



# VICTORY

## TO THE **EGYPTIAN** **REVOLUTION**

**MORE ON THE REVOLT IN THE ARAB WORLD – Turn to pages 14, 15 and 17, 18, and 19**

**TUC BLOCKS ACTION AGAINST TORY CUTS – Turn to pages 6 and 7**

## Where we stand

Workers Power is a revolutionary communist organisation formed in 1976 in the tradition of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky and applying their ideas to the fight against capitalism today.

We are the British Section of an international tendency formed in 1989, which in 2003 adopted the name League for the Fifth International to express our fight for a new world party of social revolution.

Capitalism is a crisis-ridden social system that repeatedly plunges the world into destructive phases of economic downturn, instability and war. Private ownership of the means of production obstructs the development of human potential and leaves billions in poverty while a handful of oligarchs monopolise wealth and resources.

The alternative to capitalism is generated by the class struggle of the modern working class which repeatedly organises resistance to the ruling capitalist class. Today, with global capitalism again entering an historic crisis, working class resistance is springing up everywhere against the capitalists' attempts to make the workers pay for a crisis we never caused.

By developing a new revolutionary leadership, the working class can unify its resistance to the capitalist offensive and convert it into a challenge to the rule of capital itself. This means overthrowing the capitalist class in an armed revolution, breaking up the repressive apparatus of the capitalist state and replacing it with the rule of councils of recallable delegates from workplaces and working class communities, guarded and defended by a workers' militia.

The principal obstacle to the victory of working class resistance is the leadership of the working class movement itself. From social-democrats and Labourites through to the mainstream Communist parties with their Stalinist ideology, the mass political parties of the working class movement have long since abandoned the road of revolution. Their reformist ideology not only obscures the road to working class power, but systematically disorganises resistance to the cuts and the capitalist offensive today.

The Fourth International was founded by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to challenge the misleadership of social democracy and Stalinism, but since 1951 has abandoned this task and everywhere adapts to their leadership. For this reason, we everywhere raise the call for the formation of a new world party of social revolution, a Fifth International.

## ACTIVISTS' DIARY

**Saturday 5 February**

• **Save Our Libraries Day of Action** to protest against the cuts facing public libraries.

• **Luton Anti-EDL Protest**

12 noon, Park Square, Luton  
<http://uaf.org.uk/>

**Saturday 12 February**

• **People's Convention: building resistance to austerity**

10.30am- 5pm, Friends Meeting House, London  
<http://righttowork.org.uk>

**Sat 12-Sun 13 February**

• **Coalition of Resistance, Week of Action Against Cuts**

see [www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk](http://www.coalitionofresistance.org.uk) for details

**Tuesday 8 March**

• **100th Anniversary of International Women's Day**

see [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com) for details of celebrations

## MARCH AGAINST THE TORY CUTS!



### TUC National Demonstration Saturday 26 March

Assemble 11am at Victoria Embankment for march to Hyde Park, [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk)



REVOLUTION has played a key role in the national student movement against fees and cuts, organising the mass walkout on 24 November and occupations and walkouts at Camden School for Girls, Leeds University, University College London and LSBU.

REVOLUTION's national conference will discuss how we can turn the different struggles into a united fight against the capitalist system.

Venue: University College London  
For more details and to register online <http://www.socialistrevolution.org>

### JOIN US!

- I would like to join the Workers Power group  
 Please send more details about Workers Power

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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Tel no: \_\_\_\_\_

## workers power 5

### Workers of all countries, unite!

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# ★ EDITORIAL

## There is a way to break this government too – and we must

The revolutions in Egypt and Tunisia have inspired millions of people around the world.

In Tunisia mass demonstrations routed the police of dictator Ben Ali – then a general strike drove him out of the country.

Dragged into a spiral of mass unemployment, of price rises and poverty, the poor, the youth and the workers of the Middle East have risen up.

All over the world, people are watching and learning. The revolution is spreading to other Arab countries like Jordan and Yemen. And further afield, beyond the Middle East, hundreds of millions of people are willing the protesters on. Because everywhere people are being thrown into poverty by the crisis of the capitalist system.

And the same crisis faces Britain too. More than a million job losses predicted because of Tory cuts. More than a quarter slashed from spending on local services we rely on. Prices soaring, housing benefits capped, incapacity benefits slashed, desperation and homelessness set to surge.

Here in the UK, we may not live under the 30-year rule of a dictator ... but we didn't vote for this government and its vicious cuts package. We've been landed with it by dirty deals between coalition politicians who broke their promises for power.

We too had a whiff of revolutionary energy last year when young people stormed the Tory HQ and carried on marching and protesting for over a month.

But no such energy was to be seen at the TUC's special summit on 28 January to discuss action against the cuts. Coming out of the meeting the very first thing TUC leader Brendan Barber's told the press was no one is talking about a general strike. And Labour's Ed Miliband, flying in the face of reality, said general strikes are

"...not the way you change governments. The way you change governments is through the ballot box."

Well, if we wait until the next election, this illegitimate government will have smashed our services and jobs and sold off the bulk of the NHS and schools. But as Tunisia and Egypt show, it doesn't have to happen!

The union leaders are ruling out a general strike for a reason – they know it would be effective, they know it could win, and they know ...

that it would be illegal. Under Thatcher's anti-union laws, preserved by Blair and Brown and about to be used by the employers and the government, any strike is unlawful if it is called for political purposes.

So the union leaders say they will try to coordinate lawful disputes over pay and conditions in their members' respective workplaces. The obvious problem with this is that each section can be bought off one at a time. No lasting coordination can be achieved without workers from different industries declaring they are striking for each other, not just themselves – which is the very thing that is illegal.

### Political action

We are banned from taking political strike action against the government's political attack. This is just as unjust, just as dictatorial as any one of the repressive laws of Ben Ali and Mubarak. The way to challenge them was to rouse the people's anger in a political campaign against them, and then bust the laws in practice through mass action, making them unworkable, shattering them to pieces through huge marches on the streets and general strike in the workplaces.

And that is what we need in Britain today.

Some cynics will say we'd all love a general strike but calling for one won't make it happen. Sure, but NOT calling for one won't make it materialise either. The answer is to campaign for it openly, on the streets, on demonstrations, in public meetings, on the web and facebook, everywhere we can make our voice heard. If Brendan Barber keeps saying no one is talking about a general strike we can show him on the mass TUC demo on 26 March that he is wrong. Tens of thousands of us have to shout back "Yes, WE are!"

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## What is a revolutionary situation?

“... a revolution is impossible without a revolutionary situation; furthermore, it is not every revolutionary situation that leads to revolution. What, generally speaking, are the symptoms of a revolutionary situation? [...]”

(1) when it is impossible for the ruling classes to maintain their rule without any change; when there is a ... crisis in the policy of the ruling class, leading to a fissure through which the discontent and indignation of the oppressed classes burst forth. For a revolution to take place, it is usually insufficient for “the lower classes not to want” to live in the old way; it is also necessary that “the upper classes should be unable” to live in the old way;

# THIS IS

## 1 Masses lose fear

The great economic crisis has driven the masses of North Africa and the Middle East to breaking point. Huge numbers of unemployed youth, soaring prices and old, rotten dictatorships roused millions into action. The spur was the suicide of Mohammed Bouazizi in Tunisia which brought scores of thousands into the streets, confronting the police, spreading revolt to Algeria, Jordan, Yemen and above all Egypt. By matching force with force, mass demonstrations drove the police from the streets. Rights that were denied for decades like freedom to hold meetings, to speak out, to march, had at last been won, not by begging for them, but by taking them.



## 4 Revolt spreads

The eyes of the world are fixed on Egypt, just as a week ago the eyes of Egypt were fixed on Tunisia. Millions of workers, youth and poor people in the cities and countryside across the Arab world are not just inspired by the heroism of the revolutionaries and the strength of the people when they rise – they are shown a new way forward in the fight against tyranny. Not parliamentary manoeuvres, not guerrilla warfare, not Islamism, but the mass mobilisation of the poor, the formation of fighting groups, popular committees and the general strike – in short, the methods of the working class revolution.

The ruling class all over the world is trembling as revolution becomes not just a threat but a living reality once more. They know the great economic crisis is bringing even greater unemployment, even greater suffering. And they know that everywhere young people denied an education are set on change by any means necessary.

Obama is desperately trying to convince Mubarak to stand down – but wants him to do it slowly, so that the Egyptian masses do not get the chance to express their real desire which could clash with the US-backed order in the region. In particular they fear that a revolution across the Arab world will threaten their multinationals, their huge loans, and their expansionist Israeli puppet.

And the Chinese ruling class are terrified too – the combination of poverty, a large concentrated population and hatred of dictatorship could easily spread to China’s 1.3 billion people. When their economy hits the buffers, they fear revolution too. No wonder Beijing banned the Google search term ‘Egypt’!

## 5 New methods

This is a 21st century revolution – the good old techniques like leaflets, strikes, barricades and the militia have not disappeared but have been added to by new forms of communication and organisation. No wonder Mubarak tried to block Facebook and Twitter when in Tunisia and in Egypt Facebook groups brought hundreds of thousands onto the streets, and Twitter allowed protesters to communicate with each other quickly and en masse in street battles with the police. Thousands found work-arounds when the internet was blocked, using faxes, dial-up modems and special ISPs. And in the main square of Cairo on 31 January it was a simple printed leaflet that set out the movement’s demands – no compromise, general strike, a million to march on 1 February.

## 6 Rulers tremble

(2) when the suffering and want of the oppressed classes have grown more acute than usual;

(3) when, as a consequence of the above causes, there is a considerable increase in the activity of the masses, who uncomplainingly allow themselves to be robbed in "peace time", but, in turbulent times, are drawn ... into independent historical action.

Without these objective changes, which are inde-

pendent of the will, a revolution, as a general rule, is impossible. The totality of all these objective changes is called a revolutionary situation. Such a situation existed in 1905 in Russia, and in all revolutionary periods in the West; it also existed in Germany in the sixties of the last century, and in Russia in 1859-61 and 1879-80, although no revolution occurred in these instances. Why was that?

It was because it is not every revolutionary situa-

tion that gives rise to a revolution; revolution arises only out of a situation in which the above-mentioned objective changes are accompanied by a subjective change, namely, the ability of the revolutionary class to take revolutionary mass action strong enough to break (or dislocate) the old government, which never, not even in a period of crisis, "falls", if it is not toppled over..."

V.I. Lenin: *The Collapse of the Second International*

# REVOLUTION

## 2 Ruling class divides

The fury of the people splits the ruling class. Some around the ruling dictator and his clique try to hold firm – any compromise, they say, will only embolden the masses. Others – opposition politicians and senior generals – start looking for a compromise and jockeying for position to replace the old regime. So Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak sacked his government and promised to improve wages – Yemeni president Ali Abdullah Saleh raised wages and cut income tax. These reforms are a by product of the revolution, and a snare to convince the workers and youth to back down. But the people sense that the regime's crisis is their opportunity and press on – like the millions in Cairo on 1 February who rejected anything less than Mubarak standing down now.

## 3 General strike!

Street protests and clashes escalate, and soon the workers come onto the scene. In Tunisia it was the mere threat of a general strike that sent dictator Ben Ali packing. In Egypt the great general strike that began on 1 February declared it would continue until Mubarak resigned and gave him until Friday 4 Feb to do so.

In Suez, steel workers seized their factories and began to run them under workers' control. Strikers and demonstrators set up committees to organise traffic, security and food distribution, and patrols and militia to defend their areas from looters and police.

Egyptian workers have dumped their old government backed unions and built a new trade union federation to help launch the strike.

The general strike is the most powerful weapon of the revolution apart from the mass armed uprising. As Leon Trotsky said, it poses the question: "who will be master in the house" – the capitalists, or the workers?

## 7 Who rules?

In Egypt, in Tunisia, across the Middle East, the revolution puts the question point blank: who rules? In Egypt will it be the generals in the Army? Will it be Mubarak's chosen deputy, the former spy boss and torturer Suleiman? Will it be America's friend El Baradei, perhaps in a temporary alliance with the conservative Muslim Brotherhood? Or will it be the mass of the poor, the working class and the youth?

The capitalist politicians did not make the revolution on the streets and in the factories. It was made by the millions – the working class, the lower middle class and the poor. But the rich and privileged will try to take it over.

In the struggle the masses have been forced to form local popular committees – it is bodies like these, workers' councils (or 'Soviets' as they were called in the Russian Revolution) that can become the basis for a new type of government and a new type of state – one really controlled by the exploited and oppressed, one that can really take the economy into the hands of the people.

Will the Egyptian workers organise a party in time to fight for this perspective? Will they be defrauded of the fruits of their revolution – or will they win their birthright and open a new page in history?

The drama will be played out over the weeks and months ahead. Victory to the Egyptian Revolution!





# 'Who's afraid of a general strike?'

"NO ONE was talking about a general strike."

This is how Brendan Barber opened his account of the 28 January TUC summit to a BBC radio interviewer. How odd, I wonder, how many other people start a report with a denial?

It reminded me of Len McCluskey's article in *The*



*Guardian* just before Christmas. He praised the "magnificent students' movement" before contemplating the labour movement's role:

"The response of trade unions will now be critical. While it is easy to dismiss 'general strike now' rhetoric from the usual quarters, we have to be preparing for battle."

Then Tory minister Francis Maude issued a New Year's message saying, "No-one is talking about a general strike – that would be illegal."

Before I come back to examine the mystery of the general strike that everyone agrees no one is talking about, what exactly is the TUC proposing instead? After the TUC summit, general secretary Barber announced joint action – but it was nothing new. He just reminded us of the TUC demonstration on 26 March

which he'd already announced two months ago.

I don't doubt that the demonstration can provide a focal point for activists around the country and everyone should work to make it the most militant and biggest march for years. But if this is all it is, a demonstration of our numbers, then the harsh truth is that it could go down in history as the day we did not stop the cuts – just as on 15 February 2003, when two million marched in London and 30 million around the world, marked not just the highpoint of the antiwar movement, but also the point from which it subsequently declined.

## Barber

And that is what Barber and the right wing of the TUC hope for: a day for people to let off steam, after which it will be business as usual. So we have to ensure the 26 March demo rings out with demands for strikes, coordinated action and above all the very thing Barber, Maude and McCluskey all insist is not on the agenda: a general strike to bring down the government.

But what of the more militant union leaders? The TUC left like Bob Crow of the RMT, Mark Serwotka of the PCS and Matt Wrack of the FBU have been talking about coordinated strikes. The NUT teachers union has proposed a strike against the coming attack on public service pensions and invited

other unions to join them. The lecturers (UCU), civil servants (PCS), firefighters (FBU) and railworkers (RMT) have all "not ruled out" working together on industrial action.

But there are two big problems. First the big general unions Unite, GMB and Unison have yet to support the call. And second, the TUC lefts have been backtracking and qualifying their support.

## Crow

The RMT's Bob Crow has stepped back from his call last summer for "general and coordinated strike action across the public and private sectors". When he emerged from the TUC summit, he repeatedly emphasised the RMT would only take up "legal trade disputes".



Fear of the anti-union laws runs deep with all union leaders, left and right. They have repeatedly and blatantly been used to quash strike ballots, most recently against RMT workers on the London DLR railway. Both Maude and Tory London Mayor Boris Johnson have indicated that if need be they would try to strengthen these reactionary laws, possibly by counting all non-returned

ballot papers as "No" votes. If our union leaders continue to buckle in the face of the judges, then a coordinated strike could crumble in the courts.

## Wrack

The FBU's Matt Wrack has offered to synchronise action through the Labour left affiliated Trade Union Coordinating Group. Significantly this would take the running of strikes out of the hands of rank and file members – or even their elected union officials – and place them under the control of the general secretaries.

Besides which – I'm sure I'm not the only one to notice that the FBU pulled the plug on the last co-ordinated strike, the "bonfire night strike" only to capitulate before the Tory-led London Fire Authority?

The well-supported strike, during which FBU pickets were assaulted and suspended, was called off hours before NUJ journalists at the BBC were due to come out. Quietly, two months later, the FBU signed up to new shift patterns remarkably similar to the changes they struck against in the first place.

Can we really rely on Matt Wrack co-ordinating cross-union action next time round?

Finally, let's look at what PCS leader Mark Serwotka is saying. He recently won a 90 per cent majority in a ballot to reject the government cuts. But so far there has been no national action.

**Serwotka**

Worse, backed by PCS executive members from the opportunist Socialist Party, Serwotka is talking about striking not over pensions but only over cuts to redundancy pay. Shouldn't a fight to defend every job go alongside action to protect redundancy money? What message does this send out except that the PCS has surrendered public services and jobs? By balloting on a separate issue, a fissure in the united front to defend public sector jobs has already appeared, waiting to be exploited by the Tories.

Now it is not my intention to dampen expectations by pouring cold water on the union leaders' plans. We should all support every move towards sustained and co-ordinated strikes. But obviously we should not rely on the union leaders, even the left wing ones, to deliver.

So what should we do?

The events in Tunisia show how to bring down a government – just the threat of a general strike sent dictator Ben Ali fleeing the country. That's why the Con Dems are so keen to avoid one – that's why Maude and the union leaders keep on saying it's not even being discussed.

If that makes me one of McCluskey's 'usual suspects' I'm happy to plead guilty.

The TUC would only call a general strike if they felt the movement slipping away from their control. In short, if the pressure mounts to take action without their say-so.

So the answer is to raise the call now for a general strike, call for the TUC to do it but don't rely on them, and crucially build the anticuts committees that are spring up across the country to coordinate action from below.

Then we can head towards a mighty demo on 26 March where the call goes up from thousands and tens of thousands: "Bring Down the Tories! General Strike!"

# Royal Mail up for sale

**CWU rep**

The Communication Workers Union has taken to the streets to protest against plans to privatise Royal Mail. The Coalition has broken yet another promise: that private capital would only take a minority stake in Royal Mail. Now we face a full-blown sell-off.

Promises to safeguard post offices and the Universal Service Obligation (to deliver equally to every address in

Britain) are also worthless. This will gear the postal service towards the needs of business – not the public, who will face stamp price rises, or workers, who will be made redundant or have their hours cut.

Pressure has built up on CWU leaders to act. Local demonstrations and mass meetings against mail centre closures in Stevenage and East London have finally broke the months of inaction at the top. In December an anti-privatisation

rally ended with hundreds of postal workers blockading the street outside the Department of Business, chanting the students' slogan, "Whose streets? Our streets!"

Rank and file postal workers need to organise locally and nationally to build for a national strike to stop cuts and privatisation before it happens.

For a fuller analysis of postal privatisation and a strategy to defeat it, go to the CWU page at [www.workerspower.com](http://www.workerspower.com)

## Teachers need national strike now

**Rachel Archer, NUT**

Teachers, civil servants and lecturers are set to lose tens of thousands of pounds from their pensions over a lifetime because the government wants to peg them to the retail price index, which does not take account of the real rise in living costs, in particular housing costs. On top of this, teachers will typically have to pay in an extra £30 a month and retire five years later than now.

East London Teacher's Association has held large meetings, where there is a genuine desire for industrial action over cuts to school budgets too. In particular, teachers are gearing up for a

fight over the slashing of Special Educational Needs and Ethnic Minority Achievement budgets. Teacher's pay is also due for an increase (a deal dating back to 2008's well backed one day strike) but local authorities, of course, have no money.

NUT branches will be calling strikes in individual schools over all these issues and the ever present threat of academies. This is all very good but it is only when the union calls a national strike – like they did in 2008 – that the membership has a chance of winning. We should be balloting nationally on all the issues, not just pensions.

But rather than speeding things up and gathering more

forces, we are seeing the opposite. The union executive continues to drag its feet over a strike ballot over pensions. It has been over two months since the NEC voted for action, yet members have still not received their ballots.

Now Mark Serwotka (PCS) and Sally Hunt (UCU) appear to prefer striking over redundancy pay, rather than pensions. We must make sure all this talk about "co-ordinated action" does not become an excuse for delaying our own national strike.

No more delays – run the ballot and bring forward national claims against all cuts, for our pay rise to be funded and to halt the academies programme.

## PCS leaders back off from co-ordinated strike

**Rebecca Allen, PCS rep**

Public and Commercial Services union members have rejected the government's cuts by nine to one. Now the union plans to take the government to court over the its attempt to cut redundancy pay. However, this does not give the union the legal right to call a

strike – they would need to hold a strike ballot to do that – and time is ticking away.

General Secretary Mark Serwotka announced at the Coalition of Resistance conference in November that civil servants would walk out alongside teachers and lecturers over attacks on pensions. But since

then there has been silence.

If we don't ballot now, the education unions will be out on their own. Not only would a united strike increase chances of forcing a government climb-down, it would also be an opportunity to stop office closures, job losses and attacks on redundancy pay.



Joana Pinto, School of Oriental and Africal Studies student and Workers Power member, is standing as part of the left slate for NUS elections.

# Vote for NUS left slate

John Bowman

National Union of Students President Aaron Porter will be facing an election challenge at this years NUS conference, as left-wing student activists announced they would group together to form an anti-cuts, anti-fees slate.

Joana Pinto, press officer for the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, will be standing for the Vice President Union Development position.

Joana thanked those who are supporting her. "I am standing alongside an amazing team."

A united left slate brings the possibility of radically changing the NUS.

Candidates have agreed to use the elections to campaign for an NUS that fights for free education with protests, occupations, and direct action against all the cuts. They aim to bring students into a wider struggle against war, racism and poverty.

## The anticuts candidates

- President: **Mark Bergfeld**
- Vice President **Higher Education: Michael Chessum**
- Vice President Further Education: **Ruby Hirsch**
- Vice President Union Development: **Joana Pinto**
- Vice President Welfare: **Sean Rillo Raczka**
- Vice President Society and Citizenship: **Aaron Kiely**

# NUS leadership has no strategy to win

Dan Edwards

When the NUS NEC passed a strategy document, supported by NUS president Aaron Porter for the student movement on 10 January, they showed once again that they want to plead and negotiate with the Con Dem government, rather than organise a fight to stop their plans.

The document agreed to sponsor the Manchester demonstration on 29 January, supported by the Trades Union Congress and the lecturers' union UCU, but failed to mention the demonstration in London (the capital and seat of power), called by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, the Education Activist Network and supported by trade unions Unite and GMB. As it happened, many students in the south of the country came to the highly successful London protest, while NUS coaches from southern towns going to Manchester were left empty.

On 19 January, Parliament voted to scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance



ROUGH DAY? Aaron Porter after Manchester demo (see right)

(EMA). This date was picked because many school, college and university students were in the middle of exams, a deliberate attempt to minimise students' active resistance.

Fortunately for Cameron and his friends, the NUS were all too eager to help. Instead of calling for demonstrations and occupations on the day of the vote, they called a national series of token demonstrations the day before. They wanted to let students let off steam without the option of taking meaningful direct action. On the day of the vote, they refused to support the march on Parliament and favoured only a lobbying exercise instead.

This lack of leadership by the

NUS reflects massive underlying problems with its strategy. They want to lobby the government into cutting and privatising education slightly less, rather than fighting to halt the plans in their tracks. They hope that by simply having peaceful A to B demonstrations they can gain the ear of the Tories and Lib Dems. It didn't work before the election and it won't work now.

The Tories are an openly pro-big business, pro-banker, pro-capitalist party, with nearly 20 millionaires in the cabinet. Selling off education to the highest bidder doesn't bother the party that sold off railways, electricity, steel and phones to the private sector.

Despite failing to mobilise students, Aaron Porter still audaciously claims to have been responsible for the biggest mass movement since the Iraq War. But he supported only one of the three national days of action, walkouts and occupations in the winter of last year.

If we want to stop the Tories then we need to broaden out our struggle. There will be more days of action, and students must keep walking out of class, keep occupying the schools and universities, and keep taking the direct action necessary to stop them ruling.

We need to create links and take united action with workers in the public and private sector who are about to witness first-hand the effects of these Tory attack. This means linking our anti-cuts and fees groups with local anti-cuts campaigns, coordinating our protests and linking our struggles together. This means we have to oppose and fight every cut, not just education cuts, and that our action needs to be bold and confront the government. We don't have time to waste to beg for mercy from people who don't care.

# Tens of thousands show solidarity with Egypt



## LONDON

John Bowman

Students, parents, trade unionists and Egyptian migrants united in their tens of thousands on 29 January to protest against education cuts, public service cuts, job losses and dictatorship.

If the spirit of '68 was fuelled by revolution in Vietnam, then this demonstration had been set ablaze by the uprisings in the Middle East which no doubt played a key role in bolstering numbers.

Starting at the University of London Union on Malet Street, Unison, UCU, NUT and RMT trade union banners met with students of all ages from schools, colleges and universities across England to clashing beats and shrieking whistles from the samba band.

Wasting no time, young people led the way on the now familiar march route down to Trafalgar and Parliament Square shouting "one solution, revolution!" On the way, they were joined by London Southbank students who had been serving breakfast to protesters and more students from Kings College and the London School for Economics.

Hundreds carried placards from the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts, which said: "Free education for all! Protest, strike, occupy!"

The police presence was subtle, having learned the lesson from protests last year that to beat and kettle protesters only led to further radicalisation.

This remained the case as the march carried through to Millbank, and a few protesters rushed towards the Tory HQ. But most of the demonstration had their eyes focussed on the Egyptian embassy, and the planned rally at the Tate gallery was can-

celled in favour of marching to Hyde Park via Victoria and Pimlico. Motorists waved and honked their horns in support, some taking leaflets and buying newspapers from the protesters.

The streets outside the Egyptian embassy were crammed as the march joined pro-democracy activists in streets just off Park Lane. Some chanted "down with Vodafone" – angry at the company's collaboration with the Egyptian government in closing down the internet. Banners were hung from nearby scaffolding, and three very young children shouted "down with Mubarak!" from the sunroof of their parents' car.

As people started to leave, chatting about the day's events, one thing was clear – the struggle against fees and cuts in Europe, and dictatorship and poverty abroad can be, and is already turning into one huge international struggle for all of us.

# Angry students chase NUS President off demo

## MANCHESTER

Dan Edwards

Yesterday over 4000 students, workers and youth took to the streets of Manchester against the Con Dem cuts to EMA, education funding, and the public sector. Official 'leaders' of the movement tried to hold back protesters from expressing their anger. But they only showed their increasing irrelevance to the struggle.

Many activists held placards declaring that NUS President Aaron Porter had sold them out and didn't represent them. They were angry that he had called protesters 'despicable' and refused to lend solidarity to many brave examples of direct action taken by students over the past few

months.

When Porter tried to sidle his way onto the demonstration, many students were not happy. Hundreds gathered behind a National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts banner and big red REVOLUTION flags yelling "Students, workers, hear us shout! Aaron Porter sold us out!"

He was soon chased off the demonstration he claimed to be responsible for, and had to jog into Manchester Met Student Union, protected by a line of police.

The Tory press have dared to claim that protesters hurled anti-Semitic abuse at Aaron Porter. This is a lie. It was made up to discredit the movement – a last ditch attempt for Porter to save face. The whole story is a complete fabrication.

Sally, a REVOLUTION activist from Leeds, said "Aaron Porter is not representing students and he shouldn't be able to get

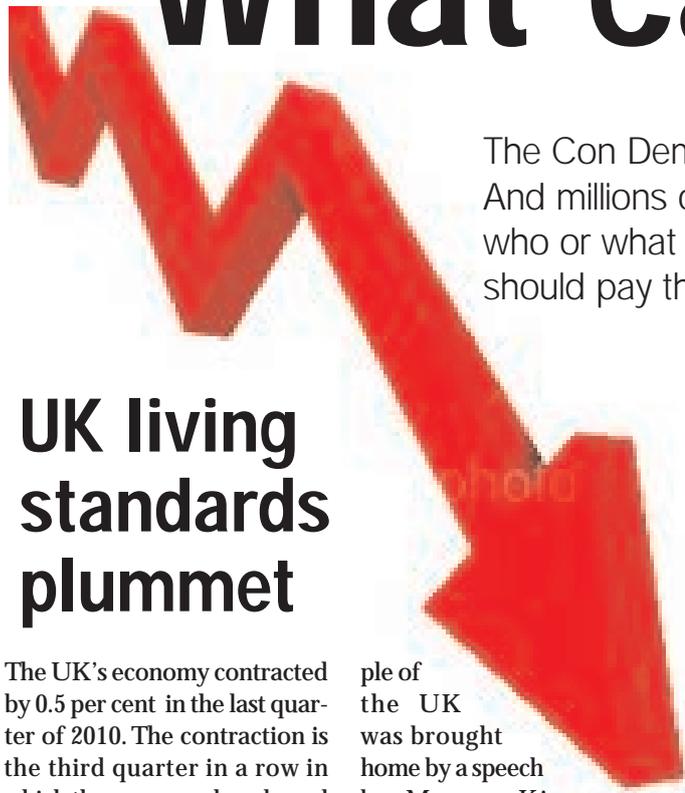
away with it. He needs to see and realise the amount of people who want him out."

Protesters rejoined the march but organisers had planned a route with police that sent protesters two miles away from the city centre. It wasn't long before many youth tried to march back to the city, but they were violently attacked by police.

An activist from Leeds, Adam, had his head smashed against a concrete floor, whilst another protester, Erin, had her arm broken.

As cuts start to bite and more and more people come out onto the streets, so the police have become more and more violent using, truncheons, boots and fists to crush defiance. We need to be prepared for these assaults on our movement, and emphasise that when it comes to dealing with police bully-boys, self-defence is no offence.

# What caused the



The Con Dems blame Labour. The Americans blame China. And millions of working class people blame the bankers. So who or what caused the great economic crisis? And who should pay the price? Richard Brenner reports

## UK living standards plummet

The UK's economy contracted by 0.5 per cent in the last quarter of 2010. The contraction is the third quarter in a row in which the economy has slowed from its growth of 1.1 per cent earlier in the year.

A prolonged period of sluggish growth or even a double-dip recession looks likely as the Tories carry out their policy of deficit reduction, which will lead to more unemployment, pension and benefit cuts, and closing of council services.

The misery awaiting the peo-

ple of the UK was brought home by a speech by Mervyn King, chief of the Bank of England late last month.

King told an audience in Newcastle that the standard of living had already fallen during the recession by 13 per cent.

Capitalism has brought us to this: today's young people will have living standards far lower than their parents. And it's set to get worse.

## Inflation – starvation

The United Nations global food price index has risen by 32 per cent in the last half of 2010 alone.

Food inflation is running in excess of the headline figure with *The Economist* estimating that prices have reached their 2008 peaks. Other estimates say that food prices rose by 37 per cent in the past year. In India it is at 13.6 per cent and there have been runs on staple vegetables such as onions. In China,

too, food inflation is outstripping the official inflation rate.

Food and fuel for cooking and heating is a major part of people's shopping baskets in poorer and developing countries.

A recent report, *The Future of Food and Farming*, commissioned by the UK government, said that recent food price spikes like in 2008 may become more common in the future sparking unrest and riots.

In the first two years of the Global Financial Crisis, everyone seemed to know where the blame lay – with the huge banks that pushed the international system of borrowing and lending into chaos.

Yet slowly but surely the politicians regrouped and shifted the debate away from criticism of the bankers, blaming the crisis on spending on public services, pensions and pay.

How did they manage it? Well, in late 2008 and early 2009, as the financial crisis turned to global recession, governments around the world ran up massive debts – which everyone now calls 'the deficit'.

By the UK election of May 2010, Tories David Cameron and George Osborne said Gordon Brown had caused the crisis by 'spending too much'. The Coalition uses that argument to justify its programme of huge spending cuts.

But this claim doesn't make sense. The deficit was not caused by having too many university places, or people claiming Education Maintenance Allowance, or schools or hospitals, or by giving workers too much pensions or pay.

It was caused by three things. The first was the £1.3 trillion bailout of the banks, which all three capitalist parties backed to the hilt. The second was the collapse in state revenues in the recession, because lower corporate profits meant companies paying less tax. And the third was the massive rise in the benefit bill because of job losses all over the country. As a result the government spent more than came in, and in just 18 months the deficit jumped from 3 to 10 percent of UK output.

In short, the deficit didn't cause the crisis - it was caused by the credit crunch and the recession. So when the Tories say the deficit was caused by years of 'overspending' they are lying through their teeth.

### The credit crunch

In 2007, the US economy began to slow down and house prices started to fall after decades of steady rises. This was because even at the height of the 2004-06 boom, real wages were falling across America, and manufacturing jobs disappearing. Hundreds of thousands of people could no longer afford their mortgage payments. Their homes were repossessed, flooding the market with vacant properties.

Meanwhile financiers all over the world had packaged up these mortgage debts and sold them on to other lenders. A huge amount of investment all over the world was in the final analysis based on American home loans – and hundreds of billions of dollars

# economic crisis?

were simply never going to be repaid. A massive quantity of the world's lending – to individuals and companies alike – was suddenly revealed to be bad debt. The foundations of the world's great citadels of financial power were riddled with holes.

So banks stopped lending and the world was plunged into a great economic crisis. The credit crunch was like a heart attack for global capitalism – the lifeblood of bank lending came to a sudden halt, causing economic destruction everywhere.

## An orgy of capital destruction

Karl Marx explained in his book *Capital* that capitalism goes through cycles that last around 7 to 10 years, starting with slow recovery from stagnation, building up steam as credit expands, and then ending in a crisis.

Through the course of these cycles the rate of profit, the return capitalists get for what they invest, has a tendency to decline. This can be offset by a range of factors, but cannot indefinitely be postponed, and ultimately creates a fall in the overall mass of profit earned.

At this point investment will not generate enough profit to make it worthwhile. Investment dries up as the bosses convert assets into cash and sit on it.

From their point of view there is suddenly “too much” capital, more than they can invest for a sufficient return. The way they restore profitability is to destroy (or ‘devalue’) this excess capital.

And that is what happened in 2008 and 2009. Stock markets crashed; banks went bust or were bailed out to the tune of trillions; jobs were axed as firms collapsed; trade was paralysed; and the value of key world currencies dived.

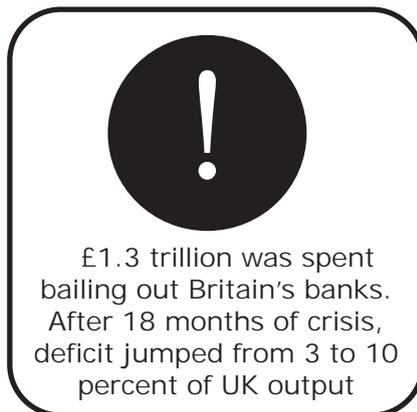
## Crisis-free capitalism?

The banks aggravated the crisis by expanding complicated new forms of credit in the years before the crunch. Some Labour Party and trade union reformists claim that the crisis could have been avoided if the banks had been regulated more. They say that the bankers got a bit too greedy by

lending to people who couldn't pay it back, but if they just behaved more sensibly we could have a crisis free system.

At best this argument is naive; at worst it is an apology for capitalism itself. In this market system banks lend in return for interest, which is no more than a deduction from a company's future profits or an individual's future earnings. Every loan is either a promise of capital still to come, or a memento of capital long since destroyed – what Marx called fictitious capital.

A bank that doesn't maximise its profit would be driven out of business by competitors. So when profits are high credit will



always expand – and then when the crunch comes credit will suddenly contract.

The joke is that the same reformists who argue that the banks caused the crisis by lending too much, are now arguing for measures to force them to start lending again – to people and companies who probably still can't pay it back! The absurdity of this underlines not just their failure to understand and address the crisis – it also reveals that the bankers' actions were an expression of the causes of the crisis, but were not its cause.

If Marx was right, then the cause of the crisis is not workers' wages and pensions, not spending on hospitals and education. Nor is it the banks, despicable parasites as they are. It is the whole system of capitalism itself. Marx showed that profit is ultimately nothing more than the unpaid part

of every worker's working day. As technology rises so the mass of profit rises, but the proportion of the capitalist's investment that goes to fresh living human labour falls in proportion. It is this deep trend that gives rise to the tendency of profit rates to fall.

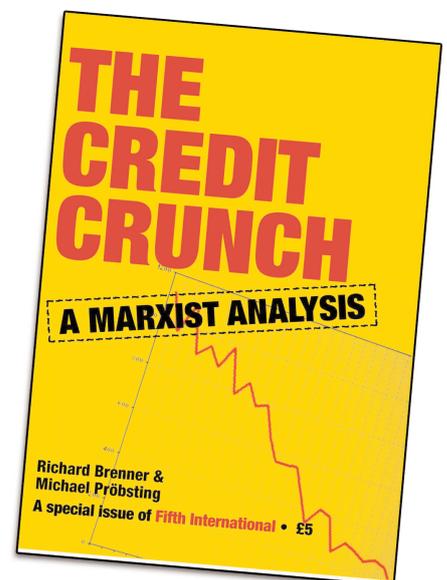
That is how Marx is able to predict that as capitalism expands we would see every greater and more global crises, and how he was able to show that each crisis would be followed by a massive attack on the working class by the capitalists, as they try to force us to bear the brunt of the destruction of capital they need to restore their profit rates.

The drive to crisis is based not in the policies of this or that bank, this or that company or this or that government. It is inherent in capitalist production. The way to end the crisis is to resist every attempt of the capitalists to make the working class pay its price – and to create a political party that can direct the resistance towards the overthrow of capitalism itself, the confiscation of the assets of the banks and corporations, and the establishment of a rational democratic plan of production for public need not private greed.

Read Richard Brenner's book *The Credit Crunch, a Marxist Analysis*.

Buy it online at:

[shop.fifthinternational.org](http://shop.fifthinternational.org)



# Tories plan to wreck NHS

Mark Booth

The Conservative whitepaper, "Equity and Excellence: liberating the NHS", is designed to transfer control for £80 billion pounds of the NHS budget to the private health sector.

It means the end of the NHS as a publicly owned and operated service, and its transformation into little more than a brand name, which health corporations will operate their own clinics and services under.

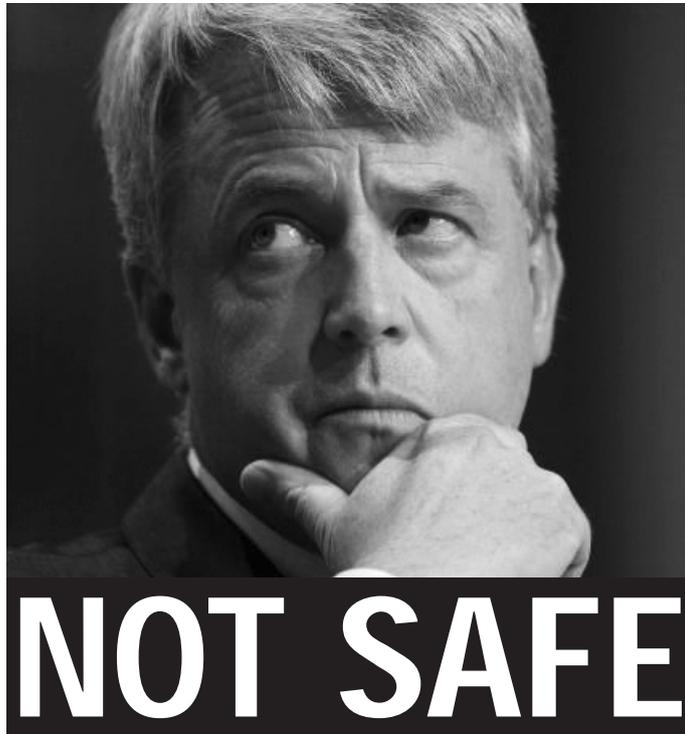
## Privatisation

The changes outlined in the whitepaper give GPs the role of commissioners (purchasers) of services. When it was founded, the provision of healthcare was controlled and funded by Health Authorities (HAs). These distributed funding to the services in their area, according to a needs-based formula.

Market mechanisms were eliminated, and healthcare was planned to meet human need based on the principle of equity, with funding needs met through redistribution from low-cost to high-cost services; risk pooling, which means sharing the cost of high-risk patients across a large funding pool; and risk planning.

This way, the NHS was able to provide comprehensive, universal and equitable healthcare at a lower cost and with greater efficiency than any other healthcare system. The NHS still costs less than half of the cost in terms of GDP than the privatised US healthcare system. The proposed whitepaper will allow the same greedy health corporations to provide healthcare in Britain, paid for by the taxpayer.

Currently, funding for the NHS is administered by Strategic



Health Authorities (SHAs) and Primary Care Trusts (PCTs). These purchase serv-



ices from the providers (hospitals and primary care services). While inefficient and bureaucratic, at least this means funding is administered by the government, so there is some accountability and oversight. Under the Tory proposals, the SHAs and PCTs are to be abolished and replaced with commissioning run by GPs.

GPs are to be grouped together in consortiums, which will then be given control of £80

billion of the NHS budget to be used to commission services from "any willing provider". However, the GPs themselves won't be commissioning services, as they will be busy seeing patients. This function will be carried out by private health corporations, which are already bidding for contracts to commission services on behalf of GP consortiums. KPMG, the global auditing firm, has been hired to group all of London's GPs into consortiums.

Crucially, healthcare corporations are to be allowed to "compete" for contracts on an equal footing with already existing NHS services. The quango, Monitor, will be tasked with ensuring the already existing NHS services don't use their "competitive advantage" to stop the health corporations getting contracts. Since those same health corporations will be administering the commissioning, it's easy to see how they will be able to systematically

direct contracts to private health providers, until existing publicly-owned NHS services close from lack of funding.

And under rules set out in the whitepaper, GPs will be legally bound to adhere to all of their consortium's commissioning decisions, including policies on referral management. This means that even if some GPs wanted to continue referring patients to NHS services, they will be stopped from doing so.

This is wholesale privatisation and will lead to the dismantling and destruction of the NHS. The Lancet, a respected medical journal, stated in its editorial that the whitepaper means "the end of the NHS as we know it".

## Resistance

But there is opposition developing across the country. The British Medical Association (BMA) has called for a halt to the reform, and the chairman of its GPs committee has stated: "We will quite quickly see failed consortiums bought up on the cheap by foreign companies and see bits of the NHS run from abroad. This really is just the beginning. Parts of this government want to see all NHS management in private hands."

These changes will lead to mass opposition in communities around the country as the inefficiencies and madness of the market begins to take hold. Anti-cuts campaigns need to reach out to GPs and patients groups, and seek to involve healthworkers and health union branches in campaigns.

When the NHS was created it was the jewel in the crown of the welfare state. We must ensure it remains so, and is not sold off to pay for the capitalist crisis.

# Council crisis: jobs and services in the firing line

Jeremy Drinkall

Across the country, local councillors are voting on job cuts and the destruction of much needed services. At the same time, hundreds, sometimes thousands demonstrate outside, trying to block or slow down proceedings in the council chambers. Both sides know this could mark the beginning of a mass movement against the cuts.

The job losses are colossal: 2,500 in Nottingham, 2,000 in Manchester and Birmingham, 1,800 in Fife, 1,500 in Somerset, 1,000 in London boroughs Camden and Southwark – the list goes on. Any talk of managing cuts of this scale through voluntary redundancies and “natural wastage” is dead.

But if the jobs massacre is eye watering – and the Local Government Association warns that 140,000 council posts will go this year – then so too is the effect on communities. Iconic services that have been available for decades – school crossing patrols, libraries, park keepers, concierges, street cleaners – will be terminated or shrunk beyond recognition.

Less visibly but as destructively, they will devastate specialised services – for disadvantaged school children, black and Asian communities, the disabled, senior citizens and rape victims. Social care budgets have been slashed by as much as 75 per cent.

And that’s just for starters; the 2011-12 budgets will be followed by more cuts in the next two years, on top of those made by many councils last year. Forget the 1980s and Thatcher as a reference point – these are the biggest cuts since World War Two.



## All in it together?

Of course these cuts will bite the poorest hardest. But inner-city councils are also disproportionately hit by the withdrawal of central government funds, and are unable to replace them by raising council tax.

Central funding to local authorities will be slashed by 9.9 per cent this year and



Eric Pickles, Tory minister pushing through local government cuts

7.3 per cent next, but the poorest councils depend on this far more than others. Some, like Tower Hamlets and Hackney in east London, receive three-quarters of their revenue from central government, while over 80 government grants targeted at deprived populations will also disappear.

As a result, Labour-controlled urban councils are making cuts of around 15-20 per cent, with a few as much as 30-35 per cent. Meanwhile, in Windsor and Richmond the cuts will be less than 1 per cent; 32 of the 37 least affected councils are Tory-led. So much for the “We’re all in this together” claim from the Tories and their chief in charge of council cuts Eric Pickles.



## Labour’s betrayal

That many of the councils making the biggest cuts are Labour-run has not dissipated the anger, but if anything increased it.

Labour councillor Theo Blackwell was howled down when he pleaded with protestors in Camden: “I believe in setting legal budgets. If the budgets are not set by us, they will be set by the opposition, if we vote them down, then the full time director will set it”

He was referring to the legal obligation

councillors have to set a balanced budget. But it is better to break the poor than break the law!

Millions of working class families simply cannot absorb these cuts. Pensions and benefits are being slashed, VAT and inflation are eating into household budgets, and wages fell on average by £5,000 last year. Labour were re-elected in working class areas precisely to keep the Tory wolf at bay, not to let it in through the backdoor.



## No cuts budget

The truth is there is an alternative. Labour councils can set ‘no cuts’ budgets. Let the government threaten to overturn the decisions of elected councillors and replace them with appointed directors. How will that make David Cameron’s “Big Society” look? Pretty small.

But instead of meekly handing over the reins to central government, like they did in Lambeth and Liverpool in the 1980s, Labour should agitate for mass action – strikes, civil disobedience and occupations – to defend jobs and services.

Of course, there is no chance of Labour councils – let alone Tory or Lib Dem ones – doing this on their own. So anti-cuts campaigns need to take action themselves. Wherever a service is threatened with closure or sell-off, we should occupy buildings and protect the assets. Wherever jobs are cuts, we should strike – with or without official backing if need be. Wherever councils meet to vote through cuts, we should flood them with questions and break up their meetings.

Providers and users of services can form an impressive united front to stop these cuts. If some Labour councillors come onto our side, all well and good; those that don’t, we will confront.

Our aim must be to unite all the local campaigns against the cuts into a national fight back, with coordinated strikes, up to and including a general strike, to stop all the cuts and bring the government down.

# Tunisia and the strategy



Dave Stockton

The flight of Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January came as culmination of a month of street mobilisations, starting with young unemployed youth in the central Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, spreading nationwide, drawing in industrial workers, teachers and lawyers. Demonstrations in Tunis calling for Ben Ali to go climaxed into a general strike called by the Tunisian General Labour Union (Union générale tunisienne du travail) or UGTT. With the threat to continue the strike, the dictator fled on 14 January - ultimately finding refuge in Saudi Arabia.

This was a genuine and popular revolution – the first mass uprising in the Arab world outside of Palestine for decades; one that sent an immediate seismic shock across the Arab world where similar corrupt and authoritarian regimes are abound. Within a week or so it had sparked a revolution in Egypt.

But Ben Ali and his wife's departure (with vast sums of the people's money) was

also a maneuver by top figures of the old regime around Prime Minister Mohamed Ghannouchi, to save the regime itself.

Demonstrations did not stop with the tyrant's departure. Indeed the announcement of a cabinet stuffed with members of the ruling party, the Democratic Constitutional Rally (CRD) - saw workers and youth on the streets the next day. They kept up their demonstrations until Ghannouchi dropped the most obnoxious of these ministers, then quit the CRD himself, and last of all dissolved the party.

Ghannouchi's room for such manoeuvres and the fact that he is still Prime Minister prove that it is much easier to get rid of a dictator than to dismantle a dictatorial regime. The fact that the army remains intact and in effective control of Tunisia is the reason for this: though certainly they have to allow unprecedented democratic rights to demonstrate, to meet and to organise. It is there to ensure that Tunisia's rich are safeguarded and the interests of Tunisia's western allies – especially the USA and France's are preserved.

Yet – though the size of the demonstra-

tions have decreased the protesters have not gone away, despite night curfews and a state of emergency. Popular committees sprung all over the country during the protests of local people from the CRD militias to organise the necessities of life.

Recently unemployed youth organised a caravan from central Tunisia to the capital and set up tents on the square in front of Ghannouchi's office. The protest is supported by the UGTT.

## National strike

"We won't leave the square until the government resigns," said Mizar, a student from Sidi Bouzid – the town where Mohamed Bouazizi, the young fruit vendor's self-immolation last month unleashed the first demonstrations. "We have come to bring down the rest of the dictatorship," said Mohammed Layani, an elderly man. The Tunisian teachers union declared a national strike on 24 January to put pressure on the interim government to resign.

In any prolonged impasse between the remnants of the old regime clinging to power and the streets there is of course the

# for revolution

danger that that the army might still intervene. The head of the army, General Rachid Ammar appears to have been a key figure in 'persuading' Ben Ali to go. As long as the revolutionary ferment lasts the army high command would probably hesitate about a grab for power.

## Progressive Democratic Party

The bourgeois opposition figures who played no leading role in events are now trying to sweep up the spoils in presidential elections. Some are for compromise with the remnants of the old regime and are fearful of the masses. One such figure is Ahmed Bouazzi, a leader of the Progressive Democratic Party. He said, "We have three possibilities. The first is the complete chaos of Somalia; the second is a military coup after a saviour comes to rescue us from the chaos and lasts for 23 years. The third possibility is working with the people who are in charge of the state right now to prepare fair elections."

A more intransigent liberal democratic voice is that of Dr Moncef Marzouki of the Congress for the Republic (CPR) who returned from exile in France, declaring he intended to run in the presidential elections for this party. He has a background as a champion of human rights. He has sharply attacked the national unity government, saying "It is the continuation of the dictatorship.

But, he added, "When we take them away, the state will function much better. Luckily, in Tunisia we have a great bureaucracy that can run the state." In fact this comment shows that, though some media describe him as a leftist, Marzouki and the CPR are liberals – not socialists.

## Islamists

Last but not least there are the Islamists. After 22 years in exile, Rached Ghannouchi, the head of Ennahdha, or Renaissance and about 70 other exiled members of party flew home from Britain. He was welcomed by

thousands of supporters at Tunis airport on 30 January. Ghanouchi compared his views to those of Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Clearly the working class, the youth and women have nothing to gain from the growth of such a conservative capitalist party.

The Tunisian Workers' Communist Party (PCOT) is a Marxist-Leninist Hoxha-ite party founded in 1986, with a youth wing, the Union of Communist Youth of Tunisia (UJCT). Its militants have operated underground for many years. Its leader Hama Hammami, in exile in France for years, has now returned. But PCOT's programme is the typical Stalinist stages one – first bourgeois democracy and later socialism. In its nine point programme for the revolution it correctly calls for a Constituent Assembly but sees its goal as to "establish the bases of a real democratic republic in which people would enjoy freedom, social equality and national dignity."

## Wrong strategy

This stages strategy with its accompanying popular front of unity between the classes will lead to disaster for the Tunisian workers and youth. It will leave power in the hands of the rich – who put Ben Ali and his predecessors in power and supported their crimes. It will mean the resources of the country continue to be pocketed by these parasites. It will mean that the process of privatisation under the aegis of the IMF, the US, France etc, will continue to subordinate and super-exploit the country's natural wealth and its labour force.

The alternative is a workers and peasants government, based on democratic councils which can take over the large scale units of the economy and plan their development. This is Trotsky's strategy of permanent revolution. Another aspect of this strategy is to spread the revolution to the surrounding countries. They are already dry tinder to a democratic revolution that grows over into a socialist revolution.

For more on revolution in the Middle East, and for up-to-date info:

# fifthinternational.org

## Anger as Gay activist beaten to death in Uganda

Jeremy Drinkall

David Kato was bludgeoned to death in his home with a hammer on 26 January. David was a gay rights activist in Uganda, leading the Sexual Minorities Uganda (Smug) campaigning organisation.

David knew he was a target in a country renown for its anti-gay laws. It is already an offence, punishable by 14 years in prison, to have gay sex in Uganda. A new Anti-Homosexuality Bill will, if passed, raise this penalty to the death sentence for "repeat offenders" and make it an offence to know about lesbians and gays having sex and not report it.



David Kato

Although a private member's bill, President Yoweri Museveni initially supported it. International pressure has forced some verbal backpedalling, but the Bill remains set to be voted on in this month.

Last October, Ugandan tabloid *Rolling Stone* whipped up a frenzy of homophobia by printing the names, photos and home addresses of 29 lesbians and gays, including David, under the headline, "Hang them: they are after our kids!!" Three months later, David is dead.

David also spent time in South Africa, where he was inspired by Nelson Mandela's overturning of apartheid's own anti-gay laws. David returned to Uganda in 1998 determined to fight discrimination and criminalisation.

Kato saw gay rights as human rights and the struggle for them as part of the fight against all forms of social oppression and for liberation. It is also part of the international class struggle.

In a shocking codicil, the British government was, on the day news of David's murder broke, trying to deport lesbian Ugandan Brenda Namigadde. Embarrassed only by the timing, the Home Office granted Brenda a reprieve. But the ugly truth is that Britain rejects 98 per cent of sexuality-based claims for asylum.

We must reject homophobia everywhere. In the words of Joe Hill: "Don't mourn – organise!"



imperialism in the dock  
**MARCUS HALABY**

# Leak exposes Fatah treason

Consistent opponents of Israel's occupation have long argued that the "moderate" Palestinian leaders of Fatah are in reality collaborators with Israel. Nothing could have confirmed this more conclusively than the release by news agency Al Jazeera of documents exposing 10 years of futile "peace" negotiations.

The picture that emerges is of weak and groveling Palestinian Authority (PA) officials, desperate for any scrap of land that they can call a "state" – and draw fat salaries from – being rewarded only with Israel's intransigence and contempt.

PA negotiator Saeb Erekat, a wealthy Palestinian who holds a US passport, reportedly offered the Israelis the "biggest Jerusalem in Jewish history", allowing Israel to annex all its illegal settlements in occupied Arab East

Jerusalem bar one.

Israeli foreign minister Tzipi Livni turned this down as being "inadequate".

They also made massive concessions on the right of five million Palestinian refugees to return, accepting just 10,000 a year for 10 years.



The then US State Secretary Condoleezza Rice even proposed that Palestinian refugees be sent to Chile and Argentina. Rice clearly hoped for a loyal Palestinian Israel in a sea of Latin American social radicalism.

That the Palestinians are a nation, and not pieces on a chessboard that can be moved around at will, clearly makes no difference to Israel and its US sponsor. Far worse though is the extent to which the PA leaders were willing to collude in, and even encourage, Israel's attacks on their own people.

They co-ordinated with the Israeli army in its killing of Hamas militants, and asked Israel to intensify the siege on Gaza.

Unelected PA "president" Mahmoud Abbas even gave the Israelis his approval to attack Gaza, while covering himself by saying he would not "enter Gaza on an Israeli tank".

The great revolution now sweeping the Arab world – in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen and Jordan – has shattered the illusion of permanence with which the Arab rulers have intimidated their peoples and accommodated the US and Israel. It would be fitting if the Palestinians were to follow suit, and put Mahmoud Abbas on his own private jet out of the country, if not on a scaffold.

## ★ INTERNATIONAL

# League gathers for first South Asian congress **5**

The League for the Fifth International, of which Workers Power is the British section, held a successful congress in Sri Lanka in January.

Members from Germany, Austria, and Britain met with delegates from the Pakistan and Sri Lankan sections of the League to discuss the issues facing the international working class.

This congress was the second part of the league's eighth congress. The first part had been held in Istanbul in May but due to racist laws it proved impossible to obtain visas for the Pakistani and Sri Lankan delegates. So we reconvened to ensure the participation of the comrades in two very important sections of our organisation.

On the agenda was a discussion about the perspectives, task and programmatic manifesto that was passed at the Istanbul congress. Then we debated and amended resolutions on Islamism and Maoism, two important political trends in South Asia. Congress also organised commissions to amend proposed action programmes for Pakistan and Sri Lanka, which were adopted at the congress and can now better guide our work in those countries.

### Win

All these documents will be translated into various south Asian languages and made available to workers, young people and anyone fighting oppression as part of our campaign to win supporters and members for revolutionary communism. Sadly a delegate from our supporters in Nepal could not attend, but we discussed how to assist them in their crucial work in the coming months.

The congress was hosted by the Socialist Party of Sri Lanka, whose Central Committee attended along with their delegates.

"We are very pleased that the congress is being held here as this is the first international gathering in Sri Lanka." Said PD Saranapala, a



**PD Saranapala speaks to a public meeting after congress**

leading member of the Jhangara Joint Health Sector Union. "It shows the commitment of the League to expanding in South Asia and building the sections."

### Democratic

Many comrades who had come from other political tendencies such as the Committee for a Workers International (CWI) or the International Marxist Tendency (IMT) were impressed by how democratic the congress was.

"We are used to people coming and giving a speech and then we just vote on a document", said a delegate from Pakistan. "But at this congress there are more in-depth discussions and a chance for every comrade to have an impact on the final documents."

After the congress, a meeting on the Fifth International was held in Colombo and led to a lively discussion with people asking questions about the history of Trotskyism and how we can fight for socialism today.

Sri Lanka has an important history of Trotskyism, being the only country where the Fourth International led a mass party and where the legacy of the collapse of the revolutionary left in the 1960s and 70s is still felt today.

The congress was a real step forward for our organisation in South Asia and provides a firm foundation from which we can go forward to building the League for the Fifth International in not only Pakistan and Sri Lanka but also in India.



# DEEP RED

# Victory to the Egyptian Revolution!

Egypt is aflame with revolution. The world has watched with bated breath as millions of Egyptians have shown that they will not be intimidated and coerced any longer. A general strike has been proclaimed and on 1 February two million demonstrators packed the vast Tahrir (Liberation) Square in Cairo demanding Hosni Mubarak's departure.

His dictatorial regime, its 330,000 strong police force, its networks of torturers and spies, cannot keep them in a state of fear any more. For over a week now in "days of anger" hundreds of thousands have braved the riot police and their batons, tear gas, water cannon, buckshot and live bullets. The numbers killed in Suez, Alexandria, Cairo and other cities has undoubtedly topped the 100 mark.

The hated police were withdrawn from the streets and the army deployed. Yet the crowds surrounded them and fraternised with the soldiers. Mubarak's stern broadcast warning of chaos and his attempts to defuse the movement by changing the government and making the chief of the security services vice president were greeted by contempt on the streets.

The uprising was unleashed on 25 January, dubbed the "Day of Anger", by Egyptian youth opposition groups such as



"April 6", using Twitter and Facebook to mobilise. April 6 was actually formed as a Facebook group in 2008 to mobilise support for a strike by workers in the northern industrial town of Mahalla al-Kubra. But it was the Tunisian movement, also launched by youth using the new social media, which brought down the dictator Ben Ali, inspiring Egyptian youth to imitate them.

Egypt faces the same problems as Tunisia – mass unemployment, soaring inflation and a stifling of all dissent. So they set out to unleash a similar uprising in Egypt, with similar slogans: "bread, freedom, social justice."

The revolution spread like

wildfire. Demonstrations reached vast proportions.

It became clear that the Army High Command was unwilling to resort to force. They feared that if they ordered rank and file soldiers to shoot they might well refuse to do so and go over to the people. Sooner or later they will force the President to go, hoping an interim government can defuse the situation, as the army did in Tunisia.

## Workers enter the battle

A crucial point has been reached where, as in Tunisia, the working class is entering the fray. In Tunisia it was the calling of a general strike that broke the dictator Ben Ali's will

and forced him to flee. In Egypt militant trade unionists and unemployed youth early on took part in the demonstrations and steel workers in Suez have come out on an open-ended strike until Mubarak resigns. Workers in Mahalla al-Kubra – an industrial city where strike waves have taken place for three years running – joined the demonstrations en masse. Finally the call for an indefinite general strike went out for 1 February and a new a new federation of independent trade unions was formed.

An all out indefinite general strike would bring the whole country to a halt, choking off the profits of the rich and breaking the will of the regime to hang on to power. Such mass action would show the ruling class the USA, the EU and Israel who is really master of the situation.

At the height of the revolutionary wave the people began to organise self-government. On 29 and 30 January the BBC reported the formation of local mass committees and popular militias patrolling the streets with sticks to maintain order. Civilians are directing the traffic. Many of the looters, whose activities were boosted by pro-government media to terrify the crowds into halting the movement, have turned out to be "off-duty" policemen!

In just over a week the rev-



olution has achieved what 30 years of bargaining and begging could not. Terrified of losing everything, Mubarak cynically offered sudden concessions. He sacked his government – but stayed in power himself. He offered social and economic reforms – but did not stipulate details of what they were or how they'd be paid for. He appointed a deputy president – but gave no details of his powers...and named his intelligence chief Suleiman for the post.

The masses are not fooled and have shifted their cry from “The regime must go” to the even more explicit and unambiguous “Mubarak must go!”

If the general strike is to have its full effect its democratic self-organisation by workers and youth will prove essential. It can make sure that the regime cannot take away the de facto freedoms that the street protests have secured so far – the right to demonstrate, to assemble, to speak freely.

The formation of councils of delegates from the factories, shops and offices, in the popular quarters, in the colleges can ensure that not only Mubarak goes but that he is not replaced by an openly military regime or a civilian government of experts. The rank and file soldiers and their NCOs should be encouraged to form democratic committees too. And a general strike that succeeded not only in getting rid of Mubarak but any permutation of the old regime, would open up an extended revolutionary period – a period of dual power where the old state forces are confronted by new popular mass organisations.

And it is just such organisations that could rapidly establish the order that the people need, releasing the prisoners, controlling prices, putting the unemployed to work, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless. The working class and the youth could take charge.



Mass working class democracy would also be the best way to stop the National Association for Change, headed by capitalist politicians like of Mohamed ElBaradei, or the conservative Muslim Brother-



The Chinese government has banned the search term “Egypt”

hood, from reaping the fruits of the people's revolution. ElBaradei initially stated that he hoped “change will come in an orderly way and not through the Tunisian model”, before he jumped on board. Likewise the Muslim Brotherhood took little part in the whole uprising ... until it took on mass proportions and they realised they had to be seen to back it or they would be swept away by events.

### Hunger and neoliberalism

The explosive material of this revolution was poverty and hunger: rising food prices,

unemployment (especially for the young), dreadful housing conditions in the slums around Cairo and the other big cities. In the words of UK journalist Robert Fisk: “The filth and the slums, the open sewers and the corruption of every government official, the bulging prisons, the laughable elections, the whole vast, sclerotic edifice of power has at last brought Egyptians on to their streets.”

Officially unemployment is 12 per cent but the real figure is twice that. About 40 per cent of Egypt's 80 million people live on around \$2 a day. The UN says between 20 and 30 percent live below the official poverty line and the living standards have fallen steadily since the 1990s.

Over the past two decades Egypt experienced its version of the pro-market neoliberal “revolution”. The state capitalist measures introduced by Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s (misnamed “Arab Socialism”) were step by step dismantled under the pressure of the IMF and the USA, which is Egypt's biggest aid donor. In the mid-1990s the regime cut subsidies to small farmers, repealed protective laws and promoted the interests of large



landowners. By the late 1990s Mubarak began privatising industries – by the early 2000s the education and health services had been sold off.

Factories were bought by foreign investors, including from Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, squeezing high returns from a workforce unprotected by effective labour laws, policed by state controlled unions, and subject to vicious police repression if they tried to strike. No wonder Egyptian textile workers earn on average less than half that of their equivalents in Turkey and other Mediterranean countries.

### The way out

In the local committees and the councils of war of the revolutionary movement, the workers and the young activists need to draw up an emergency programme to meet the burning social and economic needs of ordinary Egyptians:

- Prices must be slashed. Immediate distribution of food to the poor and unemployed. Wages must be raised to compensate for the inflation and protected by a sliding scale
- The unemployed must be offered work in a programme of public development to replace the crumbling shantytowns with decent housing, sanitation, schools, clinics
- The ill gotten gains of all the top figures of the Mubarak regime, of the super rich, must be seized and used for reconstruction
- The privatised industries and services must be renationalised without compensation
- The revolution must spread to the countryside where half of all Egyptians still live. Small farmers' debts must be cancelled, large farms and agribusinesses must be expro-

# DEEP RED

riated and put under workers' control, life in the villages must be transformed by improved provision of health-care, education and housing

- The freedom, dignity and human rights that people are demanding on the streets must be firmly established and protected against any return of the old regime

- The 12,000 or so political prisoners in Mubarak's jails must be released and all exiles given the right to return

- The police chiefs and torturers must be arrested and their crimes exposed and punished

- The secret police and the paramilitary squads must be disarmed and disbanded, a workers' and youth militia must keep order, soldiers' democratic rights must be protected by establishing soldiers' committees and the election officers so that they cannot be used again as blind tools of coups and dictatorship

- The ruling party must be dissolved, its property confiscated and its officials and ministers punished for their corruption

- There must be complete freedom to form political parties, to demonstrate, to meet, to have unfettered access to the broadcast media and to publish newspapers

- Elections must take place to a sovereign, revolutionary constituent assembly under the control and protection of workers' and popular committees and militia

- There must be active support for popular uprisings and revolutions against the ruling tyrants in all the countries of North Africa and the Middle East

- Renounce Mubarak's treach-



erous complicity in the oppression of the Palestinians - declare solidarity with the Palestinians break the blockade of Gaza from the Egyptian side

## Make its permanent

What sort of government is needed to carry out these demands? What government should the masses on the streets - the youth, workers, and unemployed of the Egyptian revolution - be aiming to bring to power?

No intelligence chiefs, no army generals, no businessmen or Nobel Prize winners with the blessings of the USA can meet the people's need for "bread, freedom and social justice." The privileged elite, the landowners, capitalists, financiers and their cronies are too tied to the US order in the region, too bound by a thousand ties of wealth and patronage to the old system, to be able to make permanent the de facto democratic rights and economic concessions achieved by the revolution so far. Only a government of the workers and small farmers can do it.

That means utterly destroying the institutions of the old regime and putting power in the hands of the most democratic

organisations of the masses - councils of workers, peasants and soldiers.

With power in the hands of the workers and poor, what side would the new government take in conflicts between capitalists and workers, between landlords and peasants? It would have to take the side of the poor, or it would become just another tool of the rich and neoliberalism. So the workers' and peasants' government



Israel's deputy PM said democracy in Egypt "threatens Israeli security"

would have to start the process of breaking with capitalism and socialising the economy - the factories and all the large-scale workplaces would be nationalised without compensation and the land brought under cooperative and communal ownership. This must not be the bureaucratic control from above that failed under Stalinism, but the democratic direction and planning of workers

and peasants themselves.

This is the Trotskyist strategy of permanent revolution. It does not, as its Stalinists of the old Communist Parties lied, mean skipping over the democratic demands of the revolution but fulfilling them, making them permanent. To carry this out the most advanced sections of the workers and youth, the most farsighted and determined fighters, need to convene in the heat of the struggle to form a new revolutionary party aiming to fight to stop the bourgeoisie, the generals and the Islamists wresting control of the revolution, and instead directing it towards its true historic goal: working class power and socialism.

The revolution in the Arab world has begun. It is shaking the whole world. Rulers are trembling at the power of the masses revealed, not just in Arab capitals but in Tel Aviv, not just in America but in China too.

Victory can be a beacon to masses struggling everywhere against repression, against poverty, against the global capitalist crisis. It gives the lie to those who say revolution is a thing of the past - it opens the broad vista of world socialist revolution in the 21st century.

## ★ MEDIA AND REPRESSION

# Cop spies, fit-ups and phonetapping hacks

By Joy Macready

A campaign of repression against the growing resistance to the cuts exposes collusion between the different arms of the state – the police, courts, intelligence agencies – even drawing in the supposedly independent media.

With the aid of the right-wing papers, the police are trying to demonise students that took to the streets in the November demonstrations against rising

tuition fees and the scrapping of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Not only have they released a “rogues gallery” of student protesters and arrested more than 200 people, the Met has asked more than 20 London universities and colleges to spy on their students.

They are also fitting up individual activists. Matt Dawson, a student at Leeds City College, was arrested on an EMA demonstration and charged under Section 5 for swearing and possessing an “offensive weapon” which turns out to be his belt buckle, which is so small that it can’t be used as a weapon. He will appear at Leeds Magistrates Court on 9 February where a lively protest will give him solidarity and support.

Meanwhile, the courts sentenced former leader of the Scottish Socialist Party Tommy Sheridan to three years for perjury. The trial exposed the collusion of the media and the police to bring Sheridan down – the Lothian and Borders Police leaked his police interview tapes to the BBC, which ran a programme with the fair and balanced title of “The Rise and Lies of Tommy Sheridan”.

Andy Coulson, ex-editor of News of the World, took the stand at Sheridan’s trial and



swore that he knew nothing of phone-hacking at the newspaper. Soon after Coulson was forced to resign from his position as chief spin doctor for David Cameron, as his lies are finally catching up with him. Again the police were keen to sweep this investigation under the carpet. The Met is said to have failed to notify all the likely victims of phone-hacking; to have

failed to pursue leads; and to have withheld evidence from prosecutors.

All of this comes on top of the revelations of police infiltration of protest groups. Mark Kennedy (known as Mark Stone), Marc Jacobs, Jim Boyling and Lynn Watson have all been unmasked. The first three are known to have had sexual relationships with women members of the groups they were targeting.

The Cardiff Anarchist Network, which Jacobs infiltrated, was right in its statement that they were “infiltrated and abused because we took, and encouraged others to take, militant action against a string of colossal injustices”.

We should all pay attention to their warning of how he “changed the culture of the organisation, encouraging a lot of drinking, gossip and back-stabbing”.

That is police informants’ goal – to foster mistrust, suspicion and paranoia amongst our ranks. We cannot let them pull our movement apart by making us all distrust each other – but at the same time we must also be vigilant and expose provocateurs and spies wherever we find them.



## LAIKA'S VIEW FROM ORBIT

**Our dog's life observed by everyone's favourite cosmic communist canine**



My satellite detects jubilation across the Middle East. But Murdoch’s Sun is trying to make you scared. The first words of its report on 29 January? “The riots in Egypt will spread fear among British tourists already shaken by unrest in travel hotspot Tunisia.” Rebels stealing the sunloungers again?



Firefighters union leader Matt Wrack made a stunning militant speech at the Labour Representation Committee conference at the end of January. Strange though that he didn’t once mention that the London Fire Brigade plans to sack its entire workforce? Perhaps it’s because Matt called off their strike before Christmas for no reason. Wracked with guilt?



Stuck in my sputnik I can’t wait to get my Morning Star every day. But what did I read on 29 January? “Britain’s labour movement pledges joint action.”

Wow! Excited I read on as Unison leader Dave Prentis pledged “to coordinate all our negotiations and discussions through the TUC.” Er...Unwow?



A suntanned Tony Blair stood smiling on the millionaires’ ski-slopes of Davos to tell the Beeb that Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak was a good friend of his. Others rushing to express support for the “strongman” were those great democrats King Abdullah of Saudi and Colonel Gaddafi of Libya. Nice company war criminals seem to be keeping.