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Strengthen the fight against all cuts Unite with European workers



The International Socialist League is publishing this Socialist Voice in an era where the global capitalist economy is sinking deeper into crisis. In the first four days of August London's index of leading shares lost £75 billion, stock markets fell around the world and the euro debt crisis continued to deepen. At the same time renewed struggles have developed in Britain, Greece, Ireland and other European countries and revolutions are shaking the Middle East and North Africa.

The Chancellor George Osborne says there will be growth this year, but growth for whom? For the banks and the multi-nationals but not for the working class, 'growth' for them means a drastic decline in the standard of living.

The prediction that Britain will be able export its way out of crisis is nothing but an illusion, it is no longer

the power it once was. Even a weak pound cannot help manufacturing exports recover today. GDP increased 0.2 per cent in the second quarter of 2011 and in July manufacturing contracted for the first time in two years. It is in decline not recovery.

The way capitalism met their economic problems in the 1930s was through mass unemployment, the work house and the means test. Then the depth of their crisis was overcome by wholesale slaughter of people and cities in 2nd World War.

As in the 1930s tensions between imperialist countries are mounting and the south European countries and Ireland are being driven downwards as the European Union and Euro crisis pushes them into deeper control by German, French and US capitalism.

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LIFE OF THE LIT

International Workers' League

Spain

Corriente Roja Advances

(Red Current)

On the 9 and 10 July the meeting of *Corriente Roja* took place in Madrid, after large mobilisations in Spain, Greece, England, the Middle East and North Africa.

Under the slogan "With new challenges, it is urgent to build *Corriente Roja*", delegates represented more than 80% of the militants of the organization. They were joined by a delegation of Syrians and alternative union currents from across Spain.

The Spanish crisis is part of the European crisis, marked by the bankruptcy in the so-called peripheral countries under the deep crisis of world capitalism's only comparable to the Great Depression of the 20th century.

Argentina

Workers and Left Front is born

Four Left parties (PO, PTS, IS and PSTU a new party of the IWL) joined together to form an electoral front for the national elections in Argentina. It is unprecedented, that there is an alternative left front in the elections.

Thousands of workers, youth, and combative women, have the opportunity to cast their votes for a radical change in society. The young students that led heroic struggles for secondary and university education, for democratic functioning in university and colleges can express their support for struggle now against repression of yesterday and today.

Brazil

Workers and Student Internationalism

Between the 3 and 6 June, a union and political Brazilian delegation took part in the Conference of Solidarity with the Arab Revolution in Egypt. Dirceu Travesso, representing CSP Conlutas, Clara Saraiva for ANEL (Students' National Association - Free) and Gloria Ferreira of the PSTU.

They called for full support to the struggles in Egypt and the Arab countries and exchanged experiences on the key questions of how workers and people can change the world.

Read the full reports - www.litci.org/en

SOCIALIST VOICE



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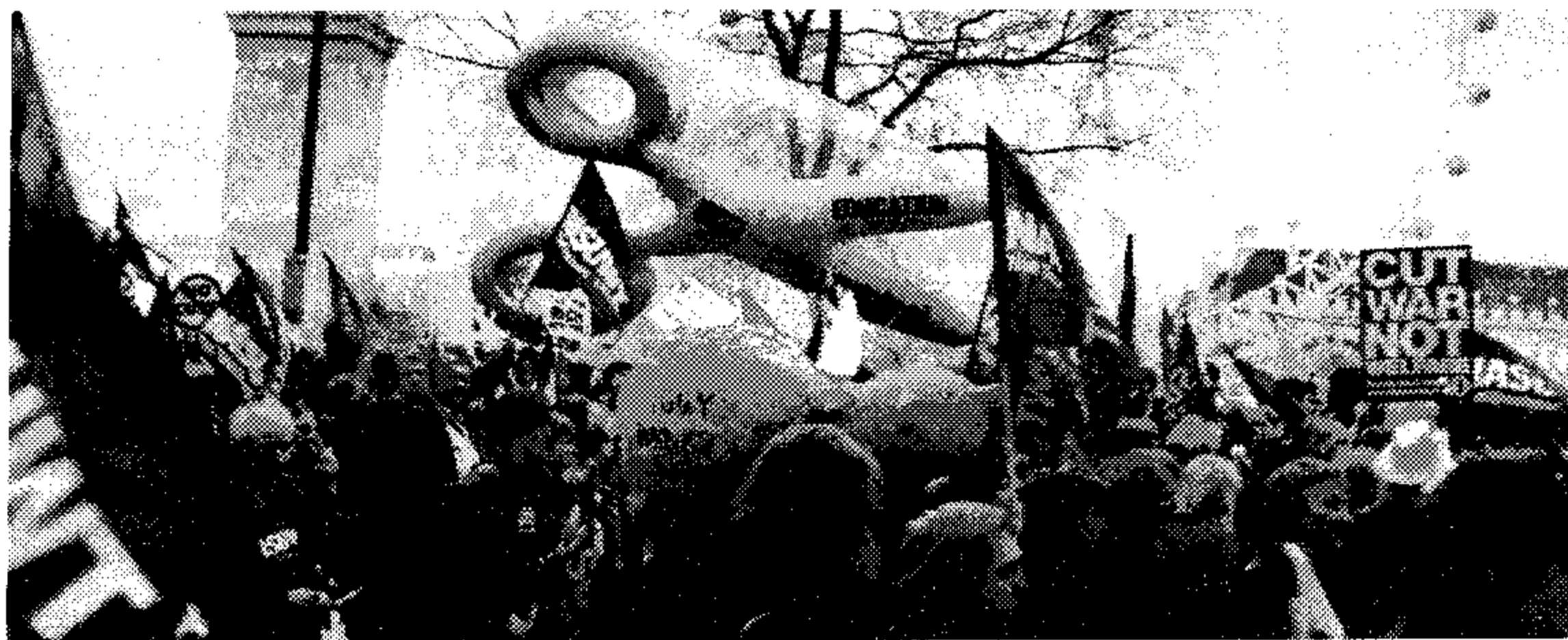
Editors: Margaret McAdam and Martin Ralph

Editorial team Bill Hunter, Cecilia Toledo

Email: isinfo@talktalk.net

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Editorial:**For a socialist and internationalist leadership**

(continued from the front page)

Europe show that all workers are facing the destruction of their public services, jobs, benefits and rights. The future under European capitalism is bleak and will be one of misery for the majority alongside plenty for the rich.

In the early 2000s the anti-war movements across the world, and today the anti-cuts movements, show the strength of anti-capitalist feeling amongst workers. These anti-capitalist movements were born from a feeling which exists among masses in every corner of the globe, including Britain, that their future is dependent on the ever increasing control by the banks and multinationals, who have no concern for the future of humanity only to maintain and increase their profits.

Britain's deepening crisis

Cameron has made it clear that the government wants to see the end of the Welfare State and wants to replace it with a two or three tiered privatised system. But what is clear is that privatisation, as happened with the railways, requires huge transfers of money to the private sector while at the same time services deteriorate or collapse, costs increase and accidents increase as maintenance and health and safety issues are overlooked.

The only difference between the Tory and the Labour Party plans concerning austerity is that Labour call for fewer cuts and a slower implementation.

They have no independent road to the Tories as was seen by Ed Miliband's condemnation of the 30 June public sector strikes to defend pensions.

The main union leadership is prostrate in front of this crisis, the international combines and the British capitalist state. To cover this they make a militant speech, but not too often and then negotiate.

Union leaderships such as Unison and Unite did not join the 30 June strike. Workers must make these leaderships fight, otherwise they will do a deal with the government over pensions, cuts and services. And the unions that did fight must call on all unions to take action and press ahead with more strikes. The traditions of trade unionism and the future of workers' organisations are being defended by these strikes and active campaigns.

We must also develop all the existing local campaigns and build on the 30 June strike. Furthermore we must link with all the strikes across Europe.

The changes, which workers lived through from the mid 1970s to now came as a result of drastic retreats and the weakening of their organisations in face of an employers' offensive. It is that weakening, a change in the relationship of classes, which has made possible all the evils and deterioration; the undermining of the National Health Service and the Welfare State; the oppressive

individual contracts, increased workloads and stress at work.

The future of the working class must be determined by workers and leaders based on a strategy with an international and socialist perspective. Socialism cannot be limited to one country, this is one of the central reasons why the working class did not put an end to capitalism in the 1940s. After the war governments were forced by workers to establish a Welfare State to improve their living conditions or face revolution, today British and European capitalism intends to reverse all these gains of the class.

We are fighting for an international perspective to link European workers together in a common fight against European governments and employers. We need a workers' government that can begin to build socialism, our aim is socialism throughout Europe and the world. To achieve this we need a socialist and international party that can draw in all layers of working class men, women and young people.

We do not stand above the interests of the class but the movement cannot be successful without a revolutionary party and International. The ISL seeks to link with workers and activists to build a revolutionary group in Britain. Read our paper, write to us, we want to hear from you.

We will not pay for their crisis

Martin Ralph, editor International Socialist League

The 30 June strike of four public sector unions (PCS, NUT, UCU, ATL) against the attack on pensions gave a glimpse of the strength of the working class. Many young workers, students and local campaign groups joined the lively demonstrations across the country. There was widespread public support for the strike, which represented mass opposition to all cuts in jobs, services, benefits and against all privatisations. It was a focus for anger against the government and a continuation of the student movement of last year.

However we must issue a warning. Instead of joining the strike, some union leaderships such as in Unison (the largest public sector union with 1.3 million members and Labour Party affiliation) continue to negotiate with the government as an excuse not to call strikes. Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour Party, condemned the strikes on the 30 June, "These strikes are wrong" he said repeatedly and demanded that the unions continue with negotiations.

Dave Prentis leader of Unison says, "Our aim is to get a final offer so that members can see whether or not their pension schemes will be maintained or reduced." Trade unions used to fight for better pensions. However it is also clear to everyone, especially the 100,000s of trade unionists who were on strike that pensions are being hit by this government. At the same time as bankers and business executives are increasing their pensions massively showing that austerity is profitable for the rich and they are getting richer at the expense of workers.

The Unison and Unite leaderships are very close to the Labour Party whose official position is, cuts are necessary. Labour Councils are turning their backs on working mothers, the disabled and many others who are campaigning for services to stay open.

Prentis said at a recent national executive meeting (<http://www.labournet.net>) that 'public opinion' had to be kept 'on board' and used this as another excuse not to strike! But strikes and demonstrations galvanise



public opinion. Every retreat by union leaders will be used by the Tories to deepen the cuts.

Speaking before the Unison national conference Prentis had to make some militant sounding noises. He said that walkouts in the autumn would be the biggest since the 1926 General Strike because over a million workers would be balloted for industrial action. However after June 30 Treasury Chief Secretary Danny Alexander stated that the government plans to look at each pension scheme separately and appears to be exempting the Local Government pension scheme from the contribution increases proposed for other public sector pension schemes. This is an attempt to divide and weaken united action. Prentis and Barber will go down this road if they are not stopped by the union membership. Which would mean that UNISON will not ballot across the different pension schemes and co-ordinate strike action with the teaching unions and the PCS in October.

Prentis's method will not benefit Unison members. They must demand that their union prepares to organise all its members to fight in the autumn, and that words are to be turned into

action. There are 1.2 million Unison members effected by the pension cuts with 5000 employers. The rank and file and leaders who want to fight must strengthen the union committees in all workplaces.

Demand all unions ballot for strike action against pension cuts.

Closing and privatising the NHS

There is a growing movement in the unions and in the working class to fight for the National Health Service to prevent its collapse into private hands that will be funded by public money and charges for treatment. The government is driving its privatisation plans forward with the opening £1bn of NHS services to private companies and charities. Announcements of this move were conveniently overshadowed by the blanket coverage of the Murdoch scandal.

Already hospitals are being forced to cut back on simple but important operations as part of £20 billion in cuts before privatisation kicks in. Operations are being delayed, 54,000 jobs have gone and 4,000 are axed every month which includes nurses, midwives, doctors and consultants.

Build a national inclusive anti-cuts struggle

Children's wards are closing and specialist services for older people, the terminally ill, and those with drug, alcohol or mental health problems are being lost.

Patient care is being jeopardised as the NHS is closing down before our eyes. The question is how can the government be forced to retreat? Unions and community campaigns must enter the struggle now and demand joint union and class action. Unite the hospital staff, the patients and all those who believe in the NHS.

Privatising Education

The Secretary for Education, Michael Gove, also announced, at this time a £2bn PFI (Private and Finance Initiative) programme to finance a new PFI school building programme for up to 300 schools.

During the student movement, in the anti-academy movement and in the fights taking place to stop closures of nurseries and other social provisions new organisations of struggle have been formed.

Local union representatives and rank and file activists who are determined to save their services must lead a fight against their own union leaderships to demand they carry through this fight.

For international and union action

Workers organisations in Greece and in other countries have called for co-ordinated European action and a days of common action across Europe. We need to build direct links with those unions and social movements calling for united action. It will be shop stewards committees and the rank and file committees that will have to organise these links (see international conference report page 18 in this paper.)

Workers united against Franco in 1930s and workers from 52 countries across the world went to fight in Spain. In the beginning it was often workers' self-organisation who forced

their leaderships to act. Today we need to build a unity in action against the European Union and capitalist Europe.

The immediate crisis is sharper in certain countries today but they show where Britain is heading. All public services, and public pensions are under attack in countries like Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain. In Greece the government is planning to privatise the Hellenic Postbank, OTE telecoms, the ports (Piraeus and Salonika) the Public Power Corporation and other public assets. It is clearly an European offensive against all workers' gains.

The European governments, the European Union, the European Bank, the IMF and the World Bank are fighting to ensure profit levels are secure by privatising Europe. Workers are suffering mass unemployment (especially the youth), increased part-time and casual work, removal of the right to health care and education, attacks on immigrants, women, and the young.

A national and inclusive anti-cuts struggle must be created. Today about 200 anti-cuts groups have been formed and the most representative body of unions, the trades councils are growing because of their fight in the anti-cuts fights. Trades councils are striving to link trade unions, communities and students and they have a greater task, that is to assist the struggle against those union leaders who are preparing to betray those struggles.

Trade unions must both lead and assist a national struggle. Those union leaders who think that it is possible to negotiate with the government to avoid the mobilisations and strikes, who turn their backs on building European days of action and who allow the NHS to be cut apart are part of the problem. The new struggles will have to develop new leaders and the best of them will be socialist and internationalist.

Our Programme

- **We will not pay for their crisis. No To cuts. More money for public services not less. Make the rich pay.**
- **Against privatisation of public services and all privatisation schemes.**
- **Build local committees of resistance led by local people.**
- **Strengthen work place union committees.**
- **Over 500,000 strike on 30 June. Build on that.**
- **Defeat the anti-trade union laws.**
- **No cuts and fees in education, for free access to education.**
- **Full employment.**
- **No scapegoating of immigrants.**
- **For the right to work, access to free health care and education for all.**
- **Build an international committee of unions, make the links with workers fighting in Greece, Spain, Ireland, France, Portugal and Italy.**
- **Call a European General Strike.**
- **Support the Arab revolutions.**
- **For socialism and internationalism.**
- **For a united socialist states of Europe.**

Review threatens railway workers, passengers and union

Socialist Voice interviewed Daren Ireland, Branch Secretary 5 RMT (Rail, Maritime and Transport) union over the government's plans for a further onslaught on the railways.

SV: What would the implementation of the McNulty report mean?

Daren: Railways in the UK are 35 per cent more expensive to run since the mid 1990s compared to European comparators for equivalent railways in Europe. Some of the comparators McNulty used are in the public sector in Europe. One of the attacks he used that will affect the conductor/Guard rate is he wants driver only operations. If that was implemented nationally 1,000s of our members would lose their jobs, and the travelling public would be less safe.

McNulty wants a complete review of ticket office hours and they want to change schedule 17 requirements, which are the statutory means we can use to oppose closure or changes to opening hours of booking offices. We have 1000s of station staff who would be effected by these proposals. There have already been attacks such as on South West Trains.

The catering grades are already under attack due to the number of subcontractors that are used because very few train operators employ their own catering staff, this means low wages and poor conditions of service.

There has been a recent attack by CrossCountry, part of the Arriva group which is owned by the Deutsche Bahn, the German national railway company. They conducted a survey of passengers, where one question was 'would you like more seats on the trains?' Well of course everyone would like more seats, but they did not ask would you like more seats on the trains by removing the buffet car? But Arriva CrossCountry went ahead and removed the buffet cars that also affected our members.

McNulty recommends more part time staff, and proposes that new starters in the industry receive inferior terms and conditions we are opposed to this. On the question of maintenance there

would be less frequent inspections and further fragmentation of the railway industry, although he does not say that the magnitude of fragmentation is one of the reasons why the railways are more expensive to run. The report calls for wanting to re-unite track and train, that would be fine under re-nationalisation, but not under piecemeal breaking up Network Rail and putting it under the control of private operators, that would lead to disaster.

Network rail was set up as a not for profit private company, and that was set up because of the chaos of railtrack that allowed multi-sub contracts which caused disasters in such as the Ladbroke Grove rail crash in 1999 killing 31 people, Potters Bar in 2002 killing 7 and Hatfield in 2000 killing 4. The Potters Bar tragedy sparked a debate about whether private maintenance firms were paying too little attention to training and safety. There were at least 2000 subcontractor companies on the track at the time of these disasters probably more as subcontractors would themselves subcontract.

In 2003, Network Rail announced it was taking all track maintenance in-house, ending the use of many private contractors except for large-scale renewal or development projects. In 2004 Jarvis admitted liability for the accident at Potters Bar. Steven Norris the ex-Tory MP and chair of the recent national rail conference in Liverpool was a director of Jarvis at that time.

McNulty wants to re-introduce the profit motive in the track. It will mean subcontractors on lower pay and lower conditions and ignoring safety issues. That is the way McNulty wants to attack conditions of our union members and undermine safety for passengers he is solely protecting the interests of the multi-national capitalist rail companies.

Network rail have just announced they want 4,000 redundancies over the next 30 years in the signalling grade and also a reduction in the number of staff as the electrical control rooms will be reduced from 13 centres to 2.



These are some of the areas that face an all-out attack on railway workers. Whether you are a member of the train crew, station staff or catering work on the train stations, infrastructure or signalling, McNulty wants to get rid of you.

Splitting up Network Rail by vertical integration will weaken national pay bargaining and will be the end of any national rail strike. McNulty also says inflation rate pay rises must come to an end, this is being experienced by our members on First Transpennine, where the employer in cahoots with the Department of Transport has offered 2.2% based on the average weekly wage increase. This is a wage cut and has been rejected by the RMT and we are now balloting all grades for strike action.

This is the start of McNulty and we will fight it all the way,

SV: How is the RMT fighting this?

Daren: Every member of the union has received directly information about the attacks. There have been branch, regional and national meetings to discuss it, we organised a protest in Liverpool at the national conference and we are organising a mass lobby of parliament on 25th October. The consciousness of members is being raised all the time. We need mass leafleting of railway stations to inform the public.

Working class communities can be mobilised, the RMT needs to work with the trades councils and other unions to explain and stop this attack.

We are all one working class

Margaret McAdam, editor *International Socialist League*

In times of crisis the contradictions of capitalism are transparent, today the working class are told there's no alternative to the cuts in public services and jobs, while they have no problem spending money to expand a militarised system of control of immigrants.

Besides that, the government is continuing to pursue imperialist wars for oil and greed, including against Libya under the name of humanitarian protection of its citizens, at the same time refusing to protect anyone fleeing to safety from Libya. Instead the borders of Fortress Europe are raised higher and thousands drown or die of starvation on the Mediterranean seas.

In this country there are savage cuts in funding seriously affecting organisations who provide crucial services to refugees and those seeking asylum. The result is a devastating reduction of support to the most vulnerable and the poorest in our society. Today single asylum seekers receive £35.52 a week which is 55% of the Income Support rate - the income threshold defining the poverty-line in this country.

The right to free education including English language lessons is now denied to asylum seekers and other immigrants. Women will be particularly affected by this change as they will be priced out of classes. 80,000 people across England will lose the right to free language classes and women represent more than two-thirds of those affected. David Cameron said earlier this year that immigrants to Britain must "learn English, so that... they can be more integrated into our country." Whilst we oppose any move towards assimilationist policies, integration and functioning independently in everyday life is extremely difficult if you are unable to speak English!

The targeting, scapegoating and criminalising of asylum seekers and immigrants serves only to legitimate the governments' actions and all cuts. Asylum seekers and immigrants live in poverty and fear as they are criminalised and terrorised by a



Asylum seekers fighting to end their repression in England

shameless system, they: cannot travel freely around this country as they are asked to verify their ID and immigration status at bus stations and on trains; have no right to health care despite immigrants making an enormous contribution to the health service; are liable to be imprisoned in one of the 17 immigration prisons in Britain, including children; are liable to be forcefully deported back to where they fled from; and are subject to work place raids and early morning raids in their homes.

In addition workers across the UK are being turned into immigration police as they are required to check people's immigration status before access to any public service or job is allowed. We must fight this enforced collusion and divisive controls which split workers into 'legal' and 'illegal', 'British' and 'foreign'.

Anti-cuts campaign groups must involve and include immigrants and the issues that affect them. And reject and oppose the scapegoating of all immigrants by the media and politicians, its only purpose is to divide the working class nationally and internationally and legitimate these inherently racist policies. People are not illegal but what is happening to them is criminal.

Concluding the Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels called upon the working class to overthrow the ruling class and take control of their destinies

saying, "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working Men of All Countries Unite". As socialists we have to overthrow capitalism and unite and organise all workers to fight against our oppressors.

"State Sponsored Cruelty"

Serious issues arise out of the cuts policy including the abandonment of morals and values by those who have turned to the state and accept any contract to get their hands on the money, Barnardo's is one.

A new detention prison for immigrant families will open in August in West Sussex. This prison, euphemistically called 'pre-departure accommodation centre' and named Cedars, will be run by the notorious 'security' contractor G4S. The 'prisoners' will be families who fear for their lives if they are returned. G4S currently face charges of corporate manslaughter following the death of Jimmy Mubenga in November 2010, when their escorts used excessive force in a forced deportation. Many serious concerns have been raised about G4S and their systemic abuse and ill-treatment of immigrants.

Despite all of this Barnardo's accepted the contract to run 'play facilities' and provide "welfare and social care support" at the 'centre', which has 24 hour security and is enclosed within a 2.3 metre high fence. This prison contradicts the coalition government's announcement in May 2010 to completely end child detention for immigration control purposes. Clegg in opposition called this practice "State sponsored cruelty" and vowed to end it. Evidence shows a very high level of children suffering psychological damage and physical health problems that were caused by or exacerbated by detention.

Barnardo's is supporting and legitimising cruelty to children by using their cuddly image. We must expose this collusion and oppose all detention until all these abhorrent prisons are closed.

Women triply burdened by the capitalist crisis

Cecilia Toledo, editorial team International Socialist League

The capitalist crisis in Europe has affected the working class as a whole and one of the hardest hit sectors is women. The weight of the crisis falls on their shoulders because they make up one of the most vulnerable sections of the working class. In Britain, because of the public service cuts, women are disproportionately affected. They are overrepresented in the sectors affected by the cuts and are triply burdened by the cuts in jobs, benefits and services. Many are being forced to go back into the job market and the number of women who have claimed Jobseekers Allowance has soared to a 14 year high and continues to grow. The latest figures published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show that the number of women seeking employment has increased for the twelfth month in a row.

This could appear to be a positive sign however the surge is a result of single mothers now being forced to switch from Income Support to JSA. Also two thirds of the workforce in the public sector, especially health and education, are female and these sectors of the economy have been hit very hard by the austerity policy launched by the government.

The latest figures from the ONS show that on average 65.5% of women are employed. 13.57 million women were employed from March to May 2011 and 15.71 million men and the number of unemployed women at 7% is lower than men at 8.3%. The rate of economically inactive women is much higher than men at 29.4%, that is 5.93 million women against 3.4 million men. The main reason is that women look after family and home, and men in addition to reasons of study, spend more time away from work for reasons of health and depression.

The figures also show that the vast majority of women who are now claiming Jobseekers Allowance seeking employment are mothers who were outside the labour market due to looking after the home and child care. Data from July last year shows that the economic crisis is forcing people



to put financial problems first. About 100,000 mothers have been forced back into work since the beginning of the capitalist crisis in 2007.

Since August 2007 the number of women who stayed at home to look after the family fell to 97,000 and continues to fall. An average of 20,000 women left the home between March and May this year. Statistics show that women "have left the home," or "exchanged home for the office", when in reality they are doing two jobs, they are employed in precarious and part-time jobs as well as looking after the family and home.

Women job-seekers are forced to accept anything because their husbands are unemployed. Others accept anything because their husband's salary is not enough to pay the bills at the end of the month. In many cases, the family finances have been reduced because bills have risen and the wages of the husband are frozen or reduced. Jill Kirby, director of the Centre for Planning (author of *The Price of Parenthood*), says that money exercises a dictatorship over the lives of countless families. "Women are going to the labour market in a time of great financial difficulty. But few mothers have the option of staying at home."

Michael Connellan, the Institute

for Family and Parenting, said that "mothers, including many middle-class families, told us that they are having to return to work much earlier than they would like because of current financial pressures". He adds, "The cost of raising a child is growing." The Child Trust Fund has been abolished, tax credits for poor families with children have been cut and Child Benefit is frozen.

While the number of mothers who stay at home raising children is falling, the number of fathers who stay at home has increased by 25,000 to 213,000 since the crisis began.

The situation in England, which affects the whole of Europe, shows once again that the problem of women's subordinate status in society is not only a problem of gender inequality, it is a structural problem of capitalism, which uses and abuses the working class in times of economic decline. In times of capitalist crisis women are forced to sell their labour for a miserable price and in precarious work. As a fundamental and most oppressed section of the working class, women need to take their place in the fight against attacks by employers and government and join the massive demonstrations taking place in England and across Europe.

INTERNATIONAL COURIER SUPPLEMENT

International Workers League July 2011

Greece: the tip of the iceberg of the crisis in imperialist Europe

The recent events in Greece are a warning of what can happen throughout the European Union as a consequence of the international economic crisis that began in 2007. Even though initially the epicentre of the crisis was in the USA, there is no doubt that the most affected imperialist pole is now the EU as the crisis exposes all the weaknesses of their contradictions.

Defending capitalist interests

Far from being “an egalitarian union of countries” that promoted “progress and welfare of the peoples”, the EU was born with two very clear targets. The first was to defend their own imperialist area against the USA. The second was to join imperialist bourgeois forces in order to attack and try to eliminate the social achievements of what was called the “Welfare State”, gained by European workers after II World War, when capitalism was forced to make important concessions or else run the risk of losing everything to the socialist revolution that was approaching from the East.

An uneven union

Inside the Euro zone countries with very different economic and productive development (e.g., Germany and Greece) co-exist. That is why the main beneficiaries have been the biggest powers (Germany and France) especially their big corporations and banks could expand business and investments without major restrictions. Weaker countries, such as Portugal, Ireland, Greece and even Spain suffered: a strong industrial decline (with the disappearance or extreme reduction of sectors such as

steel or ship building); reduction of “uncompetitive” agricultural sectors (which had to compete with the huge subsidies to farmers in Germany or France) and the penetration and growing dominance of the banking and financial markets.

During the last period of global economic boom (2002-2007) underlying problems were masked by the revenues that the weaker countries made from tourism, trade, transport, and construction. The cycle of euro income and expenditure accumulated contradictions but it still functioned. Even the economy of the Spanish State supported by the return of their investments in Latin America experienced a boom and high growth. But the crisis broke this cycle and the contradictions erupted brutally.

Domination by the stronger imperialist countries over the weaker is not new historically. In his famous book on *Imperialism*, Lenin pointed out, for example, that Portugal was a colonial power and at the same time a country totally dependent on England. The creation of the EU and the euro zone deepened this type of

relationship and the crisis is pushing this further.

Public debt Crisis

The international economic crisis affected the European economy as a whole and Euro income of the weaker countries declined. States became indebted to either the banks, or debt payments that continued to grow because of debt re-financing due to rising interest rates. The Greek and Irish bonds are already regarded as “junk” which is the lowest point on the scale.

This resulted in “default” that is the inability of countries to meet their debts and the need for “aid packages” from the EU and the IMF to cover the debt and prevent bankruptcy. In return there are very harsh requirements of continuous adjustment plans to reduce wages and pensions, increase taxes on the population, attack health and public education, privatisation and and so on. In response people are fighting back against such measures which is further accentuating the instability of the bourgeoisie.



In the past two years over a dozen general strikes have taken place and now include the occupation of squares as in the Egyptian or Spanish style.

INTERNATIONAL COURIER SUPPLEMENT

Second Euro crisis

The Greek crisis and its evolution is not a problem affecting only that country. Nor is it only a crisis affecting the PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain). The British weekly *The Economist*, analysed the Greek crisis as a "second wave of euro crisis" from 2008, because that country is the most visible point in a continental crisis. In Greece attempts at resolving the situation have hit the construction of the Euro system that took the imperialist bourgeoisie in Europe more than 50 years to build.

This is a "European crisis" for three reasons. The first is the rigidity of the whole monetary system. The existence of a single currency and a common international authority means that members of the eurozone countries are unable to create a flexible monetary policy (like a sharp devaluation of national currency) without breaking the Euro. At the same time all "crisis" measures of the European monetary authority represents an "intervention" and an "imposition" on the countries concerned. It means that a crisis in member countries, however small, in practice becomes a crisis of the euro as a whole.

Secondly the Greek banking system is now largely controlled by foreign capital, mainly German followed by French and American, consequently bankruptcy of the State and the Greek financial system (as in Argentina 2001) would have very serious consequences for European and world financial system.

Thirdly even if the imperialist chain threatens to break at its weakest part (the PIGS), the fiscal and economic crisis has also penetrated very deeply into the bigger countries such as Italy, where they recently suffered a speculative monetary attack to which the Berlusconi administration responded by voting for a very tough adjustment policy, with the full agreement of the parliamentary opposition. Even much stronger



powers, such as Great Britain and France have been driven to put austerity plans in place. If the EU chain breaks at the Greek link, the domino effect on the other "links" could be very rapid. According to a former Economic Nobel Prize Winner, American Paul Krugman, the fall of the euro could be "catastrophic" for the world economy and financial system.

But European bourgeoisies, especially German and French, are prepared to defend the euro to the bitter end and their imperialist interests. On the 27 June in Brussels (EU headquarters), the so-called "Euro Pact" was ratified; signed by 17 heads of the eurozone in order to "respond to the crisis and increase the competitiveness of Europe".

In order to do so they will have to advance in two respects. On the one hand, the submission of the weaker countries to demands for measures and conditions similar to those in the Latin American countries in 1980 and 1990 in return for "financial aid". The sovereignty of Greece will be "enormously reduced" as a consequence of the agreed adjustment plans.

Secondly, the social gains, living conditions and workers' rights will have to be attacked. From this point of view, the adjustment plans suffered by Greece will be applied across the entire continent. Today the capitalist, imperialist system can no

longer guarantee the maintenance of any workers' achievements (wages, labour conditions, decent retirement pensions, public health and education, etc.) and they must destroy all of them in order to defend their own profit and put the cost of the crisis onto the backs of the masses.

Inter-imperialist contradictions

Banks, doubly responsible for the current situation demand sacrifices from the weaker countries and the European masses as a whole, however this is beginning to produce splits between the European imperialist bourgeoisies.

While the highest levels of the EU and the ECB (European Central Bank) defend the position of the banks, German premier Angela Merkel defended the position that banks should shoulder part of the cost so as to soften the impact on the people. Merkel is expressing the double pressure of the German industrial bourgeoisie, which wants to avoid a new recession and wants to provide an outlet for their exports and the German electorate that is against their state providing funds for this aid. At the same time, she fears popular reactions to the austerity plans. The governments of France and Spain, who have lined up with the harshest measures of the ECB, reflect the close involvement of their main banks with the debt crisis of the PIGS. In any case these divisions add to the general instability to the situation that is already explosive.

The accelerated crisis

The bourgeoisies of weaker countries (such as Greece) are willing to submit to the EU to defend their position of exploitation of workers even if that means a clear retreat and the obligation to deliver tremendous blows on their peoples.

No European country is in a good position to help another. Behind the Greek powder keg waiting in line

INTERNATIONAL COURIER SUPPLEMENT

are Portugal, Ireland, Spain, Italy and England. They have already spent almost everything to prop up their State in 2008-2009. The USA is suffering its own economic and political crisis, risk of uS default was once unthinkable.

Even if the bourgeoisies accept the EU dictates the workers and masses seem unwilling to do so. In the case of Greece resistance has grown over the past two years and is developing a heroic character with over a dozen general strikes that now includes the occupation of squares like Egypt.



Occupying Madrid - Supporting the Arab Revolution

Greek masses are in the vanguard but it is obvious that resistance is spreading across the continent. The French workers and youth fought Sarkozy last year; in Portugal there are demonstrations of the "desperate generation"; the "outraged" in Spain; and powerful co-ordinated strike of civil servants and teachers in England.

These struggles are creating crises in the right and "left" governments who are implementing the plans. As the struggle continues the regimes themselves are beginning to show signs of crisis in political negotiations that were intended to divert or break the struggles. In Greece the social-democratic administration of PASOK is losing strength very rapidly while the right (New Democracy) has still not yet recovered from their electoral defeat in 2009. The representatives of both parties had to be protected by police cordons in order to enter Parliament and jointly vote through the measures of the latest package. The weakening of regimes also became evident when young people of Portugal and Spain called for "real democracy" and exposed the close links of these regimes and their parties with imperialism.

Things are not even, the situation in Greece is not the same as in Germany, where the most powerful proletariat in Europe has yet to take centre stage, in spite of the fact that there have been big demonstrations against nuclear plants and that the Merkel administration is suffering the

consequences of the European crisis with a fall in political prestige.

In other words, the European bourgeoisies are having to apply the worst adjustment plans and make the harshest attacks in decades against the masses and are having to face strong resistance and increasing political crises. Even if they do manage to get these measures through their parliaments they will deepen the economic crisis at continental and international level.

What way out?

Despite increasing resistance against the adjustment plans especially in Greece, European workers and young people cannot see a way out of the crisis. This is because bureaucratic trade union and political leaders, even when forced to call general strikes and demonstrations, block any real struggle that could challenge the adjustment plans and defeat the governments. Such a struggle would open the possibility of workers and popular governments that would implement programs to serve the workers and the people, not the bankers and monopolies. At the same time even if a struggle is directed against a common enemy, the EU and its policies, the working class leaderships divide the struggle by country and thus weaken the results.

The policy of the main workers' leaders has a common background:

defense of the EU and the eurozone. The position that is shared by some on the left, such as Bloco de Esquerda (BE) of Portugal is that the EU is "an alternative for policies to create jobs and democratic decisions against financial speculation" and to work out a "viable programme of struggle" for a "new architecture of the EU". In other words reform the EU to make it "more humane". All these trends provide a chorus for their imperialist bourgeoisies because they say, overtly or implicitly, to workers that even though the adjustment plans are bitter pills, it would be much worse to leave the EU and the euro.

The capitalist crisis has forced the EU to show its real face, that is a construction in the service of imperialism (German, and then French) to benefit their banks and multinationals, subjugating countries such as Greece, Portugal, Ireland or Spain and fiercely attacking the workers of the continent. There is no more room for the demagogical disguise of the "European Social Model" or for democratic games that guesses who makes all the decisions and where they are taken. There is absolutely no way of "reforming" the EU to make it more humane; just as there is no way of doing so with capitalism.

That is why Greece, Portugal and Ireland can only be saved from catastrophe if they declare the non-recognition of its public debt,

INTERNATIONAL COURIER SUPPLEMENT

break with the EU and adopt drastic measures such as the expropriation of the banks, the nationalization of strategic industries under workers' control, the sliding scale of hours so there can be jobs for all and the establishment of the monopoly of foreign trade. This is a programme which, sooner rather than later, will be posed for other countries, such as Spain and Italy. We, the IWL are fully aware of the fact that the problems of Greece, Portugal and Ireland cannot be solved in isolation. That is why we do not propose a return to the old, capitalist, "national" isolation or to their old currencies, as several right-wing trends on that continent propose.

Against the Europe of Capital, represented by the EU and the eurozone, we propose a struggle of all the workers on the continent for a **proletarian and popular solution**, with the prospect of the construction of the Socialist United States of Europe.

This is a huge task but an absolutely necessary and urgent task in the process of living struggle: the emergence and construction of new union leaderships and policies, based on class independence of the workers' movement from all variants of the bourgeoisie and their governments.



Israel: big demonstrations against the government

Cecilia Toledo



Massive demonstration in Tel Aviv

In the midst of the U.S. debt crisis where both Republicans and Democrats put the burden of the American debts on the shoulders of the world working class and made deal to decimate public services and jobs, two developments shook the Middle East. In Syria anti-regime demonstrators once again faced Assad's forces proving that they will not surrender despite the brutal repression against them. In Israel 200,000 people marched in the streets of Tel Aviv, Haifa, Jerusalem and other important cities.

The Israeli demonstrations were the biggest the country has seen in decades and they are demanding action over rising house prices and rents, low salaries, the high cost of raising children, unemployment and other social issues. On the streets, tens of thousands of Israelis and Arab people shouted, 'Bibi go home', Bye, bye, Bibi, goodbye " and "Revolution! Revolution!"

The demonstrations marked the high point of a popular protest movement that has gathered momentum over the past two weeks and shows no signs of letting up in its demands for "social justice". For a country with a population of around 7 million, the numbers taking part in the demonstrations were huge. The scale of the protests and the widespread support for them among the Israeli public and in the media have seriously rattled Netanyahu.

"We are now in the midst of a

complicated and challenging reality", said Netanyahu in a meeting in the Knesset and announced a task force to examine ways of tackling the cost of living, and is considering postponing the parliamentary recess, due to begin at the end of this week. However demonstrators rejected the measures as superficial and vowed to continue their protest.

Thousands of medics joined a rally outside the Knesset (parliament) as part of a long-running work-to-rule over pay and conditions. Parents marched through Jerusalem with their children on Sunday evening in protest over the cost of child-care and baby equipment.

Although the protests began over the high cost of renting and buying homes, the dominant slogan on 31 July demonstrations was "the people demand social justice". Some commentators have declared that the scale of the protests spells the end of the present rightwing coalition government.

Israel is the gendarme of Imperialism in the Middle East, the brutal oppressor of the Palestinians, supporter of Arab dictatorships and exploiter of Israeli and Arab workers. But the Israeli movement was clearly inspired by the uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa. The demonstration and strikes show the conflicts between Israeli people and the Israeli ruling class and Zionism, that trap for the Jewish people, is deepening.

Arab world doesn't rest

Cecilia Toledo

The masses first triumphed in Tunisia and Egypt where the working class and youth are reorganising. In Egypt new union organisations appear daily replacing those from the old regime. In Tunisia the UGTT (General Union of Tunisian Workers) has been strengthened with thousands of new members, mainly women and engineering workers. Across the country struggles are taking place for higher wages and better working conditions.

The Arab world is a strategic region for Imperialism, which has 60% of the global oil reserves, and which Imperialism needs to control. Historically imperialism has ensured its dominance through the national monarchies and dictatorships. From 1950 the Arab national bourgeoisie overturned colonial rule. However from late 1970s, the regimes began to collaborate with imperialism thus transforming dictators, like Mubarak in Egypt and Gaddafi in Libya, into pro-imperialists. And the people of those countries were kept in poverty, without freedoms and unable to express themselves.

By last year the workers and youth had had enough and went on the streets to fight against these dictatorships which threatened the roots of 'order' and 'stability' in the region for imperialism. However in this struggle for democratic freedoms, better living conditions and national liberation from imperialist domination the struggle will have to advance internationally and into a fight for socialism. The tasks that the Arab revolution faces can only be carried forward and led by the working class and its enemies can only be defeated in that struggle. As Marx explained in his theory, the materialist conception of history, we cannot judge an individual by what he thinks of himself, we cannot judge an era of transformation by its consciousness, but on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained by the contradictions of material



life, the conflict between the social productive forces and relations of production.

The situation in Libya

The decision of imperialism, in particular Britain, to recognize the Transitional National Council (TNC) as the legitimate government of Libya led many Libyans living in England to greet the news as a victory and a guarantee for an independent Libya. However it is not, it is just the opposite, it is another step of the imperialist intervention in Libya.

This Council is made up mainly of cronies from the Gaddafi regime. The assassination of the military commander General Abdel Fatah Younes, the day after the formal recognition of the TNC by Britain, exposes division within the TNC. The TNC is not the legitimate representative of the people and the rebels and it is the absence of revolutionary leadership that has made it possible for these cronies to fill that space.

The new pro-imperialist government will continue to deliver oil to the major powers, keep people in poverty, and it will have to de-mobilise the rebels to prevent them gaining ground.

Many of the rebel units do not accept orders from the general command and so are kept isolated from the rest of the troops for fear that they will influence the rest of the troops.

The Libyan people are aware that Imperialist recognition of the TNC substantially changes the situation. This became clear at the end of July in

an interview with Mohammed Musa El-Maghrabi, who represents the rebel fighters from the war-torn city of Brega.

"While obviously we feel that the TNC is better than Gaddafi rule, they are only representing Benghazi, we do not have any sense of them representing Brega. To us, it looks like the TNC is a foreign government, full of nepotism and corruption. This worries us. Do we want to have a Gadhafi dictatorship replaced with a Benghazi dictatorship?"

The imperialists believe that Brega is an unusual case. However El-Maghrabi's statement is a cause for concern by Imperialism because if the TNC can't gain legitimacy among the people of Brega, then how can it ever win the respect of Tripoli? Quoting a European diplomat who works with the TNC, the Guardian (28/7/11) reported that that the TNC appears to be more skilled at building legitimacy among European governments than they are with the Libyan people.

There is an urgent need for the Libyan people to continue the struggle to overthrow the pro-imperialist TNC and put in place a government of workers and people. If the Arab world is of strategic interest to the imperialists, it has even greater interest to the Arab masses. Thus the Arab revolution must continue with the support of all the Arab peoples and the masses must go forward in their struggle to control their own lives and their own countries.



Brazil: underground workers fight privatisations

Socialist Voice interviewed Altino Prazeres, the President of the Metro (Underground) Workers Union of Sao Paulo, Brazil, part of a newly elected leadership of the union. The union is part of a militant union federation in Brazil, CSP-Conlutas.

How many passengers use Sao Paulo Metro ?

The São Paulo Metropolitan Company, called simply the Metro, carries about 3.6 million passengers (from the company's data), it has a network of four lines with a total length of 65.3km, 58 stations, 900 carriages and transported 1.044 million passengers last year. In June 2010 Line 4 - Yellow was introduced, the first to be operated under a Consortium of four Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) that is 5.3 km long with four stations and 84 carriages. The total network is 70.6 kilometers with 62 stations.

Is the Metro nationalised?

The Metro is funded approximately 97 per cent from the State of Sao Paulo and almost 3 per cent from the city of São Paulo. Today there is a concession to the private sector through PPP as part of another company called Line 5, which is the Metro, but is not part of the São Paulo Metropolitan Company.

What difference has the new leadership of the union made for Metro workers and the public?

There is already a pretty big difference. We won the election last year and took office in November 2010. Since December 2010 we published an "Open Letter to the People" distributed by hand in 11 Metro stations and also published in a newspaper distributed on the Metro. We publish a letter every month, with the aim to defend the interests of the population, for example we supported a campaign, that had a certain weight in the city, against an increase in the cost of travel on the bus and the Metro



Altino Prazeres speaking to a meeting of underground workers

and we support their demonstrations. We waged a campaign called "enough suffocation", for the Metro workers and for the passengers, because they are suffocated by overcrowding on the Metro, which is the most overcrowded in the world - very long queues are formed waiting for trains. The slogan also meant that Metro workers are suffocating from low wages and too few employees. The use of the Metro has doubled in the last period while the number of employees has not changed.

Internally the change is quite substantial, workers assemblies are fully attended again, our slogan is "the union in the hands of Metro workers." We want to democratise all levels of the union so that no one has any kind of privilege and the union is open to its members who have access to all information. And the membership has already responded, returning to the union, filling the union assemblies and participating in various forums

and activities promoted by the union. For example, the previous leadership did not have open executive meetings and only the leadership attended.

We hold expanded committee meetings every month, we also have sectoral meetings in all sections, mainly monthly, while the previous leadership was concerned mainly with wages. Another symbol was to open the door that gives entry to the rooms of the officers and departments of the union, before it was closed and union members had to provide proof of identity, then the porter would check if access would be allowed or not. Now there is free movement of the members to all officers and departments, the union is open to all members not just the leaders. Workers' democracy is essential if we are to transform so it becomes an example of another kind of vision of society, a society governed by workers' democracy without bosses.

A class struggle alternative for workers and youth

What are the important issues that you are facing now?

Privatisation is the big one. A Public-Private-Partnership scheme started a new Metro line, line 5, where workers have suffered several accidents, seven people died during construction and there have been delays. The stakes are huge because the logic of the private sector is profit at any cost. In these companies workers earn less than half that of the State owned Metro workers and do not have the many benefits we have.

This has happened under the government of the PSDB [an important bourgeois party in Brazil, editor] in São Paulo, but it is similar in other States where there are railways and Metro companies under the control of the Workers Party Government now led by Dilma. For example in Recife and Belo Horizonte the federal government policy is to privatise the Metros. The fight against privatisation is very difficult because of the confusion created by the propaganda of these governments. But at the same time, the disastrous privatisation of telephone, electrical and other services means we can show that privatisation is theft against the population.

Do you link with other workers in Brazil and what difference does being part of CSP-Conlutas make to the struggles?

The current leadership has an important role in the CSP-Conlutas, but there are also members of Intersindical [another trade federation, editor], other smaller union tendencies and many independents. We work together with sectors of the left that have not surrendered to the WP government who we call "white hats", i.e., those who support the government even when the government attacked the workers directly. We are opposed to the governments of São Paulo State of the PSDB and the federal WP governments because they serve the interests of employers and the

multinationals. Illusions in the WP and Lula are still deep, but in the real world, without propaganda and the State machine, it is difficult for anyone to advocate their policies and defend even the minimal interests of working class.

CSP-Conlutas with Intersindical union, MST [Landless Rural Workers' Movement] and other sectors are planning activities of struggle in August. We discussed in our leadership our support for the days of national struggle in August [national days of action from 17 to 26 August of strikes, occupations, demonstrations etc editor] for all those in struggle in the country.

How can railway workers in Brazil, Britain and Europe assist each other?

A first step is to exchange ideas, problems, and activities, from there we can move forward with a transport plan for the big cities. In addition, the key terms are clear, we want a union that is independent from employers and governments, which defends the interests of workers not only the Metro, but in every city of the country and the world. Class solidarity is essential and what has been lost in history has to be rebuilt. I believe we can take firm steps to build active solidarity in the conquest over other companies, where the problem of language barriers and other impediments exist this should not prevent our unity.

The CSP-Conlutas have various initiatives for integration between different sectors of all the working class in the world. Let us enter and seek closer relations also with the Metro workers in England and Europe. Next year the CSP-Conlutas Congress will take place and international delegations are welcome. It will be a huge opportunity if the Metro comrades could come from England. We are available to begin this work now.

Greetings to all underground workers in England

The CSP-Conlutas is a coordination of unions, popular organizations and social movements that emerged in 2004 in Brazil with the aim of organizing the fight against the neoliberal reforms of the Lula government. It has been built as an alternative for workers' struggles against the degeneration of the CUT (a union federation), which supports the WP (Workers Party) government and not the interests of workers. Today, the organization brings together some of the most militant labour unions, including the Underground railway workers of São Paulo and important student organizations.

The CSP-Conlutas fights to defend the immediate demands and historic interests of the working class, aiming to end all forms of exploitation and oppression. Its struggle has the perspective of achieving the conditions to build a socialist society, governed by workers. Therefore, it fights for union autonomy and independence from the state, governments and political parties and for direct action with the collective mobilization of the working class. Its internationalism is based in international solidarity among the workers - a permanent objective for CSP-Conlutas. It believes that the liberation of the working class from all forms of oppression and exploitation is a task not only for one country it needs to be fought for internationally.



Murdoch: enemy of workers

Cecilia Toledo & Margaret McAdam

The Murdoch scandal today has revealed the high level of influence his empire has over the police, politics and the media in Britain and America. Along with Rupert and James Murdoch, the British police and Tory and Labour governments have repeatedly tried to cover-up corruption by maintaining the "rotten apple" theory as various scandals were uncovered. However this is no longer tenable, today's scandal has already led to eleven arrests, many civil actions, public inquiries and there is more to come.

The News of the World, a profitable newspaper selling millions of copies every week has now been killed off. Its owner, media mogul Murdoch, has for years hired highly paid private detectives to hack into and delete voice mail messages to get first hand information. The tipping point in public opinion came when in early July it emerged that the missing teenager, Milly Dowler (later found dead), had her voice mail hacked into, causing a giant heave of revulsion. It has also come to light that others, including the relatives of soldiers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now from 2000, the mother of murder victim schoolgirl Sarah Payne, were all targets of the NOW spooks.

Who is Murdoch?

Rupert Murdoch, chairman of News International, is one of the most powerful men in the world's media, one of the wealthiest and most influential. He uses the pages of his newspapers to create sensational journalism based around sex scandals and to work over anyone in public life. His papers have conducted personal attacks against Left leaders and activists, in an attempt to criminalise their actions and influence public opinion, as happened throughout 1984/1985 miner's strike and the 1986/1987 print workers' strike. Defending the interests of the bourgeois bankers his papers tell workers that essential public services are no longer affordable. That very same scoundrel who affords £1.7 million in hush money to hacking victims, hundreds of thousands in

legal fees, and payouts of £8.5 million to 4 of the recently 'departed' senior staff - Rebekah Brooks £3.5m, Colin Myler £2m, John Chapman and Tom Crane each £1.5m.

These anti-working class billionaires think they have the right to tell us that our services are unaffordable! Furthermore they attack and criminalise working class protest and poison and divide workers with racist and anti-immigrant lies and misinformation.

The state is dependent on a supine and bogus media that will scapegoat the poor and most vulnerable, immigrants and those dependent on benefit, to divert the blame and legitimate the cuts, unemployment, poverty and homelessness.

Today many politicians believe they need Murdoch to get elected. "It's The Sun Wot Won It", the infamous headline from the front-page of The Sun (11/04/92), which created the belief that the tabloid contributed to the unexpected Tory Party victory. The Murdoch press threw support behind the Labour Party in the 1997 General Election and helped with Tony Blair's triumph and continued to support the Labour government throughout including support for the Bush and Blair invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2010, Murdoch shifted support to Cameron's Tory party.

British Government engaged up to the neck

Murdoch's empire is based on lies and corruption and is rampant in the corridors of government. Hacking revelations in 2009 led the then editor of the News of the World, Andy Coulson, to resign. Despite this and against all advice David Cameron, set to become the next Prime Minister, went on to appoint Coulson as his press spokesman at Number 10.

Cameron maintained a very close relationship with the Murdoch family and their former director, Rebekah Brooks. In his testimony to the parliamentary committee Murdoch described the cosy relationship between News International and Blair, Brown and Cameron and their

secret back-door meetings at Number 10. Meetings that sought to influence the multi-million dollar merger of BSkyB which has now been stopped in its tracks.

Ed Milliband seeks to distance the Labour Party today from this scandal, however the reality is that the Labour Party were in awe of the Murdoch monster and they had neither the courage nor the desire to stop what was happening.

Freedom of the press

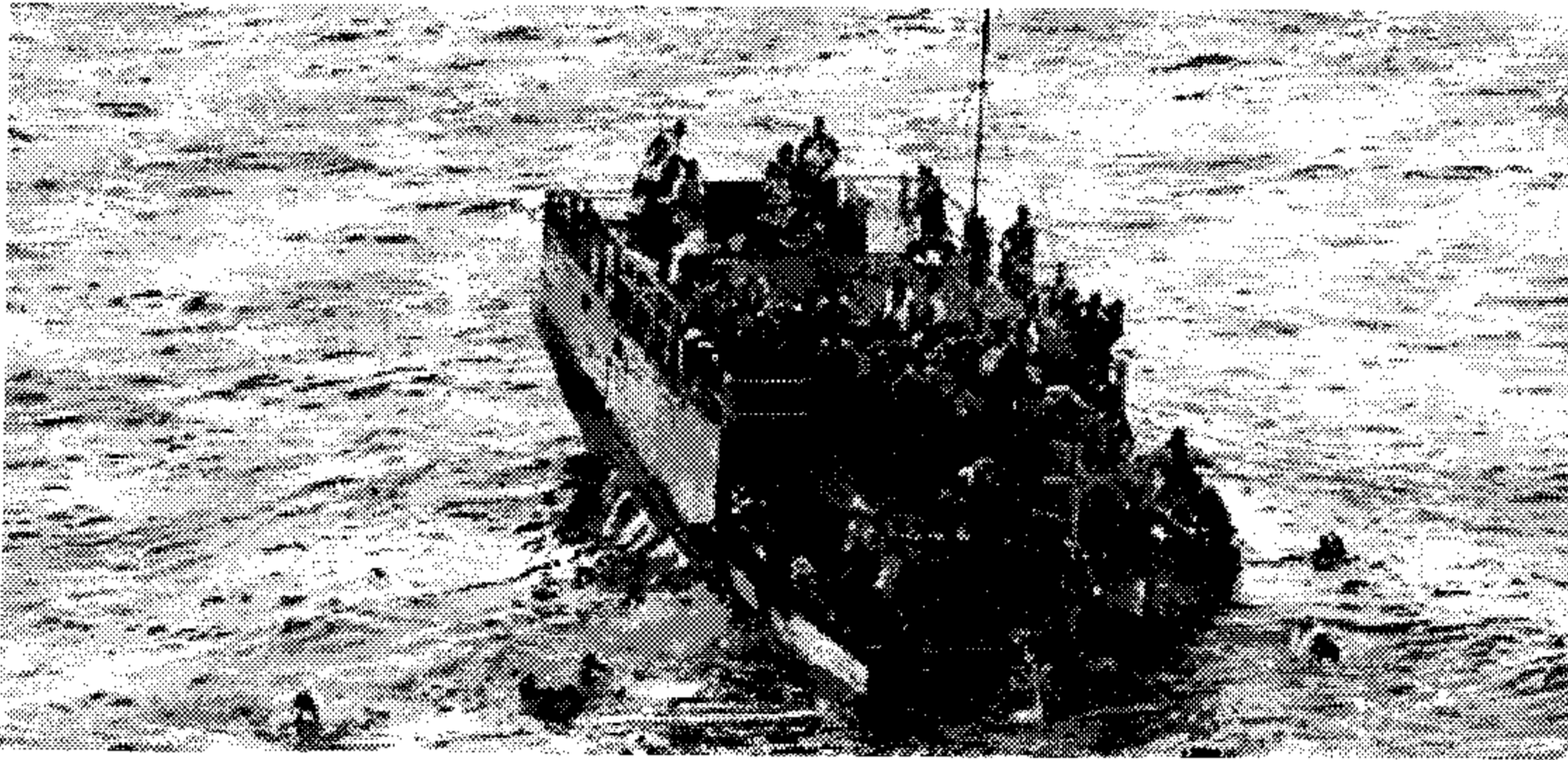
The media industry has become one of the central institutions of the bourgeois state. It is controlled by big business and the rich. The media, print and broadcast, are in the hands of a few billionaires who have close relations with governments and share the same programme of war against the working class.

Workers must be uncompromising in defence of broader press freedom for all, because that's the only way that the truth can be told. As the public sector workers said in their statement, it is necessary to strengthen the unions and above all the workers' press. We oppose the closure of the News of the World because it means that hundreds of journalists and other employees will lose their jobs.

Today we live a new era in England. The workers are beginning to mobilise and organise against the cuts and privatisations. The Murdoch scandal can help our fight by exposing the hypocrisy and contradictions of the government. Workers' organizations need to demand: the expropriation of the Murdoch empire! Money to ensure good quality public health-care for everyone! Strengthen workers organisations, build a strong workers press and defend workers' rights! Fight the cuts and privatizations, renationalise our services! This is the alternative programme for today. The class struggle will regain its strength as social gains are made!

Australia: the lie of the boat

Derek Mortimer, Australian journalist, writer and trade unionist



Murdoch's press carried a photo of children in the water, claiming that asylum seekers had thrown their own children overboard, but the photo had been cropped

Rupert Murdoch's Australian media interests include the national broadsheet, are rabidly pro big business, anti working class and racist. The Telegraph particularly is notorious for its lurid page one headlines and biased stories. One of the most infamous was during the so-called SIEV4, (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel Number 4), or "children overboard," incident in October 2001.

The incident involved 223 asylum seekers heading for Australia on board a 25 metre wooden boat, the Olong. The boat had been intercepted by HMAS Adelaide 100 nautical miles north of Christmas Island, a territory of Australia in the Indian Ocean. The Adelaide, on instructions from the Australian government, had earlier fired over the bows of the Olong in an attempt to force it back into international waters.

The Telegraph carried a photo of children in the water, claiming that asylum seekers had thrown their own children overboard, thus endangering their lives.

The obvious implication was that the act was inhuman, and people who did such monstrous things should not be allowed to settle in Australia.

Prime Minister Howard, the Immigration Minister Philip Ruddock, the Defence Minister Peter Reith and others, all claimed that the children had been deliberately thrown overboard.

But even cursory examination of the huge photo was enough to show

that it had been close cropped. What wasn't revealed in the photo were the desperate and terrified people floundering in the sea, because the little vessel was sinking fast.

The photo and the accompanying story demonised the asylum seekers and gave a boost to the scare campaign the government had been running on asylum seekers.

Despite the paradox that 25 per cent of Australians were born overseas, immigration, particularly that of asylum seekers, is still used as a dog whistle issue by the major political parties to gain the racist vote.

In the few short weeks leading up to the election the Howard government used the "children overboard" lie to demonstrate that they were strong on so-called "border protection". It was re-elected with an increased majority. A Senate select committee, composed mainly of non-government senators, was called in February 2002 to inquiry into 'A Certain Maritime Incident'. It found that no children were thrown overboard from SIEV 4, and that there was no evidence to support the Children Overboard claim. It's report revealed that the photographs claiming to show children thrown into the sea were taken after SIEV 4 sank.

Three years after the event, former Labor prime minister Bob Hawke, said, nothing had disfigured Australia's political landscape like the Howard government's dishonesty over the children overboard affair. Howard had told an "almost endless" list of lies,

but those about children overboard were the worst, he said. "The lie had created a climate of hatred towards asylum seekers". "Nothing, I believe, more despicable in dishonesty has ever disfigured the political landscape of this country," he said.

Such grandstanding by Hawke, who as PM used Australian military aircraft in 1989 to break a strike of airline pilots, to the benefit of, among others, his mate Rupert Murdoch, who had extensive interests in the industry, is ironic considering the current Labor Government's record on asylum seekers. Prime Minister Julia Gillard has followed Howard's lead in demonstrating that she too is tough on "border protection".

Recently (July 2011) the government reached a deal with Malaysia, a country that has a record of brutality towards asylum seekers, in which 800 boat arrivals in Australian waters around Christmas Island will be sent to Malaysia over the next four years in return for the settlement in Australia of 4000 refugees from Malaysia. No one knows how long those sent to Malaysia will be held their while waiting to be processed. This, it is claimed, is a blow against so-called people smugglers.

The Malaysia agreement is a denial of a decision at the last national conference of the Australian Labor Party that said all asylum seekers must be processed on Australian territory.

Paris: International Trade Union Conference

British unions must join this struggle

Report from Brazil

A CSP-Conlutas delegation from Brazil took part in a Trade Union congress held in Paris June 8, as part of the French Federation of Trade Unions "Union Syndical Solidaires" Congress. It was a significant meeting that brought together trade unions and popular organizations from different countries including leaders of trade unions and popular organizations from Spain, Catalonia, Italy, Germany, Poland, Argentina, Brazil, Senegal, Tunisia, Algeria, Iran, Egypt and France.

The meeting achieved two goals: first, to exchange information and experiences among different organizations and second, to deepen coordination between the participating organisations. The discussions also provided us information on the achievements of the Arab revolution.

In order to continue the exchange between these organizations and develop joint actions, it was agreed to hold a workshop during a meeting of the European trade unions alternative in September. Unions of other continents can participate and a joint call has been published (see international call on this page).

Socialist Voice Comment

We think all trade unionists should consider this report. Not one British trade union was represented at the conference and yet only by building international links and common actions can the British movement advance in its own country. It is a strong warning that the main union leaderships are not interested in building such links but those unions taking strike action and moving to the left have to take this step.

It means that union organisations such as shop stewards committees should start making their own links and pushing their leaderships to call for European days of action.

International co-ordination of union struggle

The crisis of the capitalist system has consequences all over the world. The economic, financial, ecological and social crises have become interlocked and sustain each other. This global crisis of capitalism has reached a dead-end that is based on an increasingly uneven division of the wealth produce because of financial deregulation and disregard for ecological issues.

To save the profits of the shareholders and bosses and to assure the future of the banks, the world institutions (World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, etc.) and governments are increasingly attacking workers rights.

The current economic and political system organises the plunder of numerous countries, forces millions of people to leave their region of origin to survive and then denies them rights because they are immigrants.

The destruction of public services, the attacks on labour-union rights, the undermining of labour-union liberties, the development of precariousness and unemployment to oppress populations ... the same methods are being used in all countries!

The trade unionism of which we are a part refuses to negotiate pacts with the existing powers to agree such antisocial measures. Trade unionism has the responsibility to organise resistance on an international scale to build, through fights, the necessary social transformation of society.

International labour unions exist. Labour-union networks have been created in work related or geographical areas. It is necessary to

make progress with the coordination of trade union struggles on an international basis. We make a commitment to work together to support:

- the development of independent trade unionism in every country, in particular where this has been denied until now.
- the revolts of the populations in the Maghreb and the Middle East, the struggle of the Palestinian people and the fierce demonstrations in Spain.
- and of course labour union activists who are victims of repression.

We have decided to work together by exchanging information, in particular on social struggles in various countries, because this will contribute to the construction of international social mobilisations. We will develop our labour-union activities of work related sectors, meetings are already planned for health, education, call centres and rail sectors. inter-work questions, such as the rights of migrants and the rights of women are also included in our common immediate objectives.

Our initiative is open to labour-unions who are for the struggle and independent trade unionism and for social transformation.

An international conference about these commitments and to develop new actions will be held in Spring 2012 at the Conlutas congress in Brazil. In September 2011, we will hold a working meeting that will be open to delegations from all continents, at the same time as the meeting in Switzerland of the European network of alternative and base unions.

Unions that attended the conference

- Union Syndicale Solidaires - France.
- Confederacion General Del Trabajo CGT - Etat Spain.
- Confederacion Intersindical - Etat Spain.
- Intersindical Alternativa de Catalunya IAC - Catalonia.
- Unione Sindicale di Base USB - Italy.
- Transnationale Information Exchange TIE - Germany.
- WZZ Sierpien 80 - Poland.
- Syndicat national des infirmières et sages-femmes OZZ PiP - Poland.
- Frente Popular Dario Santillan FPDS - Argentina.
- Central Sindical e Popular Conlutas - Brazil.
- Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal CN TS - Sénégal.
- Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes CSA - Sénégal.
- Union Générale des Travailleurs Tunisiens UGTT - Tunisia.
- Syndicat national autonome des personnels de l'administration publique SNAPAP - Algéria
- Solidarité Socialiste avec les Travailleurs d'Iran SSTI - Iran.
- Union nationale des syndicats indépendants - Egypt.



Lifelong Apprenticeship - Life and Times of a Revolutionary

Born into the Durham working class six years before the 1926 General Strike, Bill Hunter has stayed loyal to his class and dedicated his adult life to the fight against capitalism, and against capitalism's apologists in the Labour Party and Communist Party.

A Trotskyist from the age of 18, a factory shop steward at 21 and a borough councillor at 32, bureaucratically expelled from the Labour Party in 1954. Here he recalls these battles with humour, anecdote and documentary evidence.

These pages are crowded with thumbnail sketches of Trotskyist and working class fighters of the period before, during and after the second world war: Harry Wicks, Hugo Dewar, Reg Groves, Gerry Healy, Ted Grant, Tony Cliff, John Lawrence and the stalwart dockers' champion Harry Constable. There is an affectionate portrait of Bill's lifelong companion Rae. The book's heroes are the rank-and-file dockers, engineering workers, and miners in whose struggles Bill played a part, either directly as shop steward or as editor of the lively left-wing journal Socialist Outlook (1948-54).

Lifelong Apprentice shows Hunter's part in the international struggles of the Fourth International against capitalism and Stalinism, and includes an inside account of the Trotskyists' response to the 1956-57 crisis in the Communist Party. It ends with the launching of the Socialist Labour League in 1959.

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Bill Hunter Build the Fourth International

practical politics today. No section of the masses in any country can resolve any of its problems within its national boundaries - neither in the capitalist countries nor in the workers states can there be any permanent advance except through taking it into an international struggle.

Above all the conclusions of trotskyists in 1938 that the future would be decided on the world arena were absolutely correct.

The only movement which is based on that internationalism which alone can make the advances of humanity permanent is the trotskyist movement.

The principled trotskyist international organisation which exists today is the International Workers League (I.W.L.) Fourth International built on the principles of that conference fifty years ago. The IWL has proved in declarations and practice that it strives to build a world party with sections in every country and with mass influence. By words and deeds it has stood for internationalism and made a decisive break from circle existence in many countries. To our readers we say: If you wish to struggle for internationalism which means building an international organisation and taking trotskyism out of propaganda sect existence and building deep connections with the masses; if you want to struggle for a world trotskyist party and carry forward the traditions of the Founding Conference and of Trotsky then join the ISL the British section of the IWL.

Taken from a statement in 1989. Socialist Voice. Bill Hunter is a member of the ISL editorial team.



Bill Hunter's archives

Build the Fourth International

"To unite these Marxian elements, however small their number may be at the beginning, to revive in their name the words of real Socialism now forgotten, to call on the workers of all countries to relinquish chauvinism and raise the old banner of Marxism, this is the task of the day." Lenin during the First World War.

In September 1938, thirty men and women met near Paris and proclaimed the Fourth International, World Party of the Socialist Revolution. "No conference of revolutionists ever met under circumstances more tense and ominous or faced tasks of such supreme historical gravity than did this one" declared a "Review of the Conference" which was issued afterwards.

It was the brink of World War Two. The reformist and stalinist leaders of the Second and Third International by their betrayals and misleadership had opened up the masses to imperialist war and fascism. Stalin had set as the capital task of his GPU apparatus the destruction of the trotskyist world conference and the assassination of Trotsky. In the year preceding the Founding Conference, Erwin Wolf, Trotsky's secretary was kidnapped and murdered in Spain. Ignace Reiss,

a GPU functionary who broke with Stalinism, and announced his adherence to the Fourth International, was murdered in Switzerland soon after. In February 1938, Leon Sedov, Trotsky's son died in a Paris hospital under circumstances that leave no doubt of a GPU assassination. In July 1938, Rudolf Klement, responsible for the preparation of the Founding Conference, was kidnapped and murdered in Paris. Documents and reports he had been collecting for the conference disappeared with him. This tiny handful of people was facing awesome world prospects. They could draw strength only from a consciousness that the future of humanity depended on creating a world organisation and strategy for the working masses.

Trotsky in his struggle for internationalism against Stalin had hammered home the truth that the period in which we live is above all a period of world economy and world politics. Trotsky did not underestimate the tasks facing the new International. "We do not need any self deceptions" he wrote, and continued: "The discrepancy between our forces today and the tasks on the morrow is much more clearly perceived by us than by our critics." He saw the future

in terms of what must happen to the masses, and declared : "...the harsh and tragic dialectic of our epoch is working in our favour. Brought to the extreme pitch of exasperation and indignation, the masses will find no other leadership than that offered by the Fourth International". Trotsky's confidence in the working class was the axis of his political life and he expressed it throughout the period of sever defeats of the masses before the war.

It has been absolutely vindicated by the vast revolutionary upsurge which began during the last war. The old empires have disappeared; in a great number of countries the feudal and capitalist property forms have been changed. The upsurge carried stalinist and petty bourgeois nationalist forces into power. But history has been determined not just by this upsurge there has been another decisive factor. That factor is the crisis of leadership which remains as acute today as in 1938. Because of it, all the advances of revolutionary events over great areas of the world have left the world and world economy under the domination of imperialism. Socialism in one Country has been proved a reactionary illusion. But what is involved is not just a question of history or abstract theory but of

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For more information or to join contact ISL: mail isinfo@talktalk.net

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