

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty



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## 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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# Turkey: freedom, not more police!

By Martin Thomas

**On Friday 28 June, Turkish government forces fired on people in the Kurdish town of Lice, in eastern Turkey, protesting at the construction of a new base for the gendarmerie, a militarised police force.**

They killed a teenager and injured several other people.

According to Deutsche Welle, "Protests followed in Istanbul on Saturday

[29th] at midday. Organized by the workers' union KESK and the Kurdish BDP party, they chanted slogans including: 'We don't want a police station. We want freedom!'"

Generally, according to Turkish socialists, the protests which exploded at the end of May against Turkey's AKP government have "subsided considerably".

Prime minister Erdogan has carefully combined repression and concessions.

In police action against the protests over June, four teenagers were killed, thousands of people were injured, and thousands were arrested, sometimes for being "members of a terrorist organisation", or "damaging public property".

On 25 June, however, police kept back their tear gas and water cannon, and allowed thousands of protesters to fill Taksim Square, in Istanbul. The demonstrators, for their part, were careful not to block the traffic.

According to the *Financial Times*: "officials say they are taking steps to meet the demands of the Alevi religious minority... and to speed up efforts to reach peace with Turkey's ethnic Kurds".

The protests, according to the Turkish socialists of Marksist Tutum, were "a democratic movement", "against authoritarianism and widespread police terror", "a useful experience" for those many taking part.

However, Marksist Tutum also write that it is "not correct to consider

them in the same category" as the mass street movements in Tunisia and Egypt, or in Greece and Spain, because of the absence of demands based on the urgent material needs of the working class, "jobs, food, and social security".

Many individual workers took part in the protests, and of course organised socialists did too, but there was no organised collective presence of the working class.

There are still forums in parks across Istanbul, but the socialists report that the turnout in the forums has decreased quite a lot after the first week.

**The remaining small-scale forums and actions take place either in mainly Alevi [religious-cultural minority] neighbourhoods, or middle-class neighbourhoods dominated by Kemalists and supporters of the CHP [the successor of the old "state-party" which ruled Turkey under Mustafa Kemal (Ataturk) and Inonu from 1923 to 1950].**

## Remember Afshin Osanloo!

By Ira Berkovic

**Afshin Osanloo, an Iranian workers' organiser, has died in Rajai-Shahr prison in the city of Karaj.**

He suffered a heart attack. He was 42 years old, and had no previous history of health problems. It is widely suspected that his death was caused by the torture he suffered during his imprisonment since December 2010.

Afshin's brother, Mansour, is also a prominent trade union leader who suffered imprisonment and torture in the notorious Evin prison.

The International Alliance in Support of Workers in Iran is running an online appeal calling for justice for Afshin and the release of other political prisoners.

**Support it at [bit.ly/iaswi-appeal](http://bit.ly/iaswi-appeal)**

# Chinese workers face new challenge

By Chris Reynolds

**In the week ending 22 June, Chinese banks suddenly faced a cash-crunch. Interest rates on the short-term borrowing from each other which banks habitually use to sustain their stocks of cash soared.**

The central bank, which would normally deal with this by making cash available, remained stony-faced.

Since then, the central bank has eased its attitude a bit, but China's government and central bank are still signalling a drive to deflate the bubble of cheap credit on which China's economy has fed. The "purchasing managers' index", the most-used indicator of trends in manufacturing production, points to decline.

Local governments in China have long financed construction by setting up autonomous, off-the-books companies that can borrow freely. In 2008 the Chinese government responded to the global credit crunch by ultra-Keynesian policies, releasing a flood of new

credit. Total debt in the Chinese economy has risen from 150 per cent in 2008 to more than 200 per cent.

Since 2009 something like 20,000 "wealth management vehicles" have been set up, in addition to the local governments' arm's-length companies, to repackage dodgy loans. This credit bubble functions as an "endemic, institutionalised form of corruption" (Ryan Perkins, *The Atlantic*, 28 June 2013).

**COUNTERPART**  
**The counterpart is many almost-empty buildings; little-used roads, bridges, airports, and rail lines; and chronic overcapacity in many industries.**

The Chinese government is anxious to keep the plate up in the air, still spinning. Paradoxically, its despotic regime makes it more brittle, and more cautious about imposing slump conditions on the population, than parliamentary democracies which have many fallbacks and safety-valves when people get angry at a government.

However, evidently now

the government has decided it must do something to deflate the credit bubble. Whether it can do that without bursting it is an open question.

A perceptive article in the *Financial Times* by banker Ruchir Sharma comments: "This age is chaotic only in comparison to the brief 'Goldilocks' era that began in 2003. Before that year, the emerging world's share of global economic output had been stagnant for half a century and in decline for a decade..."

"After the US Federal Reserve and other central banks cut interest rates sharply to engineer a recovery from the technology bust [in 2000-1] much of the resulting easy money flowed into the emerging world, doubling the average annual gross domestic product growth rate to about 7.5 per cent from 3.6 per cent in the previous two decades.

"The annual GDP growth rate of emerging nations fell back to 3.7 per cent in the first quarter, and the normal cycle is back... The

largest, China... kept growing [in 2008] with huge infusions of state spending and credit. Now... China's slowdown could end in a stall".

In past decades, China has developed the world's biggest-ever working class, working in some of the biggest-ever factories in some of the biggest-ever cities. There is already a constant ferment of illegal wildcat strikes.

**The Chinese workers' response to a Chinese economic crash will shape the future of the world.**

## Australia

**Some leftists feel relief at the ousting of Julia Gillard as leader of the Labor Party and prime minister of Australia. But not because Kevin Rudd is better: [bit.ly/rudd-g](http://bit.ly/rudd-g)**

## Osborne

● [bit.ly/nhs-chg](http://bit.ly/nhs-chg)

# The case for the NHS

**By Jill Mountford, Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign Steering Group and member of the organising group Lewisham People's Commission of Inquiry (pc)**

**"I was mesmerised"; "I sat there all day, most of the time on the edge of my seat"; "We should have a People's Commission into all the cuts they're making to all of our services".**

These were just a few of the comments made by the 600 people who attended the Lewisham "People's Commission of Inquiry" on Saturday 29 June.

The Commission, organised by the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign, was an audacious and bold thing to do. From 9.30am to 5.30pm, residents of Lewisham were invited to attend the Inquiry chaired by Mike Mansfield QC. More than 25 witnesses gave evidence and were cross examined by four barristers from Took's Chambers in effort to expose the lies the government and its agents have told about Lewisham Hospital to justify the closure of services and the sell-off of land.

Packed into the Broadway Theatre in Catford, residents and supporters listened to in-depth detailed analysis from Professor Colin Leys, Professor Allyson Pollock, and a stream of consultants, GPs, nurses, and patients from Lewisham.

The Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt was invited to give evidence, but of course failed to turn up. In his place, the actor Peter Treece, read actual words Hunt has written and spoken in defence of his decision.

GPs and consultants spoke of a meeting they were invited to as part of the Trust Special Administrator's (TSA) consultation before Hunt's announcement was made in January this year. They each described how any opposition

or questioning of the TSA's proposals was ignored.

Doctors, nurses and patients gave scientific evidence, with passion and emotion, telling of the implications of closing Lewisham hospital for local residents. Witness after witness, patient after consultant, academic after nurse, all put the case for Lewisham.

Allyson Pollock's contribution early on in the day put the case for a publicly-funded NHS and against PFI. She called on the audience to see the big picture of how PFI is to blame for hospitals' and Trusts' debts, and not "mismanagement" as the TSA and Hunt want us to believe. She explained how every hospital funded by PFI actually cost the taxpayer the price of two or three hospitals because of the extortionate interest rates being paid.

## REPORT

**Allyson introduced a report she is completing for publication on the eve of the Save Lewisham Hospital's Judicial Review of Hunt's decision to downgrade, close, and sell-off Lewisham Hospital land and services.**

The report, "The TSA regime and the South London Healthcare NHS Trust: a case of blaming the victims" examines evidence ignored by the TSA and the government.

It shows that the "closures, redundancies, and sale of land in South East London are the result of the government not acting in the interests of the health service as required by parliament when triggering the TSA regime." The report concludes that the cuts "do not serve patients, whose needs have been, at best, down-played and at worst ignored. PFI is playing a major role in service closure and in the case of Lewisham hospital there is no doubt that the government is sacrificing a thriving local hospital in order to protect the interests of bankers, shareholders and corporate stakeholders rather than open up the contracts."

**The Lewisham campaign outside the High Court on 2 July**

Allyson Pollock ended her evidence and cross-examination to loud cheers and applause from the audience. Along with Colin Leys, she set out the big picture for the NHS and left the audience in no doubt about what is happening to the National Health Service under this Tory/Lib-Dem government.

In a world where we're fed a daily diet of tripe as if we're all too stupid to understand a detailed analysis of anything, where we start to believe that we've all got the concentration span of a goldfish and all news and information has to be simplified and fed to us in bite-sized chunks, the People's Inquiry proved the absolute opposite.

More than seven hours of non-stop evidence being presented and questioned, with no intervention from the floor, held an audience captivated; and inspired them to fight on in support of Lewisham Hospital and the NHS. We raised over £1,800 selling campaign merchandise at the beginning of the Justice for Lewisham week.

This week, the Save Lewisham Hospital Campaign will be attending a three-day Judicial Review of Hunt's decision, in the High Court in London. Whether we win the Judicial Review or not, the Save Lewisham Hospital campaign is determined to fight on to defend services and to defend and rebuild the NHS.

On Friday, July 5, we will be celebrating and organising to defend the NHS on its 65th birthday, partying outside the hospital with hospital workers, raising political demands and building Unite inside the hospital.

**The day will end with a showing of *The Spirit of '45* in the hospital followed by discussion.**

## Next after Assembly?

**Plenty of backers: what next?**

**By Gerry Bates**

**The People's Assembly, held at Central Hall Westminster on 22 June, backed the demonstration called by the Unite and Unison unions for the NHS at the Tory Party conference in Manchester on 29 September.**

It also called for a "day of civil disobedience, everywhere" on 5 November, and "local People's Assemblies in every town and city".

The Assembly, which was initiated by Counterfire and the Coalition of Resistance (CoR) but

gained sponsorship from many unions including Unison and Unite, declared that: "We have a plain and simple goal: to make government abandon its austerity programme. If it will not it must be replaced with one that will..."

"We will work together with leading experts and campaigners both here and abroad, and friendly think tanks, to develop rapidly key policies and an alternative programme for a new anti-austerity government".

*Red Pepper* magazine tweeted after the Assembly: "Inspiring day at the People's Assembly — so many people who are serious about fighting austerity and winning". Others who attended were more critical of the way the event was modelled on previous rallies (Coalition of Resistance, 2010; People's Assemblies Against

War, 2007 and 2003) which allowed for rousing speeches by celebrities but no detailed debate.

It is not clear whether the local People's Assemblies are meant to be one-off local gatherings which can help give new impulse to the anti-cuts campaigns which exist almost everywhere, or "branded" alternatives to those campaigns.

The Assembly declaration said: "We do not seek to replace any organisations fighting cuts"; however, in Newcastle, the one place where there was already a local CoR group, it seems to be planning for a local People's Assembly as a rival to existing anti-cuts committees.

**The cuts will best be fought by united campaigns, democratic and based on delegates from labour movement and working-class community organisations.**

## Forum fobbed off

**By Chris Reynolds**

**The Labour Party National Policy Forum met in Birmingham on 22-23 June 2013.**

In Tony Blair's 1997 restructuring of Labour, much of the Labour conference's policy-making work was supposed to be transferred to this Forum.

In fact the Forum confirmed what has long been clear: that it is a weak consultative body, and real policy-making is concentrated in the party leaders' offices.

As Jon Lansman has reported on the Labour-left website *Left Futures*, "Important issues addressed in keynote speeches, like

that of Ed Miliband on social security policy, or by Jon Cruddas's policy review, could... not be discussed, let alone voted on by delegates in Birmingham".

Ed Miliband said that he "hopes we can repeal the Bedroom Tax", but fended off all clear commitment with the protest that "our proposals must be credible".

"We won't be able to promise now to reverse [Osborne's cuts] because we can only do so when we can be absolutely crystal clear about where the money is coming from". From implementing TUC policy to take the banks into public ownership? From taxing the rich?

He said Labour would reduce student fees (how much?) and repeal the Health and Social Care Act (and reverse its effects?)

Christine Shawcroft reports that she and others "put forward the arguments about axing Trident and called for a debate at Conference. The facilitator said that we have no control over the party conference arrangements..."

**The unions should use their clout within Labour to get debate on the rule changes demanding more democracy which pour into Labour conference each year, and to get them passed.**

## Marxist ideas to turn the tide

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# Our “Ideas For Freedom” 2013

AWL



**The 200-plus people attending Workers’ Liberty’s annual Ideas for Freedom event on 21-23 June were this year invited to attend discussions built around developing clear socialist ideas to strengthen the class struggle.**

We looked at the idea of “transitional demands”, linking immediate struggles to the goal of a different society, and at what a “workers’ united front” and “workers’ government” mean today.

Anti-cuts councillor Gill Kennett, from Hull, spoke about the fight to make councillors defy cuts. We looked at how to fight to save the NHS and welfare state while seeking to go beyond defensive struggles today.

Working-class history was the subject of many sessions. The event featured speakers from Turkey and Greece on the mass struggles taking place there, as well as comrades from Australia and Iran, and an assessment of Hugo Chavez’s legacy in Venezuela.

Sessions on the Marxist traditions helped to solidify the ideas from other discussions. We talked about the distinctive contributions of Gramsci and Lenin, the latter contrasted to the invented tradition of “Leninism”. Sean Matgamna debated John Palmer on the “International Socialist tradition” of the SWP, and led another session on what is distinct about the ideas and tradition of the AWL.

But the theme of transforming the labour movement ran across the board: how do we revolutionise the trade unions?; what should benefits workers do about the government’s sanctions regime against claimants; lively debate on staying

in and seeking to transform mass organisations such as Unite and Unison, versus joining or setting up smaller, radical unions.

If you were there and have thoughts about what was good, bad or could be improved/done differently, or ideas for the future — please let us know. Email us at [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) or speak to an AWL member.

*Sacha Ismail*

## Liberation at IFF

**In the opening plenary of Ideas for Freedom 2013 Janine Booth described fighting oppression as one of Marxism’s “big ideas”, and the battle for liberation was key to many of the weekend’s sessions.**

These sessions built on the successful series of meetings we organised around the country on Marxism and feminism earlier this year, exploring the role Marxist ideas have played in past women’s movements and the possibilities of renewing that link today.

At IFF we engaged with, and critiqued, key feminist writers and diverse viewpoints.

Cath Fletcher examined Silvia Federici’s *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the body and primitive accumulation*, in which Federici rethinks Marx’s analysis of the beginnings of capitalism from a feminist viewpoint.

Kate Harris explored the impact of Judith Butler’s ideas on feminist activism, asking how her ideas can inform our engagement with the recent feminist revival and how this sits alongside advocating more radical solutions to women’s and LGBTQ oppression.

Camila Bassi looked at the global picture of sexual vio-

lence, and the debates on the Indian left after the Delhi protests following a gang rape in the city in December 2012.

And we held a panel discussion with RMT activist Becky Crocker; CWU activist and TUC LGBT committee chair, Maria Exall; and NUJ organiser, Jenny Lennox on how

**Gill Kennett in the closing plenary**

challenging sexism within the labour movement and left is key, as the fight for women’s rights must be central to the struggle to transform and democratise our movement.

We want to take these ideas into activity, working with others to think about how we can challenge sexism in the labour movement. We’ll continue to publish our bi-monthly feminist paper, *Women’s Fightback*, and blog as spaces for discussion and debate and welcome contributions from everyone.

**The next issue (July) will focus on the theme of socialist responses to violence against women.**

*Esther Townsend*

• Longer report here: [workersliberty.org/iff2013](http://workersliberty.org/iff2013)

# Not the way to tackle violence against women

The Left

By Cathy Nugent



**At the 2013 AGM of the transport union RMT (23-28 June, Brighton), an appeal about the conduct of an investigation into a complaint brought by RMT member Caroline Leneghan against Assistant General Secretary Steve Hedley accusing him of domestic violence was withdrawn. That was done at Caroline’s request.**

The case is now “closed”. The way it was discussed over some months has re-raised questions about the conduct of the labour movement and left which need to be addressed now.

One general issue is the lack of knowledge, culture, and expertise in the labour movement about violence against women. But there also appears to be an almost wilful insensitivity on these issues by some on the left.

While the SWP’s handling of the investigation into rape allegations against a leading member, which made it into the mainstream press, continues to trouble us and others, less attention has been focused on how the Socialist Party conduct themselves. In particular how this, the second-largest far-left group in Britain, of which Hedley was then a member, responded to Caroline’s complaint. That too fell far short of what we should expect from socialist organisations.

On 8 March 2013, Caroline published a blog post detailing her experiences during her relationship with Steve Hedley and including photographs of injuries she had sustained.

Domestic violence is an under-reported but extremely serious crime — its effects can be very damaging to long-term health and well-being. Every socialist should know this.

Yes despite the fact that Hedley was one of their most prominent trade union members, the Socialist Party made no public comment on the matter until 14 March, when they published a short note explaining that he had resigned from the Socialist Party. The note said: “Steve refutes this allegation, which is currently being investigated by the RMT.”

It also quoted, without comment, from Hedley’s resignation letter, in which he said: “Regarding our conversation earlier the police have dropped the case and I’m currently awaiting the outcome of the RMT investigation.

“I am not in control of when the decision will be made and

have been strongly advised against issuing a public statement whilst investigations are ongoing.

“I know this puts the Socialist Party in a difficult position and am therefore resigning my membership.

“I will continue to support TUSC and the NSSN and work constructively with SP comrades.”

There was no statement that the SP itself took the allegations against Hedley seriously, or even a general affirmation that they should be independently investigated. To reproduce Hedley’s note without comment suggested he was somehow being self-sacrificing in his resignation and that *he* was the victim in the situation.

That presentation is highly problematic. The vast majority of victims of domestic violence are women. It is, as the SP should know, a problem rooted in systemic oppression of women; women do not make these accusations lightly. In any similar situation a socialist, labour-movement, or any other democratic organisation should be, minimally, neutral. They should not adopt a stance of disbelieving the victim.

Ten days later, Hedley published a statement in which he claimed he had been “cleared of domestic violence”. He also claimed publicly that the real issue was Caroline Leneghan’s mental health, and that he had been a victim, rather than a perpetrator, of domestic violence.

On 2 April the Socialist Party published an article entitled: “RMT investigation concludes: Steve Hedley has no case to answer”. The article said: “Following an in-depth investigation the RMT has concluded that there is ‘no case to answer’ against Steve and decided that the union ‘will not be taking any further action on this matter’. The police had previously investigated and concluded they would be taking no action.”

The article included (at last!) an affirmation of view that “all allegations of violence against women should be taken extremely seriously and investigated thoroughly, in a way that is sympathetic towards the woman making the accusation”. This should have been their immediate response!

The article also said: “Some have attempted to raise doubts about the RMT’s investigation, but no flaws have been drawn to our attention.” The article did not mention that Caroline Leneghan was appealing about the conduct of the RMT investigation, though the SP must have known that.

The article concluded by linking to Hedley’s statement of 28 March, about which the SP said: “Domestic violence is, in the large majority of cases, a crime carried out by men against

women, but we recognise that there are some cases of women being violent towards men.

“Steve would clearly have preferred not to have to give a public explanation of the events concerned, but has had no choice but to do so given the public allegations that had been made against him.”

They concluded that the SP “will continue to work with Steve on the urgent task of building a mass movement against austerity.”

In summary, the article accepted Hedley’s claims to have been the victim here and to have been “cleared”.

For information, a long article written by Andy Littlechild, the RMT activist representing Caroline in the internal investigation, was published on Caroline’s blog on 7 April, refuting Steve’s claim that he had “no case to answer”.

The Socialist Party’s only other public comment of relevance is Hannah Sell’s long article “Combating violence against women: a socialist perspective”, published on 11 April. This was in part a polemic against the authors of a statement entitled “Our movement must be a safe space for women”, published on 19 March. I commented on that here: [bit.ly/sell-sp](http://bit.ly/sell-sp).

By the time of Unison conference (17-21 June), SP (and SWP) members were arguing in favour of an amendment, submitted by one of the authors of the statement they had polemicised against, which committed the union to take a more serious attitude towards confronting violence against women. However, they supported it with so many qualifications that their “support” actually lent weight to the opposition. The amendment was voted down.

The emphasis of the Socialist Party’s public statements throughout this issue, notwithstanding a single sentence in their statement of 2 April, was to defend Hedley, almost declaring him innocent in advance, rather than maintain a proper distance from him while investigations and appeals were ongoing. Their first concern seems to have been to reaffirm him as an important figure whom they wished to continue working with.

**If Socialist Party comrades wish to make the labour movement and the revolutionary left accessible spaces for activists of all genders, and challenge the male-dominated, machismo culture that is still prevalent, they urgently need to hold their leadership to account for its recent record.**

# NHS put on road to “user pays”

**In his recent Spending Review, George Osborne ring-fenced the health budget until 2015-16.**

Superficially the NHS is faring better than other areas of the welfare state. In reality it is entering a third year of real-terms freeze in spending. By 2015-16 services will be starkly deteriorating. This will pave the way for further charging for services. It signals the beginning of the end for the NHS as we know it, that is, a service which has been free at the point of delivery.

How ironic, then, that this week is the 65th birthday of the NHS. 5 July 1948, the official founding date of a National Health Service, was a new dawn for tens of millions of people across Britain. In place of fear of illness and infirmity came a measure of security.

The NHS was an equaliser in a very unequal world. It recognised the demand for an equal right to life for working class people. It was the culmination of decades of battles, ideological, political and economic. It was a civilising force in the uncivilised system where profit reigns supreme.

For more than three decades a consensus that there should be healthcare for all, free at the point of need, paid for through our taxes, was rooted in political life.

In 1979, the counter-revolution began. Thatcher, determined to break up the welfare state, determined to push back the working class, to make them pay for every gain, for every concession they had inflicted on the bosses class, tried to force through a new consensus. The welfare state, the NHS included, should no longer be “free for all”. The “something for nothing” culture had to end.

## INFECTED

**Thatcherism infected the Blair-Brown led Labour governments; in fact they took it and ran with it.**

They extended market mechanisms in the health service, introduced Foundation Hospitals and massively expanded PFI. Now “modernising, privatising and marketising” the NHS has reached stratospheric heights with this Tory/Lib Dem government.

On its 65th birthday, the NHS is being forced into early retirement, facing a rapid decline and horrible death. It is being killed off by those who worship profit and have scant regard for the lives of working class people. The Health and Social Care Act is the death warrant for the NHS and a service free at the point of access.

The upshot of the Act and the project for the privatisers now is to force through another political consensus on health care, one where paying for healthcare, to use this that and the other medical service, run by private businesses but disguised with the NHS logo, becomes the norm.

Hunt’s onslaught on so-called “health tourists” is another prong in the attack. It serves to whip up racism and anti-immigration sentiment while compounding the argument that services have to be personally paid for. Winning the battle of

## Demonstrate in September!

**The unions have called a mass rally for the NHS outside Tory party conference on 29 September. We should also organise for a lobby outside Labour Party conference in Brighton (21-25 September). Labour needs to commit itself to reverse all the cuts, to stop the privatisation, cancel the PFI and invest in the NHS.**

ideas for Tories often starts with “foreigners”.

Yet when the figures for “health tourism” are examined, they amount to no more than 0.01% of the overall NHS budget. Compare that figure to the net contribution made by immigrants through working and paying taxes, and the only conclusion any rational person can draw is that racism and the drive to change attitudes on NHS charges is central.

Osborne’s spending review attacked the poorest in our society — the unemployed, those with disabilities. He reaffirmed his war on welfare, announcing further cuts to benefits. He will raise the “waiting” period before benefits are paid to workers who lose their jobs from three days to seven days. Public sector workers face pay freezes, that is, cuts in their living standards.

No shame, though, when giving the Queen, the 19th richest woman in the world, with a personal fortune of £350 million, a 5% pay rise. £2 million extra brings her “wages” up to just under £38 million per year.

At every twist and turn, the working class is made to pay for the bankers’ and bosses’ crisis.

To celebrate the birth of the NHS, that is an option. To organise and defend it is a necessity. Labour movement activists need to spend the summer preparing for an autumn of protest. We should gear up to stop the cuts and closures of departments and services.

**This is a government representing and fighting on behalf of the rich and powerful. We have to demand, organise and fight for a government to represent us with as much conviction and passion. We need a workers’ government, not a bosses’ government.**

## Final fund total

**After totting up a collection at Ideas for Freedom, and a donation from last month which we failed to count (thanks Kieran!), the final total from our fundraising appeal was £13,025. Thanks once again to everyone who contributed.**

# Still against Morsi!

**The Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt is not just a neo-liberal capitalist party, but clerical-fascist. Former SWP leader Tony Cliff used that term for it in 1946. Despite the SWP’s subsequent shifts, which went as far as recommending votes for the Brotherhood in last year’s elections in Egypt, he was right.**

The Brotherhood is an approximate Islamic analogue of the Catholic fascist parties of Europe between World Wars One and Two. It is a canny, cautious variant of the type, but like those parties it has a mass plebeian activist base and a political trajectory which would shut down living space for the labour movement in the name of populist demagoguery (“Islam is the answer!”)

The Brotherhood was the only political force able to build up a big semi-tolerated organisation, and large funds, under the Mubarak dictatorship; and so it won the elections last year despite its equivocal role in the battles against Mubarak.

After a year, though — after November 2012, when Morsi claimed powers to rule by decree; after the killing and wounding of many activists by Brotherhood thugs on the streets; after Morsi has offered only Islamist rhetoric for the economic plight of Egypt’s people — millions have turned against the Brotherhood.

Egyptian socialists have been right to join the street protests against Morsi. They understand, also, that ugly forces are jumping on the anti-Morsi surge.

In most circumstances, we would side with any elected government facing a threat of military coup (or semi-coup, or quarter-coup). We would do that even if we hated the elected government and continued to oppose it.

There are cases in working-class history of socialists being swayed into support of populist military coups against unpopular elected governments (Pilsudski in Poland, 1926). We learn from those errors.

This is not the same. We are against a military coup. We are not for defence of the Morsi government. Why not? Because that government threatens, if consolidated, to squeeze out the light and air for the Egyptian labour movement even more fully than Mubarak could — or even more fully than the army could in foreseeable conditions.

**The Egyptian working class is not yet politically strong enough to take power against both the Brotherhood and the army. Its priority must be to develop its political independence and to be the first fighter for democracy and secularism against Morsi, against any “transitional” government if he falls, and against the army.**

# How Trotskyists fought in Stalin's camps

Suzanne Leonhard, once a militant of the Spartacusbund in Germany and a personal friend of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, was forced to flee Hitler's Germany because of her underground Communist activities. She sought refuge in the USSR.

In October 1936 Stalin's secret police arrested her and she spent ten years in Stalin's forced labour camps. On her liberation (living in Western Germany), she wrote a book on her experiences in these camps, *One Quarter of My Life*. The following extract tells the story of Yelena Ginsburg, one of many Trotskyists who died in Stalin's jails.

**She was then 24 or 26 years old. And her name was Yelena Ginsburg. I met her in the Shor hospital near Tibizhu during the summer of 1937.**

This hospital, administratively, did not belong to the reception camp at Shor, but to the "Shel-Dor-Lag," that is, the network of the large camps whose prisoners had to construct the railroad from Kotlas to Vorkuta.

During the construction of this railroad, many thousands of prisoners died in the swampy forests, the marshes and the tundra. Those who fell sick were brought to the hospital of Shor only when their recovery was practically excluded, and a few days after their arrival at Shor, most of them met their end.

Nevertheless, the hospital constantly overflowed with sick people, and rarely could room be found for new patients.

Three of us shared a small room: Smirnova, the wife of I N Smirnov, who was condemned to death and executed on the occasion of the first great Moscow (frame-up) trial in 1936; Yelena Ginsburg; and myself. Yelena, or Lola, as she was called, attracted my attention as soon as we became acquainted.

## CONSCIOUSNESS

**She was not pretty, her features were irregular, and she even squinted a little; but her eyes flamed with the fire of those who struggle for a supreme consciousness, who are ready to sacrifice themselves for their cause and fanatically pursue the goal to which they have dedicated their lives.**

The strength of Lola's conviction and her political seriousness could not fail to influence me; from my early youth I have myself passionately striven for truth, and I have always fought for my ideas, even though my wings no longer carry me as far as in the old days.

Yelena Ginsburg was in the hospital following a hunger-strike which lasted two weeks, but proved ineffective because of forced feeding. Lola still felt rather weak, but she no longer had to remain in bed. As I could get up myself for several hours and had medical permission to get fresh air, we were able to go for walks during which we could converse freely and without witnesses. My limited knowledge of the Russian language was not adequate at all for political discussions, but Lola had some acquaintance with French and German.

I induced her to tell me her life. Her father had been a small Jewish itinerant peddler before the revolution, and later became a construction worker. Lola was the oldest of seven children. She had no recollection of pre-revolutionary times. Her entire childhood was spent in the shadow of infinite misery, which did not recede after the October Revolution of 1917. But unlike her parents, who were illiterate, Lola managed to enter school after the revolution.

During the first post-revolutionary decade, the general level of Soviet education remained very low. There was a dearth of instructors and school-room equipment; there were few buildings; it was impossible to obtain books or writing; paper; there was often not enough coal to heat the schools; children often could not attend for lack of shoes and coats, or because they had to help out at home, or because they

were undernourished.

Lola, however, let nothing stand in the way of her enthusiasm and passion for study. She walked to school barefooted, or coatless, or without having eaten. All that mattered was to be able to learn!

A woman teacher took pity on her, gave her some books and taught her languages. Her parents did not approve of their eldest child's preoccupation with books. They overworked her with domestic chores. Lola found a solution to this difficulty. She got up early in the morning, took care of the younger children, worked with her father after school, stood in the bread-line for hours with a book in her hands, and continued to read or study late into the night, thanks to a small oil-lamp which her teacher filled with fuel.

Lola became a member of the Komsomol (the Russian Young Communist League) and obtained a job with the secretariat of the Komsomol at the end of her studies. She was happy with her education and had no inkling of its inadequacy. She was proud of her knowledge which, she thought, could not only conquer but also improve the world. Lola earned more than her father and mother together, who were unskilled labourers, but the young Communist girl kept not a single kopek for herself. Did not six children have to be fed and sent to school?

The struggles between factions in the Russian Communist Party during Lenin's illness and after his death; the Fourteenth Party Congress with its decisive political discussions; the Fifteenth Congress where the entire opposition was expelled from the party; and finally Trotsky's exile to Alma-Ata: all these steps of Stalin's road to autocratic rule and infallibility had not been consciously lived through as contemporary history by Lola. She gave herself body and soul to the task of building socialism in the world's only workers' state.

It was only during the years 1929-30, when the question of the forced "wholesale collectivisation" of agriculture became the issue of the day, that the young Communist girl, then 17 years of age, began to think independently and critically about fundamental political problems. After serious inner struggles, she decided to join the Trotskyist Opposition. As an opponent of Stalin, she was arrested as early as 1934.

The political penitentiary at Verkhni-Uralsk, where she served her sentence, became her political university. In this prison she met the political opposition groups of all tendencies and shades. If her descriptions are trustworthy, the regime was then still very liberal in that prison. The political prisoners had access to a well-stocked library and could discuss freely among themselves. We can easily imagine what heated political discussions must have taken place!

As a result of her two years' stay in this political penitentiary, Lola Ginsburg acquired a solid Marxist training and a thorough knowledge of the international labour movement and the history of political movements. Her knowledge surprised me again and again.

Many details of the history of the Russian Communist Party and its evolution into the State party of the Soviet Union were made clear to me by Yelena Ginsburg, because I had studied these problems superficially and without

method while I was abroad. Lola Ginsburg had become acquainted with the militant Trotskyist, Vladimir Smirnov, in Verkhni-Uralsk. An intimate political and personal friendship had grown between the two, and Lola married him in prison.

In 1937 the wave of arrests took on unheard-of dimensions and hundreds of thousands of political prisoners were sent to forced labor camps. Most of the prisoners at the political penitentiary at Verkhni-Uralsk were sent to far-away regions. Vladimir Smirnov received assurances that he would be interned together with his wife in a camp beyond the polar circle. But they were separated a few days after the transport. During the night Smirnov was sent to the camp of Vorkuta. Lola arrived during the next days in Tibizhu. They had not been allowed to bid each other farewell, or to share their mutual possessions; part of Smirnov's belongings were left with Lola in the women's tent.

Lola protested by means of a hunger-strike, and bombarded the camp administration with requests in which she explicitly spoke of herself as "the Trotskyist prisoner Yelena Ginsburg." To appreciate her action, it is necessary to realise that Trotskyism was the most terrible and nefarious crime. A thief, an embezzler, a bandit or even a murderer was considered a person of quality in the camp as compared with any political prisoner; but a "counter-revolutionary agitator" or one "accused of espionage" was judged relatively innocent as compared with a "Trotskyist." All those whose conviction documents were marked with the fatal letter T attempted to keep it hidden as closely as they could.

But Lola described herself proudly as Trotskyist even in official correspondence, when no one asked for it and when it would have sufficed to sign her letters "prisoner so and so." In this way she delivered herself gratuitously to her executioners. This can be taken as evidence of a lack of political maturity and great innocence; but the smile disappeared from my lips when I saw the sacred fire in Lola's eyes. Not only was I moved by the power of her convictions, but I had to admire her.

In the hospital, Lola's thirst for knowledge was greater than ever. It made her happy to refresh and enrich her linguistic knowledge with my help. She had somewhere obtained a history of French literature but the work had not been written for one who was self-taught, and Lola soon realised that it assumed a more basic knowledge than she could claim. We began to read it together. Lola was happy that I could answer many of her questions.

## DETAILED

**I gave her a detailed account of the contents of many classics and described their character, style and the epochs which had given them birth.**

I acquainted her with the tragedies of Corneille and Racine; retold Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, Anatole France's *Crainquebille*, and Edmond Rostand's drama *Cyrano de Bergerac*, which I remembered well from my studies at the lycee.

The study of this brief history of literature made Lola realise to what extent her knowledge of western writing was limited. She had read nothing of Balzac or Zola, Voltaire or Rousseau, La Fontaine or Boileau. Of the whole of French literature she had a vague knowledge only of Guy de Maupassant and Romain Rolland. She did not even know the names of contemporary authors. The penitentiary library contained but few translations from foreign literature. When we read a summary of one of Moliere's comedies in which the details of a feast are described, Lola suddenly said with a far-away and child-like tone in her voice: "Roast? I have never eaten roast food in my life."

Our political discussions were not carried on in the hospital itself. They ranged over all the burning questions of the "permanent revolution," "socialism in one country," "spon-

This drawing, by socialist cartoonist Laura Gray, accompanied this article in *Militant* in 1951.

taneity of the masses," etc. Lola did not trust our room-mate Smirnova. We walked in the garden or in the forest nearby which was part of the camp's zone.

Lola's knowledge of languages often proved inadequate and our discussions would have reached an impasse if the engineer Edelsohn, a 78 year old man well-versed in languages, had not graciously offered his services as interpreter. He liked to join us and translated Lola's heated speeches for me from the Russian. Old Edelsohn had been in the camp twelve years. He had come from Baku, where he had been a commercial engineer in the oil industry. He had travelled a great deal in this youth, knew almost the entire world, Italy, Germany, France, Spain, England, the United States, and spoke four European languages fluently, an addition to Russian. He loved to converse with me in French, German or English. We exchanged reminiscences of Paris and Vienna, the Alps and the Cote d'Azur.

Politically, Lola and I were far removed from the old engineer. He represented a world which had vanished and considered us at best as two "poor foolish girls."

This did not prevent him from being humanly very close to us and taking great pity on us, who had become, although for a cause opposed to his own, victims of the regime he detested.

Lola, the militant Trotskyist, dreamed of being indicted in a great political trial. She wanted on such an occasion to tell

the truth to the world. She wished to cry out to the world the real aims of Trotskyism, so miserably slandered by Stalin. She wished to demonstrate clearly that the road of Trotsky was the road of world revolution, the only genuine road to Communism in the USSR and Europe, whereas the road of Stalin represented the shameful betrayal of the teachings of Marx.

Her speech accusing Stalin, burning with faithfulness to her doctrine and passion for her convictions, had long since been prepared in detail by Lola. She lacked only an opportunity to deliver it before an attentive world opinion. After clarifying for the Communists of the whole world the true aims of Trotskyism and the reasons for the Trotskyist struggle against Stalin, she was prepared to die.

She knew that her actions would certainly entail death. She did not underestimate the unlimited power of Stalin and the NKVD.

But she hoped that her last words might bring thousands of new militants back into the political arena.

To die a martyr's death for the cause of Trotskyism, that was young Lola's life-dream. It was then that I began to understand the enthusiasm with which she had followed my account of Karl Liebknecht's anti-war agitation, the passion with which she had listened again and again to the description of our Spartacist uprising and our struggles on the barricades of Germany. There was the revolutionary spirit she

knew so well! But was such activity still possible in the Soviet Union? Lola refused to admit the existence of a police regime so perfected that any martyrdom became impossible.

"She fires toward death as a moth toward a flame," old man Edelsohn kept telling me, shaking his head. And this is what finally happened.

In September 1937 we learned that we would have to leave the hospital within a few days, as our convoy was leaving for its final destination — Kochmess. Yelena Ginsburg started a new hunger strike. She was waiting for an answer to her requests and refused to leave the hospital. The doctor, a good man by the name of Kukinadze who spoke German well, took me aside and asked what he could do for me. Perhaps I would also prefer to remain in the hospital. As a doctor, he could oppose my departure. I thanked him warmly for this token of humanity but decided to depart for the unknown.

Sooner or later we would get beyond the polar circle, anyway; what difference did it make whether that would be a few weeks earlier or later, I said to myself.

"Never have I taken so much pity on any hospital prisoners as on you two," sighed Kukinadze. "It is difficult enough for Russian intellectuals to live in such conditions. How much more difficult must it be for you who possess European culture — and as I have been to Germany myself, I know what that means — and for this unhappy and fanatic child, Yelena Mihailovna.

## TOMORROW

**"It breaks my heart. Tomorrow I must resume the forced feedings. I have received orders from my superiors." The day before my departure I went once more to Lola's bedside to bid her farewell.**

Her lips were swollen with fever, she felt very weak, although she had been forcibly fed for several days. "Suzanne, open my trunk, I want to give you a warm piece of clothing, you cannot leave as you are now dressed, you will die of cold," she whispered. She calmed down only after I had accepted a warm suit of brown material. It was almost new and had belonged to Vladimir Smirnov. Lola also gave me some underwear, socks and handkerchiefs which had belonged to him. "They are men's things," she smiled, "but it is better than nothing. I know that we are separated forever. I will never see my husband again and I can't send him these things. I'd rather give them to you than save them for that gang of GPU bandits." Deeply moved, I bade Lola farewell.

Two years later I learned that Lola Ginsburg had been shot at Shor during the winter of 1937. With her were a dozen victims of NKVD terror, doctor Kukinadze, the male nurse Noack, a woman nurse, a Polish comrade who had worked in the clothing department, and the camp commander at Shor. "The entire Trotskyist nest was exterminated," said one of the soldiers of the Okhrana.

The execution was mentioned nowhere, and for a long time nobody knew where the victims had been sent, until the truth came out. It is possible that the victims themselves did not know that they would be shot when they were taken to the forest. Sophie Scholl, a young Munich student who had led an anti-Nazi resistance group at the University and was shot in 1944, managed, from the very top of the Nazi gallows, to cry out words which echo to this day in the hearts of hundreds of men and inspire them to fight totalitarianism. The absolutism of the Tsarist regime could not prevent the words that the courageous Sofia Perovskaya spoke when she was led to her execution from being transmitted to other contemporaries and encouraging them in their struggle against tyranny.

Stalin's terror alone makes martyrdom impossible. The oppositional youth of the USSR became the target of the NKVD bullets, and the survivors had no news of it.

**This is why I am happy to be able to tell the life and death of Lola Ginsburg. May her heroic story, symbol of thousands of brave fighters for the world communist revolution, not have been in vain.**

- From the US Trotskyist paper *The Militant*, 15 January 1951
- *Workers' Liberty* 3/40: "Germany 1953: Workers rise against Stalinist rule": <http://bit.ly/germ-53>

# Rulers more isolated than ever

**Workers protest the closure of the state broadcaster ERT**

**By Theodora Polenta**

**On 25 June the remaining parties of the Greek government coalition — New Democracy (ND) and the social-democratic Pasok — announced a new cabinet.**

The Democratic Left had left the government after a decision by ND Prime Minister Antonis Samaras to close the Hellenic Broadcasting Corporation (ERT, Greek equivalent of BBC) on 11 June by ministerial decree, sacking its 2,600 employees.

Democratic Left was never opposed to the restructuring of ERT, but wanted layoffs done while it remained on air. Even now, Democratic Left leader Fotis Kouvelis says that the “Democratic Left... will continue to support the European course of the country and the need to continue reforms in order for Greece to overcome the deep crisis.”

But the base of the government is narrower. Meanwhile the “Left Initiative” led by George Panagiotakopoulos has formally withdrawn from Pasok. The core loyalists of the old Pasok leadership of George Papandreou have political space now to criticise current Pasok leader Evangelos Venizelos from the left.

## DESPISED

**With the withdrawal of Democratic Left’s 14 deputies, an already widely despised government is deeply unstable, with its majority in the 300-seat Parliament reduced to three. Over the last year nine deputies have already left the ND or Pasok fractions in parliament. The government could rapidly lose its three-seat majority in any crisis.**

Workers are still occupying ERT offices, although their union leaders are once again ready to work with the government in pushing through austerity. Panagiotis Kalfagiannis, the leader of the broadcast workers’ union, has said: “If the government wants to restructure ERT we agree. We want restructuring. Not a padlocked ERT.”

Workers in all hospitals — doctors, nurses and administrators — had a five-hour work stoppage on Thursday 27th, and demonstrations in all cities. Treasury workers had a 48-hour strike on 27 June. On 26 June workers at all ports in Greece had a work stoppage from noon to 7pm against privatisation and selling off ports.

On Saturday 29 June the council workers organised a rally against layoffs in the public sector and utilities. Primary school teachers have voted to commence the new school year with strikes.

Samaras remains prime minister in the new cabinet. Yannis Stournaras, an unelected technocrat nominated by ND,

stays as finance minister.

Pasok was almost wiped out as a political force in the 2012 elections and is now at 6.5 percent in opinion polls. (It had 44% of the vote in the October 2009 general election).

However, Pasok will play a much more leading role in the new cabinet. Previously it held no key ministries. Now Pasok party leader Evangelos Venizelos will be deputy prime minister and foreign minister. Michalis Chrysochoidis becomes transport minister, and Yiannis Maniatis environment minister.

The health minister will be Adonis Georgiadis, a former member of the far-right LAOS party who was expelled last year and defected to ND, after voting for the second austerity package in defiance of his party’s line.

The government is tasked with carrying out further attacks demanded by the troika (European Union, International Monetary Fund and European Central Bank), which will return to Athens next week to review the implementation of austerity policies. Its first job is to confirm to the troika that 2,000 public sector sackings are in place, as well as moving 12,500 civil servants into a labour mobility scheme over the next few weeks. Without these measures, the troika will withhold the next tranche of the loan agreement.

Samaras and Venizelos had based much of their hopes on national and international capitalist backing and their chances of concessions from the Troika. But the international environment is deteriorating. The EU summit, which was expected to give answers to critical issues of debt and banks, effectively postponed decisions until the end of 2013.

According to the Financial Times: “A shortfall of €3bn-€4bn has opened up in Greece’s bailout programme, largely because eurozone central banks have refused to roll over some Greek bonds they hold. Delays to planned privatisations have not helped either.

“Essentially, Greece’s bailout programme will run out of money at the end of July 2014 because of the hole. But this has immediate repercussions. Under IMF rules, a government must have its financing needs covered for at least a year in order for the Fund to carry on making disbursements under the programme. The shortfall means that that cut-off moment is approaching faster than expected and will come at the end of July 2013”.

The Troika has increased the pressure on Greece. European officials say that the Greek government has enforced only half of some 300 measures due by the end of June.

The new government is morally and politically isolated from society. That makes it even more dangerous than the governments which came before. Its only backup to stay in power is the Troika and the Greek ruling class; which is un-

leashing a historical counterrevolution against the rights and freedoms won by the Greek working class in the postwar period.

Already, on Friday 28th, it became known that Labour Minister Vrotsis has begun the abolition of the five-day working week in the food and restaurants industry, where now there is no contract of employment. A circular indicates to bosses that under the second Memorandum, they can sign individual contracts with their workers forcing each worker into a six-day week and cutting wages by 20%, down to the level of the national collective agreement (gross pay below 600 euros per month).

The same day, Justice Minister Charalambous Athanasiou announced a bill that would prevent temporarily-employed public sector workers from using judicial procedures to block sackings. There are 6,000 temporary workers, mainly in the municipalities, who have gone to the courts in order to secure temporary suspension order of their dismissal. The judge usually accepts that the workers are essential for the running of the council until final adjudication, perhaps years later. Athanasiou’s new bill will close cases permanently within three months.

The government has also begun a barrage to prepare society for auctions of first homes. and confiscations of deposits, wages and pensions, to cover longstanding debts to the tax office and overdue loans.

The government plans to lay off 1,000 workers from the Post Office, which currently has 7,500 workers with permanent contracts, down from 11,500. It will dissolve three munitions companies, DAC, EAS, ELVO, which currently employ 2,500 workers. Salaries and pensions will be slashed again. New workers can be hired on individual contracts at 586 euros gross for a six-day rather than a five-day working week.

Those pensions which remain at an acceptable level — judges, engineers, journalists, chemical and some other industries — will be slashed, and there will be a further 10% cut in all pensions.

## FEROCITY

**Over four years, in spite of the increasing ferocity of austerity measures and repression, the workers, the unemployed, the pensioners, the young and poor have not stopped discovering their power.**

The combative working-class movement is regaining its confidence with struggles like ERT. The potential to overthrow the government from below and from the left is back into the agenda.

Without massive and militant struggles, ND and Pasok can govern for a long time escalating their class war and destruction. There is only one way to stop them — and that is overthrow them through our struggles.

The militant sectors in the trade union movement must meet, to discuss and coordinate, with a perspective of repeated rolling strikes, demonstrations, occupations, sit-ins to join with the civil disobedience movement and declare political war against the government and the austerity policies.

The Left must establish clearly the target of the fall of the government and its replacement by a government of the Left with a program that objectively leads outside the boundaries of capitalism: scrap the memoranda, refuse to repay the debt, nationalise the banking system and strategic sectors of the economy under social and workers’ control and management, massive public investment and planning of the economy to the needs of society, socialist structure and organisation of economy, and a society grounded on a democratic basis and committees assemblies in each workplace and every neighbourhood.

Merkel, Lagarde and Co. have threatened that if Greece calls new elections they will cut the funding! The Greek labor movement should answer: we can do without them, without the EU of capitalists and neo-colonialists! But at the same time there should be no illusions in the drachma, no illusions in a go-it-alone road to a “national haven.”

**We need common struggle with the movements of the South and the rest of Europe, we need to coordinate our struggles with them, aiming for large ruptures and upheavals throughout Europe, for a workers’ Europe, for a workers’ world, for socialism.**

# Venezuela's workers' movement

In *Solidarity* 290, Pablo Velasco began a four-part assessment of the legacy of Hugo Chávez and the meaning of his government and state. In this second part, he examines the relationship between the Chávez regime and the Venezuelan labour movement.

**For Marxists, the most significant criteria for judging any regime — aside from its relation to capital and the nature of the state — is its relationship with the working class.**

This is so often missing from pro-Chávez apologists, who tend to treat workers as the passive recipients of Chávez's benevolence. It is also missing from neoliberal accounts, for whom the working class is merely raw material for exploitation.

The picture is somewhat complicated by the state of organised labour before Chávez. The historic official trade union movement, the Confederation of Venezuelan Workers (CTV), was founded in 1936 and was effectively tied to the Acción Democrática party, which dominated Venezuela between 1958 and 1998. As the Punto Fijo pact unravelled into neoliberalism, the CTV went into a steep decline. CTV density dropped from 40% of the workforce in the 1970s to less than 20% by the 1990s.

The CTV was heavily involved in attempts to overthrow Chávez in the early years of his rule. It organised joint action with employers' organisations against the Chávez government, culminating in active support for the April coup in 2002. If it was widely discredited even before Chávez came to power, then following the opposition lockout in 2002-03, its role as an Acción Democrática tail was fully exposed.

However the eclipse of the CTV provided space for the emergence of the Unión Nacional de Trabajadores (National Workers' Union, UNT) as an independent trade union centre. The UNT was founded in April 2003 and held its first congress in August that year, attended by more than 1,300 delegates, representing over 120 unions and 25 regional union bodies. It organised a half a million-strong May Day demonstration in 2005 under the banner of "Co-management is revolution," and "Venezuelan workers are building Bolivarian Socialism". It claimed over a million workers in affiliated unions.

According to Kiraz Janicke and Federico Fuentes, writing on the Venezuelanalysis website (29 April 2008), more than three quarters (77%) of collective agreements signed in 2003-04 were with unions affiliated with the UNT. In the private sector, the UNT signed just over half of all collective agreements. Despite this growth, unionisation remained only slightly above 20% of the formal work force, while around half of workers are in the so-called informal sector, which is largely unorganised by unions.

## COALITION

**Janicke and Fuentes defined the UNT as originally a coalition of five political currents.**

These were: the FBT (the Bolivarian Workers' Force) led by Oswaldo Vera; the Alfredo Maneiro current, whose key leaders included Ramon Machuca in the steel industry and Franklin Rondon in the public sector; the Collective of Workers in Revolution (CTR), led by Marcela Maspero; the United Revolutionary Autonomous Class Current (C-CURA), headed by Orlando Chirino and Stalin Perez Borges; and the smaller Union Autonomy, led by Orlando Castillo. (The FBT was originally organised by Nicolás Maduro, now Chávez's successor as president).

However there were tensions within the UNT from the start, over its relationship to Chávez's government, the absence of internal democracy and how far it was defending workers' conditions. At the founding congress there was little debate, leaders were appointed, and there were no elections. Machuca wanted an independent as president. However the FBT and others proposed a "horizontal" structure with a 21-member national coordinating committee and no president or secretary general. Although the FBT made some concessions — accepting the name UNT rather than "Bolivariana", Machuca refused to join.

The UNT effectively fell apart three years later. It held a conference in May 2006, where around three-quarters of the delegates supported C-CURA. The immediate cause of the

**Chávez's successor Maduro has a trade-union background. What is the relationship between the Bolivarian state and organised labour?**

dispute was the date of elections for the UNT leadership. The pro-Chávez minority wanted to put off union elections to concentrate on getting 10 million votes for Chávez in the presidential elections in December that year. The current around Chirino insisted that the leadership of the UNT must be elected as soon as possible, suggesting September as the best date. The minority walked out of the conference and held its own parallel meeting.

## C-CURA

**At the second UNT congress in August 2006, out of the 1,750 delegates, over 1,000 supported the positions of C-CURA. After that congress the government and the FBT sabotaged the UNT.**

They left the congress and never returned. The FBT tried to form the Central Socialista de Trabajadores (CST, Socialist Workers' Central), but it was stillborn. The FBT became the Bolivarian Socialist Workers' Force, FSBT.

When Chávez announced the formation of the PSUV party after he won the 2006 presidential election, almost all the trade union currents agreed to join it. C-CURA split over this question, with Chirino's supporters rejected participation (and calling for a spoiled vote in the constitutional reform referendum in December 2007), while others led by Stalin Perez Borges formed Marea Socialista (Socialist Tide) and went into the PSUV.

In December 2009 and April 2010, some factions attempted to re-found the UNT. The driving forces were Marea Socialista, the CTR and the Bolivarian Educators. They also involved the Communist Party of Venezuela's (PCV) trade union fraction, the Cruz Villegas Current, which had previously stayed outside of the UNT. Chirino has formed the Labour Solidarity Movement (MSL) with some remnants of the CTV, and opposed re-founding the UNT.

The Venezuelan labour movement remains fragmented and weak. Some sections are completely subordinate to the government or the opposition. The labour movement is in no sense a major protagonist, with its own independence, its own strength and its own demands. These are the fruits of a decade and a half of Chavismo.

The active interference of the Chávez government in the labour movement is one of the signs of its Bonapartist character. In April 2008 a joint press conference of the labour minister José Ramón Rivero and Oswaldo Vera, the coordinator of the FSBT announced the formation of a new national union federation and called on unions to disaffiliate from the UNT. Rivero was quoted as saying "the National Union of Workers does not represent the spirit of the Venezuelan revolu-

tionary process".

The conflict between labour and the state increased dramatically with the appointment of (ex-Morenoist) Rivero as labour minister. He intervened in disputes to advance the FSBT and sided with bosses, as with the case of Sanatorios Maracay, an occupied ceramics factory where he set up a parallel union and handed back the factory to the owner.

The situation intensified in 2008 with the steelworkers' dispute at Sidor. After more than a year of struggle for a collective contract, Sidor workers found themselves in open confrontation against management and with the local Chavista governor, Francisco Rangel Gomez, and Rivero, who tried to impose a referendum on the company's final pay offer. At one point, workers were brutally repressed with teargas and rubber bullets by the National Guard and the local police. Rivero slandered Sidor workers, claiming they were "counter-revolutionary" and falsely claiming they had supported the boss's lockout in 2002-03, when in fact, they had seized control of the plant from management. Although Chávez eventually overrode Rivero and nationalised the plant, it was indicative of the government's top-down approach.

Another example took place in the state-owned oil company PDVSA, where the minister responsible, Rafael Ramírez, intervened during elections for the national leadership of the United Federation of Venezuelan Oil Workers (FUTPV), which represents more than half the oil workers in the firm. In July 2009, Ramírez categorised the FUTPV as "Adecos" — meaning supporters of the opposition party Acción Democrática.

## COLLABORATION

**The FUTPV was formed in April 2007 in collaboration with PDVSA management and the labour ministry as an attempt to unite the four main union federations in the oil industry.**

Despite the merger, elections for the united federation have never taken place — a provisional national leadership committee was appointed by the ministry under Rivero.

In June 2009 the CNE, which facilitates union and other elections, ruled that forthcoming elections should be postponed after receiving a complaint by Argenis Olivares, from the Socialist Workers' Vanguard, (VOS), a pro-Ramírez caucus. Ironically, one of those accused of being "Adecos", Gregorio Rodríguez, said he was a member of the PSUV and decorated with the "Order of the Liberator" for defending the oil industry during the bosses lock-out in 2002-03.

In another example, 1,800 workers at a Mitsubishi plant were involved in a struggle for over a year to put an end to illegal sackings in the plant and reinstate 170 workers (including the 11 member board of the union, Singetram). Workers took part in long strikes, occupations, and two union members were killed during protests. Many workers said they were PSUV members, but still criticised the new labour minister María Cristina Iglesias who failed to support their struggle.

Judged against actual class struggles, Chavista ministers and governors invariably act against the workers involved. The Bonapartist state wants a union movement compliant with its wishes — efforts to promote independent trade unionism are met with hostility, slander and sometimes repression.

Pro-Chávez apologists claim that his government gradually radicalised. In particular, the proclamation of 21st century socialism led to the widespread expropriation of large and medium-sized companies in steel, electricity and telecommunications since 2007. However even sympathetic academic Steve Ellner acknowledges that the wave of expropriations did not obey a preconceived ideological scheme, but were the outcome of a series of battles between the state and the hostile private sector, which had strong links to the opposition and the old elites.

The expropriations have primarily been designed to counter shortages, although some fulfilled other objectives. The state control of basic industry had been a goal of nationalist movements dating back to the 1930s and had been incorporated in the 1961 constitution.

*Continued on page 10*

Continued from page 9

Some firms such as the CANTV phone company, Sidor steel firm and the national airline had been state-owned, and were then privatised before Chávez came to power. Other expropriations, such as those of contractor firms working for PDVSA or the Corporación Venezolana de Guayana, involved nationalisations to strengthen the central state's hold over supply chains. Others still were taken over as a result of their owners abandoning them after opposition efforts to oust Chávez had failed. In some cases, pressure from workers contributed to these takeovers.

### COLLECTIVE

**It is legitimate to ask how far these expropriated firms have become the collective property of the Venezuelan people. There have been a series of transfers of private capitals, at full market-value, into the hands of the bourgeois state.**

In most cases the state has paid compensation to the owners using oil-rents. Once in control, state functionaries have generally maintained hierarchical and profit-driven management. For good reason several UNT unions have taken up the motto of supporting “neither capitalists nor bureaucrats”. The expropriations have not paved the way for socialist planning. Only 30% of the economy is owned by the state, while the bourgeoisie still controls 80% of the national banking sector, 90% of trade, and the transnational companies.

It is therefore wrong to argue, as Michael Lebowitz and others do, that the commanding heights of the economy are actually in the hands of the state, without asking which class's interests this state protects. Similarly, George Ciccariello-Maher argues that Venezuela is in a period of “long dual power”, where the bourgeoisie has successively lost its grip on the state apparatus and that Chávez represents a sort

**Figures like Orlando Chirino have tried to develop independent working-class politics. Unfortunately Chirino has moved rightwards.**

of infiltration of the bourgeois state by an agent of the oppressed classes. These conceptions stretched to their limit imply the Chávez government was some sort of a workers' government, even if contained within the shell of a bourgeois state.

Such a thesis is unsustainable. The strength of the Bonapartism thesis is that it allows for the political expropriation of bourgeois parties and the incorporation of other actors, while the state remains a bourgeois state, the bourgeois continue to rule socially and economically and the working class remains exploited and excluded from power. It recognises that the Chávez government does not follow the “normal”, neoliberal rules of the game, but nevertheless remains critical

of its relationship vis-à-vis the working class.

A lesser argument often heard on the left is that at least the Chávez government has promoted workers' control in some of the expropriated factories. In 2010, at a meeting of the Socialist Guyana plan dealing with the future of the industry, Chávez said he would introduce workers' control and said “I stake my future with the working class”. Worker-directors, selected by the workers, were appointed to head many of the CVG companies, including Carlos d'Olivera in Sidor and Elio Sayago at aluminium smelter Alcasa.

Co-management and related ideas have been discussed since at least 2005 and they remain slippery. Having a worker-director, even one elected by the workers, does not guarantee workers' control. In fact genuine workers' control is very much a bottom-up initiative of workers rather than decreed from above. Powerful interests within the Bolivarian movement oppose workers' control in the basic industries in Guayana. Bureaucratic Chavista trade union leaders from the FSBT have sabotaged efforts, targeting for example Elio Sayago. The FSBT organised a blockade of the Alcasa factory gates in June 2011 which lasted for 34 days, including violent clashes in which a member of the FSBT threatened other workers with a pistol. When Sayago, backed by those workers who support workers' control, attempted to access the installations he was brutally beaten up. The day after, Sayago was accused by two women workers, members of the FSBT, of assaulting them, even though there is video evidence of the attack having been against him, not the other way round.

Since Chávez's turn to “socialism”, all sorts of firms such as Alcasa, Venepal, Inveval, Cadafe and countless others have been hailed as blazing a trail for workers' control, only for management to continue largely in the old way.

**This is not workers' control as under in Russia in 1917, or Spain in 1936, or other more recent efforts such as Argentina in 2002.**

**A 1993 anti-fascist demonstration against the BNP in Welling. Undercover police had infiltrated both the BNP and the anti-fascists, and coordinated to ensure they could effectively sabotage and undermine the protest.**

## The deceivers

Cathy Nugent reviews *Undercover: the True Story of Britain's Secret Police* by Paul Lewis and Rob Evans (Faber & Faber, 2013)

**How would you feel if you found out the person you had been in a long-term relationship with had been acting out a fictional persona, using the name of a dead child, under the direction of the state and subsidised by the tax payer?**

That is what male undercover cops have done to unknown numbers of women according to this important *Guardian* investigation. Since the late 60s, “sleeping with the target” has been a central tactic of the police in their surveillance of political groups.

Nick Herbert, Tory minister for police and criminal justice, thinks the tactic is justified. A specific ban on undercover officers having sexual relationships would he said, provide “a ready-made test for the targeted criminal group to find out whether an undercover officer was deployed

among them”.

Chief Constable Mick Creedon, who is leading an inquiry into undercover policing, has said that it is a bit like men lying about whether they are married: “It happens.”

Not so, says Alison (not her real name), who is one of 11 women suing the police for planting an undercover cop in her life: “The betrayal and humiliation is beyond any normal experience... This is not about just a lying boyfriend or a boyfriend who has cheated on you.”

At least with normal lying bastards you can be sure there some affection involved. None of these women can be sure. Having become aware of the state-sponsored deception, they half-believe the emotional commitment was also pretence; understandably the apologies and emotional outpourings of the scumbags who deceived are unconvincing. This was, in fact, state-sponsored abuse.

But it was not the only dirty tactic that undercover police operations resorted to over the years.

Under the Special Demonstration Unit and (from 1999)

the National Public Order Intelligence Unit, cops have infiltrated the anti-apartheid movement, animal rights groups, the left, anti-racist and anti-fascist groups, Greenham Common, anti-capitalist and environmental campaigns.

In those groups they have sniffed round trying to find dirt (including as has been widely reported on the Stephen Lawrence family campaign), point the finger at “innocent” activists (as suspect police), egg on groups and individuals to break the law, broken into premises, and done lots of other illegal stuff themselves (which has been retrospectively authorised by their handlers).

Knowledge about these operations came to light after the partner of undercover cop Mark Kennedy — who had led activists into a police trap during a protest at Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station — found his real passport. Further knowledge has been provided by ex-undercover cop and whistle blower known as Pete Black. With these starting points Lewis and Evans have done a great job at putting together the evidence.

So how to spot a political policeman/woman? They will arrive on the scene unannounced. They will have money. They will make themselves useful fetching and carrying. They may volunteer to be a treasurer. They will form a long-term relationship, the better to appear solid and authentic and real. After a few years they will fake a breakdown or family bereavement and go to live on the other side of the world. You will feel sorry for them when you receive a postcard from Canada, South Africa or wherever. Don't be fooled!

The government will resist calls for a public enquiry on the undercover police. Cameron's response to the evidence in this book and in particular the embarrassing revelation that the Lawrence family were spied on, is to say the police-led enquiry should be expanded (anything to ensure that the police will always police the police).

**But the left has more fundamental demands here. In the first place we want the disbanding of the political police — undercover units, Special Branch, anti-terrorist units — all of it. In that context we want to talk about who the police are, what they do and whose interests they serve.**

- Parliamentary testimony of women abused by undercover police: [bit.ly/cops-parl](http://bit.ly/cops-parl)
- A 2011 account of acquaintance with the undercover cop Mark Cassidy, who infiltrated anti-fascist activist circles in Hackney in the late 1990s: [bit.ly/mark-cass](http://bit.ly/mark-cass)

# 3 Cosas campaigners invade Senate House

By Stew Ward

Outsourced workers at the University of London are keeping up the pressure on management as part of their "3 Cosas" campaign to win pensions, holiday, and sick pay equality with their directly-employed colleagues.

An unannounced demonstration disrupted a conference in the university's flagship Senate House building on 28 June, and while some attendees were angry at the disruption, many expressed support for the workers. Demonstrators briefly blocked the doors to Vice Chancellor Adrian Smith's office.

The "Justice for Cleaners" campaign at SOAS, one of the University of London's member colleges, also plans a protest for Thursday 4 July. Speaking at Workers' Liberty's Ideas for Freedom event, SOAS cleaner Lenin Escudero Zarsoza said: "Before we started our campaign, we felt invisible. Look at us now. Now we feel like

human beings."

London Underground cleaners have expanded their union organisation following management's use of immigration raids to attempt to break organisation amongst cleaners employed by ISS. A cleaners' rep writing in the rank-and-file bulletin *Tube-worker* said: "ISS used immigration law to crush a

potential strike, but ISS has not succeeded in kicking the fight out of cleaners. [Bosses] hoped newly-employed workers would be cowed by fear, but most have eagerly joined RMT after seeing you can't stand alone against such a brutal management [...] Once the bosses learn that we can't be intimidated, they will have nowhere to hide."

Industrial Workers of the World cleaners at the British Medical Association's HQ have also taken a step forward.

**A motion to back their campaign demands was discussed at the BMA's Annual Representative Meeting, and will now be discussed by the BMA Council.**

## Posties reject pay deal and privatisation

By Darren Bedford

Royal Mail workers have voted by 99% to demand an above-inflation pay rise.

In the same consultation, Communication Workers Union (CWU) members working for Royal Mail returned a 96% majority in opposition to proposed privatisation, and a 92% majority in favour of boycotting mail from private competitors, and a 92% majority in favour of a policy of non-cooperation with company procedures in workplaces where budget cuts have made workload levels impossible to deal with.

With the company's recent profits are in excess of £400 million, CWU has denounced its latest proposals on pay and conditions — which offered an 8.6% increase over three years but

with various conditions including cuts to pension provision — as "misleading and unacceptable", and "laden with strings".

The union says its executive will meet "in the near future" to decide what action to take following the ballot.

**In a separate dispute involving Crown Post Office workers, CWU members struck for a sixth time on 20 June, closing offices around the country.**

## Why link with North Korean "unions"?



By Luke Taverner

**The Council of Executives of the RMT, at its June 2013 meeting, decided to affiliate to the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU).**

The WFTU traces its history back to the end of the Second World War, when an attempt was made to revive the old trade union international. Soon, opposition to the Marshall Plan by unions in the Stalinist bloc, and the anti-Communism of many Western unions, made the organisation untenable. Most big union centres outside the Stalinist world left, and set up what is now the ITUC.

The WFTU continued as an organisation of state labour fronts and unions historically linked to or led by their national Communist Parties (like the French CGT) around the world. Its biggest remaining affiliates include the Vietnamese General Confederation of Labour, the Cuban CTC, and the General Federation of Trade Unions in North Korea. These are not unions in

any meaningful sense, but the state-run labour fronts of totalitarian regimes, often used to police and repress working-class self-organisation and dissent.

Recently the WFTU has experienced a slight revival, in part by placing itself to the left of the ITUC, which it criticises for being in favour of social partnership. The WFTU has rebranded itself as "class-based" and "democratic." Some unions in South Africa have affiliated to it and are pushing COSATU to do so.

The RMT say they will "seek to facilitate a meeting between the ITF (International Transport Workers Federation) General Secretary Steve Cotton and the transport section of the WFTU."

But the move may also be shaped by people in the RMT who have some sympathy for the sorts of regimes for which the WFTU provides cover.

**Regardless of the motive, the sad fact is that the leadership of a militant industrial union in Britain seems to have no problem aligning themselves with an organisation which includes within it representatives of some of the most repressive, anti-worker regimes in the world.**

**Teaching unions NUT and NASUWT reported a 98% turnout in Manchester and Liverpool for the 27 June regional strike, which took place across northwest England. 4,000 people marched to support the strike in Manchester (pictured).**

**Teachers were striking against proposals to introduce performance-related pay, as well as to win demands around issues including workload and pensions. A national strike is promised for some time next term.**

**The rank-and-file network LANAC is pushing for action to be escalated as quickly as possible.**

• [nutlan.org.uk](http://nutlan.org.uk)

## Brighton golf strike

By Ruben Lomas

Workers on council-run golf courses in Brighton were due to strike on Wednesday 3 July against pay cuts of up to £4,000.

The workers are employed by Mytime Active, who manage the Hollingbury Park and Waterhall golf courses for Brighton and Hove City Council.

Members of both GMB and Unison will take part in the strike, which would be the second in the dispute so far.

Meanwhile, CityClean refuse workers suspended their action on 21 June following further negotiations with the council.

**They had previously struck for five days against cuts.**

### More industrial news online

- East Midlands Trains workers to ballot
- BBC workers vote on pay deal
- 100% vote for strikes at Portsmouth port

[bit.ly/indnews-brief](http://bit.ly/indnews-brief)

## FE workers face job cuts

By Jonny West

**Workers at LeSoCo (Lewisham-Southwark College, an FE institution formed through the merger of the two colleges) are balloting for strikes against job cuts, with the result due on Friday 5 July.**

Management plan to cut 35 jobs, and abolish science and floristry courses. Management claims the courses are undersubscribed, but both have had a higher number of applications than they did at the same point in 2012.

The University and Col-

lege Union (UCU) says the proposals "leave students in limbo", as it is not clear whether the courses will continue for currently-enrolled students.

UCU members at nearby Lambeth College are also due to strike on Thursday 4 July. Workers there face nearly 100 redundancies.

**English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students recently staged a walkout in support of their lecturers and against the cuts package of which the redundancies are part, and which will also hit ESOL provision.**

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## A new turn in Egypt

**A protester in Tahrir Square holds up anti-Muslim Brotherhood posters**

**By Matt Hale**

**Protests in Egypt on Sunday 30 June marked a new stage of the revolution.**

Called to coincide with the one-year anniversary of Mohammed Morsi's Presidency, and with estimates of 13 million attending nationwide, the protests demanded fresh elections and the President's resignation and have once again highlighted the need for socialists to organise and argue for a workers' government.

The "Tamarod" (Rebel) protests have continued, already winning minor victories with at least four ministers quitting the Cabinet.

Since January 2011 there have been many twists and turns in the Egyptian revolution. Democratic demands have often been accompanied by an expression of the revolution's social character, in the form of workers' strikes and occupations, protesters demanding social justice and moves to oust "mini-Mubarak" bosses.

The Muslim Brotherhood has cooperated with business interests, and in cooperation with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), Morsi has opted for physical force to disperse opponents.

In the context of economic crisis and a proposed \$4.8 billion loan package

from the International Monetary Fund, Morsi has intensified market liberalisation. The consequences have been devastating and resulted in the effective collapse of the Egyptian pound; there has been a 12% devaluation in the first six months of 2013 alone.

While shortages in wheat and other basic commodities continue, military spending has increased by \$3.4 billion — far exceeding the £1.4 billion military aid that the Egyptian state gets every year from the United States.

This is the context in which Tamarod, initiated by youth activists, emerged and was able to gather 15 million signatures for its petition — more than the number of votes that Morsi received last year.

But the 30 June protests and the Tamarod petition will not be enough to bring down the regime.

In 2011, it was the interaction of the protest movement with workers' struggle that paralysed the regime and realised the revolutionary potential of the movement, forcing Mubarak to step down.

Today the situation is different. The economic and political crises — the declaration of the Shura Council as illegitimate — have deepened. The masses possess a collective knowledge of their revolutionary po-

tential. Rightly, the Revolutionary Socialists (linked to the British SWP) have called for a general strike until the regime falls ([alturl.com/7eugs](http://alturl.com/7eugs)). Yet questions are posed about what should replace Morsi.

In response to the protests, Brotherhood thugs have been unleashed. They have made violent attacks on the revolutionary opposition — sixteen were killed on Sunday alone.

**STATE**  
**State security forces are for now staying away, but there is no guarantee that will continue.**

On Monday 1 July, General Abdul Fatah Khalil Al-Sisi, the head of the armed forces, appointed by Morsi, delivered Morsi an ultimatum: either meet the demands of protesters by Wednesday 3 July, 4pm, or a new "road map" will be announced.

Unfortunately, judging by reports, the military ultimatum has been largely welcomed by protesters, seeing it as a step towards their demands. As Tamarod spokesman Mahmoud Badr responded, the military "crowns our movement".

Yet for all claims about the independence of the military and their aim to foster reconciliation between government and opposition camps, SCAF remains the bedrock of the Egyptian state. All Presi-

dents since Gamal Nasser have rested upon it; SCAF has its own economic interest in the neo-liberal project.

The danger of SCAF ruling directly and staging a coup is very real. That would signal revolutionary defeat. Whether Morsi will buckle remains to be seen.

The task at hand is: the rescuing of revolution and a readiness to struggle against the National Salvation Front, the largest opposition group and an organisation that itself encompasses remnants of the old regime.

Despite claims to be an opponent of Brotherhood authoritarianism, NSF leaders have attended secret meetings with the Brotherhood and wants to avoid direct confrontation with SCAF. Their difference with Morsi's Brotherhood is primarily one of emphasis. Both are opposed to the deepening of the revolution, but the NSF opposes the Brotherhood's Islamist character.

At heart the NSF is but another tendency among capitalist forces; all lack a political programme expressing the revolution's social character.

Its National Coordinator, Mohammed el-Baradei is a former Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, an inter-governmental organisation under the auspices of the United Nations. Like the Brotherhood, it is based on the same social-economic strategy — market policies and capitalist realism.

With the cards being stacked by SCAF, the formation of an independent working-class political platform, centred on popular democracy and social justice, becomes ever more paramount.

**The urgent necessities are: winning rank-and-file soldiers to the revolution, placing working-class interests at the heart of the opposition, and the presentation of an alternative revolutionary programme to the butchers and hidden enemies of the revolution.**

• Editorial comment, p5

## Brazil protests continue



**By Rosalind Robson**

**Mass protests in Brazil against government corruption and poor public services continue, though President Dilma Rousseff's promises on political reform and public investment may demobilise.**

Meanwhile, many local authorities have backed down on public transport fare increases, the original spark for the protests.

Thousands marched in over 300 cities on Sunday 30 June, to coincide with the Confederations Cup. The tournament is a dress rehearsal for the 2014 World Cup, which Brazil is hosting at great expense — a focus for discontent.

Rousseff and her Workers' Party have promised a constituent assembly to debate political reform, retaining laws which criminalise political corruption, investment in city transport, more money for education and health and (just to balance her promises up) "fiscal responsibility".

**PROBLEMS**  
**This falls far short of the perceived problems of bourgeois democracy in Brazil. There are over 30 political parties and most are mired in cronyism.**

Capitalist development has brought the rapid growth of urban society, not matched by infrastructure, adequate housing or public services.

The demonstrations have been overwhelmingly youthful. Brazilian society is youthful — 40% of all Brazilians are under 25.

Just as the demonstrations are subsiding, for now, Brazil's labour movement has begun to mobilise. According to Claudia Costa (writing for *Labor Notes*), on June 20, "the second-largest labour federation, Força Sindical, which is considered conservative, led a two-hour metalworkers stoppage in an industrial district in São Paulo, gathering a

few thousand demanding better public transport.

"Then CSP-Conlutas, a left-wing labor federation, and CUT PODE MAIS, a dissident caucus within the largest federation, CUT [Workers' Party dominated mainstream federation], together with other organisations, called for a day of action June 27.

"That day General Motors workers, together with metalworkers from seven other plants in São Jose dos Campos, did a one-hour stoppage. Construction workers demonstrated in Belem and Fortaleza. In Rio de Janeiro, 10,000 workers and students demonstrated throughout downtown. In Belo Horizonte, the unions joined the huge demonstration of 60,000 in front of a football stadium where the Confederations Cup match was scheduled.

**LABOUR**  
**"Simultaneously seven Brazilian labour federations along with the Landless Movement (MST) met and declared a 'National Day of Struggle and Mobilisation' for 11 July.**

"Specific workers demands include "[stopping the] auctioning off of Brazil's petroleum reserves to private companies, reduction of working hours from the current 44 hours per week, stopping a bill to legalise outsourcing, and land reform, which has been frozen by the administration."

Costa comments: "The Workers' Party was elected in 2002, raising workers' expectations — which were not met.

**"Although some measures in favour of the poor were taken, such as bolsa-família (an allowance for the very poor), the administration has carried out neoliberal policies benefiting big landowners, banks, and foreign corporations."**

• [bit.ly/costa-ln](http://bit.ly/costa-ln)

