



**Crisis in the Eurozone**



**Marxism and the State**



**Will there be a third Intifada?**

# workers power 5

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Monthly paper of the British section of the League for the Fifth International

# ALL OUT 30 JUNE TOWARDS A GENERAL STRIKE!

## Spain in Revolt



ACROSS SPAIN town squares have been occupied by youth and social movement activists in an act of rebellion against the government. Similar camps have been set up in other cities in Europe, in solidarity with the Spanish youth, showing their rage against the savage cuts of their own government. Most dramatic have been the several days of angry demonstrations in Greece. In Britain too there is widespread discussion about supporting the public sector strikes of 30 June with Spanish-style protests.

The occupations in Madrid, Barcelona and other cities by tens of thousands of young people, unemployed and students has made the issue of youth unemployment and the effects of the government's austerity visible to millions.

Spain's 21.3 per cent unemployment rate is the highest in the EU - a record 4.9 million are jobless - but the rate soars to over 43 per cent for young people. Those who have jobs are mainly in low paid, insecure and often only part-time positions. Even the IMF, whose policies promote unemployment and low wages, has called them "the lost generation". Ignored by government and opposition parties and to a large degree by the trade unions too, they have finally found a voice.

Self-consciously modeled on the mass occupation of Tahrir Square in Cairo, they have shown the widespread disillusion of young people with all the major political parties. This is hardly surprising since both have governed for years as youth unemployment and insecure jobs rose remorselessly - as the government bailed out the banks but demanded savage austerity from the mass of the people.

The government of the Socialist Workers Party and Prime Minister

...continued on page 11

EVERYONE WHO wants to stop Cameron and Clegg's barbaric cuts will be working flat out to make the fast-approaching 30 June day of strike action a massive show of strength.

Four major trade unions - the civil servants' PCS, the teachers' and education workers' UCU, NUT and ATL - have balloted for action and will be striking on the same day.

They are fighting to stop the government smashing up their hard-earned pensions. They need all our support - a blow against the Tory-Lib Dem pensions plan is a blow against every other cut too.

Against the 500,000 public sector job losses. Against the cuts to health and education. Against the great benefits robbery. Against the wholesale sell off of the welfare state to the Tories' rich mates in big business.

### General strike

The 30 June action is a much-needed start in the campaign for nationwide united strike action against the cuts. We need to use it to rally the broadest possible forces across Britain for the next step: an all-out indefinite general strike to break the cuts plan and bring down the Tories.

In France and Greece we have seen one-day general strike after one-day general strike, but they didn't win.



Their governments and their bosses knew they could just hold out and the workers would be back at work the next day.

Far better to strike like an Egyptian - it was mass all-out strikes that brought down Mubarak, bringing the country to a halt until the dictator had to give in.

We need to use every available tool to get a general strike. Flood union offices with calls for action and don't take no for an answer. If union leaders say that a general strike would be illegal, reply: and what could the Tories

do about it if we held firm and refuse to back down?

At the end of the day if the union leaders aren't prepared for action, we'll need to do it without them. That's why across the length and breadth of Britain we need local, regional and national committees of delegates from every union, every campaign, every workplace and college ready to take control of the action and organise a general strike from below if necessary.

The strike on 30 June will be a great chance to launch just such a movement. Let's take it. All out on 30 June!

## WHAT YOU CAN DO:

- Join your local anticuts committee
- Pass resolutions in support of action on 30 June and send official delegations to picket lines
- Set up school and college union support groups for students to take action alongside teachers
- Organise protests in key city centre locations on 30 June
- Fight for other unions to join the strikes
- Call on the TUC and union leaders to call a general strike against the cuts

The editorial  
**SIMON HARDY**



## We need to get organised

RESISTANCE IS growing to Cameron and Clegg's vicious cuts programme. There is a wave of enthusiasm for the 30 June strikes – civil servants from the PCS union, teachers and education workers from the UCU, NUT and ATL unions are all gearing up to take coordinated action alongside one another. They are taking action against attacks on their pensions that will hit not just them but generations of future workers and their communities.

As even bigger cuts packages are being rolled out abroad, Greece has been repeatedly paralysed by a series of one-day strikes. And in Spain the central squares of its biggest cities, Madrid and Barcelona, have filled with young people determined to stop the cuts and win a better future for all. They have learned from the revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia that if you want change then direct action is key.

The cuts are happening around the world because we are living through a crisis of global capitalism. Everywhere the capitalists are trying to force the working class, the poor, women and young people to pay the price for their crisis.

So the resistance is taking on an international character. Inspiring new movements are infectious – the desire for freedom is urgent.

The strikes over pensions or redundancies show the willingness of workers to fight when the union leaders actually give a lead. Protests and occupations by groups like UK Uncut against banks and tax-dodging companies and above all the 500,000 strong TUC demonstration on 26 March prove that huge numbers reject the Tory lie that there is no alternative to the cuts.

In times of crisis such as these it is essential that our unions and protest groups don't just stick to "business as usual". It's great that four unions are lined up for action on 30 June. But what about the others? Too many union leaders are sitting on their hands.

We need to radicalise our unions and put them in the hands of their members. Rank and file challenges from new initiatives like the Unite Grass Roots Left are important and need more backing and support. Other unions – like Unison whose leaders seem determined to stay out of the action – need similar rank and file movements.

There's another hard argument brewing. The kind of strikes the union leaders are currently willing to consider (one day strikes, or stop-start strikes) won't be enough to beat the cuts and bring down the Tories. France and Greece have both had several one day strikes and they weren't enough to win. But in Egypt a general strike – backed by mass protest on the streets – brought down a vicious dictatorship. That's the way!

The anti-cuts movement in Britain today is divided into three national campaigning groups and various local anti cuts committees. Intersecting them are single issue campaigns around hospitals or nurseries. Bringing these forces together into a national anti-cuts federation is essential. The 9 July Coalition of Resistance conference could be an excellent place to start.

The tremendous youth-led movement against the education cuts and tuition fee increases shows that there is a mood to resist. There are many debates amongst young people about that kind of organisation (or not!) they want, and what kind of politics they want to promote. A national anticapitalist youth organisation could help to bring together young activists to mobilise against the cuts, against racism and war.

And then there is the issue of political organisation.

Given the disgraceful role of Labour in backing the cuts, today it is fashionable to reject party politics altogether. But if we remain at the level of spontaneity and networks, we can be sure the capitalists will beat us every time because they are organised, centralised and disciplined – they have a leadership, a strategy and a plan of action.

We need a party that fights for our class with as much determination as the Tories fight for theirs. That means organising workers and youth around an action programme to bring down the Coalition and open a challenge to the whole capitalist state – a revolutionary programme that can take us from protest to power.

Then we could replace the madness of the market, the crisis and the cuts with a democratically planned economy based on sustainability, equality and solidarity.

## ★ TRADE UNIONS

# 30 June and beyond

Jeremy Dewar

IN THIS issue of *Workers Power* we take a detailed look at the unions in preparation for the coordinated strikes on 30 June, because we recognise that this represents a key moment in the fight to stop the cuts. Although the strikes are mainly in defence of public sector pensions, many rightly see them as a broadside against the Coalition's whole agenda of cuts and privatisation.

We call on all activists to support these strikes as best they can: by taking action, joining picket lines, attending demos and rallies. Some have taken their cue from the Arab Spring and the #spanishrevolution and are planning to camp out in town squares across the country. Excellent – let's bring the spirit of Cairo and Madrid to London, Manchester and Glasgow!

This will send out the message that 30 June should just be the start, not the high-point of the fightback. However one day strikes will not stop the cuts. The NUT and its leading faction the Socialist Teachers Alliance are not thinking about follow-up action until October at the earliest, when they hope Unison and the head teachers might come on board.

Not only would this lose any momentum created by the June strikes, it would give the government three months to divide and rule. There are already rumours that Education Secretary Michael Gove is considering making the teachers a "special case" for retaining some pension rights. If the teachers are bought off or Unison's leaders refuse to expand the forces on strike, the co-ordination could unravel.

We need a new approach. The PCS showed the way by balloting all its members over pensions, jobs, pay and conditions and declaring that any branch or section could use the ballot to stop attacks on any of these issues. The teachers should do the same, declaring action against the privatisation and break-up of state education. These wider issues make it far more difficult for the Tories



to defuse action with partial concessions.

The unions should agree to sharply escalate the action, quickly progressing to an all-out, indefinite strike. Leaders should show workers they intend to win this battle by seizing the initiative and hitting the Tories where it hurts.

They should also link the strikes with joint strike committees, directly elected at every level of the movement: workplace, regional and national. All negotiations should be open and controlled by those on strike: no secret talks and no entering separate agreements.

Each union in the bloc should give a precise meaning to the adage, "An injury to one is an injury to all". None should settle until every section has won its demands.

Will this trigger the use of the anti-union laws? Undoubtedly, which is why we must prepare to defy them. Lib Dem MP John Hemming revealed Ryan Giggs' name, saying "it is obviously

impracticable to imprison "75,000 Twitter users". How about 750,000 trade unionists, then?

This is a strategy not even the most left wing of our union leaders is prepared to contemplate. Why? Because it would threaten their role as leaders and their non-aggression pact with the right wing leaders. As one PCS executive member told a left union caucus meeting last month, "Don't expect me to criticise Unison's leaders publicly, because officially we're friends."

A rank and file movement, independent of the whole bureaucracy, is essential if we are to stop the cuts. For too long, the left – including the Socialist Party and the Socialist Workers Party – have side-stepped this issue, preferring to block with the left union leaders and trim their policy to what they will accept. Now is the time to break with this bad tradition and tell workers frankly on 30 June what is needed to win.

## The anti-trade union laws: how to smash them

Joy Macready, NUJ member

WHAT DO the anti-trade union laws say? Workers cannot hold a mass meeting and decide to strike there and then. Instead the decision must be taken by a postal ballot, when workers are isolated at home.

The unions must give the bosses at least seven days notice of ballots and seven more days before industrial action. This gives the bosses about a month to intimidate workers and organise scab labour.

A strike can only be against your own employer, making it illegal, for example, for teachers to strike together against the government's education cuts even though they effect every school. It is also illegal to picket workplaces other than your own (flying pickets).

The employer can obtain court injunctions against strike action and sue the

union for damages if its members organise a wildcat strike or walk out without a ballot. Unions are liable unless they publicly denounce the strikers, in which case the members leading the illegal action could end up in prison.

Judges can outlaw political strikes or any action that they deem not part of a trade dispute – so nurses cannot strike against the privatisation of the NHS.

The anti-union laws were brought in by the Tories in the 1980s and 90s. Not one of them were repealed by Labour when it was in power.

Just imagine if these laws weren't in place – the strikes of the past three decades would have had very different outcomes, from the great miners' strike to the Royal Mail dispute. The same bosses and Tories, who rail against "state interference", would be demanding the police and courts smash picket lines and jail militants.

To their shame, the trade union leaders have used the threat of the anti-trade union laws to squander any united fightback against the government.

### How to Smash Them

The way to end the anti-union laws is to defy them. The tens of thousands of young people, students and public-sector workers that occupied the State Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin in opposition to anti-union legislation have shown us what we need to do – resist, occupy, strike.

The Tory cuts attack every single worker in Britain. Any effective strike to stop them will come up against these anti-working class laws. We must demand our leaders defy the law when this happens and prepare to do so without them if necessary. And wherever they are used, we should call for solidarity strike action – up to and including a general strike.

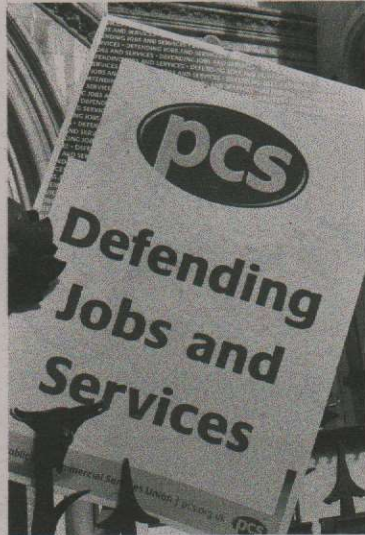
# PCS takes a fighting stance but will the leaders deliver?

Rebecca Anderson

PCS ANNUAL Delegate Conference 2011 will be remembered as the conference that declared war – class war – on the coalition government, but whether we can win depends on the leadership's willingness to go beyond the strategy agreed or, failing that, the membership taking up that challenge.

Conference not only called on the TUC to organise a general strike but also made plans to bring out the civil service in defence of jobs, pay and pensions. Most departmental conferences decided to organise further ballots over issues like privatisation. If a "yes, yes" vote is won in the national ballot then we will be striking alongside education unions on 30 June, but it was made clear that this would only be the beginning of our industrial campaign.

The decision to ballot was almost unanimous, with only two out of over a thousand delegates voting against



it. However, despite the overwhelming support for strike action, the question still remains of whether the strategy will be enough. This government is committed to the destruction of public services, and we will need one hell of a strike to stop them by

bringing the coalition down.

The PCS leadership recognises that we can't stop the Tories alone, so the strike ballot over jobs, pay and pensions is intended provide us with the ability to strike alongside any other unions for the life of the ballot.

The hope is that over the summer other unions will join the campaign of industrial action and that in the autumn Unison will ballot its membership. Kicking off this campaign with the intention of starting a strikewave is absolutely necessary, but the question is what we will do if the government gets a court injunction against the ballot or if other unions don't ballot?

On the question of an injunction, the answer is simple. We should gather support from every single corner of the trade union movement to defy it, breaking it en masse.

Whether other unions will ballot is a bigger issue. If the leaderships of Unite, Unison and GMB can ride out pressure from their members, will

Mark Serwotka take the next step and go over their heads? In doing so PCS would face the wrath of the TUC, but if it becomes necessary then Serwotka should do exactly that.

The problem with the industrial campaign is that it doesn't deal with these issues and doesn't link a strike wave over the summer to the end goal of a general strike. It remains something that we will call on the TUC to do, but we have to be willing to organise it without them if necessary, through the individual unions agreeing to strike together, and stay out until united demands are met.

Reps and activists should organise to lobby them to take further action and we should organise to take this action if they refuse. This means building a rank and file movement – a network of reps and activists – to support our leaders when they take action, but act without them where they do not.

## Posties fight job losses



CWU postal rep

LONDON POSTIES have voted by 79% in favour of strikes against plans to sack thousands of workers at four offices. Up to 3,500 workers be out on strike as early as 6 June, as well as joining other unions on the 30 June.

Royal Mail is closing East London and nine Elms Mail Centres and making swingeing cuts at Mount Pleasant Mail Centre and Rathbone Place Delivery Office. With plans to shed between 57 and 80 per cent of the workforce the union is demanding no compulsory redundancies.

In a splendid show of solidarity, the CWU conference agreed to support the strikers by refusing to "handle any of the work from London by un-agreed diversions". If this results in suspensions, as it has in the past, then wildcat walkouts will inevitably follow.

But union militants must remember that wildcats failed to win in 2007, when CWU leaders Billy Hayes and Dave Ward buckled before the courts and called off the strikes. This time, the rank and file must control the action.

In a separate move, conference voted unanimously to call for a 24 hour general strike – yet more pressure on the TUC to up the ante.

## Health workers organising to save NHS

Mark Booth

IN RESPONSE to the attacks by the Tories, healthworkers are organising at the grassroots level. In London the Health Workers Network was set up in February to bring together trade unionists and activists across the health service to fight Lansley's Bill, and resist the massive cuts being implemented across London.

Health Worker is a cross-union network, uniting workers and specialists across the NHS with those not in any union. It brings together nurses, healthcare assistants, with doctors physiotherapists, dieticians and scientists in a rank and file network dedicated to opposing every cut and to defeating Lansley's bill.

The network meets fortnightly in

London and produces a monthly bulletin with news and reports from across the service, alongside analysis of the government's plans. The network is still in formation and hasn't yet developed a programme for fighting the cuts, but it has helped organise several thousands strong marches against the cuts and is bringing together groups of activists at hospitals across London. Workers Power is submitting a statement of principles that we hope will be adopted by the network – see box left.

The network has the potential to cut across the sectional interests of the different health unions, and the professionalism of the specialists associations, uniting all those who wish to defend the NHS. If it develops an action programme and takes this into the hospitals and workplaces, fights for the protests,

### What the Health Workers Network should stand for:

We are a rank and file network organising workers across unions, across workplaces, with those not in any union, to pressure the union leadership into action, and provide an alternative lead where necessary

We oppose all cuts and privatisation. We demand the closure of the internal market and the re-nationalisation of all privatised services and facilities, in the NHS and all public services.

We support industrial action against cuts and privatisation, up to and including indefinite strike action to stop the government's cuts and privatisation plan

We call for cross-union anti-cuts committees in every workplace to link up and coordinate our resistance to cuts

We fight for industrial action to be under the control of the rank and file, through democratically elected strike committees.

marches and indefinite action needed, then it will be a crucial tool

in the fight against the Tory and Lib-Dem attacks.

## Unite activists launch Grass Roots Left

Marcus Halaby, Unite member

THE GRASS ROOTS Left is a rank and file network in Unite. It was formed after last year's General Secretary election campaign, in which hundreds of rank and file campaigners delivered over 50,000 votes for Jerry Hicks, a victimised convenor at Bristol Rolls Royce. Since then, seven GRL candidates won a combined 23,000 votes in the recent NEC elections, narrowly missing out on a seat.

Conference

May's founding conference pulled together Unite shop stewards and activists from across the country and received greetings from

whole branches, such as Swindon Honda. It openly set out to establish a new type of left in Unite, one based on the rank and file and independent of all wings of the bureaucracy.

GRL's draft constitution calls for "rank and file control over all negotiations and industrial action, defiance of the anti-union laws, wherever they are invoked" and strikes and occupations "with the backing of the officials when possible, without them where necessary".

This breaks with the Broad Left tradition of electing left officials and instead challenges the whole bureaucratic set-up. The constitution will be fully debated and adopted at a conference in the autumn.

Rank and file network

Unite is moving cautiously and hesitantly to the left. General Secretary Len McCluskey has fought for co-ordinated strikes and is balloting Unite healthworkers for action on 30 June. He has called on branches to join anti-cuts committees and affiliated the union to Coalition of Resistance. The NEC has called on Unite sponsored councillors and MPs to vote against cuts, encouraged branches to strike against job losses and urged members to "protest and show solidarity as far as they can" with other unions on strike.

But talk is cheap. The same United Left bloc that dominates the NEC and drafted this excellent policy is

currently selling out the BA cabin workers' dispute. The GRL must support every left move that the United Left makes, while mercilessly criticising every crime that it commits. That way, the United Left bloc will split – between those who want to fight and those who merely want to pass resolutions.

The GRL must build local groups, like in London, that meet regularly, discuss problems and agree on action. They need to develop websites and bulletins. They need to intervene in disputes and sign up the best militants.

This way, we can build a new type of union left, a rank and file movement, that can inspire and link up with similar organisations in other unions.

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Editor: Simon Hardy  
Deputy editor: Joy Macready  
Domestic editor: John Bowman  
Industrial editor: Jeremy Dewar  
Political editor: Richard Brenner  
Production editor: Keith Spencer  
Staff writer: Marcus Halaby  
Art & Design: Sean Murray

Printed by: Newsfax International Ltd.

workerspower@bopenworld.com  
+44 (0) 20 7708 4331  
www.workerspower.com

# Risk of debt default spreads in capitalist currency crisis

Richard Brenner

THE RISK of the euro collapsing rose sharply at the beginning of June, as bond market billionaires took fright at prospects for Greece, Spain and even Italy going bust.

At the close of a month that saw Greek workers launch another series of one-day general strikes, the chairman of the EU finance ministers Jean-Claude Juncker issued a blunt threat to Greek politicians. All parties must agree to yet another deep programme of cuts and a new wave of privatisations, or the IMF would stop making bailout payments promised last year.

Already on 23 May, as stock markets plunged over Greek debt worries, Finance Minister George Papakonstantinou rushed out a statement promising “ambitious” sell-offs of public assets. “The cabinet decided to proceed immediately with the sale of stakes in [telecoms], the Postbank, the Athens and Thessaloniki ports and the Thessaloniki water company” he promised.

But this abject display of submission wasn't enough to “calm the markets” and international capital is demanding more. The risk of a Greek default was measured at its highest ever on 27 May 2011, as the price of credit default swaps – insurance against a Greek default – reached 1438 basis points as against 999 points in January this year.

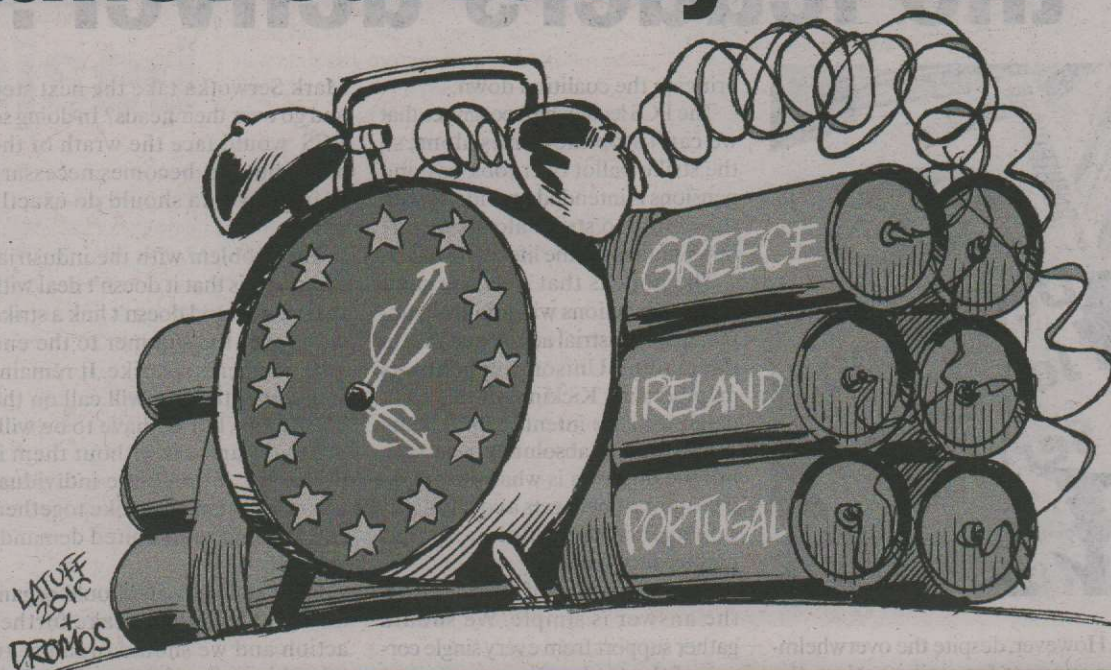
The EU's Juncker, finance minister of the Luxembourg tax haven, is closely connected to international finance and the dominant EU powers Germany and France. His demand that all Greek parties should back more privatisation and cuts revealed that global capital is more than willing to ride roughshod over the rights of voters, to blackmail politicians into breaking their election promises.

The threat is a powerful one. Under Greece's €110 billion bailout plan, the IMF is due to pay another €12 billion tranche at the end of June. If they withhold, EU powers may not be willing to pick it up.

Voters in Scandinavia, Britain, France and Germany are starting to speak out against funding more bailouts. In Finland the advance of the True Finns party showed how right wing populists can take advantage of anti-bailout feeling. In the UK the right wing press launched a campaign against foreign aid as a shot across Cameron and Osborne's bows in the event of further bailout contributions later this year.

And in Germany fears are rising. Popular opposition to bailouts is strong. When 200 leading economists signed an open letter attacking more bailouts earlier this year, German employers' president Dieter Hundt was forced to attack them in the business paper *Handelsblatt*, where he called for the size of the EU bailout fund to be raised from €250 billion to €450 billion.

Because there are more bailouts



## The euro could collapse

GERMANY HAS had an easy ride through the crisis – because of the euro. Meanwhile weaker economies in the euro, Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal, have had it hard.

The normal way a capitalist government tries to get out of crisis is by devaluing its currency. This makes its exports cheaper relative to its competitor states.

This is what the US and Britain have done. It immunises these countries from the worst impact of recession, while exporting the downturn to other countries whose exports can't compete.

This is what lies behind the repeated clashes between the US and China over the 'artificially low' level of China's currency, the Yuan.

Eurozone members like Greece and Portugal are denied this tactic. They have to carry on with the Euro at its relatively high level and cannot devalue it. So the recession hits them twice as hard – meaning their

state debt goes through the roof.

If Greece defaults on its debt, or if the EU can't afford or can't get voter support to bail out Spain, let alone Italy or Belgium, then the euro could collapse. Either the smaller countries would leave, busted out and facing decades of debt, or Germany itself would walk away, pocketing the spoils of 12 years of unfair advantage and returning to the Deutschmark.

This would be an historic change. The attempt of the Franco-German ruling class to create a new strong supra-national imperialist state to rival the US would have suffered a severe blow. A key element of the globalisation world order would have been shattered. The risk of protectionism and trade barriers within Europe would rise.

But the biggest effect would be beyond Europe. A powerful sphere of influence and power block in world politics would be significantly

weakened, opening a new and frenetic chase for influence and control of markets between the US and China along with the remaining major European powers.

Already China is taking a close interest in the Eurozone crisis. The *Financial Times* on 28 May reported one 'ray of light' over the Greek meltdown was China's willingness to use its vast stockpiles of surplus cash to fund the EU's bailout facilities. "Word of China's reported intent to stand by the eurozone's sovereigns has tempered fears for Greece", said Neil Mellor of Bank of New York Mellon, who drew comfort from "assurances that it will be a dominant presence at European Financial Stability auctions."

If the euro can only survive by subordinating itself to China, we can be sure that whether it collapses or not, the lasting effect of this crisis will have been to intensify global imbalances and global instability.

and even potential defaults looming. As we pointed out in *Workers Power* last month (WP May 2011, Fact and fiction: politics behind the deficit), the value of the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) has been raised because Spain could be bust.

As Spanish unemployment shatters the 20 per cent barrier and more than four in every 10 young people of working age are on the dole, international money markets are demanding still more vicious cuts in services, benefits and public provision.

The government of the misnamed Socialist party has been carrying out horrendous cuts already – but when they lost hand over fist in recent regional elections, investors demanded higher than ever returns for funding Spanish debt. The country's 10-year bond prices slumped as demand for Spanish bonds faded away for fear of default.

As the main squares of Madrid and Barcelona filled with young protesters

demanding revolution and “real democracy”, the governor of the Bank of Spain, Miguel Ordóñez, said the people would have to be made to suffer more. Or as the *Financial Times* put it, “the country should not accept the high cost of financing sovereign debt and must press ahead with reforms.” The Same crisis as Greece draws the same response from the bankers:

For profit to stay private, debt must become public, and the working class has to pay.

Even if Spain goes down, and even if the EFSF and the IMF have the cash to bail it out, there is no chance of Europe finding the cash for the next and even bigger looming bailout: Italy.

The Economist Information Unit insists that current EFSF plus IMF funding would “not be enough for Spain plus any other potentially vulnerable country, such as Belgium (which has funding needs of around €140 billion during 2011-13) and certainly not Italy (€820 billion).” With

a state debt of 120 per cent, the risk of an Italian bailout is real.

That risk showed signs of crystallising at the end of May. As fears spread for Greece and Spain, Italy's 10 year bond prices also dived, as rating agency Standard and Poor's put the country's debt on a 'negative' outlook. Berlusconi's corrupt rightwing regime responded by promising ... a package of cuts to balance the budget within just two years.

The working class needs to link up across Europe and fight the cuts. We need to say we won't pay for the bankers' crisis – and we need to refuse the lie that the deficit must be paid. Instead the bondholders and bankers should have their wealth and assets confiscated, the debts should be renounced, and a general strike should be launched in each country facing cuts until the bosses back down and the cuts packages are abandoned – or until we overthrow them and take the power into our own hands.

## The crisis in state finances

THE NEOLIBERAL drive to cut taxation on the rich and strip away public services in favour of private provision has massively reduced the ability of states to raise sufficient finance from their own capitalist and middle classes, while hugely expanding the role of capital markets and private investment in every sphere of life. So after the trillion dollar bailouts of the banks when they collapsed in 2008 and the massive slump in tax revenues during the recession, EU countries now have to fund ballooning benefits as unemployment rises from loans from rich multimillionaires and private fund managers (the bond markets).

This whole system of state finance is inherently unstable. Marx described in 1857-8 in his *Grundrisse* how crises of state debt moved on from one country to another, internationalising the crisis.

Or, as the less inspiring figure of John Wraith, fixed-income strategist at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, put it last month: “It is like a group of climbers roped together. As Greece slips, it pulls down countries such as Spain and Italy.”

The great credit crunch and banking crisis was caused by a slump in profits in the broader economy, prompting banks to write off their expectations of future interest, liquidate and destroy unprofitable assets in the private sector sparking a synchronised global recession in 2008-09. The capitalists' political reaction was to blame the working class for electing parties that “overspend”, and then to take the debt into the hands of the state. Their next step – obvious really – was to demand that debt be cut by devaluing and destroying our public services, our jobs, our pay, our healthcare and our schools – all over Europe.

It is the twin institutions of private property and the nation state that stand between the working class and a progressive resolution of this crisis. Instead of endless cuts we could renounce the debt to the bond markets. If one country did it, others would follow. Capitalists could be expropriated instead of working people. The squares of Athens, Barcelona and Madrid could echo not to anticapitalist protest, and police repression but to the sound of mass meetings electing representatives, linking up and planning our own economic and cultural life truly democratically, free from the dictatorship of capital.

# Spanish city centres occupied in fight against austerity and cuts

...continued from page 1

José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero are imposing €15 billion of spending cuts, up to 15 per cent cuts in civil servants' salaries, raising the retirement age from 65 to 67, and "freeing up the labour market" by weakening workplace protection and workers' rights. Big cuts in education and healthcare are being driven through by the regional governments: in Catalonia, some 10 per cent of the budget has been eliminated. The opposition People's Party (Partido Popular-PP) led by Mariano Rajoy totally supports these cuts and is an even bigger fan of privatisation and slashing labour rights. In addition the PP is mired in a corruption scandal in Valencia, where they were found to be selling government contracts to private companies in exchange for campaign contributions. Examples like this show the class basis of the PP and whom it will serve in government.

## Youth rise up!

The occupations have attracted large-scale support, especially on 18 May when 130,000 people demonstrated across Spain. An estimated 50,000 protested in Madrid, 15,000 in Barcelona and 10,000 in Seville. Smaller demonstrations took place in another 57 cities and towns.

The protests, variously referred to as the 15-M Movement, or as the #spanishrevolution (named after the twitter hashtag) has as its main slogan "real democracy now!" (*Democracia real YA!*). It was an initiative by a series of anti-neoliberal groups and NGOs such as Attac, Intermon Oxfam, Ecologists in Action or Youth without Future. Using Twitter and Facebook they issued and appeal to "the unemployed, poorly paid, the subcontracted workers, the precarious, young people..." to occupy the main squares on 15 May. Young people responded massively and magnificently – calling themselves *Los Indignados* – the outraged.

Like the revolutionaries in Tunisia and Egypt, the demonstrators used social media to put over the message at a time when the broadcast and print media, public as well as private, first ignored them, then ridiculed them and finally threatened them with the courts, the police and outright repression. Thousands of individual participants were thus able to counter the lies of the right-wing journalists and politicians instantaneously.

## Allies or enemies?

Their hostility to the main parties is understandable, since both are pledged to the austerity measures which will make the already bad condition for workers and youth unendurable. They have rejected attempts by PSOE politicians to come and address them. But the occupiers in Madrid have also made



The uprising across Spain has inspired other young across the continent to challenge their governments and the bosses

it clear that the trade unions were not welcome. This too is understandable – though a seriously wrong move. The major union federations – the *Sindicato Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) and *Confederación Sindical de las Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) – hardly present an attractive alternative to the young unemployed whose cause they have not actively championed.

Despite a one-day general strike last year, the unions signed an agreement with the government over reforms to the pensions system and the labour market. The union leaderships are selling the jobs of young people – future workers – in exchange for meagre reductions in the cuts. Instead they should be organising the unemployed and leading a mass uprising, demanding jobs for all. If they did this union membership and strength would soar.

This hostility to the trade unions is not universal however. Other camps in the more radical left cities like Barcelona have been organised along with local trade unions that have been pro-active in the working class communities and workplaces.

It is a good sign that the May Day demonstrations were large this year and demonstrators loudly condemned the cuts, but the union leaders have said little during the current youth radicalisation and indeed have done nothing to bring workers into action alongside them. This gap between the workers – some 2.7 million of whom are represented in the unions (15–16 per cent of the workforce) and the youth mobilised in the

May 15 movement – is enormously damaging to the interests of both.

## The programme of the movement

Though the actions of the 15 May Movement are inspiring – quite literally since they have been copied or will be copied in other countries – the political message put out by the representatives in Puerta del Sol is weak and in some cases wrong.

The Manifesto of the *Puerta del Sol*, for example, includes sharp condemnations of the present system. But the Manifesto does not dare to name this system as capitalism nor name the democratic, humane non-exploitative alternative to it – i.e. socialism. Still less does it say what social classes can bring this about or how. Instead it descends into "democratic" and populist phrase mongering.

For instance the *Puerta del Sol* assembly adopted 16 demands, including the democratisation of the election process and abolition of discriminatory laws, such as the European Space for Higher Education, the Immigration Law. It demanded basic rights, for housing, health care and education; greater government control over banks and businesses; reduced military spending; and the renationalisation of privatised public enterprises.

But these demands remain vague about what sort of democracy it is calling for. What about the existence of the monarchy? What about the denial of the Basques and other nationalities right to secede from the Spanish states if they so wish? It is also totally inadequate and when it

comes to economic demands. It does not even demand the total abandonment of the austerity programme, concrete measures to make the rich pay or take over the banks, and the provision of jobs for the millions of unemployed. It is all too clear that the NGO and libertarian organisers, in Puerta del Sol at least, have no programme or strategy to offer beyond protest and the building of ad hoc, temporary utopias. So what has the Spanish left to offer?

The United Left (*Izquierda Unida* or IU) supported the demonstration but confesses to have little connections with the youth there. It has, officially, around 50,000 members and nearly 2,700 local councillors. It was formed by smaller left groups around the core of the old Communist Party of Spain (PCE) in the mid-1980s. The IU election results reached a peak of 11 per cent in 1996 (2,600,000 votes) but it experienced a collapse to 5 per cent in the 2000 general elections because it presented no clear socialist alternative to the PSOE. Though its election results in the local and regional elections this May show a modest increase, the IU, despite its opposition to the austerity programme is a thoroughly reformist party, not a fighting organisation.

## How to win

Obviously the tactic of staying in permanent protest until the government resigns cannot be applied in "democratic Spain" as it was in Mubarak's Egypt. The municipal and regional elections on 22 May – in which the PSOE suffered a heavy defeat – underlined that if Zapatero were

forced to call early elections he would likely be replaced as prime minister by Rajoy of the PP. Indeed, if the unions and the workers movement remain passive a PP victory in the 2012 general elections seems certain. Under the PP austerity would continue – no doubt carried out with greater enthusiasm. The PP vociferously called on the government to send in the police to clear the squares of demonstrators before the local and regional polls.

The elections show the dilemma the demonstrators are in: how to bring about the change, the real democracy their placards demand? Calling for "real democracy" in a country with a functioning liberal democratic regime has little purchase, unless it can be linked to a more systematic critique of the dictatorship of capital which rules society behind the façade of parliament. Such a criticism must point to the methods and tasks in overthrowing the system – a real Spanish proletarian revolution – otherwise it simply poses superficial reforms, reforms which will be supportable and progressive but will fail to get to the root of the problem.

It is a damning indictment of the trade union leaders that they have not reached out to such people and brought them into the workers' movement. But the youth must not reject trade unions out of hand, and open hostility to trade unions being involved in the protests will have reactionary consequences, not just to divide the resistance, but to alienate the youth from the working class, the very force in society that can deliver the changes that they so desperately want.

With the right strategy capitalism can be overthrown in Spain – as it must be across the world. A determined fight by the working class against the government can smash the PSOE's austerity programme. There needs to be a general strike, not just a one day strike, but "all out and stay out" until all the movements demands are met or the government collapses.

To organise the general strike, strike committees with delegates from workplaces, communities, schools and colleges will be needed, plus workers defence squads to guard the picket lines. This would open up a direct revolutionary challenge to the power of the government and the capitalist class itself. This is why raising the banner of a socialist solution is so central to the resistance movement – a real, superior form of democracy of the rule of councils of recallable delegates elected in the workplaces and communities.

It would show Europe and the world that the cuts can be stopped and capitalism itself challenged with a real alternative. To do so we must first take power out of the hands of the rich and their puppets in parliament, then Socialism will become a real conscious goal of millions once again.

# Can the unions beat the cuts?

Jeremy Dewar

THE GLOBAL capitalist crisis has thrown a spotlight on the world's trade unions. Because the bosses and bankers are demanding that the working class pays for the crisis through job losses, falling pay, cheaper pensions and benefits, the destruction of the social wage – healthcare, education, affordable housing, etc. – big questions are being asked of the trade unions.

It is no accident that we have just witnessed the largest union demonstration in 30-40 years on 26 March, when up to half a million workers took over the streets of London. Nor that we are now expecting hundreds of thousands to strike on 30 June in coordinated action.

This is a new situation for the current generation of both militants and trade union leaders. Until recently, many activists would not look to the unions to lead the movement. From the anti-poll tax revolt through the anticapitalist movement to Stop the War, union members were certainly at the heart of the struggle but at the official level, the unions were peripheral or absent.

As the cold, harsh reality of the cuts dawns, however, workers are awakening to the fact that they need to fight back. And they are turning to their first line of defence: their workplace organisations.

This radicalisation of shop stewards and branch activists has been reflected in a series of resolutions calling on the TUC to organise a general strike at the NUJ, PCS and CWU conferences. While it is not enough to simply call on the TUC to act – its leaders have time and again said they are against a general strike – nevertheless it would be wrong to dismiss this as resolution-mongering, cheap talk. On the contrary, it is entirely right for workers to seek a general, that is, a *political* response to a *political* attack.

What is needed is to support and bring as many workers as possible out on strike on the 30 June, alongside fighting every single job loss, pension attack and pay cut with further, preferably indefinite action. Anti-cuts groups, with representatives from community groups and other unions, are ideally placed to provide solidarity and link the struggles – in the process they can become real action committees. By demanding the TUC call a general strike and threatening to organise one from below, we can win millions to action to throw out the cuts programme and the coalition government.

## Strike figures

One objection to such a strategy is that the unions today have launched very few strikes against the cuts; days lost to strike action in the past 12 months number the lowest since 1931 (145,000). Despite several, notable local disputes, only the UCU has launched national strike days – and then under the influence and pressure of the radical students' movement at the end of last year.

Right-wing union leaders use these



statistics to back up their argument that their "members are not ready" to strike, to use the phrase that Dave Prentis of Unison coined at the TUC General Council recently. But this is a classic piece of blaming the members for the crimes of the leadership. Could it be that the strikes statistics are so low because the union leaders have refused to campaign for and call strikes?

Heather Wakefield, Unison's head of local government, when asked if her union would strike in defence of pensions, replied that such action was "premature" and that "the last thing Unison wants is to be Cameron's NUM".

This is the right wing leaders' ace: the unions cannot win against a hard-nosed Tory government. In fact, the card turns out to be a joker – but the joke is on us. The miners did indeed lose their heroic strike in 1984-85, but only because the other unions did not link up and strike alongside them, only because the TUC failed to call a general strike even though the courts, police and government had rounded on the miners in an overtly political attack.

The miners' defeat was not inevitable, but the result of inept, cowardly, and in some cases downright treacherous leadership. Dockers, railworkers and council employees were all willing to strike with the miners, but were held back or signed shoddy deals with Thatcher to scotch the united front. To add insult to injury – or rather to add another injury – the same bureaucrats now use the miners' defeat, which their

predecessors colluded in, to justify sell-outs or limit actions to useless one-day protests.

## New realism – again

At the time, the union leaders called this ideology "New realism". Its message still holds sway. They say the unions can no longer undertake an all out war to win, as the old industries have been destroyed or decimated and the new 'service based' working class does not have the same class consciousness. Even if they try to smash government policy through mass strike action, this will only alienate middle England and reinforce the Tories at the polls. Instead the unions should only seek to protest – with tactics the middle classes can support, like peaceful demos – and build an electoral alliance for Labour, accepting that Labour will have to move rightwards and court the LibDems to win.

This strategy is wrong at every turn and we have just had 13 years of New Labour government to prove it. For a start, keeping your powder dry isn't a good strategy when the roof's leaking. By accepting the need for cuts, albeit at a slower pace, by negotiating give-backs and by limiting workers' strikes, there is no guarantee voters will rally to Labour. Neil Kinnock didn't win in 1992, so why should Ed Miliband in 2015? If workers lose historic battles, they will inevitably be demoralised.

Secondly, the strategy offers nothing more than another downward spiral of disappointed hopes and betrayal. Labour is committed to

pushing through cuts at council and government level. Going along with this is a fatal trap. Only if the workers, through their affiliated unions and their bold actions, demand the withdrawal and reversal of the cuts, would Labour feel the pressure to change tack.

Finally and most importantly, it is simply false to say that working class action cannot defeat the government. The coalition is not popular and does not have a mandate for its austerity programme. Strike action, if it is determined, sustained and generalised, has the power to draw all the popular classes onto the street with their demands. Sure the unions organise a minority of the workers, but a strike wave will open the doors and encourage millions of others to join them – just like they did in the 1960s and 1970s.

The middle classes will tend to follow whichever of the two main classes which shows it can lead society out of the crisis. If this is the Coalition, then it will stick with what it has got. But if the workers show that the coalition's policies are bringing chaos to the streets and the workplaces to a halt, then they will split and many will side with the unions.

## Rank and file, left and right

To break this cycle of defeat and despair, rank and file trade union militants need tactics and a strategy. The tactics they need are ones that will help them to relate to the left as well as the right wing union leaders – and they are different tactics. The strategy, which encompasses these tactics

and makes them possible, is to build their own networks and organisation that is completely independent of either wing of the bureaucracy.

The right wing of the TUC has hardened over the course of the crisis. The GMB's unelected general secretary Paul Kenny endorses the government's work-for-your-dole programme and supports privatisation. Unison's Dave Prentis refuses to link up strikes and even blocked a joint demo with Unite against the NHS bill.

These people are traitors – agents of the bosses in the union movement. We should organise and support unofficial strike action wherever necessary, fight the witch-hunt of militants and call an unofficial conference to unite all those branches and individuals who want to fight the cuts.

But there is also a left wing. And it is growing. We should applaud and demand they follow through when leaders move to the left, but condemn and resist them whenever they move rightwards.

Unite has recently called on its councillors and MPs to vote against all the cuts, agreed to coordinate strikes with other unions and balloted its health members to come out on 30 June. Unite's left leader Len McCluskey has been pressing for coordinated action at the TUC and reportedly came near to a fist fight with Prentis. Yet McCluskey been instrumental in selling out the BA cabin crew and will still play the right-wing card when it suits.

The PCS, RMT and FBU are all more consistently left wing, but have all pulled their punches, calling one day strikes when indefinite action is needed, calling off action whenever talks are offered and selling out disputes.

We must call on them to be more consistent and truly democratic. Put all strikes under the control of the strikers. Link the disputes and agree to come out together – stay out until every single union has won. Defy anti-union laws whenever they are used to break the workers' resistance.

To mount this kind of organised pressure, it is essential that militants and socialists launch a new kind of opposition within the unions, a rank and file movement, totally independent of the trade union bureaucracy. None of the left leaders have dismantled their undemocratic union machines, which continue to exert a conservative, caste-like control over our organisations. Despite McCluskey's reported pugnacity against the right at the General Council he has taken this outside the committee rooms of Congress House. Not one of them have broken ranks with the right wing on the TUC, openly exposed their sabotage and appealed to directly to the rank and file members of these unions for solidarity and joint action.

Only an organisation of the rank and file can do this. The urgent task for militants today is to build such a movement.

# Homophobic Britain

Chris Newcombe

FROM THE PRESENCE of Elton John and his partner at the royal wedding, you might conclude that lesbians and gay men had achieved not just equality, but actual respectability. A look at recent homophobic violence and the chilling statistics forces you to think again.

A recent violent attack left Philip Sallon with a 50-50 chance of survival. Across London, homophobic crime fell by 3 per cent in 2010, but in the West End it rose by 21 per cent, and the small drop over London follows a 20 per cent rise in the previous period.

Over the years, other cases of appalling violence demonstrate the ferocious hatred involved. Jody Dobrowski, beaten to death in 2005. Oliver Hemsley, viciously stabbed and left paralyzed in 2008. Ian Baynham, kicked to death by teenagers in Trafalgar Square in 2009. At almost the same time, in 'gay friendly' Brighton, a young lesbian couple were punched in the head by two men,



Supporters of Edson Cosmas - see below

while a third looked on. The list of attacks because of someone's sexuality is a terrifying reminder of how homophobia is still deadly.

Discrimination and abuse are also rife. In a recent case, a gay couple were thrown out of the John Snow pub in Soho for kissing. This was not an isolated incident and seems to be part of a trend. Following the attack on Philip Sallon, his friends held a

march through Soho to appeal for witnesses. As a result, one came forward - but the parade itself was attacked!

Despite these widely reported cases, homophobic crime remains under reported. One reason is that victims don't believe the police will take complaints seriously. When the two Brighton lesbians were attacked, police waited 12 days before appealing for witnesses. No

wonder those targeted by gay-haters are cynical regarding police action.

Homophobia is also still rife in education. Teachers at the recent NUT conference warned that endemic homophobia is likely to rise as the number of faith schools grows. The Catholic Church has criticised the national code of conduct to challenge discrimination, clearly signalling that religious institutions cannot be trusted to uphold equality in the schools they control. Recall, too, that the Catholic Church has been responsible for some of the worst and most widespread abuse of children and youth in its educational institutions.

There is no dividing line between verbal abuse and bullying and violent attacks on victims of prejudice. Often, verbal abuse is the prelude to an attack, and insults and bullying as a whole 'legitimise' physical assaults by demeaning and dehumanizing the targets of verbal abuse.

What can be done to combat this wave of gay hatred? Undoubtedly, the best answer to those who want to

turn back the equality clock is a new drive to demand full rights and social equality for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people and queer people generally.

We need to build a militant activist movement, and to uphold the right and establish the practice of self-defence. We also have to dispel the complacency that is based on the false idea that equality was established when celebrities like Elton John and David Furnish were finally able to tie the knot.

It is crucial that this movement be rooted in working class politics. The trade unions have been central in promoting and upholding LGBT rights in the workplace and in wider society. But we cannot be complacent; we need a militant movement to inject some radicalism and urgency into the campaign for equality.

Equally, winning the mass of workers - the only social force capable of creating a society free of exploitation and oppression - to the cause of lesbian and gay equality is the key to ultimate victory.

## Gay rights - a class issue

Capitalism does all it can to preserve its form of the family and with it the oppression of women, lesbians and gays. The working class has no interest in doing so - indeed quite the opposite. By fighting for womens liberation and the ending of lesbian and gay oppression, it increases the forces fighting its class enemy. The working class movement must become, in Lenin's words, the Tribune of all the exploited and the oppressed. Thus we must fight for lesbian and gay rights as long as

capitalism exists. But only by creating a new social and economic reality where exploitation of labour power for profit is a thing of the past - classless communism - can social oppression finally be ended.

What are the implications of this for the struggle itself, and for the lesbian and gay and workers' movements? Middle or even upper class gays and lesbians have taken up the fight for equality, but are also often able to avoid the worst effects of oppression. And being oppressed does not automatically

turn you into a rebel.

Working class lesbians and gay men formally share the same oppression as their middle or upper class counterparts, but in more extreme forms, and with much less opportunity to escape either the family environment or oppression in the workplace. Furthermore, the class interests of working class and upper class lesbians and gays are quite antagonistic.

To be successful, therefore, a movement for lesbian and gay liberation needs to do two things.

First, it must develop a strong, class conscious working class core, able to work out a programme that challenges the social basis of oppression. Second, the movement has to resist separatism or autonomism and ally itself with the broader workers' movement - unions and political parties - ensuring these become bastions of the struggle for equality, and that lesbian and gay liberation becomes integral to the struggle for working class liberation and socialism.

## Defend Edson Cosmas!

The British Home Office is trying to deport Eddy Cosmas, a gay refugee and LGBT activist from Tanzania. Homosexuality is illegal in Tanzania; prison terms can be as much as 25 years. Anti-gay violence is rife and Eddy fears for his life if he is returned. The Home Office claim there is not enough evidence that Eddy is gay and are seeking to deport him as soon as possible. A campaign has been organised to demand Eddy's right to stay in Britain. Send messages of protest: [britishembassyenquiries@gmail.com](mailto:britishembassyenquiries@gmail.com)

## Where does homophobia come from?

WHY IS homophobia still so prevalent around the world? Can lesbians and gay men achieve equality under capitalism? To answer these questions, we need to understand the role families and relationships play within the current social and economic system - capitalism.

Families vary from the extended family where several couples or generations live together to the two adult nuclear family typical of most developed capitalist countries. In earlier societies, and their survivals today, the family was a unit of production - the family farm or small workshop. But capitalism has restricted the family to a social unit, where the ability to work is daily reproduced and the next generation of workers is nurtured and socialised. According to bourgeois ideology the family is a place of security, acceptance and love.

But for all women, for lesbians and gay men it is also a place of social oppression. Women are oppressed because of their role as the main child

rearer, carer, cook and cleaner of the household. Men are expected to be the principal wage earner and to play their main role outside the home. From the bosses' viewpoint, workers their wives and children are simply present and future means of producing wealth and profit. But lesbians, gay men and those people who wish to change their gender are victims the vigorous enforcement of the heterosexual roles in society. Thus only a (usually) monogamous, heterosexual, child rearing unit is promoted as "natural" and "normal." It's no surprise, therefore, that any behaviour that is seen as a challenge to the family is stigmatized and repressed.

Sexual and moral codes reinforce this, no matter how stultifying and oppressive this is for all, including for heterosexual men. But women, children, lesbians and gay men suffer especially. Religious bodies still play an important role in perpetuating this morality.

Under our present society, the idea

of men and women falling in love, having children and living together 'happily-ever-after' is a powerful emotional ideal, even though the reality of married life under capitalism is often at variance with this. The number of people who get divorced or live unhappily 'for the sake of the kids' testifies to the gap, between the ideal and the reality. Yet if same sex couples seek to live in this way many people still see them as unnatural and abnormal, wrong, or immoral.

This is why even people who are not religious can be full of hate for gay men and lesbians, without even really knowing why.

Until relatively recent times, medical 'science' and psychology also promoted the view that non-heterosexual behaviour was perverse, sick or abnormal, and even attempted to 'cure' it! American Psychologists treated homosexuality as a mental illness until 1975.

And for many years homosexuality was treated as a crime. Many

states had a battery of repressive laws enforced by the capitalist state imposed brutal penalties for gay sex and laws still deny full equality for single-sex partners. Today many states around the world still imprison or execute people for same sex relationships.

### Gay rights in history

The reality is that the heterosexual family has not always existed in the form that it does today. In ancient Greece relationships between men and women were seen as being necessary for having children and maintaining the household. Greek men viewed love between older men and teenage boys (pederasty) as being a higher and more virtuous form of love than the 'erotic' love of women. From Alexander the Great to the Roman Emperor Hadrian many famous figures in classical antiquity had male lovers. In 600 BC the famous and respected poet Sappho, from the island of Lesbos wrote

a series of love poems for young women, which today formed the basis for the word lesbian.

The Spartan warriors, recently featured in the film 300 institutionalised homosexuality as a way of developing a closer bond to make them better warriors. Of course the movie 300 ignored that bit of history.

Indeed it was also discovered to be the case in other warrior castes in societies in Asia, the Americas and Africa. Western missionaries from the 16th to the 20th century were usually scandalised by this discovery and conducted brutal campaigns to stamp it out and spread homophobia with Christianity. Yet despite horrible denigration and violent persecution same sex relationships always exist in all societies. The claim that it is unnatural or harmful to society has no basis in science or history. Homophobia - with its results in turns of murders and beatings, its driving of young people to suicide, its psychological misery, is truly against against human nature and society.

# Marxism

Many people think that the police in Britain is somehow neutral in political matters. But recent events have exposed the real nature of the police force. **Simon Hardy** examines the role of the police and the state in our society

## The role of the police

LORD IMBERT, ex-chief of the Metropolitan Police, recently spoke in the House of Lords concerning a proposal from David Cameron to make police chiefs elected. In the debate he said "My view... is that living in a democracy means living where there is a free press, a well informed public and, most importantly, a politically neutral police service." The view that in a democracy the police are politically neutral because they are servants of the public and therefore beyond political influence is a common one – and it is wrong.

The nature of the police cannot be understood without understanding the nature of the state of which they are a part. Frederick Engels in *The Origin of the Family Private Property and the State* describes how the state arose with the development of private and the dissolution or restriction of communal property. In early non-state societies based on clan and tribal structures everyone could bear arms and were called upon to do so to defend the community. As exploiting and exploited classes emerged so the latter had to be increasingly deprived of weapons and military training and special repressive forces – an army and a police force developed.

Engels wrote: "This special, public power is necessary because a self-acting armed organisation of the population has become impossible since the split into classes.... This public power exists in every state; it consists not merely of armed men but also of material adjuncts, prisons, and institutions of coercion of all kinds, of which gentile [clan] society knew nothing...."

In succeeding stages of human history, those based on slavery or serfdom the the state was an obvious weapon of the rich and was used against anyone who rose up to challenge them internally as well as against external enemies. This was all the clearer since the great landowners, their male children and their lesser landowning dependents also staffed the armed force as its commanders and officers.

However in the capitalist epoch the state makes the claim to be truly democratic – the rule of the people, for the people, by the people. We elect our representatives, they debate

and pass laws and the police enforce them. But the essential nature of the state has not changed, it exists as an instrument for the exploiting class to enforce the conditions of that exploitation upon the rest of us. Its democratic appearance covers up the reality of a dictatorship of capital over our lives. As Lenin wrote "It is natural for a liberal to speak of "democracy" in general; but a Marxist will never forget to ask: 'for what class?'"

In capitalism a tiny minority of bosses own and control the economy. It is in the corporate boardrooms that real decisions are made which affect the lives of millions of people. And capitalism is a system of inherent inequality. The anarchy of the market and the constant drive for profit leaves countless millions across the planet in desperate conditions of absolute poverty. Even in the richer Western world workers are exploited and alienated from their labour. On top of this 'everyday crisis' of the system, capitalism regularly goes into a recession which sees wages cut, people thrown out of work and workplaces closed.

To maintain order in a system which is so deeply antagonistic to the majority of people the bosses rely on the state to enforce the rights of property – but not the right to work or the right *not* to live in poverty.

But the capitalist state – in its democratic form – cannot openly admit this. It has to claim that the private interest of the billionaires are in reality the general interest. Parliament, political parties, the press and broadcast media, academics, economists, all have the job of persuading the masses that this is in fact the case – manufacturing an ideology for the ruling class which appears to be objective, scientific, and sheer common sense.

Politicians are not just rulers, through their control of the army and the police, but foollers, professional "persuaders." Billionaire owners of the press and private TV stations and state pressure on the BBC, all make sure that any fundamental alternative to these ideas are rarely if ever heard. David Cameron uses his position as Prime Minister to constantly claims that over-spending on public services caused the deficit and that there is no alternative to cuts. The most his opponents dare say is that it should be done at half the



speed. The media (also owned by the bosses) repeat this reactionary hymn day in and day out, in order to sow confusion and despondency in the wider population. As Marx said:

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force."

But these ideological attacks on us can only go so far. When the banks were bailed out at taxpayers' expense and the first demands for cuts were made, millions thought – why should we have to pay for their crisis? But first Labour under Gordon Brown, and now the coalition, worked overtime to bury this idea and replace it with the one that "we have overspent on the national credit card and so – just like we do as individuals – the country has to make drastic cuts."

Even now people might be more willing to accept the idea that cuts are necessary. But when it comes to the closure of a nursery that they use, or loosing their own job, people begin to organise to resist. This is when the bedrock repressive function of the state becomes necessary, "an apparatus of violence" as Lenin called it.

These instruments of coercion come in the form of the police, the law courts and the prisons.

The role of the police in defending the capitalist class was outlined by none other than Derek Barnett, chief of the Superintendents Association who complained that cuts to police spending would leave them unprepared to deal with civil unrest that will inevitably result from the governments austerity programme.

"In an environment of cuts across the wider public sector, we face a period where disaffection, social and industrial tensions may well rise... We will require a strong, confident, properly trained and equipped police service, one in which morale is high and one that believes it is valued by the government and public."

The violence meted out to the students in autumn 2010, or historically against the miners and print workers in the 1980s, or at countless other working class protests and demonstrations, is evidence of the kind of training and equipment that a strong police force feels that it needs to keep the government safe from justified anger attacks on the youth, workers and the poor.

**The institutions of the state will forcibly resist any attempt to take them over and make them democratically accountable to the majority, it is not possible to capture state power and use it for the purposes of the working class**





## The workers' state

MARX AND ENGELS objected in principle to drawing up blue-prints of a socialist society. They restricted themselves to saying that a socialised economy would be directed according to a democratic plan by the "associated producers." Marx praised the Paris Commune for its replacement of the centralised bureaucratic state machine by the direct democracy of working people.

Finally Marx pointed out a crucial difference between the kind of democracy we have in countries like Britain and France and the superior model of the Paris Commune "Instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, constituted in communes."

The Russian revolutionary Lenin was able to develop these ideas on the state on the basis of the Russian Revolutions of 1905 and 1907, when the Russian workers developed the workers council (or Soviet). The seizure of power by the Bolshevik led Soviets gives us an even more valuable example than the Paris Commune.

Anarchists argue that after the revolution society should move straight to a stateless community, because all states are inherently the tool of exploiting and repressive minorities. But this is utopian, since after a revolution the capitalist class will inevitably struggle to take back power and a country where the workers had overthrown their bosses would no doubt be threatened with all sorts of military action by capitalist governments in other countries, as happened to Russia after the 1917 revolution.

In Russia after the 1917 February revolution, when the Tsar was overthrown, a liberal capitalist government took power. Workers and peasants set up soviets initially to 'keep a check' on the new government. The Bolsheviks raised the slogan "all power to the soviets" – a demand that gained support across the

working class, the army and the peasantry. This led to the October revolution, when the working class took power and a government was formed based on the soviets.

This was the first time in history that a majority class like the workers had taken power – and stands today as a brilliant example for working people all over the world that they do not have to accept the exploitation of the bosses or the violence of the police. We can take control of our own lives.

In Russia the development towards a more democratic socialist society was blocked by the isolation of the Russian revolution and the rise to power of a bureaucratic caste of officials headed by Stalin. This counter-revolution occurred because Russia was a very under-developed country and the attempted revolutions in countries like Hungary and Germany were defeated. As both Lenin and Trotsky observed it was easier for the Bolsheviks to take power but harder to hold onto it, but in the West it is harder to take power but will be easier to build socialism.

How can we ensure that a revolution does not degenerate into bureaucracy and dictatorship? Through regular elections and recallability of all officials, no officials to earn more than the average national wage and a system of collective decision making – to make 'everyone a bureaucrat' so that no one can be a bureaucrat.

A socialist state is a state which at the very moment it is created begins to wither away, being replaced simply by the administration of society collectively. As socialism develops and there is no more poverty or social inequality crime will fall away, people will become less alienated and frustrated with their lives and a state as we understand it today will simply become unnecessary. This final stage is what Marx referred to as Communism, a society in which there are no classes and no exploitation as everything is produced communally for the good of all.

# he state

## Reform or revolution

THERE IS A DEBATE in the socialist movement between those that want to reform the system through elections and those that want a revolution to bring the working class to power. Reformists, like those on the Labour left, assume that the state is neutral and that the capitalist class would surrender power if a working class party was elected on a socialist programme and began to expropriate the bosses.

The modern state is usually divided into an executive, judicial and a legislative branch. In Britain elections take place to the legislative part of the state – the parliament. In a parliamentary system like Britain the governmental part of executive has to command a majority in parliament. In presidential republics like the USA, the president is elected and he then chooses the executive from business, academia and the armed forces. But prime ministers and presidents – let alone parliaments or the US Congress are not the wielders of ultimate power.

The true executive, both the enforcers (the army and police chiefs, the judges) and the administrators (the civil service mandarins) are unelected. But these institutions will forcibly resist any attempt to take them over and make them democratically accountable.

As Marx wrote after the experience of the Paris Commune in 1871 when the capitalists slaughtered the working class who had taken power, "the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes." The task of the workers' revolution is to smash the capitalist state depriving the capitalist class of power.

But history has provided us with countless examples where peaceful attempts to build socialism through parliament led to disaster as the capitalists organised coups and overthrew governments, like in Chile in 1973. Even in Britain a coup was planned by several military men and business leaders led by Lord Mountbatten in the mid 1970s against

a possible left wing Labour government. One general who had been involved in the coup plot explained to a documentary crew that in the event of the coup they "had prepared a sort of speech, which the Queen might read out on the BBC that asked the people to stand behind the armed forces as there was a breakdown of law and order and the government could not keep the unions in control."

Clearly the powers-that-be have no respect for democracy when it threatens their vital interests. The capitalists in Germany, Italy and Spain turned to fascism in the 1920s and 1930s to smash the workers movement along with all forms of democracy.

The bosses happily use force against us when they need to. This is why we need a revolution against the bosses system and the state that protects them. A revolution must break up the armed power of the state, dissolve the police force and the army and replace it with the armed working class.

## Defending democracy

Despite the limitations of bourgeois democracy, socialists defend democratic rights against any attempts to undermine them. In this sense we are far more democratic than even many so-called democrats who are happy to pass laws that attack our fundamental rights.

Liberal democracy was an important development in the history of humanity and its struggle for freedom. Under feudalism in Europe there was no democracy what so ever for the vast majority of people. The notion that politics is based on popular consent is a central part of civil society, and gives ordinary people access to political and social life. Across the Middle East and North Africa people are struggling to constitute civil society, the right to association, the liberty to debate politics and make informed choices. These rights form an important part of our modern world.

Even if genuine democracy is impossible under capitalism what

freedoms we do have are important and must be defended and extended. We have to mobilise against any attempts to strengthen the repressive powers of the state or to take away our political rights.

In countries that suffer under dictatorships the demand for a constituent assembly is central to the struggle for freedom. A constituent assembly, based on one person one vote, with representatives elected by the people is the highest form of democracy that can be achieved under capitalism. The task of such a body is to write a constitution embodying the popular will. However a constituent assembly alone cannot organise the working class where it is most powerful, at the points of production and distribution which is why workers councils are essential to overthrowing capitalism – something a constituent assembly which operates within the limits of bourgeois democracy, cannot do.

women's perspective  
**JOSEPHINE CASSIDY**

## SlutWalk: women fight back against misogyny and rape

The SlutWalk movement has struck a chord with young women across the world and has put the issue of rape and sexual assault back on the agenda.

The phenomenon started in Toronto when a policeman instructed female students "to avoid looking like sluts" to protect their personal safety. This attitude puts the blame on the victims of rape, not the attacker. Since then, women have taken to the streets under the banner: "whatever we wear, wherever we go, yes means yes and no means no!" SlutWalk protests are now being organised across the country as women rise up to fight back.

Every week 2,000 women are raped in Britain but 95 per cent of cases are never reported. Rape has a lower conviction rate than any other serious crime, with only 6 per cent of cases ending in jail time for rapists. Courts continue to base their verdicts on a woman's sexual history and dress. In a recent London Student survey, 17 per cent of students said that a woman who dressed in 'sexy clothing' was at least partially responsible if raped.

And more recently, government minister Ken Clarke has tried to distinguish between 'more' and 'less' serious rapes, implying that women can be more or less "unwilling" to be raped.

This is a shocking reminder of how far we still have to go to change attitudes towards rape. And with proposed cuts to rape crisis centres, it is clear that this whole government (not only Ken Clarke) does not see rape as a serious issue.

SlutWalk is therefore a much-needed initiative to promote "the radical notion that nobody deserves to be raped".

With nearly 10,000 showing their support on Facebook, SlutWalk has captured the imagination of a generation of young women who have been brought up trapped between supposed equality and liberation and the stigmatisation of our sexuality.

When women choose what to wear, we are not only choosing what feels comfortable or looks good, but negotiating our way through the maze of social and cultural values which our clothing embodies.

And let's not forget the irony of a situation in which women are called sluts for wearing too little while on the other side of the Channel, women have been banned from wearing the niqab and covering up too much. These are all fronts in the struggle under capitalism for control over our bodies.

The movement has sparked off controversy at both ends of the political spectrum, with Tory MP Louise Bagshawe accusing the march of "lionising promiscuity". These accusations do nothing to change attitudes. In fact, this attitude is only a small step away from that of the Toronto policeman: imposing a moral order on women and criticising women who are sexually active with many partners as somehow bringing the gender into disrepute.

At the other end of the spectrum, some feminists and women's rights campaigners have also criticised the march for attempting to re-appropriate language which they say is too closely tied to misogyny to ever be reclaimed.

If SlutWalk was to develop into a movement focussed on reclaiming oppressive words, this would be a step backwards.

But the struggle for women's liberation will not take place on the terrain of language. We will win equality by challenging sexist ideas and attitudes and by changing the material conditions which give rise to them.

While the name SlutWalk has caused controversy, it is this in-your-face affront to conservative values which has appealed to many young women. However, the next step for the SlutWalk movement must be to broaden out. With so many cases of rape taking place within the family, any movement against sexual abuse needs to open itself up to women who have been victims of domestic abuse, who may not feel represented under the banner of SlutWalk.

These protests have the potential to be the first step towards a new women's movement which can fight against violence, for control of our bodies and also against cuts to women's jobs, benefits and services.

It's not the re-appropriation of oppressive language that is at the heart of the SlutWalk phenomenon; this is not what will make so many young women take to the streets. For them, SlutWalk is about challenging attitudes about sexual assault, it's about the way moral values are imposed on our sexuality and the way we dress, and saying: fuck you - I'll wear what I want!

★ USA

# President of war

Jamie Traska

OBAMA'S 2009 Nobel Peace Prize must be the most underserved ever. He launched the war surge in Afghanistan, on top of a 10 year occupation resulting in tens of thousands of Afghan deaths. The deliberate killing of civilians, the torture of captured 'enemies', the trampling on of international law and agreements, and the installation of puppet regimes have continued under Obama, just as under Bush and Clinton. His recent trip to Europe was aimed at reaffirming the importance of the military alliance between US and European - specifically British - imperialism. Rebutting the claim that countries like China represent the future, that we are witnessing the decline of American and European power around the world he stated - "That argument is wrong. The time for our leadership is now." He went on to claim "we remain the greatest catalysts for global action."

At the same time Obama wrapped up this reassertion of US-European global dominance in the claim that the values of democracy and individual freedom worldwide were the motive for all the wars and bombings launched by the Western world.

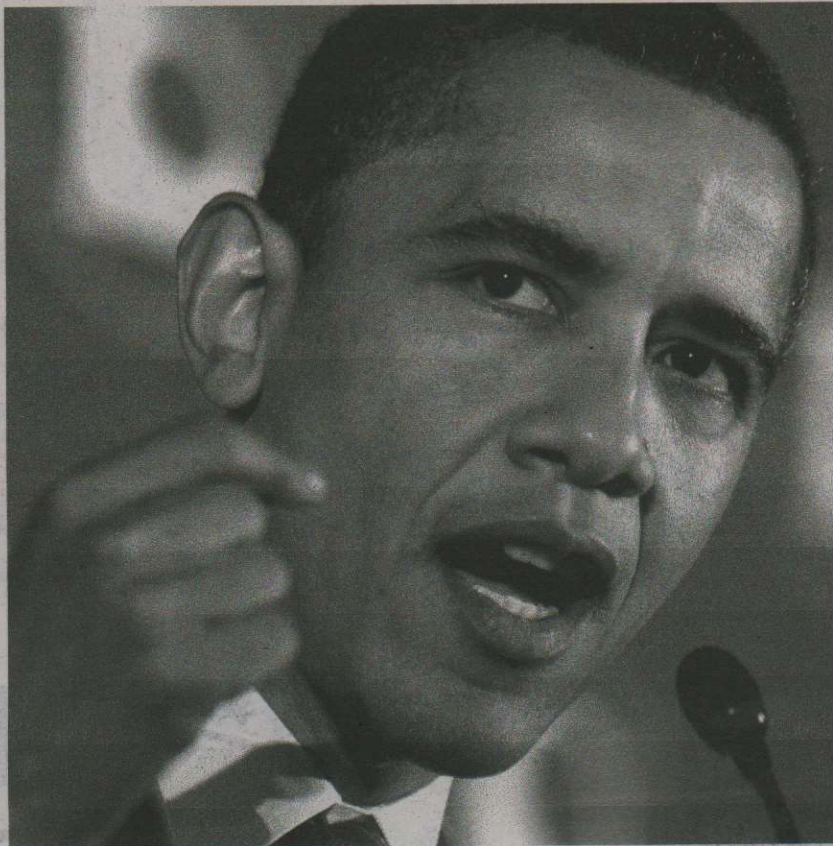
When he announced the killing of Osama Bin Laden to the US, Obama was less coy about the motives for the exercise of US might: "... as a country, we will never tolerate our security being threatened, nor stand idly by when our people have been killed. We will be relentless in defense of our citizens and our friends and allies".

When Obama sent the US Navy SEALs to assassinate bin Laden, he did not consult either the Pakistan government or military, and admitted the hit squad was authorised to fight Pakistani soldiers if they tried to intervene. When Pakistan asked the US to reduce the use of armed drones in Pakistani airspace, which has enormously increased during Obama's presidency, the US simply refused.

Obama's appointment of the "political general" David Petraeus to head the CIA is part of the creation of a huge fused military-intelligence apparatus which, according to the Washington Post, includes some 1,271 government agencies and 1,931 private companies, with a budget last year of at least \$80.1 billion. This enormous expenditure is not "in defense of (US) citizens" but to secure US economic, military and political interests across the globe.

In the summer of 2010, the Obama administration declared the "end" of combat operations in Iraq. But 50,000 "advisors" and private security contractors remain on Iraqi soil. Even though American armed forces will no longer be responsible for leading defensive operations, the Iraqi National Army and Police Forces are heavily controlled by US "advisors" in order to ensure a reliable and compliant government.

The framework agreement for "total withdrawal" by the end of 2011 is highly dubious. Not only will more than \$2.4 billion have gone into a network of permanent base structures by that time, but also the withdrawal is also dependent on 'conditions on the ground.' The bases along the border with Iran - especially Combat Outpost Shocker - will play a promi-



nent role when US imperialism ups the ante on Iran. It is clear that the US is in Iraq for the long haul and will keep its iron grip on the country.

The dilemma that is Afghanistan presents no better picture. The "Kill-Team" photos revealed a glimpse of the situation in occupied Afghanistan and the atrocities of imperialist wars in general. Several US soldiers posed as hunters, displaying their freshly killed "game" with the accused smiling and kneeling behind the slain corpse, holding up the bloodied head for the camera to see. Some soldiers even cut off fingers of some of the victims to save as macabre souvenirs. The troop surge has seen a significant increase in civilian and military casualties - 2010 saw the highest number of US fatalities since the war began.

Now the West and Karzai want to pressure the Taliban into a compromise deal. Karzai has already been trying to bring the Islamists to the table, to get them on board with the current coalition government. Winning support from sections of the Taliban is the latest strategy of the US after 10 years of failing to develop a stable regime in Afghanistan. At the same time, the military presence will continue to make itself felt, even after the supposed troop reductions scheduled for this summer. Just like in Iraq, the bases will remain either in Afghanistan or surrounding countries and we can expect US army advisors and private security contractors to operate in Afghanistan for an indefinite period, regardless of any official handover to Afghan forces.

The war in Afghanistan has long ago spilled over the border into Pakistan. Thousands of civilians have died from US drone attacks and the political situation in Pakistan is anything but stable. And the US is actively contributing to the destabilization by publicly blaming Pakistan for knowing about Bin Laden's whereabouts. In doing so, the US is paving the way for more attacks and an increased aggression against Pakistan.

The US is in a desperate struggle to maintain a sympathetic regime in Yemen, a country that is a focal point of interna-

tional trade. The Houthi rebels in the North are struggling for secession which would put US control of that region in danger.

Throughout 2010 the US continued its bombing campaign and recently also started to use armed drones in an attempt to kill senior Al-Qaeda leaders on the Arabian Peninsula. However, just like in Afghanistan, fighting against and killing radical Islamists is only part of a grander strategy of geo-political domination in the region. Controlling the Bab-el-Mandeb strait with its enormous freight traffic means controlling the chokepoint of international trade and surveying military troop deployment in the region.

### Obama's hypocrisy

It is for these reasons that Obama's 'Arab Spring' speech on 19 May rings hollow. The speech, praising the mass movements of 'the people' in Tunisia and Egypt overthrew (US-supported) dictators, stated that the US is "committed" to the "long-standing partnership" with Bahrain, and that the regime has a "legitimate interest in the rule of law."

Even Obama's relatively harsh words for Israel in the context of usual diplomatic language towards the country had its purpose in calming the renewed aspiration of Palestinians for their own state. His plan outlined a two-state 'solution' with a demilitarised, disarmed Palestine sharing a border with an armed-to-the-teeth and hostile Israel.

The two faces of Barack Obama: the tough warlord for domestic consumption and abroad as the patron of the Arab revolutions and Palestinian freedom, reflect the dilemma facing the ageing superpower. It has to use its own military muscle to defend its assets, but at the same time is fearful of provoking the millions now rising up against their rulers.

Given the contrast between the American President's fine words and his foul deeds and continued foul deeds of his Israeli allies - this deception is certain to fail in the end. In the words of the excellent American proverb - "You can't fool all of the people all of the time".

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# Labour: Shame on you for turning blue!

Luke Cooper

IT IS TESTAMENT to the lack of real political debate inside the modern Labour Party that the Blue Labour phenomenon has caused quite a stir. It is also a sign of how desperately the party is trying to make headway to deliver an election victory in four years time.

At least it has stimulated a debate, one which tries to address 'fundamentals' about what Labour should be for. And it makes a change from the argument over how fast to cut public spending which has occupied the parliamentary party since Labour went into opposition.

Promoted by Labour peer Maurice Glasman, the movement started out as the brain child of a handful of MPs, peers and academics, but has since won the ear of party leader, Ed Miliband, who has written a preface for a Blue Labour e-book. It comes at a time when the Labour Party is going through a so-called 'listening' exercise with the party rank and file, following heavy and justified criticism that they haven't presented an alternative to the Tories.

Blue – the colour of Labour's traditional enemy clearly a deliberately provocative choice. Glasman says it is "a completely agitational idea to provoke a conversation about what went wrong with the Blair project."

Glasman's main argument is that the party needs to re-discover its socially conservative 'roots' but at the same time its 'radicalism'.

## Back to basics

But Glasman's conservatism is of the 'small-c' variety, not the Thatcherite version. He invokes an image of the pre-1945 Labour Party, with its supposed concern for community, traditional British values, and hostility to the runaway excesses of capital. Blue Labour's critique cuts across Blair's New Labour and 'Old Labour', associated with the establishment of the welfare system following the World War II. Glasman argues, Blair was 'demented' to accept finance capital's vision of globalisation, but, tellingly, he argues Old Labour 'was worse', because it lost sight of traditional community with bureaucratic centralisation.

Glasman's attack on Blair will strike a chord with members angered with New Labour and praising traditional working class culture will resonate with those who feel the party has become alienated from ordinary working people.

The policies Glasman attacks as 'excessively centralising' are the great social reforms that the working class movement fought for and compelled Labour to adopt in the early post-war years: like the NHS, public ownership of core industry, and universal access to education. At a time when Cameron's touting of the Big Society and community to break up of the NHS this message is dangerous in the extreme.



Miliband has been turning to the right, pictured here with right-wing rag The Sun when he declared "Red Ed is dead"

## Anti-immigrant racism

There is an even nastier nasty side to Blue Labour. Glasman argues Labour needs to own up more fully to the 'problem' of immigration, recognising that it is eroding traditional British, working class values, and should accept that migrants should not have the same rights as 'native' people. He says Labour needs to "build a party that brokers a common good, that involves those people who support the English Defence League within our party."

This is a pack of lies. Migration into Britain hasn't corroded a set of traditional values that supposedly glue together rich and poor. It has brought enormous cultural benefits that have transformed our communities for the better. Migration doesn't divide working class communities, but the racism Glasman is an apologist for most certainly does. It undermines working class unity when we need to be uniting together to resist this government.

That's why Labour should take a clear, anti-racist message, even to those who have become sympathetic to EDL or BNP propaganda about the neglected "white working class." They can be won back – not by mimicking their racism – but by fighting to transform the run down and disadvantaged working class communities neglected by New Labour and Tories alike.

The Labour Party Glasman looks back too is actually one associated with betrayal. The party of the 1920s and the Ramsay MacDonald governments, which invoked precisely the same language of British traditional-

ism, determined not to win a new settlement that delivered real gains for ordinary people, but to convince British ruling circles it was a 'safe' party of government.

It's not surprising Ed Miliband has taken up these ideas. He shares with Glasman the view that Labour needs to win back the voters who moved away from Labour since 1997 but who didn't go to the Tories. Studies have shown how this base was mainly working class, blue collar and often poor.

Blue Labour could help Miliband to appeal to this constituency without turning left and coming under fire from the right wing press that so-ridiculously labelled him 'Red Ed'. This is why Miliband has started a rebranding exercise to appeal to right-wing voters, including an appearance in the Sun where he proclaimed that "Red Ed is dead".

## Wrong direction

The diversionary power of this poisonous message makes it essential to fight it. Labour could re-connect with millions of working people by offering a decisive alternative to the despair and misery of the Con-Dem cuts.

To do so it must challenge racism, not capitulate to it. It will be down to the trade union and labour movement to stop this lurch into populism by building a movement on the streets and in the workplaces, one demanding Labour fights every cut and makes the rich, not working people, pay the costs of the capitalist crisis.

# Will the SNP break up Britain?



Joy Macready

THE SCOTTISH National Party (SNP) has formed its first majority government after the May elections. Winning 68 out of 129 seats, the SNP made gains at the expense of all three parties: Labour lost nine seats, the Tories lost two seats and Liberal Democrats lost 11 seats. These results showed that many voters wanted an alternative to Labour and to punish the Lib Dems at the polls.

During the campaign, the SNP posed left with an election strategy that focused on its record of achievement in the previous minority government: the restoration of free education with the abolition of the student graduate charge, a council tax freeze and 330 new or refurbished schools. The party also rejected privatising the NHS, a declaration that none of the other three parties could make. In its 2011 manifesto, the SNP makes promises on job creation and investment in renewable energy and council housing.

But one of the ultimate goals of the party – independence for Scotland – was for the most part absent from the campaigning discourse.

## Independence day?

In his inaugural speech, SNP leader Alex Salmond was clear that the referendum on Scottish independence would not happen immediately, despite the party's strong showing in the elections. Salmond has said that he has first to deal with Westminster's Scotland Bill on more powers for Holyrood, which will deliver new financial powers worth £12 billion, allowing Scotland to control a third of its budget under a new Scottish-set income tax and borrowing regime.

The referendum could be held in the second half of this parliament, which lasts until 2016. However, it comes as no surprise that the SNP is not hurrying to hold a referendum. Salmond has termed this a "once in a generation" opportunity and wants to be sure of success, avoiding the situation in Quebec, where debate over multiple independence referenda over the years has been dubbed the "neverendum". He knows that a "No" result could land a lethal blow to the SNP.

With a YouGov Opinion poll in

October 2010 showing that only a third of Scots favour independence, while half are not in favour and 16% are unsure how they would vote, success is not a sure thing – yet. In addition, one of Salmond's key economic advisers has recently said that Scotland would "gain little" from independence and should instead remain within the UK with boosted economic powers, a type of "devolution max".

Salmond is counting on the fact that historically Scottish nationalist sentiment rises during a Tory-led government, as a direct response to Tory economic and social policies. And the millions of pounds worth of cuts being meted out by Westminster to deal with the deficit will fuel this fire. By maintaining a clear division between itself and the other three parties in terms of policy, the SNP aims to build a groundswell of anti-Westminster loathing before it takes the Scots to the polls for independence.

## Will independence help?

An SNP-led independent country will not solve the problems of the Scottish working class. Although the SNP's manifesto talks about social equality, the party's economic and social policies are liberal at best. The SNP is backed by some of Scotland's most high-profile business figures, including Martin Gilbert of Aberdeen Asset Management and financier Jim Spowart, who had backed Labour in 2007. It is committed to budget cuts – and plans to hold down public sector pay in exchange for retaining vital services.

Socialists believe that Scottish people have the right to hold a binding referendum on independence. However, during the referendum we would campaign for a "No" vote because we believe that Scottish workers will not benefit from being divided from their English and Welsh counterparts. We need to be united in action against the ruling class that is forcing through these draconian cuts across both countries.

And most importantly, we need to set aside national prejudice and unite together in an international revolutionary socialist political party that will fight in our interest, regardless of borders and nations – a revolutionary Fifth International.

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# Will there be a third intifada?

Kady Tait

THE CALL for a third intifada, or uprising against the Israeli occupation of Palestine, has resonated among the Palestinian people inspired by the popular uprisings against oppression from Tunisia to Syria. Can this call gather the support necessary to building a truly mass movement against the Israeli occupation, and if so what role will Hamas and Fatah play?

Under Mubarak, Egypt policed the Rafah border crossing with Gaza, ensuring that Gazans faced chronic shortages of basic necessities such as food, medicine and building supplies. A key demand of the revolutionary movement in Egypt was an end to this shameful collusion with the Israeli blockade and help for their brothers and sisters in Palestine.

The wave of revolution reached Palestine on 15 May when simultaneous protests were called to commemorate the 63rd anniversary of the Nakba or 'catastrophe' in 1948 when over 700,000 Palestinians were expelled from their lands. Around 4.6 million of their descendants remain in refugee camps in Syria, Jordan and Lebanon – as well as in the West Bank and Gaza.

The demonstrations saw Palestinians and their supporters coordinate marches to the border crossings in north Gaza, the Israeli occupied Golan Heights in Syria, East Jerusalem, Jordan and the town of Maroun al-Ras in south Lebanon.



Protest against 63 years of Zionist occupation

Israel soldiers reacted with their usual brutality, opening fire on the unarmed protesters, killing 13 and wounding scores of others – an action hardly commented on by the "humanitarian" interventionists in Washington or London.

Despite Israel's repression and Barack Obama's promise to veto any attempt by the UN general assembly to recognise a Palestinian sovereign state, the balance of forces in favour of the Palestinians could radically change. The basis for this is the 2011 Arab revolutions, the unity deal between Fatah and Hamas and the call for a third intifada by the grassroots group Gaza Youth Breaks Out.

The first two groups represent the established factions in the Palestin-

ian leadership, while GYBO is a secular youth organisation established in the last year to mobilise independently of Hamas and Fatah. During the February Revolution in Egypt both Hamas and Fatah crushed demonstrations in its support in Gaza and the West Bank. However, the size of the Nakba mobilisation organised by GYBO reveals the true extent of social pressure for change.

The bitter power struggle between Hamas and Fatah has weakened the Palestinian resistance. The unity treaty – whatever its framers intend – opens a prospect of a re-united Palestinian struggle, backed by the active mass support from a revitalised Arab world. Fatah and Mahmoud Abbas' disgraceful crawling to the US and

Israel produced not shred of a concession from the latter. The illegal settlements continued to "make facts" on the ground, destroying step by step the hopes of a viable Palestinian state.

Although Hamas has, in contrast to Fatah, continued to resist since 2006, its strategy of firing rockets and infiltrating guerrilla fighters into Israeli territory offers no way forward. The Israeli genocidal attack on Gaza in 2008, which destroyed 3,000 homes and killed 1,500 people, underlined the inadequacy of such resistance however morally justified it is.

It reduces the 1.5 million Gazans to the level of victims and prevents the kind of mass mobilisations which brought victory in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions.

In fact what is needed is indeed a third intifada as an integral part of the Arab democratic revolutions. This could begin – as in Egypt – with mass peaceful protests against the occupiers in the West Bank, Gaza, on the borders in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt and in Israel itself. This should be backed up by demonstrations in support of Palestinian self-determination in all Arab and Muslim countries and in Europe and North America. This way Israel can be made to pay for its brutality.

This means linking up with and encouraging the peace movement in Israel. Both Palestinians and their supporters should abandon the reactionary and utopian goal of a two state solution – which effectively means abandoning the refugees right to return, gives the Zionist the choice land and natural resources, and leaves the region with a nuclear armed US gendarme and a disarmed Palestinian open air prison.

The movement's aim must be to promote international working class action – general strikes, workers boycotts of Israel, cutting the supply lines to the racist settler state and the creation of a bi-national secular Palestine with equal rights for all its citizens – both Hebrew and Arabic speakers. Socialists must also fight to make such a state one where the working class takes power, for only social ownership of the land, factories and infrastructure can ensure a common development shared by both communities.

## Mladic: Western hypocrisy over war crimes

Marcus Halaby

SERBIA'S CAPTURE and arrest of Bosnian Serb war criminal Ratko Mladic, responsible for the massacre of 8,100 Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica in July 1995, has been hailed as a great day for justice and international law. He will now be taken to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague to stand trial.

Like previous arrests and indictments, of former Bosnian Serb president Radovan Karadzic and former Serbian president Slobodan Milosevic, it has been presented as part of a version of history in which the "international community", having failed to prevent a genocide in Bosnia in the 1990s, then made it its mission to find and punish the culprits.

The UN mission in Bosnia, in fact, was the first post-Cold War military engagement to see the now-familiar idea of "humanitarian intervention" used as a justification. Its "failure" – usually attributed to the international community's divisions and indecision – has been used ever since to justify more forceful interventions, in Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq and now Libya.

In fact, like much of what our rulers tell us about recent history, this account of their own lofty-minded, if occasionally naïve idealism, is a self-serving fairytale, intended to hide their own pursuit of much more mundane mate-



Ratko Mladic

rial and strategic interests. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), far from being there to prevent genocide, actually facilitated the ethnic division of the country.

UNPROFOR troops in the so-called "United Nations Safe Areas" spent much of their time trying to prevent the Bosnian army from breaking the deadly siege imposed on them by the Serb militias Sarajevo, Gorazde, Tuzla and Bihac were repeatedly shelled and attacked, while Srebrenica and Zepa were surrendered without even token resistance to forces that

then massacred and expelled their Muslim populations.

While the liberal media, with the Guardian in front, lionised "plucky little Bosnia" and demonised the Serbs, the real foreign policy of the big European states (with John Major's British government in front) saw Bosnia's stubborn resistance to genocide and partition as a nuisance standing in the way of stability.

In their view, the Bosnian Muslims, and with them the Serb and Croat advocates of a united multi-ethnic Bosnia, were "unrealistic" and had

to be brought to their senses. Time and time again, Western politicians and diplomats like David Owen and Lord Carrington presented "peace plans" for Bosnia, complete with detailed maps that divided the country into discontinuous Muslim, Serb and Croat enclaves. With each new advance by the Serb nationalist militias – bringing with it rapes, murders and mass expulsions – the maps would be re-drawn to reflect the new realities on the ground.

Serb chauvinists like Mladic and Karadzic – and later, their Croat counterparts like Mate Boban – got the message: "ethnic cleansing" works. Men like Mladic may have been malign nationalist fanatics, carrying out the sort of atrocities not seen in Europe since the Second World War, but to figures like US envoy Richard Holbrooke, their sponsor Milosevic (and his Croat counterpart Franjo Tudman) were "realists", men that they "could do business with".

Nor is the "international community" – the name that the imperialist powers give themselves when they act in concert – remotely qualified to try Mladic and company. Let us leave aside for the moment their own recent history of aggressive wars and atrocities against civilians: in Haditha, Mahmudiyah, Fallujah and Abu Ghraib in Iraq, and in Helmand province in Afghanistan.

Let us also leave aside for a

moment their quite selective condemnation of violence and human rights abuses when committed by their allies: Israel's starvation and bombardment of Gaza and Lebanon; Bahrain's current suppression of its Shi'a majority, or Indonesia's 24-year occupation of East Timor.

Let us finally also ignore the fact that Ratko Mladic, a white European, gets a full trial in public – while Osama bin Laden gets two bullets in the head and a secret burial at sea.

The ICTY, alongside the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice, claims universal jurisdiction to try people accused of human rights abuses and similar crimes. But the US, the self-appointed world policeman, steadfastly refuses to be bound by them.

Republican US Senator Jesse Helms even persuaded Congress to pass the American Service-Members' Protection Act in August 2002, to ensure that US citizens – tasked with the dirty work of occupying Iraq and Afghanistan, would have no reason to fear being arrested on foreign soil for any crimes that they might have committed. Dubbed the "Bomb The Hague" Bill and "The Hague Invasion Act", it authorises the President to use "all means necessary and appropriate" to bring about their release.

Their own contempt for the "international law" that they lecture others in says it all.

# Debate: marxism versus keynes – will taxation alone stop the cuts?

Simon Hardy

THERE IS a popular argument used by many on the left, including trade union leaders and Labour left MPs, which says the deficit can be fixed simply through closing tax loopholes and increasing taxation on the rich.

While it is right to point out the gross injustice of the growing gap between rich and poor and the shameful tax avoidance by major corporations, that is not the end of the story. Because even if we closed the loopholes and increased taxation on the rich, capitalism's repeated crises of boom and bust would not go away.

The problem goes much deeper, so our solutions need to go deeper too. Since the credit crunch the Tories have used the outright lie that the recession was caused by the last

Labour government 'overspending' on public services. This, they claim, must now be 'fixed' by cutting government spending. That's why your local hospital, library and nursery is threatened with closure, why you have to pay £9,000 a year to go to university, why your benefits are being reduced and why so many government employees are facing the sack.

The reality is that the deficit was caused by a worldwide crisis of the capitalist system in 2007-09. The instability of the global financial system meant a £1.3 trillion bank bail out in the UK alone. Then the recession which followed slashed tax revenues and pushed up the benefits bill.

This didn't just happen in Britain, but all over the world. So the idea it was just Labour's fault is a paper-thin, illogical, impossible lie.

So what caused the deficit? Capitalism caused the deficit – not just one or another policy, but the system. And this has implications for the strategy of the anticuts movement.

## Tax the rich

Take tax for example. New movements like UK Uncut have done a brilliant job exposing tax dodging companies like Top Shop and Vodafone. They are demanding that these companies pay up their tax bills – in Vodafone's case that is close to £6 billion.

It is 100 per cent right to fight tax dodging. The call for progressive taxation on the rich is essential. But it's not enough on its own.

Suspend your disbelief for a moment and imagine that a left-wing Labour government was elected. Or, if you prefer a more realistic scenario,

that the Coalition fractures in the face of mass protest and a new Miliband government comes under massive nationwide pressure to close tax loopholes, and invest more in jobs: the programme of the TUC's 'March for the Alternative' on 26 March.

Socialists support all these measures but would they end the economic crisis and stop the cuts? Definitely not.

If loopholes were closed, capitalists would move their money offshore or into complicated trusts, which they pay top accountants and lawyers millions to design for them. We'd have to stop them moving overseas, freeze and inspect their bank accounts and seize their unearned wealth. We'd have to nationalise the banks without compensation and put them under democratic control.

If the government spent billions investing in useful jobs, the international bond markets would attack the pound, forcing it down in value. Prices would spiral and inflation would devalue wages. We'd have to index link pay to real prices, renounce the national debt, jail speculators and confiscate the billions of the bondholders.

## Keynes doesn't work

Some union leaders and left-wingers support the ideas of the pro-capitalist economist Keynes who argued to invest not cut in a recession. It's easy to understand why, as they think this will help combat the hardline cuts policy of the Tories without challeng-

ing capitalism itself.

They know that Keynesian investment programmes cause inflation. But they argue that in 2011 investment to stimulate growth would not cause inflation, because the world recession is so deep that prices will still be held flat.

A moment's thought reveals the paucity of that argument. It means investment would not cause inflation, so long as the recession continues. This policy can only work if... it doesn't work.

Imagine a doctor – perhaps a practitioner of special 'Keynesian' homeopathy – who told you: "Don't worry Madam, this medicine will only poison you if it works – and there's not much chance of that." You'd never go back – but our union leaders and Labour lefts do, time and again.

So tax rises, closing loopholes and investing in jobs are all fine as far as they go – which would not be very far. The capitalists would organise economic and political sabotage which would plunge Britain into an even deeper crisis; then they'd prepare their counter-offensive to change the government, by force if necessary.

That's why we need to add to the TUC's 'alternative' a set of demands that progressively attack capitalist property itself: to end not just the cuts but the system that causes the cuts.

*Next month we will examine why recessions happen under capitalism: are they caused by greedy bankers or is there something else behind them?*

# Nepal trapped in political deadlock

Rajesh Thapa

THE FAILURE to agree a new constitution in Nepal means that the sessions of the Constituent Assembly will now be extended for a fourth time. For the main capitalist parties the major barrier to agreeing the constitution is the status of the armed Maoist fighters and how, or whether they can be integrated into the state. Major issues of statute drafting, politics and day-to-day life remain unsolved and the tensions within and among the parties has intensified.

By the end of May normal life in Kathmandu was becoming increasingly hard to remember as shops and services now regularly closed, the workings of the state slowly decline – society seems stagnant. Various organisations and groups have protested and rallied to exert pressure on the government and political parties to break the logjam – but so far with no success.

Although the ruling parties and the main opposition, the Nepali Congress (NC), agree that the Constituent Assembly's term should be extended for "the last time", they have disagreements regarding how long the term should be extended. The Maoists want to extend the term for a year as opposed to the reformists in the CPN-UML and the Congress, who want six months extension.

Congress has opposed the CA term extension under current circumstances and put forward ten demands including resignation of the Prime Minister Jhala Nath Khanal. It also demands the dismantling of the Maoists' Young Communist

League (YCL) and all paramilitary structures. Moreover, the prime minister's party, the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist has turned on him and is trying to force him to resign.

The UCPN-Maoist as well as its People's Liberation Army (PLA) has accepted the modality proposed by the Nepali Army for integrating the guerrilla fighters. Congress and some members within the UML want to limit the number to 5,000 as against the 6,000-8,000 as proposed by the prime minister. This would still leave around 15,000 armed Maoists.

The crisis in Nepali politics is the result of a crisis in wider society – with regular power cuts and lack of investment in infrastructure leading to serious problems. Because of the crisis around £200 million of foreign aid has not been used and is sitting idle in the governments bank accounts. Life for peasants and the urban workers is getting worse – even the businessmen are complaining at the lack of leadership from the main parties. Working people have been left out on a limb as the politicians argue about the finer points of a bourgeois constitution.

## The growing split in the Maoists

There has been severe dispute within the CPN-Maoist: Chairman Prachanda has severe disagreements with the vice-chairman Dr. Baburam Bhattarai and Senior vice chairman Baidya. Baidya had registered a note of dissent when Prachanda adopted the line of "peace and constitution". Now he has registered his dissent against the party's decision to accept the Nepal Army's modality for PLA integration. His faction

wants agreement on outstanding constitutional issues prior to an agreement over the fate of the PLA. Also Bhattarai has disagreements with the chairman regarding the issue of restructuring the state and federalism. Likewise, Bhattarai, who has increasing differences with Prachanda, has received death threats from a central leader of the party-affiliated trade union.

The Maoists and other political parties been engaged in a series of unprincipled manoeuvres to topple the existing government and form their own coalition to rule – with nothing but a reformist, pro-capitalist perspective. Now, the imperialist and regional powers are also trying their best to dissolve the Constituent Assembly. The hopes and expectations of ordinary Nepalese have been shattered by the failure of the Constituent Assembly and the political parties to fulfil their promises.

A Constituent Assembly that will not address burning questions like stripping the rich of their land and distributing it to the poor, that will not recognise workers' control in the factories and nationalise all those that will not raise wages to the levels demanded by the unions is useless to the masses. The poor workers and peasants cannot rely on such a democracy and must create their own assemblies of recallable delegates in every major town and city, in every rural district. Worse than useless but a positive danger are the political parties, including the Maoists, who will not solve the problems of workers and the rural poor. We need a new socialist party in Nepal, which fights for workers and peasants to take the power!

## A new manifesto for world revolution

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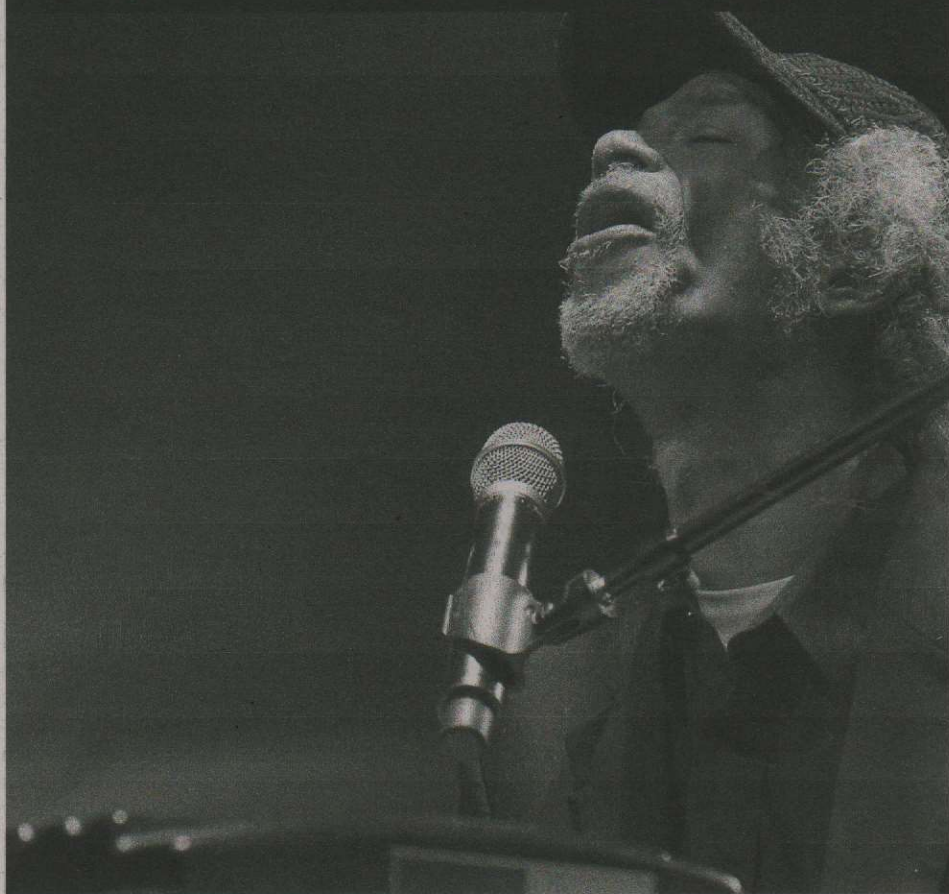


The working class movement urgently needs a new strategy. This manifesto outlines a programme to turn resistance into revolution – to unite the fight against austerity and social oppression into a direct challenge to the crisis-ridden system of capitalism itself.

# Obituary Gil Scott Heron

## Poet, musician, author, fighter

### 1 April 1949 – 27 May 2011



#### Jeremy Dewar

*The revolution will not be right back after a message 'bout a white tornado, white lightning or white people.*

*You will not have to worry about a dove in your bedroom, a tiger in your tank or the giant in your toilet bowl.*

*The revolution will not go better with Coke.*

*The revolution will not fight germs that may cause bad breath.*

*The revolution will put you in the driver's seat.*

FORTY YEARS ago, Gil Scott-Heron etched these words onto the consciousness of millions of young people. Its rejection of corporate America struck a resounding chord at the height of the Vietnam war, when the Black Panthers were being hunted down and the ghettos in the northern cities of the US were rising up.

Scott-Heron was their eloquent poet. His legacy will survive his death on 27 May 2011.

It is hard to think of a song which has had a more enduring influence than *The Revolution Will Not Be Televised*. The rapping of quick, insightful lyrics, written in rhythmic street slang and rhyming free verse, over a jazz-influenced backing track set the tone for what became hip-hop.

Scott-Heron was not the first artist to match free verse to popular black music. Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) in the US and U-Roy in Jamaica

pre-dated Scott-Heron, reading poetry or toasting over Coltrane's jazz or King Tubby's ska tunes. But Scott-Heron reached a wider audience with his soul and funk rhythms.

#### Johannesburg

Over the next ten years, Scott-Heron released a series of overtly political anthems that cemented his reputation as one of the hardest hitting critics of US imperialism and oppression everywhere. We almost lost Detroit is a poignant reminder of the dangers of the nuclear power industry and its corporate secrets and skulduggery:

*What would Karen Silkwood say if she was still alive?*

*That when it comes to people's safety, money wins out every time.*

In 1980 he played 42 concerts in collaboration with Stevie Wonder in the (successful) campaign to get Martin Luther King's birthday recognised as a public holiday in the US. The following year, he ripped into the newly elected Ronald Reagan with "B" movie:

*As Wall Street goes, so goes the nation. And here's a look at the closing numbers – racism's up, human rights are down, peace is shaky, war items are hot – the House claims all ties. Jobs are down, money is scarce – and common sense is at an all-time low with heavy trading. Movies were looking better than ever and now no one is looking because, we're starring in a 'B' movie. And we*

*would rather have John Wayne...we would rather have John Wayne.*

But it was in the anti-apartheid struggle that he probably had his biggest impact with his 1975 album, *From South Africa to South Carolina*. Until then, few black Americans outside of the intelligentsia had heard of Apartheid or knew what it actually meant. When Scott-Heron first heard about it on the news, he is alleged to have said, "I thought they were talking about Pittsburg" – the parallels with the civil rights movement in the US were not lost on him.

His hit from the album, *Johannesburg*, was both internationalist and pro-working class:

*They tell me that our brothers over there refuse to work in the mines,*

*They may not get the news but they need to know we're on their side.*

Scott-Heron also wrote several novels, notably *The Nigger Factory* about his time in university. In the final decade of his life he was hounded by the police and served several jail sentences for minor drug possession offences. As a result, he chose to spend more time in Europe, touring the UK only last winter.

He will be remembered for many years to come and his songs will be sampled and covered by generations of young people, inspired to take up the struggle from where he left off.

## When aliens invade South London

**Attack the Block**  
Directed by Joe Cornish

ATTACK THE Block is a fast-paced and extremely funny sci-fi movie, set in modern-day south London. It is remarkable for its use of unknown actors, whose lives and backgrounds resemble the characters they play, and a script that benefits from having been developed in collaboration with south London youth.

The pace of the action never drags, the use of location is inspired and the look of the film combines familiarity with the unexpected.

The aliens, for example, resemble black, shag-pile rugs with glow-stick teeth, very retro and comic. But Joe Cornish can still ramp up the suspense because you only ever catch a glimpse of them at the last moment of an attack.

It is in plot, characters and dialogue, however, that the film excels. The opening scene: a gang of teenagers mug a young nurse, Sam, for her phone outside Oval tube on bonfire night, just when an alien lands. Gang leader Moses is scarred round the face and the gang track down the alien, killing it:

"That's aliens from outta space, trying to take over the earth, man. But they landed in the wrong place. The wrong place!"

This is the central metaphor of the film. Two mindless attacks have unforeseen consequences: Sam is left on the verge of quitting London, but is forced by circumstance to team up with her attackers and



ends up standing up for them; Moses is mercilessly tracked down by the rest of the alien invaders in revenge until he takes responsibility for his actions. In the process, both find their place in the community.

Attack the Block is not a political film but race, gender and class are certainly central themes. There is the white, middle class student Brewis, who starts off too scared to enter a lift with black youths ("I'll wait for the next one") but ends up being accepted when he joins them in the fight against the aliens. And there are the young, black women, who tear off the boys a strip, when they find out they've mugged Sam.

But Moses and Sam are the main characters. When Sam tells the gang she doesn't like the area, one of them rounds on her, "Whatcha mean you don't like the area? What's wrong with the area?" Later, she explains that her boyfriend is "in Kenya, looking after children" – "What's wrong with the children

here?" snaps the reply. This gets to the heart of the different relationships the classes have to where they live: a roof of convenience for one, home to the other.

But when Sam discovers Moses' bedroom, replete with children's posters and a Spiderman duvet, she is amazed:

*How old are you?*

15.

*You look a lot older.*

Like a lot of young immigrants, Moses is bringing himself up on his own with only an absentee "uncle" occasionally on hand. This is the source of his aggression – and vulnerability. It is the turning point in the film, when Sam realises you don't have to go to Kenya to help needy children and Moses feels accepted as an equal by someone who's made it, legitimately.

I can't give the ending away because you must see this film yourself. If you can, see it in the cinema – I saw it in Peckham and the audience made for half the enjoyment.

Reviewed by Jeremy Dewar

## A radical summer holiday at Revolution International Summer Camp

#### John Bowman

Young socialists from all over Europe will be camping in the countryside outside London for a week-long festival of politics, history and activism from 8-12 August.

The Revolution International Summer Camp, held previously in Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic is coming to Britain as a result of the student movement in winter which radicalised thousands of young people across the country.

Holding parties by the campfire and playing outdoor games and activities such as 'Capture the Flag', campers will be treated to rallies by eyewitnesses to the Egyptian revolution, the Spanish youth tent cities, and speeches by prominent activists from the student movement in Britain.

This year's summer camp will be a celebration of the

growing anti-cuts counter-culture taking Britain by storm, and the camp will be joined by young up-and-coming revolutionary hip-hop artists Jimmy Jitsu and Broken Dialect.

Young activists will be given a chance to work on their activist skills with sessions on "How to be a great journalist", and "How to pull off an amazing speech."

There will be plenty of the debate when campers discuss controversial issues in the movement such as "Is nuclear power the answer to global warming?"

And as well as looking at the revolutions today across the Middle East and North Africa, there will be a fascinating insight into the revolutions of the past, such as the English Civil War, and German revolution of 1918-1923.

Learning about the theories of Trotsky and Lenin and the

fight against imperialist war, guests will be able to discuss the struggle for the emancipation of women, and against racism. A workshop on how apartheid was brought down in South Africa is likely to be very popular.

There will be plenty of time for relaxation (and jellied eels for the brave!), with a trip to the east English seaside on Thursday 11 August.

With youth unemployment at one million and growing, we need your help to raise the funds for such an important event, even if you can't come yourself. If you can make a donation, please send cheques made payable to 'Revolution' to Revolution, BCM Box 7750, London WC1N 3XX.

If you're young and anti-capitalist then Summer Camp 2011 is an event that you cannot miss.

For tickets and timetable, go to: [socialistrevolution.org](http://socialistrevolution.org)

# Disabled activists fight Atos Healthcare

Joy Macready

OVER 8,000 people demonstrated for disability rights outside Westminster on 11 May, making the Hardest Hit march the biggest disability rights protest in decades. Many protesters had to overcome travel restrictions to attend the protest – a group from a Cambridge care home was forced to stagger their journey times, after discovering that the train could only accommodate two wheelchair users per journey.

This demonstration was crucial because disabled people will be hardest hit by proposed cuts in benefits and services, with them and their families losing an estimated £9bn of support over the next four years.

The recent changes in benefits are demeaning to disabled people. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) moved all claimants on Incapacity Benefit to Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in Feb-

ruary. In order to get ESA, claimants are forced to undergo stringent but often completely inaccurate medical tests.

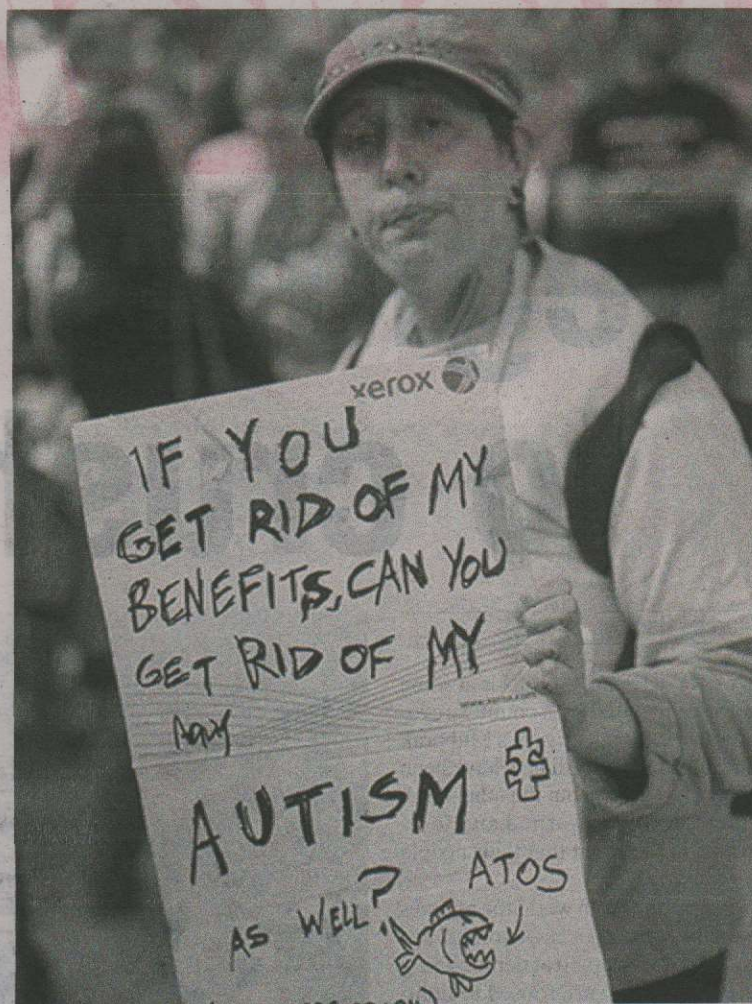
Atos Healthcare, who the DWP recently awarded a three-year contract extension worth over £300 million, is profiting from claimants' misery. The company delivers medical advice and assessment services to support the welfare reform agenda, but has come under fire for its ability to assess claimants. Its track record is not inspiring: it recently walked away from a 10-year contract (the lowest bidder) to run a primary care trust (PCT) in Tower Hamlets in just over three years because of its poor performance.

Around 1.5 million people are due to be forced through these Work Capability Assessment (WCA) tests. The company has been criticised by a number of charities as providing "flawed" and "inadequate" assessments, where doctors report incor-

rectly what the claimant has said about their own conditions and...pay more attention to the computer. To date, over a third of people who made a claim for ESA and were found "fit to work" at assessment have appealed, with the original decision overturned in almost four in 10 cases.

Despite these damning statistics, Atos Healthcare is hitting its targets in terms of forcing people off ESA. So far there have been 48,000 forced back into work after having been diagnosed with a long-term illness or disability.

Disability activists have staged a number of protests outside Atos' headquarters in London and offices around the country and organised a week action against Atos Healthcare and the DWP. The fight for a more compassionate medical assessment is also a fight for the abolition of Atos's mechanised methods – for the return to a quality medical service, publicly run, and not for profit.



# Youth see no future under Con-Dems

Joy Macready

AS THE MAJORITY of UK working class youth face a future without further education and limited job prospects, what has to be done?

In a moment of candour on 17 May, David Cameron told the Commons Liaison Committee that the UK had "schools and opportunity" problems for young people. Well, yes, that is definitely true.

What he failed to say was that the "schools problem" stems from the coalition government's decision to scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which helped young people who were facing financial hardship to continue their studies. At the same time, they gave the nod for university tuition fees to rise by 200 per cent, to £9,000 per year, putting the average student £25,000 in debt by the

end of a three-year degree.

Seeing that their educational "opportunities" are limited, many young people are looking for work but getting a job isn't easy. Currently, one in five young people are out of work, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This is more than double the average unemployment rate, which currently sits at 7.8 per cent, or 2.5 million people.

The number of jobless 16 to 24-year-olds increased by 12,000 over the quarter to February to 963,000, while the total for 16 and 17-year-olds increased to 218,000, the highest since records began in 1992.

It is even worse for young people from ethnic minority backgrounds, with the unemployment rate for 18 to 24-year-old black and Asian workers, almost twice that of young white workers.

**Draconian New JSA Rules**

Instead of taking action to ease the jobs crisis, the government has ramped up its efforts to push claimants, young and old, off Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) forcing them into low paid or voluntary jobs. The Mandatory Work Activity Scheme, which will be delivered by private, voluntary and third sector, will force claimants to take up placements or lose benefits.

These placements are varied and could be doing maintenance work for housing residents, renovating old furniture, working in a local sports club or supporting charitable organisations. Claimants will have little choice in their placement, which may be completely unrelated to their job goals or past experience.

All jobseekers will be enrolled on this scheme on the first day of their

claim and expected to do four Mandatory Work Activity Schemes, working up to 30 hours a week. The claimant will lose their allowance for a minimum of three months minimum for refusal, lateness, or failure to "actively participate".

The government has also committed to funding 250,000 more apprenticeships over the next four years and 100,000 work placements over the next two years. Currently, employers pay just £2.50 per hour for an apprentice under 19 or over 19 and in their first year, and work placements are unpaid. So this is a free subsidy from the tax payer to the employer at the expense of the worker.

Companies benefiting from forced labour include: Poundland, Oxfam, Salvation Army, Tescos and Whittington Hospital.

**Turn Britain into Spain!**

In Spain, unemployed youth have taken to the streets across the country, emulating the Egyptian revolutionary movement. And they have a right to be angry – the jobless rate among Spain's generally well-educated youth has reached nearly 45 per cent, a record in any industrialised country and more than twice the overall employment rate.

We need to do the same in the UK. We must fight for decent work, training and income for everyone.

In addition, the trade unions must join the struggle. With the social strength of unions behind us, we can stop workfare in its tracks. Join the boycott campaign, Boycott Workfare and pass the union motion at your next branch.

For more information go to: [www.boycottworkfare.org](http://www.boycottworkfare.org)

# Unpaid internships: an exploitative trick

Rachel Brooks

INCREASING NUMBERS of young people are being forced to work for free as school leavers, college leavers and university graduates enter a flat jobs market.

Unpaid internships are on the rise, and are increasingly the only option to gain valuable work experience for those who have recently left education and found themselves at the bottom of the career ladder.

Internships can vary from the reasonably unacceptable, to the downright immoral. In one case a recent literature graduate works in two unpaid internships in London. She

is unable to claim benefits, and the two companies she works for do not even pay for her travel. For one of her internships she writes reviews for a website, which generates income from advertising. So although the work she produces for them helps them raise revenue, they refuse to pay her.

Internships have always been a career track option for those wanting to work in particularly highly sought-after jobs in difficult sectors, such as national journalism for major newspapers. But now internships are becoming the norm, rather than an exception.

And the government is leading the

drive towards this as part of its "big society" vision in an attempt to turn the desperation of the unemployed into free labour. Job Centre Plus now offers a scheme whereby you can work for a company for six months on the dole, in the hope that they will keep you on. But there's no obligation for them to do so, and they could always hire another of Britain's 2.4 million unemployed to benefit from another six month's free work.

Such schemes play on the desperation of Britain's one million unemployed youth to find work, and while the lucky ones may be able to live at home or get financial help during their internship, others are being

forced into abject poverty – graduates in thousands of pounds worth of debt, forced into squatting for the opportunity to work. The alternative is lacking the experience needed to find work in today's job market.

The main culprits in this unpaid labour drive seem to be media companies, but it can vary from big banks to local government. Even the Green Party, the so-called progressive force in London government, has unpaid interns. One of the worst offenders is the National Trust, taking on very skilled graduates to work on rebuilding projects and land maintenance.

Seemingly bypassing minimum wage legislation, the rise of the

unpaid internship is not just exploitative, it provides a real barrier to the most basic social mobility. Work experience and therefore the ability to find work will be there only for those who can afford it – a policy absolutely in line with the decision to charge university students £9,000 per year for almost every course.

But as the occupations of town and city squares all over Spain show, as well as the student protests that took place in Britain last winter, young people can get organised to fight back – and we will!

Join Revolution, the socialist youth group at: [socialistrevolution.org](http://socialistrevolution.org)

Workers Power #355 • June 2011 • 15

## Regimes and West plot to crush Arab revolt

Marcus Halaby

EVERY REVOLUTION is at some stage confronted by a counter-revolutionary struggle. Egypt's Mubarak and Tunisia's Ben Ali may have been caught by surprise but the other Arab rulers were forewarned and forearmed in the event that their people rose up too.

Across the Arab world the regimes have begun a process – sometimes coordinated – aimed at demobilising the masses who are roused to political life. This has involved differing combinations of brute force and concessions intended to split and confuse the opposition.

The imperialist powers, initially caught wrong footed by events, have rushed to pose as the champions of democratic reform all along. NATO's 'humanitarian' military intervention in Libya, and the 'aid' package that Barack Obama and David Cameron have promised are aimed at promoting two forms of counter-revolution, a "democratic" one in Tunisia and Egypt and a dictatorial one in Bahrain.

### Egypt

In Egypt, the epicentre of the Arab revolution, the new military regime successfully achieved a "yes" vote in a recent constitutional referendum. Under the guise of reforming the powers of the Presidency and allowing the legal formation of new political parties, the planned constitutional changes in fact overwhelmingly privilege Mubarak's re-branded National Democratic Party, as well as the opposition Muslim Brotherhood, currently angling for a junior role in the next government.

In the meantime, Nasser-era laws prohibiting political parties that promote "class hatred" remain in force, while the army – still trading on its reputation as having "defended the people" from Mubarak's thugs in February – has been sent to attack demonstrations, including a massive protest outside the Israeli embassy in Cairo to mark Nakba Day, the anniversary of Israel's mass expulsion of the Palestinian people.

The naked face of reaction in Egypt has been shown by ultra-conservative Salafist Islamists, who have attacked the Christian minority across the country, burning two churches in Cairo's Imbaba suburb and killing 15 in early May.

Even so, the emerging workers' movement – based on new, independent trade unions – continues to organise its forces, with representatives of five socialist organisations meet-



Anti-government protesters in Damascus

ing to discuss the formation of a workers' party to contest the planned parliamentary elections.

### Syria

In Syria, by contrast, the uprising is now into its third month, facing a regime that has killed 1,062 people and arrested about ten thousand, according to Ammar Qarabi of the National Organization for Human Rights in Syria.

The government, having failed to completely crush the uprising, has nevertheless managed to confine it to the smaller towns and deprived rural areas, and is now threatening to split it. The merest threat of political strikes in Aleppo, Syria's second-largest city, forced the Ba'ath regime to order private employers there to raise wages and hire new workers – and this in a country with a massive state sector.

President Bashar al-Assad's promise of a "national dialogue" was answered by Razan Zeitounch, the woman lawyer who has become a spokesperson for the opposition, who rejected any dialogue before "all violence is stopped and all political prisoners are released".

### Libya

Libya's revolution, however, has been complicated massively by the NATO military intervention. Now the danger of counter-revolution comes from two sides. Gaddafi might yet physically liquidate the uprising, at the very least within a shrunken rump state around his base in the capital, Tripoli. The result would be a permanent partition of the country, with two Libyan governments each competing with the other for

the favours of the imperialist states and their multinational corporations.

On the other side, the EU and US imperialists are using their military involvement to re-establish and safeguard their vital interests in the rebel-held areas in the east of the country. In return for their aid they will exact from the Libyan rebels a huge political and economic price: recognition of all the oil exploration and other commercial contracts that Libya entered into under Gaddafi.

Gaddafi's former interior minister Abdul Fatah Younis now heads the Libyan rebels' armed forces, alongside and in rivalry with former Libyan officer and CIA stooge Khalifa Belqasim Haftar. Similarly Gaddafi's former justice minister Mustafa Abdul Jalil has been identified as chairman of the rebels' National Transitional Council, while Mahmoud Jibril, the neo-liberal privatiser who formerly headed Gaddafi's National Economic Development Board, was appointed interim Prime Minister.

Veteran opposition figures, like Abdul Hafiz Ghoga, the lawyer who represented the families of the victims of the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacre, have been sidelined in the rush to acquire imperialist recognition and support.

So far, only France, Italy, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan have officially recognised the National Transitional Council as Libya's sole legitimate government. The Council was not even represented at an international conference on Libya held in the Qatari capital Doha in mid-April, although it was attended by Moussa Koussa, Gaddafi's former intelligence chief

who resigned as Libyan foreign minister only two weeks previously.

The only hope for the youth, the teachers, the rank and file soldiers who made the revolution, who are fighting in Misrata, to gain real democracy and use the country's national wealth for its people, is to oust the pro-imperialist leadership and replace it with one based on the workers and the freedom fighters.

### Bahrain

The 'humanitarian' gloss given to the West's debilitating support for the Libyan rebels seems especially two-faced when set against their apparent indifference to the bloody repression being meted out to protesters in Bahrain, a tiny Arab Gulf state that plays host to the US Fifth Fleet. In fact, Obama's green light to Saudi Arabia to lead an invasion by the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council was a quid pro quo for the absence of any serious opposition to Western intervention in Libya.

Now, the ruling Al Khalifa dynasty is getting its revenge. In a blatant display of poisonous religious sectarianism against the country's disenfranchised Shi'a majority, the Bahraini government has demolished dozens of Shi'a mosques, removed Shi'a professors from their posts and forced the resignation of Shi'a members of parliament. All of this in a bid to demonstrate to the West – and to the reactionary Arab Gulf states that helped the Bahraini monarchy to put down the uprising – that the real force behind the uprising was Shi'a Iran, which remains one of the most important of

US imperialism and Arab reaction's officially sanctioned bogeymen.

However, one should not expect to hear too many protests from Western governments about the torture, imprisonment and death sentences meted out to Bahrain's pro-democracy activists.

### The working class

The underlying reason for strength of the counter-revolution is that in Syria, Libya and Bahrain, the working class has so far not thrown its weight of numbers and social power into the balance, leaving the regimes free to battle with the insurgents on their own terms – through the use of force – held in check only by the revolutionaries' determination and capacity for self-sacrifice.

In Egypt and Tunisia, by contrast, it was mass strikes that forced the regimes to throw their hated leaders overboard. But the working class has not yet asserted its political independence, in the form of a working-class movement, led by a revolutionary workers' party capable of presenting a project of its own in competition with the calls for a mere democratic reform that leaves intact the structure of political power – and with it, deeply unequal relations between the classes.

### Time for a second revolution

Still, a start has been made in Egypt. A "second day of rage" on 27 May has demanded a "second revolution", in which a civilian government would oversee elections instead of the military junta, and in which Mubarak's officials would be tried and punished for the deaths of the 840 people killed during the uprising in January and February. Tens of thousands of protesters in Tahrir Square carried banners declaring: "The Egyptian revolution is not over" and demanding a new constitution before the calling of elections.

Other demonstrations took place in Alexandria, Egypt's second-largest city, and in the industrial and commercial cities of Suez, Port Said and Ismailia, as well as in Upper Egypt and the Nile delta.

And it is now the Muslim Brotherhood – whose support for the first "revolution" was lukewarm and compromised to begin with – that stands directly against this movement, with its former legislator Sobhi Saleh condemning the demonstrations outright and standing with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces in declaring that the peoples' anger is misdirected and can only mean that they are angry "at the people themselves or at the army".