

# Workers power 5



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## BRITAIN

# THE RIOTS REPRESSION RESISTANCE

**Fight against racism, cuts, inequality and police violence**

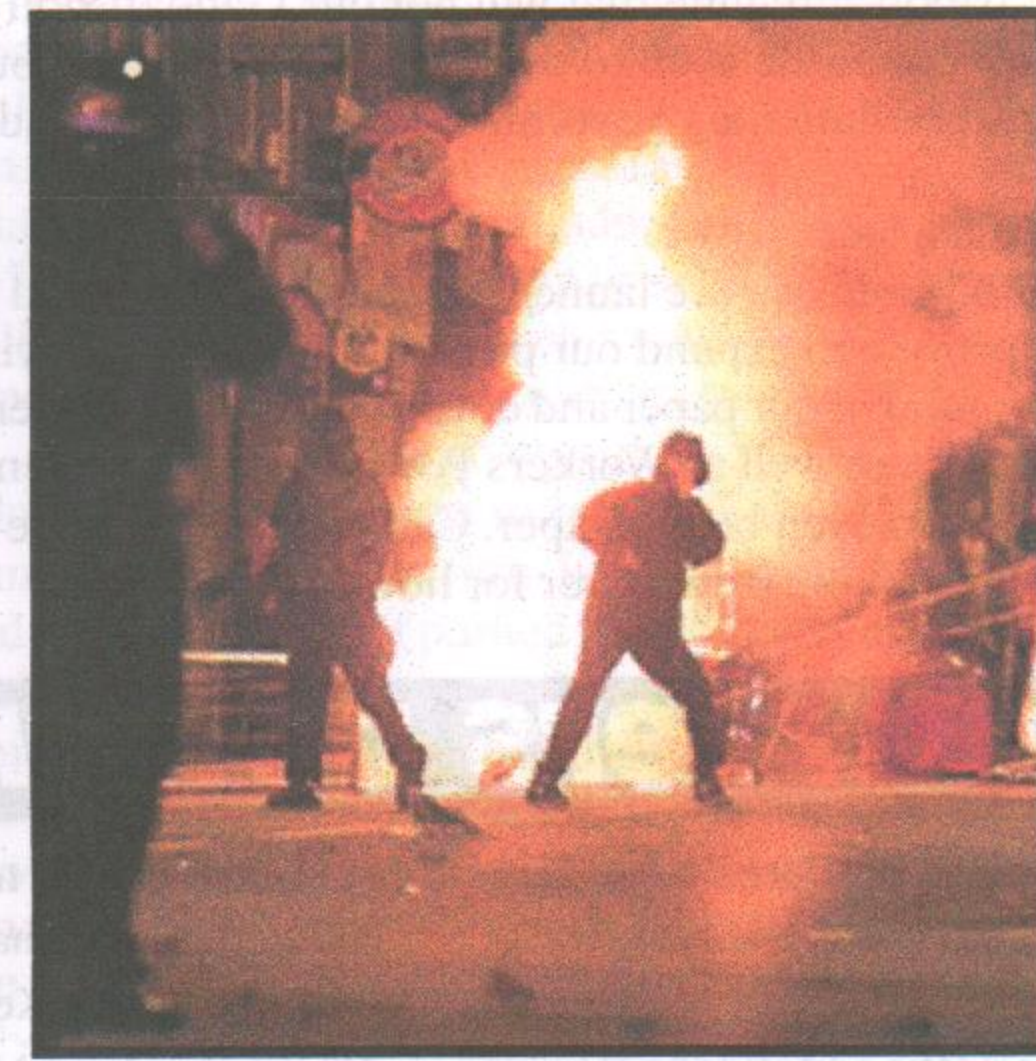
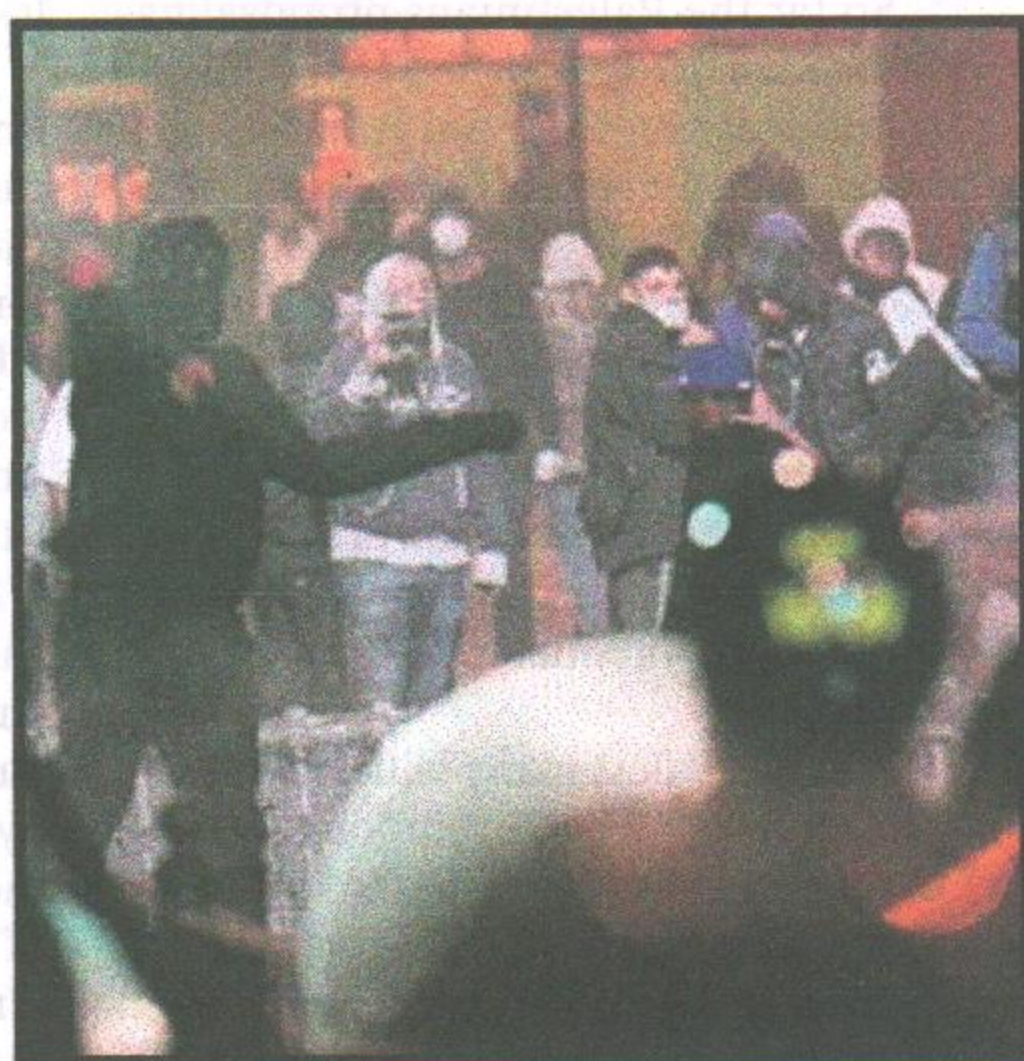
### Fighting fund

THE FIGHT is on against the coalition government - and there is much at stake. Workers Power's ideas play an important role in building the kind of resistance that we need to win.

Our monthly paper is an essential tool for us to get our message out there and we want to get the paper into more peoples hands, more regularly.

To help us with this, Workers Power is launching a £2000 fighting fund to purchase new office equipment. We need to upgrade our computers so we can improve our paper and other publications.

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The editorial  
**SIMON HARDY**



# An autumn of struggle

THIS SUMMER has been a truly momentous one. The riots that swept the country caused huge soul searching by liberal England and a reactionary backlash by the hang 'em and flog 'em brigade. Either way the youth of today responded with their own shock and awe against consumerism and the police in the kind of rioting we have not seen since the 1980s, the last time the Tories were in power.

Socialists know that the riots were not caused by a simple outbreak of criminality – the conditions of life for many young people in Britain today are bad, and getting worse. For many living in poverty, and with the threat of more poverty to come, such actions are an act of defiance against a society that they feel has abandoned them.

The cuts agenda of the government is only going to make this worse.

## What is yet to come

This autumn is a crucial turning point in the fight against the government. There will be more strikes in November. There will doubtless be protests and demonstrations. But we need much more. We need serious escalation of the action to really scare the Con-Dems – more than that, we need to create the kind of organisations that can win.

We have to bring down the government, nothing less. Anyone who thinks there is room to negotiate or manoeuvre, that we can buy time by accepting some cuts here but not there, is wrong. The government will only use such sentiments to buy off certain sections whilst smashing us elsewhere. The British ruling class are masters of divide and rule, they have been practicing it for centuries.

Many of our trade union leaders and anti-cuts organisations are following suit and seem unwilling to unite the fight back. Despite earlier claims from Prentis of Unison that he would bring his troops out on the battlefield to fight alongside trade unionists in NUT, PCS and UCU, it now looks less likely that Unison will be involved in any major way. The anti-cuts organisations remain stubbornly divided with no signs of unity.

We need a united anti cuts movement and united trade union strike action. Workers Power will campaign on any front to escalate and intensify the action in order to bring pressure on the government and strengthen our movement.

## Libya

The sudden victory of the rebels in Tripoli also saw a dramatic shift in the development of the Arab revolutions, and much debate and argument on the left. Is it right to support the Rebels or not, considering their alliance with Nato? Workers Power celebrates the victory of the rebels over the Gaddafi forces, but warns of the dangers. The west wants a loyal regime in Tripoli, a regime that will honour Gaddafi's oil contracts. Now the battle is on to overthrow the NTC and build a genuine revolutionary government of the workers and poor.

## Fighting fund

In this issue we are launching a new fighting fund to help us improve and expand our publications. We are relying on regular sales of our paper and donations from supporters and subscribers, as well as Workers Power members, to enable us to make an even better paper. Can you help? Please check the details on the front cover for how to contribute.

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Monthly paper of the British section of the League for the Fifth International  
Editor: Simon Hardy Political editor: Richard Brenner  
Deputy editor: Joy Macready Production editor: Keith Spencer  
Domestic editor: John Bowman Art director: Sean Murray  
Industrial editor: Jeremy Drinkall Staff writer: Marcus Halaby

Contact: office@workerspower.co.uk • +44 (0) 207 708 4331  
www.workerspower.co.uk

## ★ PALESTINE

# Will the UN General Assembly recognise Palestinian statehood?

September will see a show down at the UN over the question of Palestinian statehood. This could have serious international ramifications, argues *Simon Hardy*

THERE IS a looming political crisis for the US and Israel - and perhaps also the Palestinian leadership - as the UN General Assembly is due to discuss a proposal in late September to recognise Palestine as an independent nation.

Palestine needs 135 votes to get the necessary two-thirds majority at the General Assembly. Currently it has 112, but more are likely to sign up in the next few weeks. However, both the US and Israel have made it clear that any vote to recognise Palestine will not be endorsed by the UN Security Council, where the US can use its veto.

The president of the UN, Joseph Deiss, emphatically denied that the Assembly could legally recognise and therefore create a state without the Security Council.

The reason for Israeli opposition is clear. "Frankly, the 1967 lines are not defensible," said Doer Gold, an ex-Israeli ambassador to the UN. "Israel today is 45 miles wide. If you put us back to the '67 lines, we are eight miles wide."

Pressures of demographic and territorial space are recurrent themes in Israeli politics and losing so much to a Palestinian state would be a disaster for Israeli politicians.

There is a near hysterical campaign orchestrated by the Israeli right and the mass media against the vote. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman declared that Mahmoud Abbas is planning "violence and bloodletting of the sort not yet seen before" on the day of the vote, as a scare tactic designed to terrify Israelis. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dispatched top diplomats to deliver personally signed letters to over 40 heads of state explaining why they should vote against the proposal.

The US - the Zionist state's chief paymaster, sending over \$3 billion per annum - has threatened to cut off aid to the Palestinian Authority should it pursue the vote in the UN. Currently the PA receives \$550 million every year from the US. President Obama and the US Congress are hoping that the PA will be so afraid of bankrupting itself that it will pull back from raising the independence issue at the UN.

Obama was clear as to the reason behind this strategy: " Hamas still hasn't recognised Israel's right to exist and renounce violence, and recognise that negotiations are the right path for solving this problem." He repeats the US political line that Hamas is an organisation that is intransigent on non-recognition of Israel.

But Hamas does not live up to its hard-line reputation. In 2009 Hamas leader Ghazi Hamad said: "We accept a state in the '67 borders... We are not talking about the destruction of Israel." Hamas has repeatedly said it is willing to talk to the US, or even Israel, and make compromises including "long-term" cease-fires - which effectively means abandoning the armed struggle.

The US also refuses to negotiate because it claims it is not willing to talk to terrorists. But this 'principle' is undermined by recent revelations that the occupation forces - led by the US - in Afghanistan have been seeking peace



talks with the Taliban. The Taliban are also proscribed 'terrorists' in the eyes of the US.

## A new Intifada?

Why are Israel and the US so concerned about this vote? The ex-US special envoy for the Middle East, George Mitchell, described the vote as "a major political train wreck" and it is easy to see why.

Simply put, the move by the Palestinians will expose all the hypocrisy of the West concerning the question of 'two states'. The promise of statehood is constantly dangled in front of the Palestinians like a carrot as a lure to more rounds of peace talks which deliver nothing and simply give Israel more time to expand its settlements in the West Bank. All the talk of a viable Palestinian state is just white noise to cover the thunder of the bulldozers as more and more Palestinians are driven from their homes and their land is stolen.

The vote will cause a serious breach between the West and developing nations, many of which support Palestine (at least on paper) and are angered by the arm-twisting to get them to vote against or abstain.

So far the Palestinians proposal has succeeded in exposing the US and Israel as the real barriers to negotiation. If it passes and Israel still refuses negotiations or attacks the Palestinian state, this political isolation will increase.

But the Palestinian leadership itself faces a potential crisis. If the vote fails, or is passed and Israel responds with either a new military provocation or a blockade of PA areas in the West Bank and Gaza, there is the potential for a third Intifada to erupt.

Already Palestinian politics have been shaken by the Arab revolutions, and new organisations such as Gaza Youth Break Out could play a similar role to the 6 April Youth Movement in Egypt, a group that led the initial pro-democracy demonstrations in January 2011.

A third Intifada will probably not be endorsed by either of the two official Palestinian leaderships. Fatah has long pursued a strategy of cooperation with Zionism.

Even now their security forces spend far more time policing Palestinian resistance organisations than confronting the Israeli occupation. In Gaza, Hamas acted swiftly to disperse pro-democracy demonstrations that developed as part of the 'Arab Spring'. A mass movement of resistance to Israeli occupation would not only see the Hamas leadership overthrown but also co-opt and contain it, while they pass themselves off as the natural leaders of it. But such a move is fraught with dangers and threats of new political organisations emerging to lead the Palestinian national resistance struggle.

## What is the solution?

Clearly if the resolution passes it would strengthen the Palestinians position and give them more leverage on the international arena to pursue their demands for justice against the aggressive Israeli colonialist occupation force. But on its own it is unlikely to fundamentally change the power relations at work. More importantly, the UN cannot deliver Palestinian freedom - it not only created Israel in 1947, but it has failed to prevent countless atrocities and slaughter of Palestinians since then, despite countless resolutions.

What is needed is a mass pro-Palestine movement on the streets right across the Middle East, which would weaken the Zionists position and strengthen the Arab revolution as a whole. Internationally, we must win the labour movement worldwide to support the Palestinian struggle and boycott and isolate the Zionist state.

Some Palestinians are opposed to the proposal because they see it as strengthening the corrupt Palestinian Authority and a betrayal of the refugees by accepting the 1967 borders. Whilst these concerns are important, what is of prime importance is that any short term strengthening of the Palestinians' position is not counterposed to the long term goals of a one state solution for Arabs and Jews. Recognition of Palestine, even along the 1967 borders, would be a step forward, part of a wider struggle to liberate all Palestinians.

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# What the riots reveal about Britain

Jeremy Dewar argues that August's disturbances were not 'criminality pure and simple' but a youth uprising against police racism, poverty and social oppression.

THE SHOCK was felt by everybody. The speed with which the fighting against the police and the rioting spread from district to district and town to town, the ferocity of the youth burning down shops and firebombing police stations, and the size of the uprising – the Met claim 30,000 participated in “criminal acts” in London alone, while many more looked on and “got in the way” – took politicians, journalists and police chiefs completely by surprise.

But if the exact form and precise timing this rebellion took were unpredictable, the underlying causes of youth alienation made it inevitable. Capitalism and the generational cycles of poverty and social alienation were the material for the explosion, police violence was the detonator.

## Alienation

Police racism, the immediate cause of the uprising, is rampant. Since 1990, 1,410 people have died while police were present, a large number of these being black, like the recent cases of Smiley Culture, Demetre Frazer and of course Mark Duggan.

Stop and search powers are routinely used to humiliate and harass black youth. In 2008-09, police stopped and searched people an incredible 2.4m times. Recent research by the LSE and Open Society Justice Initiative found that black people are 26 times more likely to be stopped than whites. Yet arrest rates remain marginal: roughly one in 50.

In short, a whole generation of youth are subjected to daily ‘in-your-face’ policing.

Add to this the fact that one in five young people – a million under-25s – are unemployed. The Catch-22 of not having work experience keeps this group at the very bottom of the labour market.

Benefits are being cut in real value, while Iain Duncan Smith's Flexible New Deal forces the young unemployed to work 30 hours a week for free – or have their benefits cut for at least three months. These four-week stints of slave labour can be repeated endlessly at the discretion of the DWP. Working like this whilst on benefits is the equivalent of being paid £2.25 an hour, less than half the minimum wage.

And which companies benefit from this “something for nothing” culture? Why, the likes of Tesco and Primark, the apparently “innocent” victims of looting and arson.

With the abolition of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA), a £30 a week grant for 16-18 year old students, and the tripling of university fees, many working class youth are increasingly priced out of further and higher education. Courses are being cut as local colleges (and schools) face year on year budget cuts of around 10 per cent. As many as 200,000 applicants will lose out on a university place this year in the rush to beat fee rises.

Add to this other related factors



and the picture of a generation with no stake in capitalist Britain emerges.

- Social housing is dilapidated due to years of underfunding and is in chronic shortage – up to a third of council flats are unfit for habitation in inner cities.
- 2.6 million children are living in poverty in Britain – 20 per cent, though this rises to 50 per cent in deprived areas.
- Over £100 million has been cut and 3,000 workers sacked from youth services this year. Many councils have closed or severely reduced services at youth clubs, as budgets have been cut by 70 per cent to 100 per cent (Swindon, for example). Even in Cameron's constituency, youth workers went on strike to save jobs and services.

## Haves and have-nots

David Cameron's callous retorts that this was “criminality pure and simple” and that “pockets of our society” are “frankly sick” were exposed for what they are: class hatred.

He knows that the wealth gap is widening at every point: by age, by gender, by north-south, but most of all by class. While average incomes fell by 3 per cent this year, the richest thousand people saw their wealth increase by 30 per cent to £333.5 billion.

Cameron complains that there is “a complete lack of responsibility in parts of our society, people allowed to feel the world owes them something, that their rights outweigh their responsibilities and their actions do not have consequences. Well, they do have consequences.”

Rubbish. What is sick about Tory Britain is the system, which takes from the poor and gives to the rich; the bankers and bosses, who have taken no responsibility and shown no

remorse for the credit crunch and ensuing recession; the ConDem government, which demands the working class pay for the crisis; the system with savage cuts; the justice system which locks up someone for 20 months for stealing a t-shirt, but lets off the policeman who dragged activist Jody McIntyre from his wheelchair. There is no justice in Britain when it comes to workers and youth seeking redress against the state.

Of course criminal gangs moved in to loot shops, burn down buildings, including people's flats, and mug passers-by. Socialists and workers do not defend these thugs and killers – indeed our communities

## What is sick about Tory Britain is the system, which takes from the poor and gives to the rich

have organised to isolate and eject them for years. However, not everybody who looted was a criminal, let alone all those dragged before kangaroo courts in the early hours of the morning. The attempt to brand every participant a criminal is intended to erase from memory the real causes of the uprising. That we must resist.

On the contrary, the abandonment of legal norms – all night sittings, scant rights to defence, collective punishment – proves that the ruling class recognise this as a political

uprising. The “exemplary” sentences, like those meted out to students last year and activists after 26 March, are designed to frighten people from fighting back: shut up and do as you're told or we'll clobber you.

## Labour movement

But the clampdown will not inevitably succeed. Only if we retreat to our private lives isolated from our communities – our class – will repression take hold. To prevent this, we need to offer working class youth an alternative future, based on class struggle, solidarity and revolutionary goals.

One of the main reasons why the youth uprising happened in the way it did was the near complete absence of a working class party on our estates, in our schools and colleges, in the workplaces where youth are concentrated – retail, services, agency work, etc. – or among the unemployed. To focus this anger and rage on more productive targets than Cash Converter and Foot Locker, we need to redress this failing of the labour movement, especially the trade unions.

Unite has opened its doors to the unemployed, offering membership at a very reduced rate. Good, the other general unions should follow. They should also launch a unionisation drive, penetrating the anti-union mega-corporations, the private sector, employment agencies and the grey economy, where even the minimum wage is denied. Here only bold actions – lightning strikes and occupations – will succeed. And the youth have shown they have boldness in buckets.

More than this though, we need to establish a working class party and socialist youth movement with deep roots on the estates and in the

schools and colleges. The Labour Party has shrivelled to a wizened husk in these areas. It shut down its left wing youth section in the late 1980s because it was “too radical”.

Only a radical anticapitalist party would be able to inspire the youth and harness their boundless energy to the task of creating a new society. But the Labour leadership refuses to adopt the policies and direct action methods – strikes, occupations, demos – that could reverse its decline for fear of alienating the middle classes.

So long as the Labour Party remains the major electoral party of the working class, we should demand its MPs and councillors vote against and reverse all the cuts, fight for and implement budgets based on the people's needs and support every strike and action against austerity. So long as our unions remain affiliated to Labour (and provide 85 per cent of its funding), they should use their position to demand its support and to launch a new, mass and independent youth organisation.

But it would be foolish in the extreme to rely on Labour making such a turn. It will only move to the left if pushed from below – and even then it would hesitate, drag backwards and ultimately betray the youth. That's why anticuts groups, community organisations and ad hoc committees should start this work ourselves and ensure that the uprising of 2011 marks one more step – after the student rebellion of 2010 and the mass union mobilisations of 26 March and 30 June – towards throwing out this government. More than this we have to inspire a fight for a new world, one without racism and poverty.

# After the fall of Gaddafi revolution must go deeper

Gaddafi has been defeated - now the fight is on to save Libya from NATO and the oil grabbing western powers, writes *Richard Brenner*

NOW THAT Gaddafi has fallen the Libyan Revolution must go deeper and break up the remains of the old regime - popular committees need to stop the new NTC government and the NATO powers from stealing the fruits of the people's victory.

The entry of the rebels into Tripoli spelled the beginning of end for Gaddafi. The dictator's offer to arm the people of Tripoli against the rebels went completely unanswered - because the masses were already in the streets celebrating his downfall.

Hardly surprising. In Tripoli in the early days of the uprising, Gaddafi's forces had already murdered between 200 and 700 unarmed demonstrators.

Like all victorious uprisings the Libyan Revolution will have to crush the remaining elements of the old regime including Gaddafi and his sons. They should not be tried but put to swift revolutionary justice.

At the same time the revolution needs to discipline itself. The horrifying cases of killings of black people need to be stopped. Gaddafi hired sub-Saharan mercenaries but in Tripoli gangs seem to be treating black people all as Gaddafi mercenaries. Anyone doing this should be tried and punished harshly.

The greatest danger to the revolution is NATO. The imperialist NATO powers supported the rebel side in the civil war to regain their prestige and position in the Middle East after 'their guys' got toppled in Egypt and Tunisia. The international antiwar movement was absolutely right to oppose the NATO action 100 percent. Not because socialists and antiwar activists should oppose the Libyan Revolution - but because the US, British and French imperialists are false friends and now they will seize tighter control of Libya.

NATO have found willing allies among members of the former Gaddafi regime who defected to the revolution - many of whom are now sitting on the leadership of the National Transitional Council which is installing itself as the government in Tripoli.

Nevertheless the NTC is a heterogeneous body. It is made up of former Gaddafi officials, plus some of the original rebels who launched the democratic uprising in the first place before NATO got involved. There will be a struggle to decide the composition of the new government.

There are huge numbers of armed rebels on the streets and only cynical enemies of the Libyan

Revolution will claim they are all just stooges or reactionaries. Many of them will soon come to realise that the imperialists are no friends of the Libyan people, that the defectors from Gaddafi's regime are corrupt and won't help the people, that the old murderous police and state bureaucracy will not meet the urgent needs of ordinary Libyans.

So the next stage of the revolution needs to be to fight the pro-imperialist leadership of the National Transitional Council. The NTC will throw open the door to the French, Italian and British multinationals who already had lucrative oil contracts with Gaddafi and will now be out to make serious money from reconstruction contracts and "security services."

#### Armed Libyans

The imperialists are celebrating the downfall of Gaddafi - but are also aware they have a big problem on their hands. The Libyan people are armed and mobilised. They have just made a revolution and won a civil war. They will not want to be reduced to a client state of the west.

So the best hope for the future is that the armed people take the rev-

olution forward, organising workers' councils and a militia, demanding the fullest democratic rights - a Constituent Assembly - imposing the nationalisation without compensation and under workers' control of all Libya's oil, resources and industry.

The Libyan Revolution is part of the Great Arab Revolution of 2011. Now three countries bordering one another across North Africa have all thrown off their dictators: Tunisia, Libya and of course the biggest of the three, Egypt.

Why respect the old colonial borders that divide these states? The revolutionary people should extend their fight for democracy into a fight for a United States of North Africa.

Which force in Libya, Tunisia and Egypt is strong enough to take the fight forward in this way, to defeat the NTC in Libya and the generals in Egypt? It is the working class. A strong working class party needs to be built to link up these fights, deepen the democratic revolution and take it forward to socialism: which means the rule of workers' councils and the peoples' militias, and the establishment of a planned economy for the people's need, not the greed of capitalists at home...or abroad.



- No support to the NTC - for a government based on councils of workers, youth and fighters
- Stop pogroms of blacks and migrants
- Build free trade unions
- Elections to a sovereign revolutionary constituent assembly
- Scrap all deals made by the NTC with NATO and imperialism.
- No handing of the oil wealth to imperialist multinationals: US, UK, EU or Chinese
- Dissolve the remains of the national army and police.
- The people's militias must be run by mass councils of the revolution.
- All NATO forces out of Libya. No NATO bombings.
- No privatisations, workers control of industry
- For a massive infrastructure programme: build houses, schools and hospitals.
- Link up with the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions - support Algerian, Syrians and Palestinians
- Build a Libyan revolutionary working class party
- For a United Socialist States of North Africa and the Middle East.

## Imperialist hypocrisy over Libya

THE IMPERIALIST powers were caught backing the 'wrong side' in the Tunisian and Egyptian revolutions. Only when it became clear that Mubarak would fall, did they turn around and start to pose as apostles of democracy.

Then Libya rose in revolt against a dictator who, for all his past clashes with them, was up till then a perfectly adequate guardian of their interests.

When Benghazi fell to the revolution, the Western powers had to intervene to preserve the concessions Gaddafi granted them, as well as to refurbish their democratic credentials in the Arab world. But even then, they still urged Gaddafi to reform and negotiate with the rebels.

Even after they began aerial attacks on the armoured columns threatening to massacre Benghazi, they refused to provide the rebels with arms, hoping for a deal to put "responsible" elements of the old regime in charge.

Only after the battle for Misrata, when it became clear that no compromise was on offer from either side, did they send in covert Special Forces to help the rebel National Transitional Council (NTC) to victory. Now they want to create a pliant pro-imperialist regime in Tripoli.

Like the new regimes in Egypt and



Tunisia, this regime will try to disarm and swindle the demonstrators of Benghazi, Misrata and Tripoli, and the young fighters of the rebel armies, of their hopes for democracy and social justice.

The pundits demand that "the lessons of Iraq" be learned; that Gaddafi's police, army, militias, judiciary and civil service be lightly purged but restored to service. What they dare not say quite so openly is that the civilian fighters must be disarmed.

The triumph of the rebel forces - thanks in large measure to imperialist military aid and under a cravenly pro-imperialist leadership - has

thrown the left into confusion. Some big names on the populist left have always been pro-Gaddafi, like Hugo Chavez of Venezuela and Jacob Zuma of South Africa's African National Congress. We can add the old Stalinist and Maoist Communist Parties, as well as those remnants of the Gerry Healy tradition that never fully shook off their master's venal attachment to the "Libyan Socialist Jamahiriya."

These worshippers of totalitarian regimes - as long as they are in the US and EU's bad books - distinguish between "good" or "genuine" revolutions and "fake" or "CIA" revolutions. The first are directed against

pro-American tyrants like Mubarak or Ben Ali, while the second are against "anti-imperialist" tyrants like Assad, Ahmadinejad or Mugabe. These latter struggles for democracy, they say, "play into the hands of imperialism."

As if the basic fight of the workers and poor against dictators should be sacrificed purely to prop up these butchers, who are themselves completely capitalist. A government of the workers and peasants in Syria, Iran or Zimbabwe would be a million times more of a threat to the multinationals of America and Europe than any number of so-called anti-imperialist bourgeois regimes.

#### Neutrality?

NATO's undoubted success in co-opting the rebel leadership to their purposes does not at all invalidate the struggle of the Libyan people to overthrow Gaddafi. But it does seem to have confused the Socialist Workers Party.

At first the SWP rightly supported the Libyan revolution, while at the same time correctly condemning the NATO bombing. But as the civil war dragged on and the NTC's pro-imperialist character became more obvious, the SWP decided to abandon the rebels for a more neutral line.

In its paper Socialist Worker Judith Orr argued on 27 August that "the nature of the struggle in Libya is now fundamentally different from the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt that originally inspired it. It became so once Western forces decided to appropriate it. [...] This was no longer a rebellion that would challenge Western wealth and power."

The SWP's cold feet leaves them dodging the whole issue revolutionaries need to be confronting head on. The fact that their leaders back NATO doesn't mean there can be no opposition to this from the rank and file of the revolution. Indeed, as we go to press, rebels in Misrata are in struggle against the NTC for appointing a Gaddafi thug as their security chief.

In democratic revolutions against dictators like in Libya, the job is not to declare the masses have already lost, or to equate them with their reactionary leaders, but to fight for the working class to come to the head of the struggle: to create a leadership that can fight off NTC and NATO control and turn the democratic revolution into a struggle for working class power and socialism.

That is the Trotskyist strategy of permanent revolution and socialists should not be deflected from it.

# UNITE - Electricians take unofficial action against rate cuts

Joy Macready

OVER 200 rank and file electricians organised a wildcat picket outside Balfour Beatty's Blackfriars Station construction project on 24 August, the first of many protests to stop eight major construction contractors from withdrawing from the nationally negotiated industry agreement.

The contractors - Bailey Building Services, Balfour Beatty Engineering Services, Tommy Clarke, Crown House Technologies, Gratte Brothers, MJN Colston, SES and SPIE Matthew Hall - plan to withdraw from the 50-year-old Joint Industry Board (JIB) pay agreement between contractors and electricians from March 2012. The current JIB agreement, which came into effect from the start of 2011, froze electricians' wages and now the contractors are looking to slash rates.

The proposals would mean three new grades for electricians: metalworker £10.50 per hour, £12 for wiring, £14 for terminating. At the moment, electricians' JIB rate is £16.25p per hour across the board. For the hardest hit, this means a 35% pay cut.

It is not just the rate cut - withdrawal from the JIB will lead to worsening terms and conditions and a de-skilling of the industry, and will pave the way to smash the organised workforce.

Electrician Alan Keys said: "What a great turn out and this is just the beginning - now let's push on. The last time the electrical contractors attempted to cut wages by de-skilling the electrical trade was 1999 which led to coordinated strikes on the Jubilee Line, Royal Opera House, Pfizers and projects across the UK."

The unofficial action is being coordinated by union activists around the Site Worker magazine and was gal-



vanised by the formation of the UNITE Construction Rank and File Network on 13 August. Over 500 electricians and pipefitters met in London to propel UNITE into action.

The conference unanimously passed the motion: "UNITE must immediately ballot members who are working for JIB firms who have been told that the terms and conditions will be changing in March 2012, and a campaign must be set up by UNITE, distributing leaflets to all sites around the country opposing these attacks on our industry and to have regular feedback to the members."

Importantly it also agreed to call unofficial action immediately on large sites and argued that other sites should come out in solidarity, rather than wait for a ballot. "When the employers go on the attack, you can't always wait for a ballot," said Jerry Hicks, who is on the steering committee to coordinate rank and file action and also chair of UNITE Grassroots Left.

The development of a rank and file organisation is critical to winning the battles ahead because it allows the workers to maintain control over strikes and

action. For many UNITE members, who have battled the undemocratic structures within the union, this is a welcome breath of fresh air. And importantly the initiative is not limited to UNITE members; there are members of various unions and many are not members of any union.

The action is also forcing UNITE to step up - although no union official made it to the protest, the union did release a strongly worded statement that it will oppose all attempts at withdrawal and has launched a campaign to defend its members' terms and conditions. Now it needs to put its money where its mouth is - and the rank and file network will be critical in keeping the pressure on.

The model of the UNITE Construction Rank and File Network needs to be rolled out to other industry sectors in UNITE - and other unions - in order to develop cross-union connections and strengthen the fightback against the cut-backs.

• For more info: email [jerryhicks4gs2010@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:jerryhicks4gs2010@yahoo.co.uk) or contact Alan Keys at [siteworkers@virginmedia.com](mailto:siteworkers@virginmedia.com)

## On the buses – fightback at Sovereign

A FIGHTBACK is brewing at the London Sovereign bus company. The workers have rejected a 5.2 per cent pay offer by a massive vote: 185 to 23. The workers are attempting to roll back an attack on their pay and conditions since UNITE convenor Abdul Omer Mohsin's dismissal in March 2010.

"The drivers on Sovereign recognise the importance of this fight to win back their respect," says Abdul. "Please UNITE behind them on their call to UNITE to ballot them for strike action now. The mood for a fight is building fast, while there is a concerted effort being played to dampen this mood and bury their fury. We need organised leadership to help build this fight."

Abdul is a militant who led the London pay campaign from 2007. The campaign was an excellent initiative, with several rounds of strike action, including an occupation of Transport for London's offices in 2009 to demand centralised pay bargaining and one rate of pay for the job. But UNITE played a dreadful role in the dispute by suspending the strikes when management made a pay offer to drivers individually - this sign of weakness gave Sovereign the opportunity to sack Abdul and get rid of the thorn in its side.



Instead of supporting their sacked militant, UNITE hung Abdul out to dry. They suspended him and claimed that his membership subscription was in arrears - by just £20. The union has failed to organise a ballot for action over his reinstatement, despite the fact that the Sovereign drivers have refused to elect a new convenor until Abdul's case is resolved. Abdul tried to get the union to back him and support his reinstatement, which meant a head-on fight with Unite bureaucrats who wanted shot of him. This caused a crisis as he could not get work, could not pay his mortgage and was admitted to hospital with stress. After serious pressure was brought to bear on the union they have agreed to get

behind Abdul. The campaign for reinstatement has drawn in activists to distribute hundreds of leaflets across London bus depots. It is important that UNITE branches and other trade unionists send messages of support and donations.

Donations are payable to: Mr A.I. Omer, Barclays, Account No. 20408859, Sort Code 20-69-15. Copies of UNITE branch cheques should be sent to Peter Kavanagh, as the union has promised to match donations: UNITE, Woodberry, 218 Green Lanes, Finsbury Park, London N4 2HB. Email messages and donation pledges to Abdul at: [omermohsin2@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:omermohsin2@yahoo.co.uk)

## industrial overview JEREMY DRINKALL



### Where next in the fight to save our pensions?

THERE HAS been mixed news about the public service workers' pensions dispute over the summer. On the positive side, civil service union PCS and the education unions, NUT, ATL and UCU, have remained united and determined to defend their pension schemes, encouraged by the magnificent 30 June strike.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka called for "maximum unity in the face of a government that has lost the nation's trust". Mary Bousted, Christine Blower and Sally Hunt, leaders of the ATL, NUT and UCU, issued a joint statement saying they will "with regret, need to consider taking further industrial action in November."

#### United front divided

However, Unison's Dave Prentis said: "individual unions will be actively considering participating in scheme level talks... to reach a judgment on whether agreement is possible or whether they will enter into dispute and plan industrial action," adding that the timetable "has been extended to October".

Millions of workers saw 30 June as the first shot in a campaign to unite all our struggles against the government's austerity programme. Many thought the next logical step would be a public sector strike drawing in NHS and local government workers. The most far-sighted, including this newspaper, realised that an indefinite general strike will be needed to stop the government's austerity plans.

But the TUC strategy means no further strikes till November at the earliest. Scheme-based talks will inevitably all be at different stages in the autumn and this will undoubtedly be used as an excuse to block united action.

Take the NHS for example. Unison, the majority union with 460,000 members, says failure in talks is "almost inevitable". Increasing members' contributions and raising the retirement age are the sticking points. Unison, Unite and GMB are due to meet the BMA and RCN to discuss "possible future industrial action".

So will this lead to co-ordinated strike action with teachers and civil servants? Unlikely. Unite and Unison are proposing the "Southampton strategy" of "smart strikes", taking out a few sections at a time. Southampton council workers have shown resilience, self-sacrifice and courage during three months of strikes. But they are no nearer winning than when they started in May. In fact they are farther away, having all signed (on the unions' advice) contracts agreeing to a 4.6 per cent pay cuts. Now they face the threat of mass sackings.

This is not "smart". The real alternative is to bring all the members out at once - and to stay out until we have all won. But even the left leaders do not have the guts to fight for this - which is why rank and file members must take the lead.

Now I am told that union negotiators are edging towards recommending a deal over the local government pension scheme. But they are simply focusing on the question of increased contributions, leaving aside the potentially devastating closure of final salary schemes, the change from RPI to the lower and less accurate CPI inflation link and the raising of the retirement age.

Local authority bosses can afford to chip away at our rights bit by bit; after all the scheme is fully funded with £140 billion of assets. Everyone knows the real risk would come if members' contributions were doubled in one go - then tens of thousands may leave and the whole scheme could collapse. Better to let rates creep up.

Scared by the prospect of millions striking together, the coalition is playing divide and rule. But what will happen a few years down the line, if the teachers and health workers go down to defeat? The billionaire press and the millionaire government will vilify "privileged" council workers with their "gold plated" pensions and attack again. Remember: this is how the 2006 settlement was unpicked.

#### Rank and file conference

Camden and Tower Hamlets Unison branches have called "a branch-based conference, official or unofficial, to debate what is increasingly looking like a far, far worse pensions sell-out than witnessed in 2005-07". I've heard 24 September is the possible date. A number of branches have backed this excellent initiative. Such a bold move could succeed because it could tap into the anger felt by hundreds of thousands of members and the hope raised by the 30 June strikes. But it needs to draw in more than just Unison council branches and reach out to NHS, civil service and education branches, as well as firefighters and railworkers, who are both moving into dispute.

# Economic crisis - what's next?

The world economy has so far failed to emerge from the crisis with any degree of health, *Richard Brenner* looks at the problems at the heart of the global system

THIS SUMMER saw trillions wiped off the values of companies and pension funds as stock markets once again plummeted all across the world.

More than four years after the credit crunch began modern capitalism is still mired in its biggest global crisis since the Second World War.

And it could get worse. Two major threats are looming: another dip into recession by the United States, dragging the world with it and a major European country defaulting on its debt, potentially breaking up the euro or even the European Union in its present form.

Below, Richard Brenner looks at these threats and says it's not this or that policy but the system that's to blame - so we need to connect the fightback against the cuts to a fight against capitalism itself.

## America back into recession?

Gloom gripped the US Federal Reserve's end-of-summer meeting at Jackson Hole. IMF chief Christine Lagarde warned the audience of billionaires, bankers and politicians that "we are in a dangerous new phase" and that "we risk seeing the fragile recovery derailed".

New figures at the end of August showed that America's recovery is faltering. Growth for the second quarter of the year was revised down from 1.3 percent to just 1 percent - the lowest level since the global crunch three years ago. If that were the pattern for the whole year America would grow at just 0.4 percent.

Manufacturing activity dropped hard and fast in the mid-Atlantic region, to its lowest level since the trough of the post-crunch recession in March 2009, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia's closely watched index.

Unemployment at 9.1 percent is still twice the level before the recession: 13.9 million people. Of them, 6.2 million have been jobless for more than six months.

Heidi Shierholz, an economist with the Washington-based Economic Policy Institute says the USA is now a staggering 11.1 million jobs below the level needed to get back to the pre-recession unemployment rate of 5 percent in December 2007.

In a sign of how long US policy-makers think the downturn and stag-

nation will last, the Federal Reserve said in August it would hold interest rates near zero until mid-2013.

Obama's original stimulus package has run out, and Fed chief Ben Bernanke announced at the end of August that he plans no new burst of printing dollars ("quantitative easing") to try to boost things.

And the recent deal between Obama and the right-wing Republicans to avoid the USA defaulting on its \$14 trillion deficit means vast cuts are coming in benefits and health aid to the poor.

With house prices falling and far more people poorer, demand for goods and services will slump.

If America goes back into recession - and Jan Loeys, global head of market strategy at JPMorgan, says "stock markets appear to be pricing in a 60 per cent chance" of one - then this will affect the whole world, just as it did in late 2008 and early 2009. And even if it doesn't, the world's biggest economy still faces a long, slow-growth, low growth, 'jobless recovery' in short chronic stagnation. This means more attacks on workers in the US - and beyond.

## European default - EU split?

As rich investors come back from holidays on their Caribbean islands or their super-yachts in the Aegean, 'the markets' will begin again to take action against those European countries they say have too much debt and too high deficits.

The Big Greek Debt Deal in July was a last-ditch attempt to prevent Greece defaulting on its debt. The EU and the IMF lent Greece another €109 billion - and at the same time agreed that Greece would not have to pay back all the interest to the banks, pension funds and billionaires that lent it money in the first place. This was a debt default in all but name - it could be back on with a vengeance this autumn.

The ratings agencies - companies that assess and report on the credit-worthiness of countries - have also raised major worries over Italy, Spain, Portugal and Cyprus.

If these countries default it would have a domino effect. And Europe's banks are so exposed to this debt that IMF boss Lagarde called for urgent cash injections into banks to stop them collapsing. "If it is not

addressed, we could easily see the further spread of economic weakness to core countries, or even a debilitating liquidity crisis" she warned, in a clear reference to a repeat of the events that brought down Lehman Brothers in 2008.

Italy is the big one. The eurozone's third biggest economy has a debt of 120 percent of its annual gross domestic product. In the second half of this year alone, it needs to borrow €237 billion, and €296 billion euros next year - a huge demand for cash that is pushing up the interest it has to pay and raising major doubts on whether it is good for the money.

And Italy can't just be bailed out like Greece - it would cost too much. The Economist Information Unit insists that current European bailout fund plus IMF funding would "not be enough for Spain plus any other potentially vulnerable country...and certainly not Italy (€820 billion)".

Unlike the USA and Britain, the weaker countries in the Eurozone cannot respond to the downturn by simply devaluing their currency to boost the attractiveness of their exports. So they can't grow their way out of debt and deficit.

The dilemma facing the two great powers that lead the Eurozone - Germany and France - is whether to spend over a trillion euros trying again to rescue the southern European states...or whether to let them go their separate ways, outside the Euro, with all the chaos that would bring economically and politically.

Either way, more cuts and austerity will be piled onto the workers of Spain, Greece, Portugal and Italy. And with even the EU's economic powerhouse Germany showing signs of growth receding to just 0.2 per cent, Europe's crisis is set to continue.

That's where Britain sells half its exports - so it means more job losses and pay restraint here too.

## Bosses' bankrupt theories

The capitalist economists can't explain why the crisis happened. But they have their 'solutions'.

Their two main schools of thinking are monetarism and Keynesianism. Both try to save the system - and both end up making the working class pay.

The monetarists push for auster-

ity. They want to axe state spending and let uncompetitive or unprofitable businesses collapse. They hate the idea of public services - especially ones that are free at the point of use - and call for tax cuts for the rich.

Yet while they want the rich to have plenty of money 'to encourage investment', they say pay rises for workers should be held to down 'to control inflation'.

In the immediate term the monetarists' austerity measures - sharp cuts - make the recession even deeper. Fewer people have money to spend which drives even more companies out of business and dampens demand.

Ultimately they try to restore profits by destroying unprofitable ('inefficient') businesses and services and driving down workers' living standards.

The Keynesians on the other hand want to stimulate the economy through public spending and by driving down interest rates. They believe recessions are caused by investment drying up because people and companies save too much.

They are willing to print money to offset the recession and encourage governments to borrow and spend to stimulate the economy through public spending.

But ultimately this adds to inflation as the value of money falls and the bondholders - who lend money to states - start to demand cuts in the national debt, causing political instability within the ruling class.

Marxists will of course often find themselves fighting alongside reformist workers who back Keynesian solutions - after all, we also want state spending on jobs not vicious cuts in health, education, pensions and pay.

But we don't want inflation which means we end up paying but in a different way.

The Russian revolutionary Trotsky famously described monetarism and Keynesianism as meaning "unemployment or inflation, the knife or poison".

Monetarism and Keynesianism are at root superficial explanations of crisis which cannot solve the problems of the system.

Instead the Marxists demand not just state spending on jobs for all, but

that the banks be nationalised without compensation, under the control of the working class, and used to direct investment where it is needed, not for profit but according to a plan directed to meet the needs of the people. We would renounce the national debt to the billionaire bondholders, tax the rich, and peg workers' pay and benefits to inflation.

The confiscation of the property and profits of the rich and the creation of a planned economy could organise production in a way that avoided unemployment and inflation, poverty and inequality. This is because it would uproot the underlying cause of economic crisis (see diagram one below) - production in the market for profit rather than planned production for need.

## Rising inflation

**The USA's policy of low interest rates has seen the dollar plummet in value. This makes American exports more attractive - and exports the downturn to other countries around the world.**

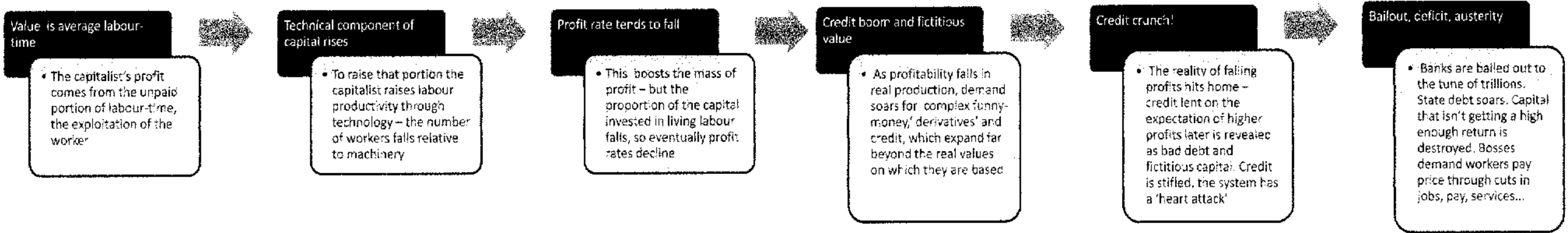
**But another key effect of this policy is inflation. The scale of the recession in 2008-09 stopped the huge bailouts and stimulus packages from causing hyperinflation like in the 1920s, but the falling value of money has still meant that basics like food and fuel have gone up in price very sharply around the world.**

**Fast growth in China and India has also pushed up prices for raw materials, as has falling productivity in agriculture because of the unplanned and unsustainable way capitalism develops the land.**

**In the UK food prices rose 6.4 per cent in May compared with a year before, way above the annual rate of 4.7 per cent witnessed during April. Tesco raised the price of a half-loaf of sliced white bread overnight from 60p to 93p.**

**In poor countries the food inflation is far worse of course: 17.5 percent in Pakistan in July.**

# The Marxist model of the crisis



# France: after the battles of autumn 2010, which way forward?

France has been gripped by mass strikes and demonstrations many times over the last decade, *Marc Lassalle* examines the reason for the present lull and the strategy needed to renew them

THE LATEST militant upheaval in September 2010, against an attack on the pension system, mobilized workers and youth into several days of strike actions with millions on the streets. But the leaders of the main union confederations refused to turn this social movement into an all-out general strike that could have forced Sarkozy to drop his "reform" or even toppled his government. The movement suffered defeat.

The protracted world economic crisis has not spared France. In 2008/2009, it underwent a sharp recession with a steep decline in industrial production, a wave of factory closures and a massive increase in unemployment.

The government responded by injecting vast sums into the banking and financial sector as well as into key industrial sectors. This limited the damage but the following recovery has proved weak. Industrial production is still 10 per cent below its peak and unemployment remains high; above 9 per cent (3 million according to official figures, probably 5 million).

The crisis has only been postponed however as the budget deficit has tripled between 2007 and 2010. It is now well above 50 per cent of GDP. While France is not in the critical situation of Portugal, Spain or Italy, it is certainly in trouble.

The government has adopted a plan to slash state expenditure by €12bn in two years. It has announced a severe austerity package: only 50 per cent of retiring public sector workers will be replaced, entire classes in school are to be closed as well as hospitals and a general review is underway examining every sector of the civil service. Huge cuts are bound to follow, at least after the 2012 elections.

The main factor determining the present low level of workers resistance is last October's defeat, despite a massive campaign of strikes and demonstrations by the unions, led by the CGT and the CFDT. But as usual they limited the campaign to a series of days of actions, one-day-only all out strikes. The figures for the number of people on the demos grew reaching several millions. The powerful federation of chemical workers went on an indefinite general strike that could have paralyzed the whole economy. However, the refinery workers, numerically weak, remained isolated even when they were hit by police repression. Similarly, railway workers and teachers initiated indefinite strikes that were not successful.

What was missing was a clear call for an alternative strategy from an organized force within the labour movement, for an indefinite general strike. This call should have been directed at the union leaders but also fought for amongst the rank and file.



By building local assemblies ("inter-pros") linking all the workers in struggle, continued strike actions at the local or industrial level could have been initiated and spread. On this basis a democratically elected national strike conference or council could have been summoned, where an alternative fighting leadership to the union tops could have been built.

## The French left

In fact, no such force existed or rather those who should have played this role – far left groups such as the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) and Lutte Ouvrière – refused to do so. Their strategy was merely to tail the movement – hardly criticizing the union leaders or their strategy. Certainly they offered no alternative to it. NPA cadres simply acted as good members of their various unions, not as revolutionary tribunes for an alternative strategy for victory. They hoped that the 2006 success against pension reform could be repeated, but the economic crisis has radically changed the situation in the class struggle.

After the defeat there was not even a clear characterisation of it as a defeat. Instead, the NPA was paralyzed by a deep internal struggle and by a lack of revolutionary leadership.

As a consequence of this defeat the unions' alliance, the "Intersyndicale", has split and renewed bickering between union leaders has also contributed to weakening the working class struggles since then. This has created a renewed space for electoralist reformism as many in the working class (including in NPA ranks) think the only solution to the attacks is a victory for the reformist left in the next presidential elections.

Another dangerous consequence of this defeat was the opening of a space for the reactionary ideas of the Front Nationale under Marine Le Pen, popularizing a racist "solution" to the crisis.

## What is France's future?

Sarkozy's victory, however, is a partial one. The workers movement has suffered a defeat but not a strategic one. The morale of the vanguard is far from shattered. The large mobilizations of 2010 showed a new generation of workers and youth a glimpse of their social power, and links were built between militants.

The economic crisis will continue and probably deepen. This will force the bourgeoisie into more brutal attacks against the working class, similar to what happened in Greece, Portugal, and Spain and is now happen-

ing in Italy. The French working class is one of the most militant and combative in Europe. Therefore France will be a major battleground for the class struggle in Europe in the next years.

While important tactical aspects of the fight back will depend on the outcome of 2012 elections, the content of the attacks will be, in essence, identical whether they are conducted by a PS president or by a right-wing president. To be able to respond successfully to these attacks the French working class needs to address the sharp crisis of leadership within its ranks. This extends from ousting the union bureaucrats to building a powerful revolutionary party.

The revolutionary left needs to draw the balance sheet of past struggles, to agitate and organize for an indefinite general strike and to fight for leadership in the struggles as they erupt. This requires an intransigent struggle against the left reformists of the Communist Party (PCF) and the Left Party (PdG) at the polls and in the unions.

All this requires that the vanguard in the NPA organize to take the leadership of the party and that it breaks with its centrist tradition, which has halved the membership in the last two years.

## Revocamp 2011 success

Alex Kelby

FROM THE 8 – 12 August 2011 REVOLUTION held its international summer camp in Essex. It was a gathering of revolutionary youth from across Europe, with people from Austria, Germany, Slovakia, Sweden and Great Britain attending. The week was full of socialist politics, discussions and partying.

There was a range of workshops to attend on a huge number of different subjects, such as Marxism and philosophy, the politics of Leon Trotsky, fighting women's oppression and the spread of Islamophobia. The workshops were interesting and educational, and led to insightful debates afterwards.

## Debating the uprising

The week was also spent discussing the riots that sprung up all over London and across the country last week on an international level. We understand that such riots are the consequence of the poverty and alienation of capitalism, and do not condemn those involved. Rather, we say that the problem is the parasitic system of capitalism which makes the rich richer at the expense of the poor, the cuts and the crisis which are throwing ever greater numbers of working-class communities into desperate poverty, and the systematic racism of the police which sparked the rioting in Tottenham.

The rallies had speakers from other countries talking about the political situation where they live. In workshops we discussed different ways our comrades internationally had intervened into different movements, worked alongside other groups and led initiatives and campaigns. This was definitely a good way to learn about and understand the political situation globally.

## Mario Bango

Perhaps the most moving talk was given by Mario Bango, a Slovakian comrade who had been imprisoned for a decade for defending himself and his family from neo-Nazi violence, who had been treated with hostility and outright prejudice by the racist Slovakian state.

There was also a brilliant performance from hip-hop group Broken Dialect, who demonstrated their lyricism and insight throughout their set, as well as live DJ's blasting out a range of tunes from old-school punk to drum n bass. There were also campfire singalongs, games of football and the odd organised activity (courtesy of the camp) to add a bit of colour to festivities.

Everyone who attended went home knowing something new and with new-found friends from across the world. The camp was great fun, and was a great success for REVOLUTION. Many thanks to all those who helped to organise the event, and to all who attended and helped make it the amazing experience it was.

# The week the youth fought back



A SPONTANEOUS uprising against police racism and brutality erupted in Tottenham on Saturday 7 August. The immediate spark was the suspicious police shooting of Mark Duggan three days earlier. During a peaceful protest against Duggan's killing, the police beat up a 16-year-old girl. By this stage initial police claims that Duggan had opened fire on the police had been exposed as lies. Both victims were black.

The uprising quickly developed into a full-scale riot. It spread to Enfield and a few other districts the same evening. By Monday, Hackney, Peckham, Lewisham, Clapham, Croydon, Camden, Oxford Street, and outside London Birmingham, Liverpool and Bristol saw barricades, pitch battles that pushed police lines back, arson and looting. While most of London was quiet on Tuesday, Manchester, Salford and Nottingham were aflame.

## Racism

Despite the police, Tory and media focus on Afro-Caribbean youth, the uprising involved white, black and Asian youth, male and female. Many disturbances took place in areas with a high density of black people, but this simply reflects the fact that disproportionately large numbers of black people live in deprived areas.

Even so, the upsurge in racist commentary since the riots has ranged from coded messages about black parenting to historian David Starkey's combination of fear and loathing for poor youth with outright racism, citing Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech and adding that white youths have "become black".

In another significant development, the fascist English Defence League came onto the streets in Eltham to "defend" (white) England, and brought together a reactionary mob in Enfield under the banner of the Enfield Defence League. This shows that a political uprising of the oppressed also mobilises reactionary counter-revolutionary forces. In clas-

sic fascist style, the EDL said they were supporting the police, who were unable to put the rioters down.

Some looting was organised by criminal gangs, also responsible for such reactionary behaviour as attacks on fire fighters and a hospital, muggings, and the burning down of independent stores and workers' homes. But their opportunistic behaviour would not have been possible without the uprising. Clearly, many cheered on the smashing of hated symbols of exploitation – chain stores, pawnbrokers, loan sharks and banks – and some workers and youth living in desperate conditions and thrown onto the scrapheap joined in the looting when the opportunity arose.

Many rioters said they were against the government, the cuts, the police and the rich. But their lack of any clear goals, demands or strategy, their sometimes indiscriminate choice of targets, the focus on grabbing consumer goods and the susceptibility of the riots to involvement by criminal gangs: these are all signs of decades of almost non-existent political organisation of the working class youth.

## Revolutionary spirit

On the other hand, the uprising revealed the revolutionary spirit of the youth, their fearlessness and energy, their hatred of the police and contempt for the rich, which can be channelled and directed against the state and the capitalists.

As the working class changes over time so every generation is faced with the task of transforming its unions and the political organisations to meet the challenge. The uprising forcefully reminds us that the unemployed have no representation, that young workers are seriously under-represented in the unions, and that with 50 percent unemployment and systematic racism, it is African-Caribbean youth who face the most sustained and chronic lack of a political voice.

This is the challenge the uprising has thrown up for socialists.

# British justice

The vengeful sentencing after the riots have revealed the true nature of the cap-

THE BRITISH courts, the police and the political establishment are conspiring to bang away as many people as they can in revenge for the riots in August. For a very long time.

It may be your first offence. You may have only walked through an open door and taken a drink. You might just have accepted stolen goods as a gift, made a provocative statement on the internet or merely live with someone who took part. But the state is after you and your family.

Before all the flames had died down, the Home Office, police chiefs and magistrates decided on a – probably illegal and unconstitutional – plan: search through 20,000 hours of CCTV footage, arrest thousands in dawn raids, rush them through the courts before they know where they are, deny anyone bail and hand down stiff custodial sentences by suspending guidelines.

This was soon complemented by investigation into suspending benefits of suspects and moves to start evicting their families from council housing. How making people homeless and penniless will set them on the path away from criminality is not explained because this is not the aim. The aim is to clamp down on everyone associated with the riots, to criminalise those who went out to vent their anger at police brutality and racism, and to intimidate anyone thinking of fighting back in the future. Other high profile policy suggestions included:

- 12 and 18-hour curfews in working class areas
- Banning individuals from, or temporarily shutting down social networking sites
- Giving police water cannons (they already have use of plastic bullets)
- "Zero tolerance" – i.e. police swamping our estates and using stop-and-search powers to arrest and charge anyone suspected of the smallest crime.

The first detainees were rushed through the system, with courts opening at the weekend and sitting through the night. Ian Kelcey of the Law Society explained, "The main problem is that you are working through the day and they want to get people in from



12 in the evening to six in the morning... When you get rushed justice, you can end up with rough justice."

Another lawyer, Julian Young, said he went 38 hours without sleep, as did his clients, some as young as 14, who were then "asked to make decisions that might affect the rest of their lives and consider and decide complex issues". Legal defence activists say that some youth were "advised" to plead guilty straightaway, without even seeing the "evidence" or they could receive harsher sentences later on. This reverses the basic premise that everyone is innocent until proven guilty, a travesty of justice that played on the defendants' youth and inexperience.

As we go to press, over 3,000 peo-

ple have been arrested, 1,600 charged and 1,400 appeared in court. The judiciary in Britain – or any democracy – is supposed to be independent, but Camberwell magistrate Novello Noades revealed her instructions from the Ministry of Justice: "Our directive for anyone involved in the rioting is a custodial sentence."

Ms Noades went on to say: "What was happening on our streets last week was anarchy. The very fabric of society was at risk, and anyone involved must be dealt with as severely as we possibly can."

In addition, a leaked Met document, titled Operation Withern, explains that "in all cases an application will be made [by the police] for

# Who are the real thieves?

Britain is facing a "slow-motion moral collapse," said David Cameron as he toured Britain following the riots. "This has been a wake-up call for our country. Social problems that have been festering for decades have exploded in our face."

He and his fellow ministers went on to denounce a culture of irresponsibility, where everyone knows their rights but refuses to accept the consequences to their actions.

But where does this culture come from? Answer: the very top.

After all, Members of Parliament were not so long ago found guilty of mass corruption, claiming from the taxpayer expenses incurred during the course of carrying out their duties, which included:

- | A duck house, costing £1,645 (Peter Viggers – Tory)
- | The clearing out of a moat around an MP's 13th century mansion, costing £2,200 (Douglas Hogg – Tory)
- | "Renting" a room in her sister's home, costing £116,000 over six years (Jacqui Smith – Labour)

Only a handful of MPs and Lords (none of the above) were ever prosecuted for this £1.1 million theft. Not surprising since those who investigated the crime were the MPs themselves.

Cameron himself was in on the act, claiming £102,874, close to the maximum allowance over five years and accepting a £350,000 loan to pay off a second mortgage, despite having made £935,000 on the property market in Kensington.

His deputy Nick Clegg claimed £84,000 for work on his second



# class justice

alist state. *Jeremy Dewar* calls for a campaign to defend all the detainees



We demand: drop all the charges and release all the detainees. Trade unions, community organisations, Labour parties and anticuts groups should come together to place these demands on the government and keep the issue in the public eye.

Wansworth's Tory council and – disgracefully – Southwark's Labour council have already started procedures to evict the families of those charged or convicted with riot-related offences. This is effectively collective punishment and probably contravenes international law.

### Start the fightback now

However, we can neither wait for nor rely on legal challenges. We need to organise lobbies, mass petitioning of the estates and physical blockades to stop bailiffs. Activists in Wandsworth and Southwark have already launched lively campaigns.

By evictions of council tenants and withdrawal of benefits of claimants brought before the courts, the establishment is breaking two other legal tenets: that one is only punished once for each offence; and that everyone is treated equally. Why should unemployed workers and council tenants receive additional punishments? Why should their families, including their children, suffer?

Flash occupations of Job Centres and council offices should loudly denounce this war of attrition against the poor. Trade unionists should refuse to implement the decisions. We should link the cause to fights against job cuts and closures, like that at Camberwell Job Centre.

The truth is that the state machinery – the government, the courts and the police – have overshot their repression. Millions of people, many of whom may not have been sympathetic when they saw the (biased) coverage of the riots on TV, will recoil at some of the injustices. If we can reach out and connect with them, explain the connection with the increased poverty, service cuts and attacks on education, arising from the austerity, we can rebound this offensive on the government.

That must be our aim. No justice – no peace!

sadly suicide by those who cannot cope with the bullying and isolation.

It is vital that a broad based defence campaign, covering all those charged with or serving sentences for offences arising from the uprising.

Of course we don't defend the despicable criminals who used the occasion to attack passers-by and emergency service staff, burn down workers' flats or run down Asian men defending their community. But this is a politically motivated campaign to isolate and demoralise working class youth. Our response must be to raise the slogans of unity and solidarity, not to somehow sit in judgment over every case before we decide to defend them.

making the banks and hedge funds take responsibility for this and collapse, politicians around the world agreed to bail them out with taxpayers' money, because the banks were "too big to fail".

Then, when this led to huge national debts, the same politicians – and the bankers – turned round and told the people we had to pay off the debt with job cuts, service closures and lower pay, pensions and benefits. Meanwhile, the banks have raked in billions in profits and their top employees have hoovered up millions in bonuses.

Only this summer we have found out that Rupert Murdoch's media empire was bribing coppers, while

hacking into the phones of everyone from celebrities to murder victims.

The vile Murdoch promised to support political parties' election campaigns in his publications if they passed bills that helped his businesses. He paid police chiefs for phone and PIN numbers, offering them jobs in return. His editors befriended working class victims, while secretly blagging into their private matters in order to expose them.

But who this year has been tried or imprisoned for any of this corruption? Apart from the original fall guys, Greg Mulcaire and Clive Goodman, only one person: Jonathan May-Bowles, who got a jail sentence for throwing a foam pie at Rupert Murdoch.

## 'Lock 'em up and throw away the key'

HERE ARE some of the most shocking sentences to date. Others will surely follow, as the crown courts start to deliver their sentences.

- Anderson Fernandes, 22, was charged with burglary in Manchester after he took two scoops of coffee ice cream and a cone from a delicatessen. He gave the cone away because he didn't like the flavour. He is remanded in custody awaiting crown court and can expect jail.
- Nicolas Robinson, 23, a college student with no criminal record, was jailed for six months for stealing a £3.50 case of bottled water from Lidl. Robinson threw away the water when confronted by police but was arrested and quickly admitted what he had done.
- Jordan Blackshaw, 20, and Perry Sutcliffe-Keenan, 22, have been given 4 years in prison for attempts to incite riots on Facebook during recent riots. Blackshaw set up an "event" called Smash Down in Northwich Town but no one apart from the police, who were monitoring the page, turned up.

Blackshaw was promptly arrested. Sutcliffe-Keenan used his Facebook account to design a web page entitled The Warrington Riots. The court was told it caused a wave of panic in the town. When he woke up the following morning with a hangover, he removed the page and apologised, saying it had been a joke.

- Ursula Nevin, 24, who slept through the riots in Manchester, was jailed for five months because she accepted a pair of shorts looted by her flatmate. On appeal the sentence was reduced to 75 hours community service, showing that it is worth appealing.
- But perhaps the most disgusting case to date involves Dane Williamson, who was accused of setting fire to Miss Selfridge's. The police dropped the case but only after they had used Twitter to publish his address. When he returned home, Dane found his flat burned down and all his possessions destroyed in what appears to have been a revenge attack.

## The Nasty Party

THE TORIES have long sought to shed their reputation as Britain's "Nasty Party". Before the last election, David Cameron's PR machine worked hard to soften their image. "Hug a hoodie" was the catchphrase, "understanding" his watchword. "Dave" described Tory Party members as "the most socially-engaged, the most civic-minded, the most neighbourly bunch of people in Britain".

Now this fluffy visage has been cast aside; the mask has slipped. Tough jail terms, curfews and plastic bullets have replaced hugging for hoodies. Any attempt to link the riots to poverty or racism were shrugged off as "relativism" or even condoning criminality.

Cameron warned young rioters: "You will feel the full force of the law. And if you are old enough to commit these crimes, you are old enough to face the punishment."

He linked his determination to lock up children as young as 10 (the lowest age of criminal responsibility in Europe) to another attack on the Human Rights Act and even Health and Safety legislation. In fact, this was a coded message that he wants parents and teachers to be allowed to smack and thwack children.

"Many people have long thought that the answer to these questions

of social behaviour is to bring back National Service," he continued, "In many ways I agree: teamwork, discipline, duty, decency." In short, boot camps to drill labour discipline into young people who cannot learn these "values" at work because there are no jobs.

Works and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith asked rhetorically, "So what we're looking at is, for criminal charges, should we take the benefit? And the answer is yes." This is yet another, gratuitous swipe at the unemployed, punishing them for the bosses' inability to provide jobs. What will happen to children in workless homes is not even addressed.

Theresa May, Home Secretary, has also been busy. She has announced plans to supplement police powers to place individual under-16s under curfew with the right to declare "general curfews" of up to 12 or even 18 hours on the whole population in what she dubbed, "no-go areas".

These knee-jerk reactions show that the Tory party has not changed. Its policies are designed to raise the hackles of its middle class base against working class youth.

The Tories and the class they serve have stolen this generation's future. Now they are tooling up to defend themselves against further resistance.

## Stop the Dale Farm eviction!

THE COMMUNITY of Irish travellers at Dale Farm in Basildon, Essex, have been living on the green field site for over a decade. A 400-strong community of 86 families and a hundred children, they are now facing eviction and homelessness at the hands of the local council.

A whole community of poor and vulnerable people will be violently evicted from their homes and thrown onto the roadside.

No wonder the plans have sparked outrage. The council have found bureaucratic and technical grounds for the eviction in planning regulations. But at the root of this is old-fashioned racism and prejudice. "Gypsy bashing", is one of the last forms of acceptable racism and the local council is clearly fanning the flames of an ethnic hatred for its own narrow political interests.

And they are prepared to spend vast sums to do it. The local council has put aside £8 million to cover the costs of the eviction, with an additional £10 million in police costs to carry it through, over £4 million of which has been directly offered by central government who are vocal in their support.

It is another example of how even in the age of austerity the government can find the cash to carry out reactionary policies, even as our public services face slash 'n burn cuts.

This time though a mass campaign has confronted government policies had on. On the day of eviction hundreds will create a human shield around the site, and celebrities and religious leaders have also spoken out against the governments' callous actions.

It has already had an effect with the United Nations reminding the government of its obligations under the rights of the child and protection of family life, to not forcibly make children homeless.

In Britain, local government not only have a statutory obligation to provide housing, but they also all meant to provide land for use by the travelling community, hardly any actually do so.

The council have not offered land at a new site, but in social housing which is allegedly sub-standard, and nothing like as good as the homes erected by the community at Dale Farm.

The legal rights of travellers and gypsies were won thanks to the resistance of the community to their oppression. And their cause was also taken up by the wider working class movement.

Indeed, the labour movement has a proud history of defending ethnic minorities and different lifestyles, from repression, prejudice and racism. We have to keep this spirit alive today and draw a clear class line. The attack on Dale Farm is part of a wider offensive against the working class and poor taking place all over Britain. We have to stand united against it across ethnic and cultural divides.

• Protest: September 10  
Wickford Train Station 1pm

## ★ ANTI-RACISM

# Islamophobia - the rise of the new racism

Nat Silverstein and Rix Bragg

FOR ALL the soul searching about what caused the Brevik to massacre so many people in Norway in July, we need to look no further than the constant and dangerous theme of Islamophobia which is so rife in western society today. Today it seems if you want to get a seat in a parliament or sell more newspapers then just attack Muslims, accusing them of being terrorists or simply 'not fitting in'. Prominent political figures have unleashed a flood of books in recent years such as Pim Fortuyn's 1997 book 'Against the Islamicisation of our Culture' and Thilo Sarrazin's 'Germany Abolishes Itself'. These serves as intellectual weapons in the hands of the new racists.

At the core of this message is the claim that the Islamist ideals which lead to extremist terror attacks are not simply a misappropriation of the religious rhetoric of Islam by those with an extreme political agenda, but rather that they are natural progression from the underlying values and beliefs of the Islamic faith: the inevitable result of such an ideal is a shift towards a complete distrust of the Muslim community and the widespread perception of Islam as being not only alien, but antithetical to 'native culture'.

The effects of this frenzied criticism by politicians and the right wing media on popular consciousness is obvious and worrying. In a poll from 2010 63 per cent did not disagree with the claim "Muslims are terrorists" and 75 per cent thought Islam had had a negative impact on Britain. The wider implications can be seen by the statistics which show that although Muslims make up only 3 percent of the UK population they represent 44 percent of all deaths resulting from racially motivated attacks.

### Islamophobia, a western disease

These issues are not isolated to the UK alone, however, but extend across the whole of Europe where cases of persecution are not only as bad but in some countries government sanctioned. After a public referendum in Switzerland the construction of new minarets was banned, this despite the fact that there were only five such structures in the entire country. Despite this many Swiss believe that the minarets were indicative of an Islamicisation of their culture. In France the government utilised an appeal to the countries historical secularism to ban the Niqab even though only a couple of hundred women in a country of 6.6 million people wore one. This appeal to the cultural traditions of the republic in France and general culture in Switzerland reflects the existential threat that is being articulated by populists and racists in Europe and the US today, namely



From establishment, to media to extremist organisations like the EDL - all united in anti-Muslim bigotry

**Racism whether it be 'new' or 'old' is a means of legitimising... a way to divide the working class within the imperialist heartlands**

that the values and culture of Islam are not only incompatible and alien but are a direct attack on our way of life. This makes all Muslims the enemy and transforms an act as innocuous as walking down the street in a different set of clothing a direct assault on western values.

### Contradictions and hypocrisy

This approach is particularly insidious as it attempts to utilise the liberal democratic values of the west which supposedly protect individual rights in matters of religion, dress etc. to condemn and attack minority groups on the basis of perceived failure to integrate culturally, the western cultural traditions becoming a measure by which all others are to be measured and found wanting. It allows the racists and the reactionaries of all stripes to attack entire swathes of society whilst at the same time denying any suggestion that they are in any way racist, it allows the most backwards elements of society pose as progressives.

This phenomenon can be seen in the often contradictory approach taken by the tabloid media and far right groups such as the EDL who polemicise in one breath about the failure of multiculturalism, lambasting the government for perceived 'softness' and in the next seek to portray themselves as the defenders of Jews and LGBT groups against the onslaught of 'Islamic intolerance', in so doing the attempt to establish themselves as



both champions and detractors of British multiculturalism.

This apparent defence of social and cultural diversity is expressed in such groups claims to oppose only Islamic extremists or Islam as a culture, this however is a flimsy mask; one need only reflect on how the word Muslim has been made almost completely synonymous with the word Asian to see that the reality of these attacks are a racist incitement against not just a perceived threat from Islamic extremists but against anyone exhibiting a cultural identity at variance with the 'British' norm. This in turn is based upon chauvinistic concept that some cultures or civilisations are inherently superior to those of others, in this case the supposed superiority of western culture to the culture of those minority groups which originate in the semi-colonial world.

The most telling contradiction within popular new racism today is the capacity of the far right to argue - along with the establishment - Islamophobic politics and to make out that in doing so they are anti-establishment. The fascists attack the political mainstream for being too soft on Islam and immigration, whilst at the same time the barrage of anti Muslim comments and editorials in the papers and from senior political leaders and parties only serves to lay the basis for the acceptance of more of the fascists 'cutting edge' ideas. Finally, the danger of the new racism is that it has reintroduced old racism back into the mainstream through talk of 'concerns of multiculturalism'. More than this it has centred these so-called concerns at the centre of much political policy making and rhetoric, so much so that when Brevik carried out his massacre it was not Islamophobia that was blamed by many commentators but precisely the failure of the establishment to take these issues seriously. Multiculturalism was blamed for the attack on itself.

### The origins of the 'new racism'

However, these forms of racism are not as new as it may first appear.

The idea of cultural superiority was a natural development of the post-colonial era liberalism where the old divisions along racial lines ceased to be an appropriate tool with which to exercise social control and the division of the working class along cultural lines within the imperialist countries became more expedient. It's for this reason Kundnani was able to observe that:

"The template of demonisation that had already been established in Britain against asylum seekers was transposed on to Muslims after 9/11"

Obviously that's not to say that there was no anti-Muslim racism before that but, as Liz Fekete (Institute of Race Relations) describes, it became "structural" from this point as we have lived for 10 years under emergency laws.

This shift away from the traditional towards the new racism though based upon perceived cultural incompatibility inevitably centres upon the almost exact same groups as before to the point where during the recent riots racist commentators such as David Starkey argued that the root of the social troubles was 'black culture' and its adoption and prevalence amongst white youth. This reveals clearly how the new racism is merely a new, and thin, veneer on a much older and uglier beast.

### No to divide and rule tactics

The real issue underlying all this is the failure to understand the causes of mass migration, including crucially, the West's exploitative ties to rest of the world. Racism whether it be 'new' or 'old' is a means of legitimising the rule of imperialist capital over the semi-colonial world and as a way to divide the working class within the imperialist heartlands themselves. For this reason we must refuse to allow ourselves to become split along racial or cultural lines, we must stand in solidarity with the oppressed and persecuted communities who are the victims of the capitalists divisionary tactics and must struggle to prevent the propagation of cultural chauvinism within our communities.

# Twenty years since the death of the USSR

Dave Stockton

THE COLLAPSE of the USSR 20 years ago was a world-changing event. The lessons drawn for millions worldwide - with the aid not only of capitalist propaganda but of Social Democrats and Labourites, as well as repentant Stalinists - was that socialism was a failed and reactionary utopia. Any attempt to replace capitalism and parliamentary democracy would lead to totalitarianism and economic stagnation. For them the fall of the USSR was quite simply history righting itself after a terrible failed 'experiment'.

Today, with capitalism facing its own mortal crisis and stagnation in its old heartlands, and with the leaders of the unions and 'socialist parties' still believing there is no alternative to the fundamental pillars economic and political of bourgeois society, it is high time to look at the experience of the Soviet Union and what its degeneration and collapse really shows us.

In 1991 the failed coup d'état of 19-21 August by hardliners opened the final act in the life of the Soviet Union. The last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, resigned on 25 December of the same year. This event marked the exit from the stage of history of the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and his attempt to reform the system by relaxing the party dictatorship and its control of the media and public life (glasnost - openness), and carrying out market reforms (perestroika - reconstruction) that had evolved into plans for a full-scale restoration of capitalism.

Leon Trotsky had predicted - in the Transitional Programme (1938) - that if a working class political revolution did not restore the democracy of genuine workers' soviets and develop a planning system based on them, then the ruling bureaucracy would lead a restoration of capitalism and the collapse of the USSR was inevitable.

In 1938 Trotsky believed the remaining gains of the October Revolution - nationalisation, planning, the state monopoly of foreign trade - still lived in the consciousness of a working class, which had carried out the five-year plans and industrialised their country. But this socialist consciousness was destroyed by the Stalinist dictatorship. After the 1970s, the USSR began a grinding process of stagnation and decline in growth rates. This stagnation was caused by the disastrous corruption of the state officials and their failure to mobilise the creativity and energy of the working class who had no power in the 'workers state'.

## The Soviet working class

The most important question is why



the Soviet working class was unable to prevent a restoration of capitalism that was to prove so disastrous. The restoration of capitalism in Russia, the Ukraine and most of the other successor states to the old Soviet Union experienced an economic collapse twice as deep and twice as long as the Great Depression of the 1930s. Some 60 per cent of the factories were wiped out.

The answer to this question must be sought in the effects on Soviet workers of over six decades of Stalinism and an adverse balance of class forces on a world scale.

The loss in the 1920s of the democracy of the soviets and the factory committees created in 1917 and the annihilation in the 1930s of most of the historic Bolshevik militants meant that virtually all living continuity with the revolutionary traditions of the Russian working class had been broken. Worse, this history had been appropriated and turned into a grotesque caricature of an infallible and monolithic party by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Stalinist terror and repression made it well nigh impossible for workers to re-appropriate the experience and lessons of genuine Bolshevism.

Stalinism meant the systematic prevention of workers from achieving an autonomous collective identity, or democratically expressing their complaints and demands for improvement. Even when Stalin's terror was relaxed, the penalty for a worker speaking out or collective action by a work team or workplace was at the least the downgrading of their jobs and thus their pay, or worse outright arrest and jailing.

For workers in the USSR from the 1970s onwards there was a growing disillusionment with the CPSU's promises to realise the socialist ideals of freedom and equality, and the inability to repair the housing stock, run-down public transport, irregular supply and poor quality of basic consumer goods etc. This led to shortages, the many hours spent queuing, and the hording that made life a time consuming grind, for women in particular. These made the promises of market efficiency and a 'normal society' increasingly attractive.

## The reform process

The five or so years of Gorbachev's reforms and the waves of strikes by miners and other workers between 1989-91 at the end of this period proved insufficient to overcome this legacy. But this is not to say that this could not have been done.

At the same time Gorbachev's reforms met a warm response from the great bulk of the Russian intelligentsia and a dissident movement, which for all its heroism had long ago lost its belief in working class power. In the 1970s and early 1980s it had been heavily influenced by ideas ranging from 'market socialism' to neoliberalism, all of which claimed that a 'normal society' was based on some sort of capitalism. Of course for the first few words this word was rarely used.

The great bulk of the democrats - who eventually crystallised as Democratic Russia around Boris Yeltsin - saw the working class as an instrument for achieving the overthrow of the party's rule and the break up of the planned economy.

The decentralising measures of perestroika and the attempts to stimulate workers participation in the

reforms process did, however, create a movement for workers self-management and some independent trade unions.

But the unions alone were insufficient. Faced with a crisis that posed the question of political power, they limited themselves to economic questions. This limitation to trade unionism and the weak numbers and confusion of the socialist intelligentsia proved critically important at a time when a revolutionary party needed to be built which fused intellectuals and worker militants in fight for political revolution.

The most genuine expression of a class viewpoint emerged from the movement for workers self-management and the workers committees that arose during the strikes of 1989. These bodies had the potential to become soviets in the 1905 and 1917 sense - instruments of class struggle, of an insurrectionary takeover and

then of working class power. But the ideas within the new workers movement were hampered by a (understandable) phobia against centralism, not just bureaucratic but any centralism. This left them victims to crucial goals of the neoliberal agenda - namely the destruction, rather than radical democratisation, of the plan.

When events began to move with great rapidity in 1990 and 1991, and the restorationist forces set out at the turn of the year to impose shock therapy, the working class was politically unprepared for resistance.

Last but not least there was the unfavourable international balance of class forces. Although the 1970s had seen a historic rise in class struggle across Europe, this had not resulted in the creation of effective revolutionary parties, and after Thatcher and Reagan launched the neoliberal counterrevolution, by the late 1980s workers had suffered strategic defeats. Old industries closed, trade unions slumped in membership and were taken over by right wing bureaucrat. The intelligentsia too - who had rallied in large numbers to Marxism in the 1970s - began to turn to the defeatist non-sense of postmodernism.

Today many left activists consider themselves anti-capitalist but have no clear alternative to the present system.

The experience of the USSR looms over the left as a terrible fear - "We don't want to go back to that!" This makes socialism appear unpopular, so that many inadvertently end up agreeing with the neoliberals that the October revolution and the attempt to build socialism was a mistake. As revolutionaries we cannot sidestep the problems posed by the rise of Stalinism and the counterrevolution that happened within the revolution - a healthy socialism is possible. Indeed, in a world of immense human misery and alienation, it is more than possible - it is necessary.

## New book out soon

Workers Power is publishing an updated and revised version of *The Degenerated Revolution*. Originally published in 1982, it remains an essential analysis of how Stalinism emerged in Russia after 1917 and how the Stalinist states expanded after the war. This new edition includes new chapters dealing with why the USSR

collapsed and what it means for the fight for socialism today.

*The Degenerated Revolution - The Rise and Fall of Stalinism* will be published on 14 October at the price of £8 (plus £2 p&p). To pre-order your copy please send a cheque made payable to 'Workers Power' at BCM 7750 London WC1N 3XX.

# Militant action can reverse Con-Dem education reforms

A year after students took to the streets, the fight for the future of education in Britain continues. As young people are confronted with few university places and even fewer job opportunities, the need to integrate the education and the anti-cuts movement becomes even more urgent, writes *Joana Ramiro*

AFTER THE A-level results came out, the usual panic for places in clearing became an avalanche as thousands of young people desperately tried to get into university before the £9,000 fees are introduced next year.

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) website crashed during clearing, as five people fought over each available place. There was a real sense of desperation from people, many of whom were trying to get into university after missing out on a place last year.

"The government has no idea what this will be like," said one prospective student. His application had "a real do or die feeling" to it, he said.

Several students with straight A's were left behind, as ever more universities required A\* as entry grades. Oxbridge, UCL, Imperial and Warwick are some of the institutions using this extreme measure, leading to even more elitism. Thirty per cent of A\* grades were awarded to private school pupils, even though they only make up 7 per cent of the student population.

This is yet another blow to impoverished working class students, who lost their Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and are less likely to opt for higher education as undergraduate degrees are set at a cost of £27,000.

For those opting to go straight into work, the future looks equally grim. Youth unemployment rate hit a record of 20.3 per cent earlier this year.

Rare apprenticeship opportunities are getting more than 100 applicants per position, while volunteer (unpaid) positions plague most of the classified job listings.

It is not for nothing that the bour-

geois media has nicknamed this the "lost generation".

## How can we turn the tide?

Despite electing a president standing to the left of Aaron Porter, the NUS 2011 conference voted down the motion for a national demonstration in the first term of the new academic year. The message was clear: the bureaucrats of the student movement were terrified of another Millbank. The NUS is still stalling on the fight against fees and cuts. President-elect Liam Burns has filled the media with firebrand slogans, but he is politically ambiguous about what to do next. Supporting UK Uncut-like action is certainly a step forward for a reformist institution like the NUS, but its reluctance to actually organise the struggle shows activists cannot rely on the NUS to lead the student movement.

It is up to grassroots organisations such as the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) and particularly to organised socialist revolutionary groups such as Revolution to organise and lead the student movement once again. If the November and December 2010 demonstrations have taught us anything, it is that we need a leadership capable of challenging governments, unafraid of standing by the students, uncompromising in its principles, and visionary in its aims.

This year, students cannot afford to be content with the token, NUS organised, A to B march. We need recurrent mass militant direct action, which supports civil disobedience and condemns police repression. In the forthcoming year, when not just our schools and universities are still under attack, but so are our job prospects,



our current jobs, our healthcare and welfare services — all that our parents and grandparents fought for in years much grimmer than these — the need to organise and fight back has never been this blatant.

## National demonstrations and strikes

The student movement certainly needs to build momentum in the autumn, including student demonstrations. Burns is right on this one: the movement needs to be a "national manifestation of anger". But it also needs to be a highly political, radical protest.

Liberalism and soft tactics won't suffice when young people across the

country are being blatantly demonised for exercising their right to protest, or fighting back against the policies of the government. We need a demonstration that tackles not just the cuts to education, but all the issues concerning young people today — from poverty to education department cuts; from fees to lack of jobs.

We need to integrate the student movement into the wider anti-cuts movement. In other words, we need to unite the students and the workers, on the streets, in the struggle. We need demonstrations, occupations and teach-ins, in order to build up to a general strike. As the students are the workers of tomorrow, we need to

unite in the struggles of today.

That means absolute coordination with the working class, be it in support of trade union struggles and in organising the fightback. In this way it would be wrong to pursue a separate student strategy without engaging with workers' strike action.

In such a situation, in which workers and their trade unions go up against the bosses and the Coalition government, students must join their struggle and strengthen the fightback. We need to remind ourselves that what parliament does, the streets can undo. Students and workers — take to the streets together and let's bring down this government!

## More political persecution of student activists

**Dan Edmonds**

AS THE courts prepare to give recent alleged rioters punitive sentences and the right wing media clamour for harsher punishments, we should not forget the attacks that the state launched on protesters in the aftermath of the student and youth movement last year.

Over 200 people were arrested on the demonstrations against the slashing of Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and the tripling of university fees. Many demonstrators have been handed lengthy sentences by a court system desperate to turn them into 'examples' and scare future would-be protesters into staying at home.

Edward Woollard, the 18-year-

old sixth-former who infamously threw a fire extinguisher off the roof of Tory HQ, was jailed for 32 months in January. He was given a longer sentence for his moment of madness than many people convicted of robbery or rape. Recognising his actions were potentially dangerous, protestors reprimanded people on the roof to stop throwing things.

In July, Charlie Gilmour was given a 16-month sentence for kicking a Topshop window, setting fire to some paper, and carrying a mannequin leg on the 9 December demonstration. The right-wing press has further tried to demonise him by repeatedly describing him swinging from the cenotaph, alleging that he tried to attack the royal car, and showing him holding a rock and



a REVOLUTION flag.

As if these cases of political prosecution weren't bad enough, there is also the case of Alfie Meadows, who was beaten into a coma by police batons on the same demo. He now faces charges of violent disorder after nearly being killed due to his beating.

The courts are passing disproportionate sentences to discourage future radical protests against the Con-Dems and their vicious cuts. These attempts to criminalise young people, ruining their lives and robbing them of their youth, are part of a drive to ensure that working-class people and youth are forced to pay for a capitalist crisis. While police can murder, assault and falsely imprison with impunity, we face victimisation and lengthy jail spells for fighting for a decent future.

# General strike: Chilean workers and students unite

Jeremy Dewar and Dave Stockton

IN CHILE some 82 trade unions, student organisations and civil society bodies combined to mobilise for the two-day general strike or national stoppage. Called by the Workers United Central (CUT), the Chilean TUC, the general strike was also supported by the social-democratic Concert of Parties for Democracy (CPD) and the Communist Party of Chile.

Central to the strike was the 780,000-strong Confederación General de Trabajadores (CGT). The strike was basically in support of a three-month student movement for radical education reform. Demands include the elimination of a voucher system, which supports private universities, and for free, universal high quality education at state schools and universities. The strikers also called for improved working conditions for hospital and emergency services workers.

There were clashes early on the first day of the strike between protesters and police in the poor neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Santiago, while overnight thousands filled the streets banging pots in support of the protest - a cacerolazo. Protesters barricaded roads with burning tyres in parts of the capital Santiago. In several other cities demonstrators clashed with riot police using water cannons and tear gas.

Young people and trade unionists alike detest Chile's President Sebastián Piñera, a right-wing neoliberal. He has a reputation as a proponent of the students' central demand of free education: "We all want education, healthcare and many more things for free, but I want to remind them that nothing is free in this life. Someone has to pay." Paying is easier, of course, if you have billions in the bank - but not so easy if you live in a workers' district or a shantytown.

## Students take to the streets

The mobilisation of young people began in early June and reached massive proportions on 9 August when up to 150,000 high school and university students and teachers marched through the streets of Santiago. Tens of thousands demonstrated in Concepción, Valparaíso and other cities. But the police violently broke up the demonstrations with batons, tear gas and water cannon. Hundreds were arrested and badly treated.

It is a mark of the students' courage and determination that repression has been unable to break this movement; on the contrary, it has gripped the country's imagination. The sight of plumes of tear gas, hundreds of riot police charging young school students, and snatch squads dragging them off of buses and beating them enraged wide layers of the working class, the poor and lower middle classes. It led to the CUT call of a 48-hour strike - the first of this length since dictator Augusto Pinochet left power in 1990.

The movement is now being referred to as the "Chilean Winter" and is openly inspired by the Arab Spring. Its main slogan is "Free and Equal Education", but it also touches on a whole series of grievances dating back to Pinochet and the neoliberal 'experiment' of the 1970s.



Students lead a militant fight against education reforms

One of the dictator's last decrees was to break up the national education system, handing over state schools to the municipalities. There would no longer be national standards and funding levels. The local authorities in socially deprived areas were given no extra funding, so a big gulf opened up between schools in rich areas and those in poor districts, while the ruling elite sent their children to expensive private schools and often abroad.

The central demands of the high school students is the abolishment of the old dictator's poisonous legacy and the restoration of a truly national free education system. Added to this are the problems university students face: crippling personal debt, due to high interest rates on student loans, and profiteering by the largely privatised universities.

Both teachers and students are demanding that state spending on education be brought up to UNESCO's recommended level of 7 per cent of GDP (Chile's economy is enjoying 6 per cent growth at the moment, although living standards and public services do not reflect this).

The movement sustained its momentum through widespread occupations of schools and a boycott of classes and lectures. They have adopted the tactics used in the previous school student movement in 2006 - the so-called levantamiento de los pingüinos (the uprising of the penguins), named after their black and white school uniforms. Young people have occupied dozens of schools over the past two months, while hundreds more have been closed by the school strike. Over 40 high school students have gone on hunger strike inside the occupied schools; three of them lasting for 37 days.

Faced with the power of the movement, Piñera has vacillated between offers of reform and a resort to harsh repression, a sign of his weakness. It is also a good sign that the movement has mobilised young people from the poorest parts of the working class. The movement is broadening out into a general rebellion against the neoliberal ortho-

doxy that has ruled the country for the past 38 years.

## For an all-out General Strike

The success of the two-day general strike in August points to the possibility of escalating the movement yet further into a head-on confrontation with Piñera - an all-out general strike. Its demands must be for a free national education system from primary to university level under the control of councils of pupils and students, parents, teachers and education workers.

The private schools and universities must be nationalised and opened up to the children of the working class and the poor. The entire cultural, economic and political heritage of the neoliberal dictatorship needs to be ripped up.

But the movement should demand the repeal of all Pinochet's repressive and neoliberal laws. The Pinochet era constitution, which concentrates power in the presidency, should be scrapped and elections held to a sovereign constituent assembly. The movement should not be demobilised. A constituent assembly should be a focus for all demands of the masses.

These demands should not stop at just education but call for a free at the point-of-delivery welfare state, for nationalisation of privatised public services, wider union and workplace rights, and the expropriation of billionaires Piñera. To ensure revolutionary measures are debated and adopted, representatives should be recallable by their electors if they do not respect their democratically decided mandates.

A successful general strike itself inevitably poses the question of who should rule Chile. A constituent assembly, likewise, can be a forum where the question of what sort of social system should replace neoliberal capitalism is posed. The answer is: not a government of billionaires like Piñera, but a government of the workers of town and countryside, of the poor, and of the youth - a government whose aim is socialism.

## women's liberation JO CASSIDY

# In rape cases, who is on trial?

ON 15 MAY managing director of the IMF Dominique Strauss-Kahn was arrested for the attempted rape of Manhattan maid Nafissatou Diallo. Three months later the case has been dropped against him, and his friends and cronies have declared DSK 'blanchi' - meaning whitened or vindicated.

But for me, the only thing this case has proved is the unfair nature of judicial systems across the world when it comes to convicting rapists. Rape has one of the lowest conviction rates of all crimes - in the UK it stands at 6 per cent and in the US it is only slightly higher at 13 per cent.

Moreover, the process of prosecuting an attacker is very traumatic for those women who are brave enough to press charges. In court, rape cases frequently involve a harsh cross-examination of the victim, exposing her sexual history, criticising what she was wearing, and whether she was drunk is taken into account. It is the victim that must defend their credibility, not the attacker.

This is exactly what happened in Nafissatou's case - she was the one on trial, undergoing a complete character assassination which uncovered that she had lied on her asylum application when she arrived from Guinea and that there was some inconsistency in her account of what she did following the attack.

For a judicial system which is skewed in favour of rich, powerful white men this was more than enough to throw Nafissatou's case out, without even giving her the chance to go to court.

But in reality, the confusion over whether she waited in the corridor or went into a room after the attack cannot possibly rule out that she was telling the truth - particularly when the forensic evidence (bruising consistent with a sexual assault) supported her account.

This case will have far-reaching effects and dissuade other women from coming forward. It confirms every rape victim's worst fears that if she reports the attack, it will be her honesty and judgement that are called into question while her attacker walks free.

What about DSK's character? He is a well-known womaniser and aggressor - other women have confirmed he also molested them. Journalist Tristan Banon came forward after the attack on Nafissatou to say DSK attempted to rape her during an interview in 2003. But it is clear that when it is one person's word against another's, the word of a powerful, male politician trumps that of an immigrant woman.

The case did, if fleetingly, shine a light on the French political culture of machismo and sexual assault which is kept out of the public eye under the guise of "respect for privacy".

## A new manifesto for world revolution

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

## Interview

## Ken Loach: "No wonder people are angry"

The British Film Industry is showing a retrospective of Ken Loach's work during September and October. Here, we reprint a timely interview with Loach from November 2010, where he gives his views on film making and politics



**WP: What do you think of the present government?**

WHERE TO begin? We all saw it coming on the left. It is comparable to the Thatcher government in the early 80s. They are using the economic situation to attack public services, health, the power of labour, as if that has not already been attacked enough, making the unemployed

struggle more. The whole rhetoric from the government is about reinforcing the consciousness that if you are not working it is your fault, that you "can't be bothered to work". It is a return to the idea of the undeserving poor. But, you know, if you want to find the work-shy you just need to wander around Knightsbridge and Belgravia. They live off the wealth generated by other people.

In order to save their system they have to attack the working class – this means rewriting the 1940s settlement, which argued that "we are stronger together". This led to the creation of the NHS.

The problem today is that these attacks are supported by right wing Labour MPs. On top of that the role of many of the trade union leaders has been terrible, but they are only fulfilling the same role of the last century.

**John Pilger called for a new kind of politics based on direct action, and then a week later we have the occupation of Tory HQ. What do you**

**think of this direction?**

Well obviously throwing a fire extinguisher off the roof was stupid. But having said that I would support the students. People are entitled to be angry with all these Bullingdon boys in office. The thing we need to do is use the anger productively.

No wonder people are angry, community centres are closing, libraries are closing, benefits are being cut, this all affects working class parents and children the most. Clearly we need to build political unity against the cuts across the country.

**On to your film work. You have been making movies for many years and during that time Britain has changed a lot. How do your films reflect this?**

Well if you think about the movie we made, Kes, the boy in that is seen as a failure but he had a talent along with a predetermined job to go into, down the mines. He did not want the predetermined life choices that had already been made. Then we made another film recently called Sweet Sixteen about a lad of a simi-

lar age where there is no job, no community and many lives have been devastated by drugs. So that, I think, shows how the quality of life for many people has changed.

**Some of your films could be described as social exposures like Ladybird Ladybird, and others are more clearly political, The Wind that Shakes the Barley, Land and Freedom.**

Well, it is the same conflict, either the struggle of people trying to make a life for themselves in harsh circumstances or the struggle of people as a class resisting the attacks of those who would oppress them, for example the civil wars in Spain and Ireland or against the U.S.-backed Contra terrorists in Nicaragua. In a sense the relationship between the films is that the failure of the high points of the struggle defined the world in which the other characters grew up. If we had won in Ireland, or Spain then those characters in My Name Is Joe and Riff Raff would have existed in a better world.

## Cultural viewpoint

## Capitalism and celebrity

In today's society, no status supersedes that of 'celebrity'. But is that really the case? Joana Pamiro looks at the allure of celebrity culture and how it relates to the class divide

THE LAST years of the 20th century might have invented girl-bands and Dolly the sheep, but it was the growing hysteria about the 'celebrity' that epitomises the period. Almost 20 years after the first airing of Big Brother, celebrity culture prevails as the modern, ultra-commodified 'freak show' of yesteryear, where raw wounds are exposed for us, the consumers, to pour over, admire and sometimes denounce.

Celebrity culture remains fascinating because it gives everyone the chance to be an armchair authority – part-psychologist, part-anthropologist, part-sociologist. Everyone could express a 'professional opinion' on Charlie Sheen's televised personal breakdown, for instance.

However, celebrity is not solely a cultural phenomenon. The celebrity culture machinery is a tool of the political and economical system and, in itself, a consequence of the capitalist age. Sociologist Chris Rojek attributes celebrity culture to the commodification of desire, the ultimate stage of commodity fetishism. There are multiple methods and purposes for this.

Imagine that celebrity culture, a Hydra-like monster, has four stages of fascination and trance. The most basic sphere is one of pure celebrity worshiping. An individual, well-known for their talent, is under constant media surveillance, with an intricate apparatus of front and backstage personnel and plenty of businesses willing to use

this person to make a profit.

The second stage of celebrity-watching is reality TV and all its acolytes: a world in which any 'nobody' can become a 'somebody' (for the best and the worst reasons), to be stalked and adored.

The third stage is an amalgamation of the first two. Celebrity and reality TV unite, in a super-profitable explosion of kitsch. This is usually populated by talented individuals or individuals turned into a 'desired object', a celebrity, by reality TV. Celebrity reality TV counts on nobodies who recently became somebodies to indulge itself in a tedious recycling of public figures, whose talent and cause of celebration is as blurred and as confusing as a recursionist painting.

Finally, the cycle relies on a destructive stage to purge some of these celebrities from the media stratosphere. This Shiva complex of continuous creation and destruction truly encapsulates the vicissitudes of capitalist culture. The downfall of the celebrity, through drugs or break ups with cheating lovers, is an essential moment in the drama, an intense personalisation and intimacy, mediated through the tabloids and 'women's magazines'. This exposes the apparently human failings of people who were raised to the level of a super-human only weeks before.

Celebrity culture has two clear purposes. The first is a mythological role.

In a society where personal freedom is touted as the state of being, but restrictive moral codes prevail, the need for narratives-as-guidance for consumers on right and wrong behaviour is essential. Celebrities act as role models, while accessing a world most of us cannot dream of. Football players must be exemplary husbands and actresses need to have children as well as busy careers. They all must be beautiful, sober, eloquent, faithful – and married. They must all be the right size, have the right poise, car and other half. They must conform to the idea of perfection.

The second reason for celebrity culture to exist is to reinforce class divisions. The ruling class – masters of TV programming and propaganda tools – knows that it is in their best interest to create outlets where individuals can try their luck in the social mobility ladder. Reality TV is nothing more than the modern version of a public execution. From Big Brother to the X Factor, the fascination comes not from the entertainment factor, not from the voyeuristic effect, nor the capacity of the viewer to empathise with the seemingly real-life characters; the real appeal of reality TV is its capacity to elevate the viewer to the position of a main judge of the aspirations of working class people.

The contestants in the most recent X Factor, for example, demonstrate this phenomenon. From the pint-sized Cher Lloyd, via peroxide Katie

Waissel, to the winner, Matt Cardle. Lloyd was from an impoverished family of Romani heritage, living in a caravan and whose uncle died mid-show of a drug overdose; Waissel a hairdresser's receptionist and her grandmother a porn star; and Cardle was a painter and decorator. Another example is 'The Only Way Is Essex' (TOWIE), which casts a cornucopia of hairstylists and glamour models, unemployed playboys and small town 'entrepreneurs'. One out of 10 TV shows will provide plenty of opportunities to see a group of young working class men and women, doing their best to reach much more than fame and fortune – they are, in fact, hoping to become part of the bourgeoisie.

**The illusions of fame**

Similar to characters in a Steinbeck play, these people don't realise that such dreams are nothing but shadows. It is impossible to transcend the class divide by turning on the cameras and exposing your bits, bobs and whatnots to millions. The Times Magazine highlighted this fact by creating a 'make-under' shoot of the usually 'caked' TOWIE female cast: those attempting to jump classes have to do more than doll up. They are funny real-life experiments, similar to Eliza in My Fair Lady and Vivian in Pretty Woman. But contrary to a scripted story, the reality TV versions of the class chameleon are ultimately

stripped of their posh colouring. Just as Victoria Beckham will never lose her WAG stigma, so will the TOWIE women be 'Essex girls' forever. Not because of their "residual glamour (...) unadulterated Essexness", as Polly Vernon wrote for The Times Magazine article, but because 'celebrity' in and of itself does not transcend the class divide.

As comedian Chris Rock points out, there is a difference between being rich and being wealthy. Celebrities from reality TV can be rich. Yet, never will they be beyond scrutiny, their status legalised and their existence fully accepted. They are forever jumped up commoners in aristocrat's clothes – they will never be of the privileged class. That acceptance is reserved for those who hold capital and hence real power.

For those who mandate whether TOWIE or Big Brother will be on TV next week or never again, these cultural forms are necessary and profitable distractions from our lives. Reality TV is a distraction from the reality of poverty, exploitation and social oppression.

Until we create a society in which there is no longer a class gap, exploitation will continue to exist. To abolish the inequalities that allow people such as Amy Childs and Tiger Woods to be slandered and humiliated in the press, we need to abolish the class that rules the media and dictates the moral codes.

# Obituary Din Wong (1948 – 2011)

THE LEAGUE for the Fifth International and its section in the UK, Workers Power, are extremely sad to report the untimely death of comrade Din Wong. Din died on 23 August after a long struggle with cancer.

Din was born in Hong Kong in 1948 and came to the UK as a student in 1967.

She was a founder member of Workers Power (indeed, of its predecessor the Left Faction of the International Socialists) from 1973 till 2006. She was a dedicated revolutionary who made an important contribution to launching Workers Power paper and our other publications. In addition, she was a militant and active trade unionist in the teachers' union, the NUT, where she was loved and respected. Din was a lifelong anti-racist and active antifascist.

Like many of her generation, Din was initially influenced by the apparent radicalism of the "Cultural Revolution" in China and this led her to a lifelong interest in the Chinese labour movement. Researching for her dissertation on the 1925-6 Hong



Kong-Canton General Strike revealed to her the errors and then the crimes of what became the Maoist current in the Chinese Communist Party and from then on she was a committed Trotskyist. Subsequently, she collaborated with the veteran Chinese Trotskyist leader, Wang Fanxi, in translating and publishing materials of the Chinese movement.

Nor was her interest solely historical. She also played an active role mobilising solidarity with other sections of workers, including with Chi-

nese catering workers in London. In 1989, whilst still recovering from her first battle with cancer, she helped organise and maintain the 24 hour picket of the Chinese embassy in London in solidarity with the Democracy Movement in Tiananmen Square. More recently, as well as travelling in China to meet labour movement activists, she also contributed to the dissemination of information from the underground by translating documents and statements for China Labour News.

Din was a complete internationalist and comrades from the League's sections in Germany, Austria, Sweden and the Czech Republic remember her warm friendship and hospitality on their many visits to her home.

We send our sincerest condolences to her lifelong companion Steve and to her sons Danny and James, as well as the rest of her family. She will be sorely missed by all her comrades and her many friends in the workers' movement, but never forgotten.

## Autumn activist calendar

### September

- 3 September Anti EDL demo – national mobilisations
- 9-12 September International Executive Committee
- 10 September Open Education conference
- 19 September Protest outside the Liberal Democrat party conference
- 20 September unofficial Unison conference

### October

- 1 October Coalition of Resistance International conference
- 2 October demonstration at the Tory Party conference, Manchester
- 22-23 October Anticapitalism, Workers Power's annual event
- 29 October Education Activist Network national conference

### November

- 5 November Jarrow march arrives in London
- 7 November Likely date for next public sector strikes over pensions
- 9 November provisional date for student demo called by NCAFC
- 12-13 November Historical Materialism annual conference

### Marxism Today Lecture series

Workers Power London will be organising fortnightly lectures as part of the Marxism Today lecture series, every Wednesday at London School of Economics students union on Houghton street. Starting in September. Entry is free

For more details please visit [www.workerspower.co.uk/marxism](http://www.workerspower.co.uk/marxism) -today or call 0207 708 4331

## Get in touch

Workers Power isn't just a newspaper. We are an activist organisation that fights and campaigns for socialist politics in the movement day in, day out. In schools, colleges, universities, workplaces and local communities, Workers Power members are at the forefront of the fight against cuts. We have branches and activists across the country. We are always looking to develop new networks of members and supporters. Wherever you are – we want you to join forces with us. All around the world, from Sweden to Sri Lanka, members of our sister sections in the League for the Fifth International are campaigning for a socialist future. Join us today!

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## WHERE WE STAND



**Capitalism** is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by

a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

**The Labour Party** is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party – bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but it gets its support from the working class via the trade unions and is supported by the mass of workers at the polls. We are for the building of a revolutionary tendency in the Labour Party, in order to win workers within those organisations away from reformism and to the revolutionary party.



**The Trade Unions** must be transformed by a rank and file movement to oust the reformist bureaucrats, to democratise the unions and win them to a revolutionary action programme based on a system of transitional demands which serve as a bridge between today's struggles and the socialist revolution. Central to this is the fight for workers' control of production. We are for

the building of fighting organisations of the working class – factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

**The Russian revolution** established a workers' state. But Stalin destroyed workers' democracy and set about the reactionary and utopian project of building "socialism in one country". In the USSR, and the other degenerate workers' states that were established from above, capitalism was destroyed but the bureaucracy excluded the working class from power, blocking the road to democratic planning and socialism. The parasitic bureaucratic caste led these states to crisis and eventual destruction. We were for the smashing of bureaucratic tyranny through political revolution and the establishment of workers' democracy. We opposed the restoration of capitalism and recognised that only workers' revolution can defend the post-capitalist property relations. In times of war we unconditionally defend workers' states against imperialism.

**Stalinism** has consistently betrayed the working class. The Stalinist Communist Parties' strategy of alliances between workers and capitalists (in popular fronts) and their stages theory of revolution have inflicted terrible defeats on the working class world-wide. These parties are reformist.

**Social Oppression** is an integral feature of capitalism, systematically oppressing people on the basis of race, age, sex or sexual orientation. We are for the liberation of women and for the building of a working class women's movement, not an "all class" autonomous movement. We are for the liberation of all of the oppressed. We fight racism and fascism. We oppose all immigration controls. We fight for labour movement support for black self-defence against racist and state attacks. We are for no platform for fascists and for driving them out of the unions.



**Imperialism** is a world system which oppresses nations and prevents economic development in the vast majority of third world countries. We support the struggles of oppressed nationalities or countries against imperialism. We unconditionally support the Irish Republicans fighting to drive British troops out of Ireland.

But against the politics of the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois nationalists, we fight for permanent revolution – working class leadership of the anti-imperialist struggle under the banner of socialism and internationalism. In conflicts between imperialist countries and semi-colonial countries, we are for the defeat of the imperialist army and the victory of the country oppressed and exploited by imperialism. We are for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. We fight imperialist war not with pacifist pleas but with militant class struggle methods including the forcible disarmament of "our own" bosses.

**Workers Power** is a revolutionary communist organisation. We base our programme and policies on the works of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, on the revolutionary documents of the first four congresses of the Third International and the Transitional Programme of the Fourth International. Workers Power is the British Section of the League for the Fifth International. The last revolutionary International (the Fourth) collapsed in the years 1948-51. The L5I is fighting to refound a revolutionary International and build a new world party of socialist revolution. If you are a class conscious fighter against capitalism; if you are an internationalist – join us!★

# Workers power 5

## Fascist EDL must be stopped

Dan Edmonds

ON 3 SEPTEMBER the fascist English Defence League (EDL) are threatening to march in what their website calls the "heart of the UK's most militant Islamic area" - Tower Hamlets in London's East End. They are aping Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts' attempt to terrorise the Jewish population of the same area in 1936. In the famous Battle of Cable Street he was stopped - despite police attempts to clear a way. Today it is the EDL who must be greeted with the same cry They Shall Not Pass. A massive response is needed - not just from the Muslim communities of the East End but also from the labour movement of London, indeed of the whole country.

When the EDL tried to march through East London in June last year, they were forced to cancel just a few days before the event, admitting it would be 'suicide' to march through the area because of the threat of violence from anti-fascist demonstrators.

The mobilisation that defeated the EDL in Bradford on 28 August 2010 was another great example of how anti-fascism could be successful in the streets. The success of the Bradford mobilisation was due to the presence of anti-fascist activists and organisers, its non-leading members, they have turned to demonstrating in smaller towns and organising regional mobilisations and flash-mobs, like Halifax, Cambridge, Derby, Blackpool, and Luton. This shows that we need a nationwide militant antifascist organisation ready to confront them wherever they turn up.

### The roots of Islamophobia

When Anders Behring Breivik murdered over 70 people in Norway in July, the press puzzled over where the ideas in his manifesto for mass murder came from. In fact there was no need to research obscure web-



sites. These ideas are the common coin of Geert Wilders' Freedom Party in Holland, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Sweden Democrats, and - yes - the EDL. Breivik emailed the EDL to tell them to "keep up the good work" and described himself as engaged in "our common struggle against the islamofascists."

All these parties and groups share a conspiratorial view of Muslims as plotting to bring the entire world under Sharia law and a unified Islamic state. They aim to stop the spread of Islam by preventing mosques being built and ridding Europe of Islam, i.e. of its Muslim population. Further-

more, they accuse both the far left and the parliamentary parties of aiding an Islamist takeover through political correctness and 'cultural Marxism'. A new wave of European fascist groups based on Islamophobia has grown up, who justify their racist violence and even terrorist acts as defensive measures against the radical Islamic advance. Anti-racist campaigns, communist groups and conservative, liberal and labour parties alike are labelled as 'traitors' for refusing to implement violent repression of Islam.

In the countries that formed the anti-Nazi Alliance in World War II,

worshiping Hitler and the Nazis was a passport to the political fringe. Most British patriots and even virulent racists would steer clear of such 'unpatriotic' stuff. However, this new racist ideology is capable of mobilising beyond the traditional Hitler-worshippers and football hooligans and finds a hearing among wider sections of the population already brainwashed with anti-Muslim propaganda from right-wing broadsheets, such as the Daily Mail, the Express and the Star. This provides more dry tinder to fuel the fires for fascist movements.

The EDL tried to take advantage of the recent London riots to

increase support for its violent activities. In Enfield, the hastily-formed EDL 'white shirts' claimed to be defending the local community, when in fact they used it as a chance to racially abuse and attack local Black and Asian youth. In Eltham, tanked up EDL vigilantes actually clashed with the police they were trying to 'help against the rioters.'

The EDL have also attacked left-wing meetings across the country and vandalised mosques; 'the UAF Hunting Club' has been set up to target meetings of Unite Against Fascism and the SWP. We need to organise within ethnic communities, among trade unionists and the radical youth, to bring into force a powerful movement to see off the EDL thugs whenever they attack or attempt to march. The fascists have their defence league - we need to build an Anti-Fascist Defence League.

If the EDL tries to mobilise its supporters onto the streets of Tower Hamlets, anti-fascists need to act in the tradition of Cable Street. But we also need to remember that the battle against fascism must be fought in the streets, and that their ideas have to be countered by the socialists and the wider workers' movement.

We have to be able to give a socialist answer to the crisis. We need to point out how the bankers and speculators crashed their own system, and then pocketed public money to restore their profits. Now they are demanding that the welfare state should be destroyed to pay off state debts.

The racist poison spread about Muslims, asylum-seekers, Eastern European immigrants, and black inner-city youth is meant to divert people from recognising this truth. Its aim is to divide the working class. Therefore, as well as fighting fascism, we have to go to its roots and organise people against the poverty, misery and exploitation of capitalist society. That way we can destroy the conditions which breed support for fascist movements.

## Why state bans boomerang on us

WHY SHOULD revolutionaries be opposed to calling on the capitalist state to ban fascist marches? Not because we defend the democratic rights of fascists to march through immigrant areas, to terrorise their inhabitants. On the contrary we say there must be no platform for fascism. But to rely on the police or the courts to do this for us is suicidal.

The most practical demonstration is what has just happened with the ban on the planned EDL march in Tower Hamlets - a counter-demonstration by the labour movement, antifascists and the local immigrant

communities have also been banned. But that's OK say its supporters - the EDL is banned so no need to march against them. Really?

In fact it is perfectly possible the EDL will defy or evade the ban. To rely on the police to enforce it would leave Tower Hamlets Muslim communities, entirely the mercy of the EDL and the racist police. So of course antifascists movement should still mobilise. All the ban in fact means is that this legitimate self-defence is now illegal.

Fascism is a weapon of war against the entire workers movement even



when it starts marches and targets its street violence first of all against migrant communities. In a time of deepening social crisis the bosses will turn to it, especially if resistance against their attacks mounts.

When fascists take to the streets they must be confronted and crushed as they were in Britain in the 1930s and the 1970s and 80s. The lesson is; never rely on the state to do what the workers organisations need to do for themselves. Socialists are in favour of community self organisation, including the setting up of anti-fascist organisations to stop fascist violence.