

Workers power 5

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

Labour, unions, communities, youth

UNITE TO FIGHT THE CUTS



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INSIDE:

- **South Africa gripped by mass strike wave**
- **From anti-cuts committees to working class power**
- **English Defence League stopped in Bradford**

South Africa gripped by mass strike wave

By Simon Hardy

Today the eyes of the international workers movement should be on South Africa. The country faces a national general strike after public sector workers rejected the government's latest pay offer. This has been averted for now, but the strike has spread to the motor and oil industries - and the threat of a general strike remains.

The 1.3 million workers, on strike for the last two weeks of August, are demanding higher wages and more money for their housing allowance. Strikers have shut down schools and government offices. Most hospitals are turning away non-emergency patients and the army has been ordered to set up clinics to treat patients.

Horror stories of patients being put at risk by striking nurses invading operating theatres have dominated headlines - but health workers' union Nehawu has pointed out that dozens of unnecessary deaths result from staff shortages without the government raising an eyebrow. In addition, the union has said it would offer an emergency service, but that anti-trade union laws banning health strikes forced them to go all-out or face the sack.

The real terror has come from the police and army, who have fired tear gas and rubber bullets into the faces and backs of strikers. After a pitch battle between factory workers and police, Numsa union official Basil Cele was arrested and is currently on bail.

The government came back



to the negotiating table with an improved offer of 7.5 per cent and a housing allowance of 800 rand (£72) a month. The striking workers, including teachers and hospital staff, rejected the offer, sticking to their demand of 8.6 per cent plus 1000 rand (£90) a month for housing.

Cosatu, the South African TUC with 2 million members, said at the end of August: "The government ministers, who deny workers their meagre wage increase, have spent millions... on luxury vehicles and are living a caviar lifestyle."

This is a reference to the so-called "black diamonds", a corrupt elite (which includes members of President Jacob Zuma's family) who have made millions through the ruling ANC's Black Economic Empowerment programme, while one in four South Africans are unemployed and 50 per cent live in abject poverty. Less than half the population have running water in their homes.

Yet the government is pleading that its coffers are bare - despite increasing military spending by over 40 per cent since 2000 and spending \$5 billion on the World Cup. In contrast with the public image of the country during the World

Cup, Cosatu general secretary Zwelinzima Vavi remarked bitterly: "We have nothing to celebrate. We have lost more than 1.1 million jobs."

Break from ANC!

The ANC led the anti-apartheid movement but went on to cement capitalist rule in the country. This could only be done in alliance with the black working class in the name of national unity - the ANC/Cosatu/Communist Party alliance.

But this alliance has been a one-way street. South Africa remains one of the world's most unequal societies.

Cosatu should call a general strike to bring the unpopular government to its knees. But this is not enough - they need to bring down the government. Cosatu and the Communist Party should break from the ANC and the capitalists they support. Instead they should form a workers' government, seize production from the corporations and the rich, and base their power on the strike committees and councils of workers delegates.

Twenty years ago Black workers brought down apartheid - now they can finish the revolution and bring down capitalism itself.

EVENTS

12 September
Lobby the TUC
Demand the TUC calls a march against cuts!
Manchester

24-25 September
Convention of the Left: building unity to defend public services
Conference with John McDonnell, Matt Wrack, Gregor Gall
Manchester

29 September
European Trade Union Day of Action
Called by the ETUC in reaction to the austerity measures in Europe.

3 October
Stop the Tory Cuts
Protest at the Conservative Party conference
Birmingham

19 October
Lobby of Parliament
Protest the Con-Dem Spending Review

30 October
Action against climate emergency
London

6-7 November
Anticapitalism 2010
Two days of discussion organised by Workers Power
London

27 November
Coalition of Resistance Conference
London

EDITORIAL

RESISTANCE!

The gloves are off. Tory promises not to axe front line services have been dumped now they are in power. Backed all the way by the Lib Dem hypocrites, Cameron and his cronies are set to slash hundreds of thousands of jobs, hold down pay, cut pensions and demolish a whole swathe of public services.

If you work in the public sector, watch out. Cameron's chancellor, Osborne could not stop smirking as he announced cuts of between 25 and a staggering 40 per cent across government departments.

If you are already out of work, you need to watch out too. Unemployment benefits will be held down below inflation – and if you are sick there is a cap on incapacity benefit, so snoopers and officials will be all over you, desperate to claw back every penny they can.

VAT hikes hit everyone, but they hit the poor hardest. No wonder the normally conservative Institute of Fiscal Studies slammed Osborne's lie that Tory policy is 'progressive'. It is *regressive*, which means it robs the poor to pay the rich.

And all this so the Tories can payback the billions they borrowed from the super rich investors in the bond markets. In short the billions lost by the capitalists who caused the crisis will be paid off by the millions who didn't.

Labour leaders fail

Everyone agrees that this is the worst package of cuts since the last great depression. So you'd expect the leaders of Britain's working class majority to be up in arms and doing all they can to stop it.

But the candidates for the Labour leadership are mainly

useless. Front runner David Miliband – a bosses man from his shiny black hair to the tips of his shiny black shoes – supports cuts and keeps open the prospect of tax cuts for the rich. His brother Ed, the candidate of the TUC, says Labour needs to go back to its working class roots... but still won't oppose all the cuts.

The leaders of the biggest trade unions – Unite, GMB and Unison – back Ed Miliband. At the same time, they are sitting on their hands in the face of the Tory job cuts and pay freeze. TUC secretary Brendan Barber has even ruled out a national demonstration against the cuts this year.

A recent poll found that one in three people oppose all the cuts. A campaign of mass action could mobilise millions, and help convince millions more. And just think how many of the 6 million union members in this country would join a march... if only the call came.

Coalition of resistance

There is an alternative and it is starting to get organised.

Key figures in the labour movement have issued the call for a coalition of our own – a 'Coalition of Resistance.'

A statement launched by Tony Benn has been signed by Labour leadership candidate Diane Abbott and a host of left-wing union leaders such as Bob Crow of the RMT, Mark Serwotka of the PCS and Matt Wrack of the FBU.

It says:

- Oppose cuts and privatisation
- Fight rising unemployment and support organisations of unemployed people.
- Develop and support an alternative programme for economic and social recovery.
- Oppose all proposals to 'solve' the crisis through racism and

other scapegoating.

- Liaise with similar opposition movements in other countries.
- Organise meetings, conferences and demonstrations.
- Support the development of a national co-ordinating coalition of resistance.

Time for action

Workers Power supports this call. We encourage union branches, Labour parties, local anticuts campaigns, antiracists and socialists to attend and bring their friends and work-mates with them.

At the conference we will argue for the need to go further. The coalition organisers call for local groups to be set up and say the movement will develop a programme of action. We believe this programme should challenge the Labour and trade union leaders who stand in the way of action, and fight for a massive wave of united strikes and occupations... with the union leaders where possible, but without them where necessary.

Millions are waking up and seeing that an historic fight is on. Given a fighting lead there can be little doubt that a mass movement could be built. If we could combine the coming industrial action, which is today beginning to mount from Kirklees council to the London underground, with civil disobedience and occupations of threatened services, we could create a movement on the scale of the anti poll tax rebellion – we could smash the Tory cuts package, save millions from poverty and bring down this vicious Tory government.

Contact Workers Power for details of your local anticuts campaign. Call 0207 708 4331

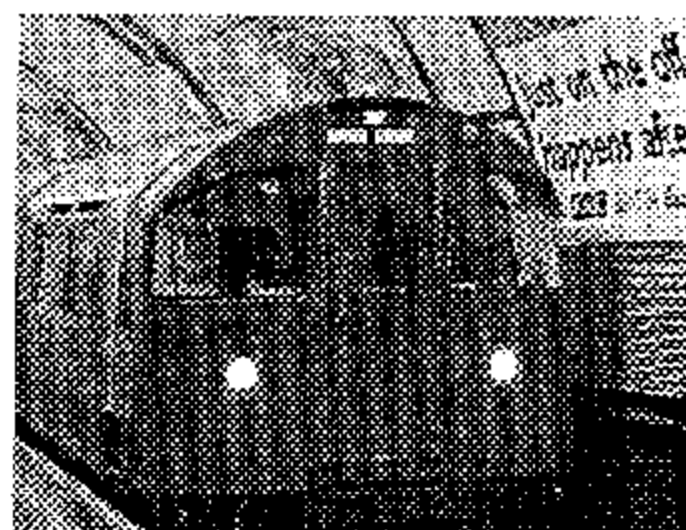
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70 years since Trotsky's death



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LABOUR LEADERSHIP CONTEST

Vote Diane Abbott and organise to fight the Con-Dem attacks

By Luke Cooper

As the Con-Dem government begins its all-out offensive against working class people, trade unionists and the public sector, the labour movement is discussing the future leadership and direction of the Labour Party. For the first time since 1994 Labour has a contested leadership election, where issues such as policy and party democracy are being openly discussed.

The Miliband brothers

David Miliband has emerged as the candidate of the right wing of the party, with the support of 100 MPs and the remaining big business backers.

His election fund has more individual donations than all the other candidates put together. And due to the undemocratic electoral system, which gives MPs a third of the vote, he is already guaranteed 13 per cent before any Labour Party member or affiliated trade unionist even casts a vote.

His brother Ed has emerged as the candidate of the social democratic centre of the party and the trade union bureaucracy. He has called the war in Iraq “a mistake”, is opposed to top up fees and has made the living wage key to his campaign.

The candidate of the left, John McDonnell, was once again denied a place on the ballot paper by his inability to win the support of 33 Labour MPs – a repeat of 2007 when he tried to stand against Gordon Brown. McDonnell was the candidate closest to the struggles outside of parliament, repeatedly using his position as an MP to build



Abbott, candidate of the left, Ed Miliband, supported by the TUC, and David, who defends big business

support for trade union struggles, as well as the anti-war and climate change movements.

He has campaigned for the reversal of the anti-working class politics of the Brown and Blair era, for restoring party democracy and for a new party leadership. Workers Power supported John McDonnell's candidacy both times because a strong vote for him would have strengthened the fight against the Tories and put his brand of reformism to the test.

Diane Abbott emerges

But without McDonnell on the ballot paper, how should socialists vote? We believe that only Diane Abbott presents an alternative to the four New Labour “continuity candidates”.

Abbott does not have the links to the growing resistance that McDonnell has, nor does she have his track record of opposition to the New Labour agenda. Abbott has performed badly in leadership hustings; she dodged the hard questions and said she would welcome the other candidates into her shadow

cabinet.

Nonetheless, over the past few weeks she has emerged as the candidate of the left wing of the party. She has the backing of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) – a network of left wing activists opposed to the Blair-Brown agenda – and her election pledges are substantially further to the left than any other candidate.

As leader she says she would:

- Save billions by cracking down on tax evasion, introduce a financial transactions tax, and have a higher bank levy.
- Bring the troops home from Afghanistan and scrap Trident.
- Reform trade union laws to restore a level playing field between workers and bosses.
- Put an end to further privatisation and bring the railways back into public ownership.

Although these demands are limited, they would meet fierce opposition from the bosses and could mobilise millions of workers into battle, if she won.

Abbott has called for resistance to the Con-Dem cuts and has backed the demonstration

outside the Conservative Party conference in Birmingham on 3 October. She has also signed the Coalition of Resistance statement, joining McDonnell. No other candidate is prepared to identify with the labour movement's active resistance to the proposed government cuts.

A strong vote for Abbott will give confidence to the trade union rank and file. And it will bring much greater pressure to bear on the incoming Labour leadership to oppose the Con-Dem cuts and support workers' struggles against them.

But we also need to step up the fight to put the Labour Party under the control of the labour movement and we need to build mass resistance that the incoming leadership has to address.

Socialists cannot ignore the Labour Party because millions of people see it as the alternative to the Con-Dem offensive. But we must not let the Labour leaders get away with rhetorical opposition alone – we must push them to go from words to deeds and support the strikes and demonstrations against the cuts.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

Ministry to slash one in five jobs

By a PCS, MoJ Branch Organiser

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) plans to close 157 county and magistrates courts and move “back office work” to four administration centres. This means 15,000 – nearly 20 per cent – of the 80,000 civil servants employed by the MoJ will lose their jobs.

Before management informed staff, news of the £2 billion cuts were in the national press. “Consultation” on court closures ends on 25 September, but everyone knows the decision has already been made.

The transfer of incoming calls and office work to admin centres will not improve customer

service. Similar moves in HM Revenue & Customs led to 20-minute phone queues. Much worse, courts with disabled access will be closed and their work moved to courts without these facilities.

So far, campaigns have focused on the consultation process, but when the cuts are confirmed we will need decisive action to save jobs and services.

Strikes will be necessary, but MoJ staff should not have to go it alone. The whole public sector faces cuts of 25-40 per cent. United action – supported and coordinated by the anti-cuts committees springing up in every major town – is our best chance of stopping the cuts.

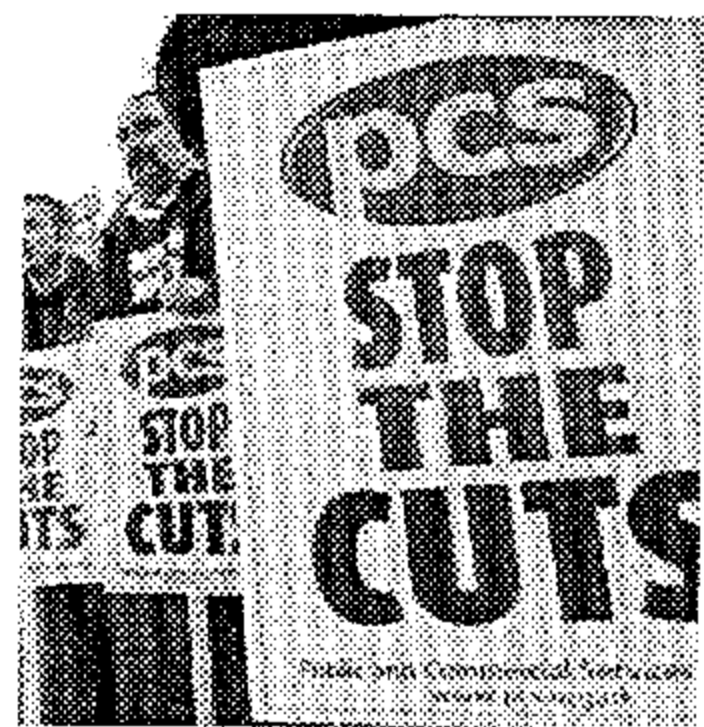
Civil service – it’s time for our union to strike together

Most government departments have been ordered to submit plans for 25-40 per cent cuts, which will see tens of thousands of job cuts.

The government also plans to limit payouts to 12 months salary for compulsory redundancies and 15 months for voluntary.

This is an attack on both jobs and society’s most vulnerable. The government plans to end mortgage help for the disabled, force single parents with young children into work, freeze pensions and bus passes, and cut healthy school meals programmes and playground construction.

The 300,000-strong PCS union is calling for anti-cuts committees in every town and for the TUC to hold a national anti-cuts demo on 23 October. As the union gears up for strike



action, the question is: what do we need to do to win?

The PCS tends to limit action to one or two day protest strikes. However, the Con-Dem’s strategy to destroy the public sector relies on shrinking the civil service and smashing its union.

To stop this we must be ready for indefinite strike action and demand other public sector unions join us. An all-out national public sector strike could bring down the Con-Dem government and their programme of cuts.

Stop Gove’s state school assault

By Rachel Brooks

Despite Michael Gove’s plan to turn 2,000 “outstanding” schools into academies this autumn, only 32 opted out of local authority control and took on the new status. But the battle is still on.

Another 180 have applied to become academies. Plus more schools may choose academy status when the next round of funding cuts is announced, which would devastate comprehensive education and introduce a two-tier system. Unions representing teachers and support staff are making preparations in case their schools try to apply. Peter Smith, secretary of Newham NUT, said: “My union is determined to do whatever it

can to protect the Newham family of schools... If our members are willing, we will ballot them on industrial action.”

Militant rank and file members and local union leaders are preparing for action against Gove’s academies, but this is not reflected in the unions’ national strategies. For example, the NUT left are pressuring the NEC to discuss a national ballot, but the executive is stalling – claiming there are questions of legality and that the membership is not ready for another national strike (despite successes in 2008).

Without a battleplan to deal with the academy threat, based on rank and file control of action, the unions will be unprepared for the next round of struggle.

BBC workers vote to defend pensions

By an NUI member

BECTU, NUJ and Unite members have voted overwhelmingly for industrial action to stop the BBC drastically slashing their pensions. More than 90 per cent of the unions’ members supported calls for strike action as well as action short of strikes in opposition to the “pensions robbery”.

The BBC management’s plan for a 1 per cent cap on future pension increases, irrespective of any pay rise or promotion, has caused outrage among BBC staff. This breaks the link between pension received and an employee’s salary at retirement, abolishing the final salary scheme at a stroke. Yet BBC

director general Mark Thompson received a £163,000 pension top-up last year alone, while deputy director general, Mark Byford stands to receive a £400,000 pension.

In addition, despite more job cuts and increasing workloads, the BBC’s 2010 pay offer stands at around 1 per cent, with pay frozen for some.

This is well below the rate of inflation and what’s more, the BBC refuse to rule out a pay freeze for all staff in 2011, and has unilaterally scrapped an agreement banning compulsory redundancies.

Instead of attacking its workers, the BBC should slash Thompson’s massive £834,000 salary.

INDUSTRIAL

Andy Littlechild is the chair of the London Underground engineering branch of the Rail, Maritime and Transport (RMT) union. We spoke to him on the eve of the recent tube strike

London Underground workers: striking for jobs and safety

Ten thousand members of the RMT and TSSA trade unions are walking out in a series of 24 hour strikes in protest at 800 station and maintenance job losses.

The tube bosses claim all job losses can be achieved by not filling vacant posts and people leaving voluntarily.

But Andy explained that this is a deception. “They say all job cuts will be made by ‘natural wastage’ but it’s just not feasible. On top of that, they keep telling us different things. They promised that they would not touch operational grades – ticket staff and station staff – and that they would only cut admin posts. But that’s not the case, so it’s hard to accept their reassurances.”

“Also they have indicated that there will be changes to the maintenance regime – to save money – and they can’t rule out redundancies. Vacant track maintenance posts have

not been filled, stretching back to our dispute last year. What we fear is that this is just part of a rolling programme of cuts. It’s the usual story of working people bearing the brunt.”

“Vacancies are job cuts. In the last round of redundancies, a lot of people were coerced into taking offers, especially if they were older. But where are they going to find jobs with mass unemployment?”

It is brilliant that drivers are prepared to take solidarity action in defence of other workers like maintenance staff.

The RMT’s policy of recruiting from every grade on the underground, not just drivers, means the members stick up for one another as workers and are not divided by grade or job.

We talked about how the industrial action could bring maximum pressure to bear on management.

Often one-day strikes have not been enough to force tube bosses to back down. So how can the union step up the strikes?

“We need a strategy to escalate the action when we’ve got strength”, Andy said.

“At the moment, management is intimidating workers by asking if they are going to strike. We know they’re employing scab crews in preparation for the strikes and planning to put on extra buses.”

Like last year’s postal strike, when scab mail centres were set up in warehouses, represents a hardening of management’s resolve. Considering that up to £1.2 billion will be cut from Transport for London’s budget in October’s spending review, strikes in this context will not be easy.

Andy continued “It’s common knowledge that it was part of [London Mayor Boris] Johnson’s unwritten manifesto to break the RMT’s hold on the Under-

ground.”

“When Cameron got into power, he said he was going to give Johnson superpowers – it was all over the *Evening Standard*. The Tories on the Greater London Authority want to move to driverless trains. It’s got all the markings of a strategy to get rid of the unions piecemeal.”

It is really important for every trade unionist to get behind the tube workers. Send delegates from your workplace to picket lines, invite strikers to meetings of your union or campaign.

Tell your workmates that the newspapers are lying when they blame disruption on the unions and that it is management’s job cuts that have forced tube workers to strike.

The bosses and Tories are coming for all of us. We all need to stand together. Support the tube strikes and help spread the movement to fight back against the bosses and the cuts.

Vote Jerry Hicks for Unite leader

By Rachel Brooks

Jerry Hicks, the Rolls Royce convenor who was sacked because he stood up to greedy bosses, is standing for general secretary of Britain’s biggest union Unite, against Len McCluskey, a full-time appointed officer.

The Communist Party and the Socialist Party oppose

Jerry and instead support McCluskey, the front runner backed by the official union leaders. McCluskey talks of fighting the cuts and even of socialism, but in practice he is a bureaucrat through and through.

When the bosses in the media were terrified that BA workers might strike at Easter, hitting profits hard, it was McCluskey who rushed to rule it out: He

drafted the new Unite rulebook which stops branches even electing delegates to regional and national conferences of the union!

Worse still, McCluskey has never objected at Unite executive meetings when they condemn unofficial action forced on workers facing pay cuts and the dole.

By contrast, Jerry calls for all officials to be elected, made

“accountable to members through the appropriate lay member committee” and paid only the average wage of a Unite member, and supports workers action.

Scores of local committees are now coordinating hundreds of Unite activists in support of Jerry. We urge Unite members to vote for Jerry and go further, campaigning for rank and file control of the union.

TUC Congress: turn words into action to defeat Con-Dem cuts

With one of the most critical Trade Union Congresses in recent history being held this month, *Jeremy Drinkall* examines the gulf between the TUC's leaders' words and deeds

Union leaders were livid when Chancellor George Osborne revealed his emergency budget in June: £6.2 billion slashed from public services with further cuts of 25-40 per cent across Whitehall departments, VAT up to 20 per cent, a three-year public sector pay freeze, and cuts to housing, child, unemployment and incapacity benefits.

Gail Cartmail, an assistant general secretary at Unite, argued: "The public sector did not cause the financial crisis. The bankers, the so-called 'masters of the universe' did – and they should be made to pay." Unison's general secretary Dave Prentis accused the coalition of "declaring war" on the working class.

Even timid TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said: "We are very definitely not all in this together. Those on middle and low incomes have done worse than expected, and the rich have been let off."

But these words have not been followed by action to match. The TUC has sat on its hands for months, only to announce that it is now too late to organise a national demonstration this year!

Unite general secretary Derek Simpson voiced the secret thoughts of many a union bureaucrat: "The Conservatives would love me to say there will be a winter of discontent [the 1978-79 public sector strikes that brought down the government], as that would move the whole emphasis to union militancy and away from the cuts."



Smug, suited and sitting on their hands, TUC chief Brendan Barber and Unite leader Derek Simpson say it's "too late" for their millions of members to march against the cuts

This £187,000-a-year bureaucrat couldn't pack more nonsense into a sentence. The one thing Cameron and Clegg fear is co-ordinated strike action and union militancy would show how the cuts could be stopped.

Meanwhile, TUC leaders, ie Brendan Barber and friends, said it is too late to organise a demonstration against the cuts this year. But the *Independent* reported that they have found time to have several "informal" meetings with the Tories.

Fighting back

Luckily, some union leaders did come out fighting. Bob Crow, leader of the railworkers' union (RMT), argued: "The trade unions must form alliances with community groups, campaigns and pensioners' organisations in the biggest show of united resistance since the success of the anti-poll tax movement. Waving banners and placards will not be enough – it will take direct action to stop the Cameron and Clegg cuts machine."

He has supported strike action on the London Under-

ground to stop job and pay cuts.

Similarly, the UCU lecturers' union co-ordinated strikes against college cuts in June.

But mostly it has been left to union branches to fight alone, such as Kirklees Unison, which is balloting 8,500 workers for a five-day strike against 1,500 job cuts.

That's the right response. We must meet every single attack – on jobs, pay, services, pensions and benefits – with strike action. At every level we must press our unions into action and fight to coordinate our action.

Strikes and workplace occupations are our best weapons. And of these, the all-out indefinite strike – a tactic which won significant victories last year for Tower Hamlets College teachers and Leeds binworkers – is the most decisive, because the bosses cannot organise scabbing and sell-outs in between strike days. By electing their own strike committees and mobilising service users and the wider working class, workers can retain control of their own action.

But any strike that looks like

it will be successful will face the full wrath of the media and the courts. The anti-union laws are there to keep us from fighting back. We should defy them whenever possible and demand the Labour Party commits to scrapping them.

Anti-cuts committees are emerging all over the country. They can unite the local unions, Labour Party wards, campaigns such as Defend Council Housing and Keep Our NHS Public, pensioners, students, benefit claimants and tenants. They can organise public meetings, leafleting sessions and lobbies. Local conferences can draw in even more workers and youth and plan next steps.

National action

But only coordinated national strike action – a general strike – can stop these cuts by bringing down the government. The coalition has no mandate to destroy our livelihoods and our communities. We must fight it to the end.

At this month's TUC Congress, the civil servants (PCS), firefighters (FBU) and RMT are all proposing "joint and coordinated industrial action". If the TUC backs the motion, good, if not Union leaders Mark Serwotka, Matt Wrack and Crow should organise the strikes and call on other union members to join in as the TUC would have proved itself impotent in the face of the Con-Dem onslaught. Either way rank and file activists should use the opportunity to implement the strikes and prepare for a new winter of discontent.

DISSECTING THE TORY AND LIB DEM CUTS

'Big Society' is Big Lie



The Big Society idea aims to divert discontent with public services into support for privatisation

What is the "Big Society"? Cameron and his new friend Clegg are pushing the idea of a society in which the people are empowered and have more control over their services, with charities and volunteers running them.

The Tories know that for every worker who supports the welfare state, there is another who is fed up with poor service, long queues for treatment, bureaucracy, rudeness and problems getting what you want.

In fact the failings of our public services are caused by cuts in funding and a lack of democratic working class control of their delivery.

Strategy

The Tory strategy to demolish our public services is to reach out to discontented service users and divert them into a campaign which is effectively for privatisation – which would actually make all of our services worse for ordinary people (but better for the rich).

The Big Society is a cover for opening up our public services to big business and millionaire "social entrepreneurs" to run for profit. Those services that councils can no longer afford and the private sector can't make profit from will be handed to volunteer groups.

The hypocrisy is that Con-Dem cuts will slash thousands of local initiatives: care for the elderly, nurseries, help for children with special needs, support for refugees

and rape victims.

Cameron is following the lead of the Bush and Obama governments, which have adopted the "social innovation" ideas of rightwing politicians and billionaire "philanthro-capitalists" who develop for-profit "social enterprises" that the government pays to run services. For example, in the UK, arms manufacturer Vosper Thornycroft is involved in managing schools services and ready to expand.

Poverty

Cameron's Big Society of charity and expensive private services will increase poverty. It is an attack on properly paid, skilled professionals who provide health and social services and advocates instead the use of untrained volunteers.

Cameron's phrase "from big government to Big Society" really means "from big state to big business".

The Labour leadership candidates are not consistently challenging Cameron's Big Society con. All private providers of welfare services should be nationalised without a penny of compensation.

Workers and consumers should control services to ensure good quality not the inefficiencies and profit grabbing of multinationals.

Labour only started the job of building public services that meet workers needs. Let's defend what we have got, and go forwards, without market madness.

THE TORIES AIM TO AXE ONE MILLION OF OUR JOBS

The Con-Dem coalition aims to slash more than £100 billion from state spending by 2014-15. Departmental budgets will be cut by between 25 to 40 per cent, civil servants' pay frozen, jobs axed, pensions and benefits for the poorest slashed.

Bankers, millionaire directors and bosses' bodies such as the CBI are delighted. The Institute of Directors polled its members to show company directors' "emphatic endorsement". Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, praised the Tory-Lib Dem austerity programme even as he warned of the possibility of a double-dip recession.

Osborne's cuts will mean the loss of the 600,000 public sector jobs. Already, Tory-led Somerset Council has announced 1,500 job losses (about a third of its workforce). Kirklees has also announced 1,500 job losses, about one in eight of its staff. This scale of attacks will be replicated across the country.

But councils and government departments contract out services or use the voluntary and private sector for work. The knock-on effect of the budget will be 750,000 private sector jobs going – more than the public sector. Unemployment will soar and Britain will risk plunging into recession again.

The cuts are also an opportunity to privatise swathes of the welfare state, local government

and the Royal Mail and hand services to private sector companies. In particular, the iconic pillar of the postwar welfare "settlement", the NHS, will be broken apart to allow private capital to flood in and take over.

It is a continuation of the policy of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s when the Tories sold off state industries such as coal, airways and steel and caused mass unemployment.

For example, Capita, the UK's largest outsourcing firm which doubled its contracts with councils under Labour, is looking forward to more contracts under the Tories, with healthcare especially a source of "vast and potentially lucrative" business.

The cuts aim to:

- Appease the bond markets so the UK will keep its triple-A credit rating, allowing interest rates to stay low for business.
- Reduce the costs for British capitalism by cutting pensions and benefits, leading to lower business taxes and premiums.
- Hand the private sector new areas for profit making such as welfare and education.

The Con-Dem's austerity plans are an attempt to restore profitability after the 2008 crash.

But the Tories aren't making the cuts to sort out the unemployment problem. They want to use high unemployment to bring down wages and conditions. They must be stopped!

Stop vicious Tory attacks on benefits

The Coalition aims to slash £11 billion or more from benefits of the poorest people.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said that the Con-Dem cuts to budgets and tax rises will hit poorer families more harder than the rich. The budget will see the richest 10 per cent in Britain lose only 1 per cent of their income, but for the poor:

- 700,000 on Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) for over a year will see their benefits cut by 10 per cent.
- 1.5 million will be kicked off Incapacity Benefit and put on JSA worth £25 per week less.
- One million claimants including 240,000 low paid workers and 170,000 pensioners will have their housing benefit cut. The Tories will

increase it only by the lower CPI rate of inflation (which excludes housing costs!), and force tenants into smaller homes or onto the streets as homeless. The young and people in the London and the south-east will be hit hard. The average loss of income for Britain's poorest will be £624 per year (17 percent of disposable income), while 40,000 households will lose over £1,000 per year.

The minister for welfare reform, ex-banker and millionaire Lord Freud, called this assault on the poor "working to restore fairness and responsibility to a broken system."

In reality benefit cuts, VAT hikes and rising food and energy prices mean more poverty for millions.

They want to smash NHS

The Con-Dem's NHS White Paper claims to be "liberating the NHS" and putting the patient at the heart of everything.

The complete opposite is true – the Tories aim to put the market at the heart of the NHS.

Conservative Secretary of Health Andrew Lansley said: "We aim to create the largest social enterprise sector in the world." The Tories will reorganise the NHS so that private capital can flood in and make profit.

Strategic Health Authorities and local Primary Care Trusts will be abolished, along with the limited element of planning and accountability they provide.

Doctors will be forced to join consortiums that will control all commissioning of care for patients, and 80 per cent of the NHS budget.

These consortia will have to manage healthcare budgets with little experience. So private

healthcare multinationals, such as BUPA, will step in to provide their "expertise" in exchange for fat fees – paid for by our taxes.

All hospitals, clinics, clinic, district nursing services and mental health centres will be forced to become foundation trusts, taking on private patients and seeking to make a profit.

At present private care is limited to 2 per cent of all hospital work, but soon the rich will pay fees to avoid waiting lists, creating a two-tier NHS.

For the first time in NHS history, private companies will have the same status as publicly owned hospitals.

The Tories can't openly privatise the NHS, they have to hide under the idea of giving more power to doctors. But the reality is that the founding principle of the NHS – treating patients free based on need – will be sacrificed.

Anticuts committees are springing up across the country



Activists set up anti-cuts groups across Britain to halt Tory offensive

LAMBETH: Unison activists set up Lambeth Save our Services in July when the Labour-run Council announced 400 job losses, many in children's services, writes *Jeremy Drinkall*.

It has successfully called three lobbies of the council over the proposed cuts and put out 10,000 copies of an eight-page bulletin with other council unions, Unite, NUT and the GMB to the public.

Lambeth SOS had our first result when we worked with staff from the One O'Clock Clubs, a pre-school service targeted for closure. Because of the high union density and the work of local activists, the One O'Clock clubs forced the council to withdraw the cuts!

Hopefully this will be the first of many more.

Contact: lambethsaveourservices@gmail.com

SUNDERLAND: Sunderland Against the Cuts gathered over 150 signatures in just 90 minutes, when we petitioned in the city centre against the devastating £800 million cuts to the NHS in the North East.

writes *Gary Duncan*.

We started campaigning in the summer and have already mobilised more activists than previous movements, like Stop the War. RMT organiser Stan Herschel and Deputy Labour leader Florence Anderson attended our last public meeting, both wanting unity against the Tory cuts.

We will be demonstrating in Newcastle on the European Day of Action 29 September.

Contact: sunderlandleftunity@gmail.com

LEEDS: On 2 September the Leeds Anti-Cuts Committee was set up by in the local Trades Council, writes *Rebecca Anderson*.

Trade unionists from the Public and Commercial Services Union, the National Union of Teachers, Unison, Unite, the Communication Workers Union, the University and College Union and NASUWT were present as well as unemployed workers.

The meeting agreed to contact other trade unions, community and student organisations to take part. It will be organising city-wide protests against the Con-Dem plans in October.

Contact Leeds Trades Council: 0113 234 9920

ECONOMY

As global capitalism stagnates, the THIS IS A VICIOUS,

By Keith Spencer

Two years ago this month, the credit crisis erupted and the world banking system was moments from collapse. Governments carried out huge bank bailouts, pumped money into the economy and invested in order to stimulate the economy. There was even talk of reforming capitalism and ending the power of the speculators. The world economy was rescued from a slump.

Now, the stimulus packages have ended and governments are attacking workers and welfare, slashing wages and benefits, cutting health and pensions. The fear in Washington and London is of a double dip recession or a long period of stagnation caused by the huge cuts in state spending. All talk of global recovery in the short term has been postponed.

The USA

President Barack Obama was elected promising that he would turn the economy around but another 54,000 jobs were lost in August, the third month in a row. The official unemployment rate stands at 9.6 per cent, with millions more on short-time working or no longer included in the figures.

The period between April and June saw the economy grow at 1.6 per cent, insufficient to bring down the unemployment rate, and even that rate is expected to decline later in the year.

The housing market is in a slump again with sales of new houses down by 12 per cent and of existing homes down by 27 per cent.

Obama has claimed his nearly one trillion dollar stimulus package has "stopped the economy bleeding".

But many disagree. Nobel prizewinner Paul Krugman, who advocates government spending, said: "The stimulus raised growth while it lasted, but it made only a small dent in unemployment...and now it's fading out."

Others are even more pessimistic.

Nouriel Roubini, professor at New York University and who correctly predicted the crash in 2008, said: "The US has run out of bullets." The government has already pumped money into the economy, slashed interest rates to zero and invested in infrastructure and tax breaks, he said.

There are few tools left to try even if Obama wanted to. He has now announced £50 billion of road and rail building but this is insufficient to turn around the economy.

Roubini predicted GDP growth would be less than one per cent later in the year and said the US economy is facing a double-dip recession.

"The stimulus raised growth while it lasted, but it made only a small dent in unemployment...and now it's fading out."

Europe

Germany reported growth rates of 2.2 per cent in the last quarter, which while much better than its competitors, depended on replenishing stocks and increasing exports – it is the second biggest exporter in the world after China. German manufacturers took advantage of the fall in the value of the Euro. Also China, which has invested heavily to escape the world downturn, is an important destination for German goods. But most German exports still go to the EU, and most of the EU is slumping.

The Bundesbank (the central bank) expects exports to slow up as the euro appreciates against the falling dollar, making exports more expensive.

But Chancellor Merkel is intent on carrying out savage cuts worth Euros 80 billion on social welfare in Germany and imposing similar cuts on the rest of the Euro area, which will undermine exports

and damage consumer confidence. And with Greece, Spain, Portugal and much of Eastern Europe in deep crisis, it is hard to see the German recovery lasting for long.

The UK

The Con-Dem government has embarked on a huge attack on welfare, jobs and services in order to cut £100 billion from the deficit in four years (see pages 8-9).

This level of cuts is already worrying economists. In the April to June period this year, the economy grew at a rate of 1.2 per cent but already this is declining. Most of the growth was from manufacturing and especially construction, which benefited from the Labour government's investment last year in building programmes. Restocking and the fall in the value of the pound (about 25 per cent) also boosted manufacturing exports.

But the Con-Dems have slashed investment programmes in schools, hospitals and house building in order to cut the deficit, leaving manufacturing and construction in the doldrums.

The Construction Products Association warned that government cutbacks on investment would "cause a double-dip recession for the sector" as new orders have already declined by 14 per cent.

In addition, the service sector, which accounts for the majority of the UK economy, is also slowing up with the worst growth rates for 16 months as consumer spending stagnates; the housing market also reported lower sales and mortgages over the summer.

Furthermore, the money needed for a new round of private investment to boost the economy isn't there. The British Banking Association reported that last year banks lent only £900 million to businesses, a quarter of the average annual rate, despite being pumped full of money by the government.

Economy analyst company Markit, which carries out surveys into UK economy, said that the recent data points to next quarter growth being only 0.5 per cent.

The chief economist at the British Chamber of Commerce put the blame squarely

ruling class goes on the offensive...

FAILING SYSTEM

the retrenchment that the government wants to implement, will inevitably increase dangers of double-dip recession."

Another danger is that the economy will end up like Japan's: stagnating for decades. A spokesperson for Barclays Wealth said: "Double dip is now on everyone's mind. 'Japanisation', or a long hard slog...is the worry."

Neo-liberal attacks

The major governments have adopted austerity policies in order to cut the living standards of workers and poor in order to hand more wealth over to banks, multinationals and rich.

Han-Werner Sinn, head of Germany's IFO Institute, put the ruling class position succinctly recently when he said the people of the USA: "Would just have to see their living standards go down."

The New York Times recently reported that profits were up on Wall Street and that the average pay of managers had increased by 11 per cent on three years ago. But wages for non-managers had fallen by 10 per cent over the same period.

More than a million families are losing their homes in the US every year while unemployment increases. And one in six Americans rely on some form of government hand-outs with more than 40 million receive food stamps.

Youth are particularly hard hit with more than half of 16-24 year olds unemployed while only one in seven African-Americans in the same age group has a job.

Similar cuts are being carried out across Europe as the imperialist economies such as Germany offload the crisis onto their own workers and the smaller economies. Iceland and Ireland were the first victims of the crisis with wage cuts between 10 and 15 per cent, Portugal and Hungary face wage freezes for two years minimum while Latvia and Lithuania have had wage cuts of 20 and up to 50 per cent respectively. Greek workers face a wage cut of a quarter and then a five-year freeze.

Workers are being forced to pay more for

pensions with contributions rising across Europe and the retirement age being raised. In the UK pensions are being tied to the lower of the inflation indexes and retirement age increased, Greece has frozen all payments and raised the age of retirement to 67 while Romania has cut pensions by 15 per cent.

VAT is also being increased all over the continent, this is a regressive tax and hits

The crisis is long and deep. Even when the recovery does pick up, it will feel like a recession for the mass of people

the lowest paid the hardest.

Even for the two countries seen to have escaped the worst of the global meltdown, India and China, the future is turbulent. The Chinese government has had to invest hugely to restructure the economy while facing a huge upsurge in workers' struggles against job losses and factory closures. India's growth rate of more than 10 per cent looks impressive but not when the inflation rate is the same and undermines the economy.

Capitalism: a destructive system

These cuts programmes are now the general policy of the world's ruling class. The initial Keynesian reflationary programmes have failed – now they are shifting to a more direct policy: drive down working class living standards, whatever it takes.

The crisis of 2008 was caused by the returns or profits on investments falling because there was too much capital in the form of money, shares, other wealth such as buildings and goods in the world – what Marxists call the overaccumulation of capital. To make the returns on investments profitable once more, the ruling class must *destroy capital*, slash wages costs, privatise state services, force some companies into bankruptcy and even destroy plant, machinery and surplus goods.

The crisis is long and deep. Even when the recovery does pick up, it will feel like a recession for the mass of people with high unemployment, falling wages, reduced benefits and services; the rich will siphon off the profits and bonuses.

The crisis brought to an end a long period in which the capitalists thought they could stave off a downturn simply by extending credit. Now the desperate measures that governments took to avoid a complete meltdown in 2008 have also run their course. Millions are discovering once again that capitalist crises and recessions are not caused by this or that wrong policy, or by this or that dodgy deal, but are necessary expressions of the contradictions of capital itself.

The expansion of capitalism all over the world in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR nearly 20 years ago certainly expanded this system, but also expanded its contradictions and its crises. We have entered a period in which the industrial cycles of 7-10 years will not disappear, but in which the upturns will be weak and curtailed, the downturns long and bitter.

As the capitalists desperately seek to squeeze profitability out of a contracting system, they will turn not only on the workers but increasingly on one another. Rivalry between states which are already trying to undercut one another in global export markets will become ever sharper and will invariably take the form first of diplomatic and ultimately of military clashes.

This is a world system in decline which brings a huge reduction in living standards and the threat of more terrible destruction ever closer. If the great crisis brings with it one lesson above all, it is the need for the anticapitalist workers of the world to combine their forces in the closest possible unity, so that we can unite the resistance in every country and across borders, and direct it towards a globally co-ordinated challenge to capitalism itself. The question of building a new world party of social revolution – a Fifth International – is posed by the crisis of global capitalism itself.

THE FIGHT AGAINST FASCISM

Fascist EDL are run out of Bradford city

By Andy Yorke

The mobilisation against the English Defence League (EDL) in Bradford on 28 August was an important victory. The fascist EDL suffered a double defeat.

It only got 700 supporters to Bradford after building the demo up all summer as “the big one”, calling for 5,000 thugs to invade the city.

And when 100 of their thugs tried to rampage through the town local people and antifascists saw them off.

After being bussed in by police and placed in their pen around 1pm, the EDL immediately began chanting sickeningly anti-Muslim and racist chants, such as, “We love the floods” – mocking the devastating crisis that has killed thousands in Pakistan.

Just as in 2001 when the National Front came to Bradford, the fascists were determined to start a race riot.

The EDL soon tried to push through police lines, throwing rocks, bottles and even smoke bombs at activists, who had passed up the two explicitly pacifist “festivals”, called by the leaders of the official antifascist organisations, to gather in the streets, forming a timely counter-demonstration.

Locals and activists defend city

The numbers at the counter-protest soon swelled with Asian, black and white people, – men and women, young and old, socialists and antifascist groups.

But at the same time, desperate to trigger the riot they

craved, a hardened core of EDL members broke free by climbing over an unguarded fence. Over a hundred fascists escaped the pen while the police did nothing.

Like lightning, the counter-protest turned and hundreds ran up a hilly road and down a car filled street, with many drivers honking their support. Some EDL thugs stood their ground, threatening the first antifascists to arrive, daring us to take them on.

But they had to be rescued by police, who used attack dogs – not to drive the EDL back, but to defend them from the antifascists! The EDL were forced back into Urban Gardens, physically stopped from spreading fear and hate.

Hope Not Hate

This victory came despite – not because of – the main antifascist organisations in Britain, who tried to prevent the community from defending their city.

In the run-up to the Bradford demonstrations, Hope Not Hate (HNH – controlled by *Searchlight* magazine and the Labour Party) argued that there should be no counter-demonstration and that the people of Bradford should campaign for the police to stop the EDL protest.

They lobbied the Home Office to ban the EDL from marching. This campaign was partially successful, with the EDL being restricted to a static protest, which predictably turned out to be not so static.

But on the day, HNH leader Nick Lowles admitted the uselessness of police “protection” saying: “Two hundred and fifty EDL have broken out and are



The unofficial counter demo stopped EDL riot

running up the hill. One solitary police car in sight. This is a shambles... The [police] dogs are out of the van but are pointed at the locals.”

UAF – ‘We Are Bradford’

Unite Against Fascism (UAF – another broad alliance but with the Socialist Workers Party

involved) argued that antifascists and antiracists should be able to show their opposition to the EDL in the city centre.

But UAF was also said that this should only be a “peaceful celebration of multiculturalism”, releasing a statement to reassure the police, local politicians and community leaders that such an

Where next for the antifascist movement?

Bradford showed clearer than ever that we need a national self-defence organisation that defends us from both the fascists and the police, rather than “channelling” our movement into pacifism and dependence on the police like UAF and HNH.

It needs to draw people together from all the anti-fascist organisations on the simple basis that we should deny the fascists the streets. It

should be ready to assert its democratic and legal right to defend our marches and our communities from racist rioters, and to defend its right to do so in the courts, in the media and in practice.

Let’s make sure what awaits the fascists next time is an organised defence association ready to stop them in their tracks – an Antifascist Defence League.

event was “not a counter-demonstration”.

In Bradford, a UAF organising meeting on 26 August explained that, if EDL members broke away from the police, attacking mosques and other buildings, then they would “stay in the square”.

When the EDL did break out of their pen they held to that policy. Even the left wing of UAF, the Socialist Workers Party, was determined to keep people at the “We are Bradford” festival and honour their agreements with the police.

While hundreds of people from Bradford were defending their city, the SWP leaders, along with most of their members, were nowhere to be seen. This was despite their newspaper article insisting that we needed a counter-mobilisation to “politically, ideologically – and physically” oppose the fascists.

The shameful fact is that the HNH and UAF leaders, supporting the media’s version of 2001, sought to prevent any confrontation with the EDL to avoid a riot. But in the end it was the self-defence of local people, not them, who prevented a repeat of the 2001 riots.

They shall not pass

In the run up to Bradford, *Workers Power* argued for the necessary tactics: mass action to defend the city from the EDL because we could not rely on the police to do it. In the end, this proved to be correct.

The police failed to control the EDL and saved their ammunition for the antiracists in Bradford. It was several hundred antifascists that drove the EDL off the streets.

The working class people who came out to stop the EDL marching were right to do so. They showed it was possible, with just a few hundred people prepared to stand their ground, to prevent the EDL launching a racist pogrom.

Northern Ireland: still a prison house

Bernie McAdam reports on growing repression in Northern Ireland and how a new movement is challenging the sectarian state.

The recent upsurge in attacks by Irish Republican groups on police targets has prompted Tory MP Patrick Mercer to warn of possible, but unlikely, attacks on the Tory party conference in Birmingham this October. He said, “I don’t think they have that capability but they are talking about it.” Tory scaremongering takes some beating!

But the rise in dissident Republicanism is still worrying the British government and its DUP/Sinn Féin administration. Sinn Féin has even offered to talk to dissident groups, and Martin McGuinness, Sinn Féin MP for Mid Ulster, insists the British government is already talking to them.

The represents a big change in tune for McGuinness, who used to hold to the view that the “micro-groups represent nothing”. The truth is that many people in the nationalist enclaves have seen no material improvement in their conditions and no progress towards a united Ireland. And now traditional repression against dissent is growing.

Prisoners and parades

Irish Republican prisoners in Maghaberry have been beaten up, locked up for 23 hours a day, strip-searched, and denied basic facilities. And although a protest campaign by the prisoners and their supporters has won their right to free association and an end to systematic strip-searching, reports suggest that prison officers are



The PSNI ensure the Orange Order can march through Catholic areas

violating the agreement.

The peace deal also failed to resolve the issue of Orange Order parades marching through nationalist areas. For the third time this summer sectarian marches have passed by the nationalist Ardoyne area. A sit down protest by residents followed by a night of resistance from local youths in July resulted in police attacks and heavy repression.

The state has also used the resurgence in bombing to clamp down on republican activists. Police raids are resuming at an alarming pace. Political leaders, such as Gary Donnelly of the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, are being framed on flimsy charges like possessing “terror-related” mobile phones. But any critic of the peace agreement is fair game for a sectarian state that abhors dissent.

Sinn Féin has no doubt been

alarmed at the increasing number of protests on the streets, which in days gone by it would have been leading. Now it governs with the DUP and is trying to pass the Public Assemblies, Parades and Protests Bill, which bans unauthorised protests of over 50 people.

The pressure must be kept up so that this bill is binned for good and not just revised. If this fails, then a campaign of mass civil disobedience including industrial action must take place.

What is needed now is a political movement, which can coordinate and develop a campaign against repression. A united campaign could be kick-started by a democratically organised conference fighting for an immediate end to the British occupation, political status for prisoners and their release, and right of the Irish people to determine the future of the six counties.

PAKISTAN

Zardari, army and West delay as Pakistan drowns

By Darren Cogavin

Pakistan is reeling from the most destructive floods in history. At least 20 million have been affected, five million are homeless, scores of thousands are starving. Roads, bridges and farms have all suffered irreparable damage. More than 6,000 villages have been swept away. Many remain stranded without access to drinking water, food or shelter.

The devastation has stirred anger against the US-backed Pakistani government, which was painfully slow to act. President Ali Zardari even visited his 16th century Normandy château whilst the floods were raging.

The floods have damaged at least 3.2 million hectares - about 14 per cent of Pakistan's cultivated land - warns the UN's food agency. The agricultural heartland, the breadbasket of Pakistan, is completely wiped out.

The Revolutionary Socialist Movement (RSM), Pakistani section of the League for the Fifth International, is involved in relief efforts across the country, helping workers' aid in the cities, collecting money, food and emergency supplies, and organising their distribution in the into the affected areas. RSM member Rashid said: "The flood and rain has devastated the lives of millions; people are living without shelter and food. The government made the situation worse with their mismanagement."

The hard work of activists stands in stark contrast to the US, which gives the Pakistan government \$1 billion a year to fight "militants", yet has only promised a paltry \$55 million for emergency aid. Meanwhile, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that the \$459 million response plan for Pakistan has only received \$291 million. Pakistan's Ambassador to the UN pointed out that Pakistanis themselves were supporting 18 million of the 20 million affected.

Bombs not food

As floods were roaring, US personnel in the region diverted resources to the so-



called "war on terror". US drones fired missiles in Pakistan's North Waziristan district - an area heavily affected by the floods - killing at least 13 people on 14 August. Over 1,000 people have died in areas raided by US drones since August 2008.

Decades of US interference, propping up corrupt military regimes, have left this country one of the poorest and least developed in the region. The US has made generous funds available to Pakistan for military equipment and intelligence agencies to secure its interests in the region, while infrastructure development, education, health and other social needs have been ignored. The lack of flood control in the country has destroyed hundreds of miles of roads, railway lines, bridges, houses, schools and hospitals.

The devastation, without any doubt, is not just an accident of nature. Ominous warnings of a massive flood were predicted in July, weeks in advance, when unusually heavy rain hit the highlands in the North. It was the heaviest rainfall in 35 years. Yet Pakistani officials took no steps to notify the population at risk or move emergency equipment into the region.

The industrialists, feudal landlords and banks are preparing to utilise this disaster for their own benefit. The central bank has already increased interest rates to make loans more expensive. For weeks, flood-affected victims have been enraged after

feudal landlords deliberately breached the levees to save their own farms while villages were flooded and peasants lost crops, livestock and homes. These breaches could not have been made without at least a tacit nod from higher quarters.

"It is not just floodwater that is killing and displacing people, now there is a real threat for many of disease and starvation," said RSM activist Faiz Ali. "Huge amounts of crops have been destroyed, making it even harder for villages and communities to feed themselves over the winter. Instead the Pakistani state has been adamant about saving various multinational corporate projects, dams and bridges."

RSM members in Gujranwala organised a protest against the government's inaction, arguing for class struggle against the corrupt elite and for an emergency plan to meet its people's needs. The economy needs to be taken out of the hands of the capitalists and landlords. Faced with a situation that is quickly deteriorating, communities desperately need food, clean water and hygiene supplies. But the resources currently available cover only a fraction of what is required, so the international labour movement must respond quickly to grassroots and labour appeals in Pakistan.

You can donate to the flood relief work of the RSM by contacting lfioffice@btopenworld.com

INTERNATIONAL

Middle-East peace talks are a farce

By Marcus Halaby

A new round of peace talks between Israel and Palestine are being viewed with cynicism by many. Despite claims from US President Barack Obama's administration that there is hope for progress, the reality is that Israel is determined from the start to undermine any genuine moves towards resolving any of the substantive issues.

These include the massive settlement-building programme currently going on in the West Bank, which is occupied territory and the construction of the apartheid "security" wall which is annexing so much Palestinian land. The other issue is the continued siege of Gaza, described as a "humanitarian disaster" by international aid agencies.

Notably missing from the talks is the party that makes up the elected government of

the Palestinians – Hamas. Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh has rightly condemned the talks in advance. A spokesperson said they would give Israel "the cover to complete its settlement project in the West Bank and its aggression against the Palestinian people."

Israel refuses to negotiate with Hamas, which would be an admission on its part that Hamas is the genuinely elected government of Palestine. As a result, the "peace talks" won't hear the voice of the majority of Palestinians and are more an attempt to boost Obama's credentials before the US mid-term elections in November.

From the Palestinian side only Fatah will attend, represented by Mahmood Abbas. Abbas is clinging onto power in the West Bank by refusing to hold elections, knowing that after his constant betrayals he would certainly not win. As a reward for helping Israel rebuff the UN's Goldstone

report, which exposed Israeli war crimes in Gaza, the only concession Abbas won before the talks was a one-month suspension on the construction of new settlements in the West Bank, applying only to the rural areas.

On the Israeli side there is little room for negotiation. Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Prime Minister since February 2009, explicitly rejected his predecessors' controversial programme of removing settlements from Gaza. Netanyahu's stubborn approach has alienated Washington, which now looks to Ehud Barak, Israel's Labor Party's defence minister, as a political ally.

Barak worked closely with US President Clinton in the late 1990s and bears much of the responsibility for provoking the Palestinian uprising in September 2000. But he too has no alternative way forward, which leaves the door open for right winger Avigdor Lieberman's proposals to strip Israel's Palestinian citizens of their second-class civil rights, and pursue a policy that is part apartheid and part ethnic cleansing.

There is only one just and viable possibility for peace in the Middle East – a single, secular and socialist state for both peoples, based on equal citizenship and the full recognition of each other's national existence.

Venezuela: Hugo Chavez's PSUV party faces tough electoral test

By Tim West

On 26 September the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) will face its first national elections. It was founded in 2007 to support Hugo Chávez' government and the "Bolivarian Revolution." The PSUV controls 80 per cent of mayoralties and 19 of the 24 states. However, it suffered defeats in the December 2007 referendum on constitutional reform and the 2008 regional elections, marking a decline from Chávez' peak of popularity in 2002 and 2003 after the defeat of right wing coup attempts.

Today, after a decade of reformist social policy, Venezuela's ongoing problems of high unemployment and inflation, high crime rates and chronic food shortages are now combined with a severe recession.

Industry and land remain dominated by large landowners and foreign multination-

als, with two-thirds of the economy still controlled by the private sector. The country imports 70 per cent of its food despite fertile soil, and large supermarket chains control food distribution, undermining government attempts to control rising prices.

Just months after calling for a "fifth international", Chávez recently commended the election of Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos, head of one of the most repressive, pro-US and anti-working class regimes in the world and a former minister in Alvaro Uribe's murderous government. Chávez called for the FARC, a Colombian rebel army, to disarm, and did not challenge Colombia's "right" to let the US build seven new military bases on its soil. These new bases will be used by the US to strengthen its military reach.

There is increasing popular anger at the "Boli-bourgeoisie", the bureaucracy inside the PSUV that has enriched itself through the oil revenue-funded state sector. The

right wing is cynically using this discontent to win over the most backward sections of workers and poor and most of the middle class. They hope to take control of the legislature, or at least force the government to further cede political ground to them.

In these elections many honest militants will vote for the PSUV as an alternative to the vicious right wing. But Venezuela's ongoing problems reveal the fundamental contradiction facing Chávez' project of 21st Century Socialism: socialism cannot be built while leaving the capitalist state and property relations, which the PSUV leaders defend, intact. As long as the means of production rest in private hands, the capitalists will sabotage any serious attempts to challenge them. Working class militants in the PSUV and outside of it should be fighting to build a revolutionary party with an internationalist programme aimed at the seizure of power by the working class.

70 YEARS SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF LEON TROTSKY

Trotsky's place in history

In the first of two articles, we reproduce extracts from Richard Brenner's recently republished book, *Trotsky - an introduction*



Today capitalism is in crisis, a system in decline. But in its early years, the capitalist class - the bourgeoisie - had to fight to establish its rule and overthrow the preceding system of feudalism.

In its revolutionary past, the bourgeoisie had its share of genuinely great leaders, people like Cromwell and Robespierre who led the revolutionary destruction of the monarchy and the feudal system. They owe their place in history to their ruthless and uncompromising struggle for the interests of their rising class.

The working class movement also has its share of such extraordinary individuals.

Among the greatest of them is Leon Trotsky, who stood at the head of the most successful working class struggle that history has yet seen.

In October 1917, as chairman of the Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (the "Soviet") in the capital of the Russian Empire, he organised an armed uprising that overthrew the capitalist government, dissolved their secret

police and state apparatus, and installed in its place a state based on delegates elected by the mass of the working class.

The Russian Revolution faced an immediate threat. Armies from 14 capitalist states, including France, Britain and Japan, invaded revolutionary Russia and fought alongside the "White Armies" of the old ruling class.

Trotsky took the lead in building up, from the exhausted and war-weary peasants and workers of Russia, a new Red Army, an army unlike any other before or since, which resisted and defeated the Whites.

So different from narrow nationalist politicians of the bourgeois type, Trotsky looked beyond the boundaries of Russia to the working class movements of Germany, Britain,



France, China and the East. He called on them to come to the aid of the Soviet republic by settling accounts with the capitalists in their own countries.

When the workers of the western countries failed to follow the Russian example with successful revolutions of their own, the revolution in Russia was thrown into isolation and retreat. A growing caste of bureaucrats and middlemen began to elevate their own interests above the international revolution and the working class.

From as early as 1923 Trotsky opposed this slide into bureaucratic dictatorship. He denounced the aspiring dicta-

tor Stalin, to his face, as the "gravedigger of the revolution". In a mounting campaign of repression, hundreds of thousands of the most self-sacrificing communists were imprisoned, tortured and murdered by Stalin and his henchmen.

Fourth International

Trotsky was the only leading Russian revolutionary not to give up the fight against this bloody regime. And as the Communist Parties around the world, united in the Third International, defended Stalin to the hilt, Trotsky fought to build a Fourth International, a new world party of social revolution.

Trotsky was cast into exile, first confined to the wilderness of the Soviet east. Expelled to Turkey, he was to be hounded to Norway, through France and finally to Mexico where he was assassinated by a Stalinist agent on 19 August 1940. The 70th anniversary of his death is an opportunity for us to reflect on the meaning and significance of his life for the struggle today.

Millions are looking for a way to fightback against the huge cuts in jobs and welfare that capitalism is imposing on working people all over the world. The answer is to link our struggles to the fight for revolution, and Trotsky's struggle for the workers' councils to take the power has lessons for us today.

Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution (see below) will be key to this, revealing as it does both the role the working class needs to lay in the revolution, and how a revolution in one country will be intimately connected to the fight in other countries.

Today millions of people who detest capitalism fear that if we overthrow it we could end

up living under a one-party dictatorship that cannot provide a decent life for the people, like in the former USSR. But Trotsky's struggle against Stalin (also see below) shows that there is a real communist alternative, not just to capitalism but to the excuse for socialism that Stalinism represented.

Finally Trotsky's fight for the Fourth International is a model for us today, because the crisis of capitalism is a worldwide phenomenon, and we urgently need to learn how we can build a new world party of socialist revolution - a Fifth International.

In all these struggles, Trotsky's ideas and work give powerful insights into what we need to do, and how we need to do it.

Permanent Revolution

The theory of permanent revolution is one of the main contributions made by Trotsky to Marxism. It deals with two main questions. The first is the role of the working class in revolutions in "backward" countries. The second is the international character of the socialist revolution.

Both are burning questions today. Repeatedly the capitalist class has resorted to the most drastic measures, including civil war and dictatorship, to prevent revolution. But this was not



always the case. To establish their power in the first place, the bourgeoisie had no option but to turn to revolution.

The French Revolution of

1789 was a classic example. It swept away the old land-owning class and the monarchy, and opened the way for the development of modern capitalism. The bourgeoisie encouraged the mass of the people - the peasants and the urban poor - to rise up and fight for "Liberty, Fraternity and Equality".

Bourgeois revolution

But once the King and the aristocracy had been overthrown, the poor were left without power, without the vote, and without rights. The capitalists had made their revolution: now the impoverished population should settle down and get to work - for the capitalists. By the turn of the century Russia was still so backward that it had not had even a bourgeois revolution. There was no parliament and no free speech; the land was still in the hands of the old aristocracy. Marxists all agreed that the coming revolution would be bourgeois.

But who would lead it? The weak bourgeoisie would not carry out even their own revolution. Both VI Lenin, the leader of the Bolsheviks, and Trotsky agreed that the workers would have to rely on themselves and build up their own organisations. But Trotsky went a step further.

His starting point was the theory of uneven and combined development. Native Americans that came into contact with settlers swapped their bows and arrows for rifles, without having to discover gunpowder themselves. This uneven and combined development applies not only to technology but to the way society develops. It suggested to Trotsky that a country could "skip" a stage of development, and that backward Russia could go directly from the bourgeois revolution to the seizure of power by the working class.

Already the great dress rehearsal for 1917 - the defeated Russian Revolution of 1905 - had seen a huge the general strike,

the formation of workers' Soviets and an armed workers' uprising. This had proved beyond doubt that the working class would play the leading role in the revolution against the Tsar.

But what would happen after the Tsar had been overthrown? The workers would have to form a government. The first steps of this revolutionary government would be to complete the bourgeois revolution, abolishing the monarchy, granting freedom to oppressed nationalities and recognising the peasants' right to land.

But should the workers then guarantee to preserve the capitalist system? Trotsky said no. The workers' government would have to go further and



take socialist measures to meet the workers' need, not the capitalists' greed.

The only alternative would be to limit the revolution strictly to capitalist measures, which would mean siding with the bosses whenever workers took action. To avoid this, the new government would have to confiscate the property of the capitalists. In Trotsky's words, "the democratic revolution grows over directly into the socialist revolution and thereby becomes a permanent revolution."

Today, in the Third World, Trotsky's theory is crucial. The Stalinists argue that revolutions should stop at the 'democratic stage', i.e. capitalism. But if revolutions against dictatorship, for national independence, for equal votes, for land, are to secure lasting gains they cannot stop halfway leaving power in the hands of the bosses, but need to go further, to working

class power and socialism.

Trotsky never believed that Russia would be able to build socialism alone. He argued that the key was to spread the revolution to other countries. The overthrow of the powerful capitalists of Germany, Britain and France would remove the greatest threat to the survival of the Russian workers' republic. A federation of workers' states would help to overcome Russia's isolation and backwardness.

This was the second vital element of the theory of permanent revolution. As Trotsky put it:

"The conquest of power by the proletariat does not complete the revolution, but only opens it... The socialist revolution begins on the national arena, it unfolds on the international arena... it attains completion only in the final victory of the new society on our entire planet."

Today, in the era of worldwide crisis, those words are more relevant than ever.

Trotsky versus Stalinism

Leon Trotsky warned that Stalinism was a sickness within the Soviet Union and the socialist movement. Stalin's regime blocked the road to socialism, and without working class democracy and socialist revolution around the world, the Soviet Union could not survive.

Russia emerged from the revolution in a terribly weakened state. In Petrograd, industry in 1921 was producing only an eighth of its 1913 output. The number of industrial workers dropped from 230,000 to under 80,000 between 1918 and 1920.

Grain had to be seized from the peasants to make sure the cities were fed. Experts had to be appointed in industry to raise production. The workers' councils - soviets - became smaller and less representative as millions joined the Red Army.

Lenin and Trotsky never tried to cover this up. They knew that special, temporary measures



had to be taken to ensure the survival of the workers' state. This took the form of the New Economic Policy (NEP).

Instead of seizing the peasants' grain, the state now took a fixed part. The remainder could be sold as under capitalism. This would avoid the danger of a peasant war and boost production. But NEP also allowed rich peasants - Kulaks - to secure privileges for themselves. A layer of so-called NEP-men, who organised the distribution of products, grew up within the Communist Party and the state apparatus.

In 1921 Lenin and Trotsky tried to make sure the growth of this privileged layer did not lead to the corruption of the Communist Party itself by banning factions in the party. This was a serious mistake that achieved the opposite of what Lenin and Trotsky had intended.

A privileged bureaucracy was already growing up within the party. This emerging layer of bureaucrats found a champion in the general secretary of the party, Joseph Stalin. As the ban on factions increased his control, any criticism was soon ruled out of order. By autumn 1923, he demanded that factions should be reported either to the leadership or to the secret police.

Trotsky launched a fight against Stalinism that would last the rest of his life. The Opposition demanded a "regime of comradely unity and internal party democracy", without fear of repression. He fought to rebuild the soviets and give them real control. He wanted the party to adopt a democrat-

70 YEARS SINCE THE ASSASSINATION OF LEON TROTSKY

ic plan of production to build up large-scale modern industry and agriculture moving towards socialist production for need rather than profit.

But the absence of party democracy allowed Stalin's faction to misrepresent Trotsky's views and prevent party members - in Russia and abroad - from looking at what he was really saying.

Stalin's offensive

First the Stalinists used jeers and smears instead of arguments. The Opposition were "counter-revolutionaries" who wanted to "rob the peasants". The threat from the Kulaks had been "exaggerated". In November 1927 Trotsky was expelled from the Communist Party, the Opposition declared illegal. The police attacked their demonstrations. By 1928 the leaders of the Opposition were all expelled. Trotsky was sent into exile.

No sooner had the Opposition been defeated than the Kulaks moved against the workers' state. In the winter of 1927-28 they refused to sell their grain unless the state raised prices. Trotsky's warnings had proved to be correct. The threat from the Kulaks had to be confronted. Yet in place of a democratically managed plan for steady progress, Stalin used force, command from above and brute terror. Whereas Lenin and Trotsky had argued for voluntary collectives the Stalinists now collectivised farms by force; 320,000 peasants were deported in the first months of the new turn.

In industry the Stalinists also adopted the plans of the Opposition but in a warped and distorted form. After mocking the idea of an economic plan, the Stalinists now planned each industry, but this was carried out by command, from above. Real advances were made, but Stalinism held the enormous potential of the planned econ-

omy back, its dynamism undermined by the absence of working class democracy.

By 1932 Stalin's rule was total - but unstable. The Great Purges of the 1930s were the result. Millions died in a frenzy of persecution and oppression. Oppositionists were threatened, tortured, and forced to "recant" their views. They were framed with ludicrous charges, then shot after grotesque "show trials".



Trotsky - alone of the former Bolshevik leaders - did not capitulate to Stalin. He was also the only anti-Stalinist to use Marxism to understand the degeneration of the Russian revolution. The backwardness and isolation of Russia were the main causes of the retreat of the revolution and the rise of the bureaucracy.

How then could the Soviet state be defined? The Stalinists insisted that it was socialist. But a socialist state:

"...has as its premise the dying away of the state as the guardian of property; the mitigation of inequality and the gradual dissolution of the property concept even in the morals and customs of society. The real development in the Soviet Union in recent years has followed a directly opposite road. Inequality grows, and with it, state coercion."

Was the USSR capitalist then? Trotsky thought not. Under capitalism everything is produced for sale on the market, including labour power - the ability of working people to work. Production goes through sharp cycles of boom and slump. Unemployment and inflation ravage the economy. The ruling class draws enormous profits - legally - by exploiting the workers.

In the USSR all this was dif-

ferent. Goods were not produced to make a profit when sold on the market. Rather, production was organised according to requirements fixed by the bureaucrats in their central plan. All property was in the hands of the state. Labour power was not bought and sold but allocated by officials; wages were fixed.

Class nature of USSR

The economy developed without booms and slumps. There was no mass unemployment. For decades inflation was almost unknown. The bureaucracy grew rich, but illegally, by robbing the state and fixing the figures.

For these reasons, Trotsky defined the USSR as a "degenerated workers' state". The capitalists and their system had been overthrown. But the transition to socialism had been blocked by the Stalinist bureau-

cracy, who had taken political power out of the hands of the working class and kept it by means of massive repression.

Trotsky concluded that the USSR needed to be defended against attempts to restore capitalism. But at the same time he said a new workers' revolution would be necessary to smash the Stalinist state and restore power to genuine soviets.

This approach is vital for socialists with regard to states like Cuba today - they must be defended unconditionally against the US and counter-revolution, but power needs to pass from the bureaucracy back into the hands of councils of elected workers' delegates and the revolution must be spread across the Caribbean and Latin America.

How should we judge Trotsky's struggle against Stalin? Clearly Trotsky and his followers failed to overthrow Stalin, and eventually the Stalinist bureaucracy collapsed, handing power back to the capitalists in 1991.

Some suggest that if Trotsky had really understood what was going on, he would never have lost power. This can be roughly translated as: Stalin was right because he won. If this is true, then justice is on the side of every tyrant on the earth.

But socialism has not failed. The great attempt of the Russian revolution has shown that there is an alternative to capitalism. Struggles against capitalism have not ceased, and as the Great Crisis of 2008 has shown, they will not cease while capitalism and its economic failure continues.

Today, as millions look for an alternative to capitalism, the ideas of the early years of the Soviet Republic will find a new audience among workers and youth all over the world. These are the ideas that Leon Trotsky kept alive - the ideas that will triumph in the future.

WHAT WE STAND FOR

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation. We fight to:

- Abolish capitalism and create a world without exploitation, class divisions and oppression
- Break the resistance of the exploiters by the force of millions acting together in a social revolution smashing the repressive capitalist state
- Place power in the hands of councils of delegates from the working class, the peasantry, the poor - elected and recallable by the masses
- Transform large-scale production and distribution, at present in the hands of a tiny elite, into a socially owned economy, democratically planned
- Plan the use of humanity's labour, materials and technology to eradicate social inequality and poverty.

This is communism - a society without classes and without state repression. To achieve this, the working class must take power from the capitalists.

We fight imperialism: the handful of great capitalist powers and their corporations, who exploit billions and crush all states and peoples, who resist them. We support resistance to their blockades, sanctions, invasions and occupations by countries like Venezuela, Iraq or Iran. We demand an end to the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and the Zionist occupation of Palestine. We support unconditionally the armed resistance.

We fight racism and national oppres-

sion. We defend refugees and asylum seekers from the racist actions of the media, the state and the fascists. We oppose all immigration controls. When racists physically threaten refugees and immigrants, we take physical action to defend them. We fight for no platform for fascism.

We fight for women's liberation: from physical and mental abuse, domestic drudgery, sexual exploitation and discrimination at work. We fight for free abortion and contraception on demand. We fight for an end to all discrimination against lesbians and gay men and against their harassment by the state, religious bodies and reactionaries.

We fight youth oppression in the family and society: for their sexual freedom, for an end to super-exploitation, for the right to vote at sixteen, for free, universal education with a living grant.

We fight bureaucracy in the unions. All union officers must be elected, recallable, and removable at short notice, and earn the average pay of the members they claim to represent. Rank and file trade unionists must organise to dissolve the bureaucracy. We fight for nationalisation without compensation and under workers control.

We fight reformism: the policy of Labour, Socialist, Social-Democratic and the misnamed Communist parties. Capitalism cannot be reformed through peaceful parliamentary means; it must be overthrown by force. In Britain, we fight to build a consis-

tently socialist alternative to the Labour Party inside the movement, a revolutionary party. This can be won through addressing the most advanced sections of the working class with the need for a revolutionary programme of action, to take steps towards unity around such a programme, to fight for a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party.

We fight Stalinism. The so-called communist states were a dictatorship over the working class by a privileged bureaucratic elite, based on the expropriation of the capitalists. Those Stalinist states that survive - Cuba and North Korea - must be defended against imperialist blockade and attack. But a socialist political revolution is the only way to prevent their eventual collapse.

We reject the policies of class collaboration: "popular fronts" or a "democratic stage", which oblige the working class to renounce the fight for power today. We reject the theory of "socialism in one country". Only Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution can bring victory in the age of imperialism and globalisation. Only a global revolution can consign capitalism to history.

With the internationalist and communist goal in our sights, proceeding along the road of the class struggle, we propose the unity of all revolutionary forces in a new Fifth International.

That is what Workers Power is fighting for. If you share these goals - join us.

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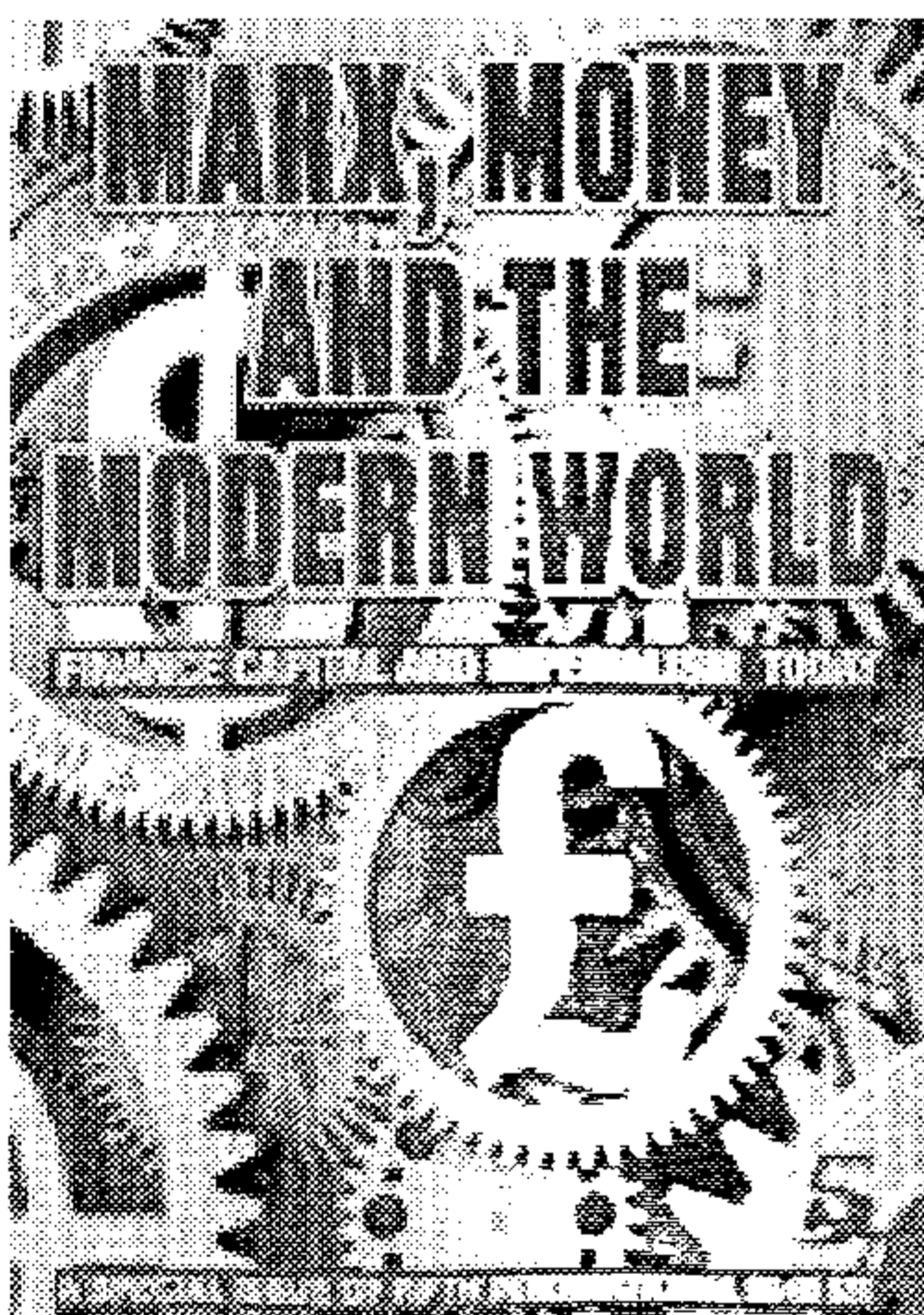
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- **British imperialism today**
Keith Spencer

From anticuts committees to working class power

By John Bowman

A new movement against the ConDem coalition's vicious cuts to jobs and services is starting to take shape. In cities and towns across the UK, trade union branches, community and socialist groups, and Labour Party activists are forming local anti-cuts organisations to coordinate resistance.

While many are in their early stages of organisation, some committees – such as Lambeth SOS which has successfully defended against attacks on parent-toddler clubs – are already winning small but important victories, showing that cuts can be challenged. This is a small step towards building a mass movement that can really blow a hole in the coalition's austerity plans.

Workers Power has consistently argued for local anti-cuts groups to be built into community-wide committees of action to unite activists. Such committees can react quickly to events, overcome divisions between workers in different unions, and also bring into struggle the unemployed who have been thrown out of work. They should also include users of public services; as the government and bosses try to lay the blame for deteriorating services at the feet of public sector workers, public opinion must be won to the struggle of these workers for quality services.

Class war

The trade unions will play a strong role within the anti-cuts committees – with local union branches already behind the forming of many of the campaigns. This is vital – the strength of the organised labour movement, which organises millions across the UK and can call for powerful strike action – is essential to making sure that the ConDem cuts do not go through.

But of course Cameron and Clegg aim to drive down the wages and living standards of everyone in Britain – except the super-rich, of course.

The unity of entire working class communities with delegates sent from

youth clubs, pensioner and community organisations, black and Asian networks, anti-racist campaigns and delegates from every workplace to fight every cut would mean that anti-cuts committees can overcome any sectional competition that might arise when the Tories seek to divide us – like Thatcher did in the 1980's.

Anti-cuts committees can fight for unity against all cuts and against policies that might defend older workers at the expense of younger ones, permanent workers at the expense of agency workers, 'British' workers at the expense of migrant workers, or healthcare at the expense of education.

This kind of unity – mass working-class unity to fight for working-class interests as a whole – makes anti-cuts committees vital. Transcending divisions, anti-cuts committees should be able to have their own democratic structures, delegate systems and be able to take votes on the policies they carry out.

A Coalition of Resistance

Sensing the need to draw local groups, such as Lambeth SOS, and national anti-cuts organisations, such as the Right to Work and the National Shop Stewards Network, into a nationwide response against the Tories, a Coalition of Resistance (CoR) was launched in August (see page 3).

With more than 3,000 signatories – including trade union leaders, Labour MPs – the new coalition has the potential to spread anticuts committees all over the country. What is more, it could convene a national anticuts committee based on delegates from the local groups.

But we will need to put pressure on Labour MPs, who often sell out, and we will need to oppose Labour councils when they carry out cuts – instead they should refuse all cuts, demand additional Whitehall funding, and set deficit budgets, breaking the law rather than breaking the poor.

So far the response of the official Labour and trade union leaders to the cuts has been pathetic. They want to

oppose the Tories in words and hope to win the next election on the votes of angry victims. But they oppose the strikes and occupations we will need to stop the cuts in their tracks. If they get their way they will be elected on the ruins of our services, our conditions and our futures. Much of our union organisation may also be wrecked unless we resist now.

Here anticuts committees and a National Anticuts Committee can be crucial. If they are based on delegates from every workplace and every working class community, they will have the power and the authority to deliver action even without the official leaders if necessary.

Committees of action

That is why communist policy always stresses in every struggle the need to organise joint committees of action from below – so that working class people can break the hold of these functionaries and control our own struggles.

In periods of massive struggles, which draw in millions of people, like the miners strike and the Poll Tax rebellion, the question is posed: who should have the power in society? The whole of the capitalist establishment sets itself against the people: the government, the media, the police.

Committees of action bring onto the stage another power – the power of the working class organised democratically to resist the bosses and take control of our society and our future. That was why great workers revolutions, like the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution, drew their strength from just such organisations of directly elected working class delegates. When they seized the power, the possibility opened of getting rid of the capitalists all together and running society on a socialist basis ourselves.

We need a revolutionary party, and to unite the resistance against the cuts and direct it against the government and the capitalist system. Anticuts committees can be the first step along this revolutionary road.