

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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For a workers' government

**The Tories on
Europe**
page 5



**Greek workers
defend healthcare**
pages 6-7

**Lenin, Liebknecht
and Luxemburg**
pages 9-10



TORIES PLAN TO CLOSE LEWISHAM HOSPITAL

See
page 3

Test case for the NHS

What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

Contact us:

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Libya: minority rights under attack

By Martyn Hudson

As events in Mali are described as "collateral damage" from the Libyan revolution, significant events in Libya have gained far less attention.

Of all the North African and Middle Eastern rebellions, Libya is a comparative success story and is widely perceived as such by its population.

Ethnic minorities and migrant labour have fared badly, the militias are worrisome — but Libya is a functioning liberal, secular democracy in all but name.

Some critics say the new civil society has been based on the assumption that the state is controlled by sharia law. This is not so. There is a lot of popular pressure for the National Assembly to adopt a clear liberal democratic constitution — not least because of fears about the future role that Islamism might play electorally and militarily.

Some on the left have pointed to al-Qaeda flags flying prominently on public buildings at the end of the old regime; in reality the military forces of Islamism are geographically dispersed, often with only nominal links to al-Qaeda.

The Islamist mobs responsible for the attack on the US envoy last September were driven out of Benghazi and have been unable to secure any kind of physical or ideological grasp on the city's population. And Ansar al-Sharia had no links to a wider al-Qaeda network.

Yet many commentators in US foreign policy networks were predicting Libya would be the next to fall electorally and militarily to Islamist repression.

Whatever the impact on Mali or Algeria, there is lit-

Migrant worker transit camp inside Libya

tle public appetite for Islamism in Libya. Yet some of the minor Islamist militias, (and non-Islamist militias), are still refusing to lay down arms or abdicate control over pieces of territory.

The Islamists are not going down without a fight. There have been recent attacks on an Italian diplomat, and back in November the Benghazi police chief was assassinated.

CONSTITUTION
The recent abduction of the Benghazi head of criminal investigation is leading to more frustration over delay with the constitution. This is perceived as the central political tool that will solve the militia problem once and for all.

The liberal coalition, the National Forces Alliance (NFA), has decided to temporarily withdraw from the National Assembly in protest against delays in delivering the constitution and the political chaos that could ensue from that delay, including concerns that the militia might target assembly members.

The speaker of the Na-

tional Assembly, Muhammad Magarief, recently called for a fully secular Libyan constitution and the separation of religion and state. However the nationalist underpinnings of the central political blocs can be seen in what is not being debated: the fate of the ethnic, tribal minorities of Libya and the wider impact of this on Mali as well as the migrant worker problem in Libya.

Whatever the reality of their participation or not in acting as mercenaries for the old regime, peoples such as the Tuareg and migrant and military labour from Mali, Chad and Niger are seen to be as hostile to the new Libyan political settlement.

The driving out of Tuareg soldiers, and hostility to an autonomous Tuareg regime which had been promised to them by Qaddafi, has had obvious effects.

The Misrata brigades achieved much of their local popularity by their oppression and pursuit of ethnic minorities perceived as loyal to the old regime.

The two million migrant workers of Libya pre-revolution have dwindled to

half a million. At the same time international organisations are keen to recruit people to well-paid work in Libya — the reconstruction and the redevelopment of tourism and catering.

There has been a huge crackdown on previously tolerated illegal migrants from the south. Many are being arrested and kept in metal containers in detention camps in the desert. The ill-treatment of minorities in factory and domestic labour is well-documented.

This ill-treatment has been given ideological cover by the national aspirations of "Libya and the Libyan people". It builds on the aristocracy of indigenous Libyan Arabs well-developed over 60 years by successive regimes. International corporations, like Esso in the 1950s and 1960s, brought migrant labour into the country in the absence of population in the oil fields outside of the coastal strips.

The continuing crackdown on "illegals" is often sanctified by the idea that they are Qaddafi loyalists or nascent Tuareg Islamists. This is often supported by the physical intimidation by the militias still on the borders and in areas outside of governmental control.

The struggle for a secular and democratic constitution in Libya should cohere a commitment to minority rights and the free movement of labour, but it is clear that it won't. The development of a new private sector, replacing Qaddafi's old clique system of state control, will also work against minority rights.

The "collateral damage" of this will be a setback for the entire Libyan working class, indigenous and migrant, as it asserts itself in the new democratic settlement.

Sydney dock workers back Bob Carnegie

Dock workers at the DP World container terminal in Port Botany, Sydney, have declared their support for the campaign to defend victimised trade unionist Bob Carnegie.

Members of the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) passed a resolution supporting the campaign across three shifts of workers on Friday 18 and Saturday 19 January. The MUA's all-Sydney branch had previously backed the campaign in October 2012.

Clive Tillman, a call centre worker and activist in Australia Asia Worker Links, also wrote to Bob to express his personal support, saying: "It is absolutely disgusting that in this country workers can face criminal charges and pos-

sible jail for industrial action. Make no mistake, you are being targeted because you are doing something that everyone else should be doing: i.e. standing up to the hitherto unchallenged power of the corporate robber barons that trample on workers rights. You are being targeted for political reasons.

"I support you fully and you serve as an excellent example for workers in Australia and around the world to follow."

• The campaign welcomes support and donations, especially from labour movement organisations. To get in touch, visit bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com

Lewisham: a test case for the NHS

By Ira Berkovic

The plan to close maternity, A&E and other services at Lewisham Hospital, and to dissolve the South London Healthcare Trust, is a test case for the government in its plans to dismantle the National Health Service.

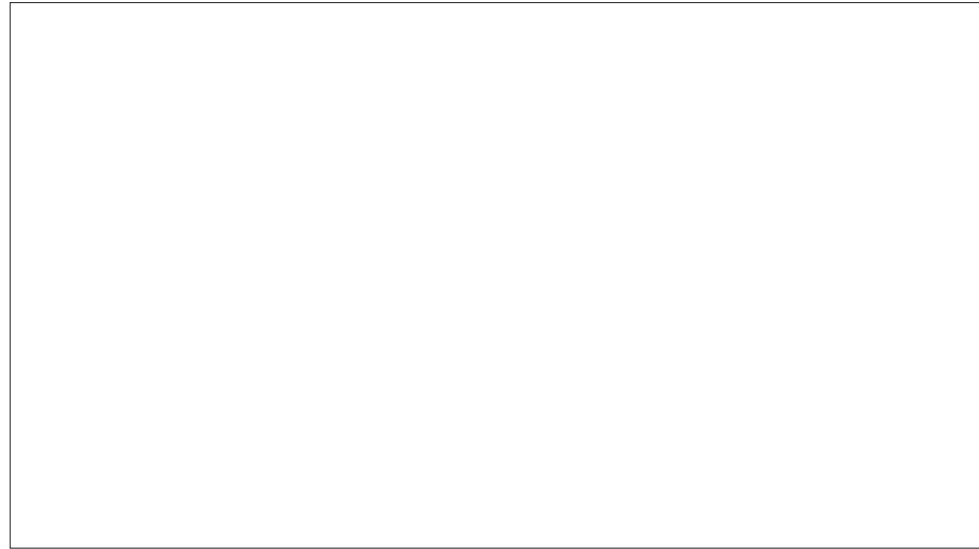
If the Tories are able in south London to get away with dissolving entire local trusts, reallocating essential services to other trusts or putting them out to tender for private companies, as well as shutting large sections of a heavily-relied-upon local hospital, they will feel able to carry out similar attacks elsewhere.

The Trust Special Administrator Matthew Kershaw admitted in his final report that there is 96% opposition to closure, but he plans to carry on regardless. Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt will make the final decision on the fate of SLHT and Lewisham Hospital on 1 February.

The issue is a test case for us — the working-class movement — too. The demonstration to save Lewisham Hospital on Saturday 24 November 2012 was an immense outpouring of working-class community anger at the destruction of our public services by the Tory government.

15,000 people came out to march, an unprecedentedly high number for a local anti-cuts struggle in recent times. The demonstration on Saturday 26 January could be just as big.

The community cam-



National health unions should be on the war path

paigned in Lewisham has in many ways been a model for resistance to cuts, building a vibrant campaign with regular meetings and a visible presence in the local community. Meetings and demonstrations have drawn in working-class people not previously engaged in politics who have been mobilised for the first time.

But there has been a key missing ingredient — organisation and action by workers at the hospital itself, and healthworkers more widely in the area.

The Unison branch at the hospital has played a poor role, with branch officials counselling workers against getting involved in campaigns led by “extremists” and “troublemakers”.

Health unions nationally have done little more than posture in response to the existential threat posed to the NHS by the Tories.

There have been no national

demonstrations (apart from a tame lobby of Parliament headed up by Unite in March 2012) and no plans whatsoever for strikes. It is certainly harder to mobilise for industrial action amongst workers who have immediate duties of care to sick people, but the gravity of the situation requires an extreme response. A discussion about how healthworkers might take effective industrial action without needlessly endangering the lives of patients has not even been had.

On the continent, Spanish and Greek healthworkers have repeatedly struck and occupied in opposition to health cuts and hospital closures. But while the Tories attempt to wipe out the single greatest concession won by the working class in Britain, the leaders of our movement have done nothing.

After the demonstration

on 26 January, the community campaign in Lewisham must continue to grow. But it must be accompanied with renewed attempts at independent rank-and-file organisation by healthworkers — independent of conservative, bureaucratic union officials — which seeks to develop strategies for action.

It will take several years (and an estimated £195 million) to run down and close services at Lewisham Hospital and for the full effects of these plans to be realised. Workers should organise in that time for work-ins and occupations.

We cannot let the Tories rob us of our right to healthcare.

- Health workers fightback in Spain and Greece:p.6-7.
- Lewisham Hospital Worker (produced by local AWL healthworkers) www.workersliberty.org/bulletins

Multiple assault on NW London A&E

By Vicki Morris

NHS campaigners in north west London are preparing to defend A&E departments at several hospitals, as the North West London Hospitals Trust seeks to make cuts.

After running a very flawed consultation, the Trust’s “Shaping a Healthier Future” plan could see A&E departments closing at: Charing Cross; Ealing; Hammersmith; and Park Royal (Central Middlesex).

Patients would be forced to travel further to what would become strained A&E departments at the

designated “major” hospitals: Hillingdon; St Mary’s (Paddington); West Middlesex (Isleworth); Northwick Park (Harrow); and Chelsea and Westminster (Fulham Road).

There are local campaigns around most of the hospitals affected, but we need coordination between them, since resistance is patchy across the region.

Ealing Council (Labour) is heavily backing the campaign to save the A&E at Ealing Hospital, and plan a fresh protest on 9 February before NHS NW London make their final decision. The protest will be part of a

“Week of Action to Defend London’s NHS” from 9-16 February.

That contrasts with the response of, e.g., Brent Council, also Labour, to the planned closure of A&E at their local hospital, Central Middlesex. They have responded relatively feebly to the proposed cut to the unit which had a £62 million rebuild just six years ago.

Local union and community campaigners did organise a successful march last summer and will hold a candle-lit vigil outside the hospital in the evening on 9 February. But the local

paper reports a new campaign - “Choose Well” - by the local health NHS Brent Clinical Commissioning Group which aims to divert patients from approaching A&E with healthcare worries and seek help instead from the local pharmacist.

In ordinary times such advice might be sensible, but campaigners should insist that patients need the option of attending a local A&E whenever they are in doubt about the severity of a condition or when they have an accident.

That choice is currently being taken away from us!

Venezuela without Chávez

By Pablo Velasco

While reports of Hugo Chávez’s death may be exaggerated, there is little doubt that his prolonged treatment in Cuba is giving rise to a crisis, in which the Venezuelan workers are likely to lose out.

Chávez went to Cuba for cancer treatment on 11 December, the fourth time he has been for treatment in less than two years. He has not been seen in public since and missed his swearing in as president on 10 January.

Before his latest surgery, Chávez anointed vice president Nicolás Maduro his successor if circumstances required him to step down. Maduro has so far only taken the reigns temporarily, rather than be installed in power. The constitutional anomalies only indicate the Bonapartist nature of the regime, built around the cult of Chávez.

The immediate threat is not from the demoralised right wing opposition, which lost both the presidential election and 20 of the 23 gubernatorial elections in December. However in the medium term the opposition, backed by the US government, is likely to gain from the absence (or at least weakness) of the Bolivarian leader.

The vacuum at the centre is most likely to play out first in a battle between Bolivarian rivals. Although Maduro has embraced his main competitor Diosdado Cabello and there is talk of unity and collective leadership, behind the scenes there is jockeying for position.

This will become clearer in the run up to mayoral elections in May. Previously Chávez and the PSUV central committee decided on candidates. Now the party say they will have to create a mechanism to determine who will stand.

Long-time Venezuela-watcher Steve Ellner reckons that the absence of Chávez will affect the strategy of making bold moves immediately after

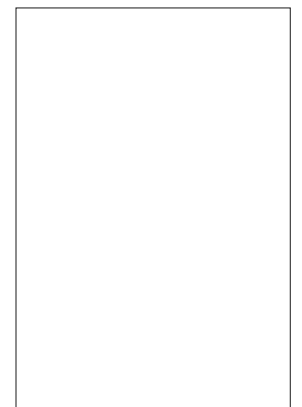
electoral victories, what is euphemistically regarded as “deepening the revolution”. Previously these have included nationalising firms and new welfare spending programmes. A weakened Chávez, Maduro, or whoever emerges from a power struggle, will have less latitude to push their measures forward, while the state bureaucracy and its “Boligarchy” will strengthen their grip.

For the Venezuela working class, fratricidal conflict within Chavismo and a polarisation between Chávez’s forces and the opposition are likely to narrow the democratic light and air needed to form an independent labour movement.

Many trade unionists will understandably see Chávez as a lesser evil compared to the neoliberal opposition, but this pragmatism would bind the labour movement to the declining Bonapartist project. Venezuelan socialists need to find their own third path between these poles.

A first test of the balance of forces will come on 23 January, when both the chavistas and the opposition have planned marches in Caracas. The date the anniversary of the day in 1958 when the dictatorship of Marcos Jimenez was overthrown and a semi-democratic system introduced in Venezuela.

Socialists and trade unionists in Venezuela should use it as an opportunity to make their independent voices heard.



A crisis has been provoked by Chávez’s absence

Pity the poor Christian

Press

By Pat Murphy



The American writer Ralph Emerson once said of an acquaintance that “the louder he talked of his honesty, the faster we counted our spoons”. I have the same instinct when I hear conservative commentators pontificate on human rights.

Writing on the *Huffington Post* site on 16 January, Mike Judge (Head of Communications at the Christian Institute), claimed that while Christians are “free to wear a cross at work, they are not necessarily free to believe in marriage”.

He was commenting on the cases taken by four British Christians to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) claiming that they had been the victims of religious discrimination. While one claimant, Nadia Eweida, had her claim (that it was unfair and unreasonable for her employer, BA, to ban her from wearing a crucifix at work) upheld, all of the other claims were rejected.

The decision by the NHS to require nurse Shirley Chaplin to remove her cross while working with patients was upheld, as were decisions that a marriage counsellor and a registrar could not refuse to offer services to members of the public who were gay.

RIGHTS

If the job of the ECHR is to balance the rights of religious believers against the competing rights of others, including the right to be safe at work, then it seems to me to have done a reasonable job.

There seemed to be no particular risk or discrimination suffered by anyone, directly or indirectly, by Mrs Eweida wearing her cross. The other three cases involved choices between the rights of Christians to express their beliefs and the rights of others.

For a host of right-wing pundits, though, the failure to uphold all three appeals was further evidence of a campaign of victimisation of Christians. Mike Judge has, as he admits, a vested interest. He was a legal adviser to one of the unsuccessful claimants, Lillian Ladele, a registrar with Islington Council who refused to deal with same-sex civil partnerships.

He describes her as “horribly bullied” and considers it a decisive argument that Islington had plenty of other regis-

Are Christians being persecuted in Britain?

trars who were prepared to carry out the ceremonies Ladele refused. All conservative commentary on these cases fails completely to understand the basics of equality. The simple replacement of the words “black” or “disabled” for the recent term “same-sex” illustrates clearly the problem with an employee who will marry or counsel some clients but not others on the basis of some aspect of their identity.

Peter Hitchens in the *Mail on Sunday* (20 January) seizes on the four legal cases as evidence that “our nation is on its knees to the church of Human Rights”.

For Hitchens the rejection of three of the cases is part of a decades-long war against Christianity. In this particular case his argument is incoherent and riddled with contradiction. He can’t decide who exactly is conducting this war though on balance there is no doubt the main culprit is “Europe” which he describes as “the unpleasant new country in which we are now trapped”.

He brushes over the fact that all four original decisions were made in Britain and upheld in British courts or tribunals. In fact, the only reason any of these persecuted Christians had anywhere else to go with their complaints was that there is a European Convention on Human Rights with a

Court to enforce it.

He writes not a word about Nadia Eweida, who has established the right to wear Christian symbols only because the European Court, which Hitchens despises, ruled in her favour. He deals with this by claiming that we only have equality laws because Europe forces us to, supporting this claim with a vague reference to “several EU directives”. Three Race Relations Acts, a range of Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts and the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission by UK governments may as well not have happened.

It’s amusing watching proper right-wingers respond to these issues. They have consistently attacked the whole idea of equality and human rights and, for the most part, despise the bourgeois project to unite European states.

And yet they seek to defend the declining privileges and status of established and hitherto mainstream religions by appealing to precisely those same institutions and concepts.

DECLINED

It’s too much for them to accept that Christianity, or religious belief in general, has declined because it is less relevant to modern society.

Instead they must explain it by reference to an absurd claim of persecution. It would, they seem to say, be as strong and popular as ever if it weren’t for those pesky EU bureaucrats and human rights lawyers.

As with any self-pitying solipsistic narrative, you have to ignore the wider real-world picture if you want to hold on to it.

Reading Hitchens and Judge, you simply wouldn’t believe that we lived in a society which has an established church to which the Head of State must belong. Or that the Church of England is guaranteed seats in Parliament as a right. Or that the national broadcasting company is required to transmit over 100 hours of religious material every year including a guaranteed peak time radio spot for proselytisers every morning.

In this “unpleasant new country in which we are now trapped” over one third of state-funded schools are controlled by religious organisations (overwhelmingly Christian) and the present government are encouraging the establishment of hundreds more under the academies and free schools programme.

If only the ideas of socialism could have “persecution” like this.

Their Europe and ours



A Workers’ Liberty dayschool

**Saturday 16 February, 12-6pm,
ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY
(near Euston)**

- Should we want the EU to break up?
- What is a revolutionary situation? Is there one now in Greece?
- Who are Syriza?
- Revolution in Germany, 1918 and 1923: why Marxists called for the United States of Europe
- Facing and beating the threat from Golden Dawn
- Solidarity without borders: migrants’ struggles
- Women across Europe fight back

Tickets: £10 waged, £7 low-waged/university students, £5 unwaged/school students. Book online: www.workersliberty.org/europeanrevolution

Why we are discussing Europe

AWL news



On 16 February, Workers’ Liberty will be holding a dayschool on the class politics of Europe.

As long ago as the turn of the 20th century, Marxists like Leon Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg pointed out that capitalist development had overflowed the borders of Europe’s nation states. During the chaos and slaughter of World War 1, and the revolutionary crisis that followed, they linked the fight for European working-class unity to the call for a broader political framework: the United States of Europe.

A century later, European capitalism is more integrated than ever. The European Union is a reflection of that. Yet the dominant forces on the British left — not only Stalinists and the trade union and Labour left influenced by them, but “Trotskyists” like the SWP and Socialist Party — reject Trotsky’s approach. They argue that, short of socialism, a Britain less integrated into Europe — or separate from it altogether — would be better for the working class.

At a time when nationalism is a major and growing force, with UKIP ahead of the Lib Dems in most polls, much of the left is throwing its weight into the nationalist camp. In doing so it not only strengthens our enemies, but prevents the ed-

ucation of the British labour movement about how to confront the attacks being coordinated across Europe — united, cross-European working-class struggle.

14 November saw Europe’s first ever cross-border general strike, with strikes in Spain, Portugal, Italy and Greece, and protests in many other countries.

In Greece, where the crisis and workers’ struggles are sharpest, the rising left party Syriza opposes cuts, but rejects calls for Greece to leave the Eurozone. Its left wing raises slogans such as “No sacrifice for the euro, no illusions in the drachma” and “Not euro vs drachma, but class vs class”.

We are holding a dayschool on capitalist crisis and class struggle across Europe in order to help educate British labour movement and socialist activists about these kind of ideas.

We want to help make the left a force which can challenge nationalism and take a lead in building working-class unity across Europe.

Cameron, Europe, and referendums

On 23 January, a few hours after this issue of *Solidarity* is printed, David Cameron will deliver his much-trailed speech on Europe.

Cameron will call for renegotiation of Britain's terms of membership of the EU; but we don't know how aggressively.

He will promise a referendum on the EU if the Tories hold office after 2015; but we don't know the terms of the referendum. Will it be in/out? Or yes/no to approve Cameron's renegotiation?

He will say that in general he favours Britain being in the EU; but he will not say where he will stand if the EU refuses to renegotiate as he wishes, which it may well do.

Cameron is trying to deflect pressure on the Tories from Ukip (now at over 10% in the polls, ahead of the Lib-Dems), and pressure on him within the Tory party from anti-EUers.

Anti-EU right-wing sentiment is probably stronger in Britain than anywhere else in Europe. Traditions of British insularity play a part.

Since the Thatcher era, Britain has had, as Tony Blair famously commented, "the most restrictive [laws] on trade unions in the western world" (*Daily Mail*, 31 March 1997), and weaker worker-rights laws than most European countries. Right-wingers yearn to improve on that by escaping (mild) EU pressure for improved worker rights (like the Agency Workers' Directive and the Working Time Directive).

Their stance also reflects Britain's closer economic ties with the USA than other European countries'. There is a rational capitalist basis for being reluctant to take Britain into the euro and to want the pound to track both the euro and the US dollar. Small capitalists, whose gaze is fixed on local markets, also tend to be anti-EU.

Many big-business people, seeking the widest possible markets and easiest cross-border flows of capital, fear new economic barriers between countries more than they would value a bit more suppression of workers' rights. They fear that Cameron will stumble into pulling Britain out of the EU.

Others are less concerned, because they reckon that a Britain quitting the EU would still stay within the European Economic Area, like Norway or Iceland, and would thus retain almost all the economic arrangements of the EU.

Socialists neither endorse the capitalist and undemocratic structure of the EU, nor give credence to backward-looking aspirations to improve things by unwinding international economic integration and restoring "economic sovereignty".

Our answer to both capitalist attitudes is workers' unity across Europe, to fight for democracy and workers' rights.

A workers' plan for Europe

Anti-EU feeling has been boosted by the crisis in the eurozone. In Greece and other countries, the EU and the European Central Bank have acted as capitalist enforcers, imposing budget cuts and destruction of worker rights and collective-bargaining structures.

Anti-EUism is no good answer here. The coalition government in Britain is making the same attacks off its own bat, and the stridently anti-EU faction of the Tories wants even more attacks.

A Europe-wide programme, with the potential to unite workers across the continent, is needed to deal with the crisis.

- Tax the rich, Europe-wide.
- Expropriate the banks and the big corporations, Europe-wide. Put them under workers' and democratic control. Gear their resources to the reconstruction of public services, decent jobs, and social welfare.
- Thorough-going democracy across Europe. Social leveling-up across the continent, to the best level of workers' rights and conditions won in any part of it.
- Win workers' governments across Europe, and join them in a democratic federation.

The working class in each country cannot wait for fully-assembled Europe-wide unity before moving. But a single isolated workers' government could only be a temporary makeshift. The workers' revolution would have to spread to other areas quickly, or collapse.

Over 150 years ago, in the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote that "united action, of the leading civilised countries at least, is one of the first conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat", and the international intertwining of the forces of production has increased hugely since then, especially in Europe.

What about referendums?

David Cameron is likely to promise a referendum on British membership of the EU, though he probably won't make clear the terms of it. Labour leader Ed Miliband opposes a referendum "for no", saying it would create "uncertainty for business".

Referendums used to be favoured by radicals as a specially direct and democratic form of political decision-making. Over the later decades of the 19th century, however, Marxists became more critical of "direct legislation" and referendums. In 1875, Frederick Engels, commenting on the Gotha programme of the German socialists, wrote: "legislation by the people... exists in Switzerland and does more harm than good, if it can be said to do anything at all. Administration by the people - that would at least be something".

In his handbook explaining the German socialists' Erfurt programme of 1891, Karl Kautsky noted that some middle-class radicals "have declared in favour of the substitution of direct legislation for legislation by representatives... This may sound very revolutionary, but in reality it indicates nothing but the political bankruptcy of the classes involved".

In the 20th century, referendums were often used by dictatorships or by demagogic politicians. Leon Trotsky commented: "The democratic ritual of Bonapartism is the plebiscite. From time to time the question is put to the citizens: For or against the Leader". In France, Charles De Gaulle, after winning the presidency in 1958 through a soft military coup, staged referendums to bolster (or try to bolster) himself politically five times between 1958 and 1969.

Referendums are necessarily more or less skewed by being yes/no votes on propositions, usually formulated by incumbent governments, which may be unclear or blur over other more important choices. Referendums can work against, rather than for, informed debate and accountability, which are the core of genuine control by the people over public affairs.

A "Britain out" vote in an EU referendum, for example, would be an amalgam of quite varied opinions, from the Norway/EEA option to autarky, from a desire to turn Britain into an offshore sweatshop to (illusory) hopes of socialism in one country, from passionate hatred of the EU to indifference combined with a wish to punish the government politically.

Since the current forms of representative democracy are so clogged up and unresponsive, sometimes socialists do support referendums. In the run-up to World War Two, for example, the US Representative Louis Ludlow campaigned for an amendment to the US Constitution to bar the government from declaring war without a prior referendum (unless the US had been attacked first).

The US Trotskyists at first opposed the Ludlow amendment, but Leon Trotsky persuaded them they should back it. "The capitalists want free hands for international manoeuvring, including a declaration of war.... The average citizen... and even the farmer and the worker... are all looking for a brake upon the bad will of big business. In this case they name the brake the referendum. We know that the brake is not sufficient and even not efficient and we openly proclaim this opinion, but at the same time we are ready to help the little man go through his experience against the dictatorial pretensions of big business..."

In the current case, a referendum on the EU would be more a lever for anti-EU demagoguery than even a partial brake on capitalist arrogance.

Help us raise

£15,000!

It's looking like it'll be a challenge for us to meet our £15,000 target by May Day. Donations have slowed recently – in the last two weeks we've raised just £210.

Asking our members and supporters – predominantly working-class people without much spare cash – for extra donations is always tough, particularly in the current climate.

But, as distant as it may seem, its only by organisations and newspapers like ours growing that "the current climate" can be meaningfully changed. That spare fiver donated to a class-struggle socialist organisation contributes to a fight for a world where none of us will have to scabble around for the bus fare or the weekly food shop, but where human needs are met through democratically-planned social provision.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, and our newspaper *Solidarity*, aims to educate working-class activists in revolutionary socialist ideas so we can transform our movement so that it can build such a world. Help us by donating to our appeal.

Help us raise £15,000 by May Day 2013. You can contribute in the following ways:

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at www.workersliberty.org/resources. Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.

- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at www.workersliberty.org/donate.

- Organising a fundraising event.

- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.

- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.



Total raised so far: £6,956

We raised £100 this week from donations and literature sales. Thanks to Kate and Todd.

Standing order authority

To: (your bank)

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Account name:

Account no:

Sort code:

Please make payments to the debit of my account: Payee: Alliance for Workers' Liberty, account no. 20047674 at the Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place, Birmingham B1 2HB (08-60-01)

Amount: £ to be paid on the day of (month) 20 (year) and thereafter monthly until this order is cancelled by me in writing. This order cancels any previous orders to the same payee.

Date

Signature

Greek workers fight

By Theodora Polenta

With 1.5 million unemployed and 30% of the population uninsured, with slashed wages and pensions not being enough to cover basic needs like food and heating, the need for healthcare in Greece has grown.

Published data for the last two years is shocking: the use of drugs associated with cardiovascular problems has risen by 36%. One in six people have psychiatric problems; anti-depressant use increased by 40%, anti-psychotics by 32%.

The government is doing nothing to meet this increased need — quite the opposite.

Five austerity programmes within the space of two and a half years have reduced the health system in Greece to the level of a developing country and stripped working people of the basic right to adequate medical care.

In order to save €1.74 billion, patient contributions for basic drugs are to be increased, expenditure by public hospitals on medicines is to be reduced, and overtime work by doctors restricted.

Plans for hospital “reform” to reduce costs will result in more staff reductions. From 2014, an increase in the daily fee for hospitalisation will be increased — from the current €10 to €25. This will discourage pensioners, the homeless, and

families with children from seeking emergency hospital treatment.

The three-party coalition government plans to merge (i.e., shut down) 50 hospitals, closing 631 clinical units and scrapping 10,400 beds! The Minister of Health has already cut 4,000 hospital beds, cut in half hospital psychiatric treatment and cut beds in “intensive” units. Medical tests which were free have been reduced or abolished.

The EOPYY (National Health Service), the new single health insurer, is 40% funded by the Greek social security system (IKA), with payments being prioritised to private clinics, diagnostic centres, etc. From this month, the wages of the hospital staff (60% of operating costs) will be covered exclusively by the imposed hospital fees. In other words the state is withdrawing from its minimum legislated obligation to support “self-funded” hospitals.

Provincial hospitals in northern Greece, Evia, and Crete, are being transformed into health centres, provoking the mobilisation of local communities.

The Bank of Greece, with its unknown shareholders, on the eve of the deal under which outstanding Greek government bonds were swapped for new ones of lower face value, decided to “invest” hospital funds in government bonds. That resulted in a 70% drop in those funds.

RELIANT

More people are reliant on the national health service as they cannot afford private treatment. This puts greater pressure on hospitals which are already underfunded and collapsing.

Most hospitals lack essential basic materials such as disposable gloves, plasters and catheters.

Spanish health workers say:

Basta ya de recortes! Enough of the cuts!

By Rebecca Galbraith and Bob Sutton

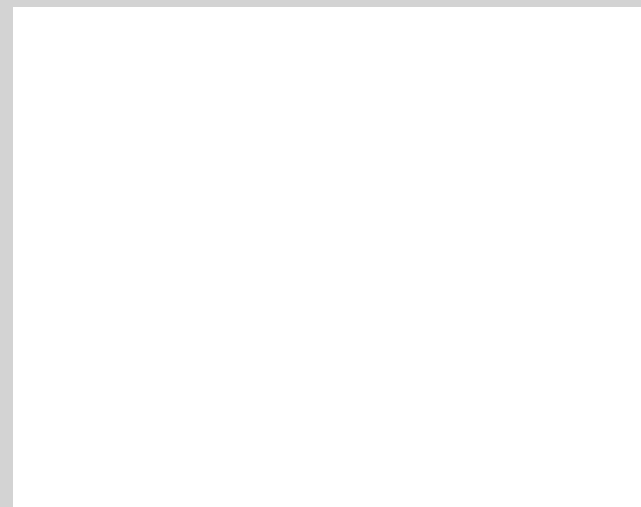
The Spanish government has been using the economic crisis as an excuse to make healthcare profitable. Against the cuts and privatisation, healthcare workers and communities have been fighting back.

In December a two day strike in Madrid against the privatisation of healthcare saw most hospital services in the capital city closed. 3,000 protestors held hands and surrounded one of the main hospitals, La Princesa, opposing the proposals to turn 6 public hospitals, 27 public healthcare centres and 269 public health assistance centres into business companies.

There have also been a four-day strike of Madrid Health Centres, three demonstrations led by White Tsunami (the healthcare campaign), and an indefinite strike called by a collective of doctors.

November saw an occupation of La Princesa and two other hospitals, Hospital del Henares and Indant a Leonor. Emi, a worker at Hospital del Henares said, “They’ve left us no choice, (we) have to move because if we don’t, we’ll be eaten alive, us and (the) patients.”

The wave of healthcare protests has not been limited to Madrid. In December hospital workers in Barcelona occupied the hall of Sant Pau Hospital to protest against cuts.



Their occupation lasted for 36 days. It came to an end because they didn’t manage to mobilise the bulk of hospital employees; but the action helped to catalyse the local developing anti-cuts movement.

The occupation organised regular assemblies, children’s activities, talks, and even the odd opera performance! The

occupation was precipitated by the axing of 84 beds and four jobs, a decrease in the quality of the service, huge waiting lists, a 5% pay cut and the ending of the Christmas bonus. The battle was ultimately over the future of healthcare.

The occupation at quickly spread from Sant Pau, and workers from several other big hospitals in Catalonia started work-ins to fight “for the healthcare we need and not just the one we can pay for”.

After 1 February, when Jeremy Hunt makes his final decision, workers and campaigners at Lewisham Hospital will be faced with decisions about what we can do to defend our hospital. Action in the health service isn’t common in the UK’s recent history; it could be useful over the next weeks to talk with workers from Spain who have been involved in these occupations and strikes, to find out how they got the actions going, and to hear their reflections about what worked and what didn’t in mobilising workers and supporters. The actions in Spain show that strikes and occupations are possible and that they require serious planning and support.

As a doctor involved in the Sant Pau hospital occupation said: “Fighting for something you really care about is not as complicated as it might at first appear. In struggle you realise that you win more than you lose.”

ht for healthcare

Poorer women have to give birth at home because they cannot afford a hospital birth, which can cost €700-€1,500. Children can only be vaccinated with cash payments.

Control of infectious diseases is no longer guaranteed due to the lower standards of hygiene throughout Greece. Chronic respiratory diseases, skin diseases, and tuberculosis are all on the increase. Outbreaks of malarial infections have been reported in five parts of the country (the disease had been thought to be eradicated in 1974).

“We have children who are starving, dehydrated babies”, complains Nikitas Kanakis, president of the network Doctors of the World.

At the same time, the country is suffering from an unprecedented exodus of doctors. Due to the austerity measures, a consultant will earn just €1,007 a month from January 2014. This is less than a quarter of what she or he could expect in Germany.

While the poor and working people of Greece are exposed to these inhumane conditions, the wealthy are increasingly turning to medical care abroad. Hospitals in Northern Europe report an increase in operations for patients from the south of the eurozone. The Greek left needs to urgently organise resistance to the privatisation and the dismantling of public health. Such things as sabotaging (i.e., refusing to collect) the €5 entrance fees are a place to start.

Direct taxation of the capitalist class can ensure health care is completely public, free, and fair for all. A united front is needed, made up of trade unions, committees of hospital workers, neighbourhood assemblies and committees, workers from other parts of the public and private sector.

That kind of organisation can reverse the Memorandum health policy and contribute to the overthrow of the three-party coalition government.

Health workers’ general strike

A 24-hour nationwide strike and rally in Athens has been called for Thursday 31 January by healthworker unions.

Doctors, nurses and hospital staff are joining forces in order to confront the Memorandum.

The strike follows many mobilisations of hospital workers in recent months; action which have successfully prevented closures and mergers under government “restructuring” plans.

Doctor’s union OENGE has said: “The Health Ministry is keen to show a reduction in hospital beds by 11,000 and merging or closing 660 departments and clinics. The cut in the state budget for ‘doctors on call’ by 45 million euros is outrageous and will exacerbate the precarious conditions of emergency services”.

The strike needs to be organised with general meetings, and debates in all hospitals. Its success will pave the way for escalation of the struggle and development of multiple form of actions such as strikes, sit-ins, occupations, demonstrations in coordination and cooperation with the rest of the public sector workers whose jobs are threatened, as well as with local neighborhood assemblies and neighborhood community movements.

The first step towards the coordination of public sector workers (and a united front of all) was achieved by those who participated in strikes and occupations last December.

Kilkis hospital in northern Greece, occupied in May 2012

Case Study: Patisia

Since 2011 all Greek governments have been working at closing down hospitals in order to reduce numbers to 80 in place of the existing 131. The three hospitals of Patisia (Athens) are among the first victims of this policy.

Until June 2011 the three hospitals in Patisia — General Hospital Patision with 110 beds, 7th IKA with 100 beds and Pammakaristos with 200 beds, together with Agia Olga at Nea Ionia, with 280 beds — met the needs of one million people in Athens and several neighboring municipalities.

Between these four hospitals, there was coverage for emergencies almost every day of the year. Despite their relatively small size, the four hospitals dealt with large numbers of people, providing superior service.

On the initiative of their doctors they developed specialist services which patients from larger hospitals often turned to. Thousands of people have signed petitions against the closure of these hospitals.

The lousy argument used by the government and its media parrots is that these hospitals have low occupancy (i.e. are inefficient). But this intentionally conceals the fact that these hospitals had a very high occupancy until 2010.

During 2007, the doctors of the General Hospital Patision organised dynamic protests over how emergency attendance via ambulance was exceeding the capabilities of the hospital. Decreases in hospital attendance after 2011 are down to government policy: decimating staff (not filling vacancies and recruitment freezes); dramatically reducing funding, in particular that associated with emergency services; abolishing or greatly reducing emergency services and hence the ability of patients to access them.

Since 2010 the general hospital of Patision has been staffed by two pathologists, two cardiologists, three surgeons. For a year the CT scanner was switched off (the maintenance of it costs €1200 euros per month), and for 15 months the blood centre had only one doctor.

Pammakaristos has the lowest ratio of nurses to beds across the country.

When one pathologist at the 7th IKA retired, it was left with only one pathologist. That virtually stopped emergency operations and other units (biopathology, cardiologists, surgeons) were transferred gradually to the Agia Olga. The government preferred to do that instead of hiring temporary staff or an auxiliary pathologist. There was a gradual wind down. In March 2012 the emergency unit was

stopped and in September 2012 the government decided to transfer doctors and staff to Agia Olga and Holy Anargyroi Kato Kifissia Hospital. In the 7th IKA there are now only dialysis machines with very low levels of safety for patients as there is no longer anaesthesiology coverage. Meanwhile valuable equipment, such as the magnetic scanner, remains unused.

The closing down of 7th IKA was done supposedly in order to enhance the operations of Agia Olga and Holy Anargyroi hospitals. An emergency service was introduced at Holy Anargyroi hospital, but it is very difficult to reach, served by only one bus line.

In this way the government has achieved the closing down of the 7th IKA, which until one and a half years ago had a fully functioning emergency service. It has made valuable equipment unusable, and filled the Agia Olga hospital with surgeons from the former 7th IKA who have no space even to sit.

In July 2011 Loverdos suggested that the general hospital Patision become a health centre and its staff transfer to the Holy Anargyroi hospital. The plan was withdrawn after the fierce protests of the hospital workers and residents and the neighbourhood committees in the area. However it was decided that the administrative interface of the Pammakaristos would be with Agia Olga hospital and that of the general hospital Patision would be with Holy Anargyroi hospital.

SEVERE

Since then, Patision and Pammakaristos have become poor relatives, facing severe shortages of staffing and funding.

The government wants to close these two hospitals and merge them with Agia Olga and Holy Anargyroi hospitals, starting, again, among other things, with the discontinuation of the clinical pathology service. Other consultancy specialties are under extinction. Meanwhile the government propagates the usual garbage about the lack of efficiency of the hospitals.

The general hospital Patision had serious shortages of doctors and staff even before the advent of the memoranda. Those were partially covered by temporary doctors. The deficiencies began to take a more dramatic form during the memorandum years due to the cumulative effects of retirements and a freeze on recruitment of both permanent and temporary staff.

Nevertheless, thanks to the heroic efforts of staff, until March 2012 an emergency service was readily accessible to the residents of the neighborhood.

From March 2012 the emergency service was stopped due to the halving of the overtime paid to doctors and consultants.

These policies have deprived Athens of 100 of 700 hospital beds and reduced emergency 24-hour coverage in the region. If the plans are not halted, an additional 300 beds will be lost.

The unions of the general hospital Patision and the 7th IKA, together with residents and collectives in the region, have now been fighting for one and half years to prevent the closure of Patision. In this fight they have as their allies the political parties, collectives and local parties of the left.

At this crucial hour we need an escalation of the struggle, in which the forces of the left should take the lead. We lost the battle of the 7th IKA, but we must not lose the war.

Where will SWP opposition go?

By Martin Thomas

The row in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) is heading for a split. The opposition, which now has a public website, internationalsocialismuk.blogspot.co.uk, is calling for an SWP special conference and the removal of the current Central Committee and Disputes Committee.

The Central Committee (CC) has set an arbitrary deadline of 1 February for SWP branch motions requisitioning a special conference, and seems to want to see off the opposition at a meeting of a broader SWP committee, the National Committee, on 3 February.

It is trying to marginalise the opposition with circulars declaring: "There are some people who want to replace a Marxist analysis of women's liberation with one centred on patriarchy theory. Others believe that changes in capitalism have altered the structure of the working class so fundamentally that it is no longer the key element in the battle for socialism..."

In fact the opposition remains, in general politics, very SWP-orthodox.

A central fact in the crisis is a radical decline, over recent years, in the political authority among SWP members of the SWP Central Committee. Some oppositionists will start looking to other groups claiming to represent the broad political tradition of the SWP — maybe to the international network of groups claiming the same broad ideological tradition as the SWP, but out of favour with the SWP itself, notably ISO (USA), Socialist Alternative (Australia), and DEA (Greece).

These all more-or-less paralleled the SWP's pro-Islamist turn after 2001-2 (although they had all separated from the SWP by then). They have never questioned the SWP's 1987-8 turn to endorsing almost any militantly anti-US force as anti-imperialist and hence progressive.

But DEA shows non-sectarian and effective activity in Syriza, while the "official" SWP-linked group in Greece, SEK, is stuck in a rut of demands for Greece to quit the euro as the banner of supposedly-revolutionary denunciation of Syriza.

ISO offers criticism of the SWP's support for the Muslim Brotherhood in recent elections in Egypt, and dissociation from Atzmon. Socialist Alternative wrote a critique of the SWP's Respect turn.

The ISO and S Alt also offer a more pro-feminist profile than the SWP; but more on that below.

Socialist Alternative has a constitution which explicitly asserts that "members have the right to publicly express disagreement with decisions and policies of the organisation", and does not (like the SWP) limit the right to form factions within the organisation to a short period before each annual conference.

The ISO, by all accounts, has a formal structure much more like the SWP's. It offers a more civilised version of it.

S Alt and DEA originate in rebellions against the turn which the SWP imposed on its international co-thinkers in the early 1990s. The SWP decreed that after a decade of "downturn", the world was entering a new era of huge "volatility", the "1930s in slow motion", opening the way for vast recruitment if only the revolutionary socialist groups turned to it.

The ISO was expelled from the SWP's international network in 2001. It originates from the Independent Socialist Clubs, a grouping started by Hal Draper in 1964. At the origin the ISC had views on Stalinism and on Israel-Palestine close to those of the AWL today.

The ISC renamed themselves "International Socialists" in 1968. In the mid-1970s they went through a factional explosion, as the British SWP/IS sought to establish decisive influence, and splintered into six or seven distinct groups. The ISO was the splinter tied to the British SWP. (Two of the other splinters eventually regrouped with others to form the organisation Solidarity). The "Draperite" heritage seems to have been comprehensively discarded.

Both ISO and S Alt have grown tidily in the last 15 years or so through dogged concentration on high-profile socialist paper sales, stalls, meetings, etc. on university campuses. Their initial criticism of the SWP's desired "turn" of the 1990s was that it lost sight of that necessary basic work in favour of unrealistic schemes. S Alt is said now to have about 250 mem-

bers (making it the biggest revolutionary socialist group in Australia), and the ISO a thousand or so (making it the biggest revolutionary socialist group in the USA, and about as big in real terms as the SWP).

S Alt was long notorious on the Australian left for *almost exclusive* focus on its stalls, meetings, and so on, and reluctance to join broader campaigns or trade-union activity. It has loosened up as it has grown, and has done good work in the campaign to defend victimised trade-unionist (and Workers' Liberty Australia member) Bob Carnegie.

Recently, however, S Alt condemned a large Reclaim The Night march in Melbourne, in terms which are more typical of its attitudes of some years ago.

The 7,000-strong Reclaim The Night march, on 20 October 2012, and an earlier "peace march" of 30,000 on 1 October, followed the abduction, rape, and murder on 22 September 2012, in inner-city Melbourne, of TV journalist Jill Meagher.

S Alt argued that "interest in and mobilisations around street crime, especially that directed against white women and children, will always tend to lead in a pro-state, pro-authority direction". A "moral panic" had been built up around a sympathetic victim, while little attention is paid to Aborigines attacked by police or workers injured or killed at work.

RSP, a group which is merging with S Alt, not only backed the Reclaim The Night march but helped organise it. Kim Bullimore of RSP wrote: "Far from giving 'left cover' to a ruling-class agenda, socialist intervention in the Reclaim the Night marches helped to partially disrupt what the ruling class hoped to make of the public reaction to Meagher's rape and murder".

John Passant, a longtime S Alt member, wrote: "just because the rich and powerful will try to use an issue for their own ends doesn't justify sectarian abstention from a movement that attracted 30,000 people and which did not call for more CCTV cameras, or police or whatever".

Passant says that he asked for his polemic to be published in Socialist Alternative, but it wasn't.

● A longer version of this article online: www.workersliberty.org/iso

Anti-semitic slur on critics of Martin Smith

By Martin Thomas and Ira Berkovic

A new dimension has been added to the crisis in the SWP by Gilad Atzmon declaring that charges of sexual harassment and rape against leading SWP organiser Martin Smith are a "tribal" (read: Jewish) conspiracy.

Atzmon accuses Smith's critics — both in and out of the SWP — as being direct agents of "the Jewish lobby".

Atzmon is a jazz musician of Israeli-Jewish origin who has turned very hostile to Israel and to almost all Jews. He has rejected his own religious, ethno-cultural, and national identities. Anyone is of course perfectly entitled to do that, and it can be a progressive and liberating act for many people. But Atzmon has rejected Jewishness in favour of racist myths about Jews; for a rough analogy, imagine a black person loudly proclaiming their support for the values of the Afrikaner Volksfront.

He denounces even fervently anti-Israeli Jewish activists, such as Mark Elf of the *Jews Sans Frontières* blog, as "AZZ", "anti-Zionist Zionists", and sees them conspiring everywhere.

He speaks of a "Judeocentric tribal coalition" conspiring to "wreck [his] career", and says that the same forces are now "pursuing" Martin Smith directly because of his [Smith's] support for Atzmon.

Atzmon says: "Martin Smith is obviously not a rapist. His only crime so far is supporting Atzmon and refusing to bow to Jewish pressure."

Atzmon refers to the (many) SWP events he played at as "Red gatherings", and speaks of the SWP's "Jewish gate-

Gilad Atzmon

keepers and tribal operators". Atzmon denounces Workers' Liberty as "tribally led", and part of a conspiracy involving forces as diverse as the contrarian right-ish blog *Harry's Place*, the anti-Zionist Jewish activist Tony Greenstein, and the *Socialist Unity* blog (which Atzmon refers to as the "Zionist 'Red' outlet known to many of us as Socialist Jewnity").

Atzmon's recycling of racist tropes about the hidden hand of the Jewish lobby pulling the strings of all political affairs, as well as his repeated use of the term "Red" as a derogatory political slander, place his political discourse on the fascist far-right.

His out-of-hand dismissal of the charges against Martin Smith demonstrate a misogynistic insensitivity to issues of gender violence and sexual abuse (he has been known to use sexist language and images in his writing before).

But Atzmon has been producing this poison for many years. The question that must be asked is why he was courted

by the SWP and heavily promoted as a voice of progressive, if perhaps confused, anti-Zionism.

A 2005 statement defending their promotion of Atzmon, and his repeated presence as a performer at SWP events, said categorically: "The SWP does not believe that Gilad Atzmon is a Holocaust denier or racist." The statement cited the SWP's record of anti-racist and anti-fascist activity — as if the fact that the SWP campaigning against racism meant that anyone they worked with must somehow be anti-racist by association. The same method has been applied in the recent crisis — supporters of the SWP leadership claim that the organisation's record of fighting women's oppression means its leadership cannot be guilty of ignoring oppressive gender roles within the organisation. This kind of appeal to history and "record" is a way of sidestepping and silencing criticism (and, in both cases, the real "record" is much more complicated than the SWP leadership would like to make out).

The SWP's support for and promotion of Atzmon was quietly dropped, without any apology or attempt to take account for why an anti-Jewish hate-monger was promoted by a socialist organisation.

It was bad enough the SWP sponsoring gigs by Atzmon.

The SWP Central Committee has a duty now to clear itself of the taint of political association with Atzmon by publicly dissociating from and denouncing Atzmon's anti-semitic slur on Smith's critics, both within the SWP and outside it.

• For more on Atzmon, including links to his posts and background on the SWP's relationship with him, see <http://bit.ly/U9Exm4>

Three giants of the revolution

January marks the anniversaries of the deaths of three giants of revolutionary socialism — Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and Lenin.

Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg were theorists and organisers of the German working-class revolution of 1918–9. They were executed by the German state, aided by the reformist labour leaders, in January 1919. The articles printed here — Liebknecht's "In spite of all!" and Luxemburg's "Order is established in Berlin" — were their last. The "Spartacus" they refer to is the Spartacus League, the Marxist group around Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and Clara Zetkin which founded the German Communist Party.

Lenin, along with Leon Trotsky, was the main architect of the Russian workers' revolution of 1917, which saw the working class overthrow a Tsarist autocracy and establish a workers' government. He died in January 1924 after a long illness.

Lenin: "Letter to American workers"

The "Letter" is dated August 20, 1918, when America was siding with an Anglo-Japanese military operation against the newly established Soviet government.

The history of modern civilised America opened with one of those great, really liberating, really revolutionary wars of which there have been so few among the large number of wars of conquest that were caused, like the present imperialist war, by squabbles among kings, landowners, and capitalists over the division of seized lands and stolen profits.

It was a war of the American people against English robbers who subjected America and held it in colonial slavery, as these "civilised" blood-suckers are now subjecting and hold in colonial slavery hundreds of millions of people in India, Egypt, and in all corners of the world.

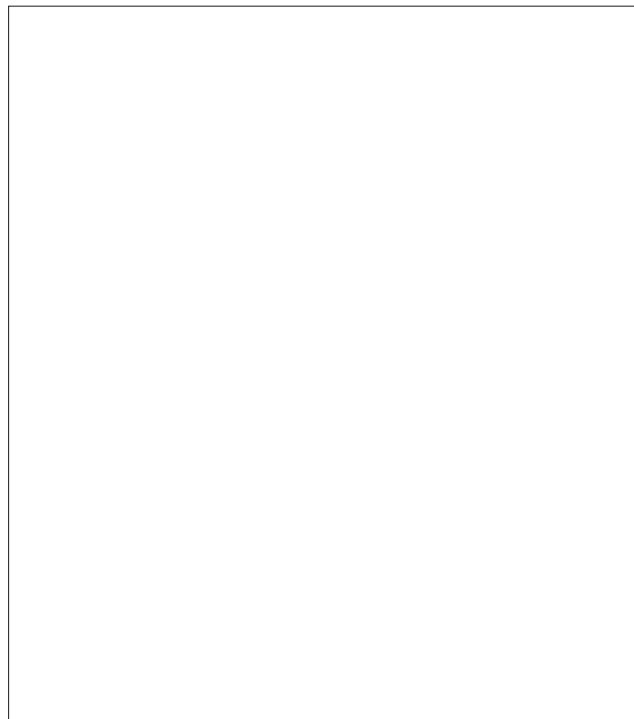
Since that time about 150 years have passed. Bourgeois civilization has borne all its luxuriant fruits. By the high level of development of the productive forces of organised human labour, by utilising machines and all the wonders of modern technic, America has taken the first place among free and cultured nations.

But at the same time America has become one of the foremost countries as regards the depth of the abyss which divides a handful of brazen billionaires who are wallowing in dirt and in luxury on the one hand, and millions of toilers who are always on the verge of starvation. [...]

But four years of the imperialist slaughter of peoples have not passed in vain. Obvious and irrefutable facts have exposed to the end the duping of peoples by the scoundrels of both the English and the German groups of brigands. The four years of war have shown in their results the general law of capitalism as applied to war between murderers for the division of spoils: that he who was richest and mightiest profited and robbed the most; that he who was weakest was robbed, decimated, crushed, and strangled to the utmost.

In the number of "colonial slaves" the English imperialist cut-throats have always been most powerful. English capitalists did not lose a foot of their "own" territory (acquired through centuries of robbery), but have managed to appropriate all the German colonies in Africa, have grabbed Mesopotamia and Palestine, have stifled Greece and have begun to plunder Russia.

German imperialist cut-throats were stronger in regard to the organisation and discipline of "their" armies, but weaker in colonies. They have lost all their colonies, but have robbed half of Europe and throttled most of the small countries and weaker peoples. What a great war of "liberation" on both sides! How well they have "defended the fatherland" — these



From *Socialist Appeal* 22 October 1938

bandits of both groups, the Anglo-French and the German capitalists together with their lackeys, the social-chauvinists, i.e., socialists who went over to the side of "their own" bourgeoisie!

The American billionaires were richest of all and geographically the most secure. They have profited most of all. They have made all, even the richest countries, their vassals. They have plundered hundreds of billions of dollars [...]

And every dollar is stained with blood — of that sea of blood which was shed by the ten million killed and twenty million maimed in the great, noble, liberating, and holy war which was to decide whether the English or the German cut-throats will get more of the spoils, whether the English or the German executioners will be the first to smother the weak peoples the world over.

EUGENE DEBS

I also recall the words of one of the most beloved leaders of the American proletariat, Eugene Debs.

He wrote in the *Appeal to Reason*, I believe toward the end of 1915, in the article, "In Whose War I Will Fight" (I quoted that article in the beginning of 1916 at a public meeting of workers in Berne, Switzerland) that he, Debs, would rather be shot than vote for loans for the present criminal and reactionary imperialist war; that he, Debs, knows of only one holy and, from the standpoint of the proletariat, legal war, namely: the war against the capitalists, the war for the liberation of mankind from wage slavery! [...]

The international imperialist bourgeoisie has killed off ten million men and maimed twenty million in its war, the war to decide whether the English or German robbers are to rule the world.

If our war, the war of oppressed and exploited against oppressors and exploiters, results in half a million or a million victims in all countries, the bourgeoisie will say that the sacrifice of the former is justified while the latter is criminal. [...]

The truth is that there can be no successful revolution without crushing the resistance of the exploiters. It was our duty to crush the resistance of exploiters when we, the workers and toiling peasants, seized power. We are proud that we have been doing it and are continuing to do it.

We only regret that we are not doing it in a sufficiently firm and determined manner. We know that the fierce resistance of the bourgeoisie to the socialist revolution is inevitable in

all countries and that it will grow with the growth of the revolution. The proletariat will crush this resistance; it will definitely mature to victory and power of in the course of struggles against the resisting bourgeoisie.

We know that help from you, comrade American workers, will probably not come soon, for the development of the revolution proceeds with different tempo and in different forms in different countries (and it cannot be otherwise).

We know that the European proletarian revolution also may not blaze forth during the next few weeks, no matter how rapidly it has been ripening lately. We stake our chances on the inevitability of the international revolution, but this in no way means that we are so foolish as to stake our chances on the inevitability of the revolution within a stated short period.

We have seen in our country two great revolutions, in 1905 and in 1917, and we know that revolutions are made neither to order nor by agreement. We know the circumstances brought to the fore our Russian detachment of the socialist proletariat, not by virtue of our merits, but due to the particular backwardness of Russia, and that before the outburst of the international revolution there may be several defeats of separate revolutions.

Despite this, we are firmly convinced that we are invincible, because mankind will not break down under the imperialist slaughter, but will overcome it.

And the first country which demolished the galley chains of imperialist war was our country. We made the greatest of sacrifices in the struggle for the demolition of this chain, but we broke it.

We are beyond imperialist dependence, we raised before the whole world the banner of struggle for the complete overthrow of imperialism.

Karl Liebknecht: "In spite of all!"

Liebknecht wrote this article for the paper *Rote Fahne* (Red Flag) on the day before his murder.

General storm against Spartacus! "Down with the Spartacists!" The shouts resound through the side-streets. "Seize them, shoot them, trample them underfoot, tear them to pieces!" Atrocities which put those of the German troops in Belgium into the shade are committed everywhere. [...]

"Spartacus smashed!" Yes, the revolutionary workers of Berlin have been defeated, hundreds of their best have been thrown into prison.

Yes, they are defeated, for they were abandoned by the sailors, by the soldiers, by the security guards, by the people's guard, whose help they firmly expected.

Their strength was wasted by the indecision and weakness of their leaders and the immense counter-revolutionary backwash of the propertied classes overwhelmed and drowned them. [...]

But there are defeats which are victories and victories which are defeats. The vanquished of the bloody January week have fought gloriously.

They have fought for a great cause, for the noblest aims of suffering humanity, for the mental and material salvation of the tortured masses. [...]

The proletariat still lacks revolutionary tradition and experiences, and only by tentative actions and youthful errors, by painful defeats and failures, can it gain the practical training which guarantees its future success. [...]

The defeated of today have already learned, they have recovered from the insanity of relying upon leaders who have proved weak and incapable, they have recovered from a be-

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

lief in the Independent Social-Democratic Party which has abandoned them despicably. Relying only on themselves, they will fight their own future battles in the future, and win their future victories.

And the truth that the liberation of the working class can only be the work of the working class, has received a new and deeper significance through the bitter experience of this week. [...]

Spartacus smashed? Not so fast! We have not fled, we are not defeated, and if they fetter us, we are there, and we remain there. And victory will be ours.

For Spartacus means fire and spirit; means soul and heart; means will and action of the proletarian revolution; means all the suffering and longing for happiness, all the determination of the class-conscious proletariat to struggle. For Spartacus means socialism and world revolution. [...]

Whether we still live when the end is attained, our programme will live. It will rule the world of a liberated humanity. In spite of everything!

Rosa Luxemburg: “Order is established in Berlin”

Luxemburg wrote this article the day before her murder. It was published in *Rote Fahne* on the day she died.

“Order is established in Warsaw,” reported Minister Sebastiani in 1831 to the Paris Chamber, when, after the terrible storming of the suburb of Praga, and the taking of Warsaw, the soldier gangs of Paskievitsch commenced their hangman’s work amongst the rebels.

“Order is established in Berlin!” triumphantly announces [President Friedrich] Ebert, announces [Defence Minister Gustav] Noske, announce the officers of the “victorious troops” to whom the Berlin petty bourgeois mob waved their handkerchiefs and hurrahd!

The glory and honour of the German arms are saved before the world! The deplorably defeated of Flanders and the Argonne have re-established their reputation by their glorious victory, over the three hundred Spartacists in the *Vorwärts* building [*Vorwärts* was the newspaper of the Social Democratic Party]. The days of the first glorious invasion of Belgium by German troops, the days of General von Emmich, the conquerer of Luttich, pale into insignificance before the deeds of [Colonel] Reinhard and his comrades in the streets of Berlin.

The massacre of the delegates sent out to negotiate the surrender of the *Vorwärts* building, the delegates who were beaten unrecognisable with rifle butts by the soldiers of the government so that the identification of the bodies was impossible; the prisoners who were put up against a wall and murdered in such a manner that skulls were smashed and brains scattered — who would remember, in the face of such glorious deeds and the shameful defeats before the French, the English and the Americans? “Spartacus” is the enemy and Berlin is the place where our officers know how to fight; and Noske, the “worker”, is the general who knows how to succeed where Ludendorff has failed.

Who does not remember at this time the victory madness of the “law and order” gang in Paris, the Bacchanal of the bourgeoisie over the bodies of the fighters of the Commune, the same bourgeoisie who had just previously miserably capitulated before the Prussians, surrendered their capital city to the external enemy and themselves fled like the cowards they were. But against the half-starved and badly armed proletariat of Paris, against their defenceless wives and children — how did the manly courage of the sons of the bourgeoisie, of the “golden youth,” of the officers, recover itself! How did the bravery of the sons of Mars, which had so drooped before the eternal enemy, recover itself in bestial atrocities on the unarmed, on the prisoners, on the dead!

“Order is established in Warsaw!” “Order is established in Paris!” “Order is established in Berlin!” So run the reports of the defenders of order every half-century from the one center of the world historical fight to the other. And the joyous “victors” do not understand that an “order” which requires peri-

Lenin; Karl Liebknecht; Rosa Luxemburg

odical and bloody massacres for its maintenance inevitably approaches its historical fate — collapse. [...]

THE COURSE OF THE SPARTACIST REVOLUTION
Confronted with the fact, the insolent provocation of the Ebert-Scheidemanns, the revolutionary working class was forced to take up arms.

The honour of the revolution demanded the immediate repulse of the attack with all energy, otherwise the counter-revolution would have been encouraged to further attacks and the revolutionary ranks of the proletariat, and the moral credit of the German revolution in the International, shaken.

The immediate opposition came spontaneously and with such natural energy from Berlin masses that from the first the moral victory lay with the “street”.

It is an axiom of the revolution never to remain in inactivity after the first successful step. The best manifestation of power is a heavy blow. This elementary rule of struggle dominates especially every step of the revolution. It is natural and is proof of the healthy instincts, and of the fresh power of the Berlin proletariat, that it did not content itself with the reinstatement of Eichhorn but that it spontaneously occupied the most powerful posts of the counter revolution — the bourgeois press buildings, the buildings of the semi-official news service and the *Vorwärts* building.

All these measures resulted from the instinctive knowledge of the workers that the counter-revolution would not remain inactive under its defeat, but would force a general trial of strength.

Here we stand before one of the great historical laws of the revolution, against which all the pedantic cleverness of the little revolutionists of the Independent Social-Democratic Party, who in each fight merely search for pretexts to retreat, are wrecked. Immediately the basic problem of the revolution is defined, and in this revolution it is the overthrow of the Ebert-Scheidemann government as the first hindrance for the victory of socialism.

It confronts us again and again in all its actuality in every single episode of the fight, may the revolution be ever so unready for its solution, may the situation be ever so unripe. “Down with the Ebert-Scheidemanns”, this slogan confronts us in every revolutionary crisis as the only exhaustive formula in all partial conflicts, and through its own inner objective logic, whether one will or not, forces every episode of the fight to its utmost point.

From this contradiction between the sharpening of the task and the lack of the preliminary conditions for its solution in the opening phases of the revolutionary development, results that the partial struggles of the revolution formally end with defeats. The revolution is the only form of war — it is its special axiom — in which the final victory can only be prepared by a number of defeats. [...]

What does the whole history of modern revolution and of socialists show? The first outbreaks of the class struggle in

Europe — the revolt of the Lyons silk weavers ended in a heavy defeat; the Chartist movement in England, in a defeat; the revolt of the Paris proletariat in June, 1848, with a crushing defeat; the Paris Commune of 1871 ended with a terrible defeat; the whole path of socialism, so far as revolutionary fights are concerned, is paved with defeats.

And yet this same history leads inevitably, step by step, to the final end! Where would we be today without these “defeats” from which we have drawn our historical experience, knowledge, power idealism? Today, when we are near the final struggle of the proletarian class wars, we base ourselves on these defeats, with none of which we can dispense, each one is a part of our strength and understanding. [...]

However, under one condition: it is a question under what circumstances the defeats have been suffered, whether they resulted from the pressure of the advancing masses against the limits of the immature historical preliminary conditions or whether the defeats of the revolutionary actions were, caused through half-heartedness, indecision or internal weakness.

Classic examples for both cases are on the one hand the French February Revolution, and on the other the German March Revolution. The heroic action of the Paris proletariat in 1848 has become a living source of class energy for the whole international proletariat. The poverty of the German March Revolution has dragged upon the whole modern revolution like a manacle...

THE REVOLUTION WILL RISE AGAIN MAJESTIC
How does the defeat of “Spartacus week” appear in the light of the above historic problem? Did it result from the pressure of the advancing masses against the limits of the immature situation, or did it arise from the weaknesses and half-heartedness of the action?

Both! The double character of this fight, the contradiction between the powerful, determined, offensive attitude of the Berlin masses and the indecision, hesitation and half-heartedness of the Berlin leaders are the special characteristics of this episode.

The leaders have failed. But leaders can and must be newly created out of the masses and by the masses. The masses are the deciding factor, they are the rock on which the final victory of the revolution is based. The masses were on the heights, they have forged this “defeat” as a link in the chain of those defeats that are the pride and the strength of international socialism. And therefore the future victory will spring from this “defeat”.

“Order is established in Berlin!” You fools! Your “order” is built on sand! Tomorrow the revolution will arise again majestic and to your terror announce with a voice of thunder: “I was, I am, I am to be!”

● Adapted from *Labor Action* (newspaper of the dissident American Trotskyist group, the Workers Party) of 25 January 1943.

HMV workers occupy as retailers massacre jobs

By Ira Berkovic

15,000 retail workers could lose their jobs, as a string of high-street chains enter administration and look set to close down.

HMV, Jessops, Blockbuster, and Comet have all collapsed in the space of only two months. Since the start of the financial crisis in 2007, other major high-street retailers, including Woolworths and JJB Sports, have gone under.

Blockbuster, the most recent chain to enter administration, is trying to find a buyer for all or part of its business. Lee Manning, from administrator Deloitte, said they were hope-

ful of keeping more than 50% of stores open, but accepted that "an appreciable proportion" would have to close. The company had an £11.2 million deficit in 2012.

HMV's British stores

have remained open thus far, despite being in administration, but its Irish stores were closed summarily after its Irish operation was placed in receivership. Workers at two stores, in Limerick, staged a sit-in on

Wednesday 16 January after management failed to guarantee that they would be paid wages owing to them.

ACTION

They ended their action on 19 January after guarantees from administrators that they would be paid all wages due to them.

Irish retail workers have a recent history of such actions. Workers at the lingerie store La Senza held sit-ins to demand backpay after the company announced the closure of three shops.

High-street retailers are almost entirely unionised in Britain. At Woolworths,

the one chain that did have union agreements, retail union USDAW played a wretched role and failed to mount even the most minimal fight against closures, limiting itself to advising members on how to get the best redundancy package possible.

Where possible, workers should take direct action against closure, which may at least secure them back-pay they are owed.

And unions must immediately launch organising drives in the sector to make sure that the next time a firm announces administration or closure, its staff are ready to fight back.

Tube drivers' safety action hits service

By Ollie Moore

Industrial action by Tube workers' unions RMT and ASLEF on the Bakerloo Line is having a huge impact, with passengers reporting delays of up to 27 minutes.

Tube drivers are refusing to take trains into sidings or depots before personally performing safety checks to make sure they are clear of passengers. Last year there were over 3,000 passenger over-carries into the sidings at Queens Park station alone - far more than on any other line. These nearly resulted in the death of a 12-year old boy.

Safety checks prior to detrainment had previously been carried out by

station staff, but job cuts have effectively led to corners being cut.

An RMT statement said: "Since the drivers' action started, London Underground's official response has been that there are 'minor delays on the Bakerloo Line due to operational issues.' The truth is that tube bosses are deliberately misinforming the public of the real extent and nature of the disruption to the service.

"While tube bosses go out their way to aggravate drivers, passengers are feeling the pain. London Underground bosses' response has meant severe delays on the Bakerloo Line and dangerous overcrowding on platforms as passengers are forced back into ticket halls unable to

get on trains.

"London Underground's traveling public are being lied to and abused. Passengers on the Bakerloo Line deserve better."

33 sacked Bakerloo Line station staff formerly employed by the Trainpeople agency are also continuing their campaign for jobs, holding weekly demonstrations to demand London Underground reinstate them. LUL is spending over £300,000 replacing workers who were already trained and in post.

The RMT is balloting all remaining Trainpeople employees on London Underground for strikes to demand justice for the 33 sacked workers.

University and College Union (UCU) members at Halesowen are fighting to win the reinstatement of four maths lecturers, including UCU branch secretary Dave Muritu.

All four are prominent UCU activists, and the union claims that the college's disciplinary procedures were not followed during the dismissals. UCU accuses the college of anti-union victimisation.

The campaign has already held a number of protests, as well as gaining over 11,000 signatures on a petition backing the sacked workers.

UCU is now balloting its members at the college for strikes. The results of the strike ballot are expected to be known by Saturday 26 January, the campaign's next day of action.

• Sign the petition at <http://chn.ge/X6CazL>



Mid Yorks NHS workers to strike again?

By Clarke Benitez

Clerical workers at Pinderfields, Pontefract, and Dewsbury hospitals may strike again, after unions rejected management's latest offer in a pay dispute.

Mid Yorkshire NHS Trust bosses want to make £24 million cuts by downgrading the salaries of medical secretaries and

other clerical workers, leading to pay cuts of £2,800 for some. Unison members have already struck for four days against the proposals.

Workers are angry that, despite the alleged need for cuts, the trust has continued to pay millions to consultancy firms. Since December 2011, it has paid Ernst & Young £3.3 million.

Honda job cuts

By Darren Bedford

Car manufacturer Honda will cut over 1,000 jobs from its plant in Swindon, with 800 permanent and 325 temporary staff set to go.

Unite officer Tony Murphy said: "It's a tragedy for our members and their families. There's no doubt these cuts will have a significant knock-on impact on the supply chain, and on local shops and services. That is why we intend to save as many jobs as possible.

"Unite will oppose any compulsory job losses. We expect Honda to negotiate meaningfully with the union in order to mitigate

the impact of these cuts. Unite will be meeting with our local union reps in the coming days to discuss the company's proposals."

The union must be quicker off the mark than it was when Ford announced job cuts and plant closures in Southampton and Dagenham. A Ford union rep told *Solidarity*: "The first day the closure was announced, we should have walked out and been demonstrating outside the plant."

Unite officer Vince Passfield has since said that the union continues to "consider all options" for action at the Dagenham plant, and is "not ruling anything out".



Fire fighters lobby against cuts

By Jack Horner

Around 500 firefighters and supporters lobbied the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority on 21 January in protest at plans to close 12 fire stations and cut 520 firefighter jobs.

A noisy and vocal lobby heard FBU general secretary Matt Wrack calls for communities to "take over" their fire stations threatened with closure, while RMT general secretary Bob Crow and other speakers called for a general strike against the cuts.

A number of speakers pointed to recent fires where firefighters from stations threatened with closure saved lives after a quick response. Firefighters from Clapham fire station, one of the 12 under threat, arrived in four minutes to the helicopter crash in Vauxhall and rescued the driver of a burning car. The authority plan sets a six minute response target, which would have meant certain death at that incident.

The lobby had some immediate success. An amendment from Labour members, supported by Liberal Democrat and Green members was passed at the authority meeting, rejecting the parts of the draft Fifth London Safety Plan dealing with the fire station closures and firefighter job cuts.

The decision now goes to mayor Boris Johnson.

• Abridged from <http://bit.ly/V2JBWM>

Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

Mali: into an imperial quagmire

By Colin Foster

The French military intervention in Mali promises no better than the US military intervention in Afghanistan since 2001. Or even worse.

The French troops may be able to push the Islamist militias out of the cities of Mali's north-west. But, when the Islamists have retreated to the vast remotenesses of the desert, then what?

Both French president Francois Hollande and British prime minister David Cameron have been trying to prepare public opinion for the operation lasting a long time, maybe decades. The French military are likely to be propping up corrupt and vicious regimes, antagonising the local people by imperial arrogance, and pushing recruits into the hands of the Islamists.

The USA never reckoned to keep troops long in Afghanistan, and at the start had apparently solid local allies. France has been interfering in Mali for 133 years now, with bad results, and has been pulled in by a collapse of the local regime.

The first result of the new French intervention was an Islamist retaliation raid (16 January) on a big gas facility in Algeria: about 40 workers taken hostage were killed when the Algerian army counter-attacked.

Mali is a big country, five times the land area of the UK, but very poor. Its GDP per head, \$1100, is only just ahead of Afghanistan's (\$1000).

It was, or rather the land area now called Mali was, grabbed by France in 1880, during the European powers' scramble to carve up Africa. It was kept under colonial rule until 1960. Walter Rodney's book *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* cites Mali as a prime exam-

French troops in Mali

ple of Africans being forced by gun and whip to grow cash crops.

Its boundaries were drawn arbitrarily by colonial competition and administrative convenience. The desert and semi-desert north-west, two-thirds of the country's area but home to only 1.3 million of its 15.5 million people, is linguistically and culturally distinct from the south and east.

In late 2011 the fall of Qaddafi's tyranny in Libya sent many Malians recruited by him as mercenaries returning home, with weapons. Armed revolt increased by the Tuaregs, a mostly nomadic desert people, spread across many countries, and a large part though not a majority of the population of Mali's north-west.

On 22 March 2012 a military coup in Mali's capital, Bamako (in the south), overthrew the notoriously corrupt regime of Amadou Toumani Touré (ATT). The officers leading the coup cited ATT's inefficiency in fighting the Tuareg revolt. The result, however, was that the Tuareg militia MNLA took the biggest city in the north-west, Timbuktu, population 50,000, on 1 April.

On 2 April an alliance of Islamist militias, well-funded from Saudi Arabia

and Qatar, and with bases also in Algeria and Mauritania, ousted the secular MNLA and seized Timbuktu in their turn. By late June the Islamists dominated the north-west.

On 11 January France sent planes and then troops because the Islamists were advancing. By all accounts the Islamist militias have no popular support even in the north-west, count only a few thousand fighters, and are a not-necessarily-solid alliance. But the Malian army is said to have a real strength of only 5000.

TUAREG ALLY

The Tuareg MNLA has offered to ally with the French in fighting the Islamists, in the hope of getting a deal which would give some power to the MNLA and autonomy for the north-west.

In the capital, Bamako, says French expert André Bourgeot, choosing his words carefully, "little tri-colour flags are being sold on some streets, and some people are buying them".

But the *Financial Times* describes what has happened *already* in Mali — not a pessimistic projection of prospects — as a "boomerang from Washington's war on terror".

France's involvement in Mali is on a different level.

Mostly when colonial peoples in Africa and Asia declared independence from former European rulers, between the 1940s and the 1970s, they really did become politically independent, though not, of course, economically independent from the often crippling impacts of a world market dominated by the richer states and the big multinationals.

French west Africa was different. The French imperialists' slogan was "partir pour mieux rester" — quitting, the better to stay — and they carried it out.

"Independent" African governments were run by French "advisers". In the first ten years after independence, the number of French expatriates more than doubled. France intervened militarily, to rescue or depose governments, 40 times between 1960 and the end of the Cold War.

Since the mid-1990s, FrancAfrique has eroded. China is now Mali's foremost export destination; France has run down its permanent military bases in west Africa, since February 2010 retaining only one in Gabon.

Yet large residues of FrancAfrique remain, and the French military intervention in Mali may well bring a reversion to outright neo-colonialism. According to Paul Martial (on www.npa2009.org), the giant French firm Bouygues runs electricity distribution in Mali and is involved in gold-mining too.

Other French firms are big in the cotton industry and in mobile telephony. Areva has an important uranium mine just over the border in Niger, another former French colony.

• Longer version: www.workersliberty.org/mali

London teachers want plan to fight on pay

By Joe Flynn, Croydon NUT (pc)

More than 250 people attended the pay briefing organised for National Union of Teachers (NUT) reps in London on snowy Saturday 19 January.

The "briefing" section of the meeting was kept mercifully short; General Secretary Christine Blower made some introductory remarks which implied that "action", presumably including strike action, was necessary in the face the government intention to effectively abolish teachers' pay scales, the continuation of 0-1% pay "rises" and the introduction of performance related pay.

She reminded the members that the union has a live ballot and we would not need to vote again in order to strike.

REPRESENTATIVE
The meeting was much more representative of the union membership than the average London region or association meeting.

For the first 40 or so minutes of the discussion the overwhelming majority of the speakers were women and not known activists.

Speakers avoided the perennial union/left problem of waffling on for ages, so we heard from a lot of reps. The overwhelmingly message was that the union must strike, as soon as possible, and without NASUWT (the other major teaching union) if that was what was necessary.

There was also general hostility to rolling regional action — something created among London reps after the frankly disastrous London-only strike last March.

Perhaps these members could be persuaded to support such action if a whole list of dates were named and London came last, but it would be a hard job. Reps in schools with weak NUT groups

also asked for national-only action as they felt they would get a better turnout that way.

Several reps pointed out the need for more than one day of strike action, or at least for an end to one-day "protest" strikes, which are clearly not part of a planned strategy to win.

The general tone of Christine Blower's comments and those of the executive members present at the end show that it is likely the executive (on 24 January) will vote for a one-day strike, but the real danger is it votes for only that.

I argued for both clear demands rather than just asking Gove to negotiate (for example picking a percentage figure for a winnable pay rise and fighting for that) and for a series of action dates to be announced this week.

These wouldn't necessarily all be strike dates, and could utilise a range of tactics and forms of direct action. Something visible needs to happen every single week to build a living, breathing campaign.

If such a plan is not forthcoming from the NUT Executive, activists involved in the Local Associations Network Action Campaign (LANAC) will need to intervene strongly in the next series of regional pay briefings to pressure the leadership to deliver something better than another one-day protest strike.

• LANAC website: www.nutlan.org.uk