

Workers power 5



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EUROPE IN CRISIS

- Greek default looming
- World recession likely
- More austerity planned

Now is the time to fight back



THE SEVERITY of the European debt crisis now threatens to trigger another major banking crisis. The part bailout, part default of the Greek debt, hastily cobbled together by G20 finance ministers, cannot solve the crisis.

How could it? It merely shifts the crisis from one arena to another.

The turmoil is tipping the continent back into recession, because of the greedy policies of the imperialist creditor nations.

Today David Cameron, Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy are demanding ever more cuts, ever more unemployment, ever more austerity from their southern neighbours. Tomorrow they will turn on their own working classes.

The exclusion of Greece and other southern European states from the Eurozone – even Italy and Spain's

exit are being discussed – would be no solution. It would be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, since a restored drachma or lira or peseta would rapidly eaten up in the flames of inflation.

The credit crunch of 2008 could be dwarfed by could be on the horizon. But a retreat into national isolation is no solution in the age of globalisation. Likewise, the belief that reformist policies of state spending and competitive devaluation would save our jobs, wages and services is an illusion. But there is an answer to capitalist crisis.

Working class solution

We should repudiate the debts and the ballooning interest on them and refuse to pay off the billionaire bondholders. Instead we should take the banks into public owner-

ship under working class control and without compensation.

Confiscate their private fortunes too. The movement of capital should be put under workers control. Their books and computers should be opened to workers' inspection so we can see where the money has gone.

We must reject the austerity programmes. Instead a massive programme of public works – building houses, hospitals, schools, public transport systems, environmental restoration and the changeover to green power.

The decades of tax cuts for the rich and big business and the squeeze on workers' incomes and spending power through "indirect" taxes like VAT should be reversed.

Make the rich pay for the crisis their system caused.

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21-23 October London

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The editorial SIMON HARDY

Their crisis is our opportunity

Milton Friedman, the Monetarist economist who inspired Thatcher, once said that you can only carry out lasting change if there is a state of crisis.

Well today the politicians are using the economic crisis to carry out lasting structural reforms to the economy. Across Europe that means the destruction of the welfare state and the other social gains of the post-war period.

In Britain it means war against the entire working class, whether private or public sector, old or young. Cameron said in 2008 that he wanted to do to society what Thatcher did to the economy, that is destroy the public services replace them with ones based on profit and the market.

In our struggle to stop this we find few allies in the Labour party today. MPs like John McDonnell, who join picket lines and oppose all the cuts, are a rare, some would say a dying breed.

Labour leader Ed Miliband condemns strikes in defence of our services and Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls says Labour won't undo the cuts if they get into government. They won't even undo the privatisation of the NHS.

Their entire project is slavish loyalty to Big Business - assuring the bankers and profiteers that in government they are a safe pair of hands. The electorate they are wooing is the selfish middle class who want to cherry pick the best schools for their kids. The only parts of the working class they want to woo are those "worried about immigration."

An election programme built on such policies will neither defeat the Tories and the Lib-Dems nor inspire workers to defend our gains.

We need to build a party which can really challenge the pro austerity programmes of the rich. A party of thousands on thousands of activists from every battle front where we are resisting the attacks. We don't just want to stop the cuts or save the NHS - we want to build a new kind of society, one based on collective action, genuine community, without poverty, with jobs, education, healthcare and housing for all.

The left is fighting the defensive struggles but we have to go onto the offensive against capitalism- ideologically too. I agree with Friedman that a crisis is an opportunity for change - now we have to get organised to fight for the revolutionary change we need.

Three million workers could strike on 30 November. This will mark a major step in uniting the resistance to the coalition government's cuts and austerity programme. But whilst more warlike words from union leaders are a welcome change, we still have to be on our guard. If the government and the judges apply either the carrot of further negotiations or the stick of declaring the actions unlawful or invalidating ballots, then our leaders resolve may waver.

Only powerful organisation at a rank and file level can ensure that things go ahead.

We should be under no doubt that the government and bosses will see these cuts through to the end. They will only offer minor concessions as a way to buy off sections to break our common front before returning to the offensive.

Most of the union leaders have only called action with a view to getting their feet under the negotiating table again. They think big one-day strikes every six months will make Cameron and Clegg negotiate seriously. They are dreaming. We have seen huge one-to-three day strikes in France, Greece, Spain and Portugal. They have not modified the austerity measures let alone stopped them.

They are designed to show the government that the union chiefs are serious... about talking. The governments know that the unions won't go further; they can ride out a one-day strike. Normal service will be resumed the next day.

So we need to see 30 November not as the pinnacle of the struggle but as only the beginning. We need serious and rapid escalation, not conciliation.

In this sense the unions need to be transformed from the bottom up. Massive general unions mean massive bureaucracies, staffed with people who have no stomach for an all out fight. They create a culture of passivity amongst the membership and refuse to campaign for a real fighting lead bar the odd token strike.

Those that want to fight need to get organised - we need to build new grass roots led organisations which connect across the unions, join up with the social movements and young people fighting for education rights. The construction workers (page 4) are an excellent example of what the rest of us should be doing.

How we can fight back against the crisis

Dave Stockton

FOR FIFTEEN years or more it has not just been the Conservative children of Thatcher and Reagan but the Labour and Socialist Parties of Europe that have sung the virtues of the markets as the sole criterion of rationality and progress.

While in power in 2008, those so-called socialists- like Gordon Brown, José Zapatero and Georgios Papandreou - handed over taxpayers' money to take the banks' toxic debts off their books. Then many of the same leaders actually initiated the austerity programmes to pay off the state debts they incurred by saving the banking system.

In Britain Brown set going the private finance cancer, which has grown into full scale privatisation of our education system and our health service. No wonder the likes of Ed Miliband roundly condemn strikes against the cuts as "irresponsible". Eds Balls tells the Labour party conference that it must not promise to reverse any of the coalition cuts.

In Greece and Spain the parties of the Socialist International are taking the lead in imposing the cuts, while the big union leaders closest to them are delaying, fracturing and stifling resistance.

We will only be able to resist the bosses' onslaught when the straightjacket of these false socialist parties is ripped off.

The idea that occupying public squares alone - of an apolitical "indignation" - is enough to answer the crisis is yet another illusion. It is made none the better by claiming it is new or postmodern.

Internationalism is key

We need to solve this crisis at a European level - not retreat into nationalist isolation. We need to coordinate our struggles across the borders and defend all those picked on and persecuted, like the workers and poor farmers, the youth and the unemployed in Greece.

We need to stop them dividing us by fighting for our own European Union - a union of the wealth creators, the working people, a United Socialist States of Europe.

To solve the historic crisis, which capitalism entered four years ago, and stop it



extending into another Great Depression with millions more unemployed and the rise of fascism as a mass force, will require a hard political struggle. But this must be a politics radically different to mere electioneering - the chase after the lowest common denominator.

It must be the politics of direct action, of bringing millions out onto the streets who were politicised with popular anticapitalist, socialist ideas and goals. In 2008 hundreds of thousands demonstrated in defiance.

But, as Piero Bernocchi of Cobas says, "As the crisis broke three years ago, here in Italy we said, 'We won't pay for the crisis'. But up to now, we - the weakest and more unprotected classes - have paid for it all." We did, because we did not have an alternative, one known to millions and supported by them. That is what has to change. We need to popularise our own answer to the crisis. We must:

- Refuse to pay off the debts - nationalise the banks without compensation and under workers' control
- Reject all the cuts - for a massive programme of work to rebuild our services and communities
- Tax the rich, not the poor - for huge taxes on private wealth and corporate profits.

It means mobilising not a struggle for governmental office but a struggle for power. Central to the direct action must be political strikes, culminating in a general strike. We have seen in France, Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal several - many - general strikes.

On 30 November in Britain we could see 3 million on strike and on the streets. In and of itself this represents a great step forward - and every socialist and worker should strive to make it as big and bold as possible. But in Greece more than a dozen one or two day general strikes have been called over the last 12 months but they not stopped the attacks.

Imagine if all these days of action had taken place one after the other. What this would represent - and is necessary today - is an all out general strike to drive the cutting governments from power.

New parties

To open up this perspective means a struggle against the "socialist" or "labour" parties that block our path. It means rallying

the rank and file of the unions for mass action independently of the union leaders who sabotage and betray action.

The militants in the unions, alongside the young activists in the schools, on campuses and among the great mass of unemployed, need to get together in new political organisations, new anticapitalist parties, welded together in a new Fifth International.

The youth and workers of the Arab world have shown us what a wave of revolutions can do. We need to imitate them in Europe with a transcontinental wave of struggle. A starting point can be the European Conference Against Austerity on 1 October, called by the Coalition of Resistance.

The best part of the draft declaration of this conference is contained in its last two clauses, which should not only be passed with acclaim but with a determination to see them acted upon:

"This conference resolves to build on the links developed in preparing this conference and to establish an ongoing European co-ordination to organise and support resistance to austerity.

"We pledge to support the mobilisations of the Indignados on 15 October and the G20 in Nice in November. We also pledge to work towards a common day of action against austerity in 2012 and call on the ETUC to prepare a European-wide day of action against austerity."

We should name a date for a Europe wide day of mass strike action and return to our countries to build support for it, declaring our intention to launch joint action with the big union leaders if possible, but without them if necessary.

A similar conference, in Florence in 2002, met and launched a campaign for a mass demonstration to stop the war on Iraq. Up to 18 million people across the world marched on that day. Potentially far more could be mobilised to stop the bosses and their politicians launching a war on the poor.

But we also have to learn the lessons from ten years ago. The 15 February march was not followed through. This time we should use any day of action to mobilise millions and be in turn a launch pad for mass strikes, occupations and civil disobedience to drive the austerity capitalists from power and prepare for a revolutionary struggle for socialism.

workers power

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World economy at tipping point into recession

CAPITALISM IS staring into the abyss of a new recession. The bail-outs of banks and countries assumed that the major economies would revive in the near future. They have not. Stagnation in the world's two biggest economic areas, the US and the EU, with inflation rising in many countries, is throwing the stock markets into turbulence, with billions wiped off share values over the summer.

The head of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, has warned of a "looming collapse in global demand". The UK Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, claimed there were only six weeks to save the euro – by the time the G20 leaders meet for talks in France. The International Monetary Fund has issued its most damning World Economic Outlook in many years, predicting "anaemic growth" over the next two years and warning that even that would be jeopardised if "the crisis in the euro area runs beyond the control of policymakers".

The great fear is that Greece's inability to repay its loans could lead to another "credit crunch", like the one in 2008. The Washington conference of the IMF proposed a "controlled default" in which an agreed proportion of all Greek debt would be written off but, since no one knows for sure what effect this would have on each of the creditor banks, the danger remains that it would run out of control.

Debt crisis grows

That would not be bad news only for the banks directly involved. As in 2008, other banks have bought parts of those debts. Thanks to banking secrecy, no one knows which of them would remain solvent and which not, so credit would be withheld and the costs of borrowing would rise sharply. This would then threaten the ability of other countries to service their debts (with Portugal, Spain, and



Bus workers march in Athens against austerity chanting "don't obey the rich – fight back!"

Italy all in the firing line) and, therefore, undermine the solvency of the banks that have lent to those countries. In this way the "contagion" would spread through the system, threatening the solvency of sovereign states this time, not just the banks they propped up in 2008.

Worryingly, for the bankers, the United States is increasingly paralysed. The US deficit stands at \$14.3 trillion. Obama wants to launch federal spending on infrastructural projects – motorways, bridges, flood defences – but the Republicans, who control the House of Representatives, will not hear of any tax increases. Indeed, they want to cut taxes on wealth and incomes and slash federal spending, even though unemployment is over 9 percent and rising, and the economy is stagnant

or entering recession.

Of course the arrival of another credit crunch, with the danger of a catastrophic slump, has focused the minds of squabbling politicians. There are already calls to "just let it rip!" – cease active intervention into the economy, and let bankrupt firms, including banks, go bust. But the Western banking system is literally 'too big to fail', it is the central nervous system of production and world trade, so it cannot simply seize up without a truly catastrophic slump in economic activity.

The banks cannot be rescued yet again by the taxpayer since the states themselves are near bankruptcy. Such a crisis, like the small scale one in Greece today, would quite simply pose the question of cancelling the debts and dramatically restructuring

banking capital, with some form of partial state ownership very likely, even just for a phase.

From the standpoint of capital, the problem remains that western economies are strangled by debt, and until these "toxic credit assets" are destroyed through defaults and bankruptcies the trouble will only continually be put off until another day. This is why we are in a historic crisis of the capitalist system such as we have not witnessed since 1945.

Even so, their solution is likely to be a variation on the 2008 strategy, borrowing yet more money in order, this time, to bail out the *international* banking system or sovereign states, not just national banks. Because no individual country could raise such colossal sums, the funds are likely to be mobilised internationally through,

for example, the IMF. This would allow the reserves of China, in particular, to play a role. Although, like 2008, that would not solve the underlying problem – it would mark the beginning of a fundamental shift in international politics that would contribute in time to even greater instability on a global scale.

What does this mean for us?

The capitalists can get out of any crisis, as long as the workers are willing to pay the cost, as the Russian revolutionary Lenin once said. That is what the bosses and bankers and their people in government are hoping for, that brunt of the burden is carried by the working class and the youth. What does this mean? It means massive structural long term unemployment (already 15 million across the Eurozone) more job insecurity, lower wages, an end to public education and health care and a dramatic reduction in welfare spending. It means more privatisation of anything that can be sold off, from local government through to schools. And when people resist, it means more police violence and persecution of activists. This is the grim future for millions of people across Europe and beyond – not to speak of the terrible conditions for the poorest people living in the third world.

But, as capitalism shows its full capacity to wreck the productive forces of the planet, anti-capitalist solutions will be forced back onto the agenda with a vengeance. The workers' movement needs to campaign actively for the abolition of the debts and the nationalisation of the banking system without compensation. More than this – we need to put the socialism argument back into the centre of politics again as the only possible alternative to capitalism, and the only solution to the crisis.

What is wrong with Europe?

THE GREEK economy accounts for only 2 per cent of EU GDP. If the EU were a single economic entity, like the United States, transferring some funds to pay off Greek debts would be no more significant than US federal support for reconstruction in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina being partly paid for by taxes levied in California or New York.

The problem is that mainland Europe has a single currency and a central bank, but neither a centralised political decision making body nor a common taxation system. In short, the European economy is increasingly integrated, and crying out for more integration, but European society and politics are still stuck in an antiquated

patchwork of separate nation states inherited from the past. It is an example of how the nation state system can come into the conflict with the demands of capital accumulation and undermine the productive forces.

The Greek crisis illustrates all these contradictions perfectly. In July, the Council of Ministers agreed to set up the European Financial Stability Facility that would mobilise finance from across the EU to underwrite Greek debt. However, it cannot be established until every parliament in the EU has ratified it and this might take until December, because of opposition from the smallest of the four parties in the coalition government of Slovakia.

These structures are not simply hangovers from the past, they reflect different ruling classes with competing interests. Despite several decades of European integration, there is still no united European capitalist class as such, let alone one with a uniform worldview and policy.

Unstable

The German bourgeoisie is most powerful in Europe but it is divided between those who believe that there should be a managed default on debts that cannot be paid back, and those, who are closer to the European Central Bank, that fear the impact this will have on German banks. They do however have a com-

mon interest in imposing austerity measures on southern Europe in return for the bailout, because the sharp recessions it causes will be an opportunity for the more efficient German multinationals to expand.

Naturally, other ruling classes fear such an expansion of German hegemony. That is why the system is also gripped with heavy competitive pressures all over the world. The ruling classes are running out of policy options, having now tried a major bank bailout and deficit-funded fiscal stimulus, so there is a risk they will turn to protecting their own industries, banks and markets from international competition. During the Great Depression, this proved cata-

strophic because then it created powerful economic pressure to use political and military means to 'seize markets' from other states. Global policy makers at institutions like the IMF are therefore obviously concerned to avoid such an outcome, and find a so-called managed solution through institutions like the G20.

Nor should it be thought that because Britain is not in the Euro it would be immune to a collapse of the Euro or of the banks massively exposed to the state debts of the Eurozone countries. British banks are up to their eyes in it and over half of Britain's trade is with Europe. In such an interconnected world British isolationism can only be a fantasy.

industrial overview JEREMY DEWAR



Form joint strike committees and unite the pensions struggle

AROUND THREE million workers are now set to strike together at the end of next month in the biggest day of action for a generation. Unison (1.1 million members), the GMB (300,000), Unite (250,000), firefighters (43,000) plus teachers in NASUWT (250,000) and heads in NAHT (25,000) are balloting to join the 750,000 teachers and civil servants in the NUT, ATL, UCU and PCS, who struck in the summer. Even the prison officers, banned from taking industrial action, are set to walk out.

The anger of millions is not hard to understand.

Public sector workers provide vital services, such as free education and healthcare, street cleaning and fire fighting, council housing and benefit provision. And what do they get in their retirement? Male workers on average £4,000 a year, women less than £3,000.

Now the Coalition wants to steal tens of thousands from each of them.

Despite the big TUC leaders' attempts to dampen expectations, 30 November is taking on a great significance for our movement.

Important as the pensions issue is, it's not only about pensions. This just happens to be the issue around which we could force the union leaders to unite the struggles against cuts and privatisation.

And it's not simply public service workers who want a coordinated fightback. Many private sector workers see it as an opportunity to further their own struggles.

Mick, an electrician involved in the JIB dispute (see opposite), bluntly told Workers Power: "They're talking about a general strike on 30 November, but we can't just go out for one day. We've got to go out for a week to really hurt these bastards."

Mick hits the nail on the head. We need to think of 30 November as an opportunity to launch a general strike that can unite every section of society threatened by the cuts and bring down the government. But also, we cannot wait another five months before we are out together again. This time we need to stay out till we have all won.

The question, therefore, is how are we going to achieve this?

Organise the rank and file

A month ago I wrote that it looked unlikely that the unions would coordinate action across the different sectors. So what changed? In short, the world economy nosedived and the Tories stopped making concessions. A new austerity package looks inevitable.

Even if the TUC was reluctant to launch total war on the bosses, the Coalition decided now was the time to call their bluff. This gave Unison, Unite and the GMB little option but to join the November strike.

But we still have to watch our leaders like hawks, keep the pressure on them and prepare to lead the resistance, should they try to settle disputes separately, as happened in the pensions dispute of 2006.

The best way to do this is by forming joint strike committees (JSCs) consisting of elected delegates from local workplaces and branches. Where anticuts groups have strong roots in the unions, they could initiate this; more usually, left wing branches or trades councils could take the lead.

JSCs can initiate lively and highly visible campaign in the run-up to the strike, involving public meetings, rallies, demos and direct action that can help win large majorities for action, recruit more members and win the argument for escalating the action. In the process it would help cement cross-union relations that could survive any breaking of the united front at the top. And they can serve as an alternative leadership if the union leaders try and sell the strike short.

Why are the TUC tops so reluctant to launch a general strike? Because these well-heeled bureaucrats do not have the same interests as their low-paid members. For them compromise is a way of life. But when compromise would leave us at the mercy of state benefits in our old age, we cannot accept it. That's why we need a new leadership, one that is controlled by the rank and file.

If we look at the exciting developments in the construction industry, where the Siteworker network is shutting down building sites and demanding to join in on 30 November, we can see how a movement from below can force the pace.

So let's build Healthworker Network, let's expand Education Networks and initiate Council Worker Networks. And most important of all, let's use 30 November to escalate the action, leading to an indefinite general strike to stop all the cuts and bring down the austerity coalition.

★ INDUSTRIAL FIGHTBACK

Mick Dooley: we need to transform the unions

IN THE CONSTRUCTION industry there are approximately two million people but the unions have only recruited around 100,000. Traditional methods of organising the trade unions must obviously be continually re-examined due to the changing nature of industry and the workplace. For example, in the construction industry a building project which 25 years ago took four years to complete would now take less than two years. This means there is less scope today for establishing and building the same effective trade union organisation on a building site in the same ways as before.

Countering this, my view is for a strong emphasis on organising within the geographical area via trade union support for community activity at as many levels as possible, so that construction workers living within that community will have knowledge of or come into contact with their union outside the workplace.

Given that most workers will work within a 50-mile radius of their home, the same workers on each building site will become familiar with the union's name - if there's any union presence on the site - by community activity, assertive community action and a strong media profile, extending into the workplace. Short of industrial action, the confidence and expectation of workers has to be raised, making it easier for workers to identify with an organisation,

collective strength, beneficial to their interests at work and within the communities in which they live.

The transition from workers being more than just a card carrying union member could be made by workers joining in or engaging with tactics employed by the union to improve conditions.

A robust group of dedicated trade union organisers who are effective in community campaigning committed to building an assertive trade union in the construction industry is a necessary ingredient in revitalising the spirit of resistance of building workers today.

New issues will always arise and we must be prepared to maximise the opportunities and to capitalise on any discontent caused by wage cuts, poor safety, bullying and any other practice which will inevitably come about as the current crisis in capitalism grows and deepens.

I believe this is doable, I'm prepared to make it happen and if necessary to take steps to thwart the anti-trade union laws. I know it is possible to effectively challenge these laws. We live in a world which is governed by law, the same law that allows 13 bullets to be pumped into the head of Jean Charles de Menezes, or for Ian Tomlinson to be battered to death in front of thousands of people, for extradition flights to Guantanamo Bay and the mass murder and bombing of civilians in Iraq, Afghanistan



and Libya. That can be legal if it is in the name of democracy. I am certain that workers have the legal right to withdraw their labour if they choose to do so.

Mick Dooley is a member of UCATT and will be speaking at Anticapitalism on building resistance in an age of austerity

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Construction workers escalate action

THE CONSTRUCTION workers campaign against vicious attacks on their JIB (Joint Industry Board) terms and conditions is escalating. Over 200 construction workers forced their way through the gates at the Farringdon Crossrail site and held a rally in the middle of the excavation, in full view of all the workers on site!

In Newcastle 150 workers blockaded the Tyne tunnel while in Manchester construction workers protested at a Bal-four Beatty site and at the BBC Media City site. Let's see if the media ignore the protests now!

The dispute is happening because eight companies are threatening to pull out of the JIB by March 2012, meaning workers face a 35% pay cut, no sick pay, deskilling, scrapping of overtime agreements and a host of other horrendous attacks.

There are weekly protests organised by the UNITE Construction National Rank and File Action Committee, elected at a rank and file meeting of 500 construction workers in August.

This campaign started with a 200 strong protest at Blackfriars station on 24 August and has organised weekly protests since - at the Westfield site, the Shard, the Olympics, and now Crossrail - demanding a ballot from UNITE and calling for walk outs and strikes against the attack if a ballot isn't given to them. The protests were spread across the country, with activists in Manchester and Newcastle organising protests at sites there and with further action being organised in Hull and Scotland.

The first four protests were all unofficial, but this rank and file action has forced

the UNITE bureaucracy to back the protests. UNITE officials attended the demonstration today and Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary of UNITE, addressed the rally.

UNITE had previously said they would ballot on 9 December for a strike next year. In response, five of the eight companies issued notice that they would sack all workers who hadn't agreed to the new contracts by 7 Dec. The bureaucracy was caught out, and has so far failed to respond. The rank and file are responding, though, by escalating the protests and preparing for unofficial action if necessary.

The mood amongst workers at the protest was militant, with many talking about the 30 November strike and the

need to unite in action with other workers.

The next steps must be to escalate the protests, get more workers involved and to push for rank and file action. If the bureaucracy won't give workers a ballot, they should organise workplace meetings and vote to walk off the job. If one site does this, they can spread the action to other sites up and down the country with flying pickets and blockades. An electrician on the demo said "This is like the 80s all over again". We need to use the militant methods of struggle used in the 80s - flying pickets, wildcat strikes, defiance of the anti-union laws - and rank and file organisation to co-ordinate it all and defeat the bosses' offensive.

An example to follow

The construction workers have shown how to do it. Organise a rank and file conference, agree a programme of action, elect a leadership that takes the fight to the employers and forces the bureaucracy to get behind it.

We need rank and file conferences like this in all industries, to organise the fightback against the massive onslaught we face from the government.

The union bureaucracy is doing all they can to hold back workers action, to dissipate, disorganise and obstruct the will to fight.

Rank and file campaigns must be built to give a lead to workers who want to fight, but who are restrained by the bureaucracy.

It is not that the workers lack confidence. They lack a leadership willing to fight which would give them a lead to follow. In most cases the existing workers leaderships will do anything to avoid a fight.

Confidence can be built through struggle and in the process workers become aware of their own power through taking action themselves.

Lack of confidence and caution amongst the mass of the working class should not prevent the most militant from initiating rank and file organisation's.

The construction workers are showing they way. The rest of the workers movement need to follow suit.

Jerry Hicks: our side needs to up the ante

An interview with Jerry Hicks, an organiser of Grass Roots Left, the rank and file movement in UNITE, and a long standing trade unions activist who is speaking on the Saturday of ANTICAPITALISM 2011

Where is GRL at now?

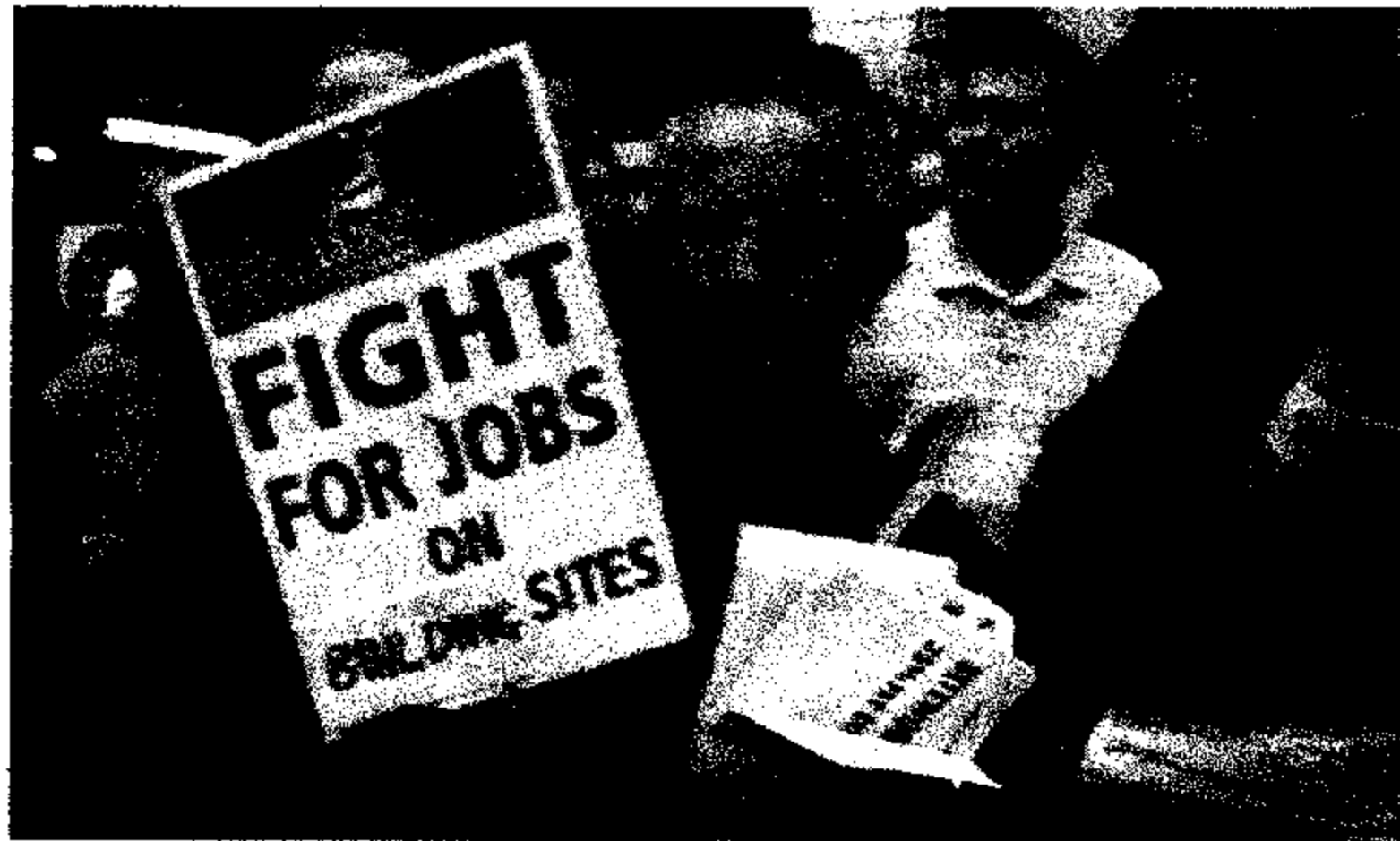
Politics mirrors life in the sense that it is quite uneven. In some places we have lots of support and activity, in others we are weaker. GRL was only set up 6 months ago and it was previously a loose network around an election campaign in Unite. But now we have supporters in around 140 Unite branches across the country, people who are really active in the union. Many of our members are active in union work and anti-cuts committees and now we have built a strong base in the West Midlands with the convenor in Jaguar.

But we are working towards the conference in Birmingham on 5 November which will really help organise GRL at a much higher level.

What I am proud of is that we have been central to the movement around the construction workers which are organising now across the country. I was elected onto the steering committee of that, and I want to emphasise elected because that is what we are talking about. Democracy and who controls it. I believe leaders should lead but members should control, that is what we are trying to build.

What do you think about Nov 30?

I fully support it and will be building for it of course, but I think the unions have missed a trick. Because unions in Britain work within the law and the Tories effectively criminalised us for taking any kind of meaningful



strike action, this means that this strike is only organised around a single issue, pensions, and only one section of workers, the public sector. This means there is little scope for private sector action alongside it and allows the media to play the public sector off against the private sector. The TUC should have called action around the state pension age because that affects everyone and it has been going up. This could have united everyone: students, the unemployed and workers.

Cameron said recently about the economy that 'we are staring down the barrel of a gun'. Well I think that our side needs to up the ante and be more courageous. But as long as the anti union laws are respected they will be a ball and chain around our necks.

You are speaking at Anticapitalism about the way forward for the left,

what is your basic message?

I think the fundamental thing to get right is the difference between a united front and a broad left. Broad lefts which become so broad they include some bureaucrats in the unions who have no real interest in seriously fighting the cuts. They are inherently conservative organisations. I think it is important to build real united fronts where you can set the pace and still have your own autonomy to act.

And the terrain of debate has moved recently. A few years ago if you said you were anticapitalist you were considered too far left. Today the whole basis of the system is called into question because of what is happening in the economy and the way the politicians are reacting. I think if we are strong and push together then we can push the whole system over.

Ashok Kumar: we must fight the new racism

"THE WHITES have now become black", historian David Starks's comment on BBC's Newsnight following the riots may have been for shock value, but the words bring into view not only the mad ramblings of an old racist but three decades of race relations in Britain coming full circle. So-called "new racism" highlighting "culture" rather than "color" as their primary motivator looks a lot like the old form of class-induced white supremacy.

The riots were convoluted and multilayered. Sikh and Turkish petite bourgeoisie protected their property from working class youth, many of them black. Black communities burned to the ground, while in other parts the EDL swarmed in to exploit the reactionary sentiment of communities shaken.

This complexity poses some real challenges to those who want to overthrow the existing white power struc-

ture. We can no longer simply point and sneer at the boogie-men of the EDL and BNP, but must attack the endemic forms of racism that lie just beneath the surface, ready to erupt at the slightest alarm. From the police, to schools, to welfare provisions and gentrification, racism manifests itself throughout. Even now, a racist Met, bent on seeking the maximum penalties with the flimsiest evidence, is terrorizing the young and black on council estates in Hackney, Tottenham and across the city.

As the smoke clears, radicals must now assess and construct a new strategy to combat a resurfaced "old/new racism" as well as the structural white supremacy that continues to subjugate black people and allows white privilege to thrive unabated. Countering it may require revolutionaries to go on the offense. Questions abound. What is the best way to resist? Is resistance enough? How



does this resistance look? Is it exclusive self-organization of black people? Or does it require a wider coalition? Wait, I've seen this movie, don't these wider coalitions become so watered-down so as to become irrelevant? And what's the role of white allies? These (and others) are questions that will be addressed at Anticapitalism 2011.

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Joana Ramiro: Palestine is key to the Arab revolutions

THE STORY of the Palestinian struggle is written in blood in the history books. From the British Mandate to the Zionist State, Palestine is a land that was never its own, a people who still suffer national oppression to this day.

For revolutionaries it is important to understand that Palestine is one of the most important struggles of the 20th and now the 21st centuries. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a direct repercussion of British Imperialism and American foreign policies, but also a prime example of the international consequences of capitalism and its bourgeois politics, as a whole.

Now, in the context of the Arab revolutions, it is even more important to put Palestine front and centre in the fight for freedom.

The debate being held at the United Nations on the recognition of the West Bank and Gaza territories

as an independent Palestinian state puts resistance to Zionism back on the international agenda. But statehood recognition won't be enough to bring peace to the region; neither will endless talks which get the Palestinians nowhere.

There has been talk amongst young Palestinians of a new intifada, this is something which has to be taken seriously, and internationally we have to discuss how we can provide solidarity for their struggle.

At Anticapitalism 2011 I will be leading a discussion on the Palestinian fight for self-determination and justice, on the debate over one state versus two state solution, the influence of the Arab Spring in the region and the UN debate on Palestinian recognition.

Workers Power has always campaigned for freedom for the Palestinians and against Zionism and imperialism.

Education not for sale

Public education is under attack. Greedy corporations are hell bent on getting their hands on schools, colleges and universities – desperate to make a profit out of education and knowledge. This is having a terrible affect on young people, adult learners and education workers – as the market drives up costs, drives down standards and threatens many institutions with closure. The principle of free education for all for as long as people wanted it is dead – killed by New Labour, Liberals and the Tories.

Here we outline the problems of creating a market in education and what we can do to halt the reforms and launch a fight back for a better kind of education, fully funded and available for all.

Markets in Higher Education – what does it mean for you?

Among student activists there is lots of talk of the evils of “marketisation” and “commercialisation” of education. But what does it actually mean for ordinary students? Here are a few reasons why you should oppose the government’s latest White Paper, hypocritically called *Students at the Heart of the System*, and support the demonstration on the 9 November.

University for the rich

With the abolition of the ceiling on student fees and with £7,500 to £9,000 becoming the norm, student numbers are expected to drop. Instead of high quality universal education for all, there will be growing inequality between the “top” institutions that have a mainly upper and middle class intake, and those at the bottom of the pile.

Business takeover

Going to university is now an economic choice – it’s going to become much less about what you want to study and learn and much more about how it will help you into the job market afterwards. Universities are already responding to this by really tailoring their courses to what businesses want.

At institutions with a large

working class intake this means, out with academic subjects and in with vocational. At the top universities there is more and more private sector control over research and teaching. Universities will be less and less places to broaden horizons and more and more places where money is everything.

Privatisation

Lots of universities responded to the abolition of the tuition fee cap by charging at the top end of what could be covered by student loans (£9,000).

The government was taken by surprise. In response they want to give degree granting powers to more and more institutions, particularly private companies, who are prepared to charge much less and deliver much less for students.

This isn’t about helping poor students, it’s about degrees on the cheap provided by companies with no academic standards. We have to keep on battling for free and universal, publically funded education.

Cuts and closures

Today, the funding crisis as a result of central government cuts is the driving force for the pro market changes. Some institutions, particularly those which take a lot of working class students, are likely to be forced to cut budgets and close courses.

The government does not want to tax big business (who benefit from a well educated workforce) or the rich so cuts are being forced through to weed out ‘weaker’ universities who are supposedly uncompetitive.

Students take to the streets again – all out on 9 November

THE STUDENT movement of last year changed the political landscape in Britain. By showing it was possible to fight back against government policies, the students inspired a wave of resistance.

This year students need to come out in force again – this time as part of a wider movement of resistance to the cuts and privatisations of this Tory government.

On the 9 November students will take to the streets in a national demonstration against cuts and privatisation, and for free education and jobs. It will be great opportunity to build momentum in the run up to the 30 November day of strike action when millions of workers will be out.

At the colleges and on campuses we need to redouble efforts to draw in large numbers of students in our education campaigns, as well as build links with the wider move-

ment in the trade unions.

We need slogans and demands that tap into the enormous feeling of anger against this Tories and what they are doing to Britain. It’s not just about £9,000 fees anymore – it has to be about the kind of society we want to live in, a fightback for jobs and public services funded by taxing the rich.

Crucially we need to attack the idea that state run services are bad and privately run services are good, and challenge the idea that an ever greater encroachment on our lives by big business is inevitable. The government is determined to destroy the vision of education as a space for critical thinking and a means to improve our lives, as it ushers in a takeover by big business.

We can’t let it happen.

We have to fight, because if we don’t then what we stand to lose will be enormous.

We need Education Assemblies!

In London the Education Assemblies that organised the protests in 2010 are a model to follow. They can help us overcome the divisions in the student movement, and provided a democratic space for us to organise.

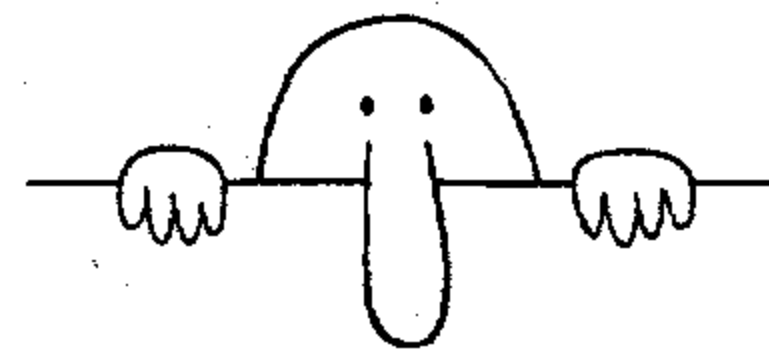
Over a hundred people would pack into the University London Union to discuss strategy and tactics – all of the successful

mobilisations were organised through the Assembly.

There was a debate over whether education workers should join them – yes they should. We want to unite students and workers in education, not divide them. Student need to be organised in the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts whilst education staff should be in their trade unions and join rank and file organisations.

Education is a right - they say cut, we say fight!

Academies: the privatisation of our schools



TEN YEARS on from the first academy opening, there are now 3,300 academies in England. This may seem a small number – there are after all 24,000 state, or maintained schools. But it is the rate of expansion – 1,100 of these have converted in the last 18 months and 575 more are in the pipeline – that is worrying parents, teachers, educationalists and, increasingly, school students.

Essentially, academies are privatised schools. Instead of the Department for Education (DfE) funding elected councils, which then allocate funds to schools

on the basis of need and for resources – such as special needs provision, ethnic minority support, teacher training, literacy and numeracy support – to be shared, the Education Secretary gives the money directly to academies.

This doesn't sound like privatisation but it is a huge step in this direction – in a very similar way to how the Tories are breaking up the NHS by handing over budgets to GPs. And we need to raise as big a campaign to save public education services as the one to save the NHS.

Like doctors, academies have

to buy in all the services they would usually receive from local authorities. Year-on-year cuts to school budgets, regardless of initial grants (bribes) new academies currently count on, will force them to seek the cheapest services available.

Multinational education service companies are already eyeing up this profitable new market and aggressively targeting academies. VT Education, for example, openly aims to run 1,000 schools by 2015. Education Secretary Michael Gove has said he favours for-profit companies moving in.

In the USA, where privatisation has a longer history, such companies run dozens of schools, raking in tens of millions of dollars a year. But they are increasingly involved in lawsuits over falling standards and fraudulent school rolls. Money that should be spent on quality education for all is lining shareholders' pockets and paying for lawyers' fees.

Alarming, academies are not accountable under the Freedom of Information Act and Gove has been recently caught trying to hide information

through the use of private emails for departmental business. Could we be sleepwalking into a US-style nightmare?

That's why we say, "Our schools are not for sale!"

The academy project has already gone too far. Some schools have gallantly fought off academy status, but it is the government's agenda to turn every school into an academy. For this reason it is not enough to simply defend each school, one by one – it will require a mass campaign for well-funded, nationalised education for all.

Case study: Mossbourne Academy

SCHOOLS THAT have become academies have had varying success. One of the most successful, the Mossbourne Academy in Hackney, is lauded by Michael Gove as the model.

Its results are undoubtedly good, with 83% of pupils receiving A*-C grade at GCSE, with maths and English, as well as four students into Oxbridge this year. But Mossbourne has not won these results on a level playing field. It has resorted to:

- Training for exams
Mossbourne concentrates above all other teaching on preparing students for exams. But this distorts young people's education and narrows their options. School League Tables count for

more than each individual child's needs.

- Tough discipline

There is zero tolerance on the school uniform code, which the Head teacher claims improves academic and artistic expression. But "former staff and some children speak of a chilly atmosphere, and make not entirely jokey references to the 'prison camp'." (School Wars p.108)

- Selection

Like many of the new academies and free schools, Mossbourne claims to be comprehensive. But the number of pupils eligible for free school meals (i.e. from families with less than £16,000 income) halved in its first

year compared to the school it replaced. The number of students for whom English is not their first language (EAL) is well below the Hackney average.

It has recently emerged that Mossbourne uses its waiting list to encourage poorer families to look elsewhere, while telling "professional" parents their children stand a better chance of entry into the school.

Academies are all too often "successful" only because they exclude the children who face more problems: poverty, learning difficulties, racism, etc. The end result is not improved education for all, but a two tier school system, with academically successful schools for the middle classes and sink schools for the rest.

Who runs academies?

AT PRESENT, schools are run by elected Boards of Governors, who are in turn accountable to the local council and the DfE. There are typically around 24 governors, elected by parents, staff, the local authority and the community. They can be changed regularly and new candidates can come forward. Similarly, we can change policy and demand funding priorities through council elections.

But when schools become academies, the governors choose

a Board of Trustees, which is then accountable to no one but the Secretary of State. There are no elections and no mechanism for removing them. Even if it takes a real struggle to change council policy or bring about change through governors, academies really are answerable to no one – so much for parent power!

As socialists, we believe schools should be run democratically by parents, students and education workers themselves. Nationally

agreed standards must apply including a pledge to combat social inequality, racism, sexism and all the social evils stemming from capitalist society. How each school interprets, moulds and adopts these should be locally decided. Not only would this provide real choice in every school, it would educate young people in the tasks of taking control of their lives and fighting inequality and exploitation – the real purpose of education.

An attack on teachers

ONCE A school leaves the local authority, the national pay and conditions for teachers and support staff goes out the window, replaced by whatever terms the Board of Trustees imposes. Claims that TUPE legislation protects these on transfer to the new employer are deeply flawed, as the academy can rip up staff contracts any time it wants.

On top of this, Academies can refuse

to recognise the unions, as has happened at the RSA Tipton Academy in Sandwell. Free schools – effectively academies set up from scratch – are even allowed to use non-qualified teachers.

Lord Hill recently wrote to heads, strongly hinting that "ministers might even turn down schools for academy status if they declared themselves happy to stick with national pay agreements" (Guardian 19.04.11).

FACT:
Further Education cuts amount to around £650 million. FE cuts disproportionately affect adult learners and poorer people because they make up most learners at FE colleges

women's viewpoint JO CASSIDY



A new women's movement to fight the 'new sexism'

Over 5,000 women were on the Slutwalk march in London and the annual Reclaim the Night march opposing violence against women is becoming increasingly popular. There has also been a resurgence of interest in feminist ideas, with blogs like the F-word getting more and more hits.

New writers like Kat Banyard and Natasha Walters have exposed the position of women in contemporary society and show that the fight for women's liberation is not over. A survey of new feminist activists by Catherine Redfern, the founder of the F-word, reported that three quarters were under the age of 35, showing that feminism has had an injection of new blood.

New challenges

While it is undeniable that huge advances have been made for women, equally there are new challenges.

One new challenge is the rise of what has been called the "new sexism". This is sexism in an era of formal equality. It is considered ironic and humorous but despite its modern packaging, it has a lot in common with the "old sexism" – it is about the objectification of women's bodies.

Images of women's bodies are ubiquitous in the media and advertising and women are under more pressure to conform to a certain body image than ever before. Moreover, we are told that the 'choice' to be a Page 3 model, or the 'right' to cosmetic surgery, is liberation.

The gains of the feminist movements of the past are being flipped on their heads and the images of sexism are being repackaged and sold back to us as empowerment.

This rise of the "new sexism" is more evident than ever on university campuses where beauty pageants are commonplace and lap dancing clubs advertise to male students at freshers' fayres. At LSE, when a female student tried to challenge the sale of lads mags in the student union, she was confronted by a mob of men brandishing the Sun and hurling abuse at her.

Sexual assault on campuses is consistently overlooked. It was the words of 'advice' from a Toronto policeman to female students that they should avoid 'dressing like sluts' to protect their personal safety which sparked off the Slutwalk phenomenon.

The economic crisis has thrown up even more challenges for the emerging women's movement. Cuts to the public sector will disproportionately affect women, forcing us to shoulder more of the burden for childcare and caring for sick and elderly relatives. Recent statistics show that unemployment amongst women is at its highest since Thatcher was in power.

What is the new feminism?

The media has picked up on the resurgence of feminism, but instead of analysing its politics they have chosen to focus on the fact that "new feminists" are more likely to wear Topshop jeans and lipstick than their foremothers. This is yet another attempt by the mainstream media to patronise and sideline women's political action.

In fact, new activists are defined only by their dissatisfaction with the illusion of equality in today's society. There is not one new feminist movement which is fully fledged or consolidated around concrete ideas. Rather, what we are seeing is a new desire amongst young women to stand up and fight for equality and liberation. However, in much feminist analyses, issues of class tend to be given a back seat. Class and gender are inextricably linked and a new women's movement must have a class analysis and an orientation to class action.

The challenge is to create a new women's movement which attracts new generations of young women, and which is militant and political. A movement which is based on class politics and understands that women's oppression, racism and class domination are interlinked and to fight them effectively we have to look at the system which causes them.

Moreover, a new women's movement will have to prepare itself to fight on two fronts: the 'bread and butter' issues such as the pay gap and free childcare, but also against the culture of 'new sexism', against the objectification of women's bodies. The challenge is not to separate these two fronts, but to see them as interdependent and equally crucial in the struggle for women's liberation.

★ INTERNATIONAL

Troy Davis: murdered by the state of Georgia

Jeff Albertson

TROY DAVIS was put to death at 11pm on 21 September as family, friends, and hundreds of supporters held vigil outside. Outside the United States, many more waited, hoping he would be given a last-minute reprieve. He received none.

This was the fourth and final attempt on Davis' life. On previous occasions, the courts came under massive public pressure to stay his execution, including protests from the Pope and even from pro-death penalty former FBI director William S. Sessions.

When the State Supreme Court of Georgia and then the US Supreme Court denied Davis' request for another stay of execution, more than 630,000 signed a petition demanding clemency, including former US president Jimmy Carter, Al Sharpton, Desmond Tutu, and 51 members of Congress.

Troy Davis had so much support by this time because the original murder case against him had completely fallen apart. Key witnesses in the 1989 shooting of off-duty police officer Mark MacPhail for which Davis was convicted of later changed all or part of their testimony. Many said they were coerced by the police to testify against him, and there was never any DNA evidence that could link Davis to the scene.

Legislation barring death-row inmates from bringing new evidence, that could have been presented at trial, ruled out a new hearing, one that could have proved Davis' innocence. As far as the courts were concerned, a black man had been found who could be blamed for shooting a white policeman.

This is where the racist nature of the US justice system comes in. The raising and surfacing of doubts and inconsistencies, the examination of the mishandling and corruption of investigations – crucial aspects of any legal proceeding under "normal" circumstances – become com-



Troy Davis: Innocent man murdered by the state

pletely incidental when black males are accused of murder.

This is especially true when a white policeman is the victim, the case of Mumia Abu-Jamal being another high-profile example. There are many more. Despite making up 12.6 per cent of the US population, blacks constitute roughly 41 per cent of those awaiting state-sponsored murder on death row.

Worse still, the majority of people since 1974 initially convicted of a capital crime and later found to be innocent were black. In the last 40 years, 138 people on death row were later found to be innocent of the crimes they were convicted of. It is testament to the racist character of the capitalist state's justice system that it is so quick to sentence so many black males to death when evidence of their innocence is readily available.

Does this not reveal plainly the flaws inherent in the use of capital punishment as a deterrent and "executor" of justice? One sickening, inescapable thought cannot be shut out: how many more have been consigned to death without cause? People who never had a campaign to defend them, or a crusading lawyer to fight their corner, who were murdered to serve the popular percep-

tion that justice was done, and that the guilty were punished?

We will probably never know the answer.

Legacy

In Britain today many people are calling for the reinstatement of the death penalty. Troy Davis is proof of the abuses that can happen when people are condemned to death. He was convicted of killing a police officer despite the fact it was impossible to prove his guilt beyond reasonable doubt. We are all innocent until proven guilty, yet Davis was murdered with less evidence than someone prosecuted for a traffic offence. We unreservedly oppose the death penalty.

In a note that Davis wrote just before his death, he urged people to keep fighting. "There are so many more Troy Davis'. This fight to end the death penalty is not won or lost through me but through our strength to move forward and save every innocent person in captivity around the globe. We need to dismantle this unjust system city by city, state by state, and country by country."

That would be the best way to honour the life and memory of Troy Davis.

Libya – the struggle continues

Gaddafi has been toppled from power, but the fight for the future of Libya continues.

Dave Stockton looks at the growing conflicts amongst the anti-Gaddafi forces.

NATO are trying to take the lion's share of the credit for the Libyan Revolution. They are also after its spoils. French President Nicolas Sarkozy and British Prime Minister David Cameron rushed to Tripoli to stake their claims to both. The UK-based oil giants BP and Royal Dutch Shell have major exploration deals. Italy's ENI and France's Total already had big contracts with Gaddafi and have operated in the country for decades.

The head of the National Transitional Council (NTC) Mustafa Abdul Jalil has made it clear that he favours Nato powers over China and Russia, who tried to block assistance to the rebels. Despite being composed mainly of Gaddafi's ex-ministers and officials, Jalil's government enjoys the complete backing of NATO. However, it is still far from controlling all of the country. It does not have widespread support from the brigades of youthful

fighters who played the decisive role in the liberation of Libyan cities.

The military council in Tripoli, which led the insurrection in the capital, is headed by Abdulkarim Bel Haj, a radical Islamist who was "rendered" by MI6 and the CIA to Gaddafi and tortured along with other Libyan oppositionists. He has little reason to love Cameron and Sarkozy or Abdul-Jalil. Another Islamist, Ismail Sallabi, who commanded the February 17 Brigade that defended Benghazi against Gaddafi's assault, has called on the NTC to resign, calling it "remnants of the Gaddafi era" and "a bunch of liberals with no following in Libyan society".

The author Soumaya Ghannoushi has commented on *Al Jazeera* – "Two legitimacies are confronting each other today in Libya: armed struggle and liberation versus the de facto legitimacy of a self-appointed leadership derived from western support.

The two are locked in a cold (and potentially hot) conflict over Libya's future, the nature of its political order, and its foreign policy. It is a contest between a strategy directed by an internal agenda on the one hand; and one defined from the outside, by NATO and western powers, on the other."

Revolutionaries, consistent democrats and socialists in Libya need to take advantage of the new situation. The overthrow of Gaddafi and the dual power between the NTC and the military councils have created a space in which they can fight to stop the plunder of Libya by France and Britain. They must demand social justice, employment and freedom for youth and the working class. They need to resist a re-imposition by the NTC of a Gaddafi regime without Gaddafi or a Salafist regime that, in the name of imposing Sharia, will oppress the youth, women, and ethnic and religious minorities.

India: carworkers fight back

By Ahsan Raza

The city of Gurgaon symbolises India's economic boom. Twenty miles from New Delhi, its skyline is dominated by the offices of multinational - IBM, Nokia, Honda, Bank of America. Not so visible are the two million industrial workers of the region. Half of them work in the auto industry, supplying parts to the major companies. Their conditions are appalling, few factories are unionised, more than 90 percent work up to 12 hours shifts for 5000 rupees (£66) per month.

The workers of Maruti Suzuki, in Manesar district, are leading the fight for workers' rights. Forced to work up to 16 hour shifts, denied time off and fined heavily for the slightest delay, they have formed the Maruti-Suzuki Employees Union (MSEU) as a fighting alternative to the management backed MUKU.

Since a strike in June, the company has tried everything to break the



Mass meeting of carworkers at the Maruti Suzuki, car plant union - with the backing of the government. On 15 August, the govt dismissed MSEU's application for registration, after the Chief Minister, Hooda, promised Shinzo Nakanishi that his government would not allow the formation of a second union. In July, workers boycotted elec-

pany then demanded that workers sign a "good conduct bond" that removes the right to strike, declaring that anyone who refuses is "on strike". No worker has signed. Eleven hundred regular workers and 2000 contract and trainee workers have now joined the struggle.

On the morning of 29 August, management imposed a lock-out, backed up by a large police deployment. It sacked five permanent workers and 18 trainees and suspended 26 permanent workers. Despite the efforts of police and goons hired from nearby villages, workers stayed united in their struggle.

On September 18, the company-government alliance went even further, arresting MSEU officers Sonu Gujjar, President, Shiv Kumar, General Secretary and Ravinder Kumar after a supposed "negotiation meeting". As a result, the Manesar plant is now at a standstill, as the union demands their release, full reinstatement, withdrawal of the "bonds" and recognition of the union.

Nepal gets new Prime Minister but deeper problems remain

Rajesh Thapa

THE CONSTITUTIONAL assembly in Nepal has once again failed to reach agreement. Its tenure has been extended for a fourth time. Although the major parties declared their commitment to the process of drafting a new constitution several times, the main issues of contention have never been discussed seriously, let alone finalised. Assembly meetings have been poorly attended, postponed and stalled.

Lust for power and the controversial issue of the integration of the Maoist People's Liberation Army have been the key obstacles to completing the political process. The main opposition parties, the bourgeois National Congress and the reformist Communist Party (United Marxist

Leninist) have openly announced that they don't want to move ahead with the process before settling the PLA dispute.

New Prime Minister Baburam Bhattarai, along with his government, has put forward a self-imposed forty-five day time limit to complete the major tasks of combatant integration and rehabilitation. However, he has not been able to give a final touch to his cabinet because of the growing internal rift in his party, the United Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist).

In short, a deeper political and economic crisis now looks certain to open.

Rift in the Maoist party

The three-way division in the Maoist party, which had been temporarily

resolved by elevating vice chairman Bhattarai to the post of Prime Minister, now threatens to re-intensify many times over. Senior vice chairman Mohan Baidya has increasingly clashed with the factions of chairman Prachanda and the other vice chairman, Bhattarai. Baidya's faction, which claims to have the support of more than 40 per cent of their MPs if they were to split the party, has strongly opposed the recent handover some of the party's weapons to the state.

Despite initially agreeing on the modality and number of PLA integration into the army, Baidya and his allies have now taken to the streets to oppose the party's decision and have refused to join the government formed by their own party. They argue that all they want is a mere apology from Prachanda and Bhat-



Dr Baburam Bhattarai

tarai and their agreement to not to repeat such mistakes.

As the political crisis continues to loom, the economy has failed to

grow. The government has not been able to guarantee the regular supply of electricity and fuel, vital for the functioning of any economy. Now it is struggling to control growing corruption, food adulteration and security breaches.

Neither the old parliamentary parties nor the new ones, like the UCPN-Maoist, have been able to satisfy the basic needs of the people who made the revolution that brought down King Gyanendra in 2006. On the one hand, they have failed to meet the people's mandate on peace and a new constitution. On the other, they have failed to improve their living conditions. We need a party which can lead the masses towards the revolutionary smashing of the bourgeois state and establishing a society based on socialist ideals.

Pakistani trade unionists facing repression

WORKERS AT the Karachi Energy Supply Company (KESC) have been fighting over 4,500 job cuts since January. Now, after months without pay, they face increased repression. In July, the government made a show of intervening to resolve the dispute and KESC management promised to pay the workers three months' wages and drop their plans. Almost immediately afterwards, management reneged on the deal and went back to harassing and persecuting the workers.

The workers' situation is increasingly desperate. Before the Eid

festival, one group of workers went to the head office to demand their wages, security guards opened fire and nine workers were injured. The news spread like a fire and thousands of workers and trade union leaders surrounded the KESC head office. They condemned the management for firing on workers and demanded the implementation of the July agreement.

Rangers and police baton charged the crowd and even opened fire with live ammunition. On 29 August, 44 KESC union members, along with Chairman of KESC Worker

Alliance, Akhlaq Khan and General Secretary, Haji Shahzad, were arrested. All of them, even the injured workers, faced prosecution under the draconian "anti-terror" laws. This was an attempt to intimidate all the workers, after a month, the workers were released by the court because there was no evidence! Even so, the non-payment of wages and the sacking of thousands of workers remain big issues.

The dispute has revealed the real character of the major parties. Many in the unions and on the left believe the Pakistan Peo-

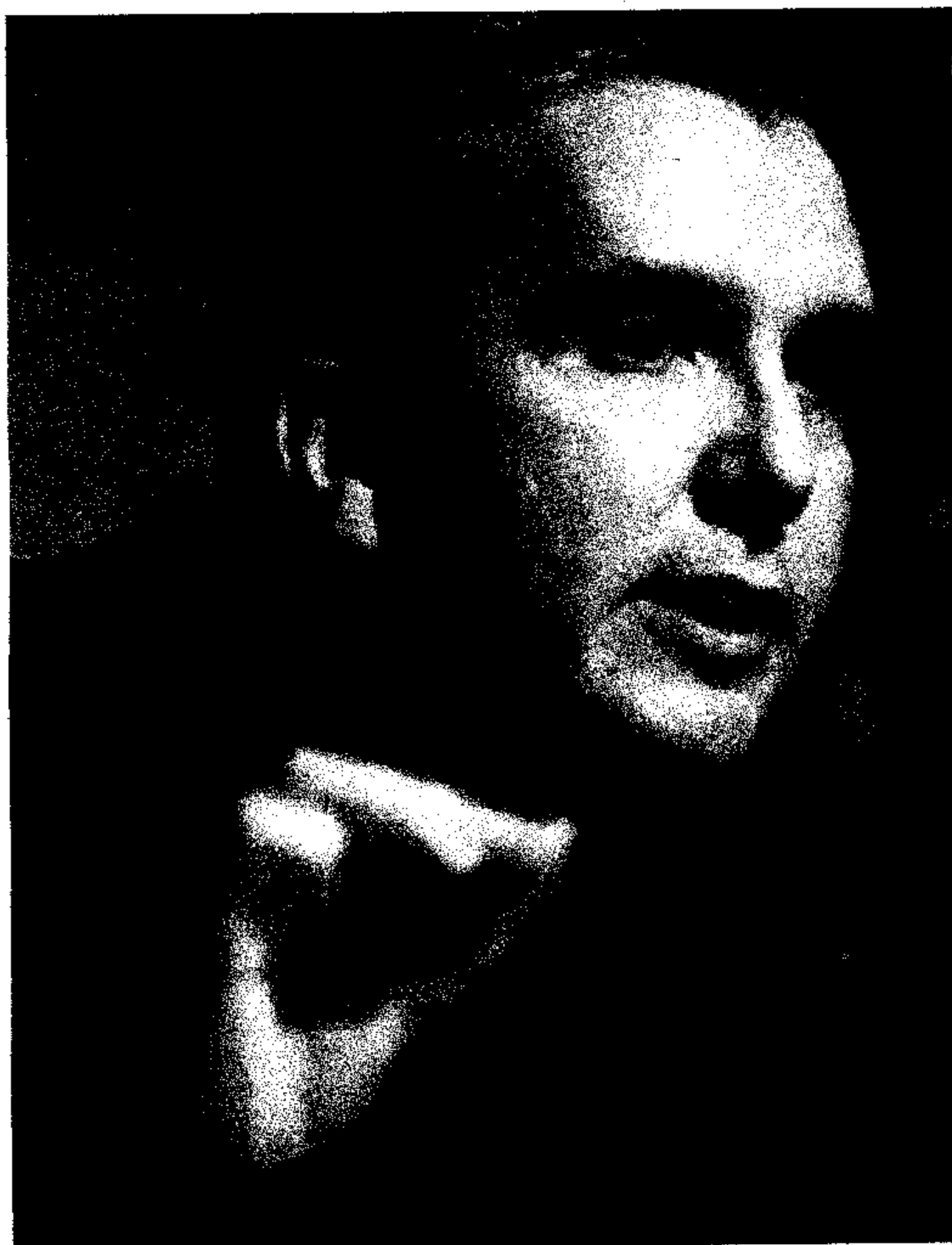
ple's Party government is on the side of the working class. The KESC struggle has shown thousand of workers where its loyalties really lie. The party and the government play a dual role, they say they sympathise with the workers but when the workers threatened to escalate their action by turning off the electricity, they argued they should limit themselves to petitioning. In reality, the government stands squarely with the KESC management. Even the opposition parties have stood aside from the issues and stuck to

their neo-liberal policies throughout the conflict.

The workers are determined to continue their heroic struggle. But determination must be linked to more militant tactics, like maintaining the picket of the head office and reaching out to other workers to support the strike. The KESC workers need solidarity from across Pakistan and internationally. The left and trade unions have to organise solidarity protests and use this dispute to galvanise the whole of the working class in defence of their jobs, their wages and their conditions.

The challenge of Capitalist Realism – rebuilding faith in a radical alternative

Mark Fisher, cultural critic, author of *Capitalist Realism* (Zero Books: 2009) and a lecturer at Goldsmiths and the University of East London, spoke to **Simon Hardy** about the state of modern politics, the power of ruling class ideology and the problems of the radical left in the face of the global capitalist crisis.



IT WAS odd but somehow fitting to meet a critic of modern capitalist culture in the newly opened Westfield Shopping Centre in Stratford. Mark Fisher is well known as a music and cultural critic, but he has also written numerous essays on the state of radical politics today and the challenges facing the left an era of 'capitalist realism'. Drinking coffee surrounded by KFC, McDonalds and thousands of people eating in the food hall, we were immersed in the modern consumer society, a monument to Blair's Britain. "It feels like you are in the Titanic after it sunk – like this is a museum to pre-2008 capitalism" he laughed.

SH: Can you outline your views on capitalist realism, what does it mean?

"Capitalist Realism is easier to spot than it is to define. A definition is actually quite hard to give because what we are talking about is a belief, but not one just in the heads of individuals. It is a kind of

psychic infrastructure; the belief that capitalism is the only possible system. On one level most of us accept this even if we don't want to accept it, especially since 1989 with the collapse of the USSR.

"Of course the idea that it is the only possible system and we have to subordinate ourselves to it is something that the neo-liberal right have always believed. But the significance of Capitalist Realism is when that belief is shared by the left, or the former left. Many on the left still implicitly hold the view that capitalism cannot be overcome. So anything realistic is on the side of capi-

tal and business. This means everyone is supposed to come to terms with business and everything has to be run more like a business.

"In that sense Capitalist Realism is about New Labour, it is no accident that it was written by someone who worked in institutions which were being heavily shaped by New Labour ideology."

SH: Most of the book was written prior to 2008, so how did the collapse of the western banking system effect its main thesis?

"I joked that when I was writing it that events were outrunning the

book and capitalism would be finished before the book was out. I thought this would consign the book to a certain irrelevance. It seemed clear by 2008 that capitalism was not realistic any more. But what we had after the bank bail-outs was just shock doctrine and more of the same. The ebullient confidence has been replaced by desperation, this is the only thing we have and we have got to make it work."

SH: What do you think about the radical left and its response to the financial crisis?

"What has been exposed is the ubiquitous nature of anti-state attitudes. Today's mainstream ideology is ostensibly anti-statist, of course in neo-liberalism they instrumentalised the state and they cannot exist without it, but there is still a very strong anti-state attitude. This is why I am against certain kinds of anarchist currents, because you can't act as if the rhetoric of self-organisation has not been co-opted. That is not to say there is no value in the concept of self-organisation, it is that you can't start as if these discourses have not been metabolised by capital."

SH: At Anticapitalism 2011 you will be speaking on the "new" left versus the "old" left, what's your take on these terms and the tasks of the left today?

"Well, old vs. new, who has control over that temporality? It is a neo-liberal binary that constructs these terms. 'New' means emphasising decentralisation, choice, freedom, whereas 'old' means bureaucratic, top down, statist and so on. This has to be broken down. That way of understanding the left is very wrong. We saw that around the student movement. New meant leaderless, completely self-organised, and so on. Firstly, I do not think that it was leaderless. Secondly, it was a failing of the student movement, ultimately, that

it stopped in December. There was a failure to sustain the antagonism. And this is because there was a lack of an organisational institution to carry it on."

SH: What about the famous break in 1968 between the supposed old and new left?

"The important thing to remember is that '68 failed, it was not a triumph, there is a strange nostalgia for '68, but it ended in failure. Of course there are important gains made as a result of the 60s, but there were significant losses. We can't go back to the way things were before the 60s happened but we can't carry on with the same 60s politics. For me the big thing today is co-ordination rather than centralisation. We don't need centralisation, we need co-ordination. Capital is not centralised, but it is co-ordinated enough to fight us. So we need sufficient globalisation and co-ordination.

SH: So how would you sum up your manifesto for a new left?

"Why are people here [in Westfield] now? It is a degraded form of public space. They don't have civic squares to go to, so they come to shitty shopping centres." He motions to the local newspaper we have on the table in front of us. "Look, more than a million people came here last week - they are looking for something they will never find."

SH: So what is the answer?

"We need to say 'we are the only people who can deliver modernity and give you what you really want'."

Mark Fisher will be speaking at Anticapitalism 2011 on the 21-23 October in central London. A longer version of this interview can be read on our website where you can also buy a ticket.



Film review: Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy

Simon Hardy

"There is a mole at the top of the circus..."

THESE WORDS open up a well made and tense thriller, directed by Tomas Alfredson. *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, now remade as a historical drama piece, speaks of a different time but captures well the tensions of the spy world in the mid-1950s. Through a series of European missions that go terribly wrong, it becomes apparent that there is a Soviet mole placed in the inner circle of the British secret service, referred to as the Circus after its headquarters at Cambridge Circus. Based on the experience of the Cambridge spy ring around Anthony

Blunt, Kim Philby and Guy Burgess, British spies who were double agents for Moscow, the film is analogous to a game of chess between the gentlemen spies of the Cold War.

Gary Oldman, one of the most versatile actors in cinema today, plays the world-weary figure of George Smiley very well. Smiley was the star of several of le Carré's spy novels, who himself had a career in MI6. Oldman is understated, with a sense that he has seen and done too much – his family life is a mess, in fact his dedication to the British establishment is the only thing he has left.

The one flaw in the film which felt important comes at the conclusion. The movie spends so long chasing the double agent it leaves no time for any sort of explanation for why they did it, what motivated them to betray

Queen and country. In the novel the double agent was recruited in the 1930s and came to hate the dominance of the United States after the Suez Canal incident in 1956, spying for the Russians as a way of undermining growing US hegemony. This is believable, but leaves the double agent merely as a disgruntled British nationalist in an opportunistic relationship with the Soviet Union, not out of any ideological commitment to socialism or against capitalism. In the film the reason is just that "the west has declined and I had to pick a side."

In short the film is good on spy-fuelled tension but short on the necessary psychological drive for the character, a usual complaint when a novel is stripped bare to fit a two-hour movie.



"Nothing is what it seems." David Dencik and Gary Oldman as spy masters in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*

Israel and USA promise to veto Palestinian statehood

By Andy Yorke

THE PALESTINIAN Authority's bid for statehood at the UN has been attacked by Israel and the US in a disgusting denial of the Palestinians' national rights.

If successful the bid would immediately throw into question the Israeli occupation, and its colonies of half a million Jewish settlers in the West Bank. Palestinian officials would have access to international institutions, such as the World Court in the Hague, with which to prosecute Israeli politicians or soldiers for war crimes, like those committed during the vicious 2009 bombardment of Gaza. No wonder Israel is dead-set against it. Moreover, the loss of the West Bank and the recognition of East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital would in a stroke end Israel's ambitions for a Greater Israel incorporating most of these territories, ultimately cleansed of Palestinians.

However, the resolution will first go to the Security Council where the US has indicated it will veto it, causing anger throughout the Middle East. The Palestinian Authority (PA) is then likely to apply to the General Assembly to upgrade its current status to being a 'non-member observer state', allowing its officials onto some committees. Here, PA president Mahmoud Abbas is likely to win the vote, with the rich, imperialist countries pitted against the great majority of semi-colonial countries. In fact the countries that support the Palestinian bid make up around 80 per cent of the world population.

Abbas' move has flushed out Obama, whose response has blown a hole into his own carefully cultivated image, as a 'principled' statesman and honest broker for peace and

democracy in the Middle East. Obama already caved in to Israeli pressure in 2009, when he dropped his demand that it cease further settlements. Now he insists that Palestinian statehood can only be won through yet more talks with Israel, after a two-decade 'peace process' that has gone nowhere. Talks broke down for the umpteenth time as recently as October 2010, when Israel yet again refused to halt its expansion of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Obama's hypocrisy on Palestinian statehood is another wedge driven into US credibility in the Middle East.

Abbas himself is no heroic, democratic leader of the struggle for Palestinian national rights. The 'Palestine Papers' leaked to Al-Jazeera in 2010 show how PA officials offered to abandon the rights of 4.8 million Palestinian refugees, cede nearly all of the land annexed by Israel in East Jerusalem, and collaborate with Israeli, US and British intelligence to attack Hamas. Abbas' presidential term formally expired in 2009, and he continues as president only thanks to emergency powers and repression. Abbas is part of that cabal of Arab oil sheikhs and 'presidents-for-life' that are dead-set against the 'Arab Spring', and both the PA and the Hamas governments suppressed domestic protests in solidarity with the Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions.

Should it be supported?

Of course the bid is primarily meant to strengthen Abbas' hands in future peace negotiations, and the position of his government against its Hamas-led rival in the Gaza strip. Many Palestinians have opposed the bid because it does not include any pro-

vision for the 4.8 million Palestinian refugees and would do little to help the Gaza strip, still under a state of near siege.

But the vote demonstrates one important principle: should the international community recognise a Palestinian state? The answer is yes. To oppose it would mean to line up, though for different reasons, with the US and Israel in opposing Palestinian national rights.

Any recognition at the UN would have to be seen in perspective. It would not liberate the Palestinians and it would not end the conflict. It will, however, strengthen the Palestinians' position internationally, which exactly is why Israel is so opposed to it. The wider goal however must remain a secular, democratic and bi-national state for both peoples. The 5.84 million Jews in Israel today are now close to being outnumbered by a growing Palestinian Arab population, comprising both those living as a minority in pre-1967 Israel and those in the 1967 Occupied Territories. There are millions more in exile waiting for the right to return to their historic homeland.

The Arab revolutions have unlocked a door for the Palestinian people. The revolutionary impulse sweeping through the region creates huge possibilities for a new, third intifada. Palestinians can find allies, both in a newly politicised Israeli working class fighting Netanyahu's neoliberal government, and in the revolutionary democratic struggles of the neighbouring Arab countries. The Palestinians badly need a new intifada, a struggle organised under popular control that pushes aside the corrupt, treacherous leadership in the PA.

Dale Farm resists eviction

Natalie Silverstein

ON 19 SEPTEMBER, the 86 families resident at the Dale Farm site in Basildon, Essex celebrated as the High Court issued a last minute injunction to delay their eviction. This was granted due to concerns that about a "total clearance" of the entire site, including structures allowed to be there. While this only gave the site four days respite, the next court hearing of Friday 23 September has seen any eviction decision postponed until at least after the weekend and possibly for several weeks.

The eviction would have been one of the largest in British history, uprooting a community of 400 Irish travellers that settled on the site over a decade ago. Despite rhetoric about the need to protect "green belt" land, the plans have been widely recognised as discriminating against the travelling community, which has been facilitated by a deeply rooted racism.

While Friday's hearing was another temporary victory, the judge has

made it clear that the "ultimate eviction" was "in many cases going to happen" but that the stays were being granted to ensure all residents were "treated with dignity" and that "minimum alarm" was caused to children.

But dignity for the travelling community means precisely having the space provided to live on travelling sites – not pushed into the overcrowded, substandard fixed housing that has been or will be offered to them. Likewise the children of Dale Farm, who go to local schools, will have their lives seriously disrupted by the eviction, however it is carried out.

Racism

The question remains – why is the council spending millions of pounds to evict people from a field?

The leader of Basildon council has already said that those evicted will have to leave the area, as there are no suitable authorised sites to house them on. The issue of where they will go has been kept firmly off the

agenda, with the government even refusing an offer from the UN to help negotiate a deal between the travellers and the local authority.

While the injunctions have provided a welcome respite for the community, we cannot rely on the legal process. This has so far led only to delaying the day of eviction and is ultimately likely to give the green light for most of the site clearance to go ahead. On 19 September, 200 residents and protestors blocked the entrance to the site, with some chaining themselves to the cars and concrete blocks. If and when the court finally gives the green light, residents of Dale Farm and their supporters will need to use similar tactics to save their homes.

The network that has been created around the anti-eviction campaign should be transformed into a broad based solidarity involving the labour movement and anti-racist groups, demanding decent plots for all travellers and fighting for an end to anti-gypsy racism.

WHERE WE STAND



Capitalism is an anarchic and crisis-ridden economic system based on production for profit. We are for the expropriation of the capitalist class and the abolition of capitalism. We are for its replacement by socialist production planned to satisfy human need. Only the socialist revolution and the smashing of the capitalist state can achieve this goal. Only the working class, led by a revolutionary vanguard party and organised into workers' councils and workers' militia can lead such a revolution to victory and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. There is no peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

The Labour Party is not a socialist party. It is a bourgeois workers' party – bourgeois in its politics and its practice, but it gets its support from the working class through the trade unions and is supported by the mass of workers at the polls. Socialists work alongside Labour Party members in the workers movement and argue for our revolutionary positions within the struggles.



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

fight for workers' control of production. We are for the building of fighting organisations of the working class – factory committees, industrial unions, councils of action, and workers' defence organisations.

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

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

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



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

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

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

Workers power 5

Mass strikes in Egypt can reignite the revolution

Marcus Halaby

EIGHT MONTHS after the fall of Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's newly independent trade unions are now embarking on their first major challenge to the military government that replaced him.

Having its origins in four small unions that organised illegally before the revolution, the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions is demanding a minimum wage of 1,500 Egyptian pounds a month (£165), and more than three times the barely enforced Mubarak-era lower limit that is still on the statute book.

The core of the movement consists of 22,000 textile workers at the huge Misr Spinning and Weaving Company in the industrial city of Mahalla. They are also demanding a tripling of bonuses, and state intervention to increase investment and the supply of raw materials.

Nationally hundreds of thousands of workers have joined the Federation's strike call, while as many again are in separate disputes, in defiance of anti-union laws passed by the new government in its first few days in power. These include teachers demanding higher bonuses and permanent contracts, as well as postal workers, train drivers, hospital and airport staff.

Bus drivers and ticket inspectors in Cairo have threatened to extend their action, with 20 out of 24 bus depots already shut down by strikers. A teachers' strike has closed 90



per cent of the schools in Suez and drawn in 600,000 nationally, forcing education minister Ahmad Gamal el-Din to promise concessions over promotions and permanent contracts.

Workers have struck at the Upper Egyptian Sugar Refineries, raising alongside economic demands political slogans around the management's relationship with Israel and the United States, while teaching staff at the American University of Cairo (AUC) have also struck, supported by their students with sit-ins and occupations.

Other demands have included the sacking of corrupt or incompetent

managers, the payment of delayed wages, the resignation of the minister of civil aviation Lotfi Mustafa Kamal and the reopening under workers' management of recently closed enterprises. The most notable demand has been for a maximum wage of 15 times the minimum wage, essential to prevent corrupt managers from siphoning off revenues from large enterprises and state institutions.

The strike movement has also intersected with the revival of mass street protests against continued military rule, echoing their demands for the abolition of military tribunals for civilians, the trial of corrupt officials

and the punishment of those responsible for the deaths of the 850 people killed during the eighteen day uprising against Hosni Mubarak.

Elections

All of this comes just weeks before parliamentary elections, already postponed by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) headed by Mubarak crony Field Marshal Mohammed Tantawi but now scheduled to begin in November. These will now be held in several stages ending in March 2012, a favoured tactic of the old regime that enabled it to manipulate the results when required.

The elections are in any case expected to produce a good result for the military junta's Islamist allies in the Muslim Brotherhood and the ultra-puritan Salafist movement. Much of the middle class is weary of the revolutionary upheaval, while many of the rural poor have yet to see any economic gains from a revolution made by the urban working class, making the Brotherhood their logical choice.

Their showing will doubtless be increased by the military regime's rigging of the legal framework for the elections, ratified in March by means of a rushed constitutional referendum. A subsequent electoral law, passed in July, ensures that half of the seats will be elected by first-past-the-post rather than proportional representation. This again favours the Brotherhood and the successor parties of Mubarak's dissolved National Democratic Party, and disadvantages the workers' movement and the left, only beginning to organise after decades of repression.

The SCAF has already demanded civilian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf crack down on striking workers, and paramilitary police have subjected demonstrators in Suez to brutal attacks and beatings. It is plain that Tantawi and his junta represent the high command of the counter-revolution. Protesters in Tahrir Square who chanted, "Tantawi is Mubarak" are right. He has refused to appear as a witness at the trial of Mubarak and former interior minister Habib el-Adly. He should indeed appear – in the dock alongside his partners in crime.

This growing convergence of economic and political demands – of a mass strike movement combining with a mass movement on the streets – could pose the question of political power afresh, and ensure that the revolution is not derailed by a show of "elections" that will allow Egypt's ruling capitalist class to re-establish stability behind the façade of a mil-

itarised "democracy".

The most revolutionary sections of the youth and the trade unions should create a movement demanding elections be held, not for the old parliament and under an old constitution that bans parties which "foment class hatred", but for a sovereign constituent assembly to draft and debate a new constitution. It must debate how a new dictatorship can be prevented, grant full democratic rights to soldiers, and determine what Egypt's relations with the US, Israel and the Palestinians should be.

The military junta, the US and the Israelis hate like sin the idea that the masses should express their views on these issues at all, let alone even more fundamental questions like what should be the social foundation of the economy in industry commerce and agriculture that can really lead to equality and freedom from exploitation.

It is clear that neither the SCAF, nor the Muslim Brothers, nor the various liberals on offer, including Mohamed ElBaradei, can be trusted to fulfill the democratic aspirations of the youth or the need for social justice from the workers, the peasants and the urban poor.

Strategy

What can be done, then, at this crossroad of the revolution? Firstly, it is vital that committees or councils of delegates are formed from all the sections on strike to run what can rapidly become a general strike against the military regime. Representatives of the revolutionary youth, the rural population and the shantytowns should be drawn in too.

Secondly, the mass movement of millions is the only force that can outweigh and contain the Islamists drive for power. But it must be democratically run and given political leadership if it is to compete with the Islamists for leadership of the masses. A national strike committee should be formed to formulate the movements' demands.

If the strike movement can coalesce with the movement on the streets, and bring the organised working class to the head of the democratic struggle, then this time the people's victory will not be stolen from them.

Thirdly, these revolutionary tactics pose the question of power for the workers and peasants – of a government based on their organisations, one that can finally rule in their interests. If this is achieved, then the revolution of 2011 can be completed as a socialist revolution that can set the whole Middle East – and beyond – aflame with liberation.

Protesters storm the Israeli embassy

Protests have mushroomed since Israel's killing of five Egyptian soldiers in mid-August, when Israeli security forces breached Egyptian territory in pursuit of Islamist militants allegedly responsible for a series of attacks on Israeli civilians in Eilat.

Popular anger at Israel's actions and at its renewed bombardment of Gaza prompted mass demonstrations outside the Israeli embassy in Cairo, calling for the breaking of diplomatic relations and a review of Egypt's 1979 peace treaty with Israel. The military regime was forced to threaten to withdraw Egypt's ambassador from Tel Aviv.

On 23 August, 23-year-old demonstrator Ahmed Shahat earned international notoriety as the "Flagman" who scaled the embassy to take down its Israeli flag and replace it with an Egyptian one. A few weeks later the nearby



Saudi embassy was also targeted, with protesters bring down one of its walls, forcing the evacuation of the Israeli ambassador and all his remaining staff.

The military regime has since declared a state of emergency to protest its relationship with the

Zionist state. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also pledged that Israel would continue to observe its peace treaty with Egypt. Both regimes fear the breakdown of this bloody, reactionary pact, should matters escalate.