reversed, but the episode tells the real story of the unions’ relationship to the Blairite revolution in Labour — oppositional bluster, followed by complete acquiescence.

None of those unions have had substantial changes of leadership since 2007. The people who then ran the T&G now run Unite. What we have, then, is a trade union movement that is not prepared to fight Blairism. Making immediate disaffiliation the point-of-departure demand does precisely nothing to change that. In fact, it makes a perverse implicit excuse for the bureaucracy by pretending their acquiescence is *caused* by the link to the Labour.

What should the ultimate aspiration here be? Can the Labour Party be “reclaimed”? No, and not only because it was never meaningfully “ours” in the first place. The link between the trade unions and the Labour Party (greatly hollowed-out and controlled by a party-within-a-party cadre of bourgeois political organisers) does need subverting, disrupting, and,

ultimately, “breaking”. But it matters a great deal *how* that break is made. A campaign that makes “break the link now” its starting point would, in current conditions, be objectively passive. It would mean the far left reacting to a Labour leadership determined to drive the unions out of official, and potentially governmental, politics by saying “sure, let us help you!” And it would mirror back and entrench the current levels of consciousness and confidence that

sees many trade unionists rightly despise the Labour Party for all it did in government, and for all it’s failed to do in opposition, but extend that hatred into an understandable but ultimately incapacitating cynicism about politics as a whole.

What would an active campaign for union self-assertion within the Labour Party, and against its leadership, look like? There is a whole raft of things we should fight for:

- More active, public political campaigns — involving stalls, demonstrations, rallies, and other direct action — for union policies. Unions, including non-affiliated unions, should demand that these campaigns are backed and taken up by the Labour Party. Even minimally visible public political campaigns which demanded support from Labour would apply pressure to the Labour Party.
- Opposing local government cuts. Advocating Labour councils defy and mobilise against central government instructions to make cuts.
- Committing to support, including against imposition of government commissioners or punitive action by the national Labour Party, Labour councils which defy cuts; and to support, including against disciplinary procedures and expulsion, individual Labour councillors who vote against cuts budgets.
- Withdrawing funds and other support from MPs and councillors who vote for cuts.
- Nominating and voting for candidates committed to defy cuts in council selections, and for candidates committed to left-wing pro-union policies in parliamentary selections.
- Initiating de-selection procedures against councillors and MPs who vote for cuts.
- Mandating union representatives on Labour Party committees to fight and vote for union policies, and recalling them if they don’t.
- Reconstituting unions’ parliamentary groups so as to only include only labour-movement MPs who commit to fight for basic working-class policies.
- Putting rule changes, policy resolutions, and emergency motions to Labour Party conference, and actively supporting democratic improvement.
- Organising union members who are also Labour Party members into a network, and encouraging them and giving them resources to campaign for union policies in the Labour Party and to report back.
- Affiliating to the Labour Representation Committee and taking an active part in it. Working with other LRC-affiliated unions to form a pro-LRC union caucus which operates in a cohesive way at, for example, Labour Party conference.

A rupture of the Labour-union link following such a campaign would present radically better prospects for any new initiative than disaffiliation in current conditions of passivity and retreat. None of the proposals above are made impossible by objective structural issues or rules within the Labour Party. The missing ingredient is political will.

It is a fairly significant missing ingredient. Unions unprepared to vote against the 2007 rule changes are unlikely to suddenly to launch a militant campaign for independent labour representation. Many unions are as thoroughly controlled by a professional bureaucracy of effectively-bourgeois politicians as the Labour Party is. In Unison, for example, democratic oversight and control of its relationship to Labour

is hived off into the “Labour Link”, an esoteric corner of the union’s structure that even the few members that are inclined to do so find it difficult to engage with.

A fight for a transformation of the way our unions “do” politics — and, in the first place, how they relate to the leadership of our existing political wing, the Labour Party — cannot take place in the abstract, but must be part of a wider struggle to transform our unions; not a structural tinkering, but a top-to-bottom transformation.

This is unlikely, impractical, unfeasible? The union bureaucracies will block it? Disaffiliation would be easier to win over a shorter timeframe? This is Luxemburg and Bukharin’s argument about the national question applied to domestic politics. They contended that it was pointless to fight for national self-determination for small nations because larger imperialist powers would inevitably crush them.

Immediate-disaffiliationists argue that advocacy of union self-assertion now is pointless because the union leaders will block it and, if they don’t, the Labour leaders will stamp on it. But if these contentions are true, almost *nothing* is achievable. It is not even the case that disaffiliation would be “easier” to win in current conditions. There is no evidence from any of the recent conferences of any of the larger affiliated unions that this is so. And if it were, that wouldn’t make it the right policy to pursue.

The FBU’s disaffiliation was “won” on a largely anti-political basis (understandable, given their bitter experience in the 2002 pay dispute against a Labour government), and, as aforementioned, they have done little politically since that time.

A new working-class party cannot be conjured out of thin air, or simply declared. The existing labour movement, warts-and-bureaucracy-and-inadequate-political-wing-and-all is the only one we’ve got. Attempts to find shortcuts around the very probably long and difficult work of revolutionising it (which necessarily involve circumventing the 200 years of accumulated struggle, resource, memory, and experience — positive and negative — that it represents) are vastly *more* impractical and unfeasible. There is no way around, only through.

## NEW “LEFT” PARTY?

**The internet agitation for a “new party of the left”, for which (once it is declared) union support might then be sought (along with support from various other elements — students, pensioners, and so on) is not an alternative.**

“The left”, as an amorphous body of social opinion abstracted from class and class struggle, is not a helpful focus. The logic perversely mirrors that of the Blairites, who want the unions to be one stakeholder, or “interest group”, amongst many, with no privileged degree of control or accountability over the political Labour Party. As organic, organisational expressions of class relations and class conflict, the trade unions (even in their passive, class-collaborationist, and bureaucratically-controlled current forms) are more than an “interest group” — they are the necessary point of departure.

Immediate-disaffiliationism and new-partyism do not see socialists as a political tendency within the broad labour movement, starting from its existing levels of consciousness and organisation but seeking to educate, develop, and shape its ideas — but rather as external forces attempting to instrumentally capture working-class support for this or that sectarian initiative.

The 1900 Labour Representation Committee and the 1906 Labour Party were not attempts to create “parties of the left”, but to create a political extension of the industrial labour movement to give voice to working-class interests in the political sphere.

The Hicks policy, and the variants of it held across the left, would aid the Blairite mission of winding the clock back 113 years and reducing organised labour to, at best, an “interest group” and, at worst, a cash cow for external electoral adventures. Instead, revolutionary socialists and other radicals in the labour movement should advocate a policy that makes union self-assertion — within and without Labour Party structures — its starting point, not making a fetish of maintaining the Labour link, in its current form, for all time, but neither making a fetish of immediately breaking it.

**Our job is not to “reclaim Labour”, our job is to make our movement fight — using any and all channels available.**



# What a “party” must be

By Sean Matgamna

**The organisational nature of a Marxist “revolutionary party” has to be shaped to what the Marxist party exists to do in the outside world. What, fundamentally, irreplaceably, does it do?**

In the course of its life a Marxist party does many things, from organising strikes, to street-fighting with fascists and racists, to organising insurrections. But fundamentally, through all the phases and varieties of its activity, it works to educate and enlighten the working class so that it can see capitalist class society as a whole; the place of capitalism in history as one exploitative class society in a succession of them; the place of the working class in capitalist society; the possibility and urgent necessity for the working class to overthrow capitalism and begin to build a socialist society.

Plekhanov, the well-named “Father of Russian Marxism” and first teacher of Lenin, explained the idea of Marxist revolutionary activity which would guide the Bolsheviks in their work of preparing the working class to make the October Revolution in 1917:

“Standing resolutely on the side of the proletariat, the new Socialists do everything in their power to facilitate and hasten its victory. But what exactly can they do in this case?”

*“A necessary condition for the victory of the proletariat is its recognition of its own position, its relations with its exploiters, its historic role and its socio-political tasks.*

*“For this reason the new Socialists consider it their principal, perhaps even their only, duty to promote the growth of this consciousness among the proletariat, which for short they call its class consciousness.*

*“The whole success of the socialist movement is measured for them in terms of the growth in the class consciousness of the proletariat. Everything that helps this growth they see as useful to their cause: everything that slows it down as harmful.*

## UNINTERESTING

**“Anything that has no effect one way or the other is of no consequence for them, it is politically uninteresting...”**

The *Communist Manifesto* explained:

*“The Communists... have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletariat as a whole...”*

*“The Communists are distinguished from the other working-class parties by this only: 1. In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality. 2. In the various stages of development which the struggle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole”.*

Living in the depths of Stalinist corruption, Trotsky summed up the rules that must govern a serious Marxist party in its internal life and in its relation to the working class:

*“To face reality squarely; not to seek the line of least resistance; to call things by their right names; to speak the truth to the masses, no matter how bitter it may be; not to fear obstacles; to be true in little things as in big ones; to base one’s program on the logic of the class struggle; to be bold when the hour for action arrives...”*

To play this role in the working class the members of the Marxist organisation must educate themselves. This is not only a matter of mastering key old texts. It is an ongoing process. The Marxists don’t just teach the working class. We learn from it also — as, for instance, the Bolsheviks learned about soviets and their possibilities from the Russian working class.

That requires that the Marxist party is a democratic organisation in which the members can think, question, reason and learn from past and contemporaneous events. Which is made up of thinking people, not aspirant parrots.

Where the leaders have the authority of more experienced, more knowledgeable, more devoted comrades, not the authority of sect priests. Where Marxism is an honest tool of

**For the Bolsheviks, unlike the Stalinists, “democratic centralism” meant a regime of constant debate and criticism, combined with unity in action.**

analysis, not the house-broken handmaid rationalising whatever the “party” apparatus decides to say and do.

Trotsky, with the savagely bureaucratic parties of Stalinism in mind, once compared the need for democracy within a revolutionary Marxist organisation to the need of a living being for oxygen. Without oxygen the living being stifles and dies. Without democracy so, over a longer period of time, does a would-be Marxist party.

The question of the organisational rules for a Marxist party — “democratic centralism” — has been hopelessly muddled over by the experience of Stalinism — and of some notionally Trotskyist organisations, Lenin described what it is in a 1906 article:

*“Criticism within the limits of the principles of the Party Programme must be quite free, not only at Party meetings, but also at public meetings. Such criticism... cannot be prohibited. The Party’s political action must be united. No calls that violate the unity of definite actions can be tolerated either at public meetings, or at Party members, or in the Party press”.*

What this meant is shown by the experience of the Bolshevik party in the October Revolution.

Two leading Bolsheviks, Zinoviev and Kamenev, publicly denounced the Party’s plans for an insurrection. In the insurrection they placed themselves at the disposal of the party in the action decided upon by the majority of the party. The indignant Lenin later proposed that they should be expelled for strike-breaking, but on the leading Committee failed to win a single vote to add to his own.

An organisation in which the members do not have the right and the duty at all times to think about politics and the affairs of the organisation, and the right to express their opinions freely, is in reality the opposite of Bolshevism. For decades the SWP was organised more like the Catholic Church, with its own pope and College of Cardinals, than like Lenin’s Bolsheviks!

Isn’t such a way of organising ridiculous? It makes no sense. It has led to such nonsense as Respect and hobnobbing with the Muslim Brotherhood, which Tony Cliff once justly denounced as clerical fascists. It wasn’t the Brotherhood that had changed in essence, but the leaders whom Cliff had educated to carry on his tradition.

The prolonged, reverberating crisis of the SWP places the

need to reorganise the Marxist left into a democratic force at the centre of our political concerns. What are the preconditions for a healthy democratic organisation?

The first precondition is full rights of internal discussion. You get some discussion even in the most bureaucratic organisation, but usually as a concession from the leadership. But it needs to be a right of the members to have a discussion when they want it.

You have to have it written into the constitution, as it is written into AWL’s constitution, that there is a right of access to the public press for minorities.

There may be exceptions — where you’re going to organise an insurrection, you wouldn’t allow a minority to denounce this plan in your paper — but everyday, normally, minorities should on demand get access to the press.

There must be a possibility of initiative in the organisation other than from the centre.

There are some Trotskyist organisations which have rules that say that discussion can’t be started until the centre initiates it. But there has to be a right of initiative for every member.

You need a right for members to by-pass the leading committee and call a conference if necessary. Our AWL constitution gives the Disputes Committee the right to bypass the leading committees and call a conference if necessary. It wouldn’t do that casually, but the right has to exist.

The organisation must have a politically self-respecting membership.

## ARCHBISHOP

**An organisation where members are taught to kowtow to a Pope, to an archbishop, to a prophet — that organisation is not breeding self-respecting individuals. It is not breeding educated political militants. It is not breeding militants who could lead a mass working-class struggle.**

Imagine the SWP as it now is, and has been for a long time, leading a workers’ revolution. It is not really imaginable. It wouldn’t happen. But the SWP would disintegrate in response to the great swirling mass of activity. Or if it didn’t disintegrate, and it took power, then how could it create anything other than a very deformed workers’ state, if it was a workers’ state at all?

You have to have self-respecting individuals with some idea of their own political value and of their rights.

You have to have an atmosphere in the organisation where discussion is free — where there is not a heavy disapproval from full-timers, central bodies, and so on, of discussion. Where there is no shouting down, no intellectual hooliganism.

You need an organisation where the “machine”, the full-timers, have no privileges. They have rights — they have the rights of members — but there is no special prioritisation for the “machine”.

The organisation has to be regulated above all by the rhythms and by the needs of the class struggle. It has to accept, and really mean, what the *Communist Manifesto* says — that the communists have no interests apart from those of the working class.

The organisation has to be a living part of the class struggle, not a spinning top on its own axis, as all sectarian groups are.

It has to be an honestly Marxist organisation. One of the baneful things on the left is that in most cases what the groups say is determined or heavily adulterated by calculations of advantage. That is best called “apparatus Marxism”. It is a sort of twin of academic Marxism.

There should not be any pre-designated leaders. Quite plainly in any collection of people some will have more abilities in certain directions, but there should not be a pre-designated leadership. There should not be a closed leadership.

That is democratic centralism as the Bolsheviks had it, as Lenin had it, and as it can serve the working class. The sectarian stuff can’t, and that is the reason for condemning it.

**The fundamental trouble with the SWP’s methods is that they cannot serve the working class or help the working class. They can only do harm.**

## Hymn of the warmonger

Gun God, we are nearly ready for the sacrifice.  
How many millions it shall be we do not know:  
But it shall be considerable.  
We shall dig them from the cities  
Ere the grime is from their face  
Ere the ink is from their fingers  
You shall have them  
All the strata in a bundle  
Slums and all.

They're a holocaust for you, Gun God.  
Do they tremble at the ordeal before them? No,  
They are preoccupied with trifles. Like young mice  
they will nibble at our cheese: delicious, intoxicating  
cheese, having nothing at all to do with traps. A  
national cheese.  
You shall have them from the fields,  
Fresh and brown, strong and eager  
Ere the chaff is from their hair  
Ere the dew is from their boots  
Ere the sun is from their faces  
You shall have them, Gun God.  
What a holocaust for you!

Do they think of profits and wage acquirements?  
Yes, and think of glory. They hear the Voice of Mother  
country calling plaintively over press and radio.

We have a gallant crowd of mystic journalists  
And a merry band of mystic orators, feeding  
well on the heaps of mangled bodies — far-seeing  
fellow — in advance  
You shall have them from the mountains and the plains  
You shall have them from the cities and the towns  
You shall have them, bone and blood,  
Mangled, twisted, torn asunder  
In a heap.  
What a holocaust for you, Gun God!

And the women, what think they? Are they pale  
and anxious now? With a woman's intuition do  
they realise what's coming? Have they seen my shadow  
on the hearth — lean and scraggy from much  
starvation, curse it?  
Oh, the women!  
We shall wring the bloody heap  
With their hearts.  
We shall string them all together  
Bruised and bleeding, pierced to rags -  
Women's hearts!  
What a holocaust for you, Gun God!

*From the Irish left-Republican paper Republican  
Congress, 12 October 1935. Cartoon, left, by Carlo from  
the US Trotskyist paper Labor Action*

# Syriza faces new challenges

By Gerry Bates

**For the congress on 10-14 July which transformed Syriza from a coalition into a single party, there was a programmatic proposal from the majority leadership ("mainstream"), which won 68% of the vote, an amendment from the Left Platform which won 30%, and a counter-proposal from another minority.**

The keynote speech from Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras was bland. It did not cancel the leftist turn which Tsipras has made since the start of the workers' occupation at ERT (Greek equivalent of the BBC, which the government wants to shut down), but it did not sharpen it either. It did not return to the rightward drift which Tsipras outlined for Syriza at the end of 2012.

75% of the debate around the congress was about the dissolution of the components of Syriza. At the congress, the leadership backtracked on its demand for the immediate dissolution of the components, but still asked for them to dissolve "in due time".

The new Syriza will recognise rights for "tendencies". What makes the step from "components" to "tendencies" more than a change of name is mostly two things.

The "components" had some guarantees of representation in Syriza's committees. And they got a share of the state funding allotted to Syriza under Greece's rules for funding political parties. The share might be small, but for the small components it has been significant.

Behind the call for the dissolution of the "components" is a call for the minorities in Syriza to cease public political activity outside Syriza, i.e. to stop publishing their own papers and calling their own public meetings.

Already at the congress, the literature tables of the minorities were much less visible than they traditionally have been.

Kokkino, one of the revolutionary socialist components of Syriza, has split. Kokkino has always wanted a "broad left" party, and a strong minority, including some leading people, decided that Syriza is now near enough to what they want.

Another left-wing component, Rosa, has also dissolved: that is different, since really Rosa constituted itself as a formal organisation only in order to be able to participate in Syriza as a component.

DEA, the other main revolutionary socialist component, has fought consistently against dissolving the components.

The committee of the new Syriza was elected by a vote be-

tween rival whole "lists", removing the right which previously existed for members to vote for some candidates from one list and some from another and thus to "amend" the leadership's list even if no faction is strong enough to defeat the leadership list outright.

The majority presented itself as a "rainbow arc", a pluralistic mainstream, so as to marginalise some more militant minorities.

Alexis Tsipras was elected president by direct conference vote, with 74% to 4.7% for Sissy Vovou and 0.7% for Panos Iliopoulos. The Syriza left had argued against direct election, and for a president elected by and accountable to the committee. There is a lot of demagoguery about making Syriza "a rank and file party", which can mean a party with a large passive membership and a leader who can use an elective majority among that large passive membership to overrule the activists.

### FLOOD

**In the last year Syriza's membership has risen from 16,000 to 35,000 (equivalent of about 190,000 in Britain).**

There are reports of a big influx of new people into Syriza about a month before the congress, maybe to get votes for the congress. The local organisations of Syriza don't always work that well, so a flood of new members into Syriza is not such a good thing as it may seem.

Behind the organisational details, the battle is political. One trend stands for a Syriza operating within the system and aiming to be the centre of a coalition government which may include bits of Pasok and even the right-wing anti-Memorandum "Independent Greeks".

The other stands for an anti-capitalist Syriza that will commit itself to defend at all costs the interests of the working class, using a left government as a first step to achieving workers' control and workers' power.

The Stalinist but still-strong Greek Communist Party (KKE) still ignores this battle. According to the KKE paper *Rizospastis*, the Syriza leadership and the Left Platform are just the same politically, both social democrats. The Left Platform exists only to give Syriza left cover and divert Greek workers from the revolutionary path of joining KKE.

Syriza is almost even with ND (the conservative party) in the opinion polls. Both Syriza's scores and ND have been fairly stable since the June 2012 election; Pasok has lost a lot

of support, and the Golden Dawn fascists have gained support, though that has levelled off.

But when opinion polls ask people whether they think a Syriza-led government will really cancel the Memorandum imposed by the ECB, the EU, and the IMF, they say no. Syriza has to convince people that it is serious about cancelling the Memorandum, and it hasn't done yet.

The central issue here, and the Left Platform rightly emphasises it, is workers' control. A left government which cancelled the Memorandum and reversed the cuts could not bring immediate prosperity and harmony. It could ensure decent conditions for the poorest (at the expense of the rich), and democratic control over what happens.

The dimension on which the right wing of the Syriza leadership used to rely — that a left government in Greece could win through by chiming in with a pro-growth reform programme on a European scale — has become less plausible.

A year ago there was a lot of talk at the top of the EU about the need for measures for growth. It came to nothing, and the talk has gone. All ideas that the French government under Francois Hollande would push for a big change in EU policy, or that the Social Democrats in Germany would seriously differentiate from Merkel on European policy, have faded.

Syriza must look to the rank and file workers' movements in other countries to construct any even plausible European dimension. Looking for shifts at the top is less plausible than it was.

Yet there has been no proper evaluation within Syriza of how, in Cyprus, a left government ended by introducing a Memorandum.

The leaders of the EU now think they have pulled the governments of Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland into line. As long as they remain in line, the EU leaders will offer fudges and concessions at the edges. They will "overlook", for example, the fact that the coalition government in Greece has got and will get much less revenue from privatisations than projected. But on the basic line they are more confident and arrogant than before.

**There have been shifts to the left in the unions in Greece (in the "second-level" unions). How much they will mean, remains to be seen. There is a strike by public sector workers on 15 July, with some occupations of town halls, against planned job cuts, and the workers' occupation continues at the Athens offices of the ERT (Greek equivalent of the BBC).**

# Firefighters ballot for national strike

By Jack Horner

**The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) will ballot members from 18 July for national strike action, after the government issued an ultimatum over changes to firefighters' pensions.**

The ballot, which lasts until the end of August, is expected to produce a large yes vote, with strikes likely in September if a settlement is not reached before then.

Why are firefighters balloting at this late stage of the pensions battle? Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "Expecting large numbers of 60 year olds to fight fires and rescue families is dangerous to the public and to firefighters. The government is simply ignoring the evidence

about the physical demands of firefighting and has been unable to answer our concerns during two years of negotiations."

The FBU ballot covers a range of issues including contributions and a scheme for retained (part-time) firefighters. But the central issue is mitigating the effects of the new normal pension age (NPA) of 60, in terms of protection from the sack or retiring early on a reduced pension.

The FBU has gone its

own way during the government pensions assault, particularly after the big unions decided two years ago to retrench into sectional talks instead of facing the government's attack as a whole. Once sectional talks began, the FBU won some improvements in the cost ceiling and a review of the NPA. The union did not strike in November 2011.

The review, fronted by government specialists and published at the beginning

of this year, conceded that most firefighters would not be fit to work until aged 60 (currently firefighters retire at 55). However the government pressed on with imposing 60 in the Public Service Pension Act, which came into force for all public sector workers in April.

The FBU resolved to ballot at its conference in May. It has got some further concessions since then. However the fire minister made a "final" offer at the end of June and made it conditional on the FBU accepting the deal by 12 July. The FBU executive decided on 9 July that the offer was not acceptable – particularly because it leaves fitness matters unresolved. This could see firefighters sacked on capability grounds when they are not fit enough to work, thereby

losing much of their pension.

The ballot comes as the talks reached stalemate. A strike may break the logjam. Socialists, activists and trade unionists need to support firefighters if it comes to a strike.

**The level of workers' action is very low, and even limited acts of resistance will encourage other workers to fight.**

## Demonstrate against fire cuts

**Thursday 18 July, 11.30am, The Monument, Fish Street Hill, London EC3R 6DB  
More: [bit.ly/fbu-demo](http://bit.ly/fbu-demo)**

**As *Solidarity* went to press, activists were planning protests outside Holborn police station in support of a student activist who was assaulted and arrested by police for chalking pro-3 Cosas slogans on University of London property on Tuesday 16 July.  
See [bit.ly/ulu-cops](http://bit.ly/ulu-cops) for more.**

and the union to members of staff. New members were signed up to the IWGB University of London branch.

**The campaign's Summer of Action continues with a demonstration on Wednesday 17 July. For more information, see [facebook.com/3coca](http://facebook.com/3coca) or follow @3CosasCampaign on Twitter.**

## RMT: "all-out fight" on job cuts

By Ollie Moore

**Over 100 jobs on the London Overground network could be lost, as London Overground Rail Operations Ltd. (LOROL) seeks to move to "driver-only operation" (DOO).**

The immediate impulse for cut is a 12.5% cut in central government funding for Transport for London, announced in George Osborne's 26 June spending review. Moving towards DOO is also key recommendation of the McNulty Review into railway industry reform.

LOROL wants to implement DOO by December 2013, and, according to rail union RMT, plan to begin the process even if the new

staffing arrangement has not been safety-certified.

A union statement said: "LOROL informed RMT that TfL have 'exercised a clause in their contract' giving only six months to implement DOO on the network by the December timetable and have even commenced this process without first achieving the necessary safety validation certification required as they seek to bulldoze it through regardless of the safety risks involved."

The RMT has promised an "all-out political, public, and industrial fight" to stop the job cuts. Unfortunately, drivers' union ASLEF has remained silent on the issue, as it has thus far accepted DOO.

Cuts are also threatened

on London Underground, where bosses plan to cut more station jobs and close ticket offices. Activists demonstrated against the closure of Whitechapel ticket office on Monday 15 July. The union said that the plans to close Whitechapel's ticket office "totally ignore the fact that the station serves an area which includes a busy market and a major hospital."

**"The area is also known for its diverse local population, many of whom need to access staff support at an open ticket office rather than rely on ticket-issuing machines – machines that are vulnerable to vandalism."**

## Postal workers strike

By Darren Bedford

**Postal workers in Bridgewater, Somerset, struck on Saturday 6 July in a dispute over job cuts and management bullying.**

Communication Workers Union (CWU) rep Dave Chapple said the strike was "one of the best we've ever had", with over 100 workers taking part.

Union reps have prom-

ised escalation if the dispute is not resolved.

In Peterborough, 170 postal workers held a wildcat strike following the suspension of a union rep.

There was also a strike at a delivery office in Plymouth. The CWU said members are fed up with increasing levels of bullying and harassment from bosses.

The strikes come in the context of government

plans to privatise Royal Mail. A recent consultative ballot of CWU members returned overwhelming support for keeping Royal Mail in public hands, as well as for industrial action to stop the sell off and on ongoing industrial issues (including pensions) within Royal Mail.

**The ballot returned a 96% vote against privatisation on a 74% turnout.**

## 3 Cosas news

By Ira Berkovic

**The "3 Cosas" campaign of outsourced workers at the University of London for sick pay, holiday, and pensions equality organised a week-long "planton" at the university's flagship Senate House building on 8-13 July.**

The planton (from the Spanish "plantar", meaning to plant or install – there is no direct English translation, but the nearest equivalent is "presence") involved holding all-day stalls outside Senate House offering tea, coffee, biscuits, and (most importantly) information about the campaign

## Right to leave Unison?

**Sandy Nicoll, SWP member and secretary of the Unison branch at SOAS, wrote an article in the SWP's *Socialist Review* journal criticising the outsourced workers' decision to leave Unison and set up an IWGB branch, arguing that the "obstacles [inside Unison] were not insurmountable". (Read the article at [bit.ly/sandy-n](http://bit.ly/sandy-n)).**

**Jason Moyer-Lee, an activist involved in 3 Cosas and the secretary of the IWGB University of London branch, has written a reply, in which he argues that the need to fight actively, and immediately, on the key industrial issues took precedence over the need to fight inside Unison.**

**Jason has submitted his article to *Socialist Review*, and in the interests of furthering the debate, AWL is also hosting it on our website. Read it at [bit.ly/jason-iwgb](http://bit.ly/jason-iwgb).**



## Industrial news in brief

### "Boris Bike" workers' 100% strike vote

Workers employed by Serco Barclays on the municipal bike hire scheme in London ("Boris Bikes") have voted unanimously for strikes against the imposition of a new pay deal and shift patterns.

The Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers' union (RMT) ballot returned a 100% vote in favour of strikes over a range of grievances, including the imposition of a 2% pay deal, shift changes, management bullying and harassment, and management's failure to reach formal agreement on travelling time and travel allowances for workers.

### South London FE workers to strike

Further Education workers at Lewisham-Southwark College will strike on Wednesday 17 July against departmental closure and job cuts.

A lunchtime strike rally is planned from 12.45 outside the college on Lewisham Way (SE4 1UT).

Send messages of support to [pete.bicknell@googlemail.com](mailto:pete.bicknell@googlemail.com)



### Cleaning workers' two-week strike

Cleaning workers on the Tyne and Wear Metro began a fortnight-long strike on Friday 12 July.

The workers are demanding that their employer, cleaning contractor Churchill, pays living wages, as well as gives them sick pay, pensions, and travel pass equality with directly-employed staff on the Metro.

The long-running dispute has already seen workers strike for 19 days.

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## Egypt: neither army nor Morsi!

By Clive Bradley

**The events in Egypt have confounded the image that pundits of both right and left have about the Muslim world — that the people are dominated, or automatically inclined to, Islamist movements.**

The movement against Morsi has been a huge popular movement against an Islamist government, and not just any Islamist government either. The Muslim Brotherhood, and its political wing, are in many ways the most formidable Islamist party, and it was democratically elected.

What's taken place is a coup. It's not something to celebrate, and is in fact quite dangerous. The fundamental nature of the movement in the streets is a continuation of the 2011 revolutionary movement, and it does represent a mass popular uprising against the Morsi government. But the uprising was curtailed by the army taking power.

The Morsi government has proved fantastically unpopular. The spark for the recent protests was a petition campaign calling on Morsi to resign, which got over 20 million signatures. The government was very exclusive — once it had won both the parli-

mentary and presidential elections, the Brotherhood were seen as taking all power for themselves. They'd pushed through an unpopular Islamic constitution. Morsi took executive power into his hands through the dismissal of judges and so on; that was widely and correctly seen as very undemocratic.

There have also been attacks on opponents of the Brotherhood in civil society, for example the dismissal of the director of the opera.

### DEALS

They are widely seen as having done deals with the security forces.

Heavy repression continued under Morsi — snipers shooting at demonstrators, the continuation of military courts to try people arrested on protests... The Morsi government was seen as not fundamentally different from the Mubarak regime.

The government was probably about to do a deal with the IMF, dismantling those elements of state welfare that had survived decades of neo-liberalism. They had eviscerated legislation which was bringing in more progressive taxation. They opposed a law to allow the registration of independent unions

through workplace elections, and sided with employers over strikes.

Emblematically, they revived Mubarak's "Cairo 2050" plan to socially cleanse Cairo and build prime real estate in working-class areas. Add to all this rising fuel costs, rising commodity prices, rising unemployment, and the general decay of people's daily living standards.

Much commentary has contended that events in Egypt "prove" that the people don't understand the nature of democracy — "they've elected this guy, they have to let him rule, that's democracy!"

But even the US Declaration of Independence says: "Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government..." That one should have the right to recall and

replace people you've elected is a principle of radical democracy going back at least to the [1871] Paris Commune. The legitimacy of the demand that the Morsi government get out is not the issue here.

Who holds power now? Ultimately it was not the mass of the Egyptian people that overthrew and replaced Morsi, it was the army.

### ARMY

**Who is this army? You can imagine a situation in which a radical upheaval had taken place within an army, so the army had itself been affected by the mass revolutionary movement outside.**

Something roughly analogous happened in Portugal in the mid-1970s, where the programme around which much of the revolutionary left rallied came from a radical wing of the army. That's not the scenario in Egypt. The army which has retaken power is the old regime. It is the



## Ireland: abortion ban cracks

By Micheál MacEoin

**On Thursday 11 July, Irish parliamentarians passed a law finally allowing limited abortion rights in Ireland.**

The law, passed by 127 votes to 31, allows for abortion only in cases where a woman's life is in danger or if she is suicidal.

The new legislation, the first of its kind, does the bare minimum to comply with the 2010 European Court of Human Rights ruling which found that Ireland's failure to regulate access to abortion was a violation of its human rights obligations.

However, it does not reform or add any new grounds for legal abortion.

The law does not apply to cases of rape and will do little to stem the tragic flow of women across the Irish Sea to British hospitals and clinics to terminate their pregnancies. Department of Health figures released last week show that around 4,000 such journeys took place last year alone.

Mara Clark from the

Abortion Support Network charity told the *Guardian*: "Even if this law is enacted, only a very, very small percentage of women who need abortions will be able to access them in Ireland."

"Women pregnant as result of rape, women with fatal foetal anomalies, couples who simply can't afford to care for a (or in most cases, another) child, will still be left behind."

The clarification was welcomed by the family of Savita Halappanavar, the Indian woman who died after being denied access to an abortion in a Galway hospital last October.

**Bishops from the Catholic Church are threatening to launch a legal challenge but the tide of public opinion is increasingly against them, with polls indicating that over 70% of people in Ireland supporting a relaxation of the law.**

Mubarak state.

Because of external pressures, they will probably hold elections. They have promised to do so quite quickly. But pressure will be key there — it's not that the army has suddenly become a benign force. The fact that large sections of the mass movement seem to have substantial illusions in the army is troubling.

The worst-case potential scenario is Algeria in the early 90s. There, Islamists won local elections, the army intervened to prevent parliamentary elections, and a bloody civil war resulted in which, according to some estimates, 150,000 were killed. There have already been people killed in Egypt, most prominently the 50-or-so Morsi supporters shot outside the Republican Guard headquarters. I think it unlikely that Egypt will evolve in that direction, but even a smaller-scale version of that would not be good.

When the army first came onto the scene in the 2011 revolution, people were glad of their intervention, but that soon changed after the army took power and ruled in a very repressive way. People demonstrated against military rule. Some of those instincts seem to have been forgotten. And the current situation allows the Broth-

erhood to portray themselves as martyrs.

The question of how to appeal to the base of the Brotherhood, or even to the base of the Salafists to the Brotherhood's right, is important for the mass movement.

The cadre of the Brotherhood is middle-class, but they have huge numbers of poor workers, peasants, and so on, who vote for them. The mass movement needs to be able to say to them: "we are not calling on the army to take power. That's not our agenda."

Opposing the coup in Egypt doesn't mean going on Brotherhood demonstrations or calling for Morsi's reinstatement. It means you are active in the mass movement and you argue against military rule and against the army taking power. People have done that: there were placards and banners visible in Tahrir Square arguing against military intervention and a coup.

**Our tasks of solidarity, with the mass movement generally but particularly the socialist and working-class elements in it, are greater than ever.**

• Clive was speaking at a Workers' Liberty London forum on "Socialists and the Egyptian coup" on Thursday 11 July. This is an edited transcript of his speech.