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workers'
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Solidarity

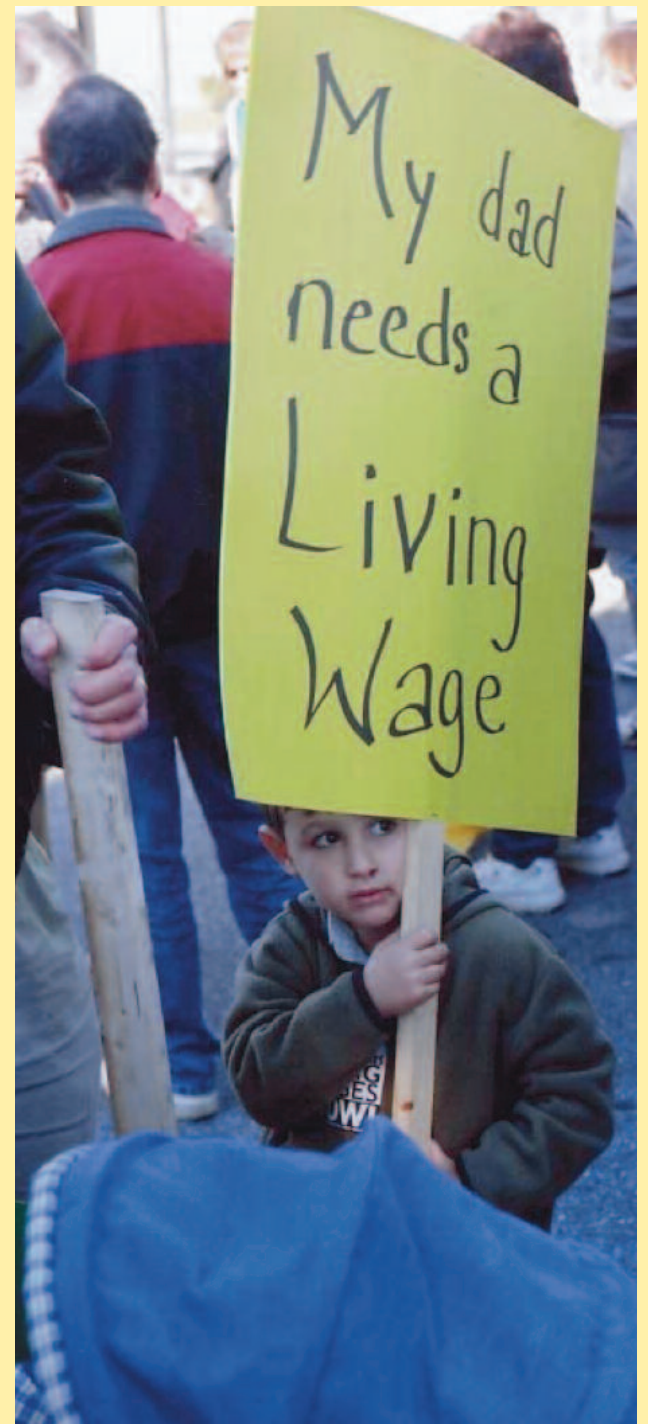
For social ownership of the banks and industry

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A LIVING WAGE



What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

We stand for:

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

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Social housing, not social cleansing!

By Harriet Kitto

29 East London-based young mothers are under threat of eviction after Newham Council cut funding to their accommodation, in East Thames's "Focus E15" building in Stratford.

The mums have been fighting to stay in social housing since last October. They have been making national news and local front pages. Most recently, on Friday 17 January, they confronted their landlords, East Thames, occupying one of the "show flats" that East Thames has been promoting to the wealthy to entice rich people to move to Stratford.

The accommodation that the mums and their babies are housed in is already inadequate. They live in small bedsits, with little or no ventilation, and some of the flats have severe damp and pest problems, including rats. The damp conditions have caused breathing problems for some of the children.

Despite this, the young women are worried they could be moved somewhere worse, or equally bad, but away from their families and friends.

Some were registered homeless through an arbitrary process, and a few



Above: mums holding a party for their kids in the occupation on Friday 17 January. Jasmin Stone said: "We've come here today to show that we're not going to give up fighting. We're going to keep fighting until we get what we need." For a longer report of the action from a participant, see bit.ly/e15-occ-rep

have had offers for alternative accommodation in places as far away as Gloucester and Birmingham. Many have been told to look for alternative accommodation through payments from the council, but have been given virtually no help in looking in an extremely hostile housing market for private tenants, let alone tenants paying through the council.

One of the key methods in which the council and the landlords seem to be working is to attempt to "divide and rule" the mums, avoiding sending letters that could be seen by lawyers, instead knocking on doors or calling im-

promptu meetings. As a result the campaign is calling for open meetings where everyone is present to counteract these tactics.

East Thames has 750,000 properties. They blame Newham Council for cutting the funding, yet clearly do not bother to even maintain the properties that the council is paying rent for. The Labour council, led by Newham Mayor Robin Wales, is to blame for cutting funding to a vital service, in what campaigners say is a social cleansing experiment, leaving working-class young mums high and dry.

Around the corner from Focus E15 is the Carpenters

Estate, a social housing area that in recent years working-class people have been systematically evicted from. It is high-quality housing stock that is being left to rack and ruin through a lack of maintenance and no one living there. When University College London tried to buy some land off the estate, local tenants organised to stop them and to save their community, gaining support from many UCL students.

The Focus E15 Mums are militant, brave, and inspirational women. At the moment they are doing a lot with very few resources.

Their demand is: "social housing, not social cleansing!" They want suitable, long-term accommodation in London, in social housing, not the private-rented sector, as well as any meetings to be held with all affected mothers present.

The campaign runs street stalls on Saturdays, from 12 midday until 2pm outside Wilkinson's, near Stratford station.

- Sign the campaign's petition at bit.ly/e15-mums
- "Like" the campaign's Facebook page at bit.ly/e15-mums-fb
- Contact the campaign on 020 7837 1688

New loophole find helps Bedroom Tax fight

By Luke Hardy

Anti-Bedroom Tax campaigner Peter Barker has discovered a major loophole in the legislation.

He found that any tenant whose housing benefit claim for a property dates

from 1996 or before should not be liable for the Bedroom Tax, even according to the government's own legislation.

His blog post on this was widely read, and led to the government telling councils and housing associations to pay back the

rent claimed for the so-called "spare room". This should affect about 40,000 tenants (still less than a tenth of those hit by this policy). The government is now moving to try to close the loophole and force those tenants to start paying the Bedroom Tax again

from March.

One particularly horrifying aspect of the policy is that after three months of a family member in the house dying, their family can be liable for paying the Bedroom Tax on their room. The family of Cornwall teenager Caleb Hollow, who died in December 2012, kept his room as part of their grieving process, but will now have to move house or stump up extra money for rent.

The Labour Party has come out against the Bedroom Tax nationally, but the vast majority of Labour-controlled local councils which control their own council housing are still imposing the Bedroom Tax.

Councillors Against Cuts have put out a statement for Labour councillors to sign which calls for councils to side with tenants and refuse to implement the policy.

Ukip bigot blames gay marriage for floods

By Emily Blake

With the flood of Bulgarian and Romanian immigrants that the United Kingdom Independence Party (Ukip) predicted failing to materialise, bigots have found another scapegoats for the actual floods that hit Britain recently.

According to David Silvester, a Ukip councillor in Oxfordshire, the floods were a punishment from god for the government's

support for same-sex marriage. He claims he even wrote to David Cameron to warn him of impending disaster.

Ukip initially refused to condemn him, saying: "if the media are expecting Ukip to either condemn or condone someone's personal religious views they will get absolutely no response."

Silvester has now been suspended by his party, but rather than explicitly condemning him, Ukip leader Nigel Farage has fo-

cus his response on claiming that the whole episode is exaggerated and played up by the media to undermine his party. In fact, the media is increasingly allowing Ukip to define and dominate the debate on Europe and immigration. Their ideas on those things are just as bigoted as Silvester's homophobia.

The task of the left and the labour movement is to challenge those ideas and expose Ukip's racism for what it is.

Winter Olympics cast spotlight on bigotry

By Dale Street

The staging of the 2014 Winter Olympics in the Black Sea city of Sochi has cast a spotlight on anti-gay bigotry in Russia — in its “legal” and “popular” forms.

In June 2013, the Russian Duma (Parliament) unanimously voted through an amendment to Article 5 of the Federal Law on the “Defence of Children from Information Causing Harm to Their Health and Development”.

The stated purpose of the amendment is to protect children from “information which propagandises a denial of traditional family values and non-traditional sexual relations.” Non-traditional relations are defined as “relations not conducive to procreation.” Earlier versions of the wording were more straightforward and simply referred to “protecting children from homosexual propaganda.”

Russian individuals and organisations found to be

in breach of the amendment can be subject to a fine of up to one million rubles (around £18,000). Organisations that can also be shut down for up to 90 days. Heavier penalties can be imposed where such “propaganda” has been disseminated by the media or through the internet. Foreigners who breach the amendment can also be imprisoned for up to 15 days and deported from Russia.

The vagueness of the wording makes the amendment a licence to ban all Gay Pride marches and protests in defence of LGBT rights — in case such events are witnessed by minors. The same vagueness means that any material in defence of LGBT rights which is posted on the internet or discussed in the media could also attract criminal charges — because minors might come across such material.

Well before 2013, similar laws had already been adopted by a number of regional parliaments. Ryazan, Arkhangelsk,



Kostroma, Krasnodar, Novosibirsk, and St. Petersburg have all passed laws making it illegal to speak in public or publish articles about being LGBT. In June 2012, Moscow City Council banned Pride marches for 100 years. Sochi itself also has anti-gay laws on the local statute book.

LGBT rights groups have rated Russia as the worst country in Europe — 49th out of 49 — for LGBT rights.

But this is still not enough for the most prominent anti-LGBT elements in Russian society: right-wing nationalist politicians and the Russian Orthodox Church. (And Stalinist nostalgics: homosexuality was outlawed by Stalin in 1934, and decriminalised by

Yeltsin in 1993.) In July 2013, the Russian government enacted new laws banning the adoption of children by gay and lesbian couples in foreign countries, and the adoption of children by unmarried couples in countries which permit same-sex marriages. Duma member Aleksei Zhuravlev has also proposed amendments to the Russian Family Code under which children would be taken away from their parents if one or both of them had a “non-traditional” sexual orientation.

On 10 January, Russian Orthodox Church spokesperson Vsevolod Chaplin called for a referendum on banning all gay relationships, claiming that such a ban would be a democratic act in the light of opinion polls indicating that over 50% of Russians regard homosexuality as a crime or an illness. Chaplin’s comments are consistent with those expressed by the head of the Orthodox Church, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia,

who claimed last year: “This (legal rights for gays) is a very dangerous apocalyptic symptom, and we must do everything in our powers to ensure that sin is never sanctioned in Russia by state law, because that would mean that the nation has embarked on a path of self-destruction.”

An attempt to stage a Pride march in St. Petersburg last year was attacked by Russian nationalists. According to the local LGBT rights group Coming Out, LGBT people in the city have also been harassed by police, evicted from their apartments and sacked from their jobs. In Volgograd a man was beaten to death after having come out to his friends. LGBT campaigners in Moscow protesting against last year’s anti-LGBT legislation were attacked by counter-protestors wielding icons and crosses.

With increasing frequency, homophobes are using on-line dating sites to meet with gay men, who are then subjected to video-

recorded humiliation and beatings.

Although there have been some calls for a boycott of the Winter Olympics and of “Russian” products such as Stolichnaya Vodka (exports of which are produced in Lithuania, not Russia), Russian-based LGBT groups are opposed to a boycott.

Advancing slogans such as “Speak Up, Don’t Walk Out” and “Don’t Boycott the Olympics — Boycott Homophobia”, they are calling on LGBT activists and supporters to take the opportunity of the Olympics to:

“Join LGBT people, their families and allies in Russia in solidarity and taking a firm stance against the disgraceful human rights record in this country ... (and) send the strongest message possible by involving athletes, diplomats, sponsors and spectators to show up and speak up, proclaiming equality in the most compelling ways.”

Solidarity with LGBT people in Nigeria!

By Paul Penny

On 7 January 2014, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signed a law that makes gay marriage in Nigeria punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

Already, LGBT rights activists are reporting mass arrests and beatings of gay people, and people perceived to be gay, all over Nigeria.

Dorothy Aken’Ova, executive director of Nigeria’s International Centre for Reproductive Health and Sexual Rights, gave the BBC a detailed account of how police seized and held four gay men over Christmas and beat them until they named people allegedly belonging to LGBT organisations. Dozens of gay men have already been arrested in the northern state of Bauchi, after police drew up a list of 168 gay men who are now being hunted down.

There has been international condemnation of the Nigerian “Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act”. The law bans processions, meetings or gatherings of LGBT people. Any persons or group of persons that

witnesses, and aids the solemnisation of a same-sex marriage contract or civil union or supports the registration of gay societies and organisations, processions or meetings, commits an offence and is liable on conviction to ten years’ imprisonment.

Ifeanyi Kelly Orazulike, executive director of the Nigeria-based International Centre for

Advocacy on Right to Health, said, “Arrests have been made before, but not at this magnitude. Police are not telling us what the charges are, and people are scared. People want to leave and you don’t blame them. They are asking us about the exit choices.”

Last week, the BBC was told by Jibrin Danlami Hassan of the Bauchi Sharia Commission that “an Is-

lamic court in Bauchi has put 11 Muslim men on trial accused of being homosexuals. The men were arrested by residents of Bauchi city and handed to the Islamic police force,” he said.

Amnesty International reported that between 15 and 18 January, 12 LGBT people were arrested in Oyo state in the south-west, six in Imo state in the

south-east, eight in central Abuja, and six in Anambra state in the south-east.

The anti-gay law is seen as a calculated move by politically beleaguered Goodluck Jonathan to use homophobia and hate as a distraction from his own incompetence, and to divert attention and the focus of political debate in Nigeria from the endemic political corruption

and unequal economy. Nigeria is a deeply conservative country, and homophobia is used by political leaders as a political game and a distraction from other human rights violations and political tyranny.

Homosexuality is illegal in seventy-six countries around the world, and in ten of these punished by death or life imprisonment.

Italy: Renzi woos Berlusconi

By Hugh Edwards

20 years ago, after the collapse of Italy’s first postwar republic, a fanfare greeted media-mogul Silvio Berlusconi’s accession to power as the new beginning for the perilously unstable economy and the fortunes of its chronically corrupt rulers.

Last weekend in Rome, we saw a rerun of the same pantomime.

Matteo Renzi, the newly-elected Blairite secretary of the Democratic Party in government, in a two-hour

meeting with Berlusconi, not only legitimated the ex-con (and formally banished) tax crook as prospective founding father of a new Third Republic, but also connived with him in a new electoral law, as inimical to elementary democracy as the current one.

Underneath the hosannas of the “liberal” press (their “moral” revulsion of Berlusconi forgotten), the goal is to choke off further electoral and political dissent, allowing the trouble-free prosecution of the priorities that, if successful, will see Italian capitalism

re-emerge as a major player in the European and world economy. Renzi incarnates the spirit of this “modern” liberal populism in the service of the most rampant sectors of the economy — agribusiness, design, fashion etc., the latter thriving on a wage system paying at most €8 an hour, and maintaining the near slavery of Chinese workers, as revealed in the tragedy of Prato two months ago, in which seven workers died in a factory fire.

Within the Democratic Party Renzi is a threat to its old guard of ex-Stalin-

ists, Christian Democrats, and the extensive web of bureaucrats and officials within the trade union movement, local and regional government, and all the key apparatus of the capitalist state. At the moment the wind blows in his favour, though his abrupt decision to do a deal with Berlusconi, after his overtures to Beppe Grillo’s “5 Star Movement” were rejected, might backfire if Prime Minister Enrico Letta’s government should fall and new elections ensue in an even deeper climate of instability.

The disastrous legacy of

Berlusconi and the onset of economic, political, and institutional crisis has inevitably resulted in a comprehensive dissolution of mass consent for the established political order and its dominant parties. The Italian working class, and its leaders in the trade unions and left political forces, are not currently fit to fight.

As Lenin pointed out, for as long as the victims of the exploiters fail to carve out the means and the road to challenge them and their system, the exploiters will find the way to survive.

South African metalworkers take new course

By Robert Fine

Rumour has it that in 1994, some leading trade union organisers in the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) gave the African National Congress (ANC) a 10-year deadline to introduce serious social democratic reforms.

Now the 10 years are up. One of the largest and best organised unions in South Africa, the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) has dissociated itself from the ANC-South African Communist Party (SACP)-COSATU alliance.

In December 2013 at a special national congress (attended by 1,200 delegates) NUMSA declared that “the working class cannot any longer see the ANC or the SACP as its class allies in any meaningful sense”. It resolved not to campaign for the ANC or the SACP or support them financially in next election. It also withheld its 800,000 Rand monthly subscription to COSATU.

The model of labour representation that has dominated South Africa over the last decade, based on the tripartite Alliance of the ANC, SACP, and COSATU, is now under threat. It is more than a year since the South African police killed 34 strikers in Marikana platinum mine, owned by Lonmin, a British company, with Cyril Ramaphosa, Deputy President of the ANC and former leader of the mineworkers’ union as an executive on its Board.

In the last year industrial actions have also targeted other parts of the mining sector, including the world’s largest platinum producer, Amplat. Both the Marikana and Amplat strikes were organised by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (AMCU), a union formed in 1999, which is in open and sometimes deadly conflict with the COSATU-affiliated National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). There has also been major internal unrest in other COSATU unions.

The fast-flowing current of dissent within the labour movement poses the most serious challenge yet to the neo-liberal policies pursued by the government and to the corruption rife among political and some business leaders. These divisions have been reflected within COSATU itself. The President Sidumo Dlamini (supported by the NUM and the

SACP) has been challenged by the General Secretary Zwelenzima Vavi (supported by NUMSA). Vavi criticised the diversion of public funds to the President Jacob Zuma’s private home, but he himself has been accused of rape of a COSATU employee and has been placed by the COSATU leadership on special leave. NUMSA has called for a national congress of COSATU to reinstate Vavi to office.



Striking mineworkers in 2012

The SACP seems to be as powerful as ever within the ANC. It has held key offices in the government and was a firm supporter of Jacob Zuma, at the December 2012 ANC Conference.

Leading figures in the ANC, SACP and COSATU wasted no time before denouncing NUMSA’s decision to withdraw support from the ANC and establish an independent workers’ party. They predictably accused it of ultra-leftism and of betraying the “founding fathers of COSATU”. This is rather facile given the historical hostility of the ANC leadership, the SACP, and the SACP’s trade-union wing to the “founding fathers” and mothers of COSATU and its predecessor FOSATU in the in the 1980s. A quick look at the SACP paper *African Communist* will reveal that the Party condemned the independent, non-racial unions for “workerism”, “reformism”, “economism” and all manner of worse sins.

NUMSA was also accused of “flirting” with two recently-formed radical groupings, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Workers and Socialist Party (WASP).

However, NUMSA seems wisely to have kept its distance, wary of the EFF’s internal military command structure, its support for nationalisation but without mention of workers’ control, and its commitment to anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism without mention of socialism.

NUMSA is a well-established union with a strong and proven record of workers’ control. It has traditionally shown

a somewhat syndicalist slant, which may be reinforced by what it sees as opportunist advances on the part of untested left-wing political groupings. It declares itself particularly disturbed by the “commander in chief” of the EFF and former ANC Youth League leader, Julius Malema, whom it describes as a “tenderpreneur”, a director of companies that work for the government on the basis of tenders.

Nonetheless NUMSA plans to establish a new “united front” with various political groupings and trade union organisations (like AMCU) to co-ordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities in a similar way to the United Democratic Front in the 1980s, and to oppose the neoliberal policies of the government’s National Development Plan. The aim is apparently to form an independent labour party by 2015 and contest elections in 2019.

This aim echoes a perspective Workers’ Liberty’s predecessor, Socialist Organiser, put forward in the late 1980s before FOSATU became COSATU and joined up with the ANC and SACP.

The union is going to convene a conference on socialism next year and commission an international study on the formation of working-class parties, such as those in Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia and Greece. The union will not endorse any political party in 2014 but of course will not stop its members from campaigning for any party.

NUMSA still holds to the Freedom Charter (formulated in 1955) as the basis for the united front it envisages. This is based on the supposition that the Freedom Charter stands for a fundamental transformation of property relations in South Africa. This stance takes a rosy view of the past, but it makes sense in terms of rooting the union in the established tradition of the national liberation movement.

In fact, what the union has done is take a huge step forward in setting up an independent political wing of the labour movement.

Although full of dangers as well as possibilities, this is greatly to be welcomed by socialists and democrats and offers a ray of light not just to the South African but to the African working class. Solidarity to NUMSA! Solidarity to its courageous action!

• Robert Fine is the co-author of *Beyond Apartheid: Labour and Liberation in South Africa* (London: Pluto, 1990)

Iraqi labour under fire as sectarianism grows

By Falah Alwan

Sectarian violence continues in Iraq, with 21 people killed in bombings in Baghdad on 20 January. The central government, dominated by Shi’ite Muslim parties and led by Nouri al-Maliki, recently launched a military counteroffensive against Sunni-Islamist militias which have taken control of areas in the cities of Ramadi and Fallujah in western Iraq.

Falah Alwan, President of the Federation of Workers’ Councils and Unions in Iraq (FWCUI, one of Iraq’s main labour federations), spoke to *Solidarity* about the situation in the country.

There is enormous wastage on government salaries and other similar expenditure. There’s been no real public sector job creation in the last few years, except for military jobs, and there’s been enormous misappropriation of public funds by government bureaucracy.

There are ongoing tensions between the central government and the semi-autonomous Kurdish regional government, which has been directly exporting oil to Turkey for some time. The Prime Minister of Kurdistan was in Baghdad on 20 January to discuss this issue. The Minister of Oil has said explicitly that Iraq will boycott Turkish oil companies. So the al-Maliki government is putting pressure on the Kurds over this.

But there’s a pressure in the other direction, too, as the Kurds believe al-Maliki needs their support in his conflict with the Sunni nationalists and the Islamist militias.

The government and Shi’ite parties have been trying to stir up sectarian feeling amongst the people. Of course, peo-

ple are against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/ISIS), which is affiliated to al-Qaeda. People in western Iraq consider themselves victims of both al-Qaeda and the Iraqi government. There are reports of people creating neighbourhood patrols and militias to protect themselves against both ISIL and the Iraqi military.

In the south of Iraq, the Shi’ite parties and the government have been able to mobilise more support, with many people backing the army. Elsewhere, people see al-Maliki as the root cause of the current conflict due to his attempts to divide people by religion and ethnicity.

The main struggle for the Iraqi labour movement is still focused on winning a labour code which guarantees workers’ rights. The Parliament was due to vote on the latest draft on Thursday 16 January, but the vote was delayed. That’s fortunate for the unions, as the latest draft doesn’t include any of the unions’ demands or the International Labour Organisation’s recommendations.

The Iraqi government wants a labour law that will be responsive to its neo-liberal policies. The latest draft retains the prohibition of unions in the public sector, something leftover from Saddam Hussein’s 1987 labour law.

We are still campaigning for a labour law which includes the right to organise and the right to strike, workers’ compensation, and protection against job losses. The new labour law gives bosses enormous power to sack workers easily, without consulting the unions. This labour law represents the interests of the capitalists, not the workers. We don’t yet know when the law will come back to Parliament for ratification.

There is also a campaign against the government’s plan

to abolish the Ministry of Industry and move 250,000 previously-nationalised jobs into the private sector. But it’s difficult to campaign effectively. Basic union organising is very difficult in the current situation. There is effectively martial law. Workers are prevented from organising even peaceful strikes and demonstrations. The government considers every activist a terrorist.

The Parliamentary elections are due on 30 April, although the war in western Iraq could delay them. The existing administration has created laws and regulations around the elections that allow them to control the process. There’ll be widespread fraud, election papers will be falsified, and voters will be intimidated by gangs. No serious changes will happen.

There is a coalition led by the Iraqi Communist Party, called “Democratic Trend”, which will participate in the elections as a left bloc. They might win one or two seats. But they cannot make serious changes to the policy of the regime.

The Worker-Communist Party advocates a boycott of the elections, because they are essentially rigged and held under conditions controlled by the existing political powers. This was the same in 2005 and 2009.

Workers and socialists internationally can support the campaigns coordinated by the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Centre, and the industriALL union, which are supported by the unions in Iraq.

Socialists can demonstrate at Iraqi Embassies in their countries and hold meetings to raise awareness about our struggle for a pro-worker labour law and our struggles against neo-liberal policies.

Ukrainians resist Russian imperialism

Anti-government protests have continued in Ukraine, with tens of thousands gathering in defiance of anti-protest laws rushed through Parliament by President Viktor Yanukovich.

The protesters oppose the government's plans to tie the country into closer relations with Russia, and many want Ukraine to develop closer relations with western Europe and join the EU. This article, by Stephen Velychenko of the University of Toronto, appeared on various left-wing websites, including New Left Project, in December 2013.

Workers' Liberty does not share the author's precise take on the situation, but we reprint the article to give background to the situation and as part of discussion.

The mass of Ukrainians and a majority of Russians and Russian-speakers, with the exception of the Crimea, alongside their national-democrat leaders, regard the EU as the only alternative to the neo-soviet Russophile oligarchic order in which they live.

They desire integration into EU, looking to Poland, Slovakia, and Hungary as models. For some European democratic and anti-Stalinist leftists who condemn the American-led neo-liberal corporatist offensive to destroy Europe's post-war social-democratic order, this Ukrainian affinity to the EU can appear incomprehensible. Most ignore Ukraine. Others, despite professed support for oppressed and downtrodden groups, either implicitly or explicitly think Putin's Russian bandit-capitalism preferable to American neo-liberal capitalism, and tolerate his neo-imperialist-driven objective to maintain at least Russian hegemony over Ukraine. Those who think in these terms overlook a number of issues that principled leftists should not.

First, the November 21 refusal by Yanukovich to sign the Association agreement [a deal tying Ukraine more closely to the EU] is a result of the very successful Russian colonialist project in Ukraine. Initiated by Peter I after the Battle of Poltava in central and eastern Ukraine, the project was successfully implemented in western Ukraine after 1945.

Like all colonialist projects, the Tsarist and soviet Russian project in Ukraine involved foreign-speaking colonists from the metropole settling in the periphery, centrally imposed governors from the metropole, a local collaborationist elite, and a reduction of the local population to ethnographic curiosities unsuited to modernity. The imperial centre then turned the annexed periphery into a supplier of raw materials and unfinished bulk-goods. This project was so successful that even today, Anglo-American and European commentators and politicians, who would not even think about referring to "legitimate" English or French interests in India or "Indochina," can, with straight faces, talk about "le-



A protester rips a picture of Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovich

gitimate" Russian interests in Ukraine!

This socio-political order was threatened in 2004, but in 2010 the world witnessed regime-restoration in Kyiv. The flag and the formal language became Ukrainian in 1991, but the public communications sphere remained Russian as did the underlying institutions and relations of power. In this broader context, the ruling elite, as represented by Yanukovich, his Party of Regions and the still existing Communist Party of Ukraine, was for all intents and purposes a continuation of the old Soviet-era colonialist administrative elite whose focus, allegiances, culture, and fortunes remain tied to Putin's neo-imperial Russian centre.

As rulers and owners of a de jure independent country, some of Ukraine's Russophile post-Soviet oligarch/capitalists began developing a territorial "national interest." Like their counterparts in 19th century Latin America, this group, after 1991, began evolving into a "creole" elite, ruling an independent national state separate from the imperial metropole. As an incipient "national capitalist class" they see membership in the EU as a way to secure their local political power and stolen fortunes.

The November 21 decision suggests this evolution has

stopped for the foreseeable future. Whether or not massive inflows of European capital will renew it remains to be seen. Whether police and special forces turn and support the pro-EU movement also remains to be seen.

Within this context, the average Ukrainian, even if such a person is aware of the neo-liberal corporatist destruction of the post-war order, sees the EU corporate neo-liberal capitalist order as one that still provides better conditions of life than the Russian-style robber state-corporatist capitalist order they live under in Ukraine. Re-establishing closer ties with Putin's Russia would reinforce that criminalised order.

When the average Ukrainian looks at the EU, they see what Marx considered the great achievements of the 18th and 19th-century bourgeois revolutions: freedom of the press, elected representative assemblies, constitutions, the rule of law, and strong legal trade unions. These freedoms have yet to be enacted and enforced in Ukraine.

Today, transnational corporations, through their various "trade agreements", usurp and destroy these freedoms in the countries where they were won, often by force of arms and bloodshed. Nevertheless, even in truncated form, today's EU member countries remain as beacons of these "bourgeois freedoms" to people living in authoritarian post-soviet republics. These freedoms never existed in Stalin's USSR and, after 1991, despite their formal adoption in a written constitution, Ukraine's robber barons and their hired politicians ignore them whenever they please.

From a leftist perspective, the results of the "bourgeois revolutions" that occurred in eastern Europe only in 1989 have yet to reach Ukraine. Accordingly, leftists must realise that nationalism plays a different role in Ukraine than it does in the EU. Nationalism is simply a theory that says political and cultural borders should coincide. The policies enacted within those borders can be leftist or rightist, extremist or moderate. Everything depends on the leaders and the people. Ukrainian nationalism in Ukraine, accordingly, as in any other country, cannot be identified solely with the extreme right. Besides, leaders of such extremist, nominally "Ukrainian", groups like Dmytro Korshynski of "The Brotherhood", or "Patriots of Ukraine," upon investigation, turn out to have links with Ukraine's pro-Russian oligarch and the Russian FSB [ex-KGB].

Like any nationalism nurtured by and directed against any imperialism, Ukrainian nationalism directed against Putin's Russian neo-imperialism, represents a democratic progressive force and must be supported.

• This article is abridged. The full version can be read online at bit.ly/st-vel

Mobilising workers in Bangladesh

Badrul Alam, a member of the Communist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist-Leninist), an observer section of the Fourth International, spoke to *Solidarity* about the political crisis in that country and its implications for working-class politics.

The Awami League and the Bangladeshi Nationalist Party (BNP), the two main bourgeois parties in Bangladesh, are fighting each other for power. There are no real ideological differences between them. Both parties belong to the bourgeoisie.

The Awami League, the ruling party, wants to cling to power. The opposition parties called for it to dissolve parliament at the end of its five-year term and create a so-called "level playing field" with a caretaker government, but instead it called a new election. Most of the opposition parties boycotted it. The election was held on 5 January, but only 153 of 300 seats were contested.

The Awami League's coalition includes some so-called "leftist" parties, like the Workers' Party of Bangladesh, led by Rashed Khan Menon, who are providing cover for the bourgeois Awami League. The National Socialist Party of

Bangladesh, led by Hassan Haq Inu, is also part of the government coalition. The Workers' Party has some ministerial positions following the elections.

The coalition also includes the Jatiya Party, led by Hussain Mohammed Ershad, who was President of Bangladesh from 1983 until 1990 when he was ousted by a popular uprising. Now he is sharing power in the ruling coalition.

The main opposition party, the BNP, did not take part in the election. They called demonstrations, blockades, and other direct actions against the election. They were joined by Islamist militants like Jama'at-e-Islami.

Our party did not take part in the elections. We tried to convince people about the nature of the bourgeois political parties, and explain that power is their main target. They don't take into account the problems of the people.

Our party is trying to mobilise people. We are trying to show how the bourgeois political parties are deceiving and even killing the people — whether in the name of "democracy" or in the name of Islam. Everywhere, ordinary people are the victim. Bourgeois politicians are looting the contrary. Their incomes and ministerial honoraria have increased enormously. Our aim is to mobilise the people against the bour-

geois system.

The government is currently conducting trials for war crimes committed in the 1971 war of independence. One Islamist leader, Abdul Kader Mullah, has already been hanged.

They committed crimes in 1971, but have not been through the trial process. It's important that they should be brought to trial.

There have been mobilisations in support of the death penalty, involving many people taking to the streets wanting to see the war criminals punished. We intervened in those mobilisations to say that yes, the criminals should be brought to trial and punished, but we were against the death penalty.

The question of garment workers' rights, particularly safety at work, is still a big issue in the country, but because of the electoral crisis it has been somewhat overlooked recently. However, garment workers are still in the streets. The government recently increased the minimum wage, but the workers are still demanding living wages.

The daily cost of living is rising beyond a level at which garment workers can afford. The demands for factory safety continue, but there is still much to improve in the garment sector.

What is the fascist danger in France?

Letters



The fascist danger in France finds its breeding ground primarily in the social despair which the Government feeds by its policies, and to which the Front de Gauche [FdG the biggest left opposition] has had neither the will nor the ability to propose a convincing and rousing response.

We can reassure the readers of Solidarity: there are not Front National [FN] hordes attacking local trade union offices today in France. The courts are taking enough repressive action against trade unionists, the bourgeoisie does not yet need storm-troopers, and Hollande refused the draft Bill, proposed by the FdG, to amnesty those convicted on the basis of trade-union or community activities.

The FN is "very well-behaved", and is playing the card of respectability in order to maximise its electoral influence. To avoid misunderstandings — the FN is a group structured round fascist cadres continuing a legacy from Vichy and the OAS during the Algerian war; but today the FN is going for a "Gramscian" strategy of conquering influence through elections, with a much softer and more regulated discourse than Jean-Marie Le Pen used in the 80s.

The politician most guilty of racist speech in recent months has been Manuel Valls, the interior minister, who has pushed a repressive policy against Roma migrants, declaring in a quite racist and essentialist way that they should not stay in France and that expelling them en masse from France was normal. This is the same Valls who claims to lecture Dieudonné on anti-semitism.

If there is a fascist danger in France, it comes from the fact that on the issues where the Government tries to take some progressive social measures, it does it in such a way as to put out the red carpet for far-right movements.

Thus, at the start of 2013, the question of gay marriage allowed the fundamentalist far right, supported by the Catholic hierarchy, to reinvigorate itself by repeatedly mobilising hundreds of thousands of people and creating social pariahs comparable to Jews in anti-semitic mythology. Even the FN seemed "moderate" on this question!

On Sunday 19 January, between 20,000 and 40,000 demonstrated in Paris to demand the extension to France of the steps taken recently by the right-wing government in Spain against abortion rights. This fundamentalist Catholic trend, distinct from the FN, is one of the elements of fascist infection.

The other factor relates to the social and demographic changes in France over the last 50 years, and especially the growth of the immigrant population.

DIEUDONNÉ

Basically, the issue is simple: how to attract and hold in the reactionary camp hundreds of thousands of young people born in France and of immigrant background, who socially form part of the working class but are not yet really integrated into the labour movement, and who face social and racist discrimination.

This is where someone like Dieudonné and his crony Alain Soral come in. The recipe is simple. In place of the old anti-semitism of the Action Française type and the era of the Dreyfus affair [turn of 19th-20th century] or of Vichy [World War Two], to promote a new anti-semitism for the "slum non-whites", one which says that poverty stems not from the workings of the capitalist system but from the secret influence of a Jewish lobby which has great power in business, the banks, the media, the cinema, and politics. Thus, with a discourse combining an appeal to Muslim identity, solidarity with Palestine, social prejudices (against women and lesbians and gays), and a strong dose of anti-semitism, all dressed up in "anti-imperialist" or "anti-Zionist" terms, a social division is created which diverts proletarians from struggle against capitalism.

The subtle twist is to begin by targeting young people of Arab and African origin, and then to extend this new anti-semitism to other sections of the youth or of the working class. This is where the "anti-system" gesture of the "quenelle" comes in. It is simultaneously a parody of the Nazi salute and a threat of anal rape against the "Zionists"



West Brom striker Nicolas Anelka gives a "quenelle" salute.

and the "supporters of the system"... It is all spiced up with dubious jokes about the Holocaust, and conspiracy theories about 11 September.

This game can continue only thanks to the absence of a social mobilisation against the policies of the Government. The main task of revolutionary activists is to work for the revival of social struggles and their generalisation against the Government, in order to put the social question centre stage.

Along with the necessary explanations combatting racist demagoguery and this new version of anti-semitism, it is by relaunching the class struggle that we will clear away this stench.

Olivier Delbeke

• Abridged. The article in full is at bit.ly/od-ddne

Should socialists call religion "primitive?"

While the origins of religious belief are "primitive" (Mark Sandell, *Solidarity* 308) in the sense of being pre-modern, the same can be said of many other things - music, mathematics, science.

What I think we need to do is distinguish both between religion and science and between different kinds of religion.

Religion in the pre-modern, "primitive" era tended to be almost exclusively polytheistic. The major monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all comparatively modern (a few thousand years old at most) and their political/fundamentalist forms very modern indeed.

The idea that, "bereft of any explanatory power in the wake of scientific knowledge of the universe", religion is irrelevant wrongly implies that all religions see themselves as providing alternate theories about the origin of the universe to those provided by science, as opposed to providing answers to questions in other fields such as morality and philosophy. I'm also not sure about the idea that "in modernity many of these roles are taken by secular science."

Much of the criticism of religion made by Dawkins et al has the tone of well-educated, middle-class people sneering at the poor because, as a priest put it to the person who recruited me to *Socialist Organiser* in the early 90s, "now you've been to college, you think you're too clever to believe in God."

Even if you don't believe in God and want to remove religious belief from society, do you think it is tactically wise for socialists to describe religion as "primitive" or "mumbo jumbo"?

Matthew Thompson, Stockport



New journal of Marxist discussion

The first issue of a new journal of international discussion among revolutionary socialists, *Marxist Revival*, is almost ready to go to the printers.

The journal is produced by the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (AWL) and the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency. The first issue also includes a long contribution from the Turkish revolutionary socialist group Marksist Tutum, and a survey from Workers' Liberty Australia of the revolutionary left in Australia.

The journal declares that "it will not be just an open forum. The two organisations initiating it, the Iranian Revolutionary Marxists' Tendency and the Alliance for Workers' Liberty, have their own ideas, close on many issues but not identical: we will promote the ideas we have in common, debate the issues on which we disagree..."

"Marxist Revival will be open for disputations, polemics, and divergent views: we invite both groups and individual activists who disagree with IRMT and AWL, yet are interested in international discussion among revolutionary Marxists, to contribute.

"There are almost no other such journals of international Marxist discussion. Arguably today, in the era of the internet, mass air travel, and English as a global lingua franca, activist Marxist debates are more separated off into national silos than they were a hundred years ago, when the technical difficulties were a hundred times greater.

"Yet our foes, the ruling classes of the world, have globalised themselves more than ever".

To get a copy, send £2 plus £1.20 postage via www.workersliberty.org/payment.

Marxist Revival



Discussion journal of revolutionary Marxists
Number 1, Winter 2013-4. www.marxistrevival.com
Price 2 euros/ US \$ 2.50 / £2 / A\$3 / 60,000 rial / 7 zloty / 5 lira

Take the bankers' wealth!

Just 85 of the world's richest people have as much wealth as the 3.5 billion people in the poorer half of the world's population.

Within Britain inequality is not quite as wide as that world-scale gap calculated by Oxfam. But inequality is huge even within Britain. It has been rising ever since the Thatcher days. And the Government is using the economic crisis as a lever to increase it further.

Under pressure on the issue, chancellor George Osborne has recommended to the Low Pay Commission that the minimum wage be raised by a grand 69p per hour, from £6.31 to £7, from October 2014. (For over-21s, that is: the minimum rate is much lower for younger workers).

Osborne claims that this will restore the real value of the minimum wage to what it was when the Government took office. Even that claim is deceptive.

Osborne's welfare cuts cost the average household £760 a year. Most of that cost is levied on lower-paid working households. Even if the minimum wage is raised to £7, with the benefit cuts taken into account minimum-wage workers will still be worse off.

The £7 rate is much below the widely-recognised Living Wage rate, now £8.80 an hour in London and £7.65 outside, and due to be increased in November.

At the same time rich bankers are griping and moaning about a European Union ruling which limits their annual bonuses — mostly paid in February and March — to 200% of annual pay (or 100% if they don't get specific permission from shareholders).

The low-paid worker is supposed to be grateful for a 69p per hour rise, more than cancelled out by benefit cuts. There are in Britain more than three times as many bankers paid over one million euros (£820,000) a year in "wages" than there are in the rest of the EU combined. Those rich bankers reckon it is an outrage that their bonus can't be more than twice their inflated "wage".

In 2013 the banks paid out £14 billion in bonuses. They also had to pay out large amounts in compensation for pretty much defrauding their customers by selling worthless "payment protection insurance" and "interest rate hedging" schemes. No top banker lost his or her job for the dodgy mis-selling.

The banks still reported £16.5 billion in profits in the first half of 2013. Most of that they owe to the help they had from the bail-outs in 2008 and the help they have had since from the Bank of England lending them money at extra-low rates.

So devastating was the crash of 2008 that the banks today are still not quite as extra-profitable compared to the rest of capitalist business as they were before the crash. Yet still much of the economy acts as a vast pump, squeezing profits out of workers forced to labour at minimal wages, and directing the best of the flow to the pockets of financiers. Money is everything in this capitalist economy, and money

keeps flowing to where there are already the largest, deepest pools of it.

Ed Miliband says he wants to curb the biggest banks. We need something altogether more drastic. The banks and finance industry should be taken into public ownership and run as a public service under democratic control.

Their vast funds should be squeezed out of them and democratically redirected to creating useful jobs for all, with good conditions and paid a living wage.

Financial inequality corrodes, rots, and demoralises. The fight back, for equality, inspires and regenerates.



Help us raise £12,000 by October

Workers' Liberty's priority is to organise politically in workplaces and trade unions. This is not counterposed to being active in working-class communities or other political struggles. But we do believe it is in workplaces that sharp class struggles develop and, potentially, powerful collective organisation can be built. Many class struggles come to nothing because management has the upper hand, or because our trade unions are too stodgy to fight on day-to-day injustices in the workplace.

We produce regular workplace bulletins, in which we reflect on class struggle issues and use to stir up all kinds of political ideas. We follow a tradition from revolutionary socialists and syndicalists stretching back to the 19th century. We aim to help workers gain confidence and get organised.

Pictured are three of the bulletins we produce in London: Tubeworker, Lewisham Hospital worker and Open Book (a bulletin for University of London workers).

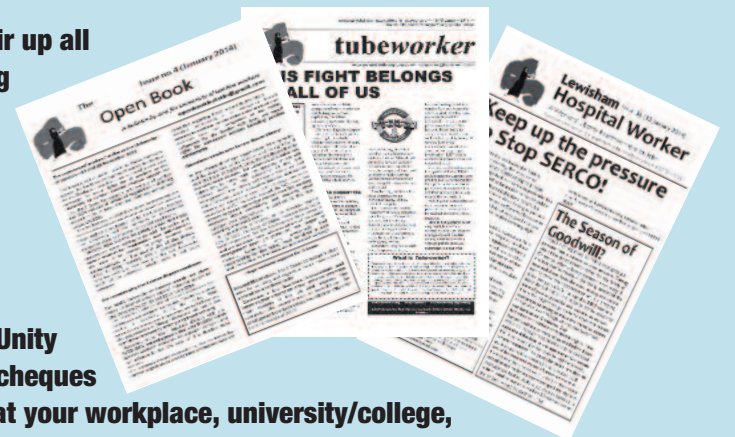
Will you help us in this work?

We want to raise £12,000 by our AGM in October 2014

You can set up a regular payment from your bank to: AWL, sort code: 08-60-01, account: 20047674, Unity Trust Bank, Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB). Or send a cheque to us at the address below (cheques payable to "AWL"). Or donate online at workersliberty.org/payment. Take copies of *Solidarity* to sell at your workplace, university/college, or campaign group, or organise a fundraising event. And get in touch to discuss joining the AWL!

More information: 07796 690 874 / awl@workersliberty.org / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.

This week we have raised £163. Thanks to Eddie, Mick and Sheffield AWL



Organising communist women

Our Movement

By Micheál MacEoin



Inessa Armand (1874-1920) was a pioneering socialist feminist who played a key role in promoting the emancipation of women in the international socialist movement, and after the Russian revolution.

She was born in a working-class district in the north of Paris on 8 May 1874. Her father was a French opera singer, and her mother an actor of Anglo-French parentage. Inessa was raised near Moscow by her aunt and grandmother. Inessa's aunt worked as a governess for an upper-middle-class Russian family, headed by Evgenii Armand. A textile manufacturer of a liberal mind, Evgenii welcomed his governess's orphaned niece as part of the family, and Inessa received an education similar to that of the Armand children.

Inessa Armand was exposed to Enlightenment ideas, the piano, and the German and Russian languages. She trained as a home teacher — one of the few vocations open to educated women in late-Imperial Russia. In October 1893, Armand married Evgenii's eldest son, Alexander. They had five children together, and opened a local school for peasant children.

MOSCOW

Armand got involved in the Moscow Society for Improving the Lot of Women, setting up hostels for poor women and prostitutes.

When her applications to set up a school and a newspaper for working-class women were refused by the authorities, she developed doubts about the ability of reformers to achieve progress under the repressive Tsarist system. Her move towards revolutionary ideas was strengthened by an affair with Alexander's brother Vladimir, a member of the illegal Social Democratic Labour Party. She worked with the party in Moscow and Pushkino in the north-east of the city.

During an extended stay in Switzerland, Armand read Lenin's *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and was convinced to join with the Bolsheviks. Following her return to Russia during the revolutionary events of 1905, Armand was arrested in front of her children and held for four months. Upon her release she continued agitation, and was banished to Mezen in the far north of Russia for two years.

She escaped to Poland, and made a desperate journey to France to see Vladimir, who was being treated for tuberculosis. He died in her arms within weeks of her escape, in 1909. After a period spent studying in Brussels and Copenhagen, Armand travelled back to Paris and became involved with Lenin's group of exiled Bolsheviks. She organised party schools in Longjumeau with Lenin. In 1911 she became the secretary of the Committee of Foreign Organisations, set up to coordinate Bolshevik circles in western Europe.

The following year she returned to Russia to help organise the Bolsheviks' campaign for the Duma; she was arrested two months later, and released in March 1913. Fleeing bail, Armand went to live with Lenin and his wife Nadya Krupskaya in Galicia. It was there that she began producing *Rabotnitsa*, one of the first socialist women's journals, originally published on International Women's Day 1914.

During World War One, Armand was a Bolshevik delegate to the Second International's International Socialist Women's Conference in Berne in 1915. In 1916, she was sent to Paris to raise support for the revolutionary anti-war positions taken by the left-wing minority at the first Zimmerwald Conference in September 1915. She attended the second such conference in Kienthal in April 1916 as a Bolshevik delegate.



Following the abdication of the Tsar during the February Revolution of 1917, Armand joined Lenin and 25 other revolutionaries in the sealed train to Petrograd's Finland station.

As a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, she became a familiar figure around Moscow. In June 1917, she published the journal *Working Woman's Life* and, following the October Revolution, became a member of the Executive of the Moscow Soviet. That same year, Armand became Chair of the Moscow Branch of the Economic Council, establishing schools and organising the First All-Russia Congress of Working and Peasant Women with Alexandra Kollontai and Konkordia Samoilova.

Back in Petrograd in 1919 to found and become the first director of the Zhenotdel, the world's first government department dedicated to improving the position of women. It set about fighting illiteracy, and educating women about the new marriage, abortion, education and workplace laws in the Soviet Republic. In the face of innumerable difficulties, she worked hard to establish nurseries, clinics, communal laundries and canteens, to ease the burden on working-class women. (The Zhenotdel would be shut down in 1930 following the Stalinist counter-revolution).

Armand chaired the First International Conference of Communist Women, the women's section of the Communist International. In the spring of 1920, she founded the journal *Kommunistka*, to deal with "the broader aspects of female emancipation." But the fifth edition of this journal carried her obituary for, over-worked and poorly-fed amidst the tribulations of the Russian Civil War, she contracted cholera and died at the age of 46.

Inessa Armand was a brave and talented Bolshevik and a stalwart for socialist feminism in the international communist movement.

Her efforts towards the emancipation of women in the Soviet Republic and worldwide should be remembered and celebrated by socialist feminists and revolutionaries everywhere.

• For more from the "Our Movement" column, see facebook.com/ourmovementcolumn

Target culture

By Todd Hamer

As part of the government's response to the Francis Report in misconduct in the NHS, they have introduced a "duty of candour" for clinical staff. It is designed as an antidote to the bullying culture that led to the abuses at the Mid-Staffs NHS Trust.

A recent study by Durham University found that nearly half of all NHS staff have witnessed bullying at work. Another survey found that a quarter of doctors and a third of nurses say they have been bullied into doing things they know are bad for patient care. Bullying is endemic in the NHS. It creates a toxic atmosphere in which patients die.

The duty of candour may help healthworkers stand up to the bullies and blow the whistle on poor standards of care. It may stop management covering up poor practice. But "candour" alone won't stop the systemic causes of bullying in the NHS.

Recently, Workers' Liberty's *Lewisham Hospital Worker* bulletin was told of an alleged incident in a neighbouring hospital where a patient died on a trolley wait because there were no beds in the intensive care unit. The doctors and nurses who cared for that patient will no doubt be candid in reporting the incident. Their managers will be candid in the way they conduct their investigation. But if it is found that this was an unnecessary death, who will take responsibility?

This isn't the nurses' or doctors' fault. These people have no say over how many beds the hospital keeps open. Hospital management cannot be held responsible either. They can only run a service with the money they receive from the commissioners. The commissioners in turn are working within the budget restraints imposed by the government. Neither managers nor commissioners can magic cash out of the sky.

Ultimately it is the government funding cuts which are responsible for this patient's death. But will the government take responsibility? No chance! In fact, as part of the Health and Social Care Act, the Secretary of State for Health is no longer legally responsible for providing a comprehensive health service. The statutory duty that makes the government responsible for the NHS no longer exists. They set the budget but they aren't responsible for the service!

With the Hospital Closure Clause (118) being pushed through Parliament under the cover of the Care Bill, this tendency is set to get worse. Section 118 gives a faceless bureaucrat — the Trust Special Administrator — dictatorial powers to shut down hospitals with no accountability to the public.

The NHS has a bullying culture because politicians have introduced a mechanism so that those with the most power have the least responsibility. Nursing staff have very little power but are held responsible for everything that happens on our wards. As everyone above ward level squirms their way out of taking any responsibility, frontline staff hunker down worried for our next pay packet. The threat of disciplinary and losing our PIN hangs over us with every clinical decision. Those with power crank up the pressure with further cut-backs and "initiatives". The decisions are made at the top and the rest of us have to deal with it.

Jeremy Hunt implies that bullying happens because of nasty managers and spineless workers. In fact, it happens because the system is set up so that those in power are not responsible for the consequences of their own



ure hurts patients and workers

decisions. They pass responsibility down the chain of command, whilst concentrating ever more power in their hands.

Nye Bevan, the NHS's founder, said that if a bedpan drops in a hospital corridor he wanted to hear the reverberations in Westminster. Jeremy Hunt and his New Labour predecessors are not hearing the falling bedpans. The performance data that management demand and which is passed up the hierarchy to the politicians is a unreliable reflection of the reality on the wards. The real scandal at Mid-Staffordshire was that everyone from the hospital management up thought it was one of the best NHS Trusts in the country! It took a mobilisation of the local community before anyone with any power realised that patients were dying of thirst, in their own shit, in their hospital beds.

The people at the top inhabit an alternative reality, a world of spreadsheets and number-crunching. A hospital can produce perfect data at the same time that it is filling up its mortuary.

It is worth considering what is going on here. Driving improvement, ensuring a consistency of service and planning future investment are necessary parts of running a health service. To do these things well requires accurate methods of data collection. Health economist Allyson Pollock argues that the pre-1980 NHS had much more efficient and useful data-collection methods than we have nowadays in spite of all our IT systems. Traditionally NHS data was used to determine where the NHS should expand or contract its services, which treatments were working and how to spread best practices. It was public and transparent.

Much of the data-collection that now takes place is for a different purpose. While Thatcher was loath to privatise the NHS, for fear of public outrage, she was keen to bring capitalist management technique into the NHS. Thatcher replaced much of the old NHS management with "general managers" including appointing the former boss of Sainsburys' supermarket as the Deputy Chief Executive. These managers implemented Taylorist strategies for management control of the labour process, taking a forensic look at what doctors and nurses were doing and designing ways to standardise practice through clinical audit and data-harvesting. While these strategies may drive efficiencies in supermarkets and car factories, the labour process in the NHS involves complex clinical decisions. A tension emerges between management's appetite for control and the clinicians attempt to provide patient-centred care and apply their considered professional judgement.

MANAGERIAL

By the 1990s this managerial culture was bolstered by the attempt to marketise the NHS. At the heart of neoliberal ideology is the belief that capitalist markets are superior to state planning as a means to run public services.

They claim that the NHS is too big and too complex to be managed by mere mortals. Only the "hidden hand of the market" can effectively and efficiently "manage" such a large organisation. With this dogma being pushed by an aggressive lobby of American private health firms, the Tories then New Labour and then the Tories again tried to replace the old NHS bureaucracy with this miracle-making, all-powerful market.

The market is supposed to do what management could not do — drive up efficiency and cut bureaucratic waste. In fact, it has increased both inefficiency and bureaucracy. A market is simply the buying and selling of commodities. But what are the commodities that the NHS produce? How to you attach a price tag to diabetes management, or childbirth, or forced detention and treatment under the Mental Health Act? The attempt to impose a market means that all the complex tasks that take place in the NHS have to be quantified. This in turn gave an extra impetus to management to design tools



The market is wreaking chaos in the NHS. Only a democratic movement from below can stop it.

to measure what is happening in clinical areas. It created an insatiable demand for data even if this meant doctors and nurses spending hours at their computer screens filling in management's tickboxes. In this way, management transform clinical work into figures which can then be linked to funding.

There are five main problems with the approach to data harvesting.

1) The data may or may not reflect reality. Excellent performance only means that the ward staff are ticking the boxes on a form or computer screen. It does not mean that the tasks have actually been done. For example, *Solidarity* was told of a older adults wards where management have brought in a long checklist of personal hygiene tasks that nurses are supposed to tick off throughout the morning shift: change pad, clean teeth, wash face, shave, cut nails, wash hair etc. Management believe these forms will allow them to micromanage the nursing staff from behind their computer screens. Nurses tell us that they often perform tasks but forget to check off all the boxes on the form. Or if they are extremely busy one shift, they may tick a few extra boxes just so management don't start complaining about poor performance. So much time wasted by management and staff for what will always be meaningless data.

2) Some performance measure are completely inappropriate for the clinical setting. For instance, some palliative care nurses have targets for the number of patients they speak to about smoking cessation. There are probably lots of things that a dying smoker wants to discuss with their palliative care nurse but giving up cigarettes isn't one of them. Unsurprisingly hardly anyone takes up the offer of joining the smoking cessation programme but that does not matter. As long as the conversation has been had, the nurse can tick the box!

3) Sometimes the way a performance target is measured creates weird behaviour on the part of nursing staff. Recently, *Solidarity* heard of a clinical audit designed to monitor how psychiatric nurses were tending to the physical health of their patients. This is quite unobjectionable. The physical health of psychiatric patients is often neglected. However, a large portion of the audit was concerned with whether the patient's details were written correctly on the front of their chart. Before audit day, nurses are locked away in the office vigilantly crosschecking their spelling while patients in psychological

distress fend for themselves on the ward. One nurse calculated that it was possible to score very highly on the audit, and get top marks from management, without doing any physical health checks at all!

4) The demand for paperwork shifts clinicians' attention. A recent RCN survey found that due to low staffing levels, 86% of nurses complained that there was not enough time on their shift to do all the tasks they needed to do. Of these 66% said that the main task left undone was "talking / comforting patients". Talking and comforting patients, like other "soft skills", is not easily quantifiable and not easy to plug into a spreadsheet. It is not prioritised by management and so it falls off the to-do list of overstretched nurses. At Mid-Staffordshire, staff were so focussed on ticking management's boxes that (in the words of one junior doctor) they became "immune to the sound of pain".

5) The worst consequences of this data-obsessed culture are the targets that have perverse results on patient care. The famous example is the four-hour waiting target in A&E. This led to some patients being left outside in ambulances during busy times because the clock only starts when the patient enters the building. Another famous example is the targets for putting patients on the Liverpool Care Pathway, which incentivised clinicians who were willing to diagnose an early death!

Successive governments and their big business advisers thought that all this data could be mashed together to create their dream of a healthcare market. With all this data, the accountants started to work out how to attach price tags onto the different complex tasks we perform. From the 1990s onwards, thousands of accountants have been employed whose job it is to attach price tags to different hospital treatments and send each other invoices, bills of payment and credit notes. The accountants and their hangers-on now consume 15% of the NHS budget and they are rapidly expanding.

COMPREHENSIVE

The "duty to provide" comprehensive healthcare was the foundation stone of the NHS. It was a phrase that was included in every Health Bill from 1948 until it was ditched by Andrew Lansley in 2010.

It meant that the government had to put aside a certain amount of money that would cover the costs of healthcare for all. They would monitor demand from the previous year to work out the budgets for the next year and organise the long term investment strategy. Historically that money has always fallen short of what was needed, but it was near. This is no longer the case. The demand for healthcare is outstripping supply. People are dying on trolley waits. The market is wreaking chaos across the system as human suffering is miscalculated into pounds and pence.

The market rationalises healthcare into a number of easy-to-commodify step-by-step processes. But its deaf to human suffering. It is creating a toxic environment where healthworkers are bullied into servicing the performance targets whether or not this benefits the patients. We are turned into drones, micromanaged into situations that harm patients and then blamed for not exercising our own clinical judgement.

All hierarchical organisations are susceptible to bullying. People in power enjoy a certain freedom to manipulate, cajole and abuse those with less power. Capitalism creates a world where some individuals own whole factories, hospitals or vast tracts of land as their personal property, while others only own the clothes on their back. Capitalism is a system in which bullies thrive. The only real antidote to the culture of bullying is workers organising in unions and taking back the power from the bullies.

The power of the bully can only be broken by a democratic movement from below. Such a movement would lead to better care in the NHS and open up possibilities for a more equal and democratic future.

A journey through the third camp left

Here we publish an autobiographical recollection from Ed Strauss, a Workers' Liberty member based in Brighton, who was involved in the US third camp left in the 1950s and 60s.

In *Solidarity* 242 (18 April 2012), we began publishing a series of recollections and reflections from activists who had been involved with the "third camp" left in the United States — those "unorthodox" Trotskyists who believed that the Soviet Union was not a "workers' state" (albeit a "degenerated" one), but an exploitative form of class rule to be as opposed as much as capitalism. They came to be organised under the slogan "neither Washington nor Moscow."

The assessment of the "third camp" tradition by the majority of the modern-day revolutionary left is bound up with the continuing holy terror of that "original sin"; many Trotskyist groups still see the remaining Stalinist states as some form of working-class rule, and even those that formally do not (such as the British SWP and its international satellites) have superimposed the template of Cold War "my-enemy's-enemy-is-my-friend"-ism onto the modern world and see such forces as political Islam as progressive potential allies against the dominant (US) imperialism.

Retrospective assessment of the third camp tradition is also coloured by legitimate contempt for the political suicide of its most prominent theoretician and sometime figurehead, Max Shachtman, who eventually became a sort of Fabian.

Workers' Liberty has, over a number of decades, attempted to rediscover and re-examine the tradition of "third camp" socialism, and to attempt to learn from it. This symposium brings together the reflections of activists from both the "first generation" of third camp organisations — the Workers Party, which split from the American SWP in 1940 and became the Independent Socialist League in 1949, before entering the reformist Socialist Party of America in 1957 and dissolving — and the "second generation" — the Independent Socialist Clubs of America (founded in 1967 as a federation of loose third camp groupings on various college campuses which were founded some years earlier), and later the International Socialists (founded in 1968).

I first became acquainted with independent socialism in 1954, when I went to the University College in Albany, New York.

I was soon recruited to the YSL (Young Socialist League) by a local member who was an organiser for the International Paperworkers' Union, affiliated to the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO), which had not yet merged with the American Federation of Labor (AFL).

I eventually joined and received my party card in 1955. Our "candidate" branch never became a full one, as that required five members, and we never had more than four. We did periodically visit the large branch in New York City for demonstrations, educational events, and socially.

The YSL was the unofficial youth group of the Independent Socialist League (ISL), which had been called the Workers Party from 1940-1949. The ISL and its official youth section, the SYL (the Socialist Youth League established in 1946), were on the US attorney general's list of subversive organisations. This was the period of extreme McCarthyism, with witch hunting, red scares, official loyalty oaths, and mass repression.

The YSL was formed in 1954 by a merger between the SYL and the left-wing of the Socialist Party's youth group, much to the disgust of the "adult" SP. By then, the ISL/YSL had fully developed a third camp, "Neither Washington nor Moscow" position. It believed in the vital connection between socialism and real democracy, and had a bureaucratic collectivist analysis of the Soviet Union (with a few members preferring a state capitalist analysis). It did not see itself as a vanguard centralist party, but rather as a broad, multi-tendency organisation, which could support agitation and provide education and some leadership for a revolutionary workers' movement, but would not be involved in giving directions. Rosa Luxemburg, as well as Lenin, was seen as a historical guide.

In our locality, our activities were somewhat restricted. However, I was able to organise a left student forum in my college under the name "Society of Critical Thought". It attracted a mixture of newly-political left liberals and children



Ed was involved in struggles against the Vietnam War

of people who had a CP or Progressive Party (which organised Henry Wallace's 1948 Presidential campaign) background.

Over the years, we were involved in agitation on student issues and organised open meetings with speakers from the different US socialist groups, as well as anarcho-syndicalists connected to the Spanish FAI/CNT.

The college authorities were not unfriendly — many were liberals or closet leftists. There was never any hostile reaction from other students; but this was New York State, not mainstream America.

In the summer of 1958, after more than a year's contentious discussion, the YSL, partly because of its own weakness, merged organically with the remnants of the Socialist Party's official youth section, the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL), becoming a youth section of the SP. A small faction broke away and rejoined the Socialist Workers Party, from which the WP/ISL had split in 1939/40.

The ISL itself, humiliatingly, was not allowed to merge with the SP, which was perhaps fearful of being branded as subversive. It had to disband and hand over its assets, and its members had to be admitted to the SP as individuals. The SP itself had recently re-merged with the Social Democratic Federation, a 1936 rightwards breakaway, giving the organisation a respectable right-social-democratic image.

Many, including myself, never really felt committed to it, and, although remaining nominal members for a few years, drifted away or turned to other political currents.

HEROIC

It was not until 1964 that Hal Draper in California helped to form the first "Independent Socialist Club". Shortly thereafter, in 1966, he published *The Two Souls of Socialism*.

At the same time the main WP/ISL leader, Max Shachtman, deserted the quite heroic role that he had played and took a sad path, beyond right-wing social democracy, becoming a supporter of the Democratic Party and the violently anti-leftist AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy.

Meanwhile, I began teaching and joined the American teachers' union. I made some contact with members of the New York State Liberal Party, a social democratic party which began in 1944 as a break-away from the New York State American Labor Party after it had been taken over by the Stalinists. I could not identify with any other group locally in the mid-Hudson Valley.

In the following year, I went to graduate school in Syracuse University, and joined a newly formed chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS had originated from a social democratic formation (the League for Industrial Democracy), but the student section had been disowned by

that organisation after the students had adopted the radical, "New Left" Port Huron Statement advocating participatory democracy. We were involved in black civil rights actions locally and organised a meeting in a large hall for a visit by Norman Thomas, a former Socialist Party presidential candidate. We were afraid that the name "socialist" would generate little interest.

However, when I stepped out to introduce the visitor, I saw that more than a thousand students and townspeople had filled the hall to overflowing. To me, this was a sign that the "New Left" had really arrived and that the fear of repression was disappearing.

I spent 1964-5 studying in Yugoslavia. The Titoist state was present in the background, but life was relatively free. I lived with a very political family, and was conscious of the contrast between the beautiful socialist aesthetic, the partisan war victory and the myth of "workers' control", on the one hand, and the state's autocratic, though subtle, repression on the other. This experience strengthened my libertarian communist leanings. I had to leave rather under a cloud, because I had expressed my anti-authoritarian analysis of Titoism and was warned that this would be reported to the secret police.

I came to England in 1965, and made contact with Tony Cliff and the International Socialists (later the British SWP), the anarcho-syndicalists in London, and the anarchist Freedom Press. My wife had been in the Socialist Review Group, the predecessor of IS/SWP, in the 1950s. My wife and I became active in the group around Chris Pallas (aka Maurice Brinton), which published *Solidarity*.

We returned to the USA, where we lived from 1965-1969, first in Albany, New York, and then in the Dartmouth, New Hampshire, area. We became very involved with SDS and the anti-Vietnam War campaign, as well as the movement for black civil rights. In the area around Dartmouth, the SDS began to emerge as a nascent mass movement, organising demonstrations, meetings, marches, and educational events.

SCENE

We helped to run a local radical printing press, the Wooden Shoe Press. We also assisted the draft resistance movement, aiding young people fleeing to Canada to avoid the draft.

I remained in touch with the third camp scene — the Independent Socialist Clubs, the *New Politics* journal, and other ex-ISLers, and I tried to spread third camp ideas among the local comrades.

In 1969, the anti-war movement on the Dartmouth Campus culminated in the occupation of the College Administration building. The police were called, there were mass arrests and 40 students were sent to prison for 30 days. We both lost our jobs, and returned to England, where we lived in Hull until 2008.

I joined the local branch of IS, left briefly, and rejoined in 1971. I took part in the local anti-apartheid campaign and the occupation of the admin building on the University of Hull campus, demanding disinvestment from South Africa and support for the dockers' strike. I broke with IS in 1973, because of the increasingly authoritarian domination of the group by the centre. In Hull we were then only vaguely aware of the AWL's predecessor, the Trotskyist Tendency, and the reasons for its expulsion from IS.

During the following two decades, I was very involved in college teaching. I took part in some of the activities of our NAFTHE branch (now part of the University and College Union), and maintained an interest in radical left politics. It was only in 1990 that I first saw the AWL's *Workers' Liberty* magazine. During the past twenty years, I subscribed to this journal and then to the paper, *Solidarity*, occasionally contributing to the press fund. I realised that the AWL had evolved a political position very similar to that of the ISL, which is basically the position that I have always held.

I became more involved and finally decided in 2013 that I should formally join the AWL and give as much active support as I could. Although contemporary British reality is very different from that in the USA in the 1940s and 50s, the AWL's continuation of the ISL's political line is very striking.

- A longer version of this article appears online at bit.ly/ed-strauss
- The entire symposium is available to view online at bit.ly/thirdcampsymposium

Plundering the Tube

By Brian Munro

A review of Janine Booth's *Plundering London Underground* (2013, Merlin). Brian Munro is a member of the RMT rail union Executive, writing here in a personal capacity.

As Tube unions, passenger and community groups launch the "Hands Off London Transport" campaign in the latest battle over the funding and future of the Tube, Janine Booth's book *Plundering London Underground*, which documents the struggles against the introduction of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) from 1998, and its ultimate demise, is significant and timely.

It is only three years since the demise of the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) on the Tube, which saw billions siphoned off to privateers. Yet the Tube is now facing a new funding crisis. This government, with the full backing of London's Tory Mayor Boris Johnson, is forcing massive subsidy cuts of £9.8 billion on Transport for London and London Underground. Tube unions and passengers are gearing up to fight these cuts and make the case for a properly-funded, publicly-owned Tube.

This campaign will involve young trade unionists, students and activists who were not involved in the long anti-PPP struggle; the strikes, demonstrations and activism of that period are therefore well worth revisiting, as a source of inspiration and also to learn the lessons from that time.

Plundering London Underground is a unique analysis of that period in the Tube's history. Booth, a Tube worker and trade unionist, was immersed in the battle to oppose privatisation. She interviews those directly involved, both ordinary workers and company bosses, to expose the politics behind the PPP experiment and to explore the consequences for Tube workers and passengers.

From its announcement by Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott in 1998 to its collapse in 2010, the PPP was mired in controversy. First mooted as a cure for the funding ills of the Tube following decades of underinvestment, PPP, it was claimed, would allow for sustained investment in London's Underground and at the same time bring in private sector expertise and finance.

MANTRA

The mantra, in accordance with the New Labour orthodoxy of that period, was that the public sector was inefficient while the private sector and its profit motive was the harbinger of efficiency and good management.

As Chancellor Gordon Brown put it, the private sector "could bring a wide range of managerial, commercial and creative skills to the provision of public services".

But Tube unions and campaigners fought to oppose private sector involvement, refusing to accept that PPP was the "only show in town". In autumn 1998, the RMT's London Transport Regional Council launched the Campaign Against Tube Privatisation (CATP) "to encourage Londoners beyond its own ranks to join in opposing the Public-Private Partnership". The campaign's name reflected the union's assertion that "despite Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott's denials, the PPP was a form of privatisation."

CATP's support, influence, and campaigning turned round the public's perception of the PPP from an initial lukewarm relief that London Underground would at least get some kind of long term funding, to outright opposition to PPP. Even the trade union-hating *Evening Standard* had to reflect the views of its readers, mainly disgruntled and fed up commuters: "In 1999 the PPP was a 'realistic funding policy' that would 'improve and update London's Tube'; in September 2000 the terms of the PPP contracts were 'scandalous'; and by July 2001, the *Standard* was running an online petition against the PPP."

Alongside the public campaigning and demonstrations there were also strikes by Tube workers, pre- and post- the imposition of the PPP — both official and unofficial. Tied by anti-trade union laws preventing the unions from calling strikes around the political nature of the PPP, the workers took strike action over safety and demands for guaranteed job protection. Tube strikes tend to be, or at least are reported to be, unpopular, but one of the strikes to stop the PPP, a 48-hour strike of RMT members in February 1999, showed that sections of the public backed the union action, "many members of the public phoned its headquarters to express sup-



port for the strike".

Booth's narrative also covers the contribution and role of Ken Livingstone. The Greater London Council was abolished in 1986, but the Labour government created the Greater London Authority and a directly-elected Mayor. As the political parties went through their processes of choosing candidates it was clear that the future of the Tube would be a critical factor. The Labour Party manipulated the selection of their Mayoral candidate to the extent that, though Livingstone gained 70,000 votes in the electoral college to Frank Dobson's 20,000, Dobson was declared Labour's candidate. Livingstone stood as an independent candidate, supported by rail unions RMT and ASLEF, and his opposition to PPP was a central plank of his campaign. As the *Economist* reported "Mr Livingstone's decisive victory looked like a vote against the government's (PPP) plan".

But Livingstone didn't drive home this mandate to work with the trade unions to finish off the PPP. His preferred route of legal reviews did little to kill off the privatisation. By the end of his tenure as Mayor, Livingstone was doing his own privatising, of the East London Line, and during his time had even called on Tube workers to cross picket lines.

The PPP was fully imposed in 2003 and Livingstone capitulated in a letter to Alistair Darling: "An orderly and rapid transfer of the Tube is critical for the management of these complex contracts and to improve the transport services we are providing to the millions of people who use the Tube each day".

COMPLEX

And the contracts were complex. As Booth points out, the draft contracts in 2001 "involved 135 separate documents, over 2,800 pages and 2 million words. One set of contracts alone filled 10 single-drawer filing cabinets".

Private "infrastructure companies" ("infracos") were formed to maintain and improve the Tube's infrastructure: Metronet, with "partners" Bombardier, Thames Water plc, and Atkins plc; and TubeLines, made up of Amey plc, Bechtel Corp, and Jarvis plc.

In the first two years of the PPP, four serious derailments hospitalised passengers and called into question the infracos ability to adequately maintain trains and track. Engineering overruns regularly meant that the train service started late. In one incident in January 2005, 100,000 passengers were stranded and in 2006 engineering overruns took place 207 times during the year.

Basic but essential maintenance under PPP took a dive while at the same time the private companies dodged contractual responsibilities to get on with improving the Tube. This was because under the contracts the infracos would get huge bonuses for improving such things as train and station "ambience", but "abatements", the penalties for failing on maintenance and improvements, were negligible in comparison.

PPP was supposed to shift Tube funding from government subsidies to private sector finance and bring private sector "experience and drive" to infrastructure maintenance and improvements. It did neither. What it did was provide a cash cow to the private companies and directors involved in the

PPP. The central government grant to LU increased 27-fold from £44.1m in 1997/98 to £1.218m in 2003/04. By 2005 LU had forked out £2,220.2 million to the infracos. At the same time the Directors were "awarded" obscene monies for failure. Terry Morgan, the Director of TubeLines, pocketed £552,000, while the Metronet Chief Executive trousered £325,000 in the first year of the PPP. It was the long-suffering passengers who paid these huge amounts of money to the privateers: first in taxes, secondly in fares.

The "commercial and creative skills" Gordon Brown lauded at the outset of the PPP was also brought to bear as the privateers maximised profits at the expense of "efficiency". Both infracos were subcontracting their work to their own subsidiaries. Metronet created Trans4m, a "consortium within a consortium... a conveyor belt carrying Metronet's income from the public purse to its private owners' pockets." Not only was this corrupt, it was also inefficient, as a former Metronet worker said:

"My colleagues and I witnessed the placement of multi-million pound contracts with Balfour Beatty Construction Ltd (BBCL) sub-contractors, who were not fit to be scrap dealers, let alone competent premises refurbishment contractors. BBCL managed works went on average approximately 2.5 times over the original budget with all the costs fully reimbursed through Trans4m/Metronet..."

By the middle of 2007 the PPP was unravelling. A series of even more high profile failures by Metronet, culminating in another derailment, this time at Bethnal Green Tube station, brought to a head the fact that the company was floundering. LU, despite repeated attempts to use the contracts and even the courts, were powerless to force Metronet to improve. In May 2007 Metronet admitted it "could no longer meet its financial obligations", while RMT stressed the firm had "collapsed under the weight of its own inefficiency".

As the powerful Transport Select Committee noted, Metronet's collapse "fatally damages the government's assumption that the involvement of the private sector will always result in efficient and innovative approaches to contracts". Metronet went into administration in the autumn of 2007 and finally transferred back to London Underground in 2008.

INCALCULABLE

The cost of the failure was incalculable. Transport for London was liable for 95% of Metronet's debts and had to front £900 million to administrators Ernst and Young LLP.

The government also gave £1.7 billion to Metronet's lenders as part of the TfL funding settlement. At the same time "there was money wasted: TfL paid £1.2 billion for station renovations that Metronet had not carried out". TubeLines went the same way, with even Mayor Boris Johnson at the end describing PPP as "larceny" and "demented", and was brought back into London Underground in 2010.

All those who campaigned and joined the demonstrations, and the Tube workers who struck against privatisation, were proved right. The argument that private sector involvement in the railway is necessarily good has been derailed.

In *Plundering London Underground's* final chapter, "A socialist alternative", Booth argues that "London Underground needs public ownership and adequate funding [which] would allow stability, and that stability would promote effective working and improvements". More than that, Booth makes the case that it is time to move away from standard government control with its top-down uncertainty.

Londoners need "working class control through a Workers' and Passengers' Plan, [which] would be a transformational and transitional policy for London Underground: it would see enormous improvements to the Tube, with consequential benefits to society as a whole, while posing a model for a socialist urban transport policy."

To those campaigning to defend TfL and the Tube from Tory cuts, *Plundering London Underground* gives an alternative vision on the type of funding and model for London Underground. It also hammers home the campaigners were proved right but lost the battle over PPP.

For those stepping up to join the fight for London's transport system it will not be enough to be right: this time we have to win.

• Book info: bit.ly/plun-lu. "Hands Off London Transport": handsofflondontransport.wordpress.com

Mike Kyriazopoulos

Mike Kyriazopoulos, a Workers' Liberty supporter based in New Zealand/Aotearoa and active in Fightback, died on 18 January 2014 a year to the day after his diagnosis with Motor Neurone Disease. Mike was a postal worker and CWU rep here in the UK and was central to our work on the post in the 90s. After Mike and his wife Jo moved to New Zealand he worked as a union organiser. Mike was also active in the Mana movement.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty sends our condolences and solidarity to Mike's family, friends, and comrades in New Zealand.

From a letter Mike wrote to comrades in April 2013

Early this year I was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease. I wanted to thank all of you who know me for your political guidance, solidarity, friendship and love over the years.

I first came across the AWL at York University Labour Club. But I realised the group was serious when I joined an occupation because Janine Booth was stood on the balcony of the Central Hall with a megaphone, urging students to join the protest against grant cuts.

When I graduated, I got a job on the post, in line with the group's policy on "colonisation", or "inside organising". Those days were among the most vivid memories of my political life. The seven years I spent in the industry taught me heaps of lessons in the sometimes bitter realities of the class struggle. I was thrust in the deep end, finding myself a rep within a few months, because the previous guy had been sacked, and no one else wanted to do the job.

Pretty soon I attracted the attention of management. First they tried to get me to become a governor, then they tried to sack me — twice. Both disciplinaries were related to organising wildcat action. The first time, they stuffed up the process, and I got off scot-free. The next time I copped a final warning and two days' suspension.

During a week-long wildcat strike involving many London offices, I remember being on a picket line of one. One does not make a virtue or a habit of such a thing, but sometimes it is a necessity. Most of our office scabbed because they were scared of the strike being sold out (which it eventually was). Only a handful of us struck, and one morning I was the

only one who turned up for the picket line duty. Some of the strikebreakers implored me to come back to work, because they were convinced I would be sacked, in which case, they assured me, they would go on strike to get me reinstated! I was not sacked.

I was fortunate to be in a left-wing union branch. I joined the branch executive as political officer, where I worked with other socialists to secure support for Ken Livingstone and the Socialist Alliance in the London elections of 2000.

The decision was robustly debated at a meeting of rank and file reps. The branch secretary voiced a prophetic word of caution about not knowing how long this alliance would last. Our branch paid a heavy price, having all its funds frozen by an unelected bureaucrat in head office, but they didn't back down. To me, it highlighted how the Socialist Alliance had begun to build something in the labour movement, only to have that opportunity criminally squandered by the key players within the Alliance.

The greatest success we had at Finsbury Park Delivery Office was winning extra jobs, night duties, following an unofficial overtime ban. Management always intended to claw the duties back eventually, but we managed to hold off the revisions for a good few years.

In retrospect, I was hampered by being isolated in a sub delivery office. I never made much progress towards establishing a rank and file movement. But then, such a movement usually requires a great upsurge in militancy to establish it, so there's an element of Catch-22.

In 2007, I emigrated to New Zealand, essentially for personal reasons. Comrades, I'm sorry if it felt like I turned my back on you. I never turned my back on the struggle.

I joined the Workers' Party (now Fightback) because that was the most open and democratic group going. Unfortunately, it was controlled by a clique whose political background was soft Maoist and kitsch Trotskyist. They encouraged a culture of avoiding tricky historical questions. I was remiss in going with the flow, taking the line of least resistance for a while.

Perhaps subconsciously I thought that the insights of Third Camp socialism on the corrosive effects of Stalinism were not so relevant in the 21st century. It was only when the leadership clique abruptly walked out of the party, and retired to the blogosphere, that I did some rethinking

After some discussions with Martin Thomas I published a



Mike with a copy of his novella, *Cloudy Sunday*

number of internal bulletins on Stalinism, the fighting propaganda group, Maori liberation, Third Camp socialism and Maoism. I hope that I have had a positive effect on the trajectory of the group, which now explicitly defines itself as anti-Stalinist.

I do believe the AWL has something precious in its fragmented Third Camp tradition. Not in the sense of a socialist "Holy Grail", or a "historico-philosophical master key", but as a method of training revolutionaries to think critically.

I don't need to tell any of you what's wrong with Michel Pablo. He did, however, have the best motto: "The meaning of life is life itself, to live as fully as you can."

Comrades, most of you will be blessed with decades of life ahead of you. Live them to the fullest making a better world. Aroha nui (all my love).

From Mike's comrades

Everyone in and around our organisation who knew Mike respected his dedication and commitment to the struggle for socialism, as well as his warm good humour.

A series of tributes AWL comrades contributed for a tribute meeting for Mike in April 2013 show how well he was regarded by his comrades. Saying it was a "pleasure and privilege to know him", Janine Booth, who recruited Mike to AWL in York in the early 1990s, wrote that he was "friendly, warm, thoughtful, and funny [...] not aggressive or judgemental, and impossible to dislike".

Paul Hampton wrote: "Many comrades will know that he was a militant postal worker, a member of the CWU when it took regular, often unofficial industrial action against Royal Mail management. Early morning picket duty during these disputes was always an education — but we went armed with our bulletins and papers containing Mike's insights into what was going on. Mike was able to do this work so successfully because he was serious about socialist ideas. He was not one for grandstanding at conferences, or showing off with rhetorical flourishes. But he listened intensely to discussions in the group and always contributed thoughtfully."

Mark Sandell recalls "many fond memories of nights out with Mike; our revolution will include dancing." Other memories of Mike also recall nightclubs, drum 'n' bass, hip-hop, late nights, and early mornings!

Maria Exall, former member of the Communication Workers' Union Executive, praised Mike's role in that union: "In his active involvement with the CWU, I know Mike argued for and practised principled trade unionism, promoted working-class self organisation and argued for a socialist society."

And from Martin D: "Lovingly supported by his wife Jo they faced awful circumstances with incredible strength and love. Mike was an exemplary Marxist; thoughtful and principled but also kind and generous of spirit. He lived his politics, and his humour, courage and commitment will be sorely missed by his many comrades and friends as well as by Jo and his family."

These are just a small selection, but give some indication of how Mike was seen by his comrades as someone of particular dedication and commitment to ideas and struggle, and of immense personal warmth.

A comrade, in the truest sense of the word.

New book evokes an era

Today we think of the USA as a land of triumphant capitalism and a very battered labour movement. It was not always so. In 1946 US workers had the biggest strike wave seen in the world to that date.

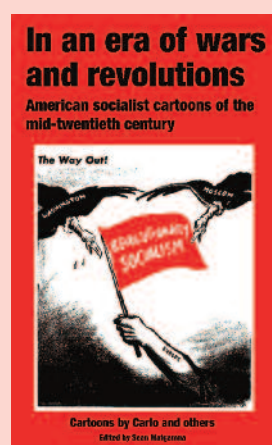
Key events, themes, and the arguments of socialists in that tumult are vividly conveyed in a new book of cartoons from the US socialist press, "In an era of wars and revolutions".

A cartoon from 1944 shows a worker "socking" the bosses with one hand, and with the other holding a leaflet calling for "30 hour week, \$5000 minimum annual wage, \$250 billion reconstruction program, soak the rich".



Others illustrate demands for opening the bosses' account books, for workers' control of production, and for "escalator clauses" guaranteeing wage rises in line with inflation. Yet others popularise the call for a trade-union-based labour party as an alternative to Republicans and Democrats.

During the 44 months from Pearl Harbor to V-J Day, despite union leaders pledging no strikes, there had



already been 14,471 strikes involving 6,774,000 strikers: more in any other similar timespan in US history.

After Japan's surrender in September 1945, strikes quickly escalated in the USA, while in Europe they remained rare.

225,000 General Motors workers walked out from 21 November; 174,000 electrical workers from 15 January 1946; 93,000 meatpackers from 16 January; 750,000 steel workers from 21 January.

At the height, 1.6 million workers were on strike. By the end of 1946, 4.6 million workers

had joined strikes, often long ones.

In the end, government repression, the political inadequacies of the union leaders, the rise of Cold War ideology, and relative prosperity turned the tide for the bosses, and set US politics on a course for the witch-hunting of the McCarthy era and the conservatism of the 1950s.

Depicting both the great upsurge as socialists saw it and intervened in it, and the socialists' rearguard battle in the ensuing ebb, the book helps inspire and prepare us for future upsurges.

- More on 1946: bit.ly/brecher
- To get the book: bit.ly/era-of

The making of global capitalism

Paul Hampton reviews *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy Of American Empire*, by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin (Verso, 2012).

***The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* by Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin is one of the best Marxist analyses of the modern epoch published in a long time.**

The book is devoted to understanding “how it came to be that the American state developed the interest and capacity to superintend the making of global capitalism”. It deserves to be widely read and discussed on the international left both for the coherence of its arguments and because it challenges a series of shibboleths – particularly on imperialism – that have hampered the left for decades.

Panitch and Sam Gindin’s central claim is that since the Second World War, the US state has acted as the essential defender of the particular interests of US capital-in-general, but also for the general interests of global capital-in-general.

They argue: “The ambitious project for the making of global capitalism, imbricated in the American empire and first articulated during World War II, was realised in the last two decades of the twentieth century.” In short, the US state established effectively an informal American empire, where its hegemony is accomplished primarily through economic mechanisms (including through the World Bank, IMF, WTO), while backed by the irreplaceable role of the state, military forces, and political coercion (through the G20, the UN, NATO and of course its own armed forces, the CIA and local collaborators).

The new relations were most pronounced with Europe. The Marshall plan signalled the US state’s commitment to underwriting the European states as capitalist states. Panitch and Gindin argue that the US state positively supported the Common Market, which “was not intended to be, and it did not become, the basis for a new inter-imperialist rivalry based on a European super-state”. Rather than trying to limit the penetration of US capital, European governments competed for American investment, offering special treatment for foreign capital. They argue that the stage was set for “the implantation of American capital as a class force inside European social formations”.

CONTRADICTIONS

The process was not without serious contradictions. The first was “the growing trade competition from Europe and the growth of US private investment in Europe combined to produce severe pressure on the dollar”.

A second emerged as US financial capital increasingly strained against the limits of the New Deal framework at home, and also “found new outlets through the overseas expansion of multinational companies (MNCs) and the opportunities this gave to internationalise US banking”. The vast cross border flows of private capital this involved “were bound eventually to undermine the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates”.

Integration of the rest of the world into the US informal empire took a qualitatively different form from Western Europe, not only in Japan but also in the oil-producing states of the Middle East, as well as elsewhere in the “Third World”. Although Japan’s integration would become the model for Taiwan and South Korea, no other part of the Third World would be so successfully integrated in this fashion into the American empire. Although Japan was the successfully assimilated, this was also not without contradictions, not least the economic competition of Japanese capital with US capital that emerged in the 1960s.

Transformations – the new age of finance, the restructuring of manufacturing, the explosion of high-tech, the ubiquity of business services, as well as the profound weakening of working class organisation and labour identity – reconstituted the material base of the American empire.

The global division of labour before the Second World War was rigid: manufacturing was largely concentrated in the former imperial countries and resource extraction in their dependencies.

This pattern did not change all that much until the 1980s, when the political conditions were established – in the North as well as increasingly in the South – that laid the grounds for a truly global capitalism.



Institutions like the IMF have been key to the development of US capitalist hegemony

By the new millennium there was clearly a very remarkable, if still highly uneven, process of capitalist development taking place in the global South. Panitch and Gindin do not exaggerate the extent of the transformation. The integration of these regions of the world into global capitalism has been extremely uneven. At the end of the twentieth century the advanced capitalist countries accounted for 90% of all financial assets, 65% of world GDP, and almost 70% of global exports of manufactured goods.

Panitch and Gindin constantly emphasise the contested nature of the global order and in particular the efforts of labour movements to come to grips with it. Thus they see that within the drive towards globalised capitalist production increased the power of capital but also the social weight of the working class. The apparent triumph of the American empire only reinforces the global terrain of working class politics and the importance of international working class struggle.

One of the chief contributions made by Panitch and Gindin, not only in this book but in a range of articles they have produced over the last decade in the *Socialist Register* and *New Left Review*, is to challenge the “orthodox” left version of imperialism. This view, expressed by the SWP and most of the left in Britain, mechanically transposes Lenin’s view of the inter-imperialist rivalry leading to the First World War onto today’s very different conditions. Behind arguments about Israel-Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Iran, and a host of other debates lurks an interpretation of imperialism largely inherited from Stalinism. Clearing away the debris is vital to understand the dynamics of current politics.

Panitch and Gindin applaud the classical Marxist analysis of the international dimension of capitalism. They regard the insight that the export of capital was transforming the role of the state in both capital-exporting and importing countries as “the most important contribution of theorists of imperialism writing at the beginning of the twentieth century”. However “the link these theorists made between the export of capital and the inter-imperialist rivalry of those years was problematic, and would become even more so over the years from 1945 onwards”.

The problem was “not only that classical theories of imperialism saw states as merely acting at the behest of their respective capitalist classes, and thus did not give sufficient weight to the role of pre-capitalist ruling classes in the inter-imperialist rivalry of their own time”. It was also that “they treated the export of capital itself as imperialist, and thus the theories did not really register the differentiation between the economic and political spheres in capitalism, or the significance of informal empire in this respect”.

In short, Marxists cannot understand capitalist development after the Second World War by mechanically extrapolating the tendencies that characterised the period of the First

World War.

Panitch and Gindin build on the insight of Marxists such as Ellen Meiksins Wood, about how the separation of the economic and the political that characterises capitalism. This plays out globally as well as within particular states. The prototype for this kind of imperial hegemon was of course Britain, which emerged as the first global capitalist power. Before the late-18th century, all empires had combined economic control with military and political control.

It was left to Britain, “where the differentiation between economy and state was most advanced, to develop a conception of empire based as much on economic expansion and influence — the ‘imperialism of free trade’ — as on the military and political control of overseas territories”. Of course the British empire mixed the old territorial conquest (such as in India) with the more informal methods (such as in Latin America).

Panitch and Gindin puncture the conventional notion that free trade and imperialism did not mix, a misconception carried into the 20th century by Marxists such as Kautsky and Lenin. The British experience and latterly the role of the US decisively refute this juxtaposition.

Panitch and Gindin extend this analysis of “the imperialism of free trade” to understand the hegemony the US state has exercised globally since 1945. They also make some wider insights that are valuable. First, those observers who have sought since the 1970s to predict “a recrudescence of inter-imperial rivalry”, in the form of US conflict with either Europe, or Japan, (or latterly with China) have been wrong.

The continuing centrality of the American state in the global economy has been reinforced in the current crisis unfolded, “with virtually no trace of such inter-imperial conflict that a century earlier had given rise to world war”. The conflicts that have emerged today in the wake of the greatest capitalist crisis since the 1930s are taking shape, not only in Europe but much more generally, “less as conflicts between capitalist states and their ruling classes than as conflicts within capitalist states”.

COLD WAR

There are also implications of their analysis for our understanding of the Cold War and its place in the last half-century of history. Panitch and Gindin, rightly in my view, did not regard USSR as a capitalist state, but rather as a different form of exploiting class society.

The USSR was imperialist in the classic, historical sense, i.e., a territorial imperialist, both internally in dominating other peoples, such as in the Ukraine, and externally in its post-war control over Eastern Europe. The Cold War was undoubtedly a conflict between imperialist blocs, and between different modes of production. There is no doubt about the real threat of global war that it entailed, or its terrible impact on labour movements.

However, many on the left made the US-USSR rivalry simply a species of the inter-imperial rivalry thesis, and thus the main dynamic in international relations between 1945 and 1991. If I read Panitch and Gindin right, they regard the Cold War as a secondary phenomenon, subordinate to the global capitalist project of the US state. I think they are right about this. The USSR was never able to mount a systemic challenge to capitalism and Stalinism never caught up with the productivity of capitalism. Stalinism was a blind alley — and for the working-class movement a terribly destructive diversion — within an epoch in which capitalism was the dominant mode. The collapse of Stalinism and the endurance of capitalism underline the analytical priority. This is not to render the Cold War irrelevant, but rather to understand it as a sub-plot within a much wider global political economy that emerged after 1945.

Panitch and Gindin also debunk important presuppositions about relations between the big powers, and challenge the way “North-South” relations have been framed. They are critical of the way “imperialism” became ever more loosely associated with core-periphery relations, dependency and unequal exchange, with little focus on what distinguished the US from other empires.

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

The world systems, dependency, and other Third-Worldist theories that dominated left-wing thinking, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s, have been crucially undermined by developments over the last generation. Capitalist development has been and will always be highly uneven, but there has been significant combined development, particularly the creation of new centres of accumulation with sub-imperialist states, and crucially the growth of the industrial working class, which has renewed and expanded the objective basis for international socialism. It is on these tendencies that a revived labour movement can arise.

Since the 1970s, much of the international left has claimed that the US is in decline. Yet even a superficial familiarity with the real relation of forces challenges this thesis – the US retains absolute superiority in military, economic, technological and cultural matters. For example, the US state had around 400 military bases in the 1960s, while today it has over 700. The US also outspends all its possible rivals put together on nuclear and cyber capabilities, and other advantages.

The Making of Global Capitalism shows very clearly that apocalyptic interpretations of US decline are misplaced, the evidence for it scanty, and the political conclusions drawn from it hugely problematic. Panitch and Gindin weigh up key decline arguments: growth, technology, trade and rivals, finding them unsatisfactory at present.

Panitch and Gindin argue that the “commanding heights” of global accumulation has shifted to high-tech sectors, in which the US is a leader, and to a range of business services.

As of 2007, the top three or four firms in such diverse sectors as technological hardware and equipment, software and computers, aerospace/military, and oil equipment and services were American, as were 14 of the top 16 global firms in healthcare equipment and services.

Nine of the top 10 corporations in global financial services were American — a dominance that went beyond that in any other sector. By 2007, five US investment banks accounted for 35% of world revenue generated by underwriting bond issues, organising IPOs, equity trading, syndicated loans, and over-the-counter derivatives.

More than half the world’s pension, insurance, and mutual funds were under the management of US financial firms, as were two-thirds of hedge funds and private equity funds. Yet the US was still producing more manufactured goods and receiving more foreign investment in 2007 than all the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India and China) combined.

CHINA

The final argument for the “US decline” viewpoint, which has probably the most substance, concerns the rise of China.

The size of Chinese economy is expected to surpass the US economy in the next decade, although in per capita terms it remains far behind. However, by 2050 (if not before) China may become the centre of gravity of global capital accumulation, and by that stage the Chinese armed forces may present a more serious rival to the US.

China is already an imperialist power, in the traditional sense of territorial suzerainty over oppressed peoples and in the modern capitalist sense involving the export of capital, the role of financial capital and in the relationship between the Chinese state and particular states.

Panitch and Gindin do not discount the long term possibility of rivalry, but are sanguine about the exaggerated claims of China’s growing economic dominance, given that Chinese capital is still catching up technologically to Korea and Taiwan, let alone the US. They point to Chinese-US interdependence, with China reliant on the US as an export market and as the holder of huge dollar reserves, while US capital is now producing much more in China itself.

They believe that since China’s admission to the WTO in 2001, it has been integrated into global capitalism. However the crucial question about rivalry concerns whether the Chinese state has the capacity to take on extensive responsibilities for managing global capitalism. Their view is that China is “manifestly still a very long way from being able to do so”. There are international institutional ties, from the UN to the G20, which at present bond the Chinese state to the current global order.

The situation of Chinese workers is perhaps the biggest factor in shaping the type of state China becomes in the coming decades. The number of manufacturing workers in China alone is now double the ten leading developed countries combined and its total labour force is larger than that of the US, Europe, Japan and all Latin America combined.



Panitch and Gindin argue that American companies’ continued dominances of key sectors like technology contradicts the “US imperialism in decline” hypothesis

Panitch and Gindin say “it cannot be known in advance whether working-class struggles in China will lead to the emulation of the West’s individualised consumerism, or whether they lead to the new collectivist claims”. What is known, based on the bitter experience of the last two decades, is that there will be more class struggle in China and there are opportunities for workers to organise as they did spectacularly in 1989. The role of international working class solidarity, in which Marxists can play an irreplaceable role, will also be vital for the emergence of an independent Chinese workers’ movement.

Panitch and Gindin provide an interesting account of the most recent phase of capitalism since 1982, although they are not keen on the term “neoliberalism”. First, they believe (rightly) that capitalist states remain central to the reproduction of capitalist social relations of production and have not been displaced by market mechanisms.

Second, they argue that to demarcate the period since 1982 as neoliberalism “misses the continuities between their prescriptions for free markets and the long term goals already articulated by the American state at the time of the relaunching of global capitalism into the post-war era”.

They quote Per Jacobson, who ran the Bank of International Settlements (and later the IMF) reassuring American policymakers in 1948 that something he called “neo-Liberalism” had “begun to gain ground” in Europe. Third, they believe that neoliberalism was essentially “a political response to the democratic gains that had been previously achieved by working classes”.

These are valid insights, but their description does in fact (and for good reasons) feed the idea of that the past three decades have been significantly different from what went on for a generation before. Panitch and Gindin state that the derivatives revolution was “crucial to the stabilisation of currency markets in the wake of the end of fixed exchange rates, and was also intimately linked to the internationalisation of the US bond market”.

The significance of the triumph of monetarism in Britain in the late 1970s was “the class alignment that went with it”. In accepting the need to give priority to fighting inflation, “industrial capital accepted that a finance-led accumulation strategy was in its interests too”.

The way in which this was achieved — high interest rates, a deep recession, and the liberalisation of markets — also laid the basis not only for the new age of finance, but also for the restructuring of US industry.

Between 1980 and 2007, global GDP doubled, trade grew twice as fast as GDP, and FDI grew twice as fast as trade. Panitch and Gindin believe that this “accelerated capitalist globalisation” entailed major changes everywhere. This could be seen in three interrelated areas: a) the massive expansion of finance in global accumulation; b) the impact of networks of integrated production on the global division of labour; and c) the novel aspects of US economic centrality in global capitalism.

The scale of global financialisation “was especially stunning”. While in the years 1990-2007 world trade grew at an impressive annual rate of 8.7%, cross border financial flows grew at 14.4%, exploding over those years from \$1.1 trillion to over \$11 trillion.

Financialisation in the global South also “facilitated the outward flow of capital from developing countries”. Capital flows between the developing countries increased significantly, and this came “not only from the foreign banks operating there, but also from local capitalists who were expanding their horizons beyond their home base”.

The new division of labour corresponded to something equally crucial to a globalised capitalism: the development

of new networks of integrated production. The result was a more interdependent global capitalism that required more than ever the consolidation of ‘free trade’ to facilitate borderless production. Again, the process has not been without contradictions. No less than seventy-two financial crises broke out in the 1990s. The crisis that began in 2007 also indicates the state of the global power relations, including the neoliberal continuities with the previous period.

The current crisis is a crucial test for theories of imperialism and capitalist development. Panitch and Gindin argue that the first global crisis of the 21st century “would not be caused by the build-up of external imbalances, such as the US trade deficit and indebtedness to China, triggering collapse of the dollar”. On the contrary, “it was caused by the build-up of domestic contradictions in US society’s own envelopment in the volatility of finance. It was a crisis made in America”.

The American crisis that started in 2007 “was not caused either by domestic industrial ‘overaccumulation’ or international trade and capital imbalances, but rather by the volatility of capitalist finance”. It was because “US finance had become so integral to the functioning of twenty-first century global capitalism that the ultimate impact of this crisis throughout the international economy was so profound”.

Panitch and Gindin oppose efforts to subsume the explanation for all crises to one universal law, such as the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. They oppose attempts to go back to the theories of imperialism a century earlier, which suggested that “overaccumulation is the source of all capitalist crises”.

There are fundamental differences between the 1970s crisis and the present one: for example “it was only after the financial meltdown in 2007-08 that profits and investment declined”. The stagnant growth and employment since are not due to falling profits – corporate profits quickly recovered after the 2009 downturn, and by mid-2011 were not only 23% above the mid-2007 level but even 16% above their record peak in mid-2006.

CONFRONTATIONS

The confrontations between the Treasury and Congress starkly revealed the tensions the American state experienced between “the governance of its own social formation and its imperial responsibilities for the reproduction of global capitalism”.

But thus far the US economy has survived the impact of the crisis and the US state remains central to the existing global political economy.

Panitch and Gindin’s account of the current era of capitalist development, superintended by the US state and sucking almost all social formations into the vortex of capitalist social relations of production, is essentially sound. At one point, they describe the way national bourgeoisies forged ties with American capitalists and were integrated into American imperial hegemony as “Canadianised”.

This is an apt description and no accident. The authors have observed the pattern of US-Canadian relations firsthand during their lives, and those relations have served as a model for the global order.

Panitch and Gindin make some pertinent points for the future, which should be assimilated by sober Marxist analysis. First, the belief that there is a way back to a supposed post-war “real economy” from finance-led capitalism is “illusionary”. Second, “there is no real possibility of going back to the largely mythical ‘mixed economy’ the New Deal and Keynesian welfare state are imagined to have represented”. Third, “a revival of progressive economic nationalism in most developing states today is ruled out by the absence of anything like a national bourgeoisie for popular classes to ally with”. Instead they look to the organised labour movement for the social agency capable and willing to take on the forces of capital.

It would be churlish, as some reviewers have done, to emphasise the gaps and limitations of the picture. Methodologically, Panitch and Gindin chose to examine the construction of global capitalism through the analysis of a single state, which inevitably means some global relations are not discussed fully. Of course further analysis is needed of global flows of surplus value, anomalies such as many regimes in the Middle East and Africa, and no doubt other problems. But these can be reconstructed on the firm foundations established by the book.

This is an immense contribution to understanding the nature of contemporary capitalism, which socialists should study in order to rearm the labour movement.

• This review is abridged. The full version is online at bit.ly/ph-pg

Teachers: defy the drift!

By Stewart Ward

Britain's two main teaching unions have pulled back for a second time from a promise of joint national strikes.

Following regional strikes in October 2013, the National Union of Teachers (NUT) and National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) assured members there would be a joint national strike before Christmas 2013. That commitment was reneged on, superficially because Michael Gove offered "talks". Both unions publicly committed, in writing, to striking nationally no later than 13 February if those talks failed to yield serious concessions.

Although there is no sign of such concessions, the unions have once again climbed down. An emergency meeting of the NUT Executive on Thursday 16 January reaffirmed a general position in favour of further strikes, but called no action – so strikes before 13 February are now off the agenda. A proposal from supporters of the rank-and-file Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC) on the NUT Executive to strike on 12 February was deemed to "fall" when another formula passed. The NUT has de-



clared its Executive will meet again on 30 January to decide further action.

An NUT activist told *Solidarity* that the union will approach NASUWT with proposals for strikes in March, but that the 30 January Executive will call a strike in March even if NASUWT refuses. Just in time for NUT conference at Easter... but not action on a scale that can win.

The aspiration for united action, particularly in an industry where workers, in defiance of all industrial logic, are organised across several different unions, is extremely important. But it should not mean that an industrial campaign is shackled to the pace of the slowest, most conservative union. NUT leaders' insistence on not striking without unity with NASUWT has allowed them to use NASUWT's conservatism, a known quantity before the dispute began, as an ex-

cuse to demobilise NUT members.

The alleged sensitivities of the negotiations between the two unions have also been used to prevent open and transparent communication between union leaders and ordinary members about the progress of the dispute. The outcomes of NUT Executive meetings are routinely embargoed until further discussions with NASUWT are conducted. Inter-union talks are important, but the right of NUT members to know what their elected representatives have discussed and decided should come first.

The teachers' dispute is in critical condition. The new pay regime, which the campaign is notionally attempting to stop, has already been introduced. The framework of the national dispute has been effectively used by union groups in some schools to launch

local disputes over workload, management bullying, and over-observation, but the lack of national strikes means the pressure on Gove is minimal. He will concede nothing meaningful in talks when the unions are so patently unwilling to confront him nationally.

Rank-and-file teachers must organise to rescue their national campaign, and fast. LANAC holds its national conference in Leicester on Saturday 1 February. The network says unions need to look beyond single-day strikes and announce an ongoing, open-ended calendar of action, including regional, national, rolling, and selective actions.

Irrespective of what happens with the national strikes, activists should also revive the non-strike action on workload, and demand that the union leaders work actively to promote it. A strong push there would lead to many strikes in schools.

NUT branches affiliated to LANAC, and NASUWT activists frustrated by their leadership's foot-dragging, must propose such programmes within their unions as soon as possible.

For more information on the LANAC conference, see nutlan.org.uk

ing their members to participate in the February walkouts.

HOLT will be an essential addition to the unions' industrial action. By campaigning publicly against the cuts, and for a well-funded, publicly-owned, democratically-controlled transport system, HOLT can ensure that Tube workers are not left to fight their dispute alone as a sectional industrial battle, but are supported by a wide coalition of working-class community organisations. The defence of London Underground is a political fight for the whole working-class in London.

To download campaign materials, visit handsofflondontransport.wordpress.com



strike for 48 hours across 4-6 February, and 11-13 February. RMT members in stations grades also launched an overtime ban on 17 January, and plan revenue action (refusing to carry out certain duties relating to checking fares and tickets) between 9.30 and 11.30am, and 6.30 and 8.30pm, on 7, 10, and 14 February. TSSA's ballot for strikes closes on Monday 27 January, and is expected to return a yes vote, allow-

HE pay dispute must step up

By Darren Bedford

The University and College Union (UCU), Unison, and Scottish teachers' union EIS will strike on 6 February in their dispute against Higher Education employers' 1% pay offer.

Unite, the other main union representing non-academic staff in Higher Education, say they are undertaking further consultation before joining the strike.

Although the announcement of a further strike day is positive, many workers were hoping for an escalation of the dispute to a two or three-day strike following one-day strikes on 31 October and 3 December. Union members have essentially been kept in the dark since December, despite unions initially threatening to announce ongoing programmes of action for the period after Christmas.

UCU is supplementing the 6 February strike with a series of two-hour walkouts on Thursday 23 January (11am-1pm), Tuesday 28 January (2pm-4pm), and Monday 10 February (9am-11am).

Although UCU describes the move as an "escalation", many UCU activists believe it is just the opposite. One union activist told *Solidarity*: "This is a complete change of strategy from the one put to members with the original ballot, and is clearly a de-escalation. It is contrary to the promise of escalating action after to Christmas to two and

three day strikes, followed by a marking boycott."

Unison members at the University of Birmingham, one of the universities to have imposed the 1% deal, struck on Thursday 16 January in a local dispute about pay. They are demanding living wages for the 326 university workers currently paid below that rate.

A Unison activist told *Solidarity*: "It seems to me like this dispute is being deliberately run into the ground — who can talk to their colleagues about the great effectiveness of a two-hour strike, or even of another 24-hour strike, with a straight face? Employers are implementing the offer unilaterally all over the place.

"The best thing we can salvage from it is to bring together the disaffected branches who want more action and come up with a battleplan for how we can conduct an industrial and political campaign for a proper pay rise next year to begin to make up for the pay which has been eroded."

Time is running out for national dispute. Many institutions have already begun to implement the 1% pay deal which the strike is attempting to stop.

Some student unions, such as the University College London Union, have called solidarity demonstrations on the days of the UCU's two-hour walkouts.

• For information on student solidarity with the strike, see anticuts.com

Unison calls "day of protest"

By Ollie Moore

Unison has called a "day of protest" on local government pay for Tuesday 4 February.

The union says: "Branches across the UK will be organising protests, stunts and rallies at lunchtime and outside work hours, working jointly with GMB and Unite."

But the union is very clear that "this is not industrial action".

A "day of protest" is better than nothing, but much more will be needed to win real victories.

Tube unions plan political fight against cuts

By Ira Berkovic

Over 100 came to London's Conway Hall for the launch of the "Hands Off London Transport" campaign (HOLT).

HOLT has been initiated by Tube union RMT as part of its fight against huge job losses, ticket office closures, and attacks on workers' terms and conditions on London Underground. The launch rally also included representatives from TSSA, another Tube union, as well as Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC) activists, the National Pensioners' Convention, the Green Party, and Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn. John McDonnell MP sent his support.

RMT members on London Underground will

Turkish uni workers' 3 Cosas solidarity

By Jonny West

Workers at the Hacettepe University in Turkey sent a message of support to the University of London workers' "3 Cosas" campaign (see page 12).

The Hacettepe workers are also fighting outsourcing, and won the rein-

statement of 50 workers who were sacked following a strike. They contacted the 3 Cosas campaign to express their support.

The workers are active in UID-DER, a rank-and-file network in the Turkish labour movement.

For more on this story, see bit.ly/hu-3c



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Support 3 Cosas strikers!

By Daniel Lemberger Cooper (ULU Vice President and IWGB member)

Outsourced workers at the University of London's central administration, employed by Cofely GDF-Suez (until recent by Balfour Beatty), will be striking from 27-29 January.

Terms and conditions for Cofely GDF-Suez workers, specifically sick pay, holidays, and pensions, are much improved after a previous strike, but still inferior to those terms and conditions of direct employees of the University of London. The demand for parity forms the basis of the "3 Cosas" ("3 Things") campaign, which has seen workers mobilise against university management for over a year.

The first and third days of the strike will see workers mount mass pickets at Senate House, University of London, from 6am until 1pm. On the second strike day, the entire picket line will board an open-top bus for a whistle-stop tour of high-profile sites throughout London, including national media outlets and places of particular interest to the University of London and Cofely.



The strike is called by the University of London branch of the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB) and is over union recognition, terms and conditions, and job losses.

Sonia Chura, Vice-Chair of the University of London Branch of the IWGB, said: "We've made great progress thus far, but our fight will continue until we win all our demands."

The strike follows a partially successful two day strike in November, 2013, which won major concession on sick pay and holidays. IWGB is also demanding a formal recognition agreement in order to set up proper negotiating infrastructure. Many

workplace issues that later turn in to formal grievances or industrial disputes could potentially be avoided if there was more dialogue between the company and the union.

The final demand is around job losses. The University of London is planning on shutting down the Garden Halls, where many union members are employed as cleaners, next summer. The IWGB wants the company to re-allocate these workers within the company as vacancies arise in order to prevent job losses.

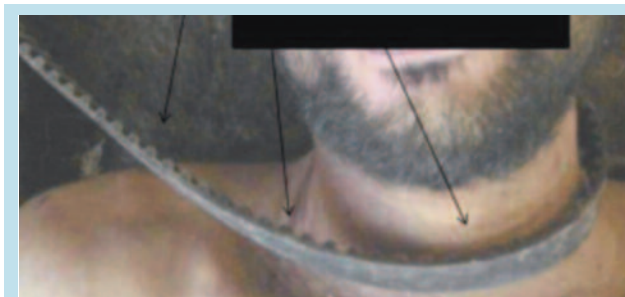
The campaign is run by outsourced workers and has gained massive traction due to its innovative use of social media and the inter-

net (Facebook, Twitter, and an electronic campaign through LabourStart which saw over 1,400 emails sent to the Vice Chancellor). It has also benefited immensely from student support.

But fundamentally, the campaign has been successful because it has rediscovered the best traditions of democratic, rank-and-file-led, militant industrial unionism.

The 3 Cosas campaign is a model of what workers can achieve when they organise and fight. It is an example for the entire labour movement.

• Donate to the IWGB University of London branch's strike fund at bit.ly/3c-donate



Torture photos expose Assad

By Rhodri Evans

"At least 11,000 human beings have been tortured and executed", says David Crane, one of three international lawyers who released a report on Syria on 21 January.

Those 11,000 were not killed in the heat of battle. They were taken prisoner by the government of dictator Bashar al-Assad, and then tortured and killed in jail. Their families were told they had died of "heart attacks" or "breathing failure".

The evidence comes from a photographer for the Assad regime's military police who defected.

Published just before the "Geneva 2" talks on Syria open in Switzerland, it will spike an incipient trend in the US ruling class to settle for some new deal with Assad.

Ryan Crocker, who is now an academic but has been US ambassador to both Iraq and Afghanistan, wrote in the *New York Times* in December that "Assad is the least worst option". The new evidence will discredit that view.

In any case "Geneva 2" is unlikely to bring a result. Only exile groups of the opposition have agreed to attend, and they say they will walk out if Iran is represented there, as it is due to be.

Within Syria, war still rages between the ISIL Islamist "ultras" and softer-Islamist or secular factions of the opposition, as well as between the opposition and the regime.

Intervention by the working class and the labour movement of the whole region is the only factor likely to be able to create a "third camp" in Syria for a democratic and secular outcome.

Students will rally on 29 January

By Ed Maltby

On 22 January, student activists will demonstrate in London to support the campaign by outsourced workers in the University of London (see above), to oppose police repression, and to oppose the threatened closure of the University of London Union.

The following day, students will take action in solidarity with the national Higher Education workers' pay dispute, and on 29 January a meeting in Birmingham will discuss and plan the next steps for student struggle.

Class struggle in the higher education sector is symbolised by the vast pay rises handed to university Vice Chancellors (VCs) this year. VCs at the top unis received an average 8% pay rise, taking the salary of, for example, Birmingham University's David Eastwood up to £400,000.

This generation of university management, in the style

of the private sector CEOs they imitate, even award themselves huge bonuses when they have demonstrably failed: at the University of East London, three senior staff members took a special farewell bonus package totalling £600,000 following the collapse of UEL's overseas campus and its international examinations company.

Typically with backgrounds in management rather than teaching or research, they define success as competitiveness (grabbing money and erecting prestigious monuments) and toughness (abusing staff and students).

Far below them, their staff are burdened with a below-inflation pay increase of 1%, and outsourced workers, the people who cook and clean, live in misery, often working two or three jobs.

When bosses' authority is challenged, their response is brutal. In 2009, SOAS organised the mass deportation of a group of unionised migrant cleaners. In 2012 and in 2013,

Birmingham University management used campus security as hired goons to break up student occupations, and sought blanket injunctions banning protests on campus which were criticised by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International.

At the University of London, police were repeatedly called to intimidate student protests in support of staff — culminating in the arrest of organisers of student demonstrations and a police riot in December which saw more than 40 students arrested and dozens of others brutalised when the occupation of Senate House was broken.

Against this model of big-business education, the student and labour movement needs to counterpose a democratically-controlled, free, public education, in which neither police nor border guards nor management swindlers play a role

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