

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

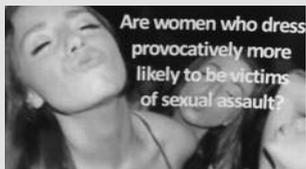


No 276 27 February 2013 30p/80p

[www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

For a workers' government

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# Unions must call protests!

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Council: ready to  
tell residents  
about the benefit  
cuts — but not  
to resist them**

**On benefit?**  
The government are making cuts



## What is the Alliance for Workers' Liberty?

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

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

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

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

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

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

### We stand for:

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

### Contact us:

- 020 7394 8923 ● [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

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# Mali: "a difficult phase"

By Colin Foster

**On 20 February the Islamist militia Mujao took the town hall in Gao, one of the three sizeable towns in Mali's north, and on latest reports (23 February) fighting continues.**

There are now 4,000 French troops in Mali, and 2000 soldiers from France's ally Chad, between them making a larger effective force than Mali's own army. There are also 300-odd British soldiers, and troops from other West African states. France has called for a UN force in addition.

Yet France's defence minister says that the French military intervention must now go through its "most difficult phase". After French troops came in on 11 January, the Islamist militias which seized Mali's sparsely-populated desert and semi-desert north in April-June 2012 withdrew

from the towns with no or little battle, and retreated into hide-outs across the vast expanse of the north (which is about three times the land area of those parts of Afghanistan where the Taliban is strong), or over the borders.

The Islamists have felt strong enough to return to battle in Gao more than once since January. Mujao has also claimed an operation in Kidal, which is held by French troops in alliance with a secular Tuareg militia and dissident Tuareg Islamists. The Tuareg forces have refused to allow the Malian army to enter the town.

In Timbuktu, the third sizeable town, the Paris daily *Libération* reports a "reign of fear" by the Malian army, directed against Arab and Tuareg citizens, though mitigated by the fact that most Arabs and Tuaregs fled the town

when the French and the Malian army arrived. A set of photos on the website of the Paris daily *Le Monde* of schools reopening in Timbuktu shows not a single Arab or Tuareg person, but only people of southern-Mali (black-African) origin, presumably mostly Songhai.

*Libération* on 19 February ran a big feature on the scantiness of direct journalistic coverage of northern Mali. Journalists are not formally excluded. But the Malian army stops them driving north on grounds of security, and the French authorities say they can't overrule that; the French military won't let journalists onto planes because it says that there is no space.

Journalists have not even been allowed to collect vivid stories of the horrors of the months of rule by the "narco-salafists" in the north, though there were

surely many. *Libération* on 18 February reported on the improvised "women's prison" which the Islamists established in Timbuktu, which was crammed with women arbitrarily jailed for a flaw in Islamic dress, for smoking cigarettes, or for wearing make-up.

Whether deliberately (to restore its authority in the region) or by way of being sucked in, the French military has put itself in the position of being arbiter of Mali's future, arbiter and enforcer of some compromise deal between secular Tuaregs fighting for northern autonomy, Islamists, and the Malian army, which is the ruling power in the densely-populated south.

**The French intervention, which was seen by most people in Mali as a help and a liberation from the Islamists, is on rails liable to establish it as a neo-colonial enterprise.**

## Bulgarian crisis

By Robert Fox

**The resignation of the Bulgarian government on Tuesday 19 February amid escalating popular protests provides an illustration of the way in which austerity and neo-liberalism interact — and, more positively, the way in which this can lead resistance.**

The protests were sparked by the continually rising energy prices that have resulted from the privatisation of the state monopoly in electrical distribution in 2005, which have doubled and in some cases tripled.

Government austerity has resulted in what the International Trade Union Confederation has called "catastrophic social consequences" and stagnant wages.

Bulgarians earn the lowest average salaries in the European Union (393 euros). By the beginning of 2013 local analysts were estimating that, in some parts of the country, energy costs were approaching 100 percent of the average household income.

The protests began with the symbolic burning of

electricity bills in Blagoevgrad in January.

Their demands at the start were purely economic — the renationalisation of private regional energy monopolies, the removal of subcontractors — and born of immediate desperation.

But they soon developed into broader opposition to the governing centre-right GERB party.

Endemic corruption has also been a universal theme — the government's name has increasingly been used interchangeably with the word "mafia" — but it has also served to unify a broadly populist plebeian critique of a self-serving elite.

**It hasn't been lost on the protesters that it is the same people that are raising the energy prices, cutting the public utilities and taking the kickbacks.**

## Cyprus elections

By Theodora Polenta

**Presidential elections were held in Cyprus on 17 February.**

In a run-off on 24 February Nicos Anastasiadis of the Democracy Rally Party (DHSY) won with 57.5% of the vote.

The Cyprus elections come amid panic about the collapse of banks and the

entire economy of Cyprus — and a long strike by construction workers.

Anastasiadis replaces Demetris Christofias of AKEL (the Communist Party), who is going to go down in history as the "communist president" who brought Cyprus under an EU/ECB/IMF cuts memorandum. He did not seek re-election. Stavros Malas, supported by AKEL, got 42.5% of the vote.

• Full background: [www.workersliberty.org/node/20487](http://www.workersliberty.org/node/20487)

## Councillors Against the Cuts national meeting

**Saturday 16 March, 11am to 4pm**

**Birmingham City Council House, Victoria Square, Birmingham B1 1BB**

**All Councillors elected as Labour and wanting to defeat the government's cuts welcome.**

Delegates also welcome from:

- local government unions
- affiliated union branches
- community-based local anti-cuts campaigns who wish to support Labour councillors who refuse to implement cuts.

Delegate fee: £5/Observers £2 (number of observers may be restricted by space considerations)

For further information and to register, email: [info@l-r-c.org.uk](mailto:info@l-r-c.org.uk)

# The Tory student bigots

By Tom Harris

The “lad culture” (as seen in men’s magazines like Nuts) has been around for a long time.

But it has recently taken a turn for the far worse with websites like Unilad, Truelad and others finding massive popularity on university campuses.

Unilad (until it was forced through criticism to close down and reconstruct itself) existed to “push boundaries” with its “jokes” about humiliating women, and “tongue-in-cheek” advice about how to inflict sexual and other violence on women.

All this at a time when according to a survey by the National Union of Students

one in seven female students have been a victim of sexual violence while studying at college.

A series of indicators a noxious “lad” culture of bigotry towards women and ethnic minorities became systemic within University College London Conservative Society, in particular.

And now William Hall, a recent UCL ConSoc president, is standing for president of the University of London Union.

Hall, a Conservative councillor in Henley and the son of Baron Hall of Birkenhead, came under criticism during hustings last year for opposing the creation of a Women’s Officer but also for describing

homosexuality as “a lifestyle choice”.

University of London students will also vote for Vice-President and *London Student* editor, and to the new position of Women’s Officer. While the move towards introducing liberation officers was approved by the governing body of ULU, Hall has stated his opposition to it.

Liberation officer posts (such as the most common and historically established Women’s Officer post) are designed to ensure representation for marginalised sections of the student body and to give students from oppressed groups the opportunity to autonomously organise their own campaigns.

When challenged over his position, Hall backtracked on his “lifestyle” remark, going on to say that he favoured ULU having “someone to run liberation campaigns”, but not necessarily from the appropriate oppressed groups.

During Hall’s presidency of the UCL Conservative Society, the organisation was accused of bigoted behaviour from fellow students and sections of the national press.

The most notorious incident took place during a Societies’ visit to a “Port and Policy” event hosted in the

Oxford Union. One member heckled a woman speaker saying, “shush... you’re a woman” and told her to “get back to the kitchen”.

Hall publicly distanced himself from the heckler, denying they had been invited to the event and claiming they “may have found out about it from our Facebook group” — a claim questioned by UCL’s *Cheesegrater* newspaper, which noted the individual had regularly attended the Society’s events in the past.

Prior to Hall’s presidency, the Conservative Society had already gained a dubious reputation when the then-president, Kieran Weisberg, wrote an article in *The Caerulean* defending the infamous Tory right-winger and campaigner for the repatriation of immigrants, Enoch Powell.

With Hall at the helm, this reputation worsened when UCL Tories joked on Twitter about “not wanting muddy [mixed-race] children”, and member Thomas Elliot appeared at a party in “blackface” costume and make-up.

Hall’s presidency reached a nadir of offence during a Conservative Society trip to Belgium. In an email to the *Cheesegrater*, Weisberg highlighted the behaviour of Hall as “standing out” after punching fellow Tory

Matthew Gibbard in the genitals and encouraging him, successfully, to expose himself in public.

Weisberg describes how Gibbard later complained that he “would not be able to make racist jokes for three days as he would be staying with a foreign ambassador”.

Gibbard, Elliot and Hall do not display the same de-

gree of vile “extreme lad” misogynistic culture. But their remarks and behaviour have to be seen in this context.

**Hall is yet to address many of the criticisms levelled at him although they relate both to his own behaviour as well as his responsibility as President.**

## Marxism and Feminism: Capitalism, class and the politics of women’s liberation

Women’s Fightback and Workers’ Liberty Students are organising a series of meetings to discuss issues of class and the politics of women’s liberation, and to consider the case for revolutionary socialist feminism.

More details:

[womensfightback.wordpress.com/marxism-and-feminism/](http://womensfightback.wordpress.com/marxism-and-feminism/)

# Student union elections

AWL news



**In the next two months, a number of AWL members, sympathisers and activists we work with will be running in student union elections.**

AWL students are very active in anti-cuts groups, protests, solidarity with working-class struggles and so on. We think standing in student union elections can play a subsidiary but important role in such struggles and in winning people to socialist ideas.

AWL member Daniel Lemberger Cooper is now standing for a second year as Vice President of University of London Union. NCAFC supporter and NUS executive member Michael Chessum is standing alongside him, for President, again for a second term.

In the last six months, Daniel and Michael have taken major steps forward in transforming ULU into a radical, campaigning union — from mobilising students in defence of the NHS to supporting cleaners’ and other workers’ struggles at the University of London to providing resources for many radical campaigns. They have created new democratic structures. They have also won respect

across the political spectrum for getting ULU’s sports, societies and service provision functioning again.

Will Hall, a Tory councillor in Henley-on-Thames who Michael defeated for President last year, is standing against Daniel (see above).

Hall is sure to make the internationalist stance Daniel has taken on “remembrance”, i.e. war and imperialism, a central issue.

Alongside many other NCAFC supporters, AWL members are standing for local officer positions around the country. Beth Redmond will be standing for President at Liverpool John Moores University, and Luke Neal for Education Officer and Ella Thorp for Welfare and Equality Officer at Newcastle.

Ella explained why the Newcastle Uni comrades are standing:

“With government attacks on education and the welfare state, students need political, campaigning unions more than ever. Often welfare is seen as non-political but that couldn’t be further from the truth. From fees to accommodation to rights at work, there are lots of issues we need to campaign on.

“Running in the election also gives us a chance to spread socialist ideas — even if we don’t win and even more if we do.”

At the National Union of Students conference in early April, AWL member Rosie Huzzard, from Sheffield College, will be standing for the national executive alongside fellow NCAFCers Thais Yáñez (Birkbeck), Roshni Joshi (already on the NEC) and James McAsh (President of Edinburgh University). Matt Chadkirk is standing for NUS Disabled Students’ Officer and Gordon Maloney for NUS Scotland President at separate conferences.

**At NUS conference we will also be supporting other left candidates and putting forward policies for a fighting union.**

**Vote Thais Yáñez for ULU Women’s Officer**

**The two candidates for the newly created ULU position of Women’s officer are both NCAFC members.**

One is Susuana Antubam, who is president of Royal Holloway Feminist Society and one of the organisers of the recent Student Feminist Conference. We are supporting Thais Yáñez, who is Anti-Fascism, Anti-Racism officer at Birkbeck Student Union and one of the LGBTQ reps on the NCAFC national committee.

**Thais shares a lot of our Marxist feminist politics and has an outstanding campaigning record.**

## Student feminist conference

By Esther Townsend

**The London Student Feminist Network organised a conference on 23-24 February, Student Feminists 2013.**

Around 80 people attended on the first day, fewer on the second.

The conference encompassed a variety of workshops, including ones on sex worker activism, Education for Choice and further education activism. Others were more experiential.

A Workers’ Liberty /

Women’s Fightback session was on women education workers including information about Action for ESOL, the Postgraduate Workers’ Association and the 3 Cosas cleaners’ campaign.

**It is very positive that this initiative has been made, but in future it would be useful to have more nitty-gritty discussions about “what kind of feminism?” and what sorts of activities feminist students need to organise in order to respond to sexism we face.**

# Serving up horseshit

Press

By Pat Murphy



**An early entry in the tabloid editors' manual is a device known as story selection.**

While other newspapers and broadcast outlets may think the main story is, say, a global climate summit or war in Syria, the tabloid editor looks constantly for news that reinforces his paper's worldview. The aim is to keep them angry and embittered about the right issues.

An obvious manifestation of this is the constant stream of stories related to immigrants, asylum seekers and benefit claimants in the *Mail*, *Express* and *Sun*. Whatever else may be happening in the world it is important to remind people that the greatest threat to their happiness, prosperity and security is the free-loading antics of the unemployed, foreign and "other". The archetypal story focuses on one person who represents all three.

A crucial part of story selection is the skill of knowing which news to ignore and marginalise too. So, many hundreds of thousands of people may demonstrate against government cuts, for an alternative economic vision or against a major war only to see no coverage whatsoever in the following days papers. The silence alone tells us we are marginal, our views can be ignored while the most trivial of royal or celebrity gossip bedecks the front pages.

The problem arises when there are stories which cannot be ignored and yet are difficult to fit neatly into the worldview. Such has been the horsemeat scandal.

From 16 January, when traces of horse DNA were found in meat products provided to supermarkets by firms in Ireland and Yorkshire, to 14 February, when suppliers based in Aberystwyth and Todmorden were arrested on suspicion of contaminating food, this has been a story which pressed too many tabloid buttons to ignore. It has moral panic, exaggerated fear, genuine public interest and universal relevance (it's food, for heaven's sake).

The problem for tabloids, in particular the more political "black-tops", is that they have trained their readers to expect a message alongside their "news" complete with scapegoats. The obvious message is not good. Not only does it not fit the

worldview, it flies somewhat aggressively in its face. You don't have to be very political or sceptical to see that the discovery of horsemeat in food that claims to be beef suggests that what we have here is an industry that lacks strong enough regulation by the state.

But the right-wing press is very much against state regulation. They want "quangos", like the Food Standards Agency, abolished. They supported the Tory promise in 2010 of "a bonfire of the quangos" and the powers of the FSA were indeed weakened. The ridiculing of health and safety laws is, so to speak, meat and drink to them.

## DISTRACTION

**What can the tabloids say here? What to make of their dilemma? The *Mail* and *Express* decided to reach for less commonly used and more complicated tabloid techniques such as "distraction".**

Early in the crisis the *Express* ran a story headed "It wouldn't have happened in America" based on the tenuous claim that the slaughter of horses for their meat had been banned in the US. I say tenuous because almost immediately their own readers posted website comments claiming that this ban had been introduced in only some states and had since been repealed in many of those. As a solution, in any case, a ban would be state intervention at its highest, and as it could only come about as a result of a EU directive it would be portrayed by the same paper as pen-pushing Eurocrats denying us the right to choose what we eat.

As the story unfolded it became clear that the contaminated supplies did indeed come from around the EU: from Ireland, the UK, Poland and France. The *Mail* made a half-hearted attempt to blame foreign suppliers, but this was cut short by horsemeat discoveries and arrests in Wales and Yorkshire.

The most bizarre attempt to square the populist circle came from *Mail* columnist, Richard Littlejohn. He decided to attack the EU for failing to regulate food better on the grounds that they were too busy involving themselves in the wrong kind of regulation — the enforcement of silly, petty rules which got in the way of traditional British customs. The custom, in particular, of selling jam in second-hand jars.

Re-hashing one of his old stories he wrote on 12 February that it was "funny how the EU can enforce strict food hygiene

regulations which prevent the Women's Institute selling jam in second-hand jars but can't stop Eastern European horsemeat being passed off as beef." What he is alluding to here is an old claim that EU regulations prevent the use of re-used jars in the production of jam. (In fact this rule applies only to food businesses and does not apply to charities and occasional events. Despite the fact that the correction was made by the EU and the Women's Institute back in October in response to his own stories Littlejohn felt he could repeat his false claims while at the same time suggesting that the problem was "Eastern European" horsemeat as if the British versions were absolutely fine.)

There was unintended comedy in another response from the *Daily Mail*. On 24 February their headline brought to the attention of the nation that "contaminated produce may have been served to the Queen at Royal Ascot". Oh no! Bad enough that she *may* have been served horsemeat, but couldn't it at least have been served in the privacy of her own home? But at Royal Ascot! The shame, the national ignominy!

It was left to Caroline Lucas and Natalie Bennett of the Green Party to draw some of the wider political lessons in the *Guardian* on 12 February. In a piece whose title located the origins of the scandal "in the heart of our economic model" they went beyond the obvious attack on de-regulation to highlight the vice-like grip of huge corporations on the food market, the way in which a low-wage long-hours economy drives the market towards cheap, mass-produced ready meals and the lack of adequate education on healthy food.

These aren't hugely complicated lessons to spell out and they relate to the lived experience of the vast majority of people. They don't appear in a broadsheet paper rather than a tabloid because they are more highbrow.

**They do so because they are all lessons which suggest the threat to our health and wellbeing is not the poor or foreign "other" but the subjugation of all wider considerations to the untrammelled rule of the market.**

## ANTONIO GRAMSCI: WORKING-CLASS REVOLUTIONARY



Antonio Gramsci was a leader of the Italian Communist Party in its revolutionary days, and spent his last years in Mussolini's fascist jails. The *Prison Notebooks* he wrote in jail have been quarried to justify many varieties of reformist or liberal politics.

This booklet discusses a major recent study on the *Notebooks* — Peter Thomas's *The Gramscian Moment* — and argues that the *Notebooks* were in fact a powerful contribution to the working-out of revolutionary working-class strategy in developed capitalist societies.

**£4 from AWL, 20e Tower Workshops, Riley Road, London, SE1 3DG.**

• Buy online at

[www.workersliberty.org/gramscibook](http://www.workersliberty.org/gramscibook)

## Some merit in Jon Cruddas

Letters



"Who decides Labour's Policies?" (*Solidarity* 275) made thoughtful reading.

It's certainly true that the Labour Party needs more democracy, just like most other parts of our society. There should be a greater emphasis placed on events such as the party Conference deciding party policies. The days of top-down policy making really was a feature of New Labour. We need a genuinely "new" Labour Party that is more democratic, socialist and orientated to working people.

Fewer policy wonks, and more workers, are needed. All too often politics and political parties have become very middle-class. Fewer working-class people seem to be getting elected or selected in politics. And we've got to change that, in order to change society.

I do think, however, that the ideas of Jon Cruddas have some merit. It's important we push for the Living Wage everywhere in the economy and support more social homes being built. I'd support a mansion tax, as well. These things would create a more equal society, and draw more working people back into politics.

**Working people need greater control over their workplaces, too.**

Graeme Kemp

## Slavery in the US: liberation from above?

Sacha Ismail is wrong, I think, against Eric Lee (*Solidarity* 274). Sacha doesn't like Eric's basic point — that the US slaves were liberated "from above" by a white man, using a "white state".

Of course liberation would have been better coming from the action of the slaves themselves, rising in armed revolt and winning their own freedom, arms in hand. Abolition won this way — and the self-confidence and self-organisation gained — would have made the racist counter-revolution of the 1870s onwards much harder to carry through.

But it didn't happen that way. Slavery was abolished by Sherman's army and Lincoln's legislation. Black units fought bravely (eventually, when they were allowed, and under white officers).

Sacha notes that many slaves were able to run away. But they were able to do so because of the power of the Northern state, and the pressure of the Union armies. And running away from a master is not the same thing as a mass, armed slave rebellion.

**Of course, it would have been better otherwise. But it didn't happen that way.**

Dan Katz, Lewisham

# Benefit cuts: unions and Labour must protest!

**A scattering of protest meetings and stalls and lobbies is beginning to grow. The TUC has called a rally for 13 March. The Labour Party has at least voted against the benefit cuts — it hasn't voted against all the bad things the coalition has done — and some local Labour Parties have campaigned, with official approval.**

But labour movement mobilisation against the benefit cuts remains small compared to the scale of the cuts themselves. A veritable wall of benefit cuts will hit us in April. Eleven and a half million children — the majority of children in Britain — will be affected. 27 million people will lose out.

Averaging out over the population, it's £760 a year in benefit cuts by 2014-5 for each of us, including this April's round and the previous ones. Hundreds of thousands of people, mostly the worse-off, are losing much more.

Under the "benefits cap", 56,000 households will lose an average of £93 a week between April and September 2013. Many of them will lose £100 or £200 a week. Many will be evicted and lose their homes.

Maybe the trade unions have been slow to move on this because their membership, these days, is concentrated in the better-off sections of the working class, which lose less. Maybe because they got a battering in the battle over public sector pensions. Maybe because they are preoccupied by other issues: the privatisation and cuts in the NHS, pay, local government cuts.

Certainly, in part at least, because the unions are dominated by well-off officials who are hesitant about struggle of any sort, and many of whom have now dropped all thought of anything much beyond hoping for some relief from a Labour government, maybe, in 2015.

Even bureaucratized trade unions can be pushed into action. Socialists need to push them. We should be sceptical about *Socialist Worker's* ritualistic repeated claims that the coalition government is "weak". If we fail to mobilise sufficiently, then the government will prove quite strong enough to push through these cuts. But it can be made weak.

The creditworthiness of Britain's bonds has been downgraded by Moody's ratings agency. The move is of small immediate economic importance, but a real blow to the credibility of chancellor George Osborne, who has made a fetish of the credit rating.

Britain's government debt, which the coalition government said it would reduce, is rising. The deficit — the amount added to the debt each year — is probably rising too. Production is stagnant. Inflation is high.

Alternative economic policies can get a hearing — if voiced boldly — because the current policies are visibly not working on any terms other than plain vindictive utilisation of the crisis to beat down working-class conditions.

In addition to the "benefits cap", from April most unemployed and low-waged people who currently get full council tax benefit will have to pay some council tax, probably about £5 a week.

Under the "bedroom tax", households reckoned to have spare bedrooms will have their housing benefit cut.

Disability Living Allowance for working-age people will be replaced by Personal Independence Payments. The Government's own estimate is that harsher criteria will throw 500,000 people off benefit by 2015-6.

The regular annual increase in benefits which comes every April will raise them by much less than inflation. The Government is imposing a cap of one per cent on increases in most working-age benefits and tax credits for three years from 2013-14.

Trade unions and the Labour Party and anti-cuts committees and the left should be organising loud, large street protests which say:

**Stop the cuts!  
Tax the rich!  
Expropriate the banks!**

- Local meetings and protests: [bit.ly/cutspr](http://bit.ly/cutspr)
- TUC rally: Wed 13 March, 6pm, Emmanuel Centre, 23 Marsham Street, London SW1P 3DW
- Benefit Justice summit: Sat 9 March, 11am, ULU, Malet

## For healthy debate, help us raise £15,000

**Workers' Liberty has always been committed to debate.**

Not "debates" in the sense of one-sided denunciations of straw-men opponents with no chance for them to reply, but genuine debates — in writing or in person — between opposing viewpoints. We are committed to debate within our own organisation, within the left, and between left and right.

That's why, in 1992, we debated Roger Scruton and David Marsland, ideologues of the "New Right" proclaiming the death of socialism.

That's why we carry internal debates in our public press.

That's why we seek debates with socialists and other revolutionaries from traditions outside our own who disagree with us on key questions.

And that's why we have rediscovered and republished key debates from the history of our movement, for example between American socialist Max Shachtman and the "labour priest" Charles Owen Rice.

In 2013, we hope to bring together and publish some of these debates in two new collections. At a time when the entire organisational culture of the left is (rightly) under scrutiny, we want to help build a left more committed to openness, democracy, and debate.

You can help us release these collections by donating to our fund appeal.

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

- Taking out a monthly standing order using the form below or at [www.workersliberty.org/resources](http://www.workersliberty.org/resources). Please post completed forms to us at the AWL address below.
- Making a donation by cheque, payable to "AWL", or donating online at [www.workersliberty.org/donate](http://www.workersliberty.org/donate).
- Organising a fundraising event.
- Taking copies of *Solidarity* to sell.
- Get in touch to discuss joining the AWL. More information: 07796 690874 / [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) / AWL, 20E Tower Workshops, 58 Riley Road, London SE1 3DG.



**Total raised so far: £7,282**

We raised £75 this week from donations. Thank you to Traven (£65) and John (£10).

### Standing order authority

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Signature .....

# The prospects for workers

By **Theodora Polenta**

*We are the ones who knead and yet we have no bread,  
We are the ones who dig for coal and yet we are cold.*

*We are the ones who have nothing and we are coming to  
take the world.*

Tassos Livaditis

**The struggle of workers at the Industrial Mineral (BIO.ME) factory in Thessaloniki is one of the most important workers' struggles taking place in Greece.**

Tuesday 12 February marked the first official day of production under workers' control at the factory. The workers are posing the issue of workers' self-management as a response to "padlocks", layoffs and a bankrupt capitalist Greece.

## Can you hear them marching?

Listen. Can't you hear them?  
It's the sound of marching feet.  
It's the armies of the workers.  
From every land they meet.  
They are marching on to Victory.  
They shall trample every foe,  
For their slogan's human brotherhood  
Everywhere they go.

They shall up the bars from prisons.  
They will wreck each dungeon cell,  
They will liberate the victims  
Of the boss-created hell.  
They will level social barriers  
And by reason of their might  
Eradicate for ever  
The ruling parasite.

They will trample class distinction  
In the mud beneath their heels  
For tomorrow's ruling class shall come  
From factories, mines and fields.  
They will raise the scarlet banner  
And beneath its folds unfurled  
Shall meet a congress of the workers  
In a federation of the world.

A WORKER  
April 1941, *Labor Action*

The factory was abandoned by its owners, the workers left unpaid since May 2011. In September 2012, the retention allowance received from the Employment Agency (OAED) ended. The workers survive through the solidarity of other workers in Greece and abroad.

That support — packets of spaghetti, a bag of beans or a two-euro coin — gives strength and courage to the BIO.ME workers to continue.

In extreme cases of poverty the government hands over an allowance. But the workers have made it clear that they do not ask for charity handouts but for their right to full employment.

In October 2012 BIO.ME made a formal proposal to establish a workers' cooperative under their full control, demanding legal recognition for any project at the factory. They demanded the government and their former boss give them the money to reopen the factory, stating that this money belongs to them, as they are the ones who produce the wealth of society.

The workers' demands first met hostility from the government and the icy indifference of the various trade union bureaucracies. But they were received with great enthusiasm by the rank-and-file workers and community movements, who, through the creation of the "Open Solidarity Initiative for Thessaloniki" and similar initiatives in many cities, have conveyed their message during the last months of ongoing battle.

BIO.ME's workers have "distanced" themselves from both the trade union bureaucracy of GSEE and the Stalinists of PAME. Both have failed to build solidarity for BIO.ME's workers.

GSEE wanted the workers' representatives to meet with the government and the former bosses and to "demand" the boss of BIO.ME reinvests and brings his capital back. PAME offered support only on the precondition that the BIO.ME union join PAME's ranks.

At a nationwide meeting of the BIO.ME solidarity initiatives on Sunday 10 February the slogan that dominated — "You Cannot, But We Can" — is one which fills thousands of workers across the country with hope.

The president of the solidarity association described what will happen now. Workers will operate as a cooperative, all decisions will be taken by the General Assembly of the worker "shareholders". The money raised from auctioning old products and machinery will be used to purchase raw materials to start the first production line. Part of the production will be modified to produce cheap organic household products for the working classes. The "shares" will not be inherited.

On 11 February a solidarity march of more than 1,000 people took place. Left organisations, including SYRIZA and ANTARSYA, participated. The march ended at the Ivanofeio Stadium where a concert of solidarity took place.

In the first phase of production money will be channeled through the retail solidarity initiatives of people involved in the movement of "no middlemen".

A percentage of the money raised from the sale of the products will go to a Solidarity Fund. Another percentage will be saved to meet any future losses of the business. A significant percentage will be invested in expansion of the plant. The rest will be allocated to BIO.ME's workers. The 40 partner-co workers of BIO.ME have unanimously agreed that if the profits of the new BIO.ME exceed their expectations, they will "cap" their wages in order to employ more workers.

During the last three years thousands of workers had been made redundant as a result of factories shutting down so

BIO.ME is, in that respect, a "drop in the ocean".

The best way to support the workers of BIO.ME is to spread the idea of nationalisation under workers' control and without compensation of the factories and businesses that are being shut down and are sacking workers.

### ARCELOR MITTAL

**In late January, several thousand kilometres away in Belgium, thousands of workers of the global steel giant Arcelor Mittal went on strike and took to the streets to demand the nationalisation of their company.**

This was a response to declining production, the closure of an entire unit, the announcement of a further 1,300 redundancies (in September 2011 750 workers were made redundant). It is worth noting that the factory "KONTI" in the town of Volos, which had recently shut down, belonged to the same multinational, Arcelor Mittal.

Volos has been hit hard by the years of recession. Declining production, redundancies, wage cuts, job rotation, flexible employment and closures in many industries: Kanakis BIOUSOL, KONTI to name two. At the same time, metal and chemical factories in Volos are also due to close.

According to official data from November 2012 the overall index of industrial production in Greece has reduced by 11.8% compared to two years ago.

Thousands of workers are made jobless with almost no means of subsistence for the future. The capitalist crisis in Greece appears in its most "pure" form — destruction of its own "cells" of production and closure of entire industrial plants, the destruction of work, the continual creation of new unemployed.

The vicious circle of recession-unemployment-recession exacerbates this. In recent months, one after another, companies have announced bankruptcy, including historical and major industries that employ thousands of workers among them.

The long-established dairy company of AGNO, in northern Greece, with nationwide distribution, has filed for Article 99 (bankruptcy). Its 411 currently employed workers are anxious not only for their jobs, but because they have been unpaid for over three months.

As a result of AGNO's bankruptcy the entire dairy industry of northern Greece has been severely affected — 112 cattle farmers are one step from disaster, claiming outstanding payments of approximately 2.3 million euros.

The workers of AGNO have organised repeated 24-hour strikes since the beginning of January. The dairy factories of MEVGAL in Athens and Nounou in Aspropyrgos have also entered a downward spiral; demonstrations are taking place daily, with workers demanding to be paid overdue accrued salaries.

The famous furniture company NEOSET has repeatedly tried to file for Article 99. With 30 stores in total throughout the Balkans, NEOSET only opened a new section in Romania last November — at the same time that it was filing for bankruptcy!

What will happen to the company's 1,014 workers? Since mid-2012, the bosses had stopped paying its 200 workers in their Vasilikos factory at Evia where the entire domestic production is based. Those workers are now trapped in the process of "reconciliation consultations" with employers, under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour.

Another longtime industry, wood processing, has closed down in the recession hit region of Evia. In Shelman, back in 2010, the bosses were trying to get through "job rotation" and the dismantling of the collective bargaining agreements. That

# s' control in Greece

sparked a 38-day strike. The end of the strike was followed by a "pogrom" redundancy of 500 workers.

Both the Shelman workers and those at Vasilikos-Evia say they will not accept any redundancies and will not engage in any further negotiations with the bosses.

The workers of the woollen carpets factory Fintexport have just entered their third month in occupation. The bosses shut down the factory last July. The workers are demanding accrued wages over 14 months, the reopening of the factory, restored collective bargaining agreements, full-time employment and wages. They have recently confronted and prevented the bosses from getting materials out of the factory. The Fintexport workers are demanding emergency financial aid from the government, the freezing of their loans and mortgages, for as long as they remained unpaid, and for electricity in the factory not to be disconnected.

The American drinks multinational company, Pespico-Hvi is closing its factory in Loutraki, where bottled water "Hvi Loutraki" is produced. Two years ago the company started a voluntary retirement programme which left 40 workers at the plant. The remaining 20 workers are now threatened with redundancy. The company "promises" that it will compensate the 20 workers, and that it will relocate them to the factory at Oinofita.

The above case studies are merely the best known to the general public. A detailed list of closures would require hundreds of pages.

But the goal for the working class is not to sit back and count the "corpses" of factories and businesses. The challenge is to work out a plan for a way out of the disaster, claiming our right to work and decent life.

Answers need to be found for all sorts of questions such as: how can the factories be re-opened again and how will we safeguard our jobs? What sort of production do we want and in what kind of society? Such dialogue must begin first and foremost among the workers of the factories and workplaces threatened with closures.

## CAPITALISTS

**The BIO.ME workers in Thessaloniki and the Belgian steelworkers remind us of an historical truth.**

That for the factories to work, for the economy to produce, for the productive forces to evolve, for the society to flourish — there is no need for the capitalist bosses. On the contrary, today's capitalists are an absolute obstacle to the operation and further development of the economy and humanity.

To maximise their profits, the "productive" capitalist industrialists and multinationals do not hesitate to "put a padlock" on productive units and lay off thousands of workers. That "golden rule" of capitalism applies equally to modern factories in Belgium and to little industrial production units in Greece.

The factories are closing not because society does not need the steel of Greek Chalivourgia, the radiators (BIOSOL) or tile adhesives (BIOSOL), but because their production no longer offers the gains of the past to the capitalist bosses. This sums up the parasitic nature of the "free market", of capitalism.

The only way for the workers to keep their jobs and to continue to produce socially useful products is for the strategic sectors of the industry and the overall economy to be placed under the ownership, management and democratic control of the labour movement and society. To create national public sector bodies throughout industry (e.g., for building materials, construction, metal industry and so on). Then to introduce democratic planning of production and the econ-

omy as a whole for the benefit of society. The workers of BIO.ME are a living example that it is feasible to run a factory without bosses.

However, if the self-organised factory of BIO.ME is left isolated it will be very difficult for it to survive within the fierce competition of the capitalist market. Furthermore, to safeguard the BIO.ME workers against the potential of becoming "little capitalists" it is imperative for the workers' movement to be by the side of the BIO.ME workers in order to keep this struggle within its anti-capitalist framework, of workers' management and control. Otherwise BIO.ME's workers could be "accommodated" within the capitalist system and gradually transformed into a small "alternative" albeit capitalist enterprise.

Similar experiments in Argentina (2000s) or in Portugal after 1975, and briefly in France in May 1968, of factories run for workers and by workers and establishing new human relationships in the here and now, despite their valuable contribution as blueprints of workers' control and dual power, are also a lesson of limitations within the framework of capitalism.

It is necessary to nationalise whole industries and it is now the responsibility of the left and of the militant rank and file trade unions to highlight and popularise this historic demand.

The BIO.ME struggle should not be confined to the factory of BIO.ME. It should be generalised and spread to all the shut-down factories and businesses, to help it survive, to help them become the pioneers of a completely alternative organisation of production and the economy, one without exploitation, without inequalities and hierarchies.

In the Memorandum Greece, with unemployment approaching two million and the vast majority of people condemned to poverty and misery by the three-party coalition government, as well as by previous governments, the demand to put factories into the hands of workers to be run under self-management and control is the only response to this disaster.

The left and the rank and file unions have a duty to join the fight and organise the battle at every workplace with direct democratic procedures, open general meetings, and assemblies without bureaucrats.

## HISTORY

**The last words belong to Makis Anagnostou, the president of the trade union association of BIO.ME:**

"I would not call our struggle and our demands pioneering. Our demands and struggle are rooted deep in the historical industrial workers' struggles.

"Throughout history the industrial workers aimed to get the means of production in their hands and under their control and management and to be able to produce for themselves and society.

"We state this 'primitive' elementary demand to every worker and try to break the power of habit that the bourgeoisie has instilled in them, aiming to keep all workers in hypnosis.

"The trade union bureaucracy as an agent of the bourgeoisie tries to push all workers' struggles in more 'peaceful', conciliatory routes within the confines of the capitalist system.

**"We, I repeat, took examples from the past and we believe that the reopening of the factory and the setting up of an egalitarian workers' cooperative will steer clear of bourgeois types of solutions."**

• BIO.ME international website: <http://www.viome.org/>

Logo of the  
BIO.ME  
workers

Makis Anagnostou, president of the BIO.ME trade union

# An enthusiast for the rank-and-file

## Our Movement By Michéal MacEoin



**Stan Weir (1921-2001) was a Third Camp socialist, trade union militant and intellectual at the forefront of the post-Second World War US labour movement.**

Weir graduated from high school in 1940 and, because of his school's participation in an experimental curriculum, was eligible for a place at the University of California. Neither Stan nor his classmates were told of this, however. The omission was no accident. As his former principal explained, kids from his school were needed as mechanics and factory workers, not college graduates.

After learning this lesson in the politics of the American class system, Weir managed to take up his place at university, though many of his friends were not so lucky.

When the Second World War broke out, Weir enlisted as a naval reserve cadet in the Merchant Marine. On board, Weir encountered members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) who taught him the lessons of the 1934 San Francisco general strike. He recalled:

"[T]hey pumped all this history into me. And then they would quiz me. 'What happened on such-and-such a date?' 'What's Bloody Thursday?' 'What were the big demands?' 'What was the 1934 award?' 'Why were we able to win victories before getting a collective bargaining contract?'"

Weir had been on course to become an officer but his experiences with the deckhands encouraged him to subvert the ship's hierarchy. He abandoned the officer's mess to eat with

the seamen. Membership of the Sailors' Union of the Pacific followed, introducing him to the organised left and a whole array of radical activists and ideas in foreign ports.

In 1944, Weir joined the Workers' Party led by Max Shachtman. As the US group *Solidarity* wrote: "Throughout this period, Stan maintained his independence within the left. His membership in the Workers' Party and Independent Socialist League from 1944 through the 1950s involved him in probably the least dogmatic and most democratic left organisation of the time."

### AUTO INDUSTRY

**After the war, Shachtman persuaded Weir to get a job in the auto industry in Oakland.**

Weir stumbled into the October 1946 Oakland general strike, sparked by police breaking the picket lines of women strikers at two department stores. Soon 130,000 workers were on strike, bringing the city to halt.

Weir wrote that: "Bars could stay open if they didn't serve hard liquor, and they had to put their jukeboxes out on the sidewalk. People were literally dancing in the streets in anticipation of some kind of new day... It lasted fifty-four hours. It was that vision and the experiences in that strike that I experienced and which my wife saw, the vision in actual life of people determining their own destinies that sustains one and makes one stand fast for a long, long time."

Weir was a life-long enthusiast of rank-and-file union organisation. Just like street-corner committees during the Oakland general strike, Weir argued that workplaces have their own de facto decision-making structures, or "informal work groups". The task was to link these together to build a struc-

ture of workplace-based representation.

Weir further hardened against bureaucratic officialdom when, following the Workers' Party line, he campaigned for Walter Reuther during his first outing in the elections for the United Automobile Worker presidency. By the time re-election came around, Weir had been disillusioned by Reuther's refusal to back workers on basic issues such as assembly line speed, and began to develop an analysis of the structural bureaucratic pressures on union officials.

After the Independent Socialist League dissolved in 1958, Weir worked at the waterfront in San Francisco, involving himself in a rank-and-file struggle against the leadership of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). His experience as a workplace organiser led to a job at the University of Illinois in 1968, teaching union officials.

In the late 1970s, Weir founded Singlejack Books, whose motto was "Writings about work by the people who do it." Norman Diamond, President of Pacific Northwest Labor College wrote that: "The intention was not only to share work experience and make workers and workplaces visible in a culture that ignores them. It was also to encourage the self-reliance of worker-intellectuals and the development of people able to speak out and stand up for themselves and their class."

**Such a project, enriched by a lifetime experience of rank-and-file organising, working-class self-education and immersion in the most intellectually open and exciting currents of American Trotskyism, leaves a lasting legacy to the working-class socialist movement.**

# Socialist Worker defends North Korea

## The Left



By Martin Thomas

**After sidling into mealy-mouthed defence of Al Qaeda and its allies in Mali (9 February), Socialist Worker of 23 February attempts a sort-of-defence of the North Korean regime.**

SW says that North Korea's nuclear weapons tests have "nothing to do with anti-imperialism or socialism".

However, it declares the North Korean government not to blame for those tests. All the blame lies with the US and its allies.

SW says that North Korea is "a nuclear bogeyman created by the US". SW cannot mean to say that North Korea really has no nuclear weapons (i.e. the story that it has them has been manufactured by the US). It cannot mean to say that the North Korean government is controlled by the US, and carrying out nuclear tests only because the US tells it to.

It seems to mean that the US is so aggressive towards North Korea that North Korea somehow has no choice but to stage nuclear tests. "North Korea's third nuclear test was a direct result of bullying by South Korea, the US and Japan".

The UN Security Council had increased sanctions against North Korea because of a previous rocket launch. The US and South Korean government had warned of further action.

This allegedly means that: "North Korea's nuclear weapons and rockets are 'monsters' created by US imperialism".

How? Let's concede that the US has adopted an aggressive tone towards North Korea. It's mild stuff compared to what the US has done over the decades in central America. If North Korea has developed nuclear weapons, and the central American countries haven't, it is a matter of the North Korean government's choice, not of compulsion.

SW's argument here seems like their argument that Islamist terrorism, though not exactly what SWP members would want to see in their own front rooms, is an inevitable

response to US misdeeds in the Middle East, so inevitable that people like those who bombed the World Trade Centre should not be condemned.

Why then haven't the peoples of Central America been "forced" into Catholic-fundamentalist terrorism? For that matter, why haven't workers in the US itself been "forced" into systematic bombing of civilian targets by the exploitation to which US bosses subject them?

SW continues: "The US demonisation of North Korea is part of its strategy to maintain hegemony in East Asia... There is even talk of supporting regime change in North Korea".

The US State Department declares officially that "outstanding problems includ[e] the North's attempts to develop a nuclear program and human rights abuses". Facts about North

Korea do not cease to be facts if the US government repeats them.

The SW article nowhere mentions the totalitarian and exploitative regime in North Korea, or its denial of all workers' rights.

The issue on which the forerunners of the SWP first separated from other Trotskyists was that in 1950 they refused to consider the Korean war as just an attack by the US on innocent North Korea, and insisted that Stalinism was also playing an imperialistic role in Korea.

**At that time the Stalinist regime in North Korea (as far as can be guessed) had sizeable popular support. Why rally to the defence of its raddled and corrupt successor in 2013?**

## "I don't debate with Israelis"

**When I first entered politics, I used to respect George Galloway, he was one of few prominent politicians with a viewpoint that seemed to resonate with my own.**

I liked the way he could run rings around ignorant TV presenters; his eloquent and devastating oratory gave comfort to me that my anti-Iraq-war feelings weren't either as isolated, or as naive as every analyst made them out to be.

However, any bone of affection I ever held for Galloway has long since disintegrated, further fuelled by his latest ridiculous outburst at an Oxford University debate. Upon hearing his opponent's way of reference to Israel, he questioned him, asking... "You said 'we', are you Israeli?" Then, on hearing the response: "I don't debate with Israelis". He exited the debating chamber reiterating: "I don't recognise Israel and I don't debate with Israelis."

He didn't say: "I don't debate with apologists for war crimes". Or even: "I don't debate with vulgar propagandists."

His refusal to participate further was based on his opponent's nationality, and no other factor.

If we want the politics of Israel/Palestine to be understood, and acted upon by a broad, engaged and receptive public so that a peaceful solution can ensue, we would do

well to disassociate ourselves from this kind of politics.

It bears the same lack of moral standard as contemporary politicians; the denial that moral standards are universal and the claim that their group has an earned exception to them. Galloway's mantra is that his racism is based on "a refusal to recognise Israel", or an "academic boycott" of Israel.

Imagine a prominent Israeli exiting a debate on seeing his opponent, stating, "I don't debate with Arabs". The entire left would be ablaze with denunciation, and rightly so.

Galloway is a supporter of the "one state solution", one that involves the return of all Palestinian refugees, and their descendants to a democratic, bi-national, secular state. The logical conclusion of the implementation of such a plan however, would lead to a vastly ethnically imbalanced state, the demography changed to the extent it is no longer reflective of the state desired by the population of Israel today.

There are two peoples living in the land that is historic Palestine, both seeking national self-determination.

Ignorance and racism towards one nation's right to exist will only help to protract the conflict, exacerbate tensions and undermine the hard work of reconciliation that serious leftists and socialists are engaged in.

Andy Forse blogging at <http://leftwingtittletattle.wordpress.com>

# Stalin's bloody rise to power

This article by US Trotskyist Albert Glotzer (taken from *Labor Action* 16 March 1953) was written to mark the death of Joseph Stalin 60 years ago (5 March 1953). Glotzer had been court reporter at the 1937 John Dewey Commission, called to hear trumped-up charges by Stalin against Leon Trotsky.

**In the pre-revolution days of the struggling Bolshevik party, Stalin became known to the party leadership as an indefatigable party worker, who could be relied on in the dark days of Tsarist persecution when all revolutionary democratic and socialist groups were periodically driven underground.**

He was one of the "practicals," a man from the provinces. He could lay no claim to any significant intellectual achievements. He was without special learning; he was not a writer or a speaker; and this in an organisation which contained perhaps the most outstanding group of leaders ever seen in any political party, socialist or otherwise.

Before 1917, there were many party workers who like Stalin, were in the secondary leadership, some with greater talent than his, some with less. They functioned in the organisations of the party below the Central Committee; they were often arrested and many times exiled to Siberia. Some escaped, while others were liberated by the First World War. Some left the movement in its darkest days, while others, like Stalin, went through periods of inactivity.

It was while he was in exile that Stalin exhibited that cunning patience for which he became noted in the years when he was reaching out for complete power. All reminiscences of his comrades-in-exile or in jail describe his anti-social behaviour, intrigue and isolation from his comrades. He was an envious, resentful and bitter person. As a result most comrades shied away from him and left him in peace.

In 1912, Stalin worked on the editorial board of *Pravda* in Petersburg, at the time when the whole staff was hostile to the policies of the Central Committee, which then resided abroad under Lenin's leadership. The Central Committee sent Yakov Sverdlov, who became the first president of the Soviet Republic, to Petersburg to correct the ambiguity created by an editorial staff in opposition to the Central Committee.

Part of that correction was Stalin's first extended trip abroad. He went to Cracow to see Lenin. The visit coincided with a meeting of the Central Committee in December, 1912, and January, 1913. It was while he remained with Lenin that he wrote his *Marxism and the National Question*. Historians have wondered why the man had never written anything previous to 1913, or subsequently, that compared with this acceptable Marxist work on the national question. The answer would obviously seem to be Lenin's presence, his tutelage and assistance. For this was to be the first and last important literary work by Stalin until he became the general secretary of the party in 1922, or more precisely, until he was part of the triumvirate with Zinoviev and Kamenev in the struggle against Trotsky and the Left Opposition.

He then issued his infamous book *Leninism*, a collection of dry-as-dust platitudes and revisions of Marxism and socialism, which became one of the bibles of Stalinism.

## UNDISTINGUISHED

**Little more is heard of Stalin until after the Russian Revolution, when the Bolsheviks were in power. He was not inactive in the revolutionary days, to be sure, but it was in a subordinate capacity, and mostly, during the civil war, in the Kazan province of the country.**

Before Lenin arrived in Russia after the March revolution, Stalin was one of the editors of *Pravda* who called for support to the Provisional Government in opposition to party policy. As on other occasions, this "old Bolshevik" found himself in company with the Mensheviks. At the famous April Conference in 1917, at which Lenin proposed a complete revision of the course pursued by the party in Russia, Stalin fell mute. He was so closely identified with the false policy of *Pravda* that he preferred to remain anonymous at the conference.

The history of the events of the revolution recorded the activities of all the important figures, bourgeois, Social-Revolu-

tionary, Menshevik and Bolshevik. But Stalin's name rarely appears. One need only read a list of the men whom Stalin had purged and assassinated to learn who the leaders of the revolution were.

Stalin became Commissar of Nationalities in the new government. Although it was an important post, his work was undistinguished. Undistinguished? Nay, it was distinguished for the rude Great-Russian policy which emerged from his direction — the Georgian-become-Great-Russian-nationalist. It was necessary to sever his connection with this important field of work.

The great turning point in Stalin's career occurred in 1922, when, ironically enough, he was proposed as the General Secretary of the party by Zinoviev, an act which the latter undoubtedly regretted to the very day when a GPU pistol was fired into the base of his skull. For the most part, the post had been primarily an administrative-technical post, important in itself, but completely subordinate to the Political Committee of the party. Then began that subtle, unrelenting drive by this modern Genghis Khan (as Bukharin later called him) to make the post the most powerful one in the party.

Shortly after this appointment, Lenin became gravely ill. He was unable to function as the active leader of the government and the party. It was in this period that Stalin began to reach out for control of the party. In a party whose revolutionary elan was high and whose authentic leadership thought in quite other terms than that of inner-party intrigue, it came as a surprise that Stalin had unostentatiously filled hundreds and thousands of posts with the "apparatus men", that large layer of bureaucratic elements to whom the revolution had been the means to "success."

The old comradeship, the old system of elective posts, the essential ideological unity of the party, was shaken by the

## Dead, but his foul legacy lived on

new bureaucratic rule. This rule was accompanied by rudeness, physical assaults upon opponents, and a veritable reign of terror against all protestants. The adoption of a false, but temporary, measure at the 10th Party Congress in 1921, which barred factions and factional dispute in the party because of the dire threat of the counter-revolution in the midst of civil war and the severe economic hardships that prevailed, became a lever for Stalin's seizure of control of the party apparatus.

In the name of unity, and the above-mentioned statute outlawing factions, all opponents were hounded, and driven from their posts and authority. Stalin was creating the monolithic party. He was aided by both Zinoviev and Kamenev, to their everlasting shame. Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky allied themselves with Stalin. They joined hands to destroy the power and influence of Leon Trotsky.

In his brief recovery in 1923, Lenin became aware of the vast change that had taken place in the organisation and in the state apparatus as well. He was greatly alarmed. Lenin then dictated his famous "testament" which called for the removal of Stalin from his post as General Secretary of the party.

The testament contained two parts, the first dealing with the danger of a split in the party in the conflict which impended between Trotsky and Stalin. He criticised Trotsky, whom he regarded as "the most brilliant and able man in the present Central Committee," for his "too far-reaching self-confidence and a disposition to be too much attracted by the purely administrative side of affairs."

Of Stalin he said, he "has concentrated an enormous power in his hands; and I am not sure that he always knows how to use that power with sufficient caution."

Finally when all his efforts to halt Stalin's stranglehold on the party apparatus had failed, he wrote a postscript to the above testament saying: "Stalin is too rude, and this fault, entirely supportable in relations among us Communists, becomes insupportable in the office of General Secretary. Therefore, I propose to the comrades to find a way to remove Stalin from that position and appoint to it another who in all respects differs from Stalin only in superiority — namely, more patient, more loyal, more polite and more attentive to

comrades, less capricious, etc." But it was already too late.

With Lenin incapacitated and Trotsky ill, Stalin was able, with the assistance of Zinoviev, Kamenev, Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky; to dominate the party. The 12th Party Congress was filled with hand-picked delegates. This was to become the rule. Elections were swiftly becoming a thing of the past. Once the most democratic deliberative centres of the Bolshevik Party, party congresses were destined to occur less and less frequently and then to meet purely as a rubberstamp to all decisions taken by Stalin.

When Trotsky published his *Lessons of October* in 1924, all the pretences of the Stalin-Zinoviev-Kamenev triumvirate about unity and peace with the party were dropped. Then came the great "Struggle Against Trotskyism" in the demagogic name of Lenin and party unity. It ushered in a new kind of inner-party life.

Once the party was the great arena of ideological dispute and factional contention. Free discussions allowed for the development of ideas, the exchange of conflicting viewpoints and the possibility of honest conflict with the prospect of influencing one another in debate. This was now ended. A reign of terror was unleashed in the party, in the trade unions and in the soviets.

The groundwork for Stalin's dictatorship was laid in the years of 1924, 1925 and 1926.

The unrelenting drive of Stalin for personal power caused a break-up of his alliance with Zinoviev and Kamenev. They belatedly joined forces with Trotsky and the Left Opposition in a bloc aimed at halting Stalin's domination. It was already too late. Stalin was striking out against the left, against those forces in the party who called for a vast industrialisation of the country, for a collectivisation of agriculture, for a genuine internationalist socialist policy abroad. The struggle pro-

duced a reactionary, nationalist assault upon the left.

Stalin introduced his reactionary, nationalist theory of building "socialism in one country," and railed against "foreign adventures." The reaction and relapse after the heroic revolutionary days was in his favour. The weary masses remained quiescent in this conflict. The party apparatus, the vast bureaucracy, pushed Stalin forward in its name, for "peace" and for their kind of reconstruction. In the ensuing struggle, Zinoviev and Kamenev capitulated, but Trotsky and the Left Opposition continued the fight.

For its principled stand Trotsky's opposition suffered expulsion, arrest, imprisonment, and exile. Later the same fate awaited Stalin's allies of the "right," Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsky. Stalin extended his monolithic control to the Communist International and its Communist Parties, converting these into docile tools of the Russian bureaucracy.

This was the victory of the counter-revolution in Russia. It marked the end of the socialist revolution and the beginning of a new kind of state and society, so imperceptible in those years, but to emerge more clearly in the thirties, the years of the purges. Those years marked the consolidation of the personal dictatorship of Stalin and the physical destruction of all the remaining figures of the revolution, whether of importance or not. Many of those murdered during the purges, were already completely destroyed politically and morally. A new generation of bureaucrat had grown up — the Stalinist generation, a generation to whom the revolution was known only through the falsification of history undertaken by Stalin's robot historian.

A new regime was constructed out of those elements. It was under this leadership, too, that the purges were completed. It was this leadership which contributed to the Second World War through the Stalin-Hitler Pact. It was this generation that directed the nation through the war and the post-war imperialist expansion. From it emerges the regime of the new bureaucracy, the new class of a new society in Russia.

How could it happen that a man like Stalin could triumph over the Bolshevik party and men of greater stature than himself? How could he have triumphed over the Soviet state

*Continued on page 10*

which marked a tremendous advance of democracy in Russia?

Superficial bourgeois historians and critics, as well as liberal and social-democratic observers, have asserted that the triumph of Stalin and his totalitarian regime were the inevitable result of Bolshevism and its highly centralised and disciplined party; that the Stalinist system describes the real evolution of socialism. Incidental and accidental factors which aided Stalin (the death of Lenin, or Trotsky's failure to fight immediately) are given the weight of decisive historical importance.

The arguments of these historians and critics have already been effectively replied to by Marxists, in the first place by Trotsky himself. Despite his own great error in regarding Stalin's Russia as a "degenerated workers' state" Trotsky wrote at great length against the completely superficial analyses made by these critics, which, he pointed out, was not so much a criticism of the specific nature of Bolshevism or Stalinism but of socialism.

The explanation for the rise of Stalinism, said Trotsky, must be sought in the objective situation of society. Stalin's role in this situation was not unimportant; on the contrary, Trotsky himself has supplied to the world a wealth of detailed analysis and information on the manner in which Stalin's intervention in the course of events determined their concrete development. But it is necessary to seek out the fundamental factors behind that terrible development.

No one decisive factor brought this about, Trotsky wrote. The Russian Revolution occurred in a country of great backwardness — economic and cultural backwardness — in which the political level of the masses was far in advance of the economy or the culture of the nation. This was the startling contradiction of the combined development of a peasant land with an archaic agricultural system, but at the same time with a small, advanced and concentrated industrial system. It happened that the Tsarist regime, at one and the same time the weakest and most corrupt in Europe, could not rule with any strength or confidence in the crisis created by the First World War in which it suffered the greatest losses of any country involved.

In the perspectives of the leaders, the Russian Revolution appeared only as the advance post in a revolutionary Europe where working class or socialist power seemed imminent in a number of countries, most notably Germany with its advanced industry, technology and wonderfully organised working class. The curve of the revolutionary wave was, however, extremely uneven.

The revolution in Russia was visited by internal counter-revolution and external intervention by the Allied armies, including the American expeditionary forces. Although the new regime successfully withstood these assaults, it came out of the war years greatly weakened. The economy of the country was virtually at a standstill. The sufferings of the people were incalculable. Great weariness gripped the population; it was interested in peace, quiet, order and an end to sacrifice. A conservative reaction had set in.

### RUSSIA ISOLATED

**A similar reaction occurred in Europe too, after the defeat of the German and Hungarian revolution. Fascism, under Mussolini, came to power in Italy.**

The consolidation of bourgeois society in the west led to the extreme isolation of the revolution, and in a backward country at that. Reconstruction became the watchword in Russia. The internal dispute over industrialisation covered up temporarily the great weariness and conservatism which was present.

In these circumstances, it was possible for Stalin to rise to power, for he stood at the head of the conservative reaction, the personification of the new bureaucracy. Was this, therefore, the inevitable evolution of Bolshevism? To this Trotsky replied:

"Those theoreticians who attempt to prove that the present totalitarian regime of the USSR is due not to such historical conditions, but to the very nature of Bolshevism itself, forget that the civil war did not proceed from the nature of Bolshevism but rather from the efforts of the Russian and international bourgeois to overthrow the Soviet regime.

"There is no doubt that Stalin, like many others, was moulded by the environment and circumstances of the civil war, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship and a whole layer of workers and peasants raised to the status of commanders and administrators."

It ought also to be remembered that the Bolshevik party had changed considerably in those few years. Five years after the revolution, more than 97 per cent of the party consisted of new members. Another five years, and the membership had only the vaguest recollections of the revolution and the generation which led it.

When Stalin consolidated his power, fully three-fourths of the membership had joined after 1923. This was a new generation of party members; it had no ties with the glorious past of the organisation, its traditions, its work and experiences.

"Thus," wrote Trotsky, "Stalin, the empiricist, without formally breaking with the revolutionary tradition, without repudiating Bolshevism, became the most effective betrayer and destroyer of both."

Trotsky recalled that in the spring of 1924, following a plenum of the Central Committee from which he was kept by illness, he told I N Smirnov: "Stalin will become the dictator of the USSR." Smirnov replied, "But he is a mediocrity, a colourless nonentity."

The reply Trotsky made to Smirnov in 1924 should be remembered by all for its perspicacity: "Mediocrity, yes; nonentity, no. The dialectics of history have already hooked him and will raise him up. He is needed by all of them — by the tired radicals, by the bureaucrats, by the Nepmen, the kulaks, the upstarts, the sneaks, by all the worms that are crawling out of the upturned soil of the manured revolution. He knows how to meet them on their own ground, he speaks their language and he knows how to lead them.

"He has the deserved reputation of an old revolutionist, which makes him invaluable to them as a blinder on the eyes of the country. He has will and daring. He will not hesitate to utilise them and to move them against the party.

"He has already started doing this. Right now he is organising around him self the sneaks of the party, the artful dodgers. Of course great developments in Europe, in Asia and in our country may intervene and upset all the speculations. But if every thing continues to go automatically as it is going now then Stalin will just as automatically become dictator."

### NATIONAL SOCIALISM

**One other point needs to be made about Stalin, his theory and perspectives. We have already referred to the presentation of his single "original" bold idea: Building Socialism in a Single Country. The very idea is in complete contradiction to the beliefs of socialism, which was conceived by its founders as an internationalist universal system, in contradistinction to an international capitalism made up of antagonistic national entities.**

At a party gathering in the year of the revolution he began a speech containing the essence of the views formulated in 1924. But at that time nobody paid any attention to him whatever, and he retired quietly.

Stalin began, his political life in nationally oppressed Georgia. He began, therefore, as a national revolutionary and in the course of his development became attracted to Marxism and socialism.

What did the great internationalist doctrines of Marx and Engels mean to the young man living in the deadly isolation of a backward oppressed nation of "backward Great-Russian imperialism"? It would seem to this writer that the theoretical and political horizon of Stalin, moulded as it was in his formative years in backward Georgia, grasped in Marxism and socialism only national liberation and a species of national-socialism.

By socialism, he understood the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and perhaps the nationalisation of industry and collectivisation. It is difficult to say, for in the matter of theory, Stalin was ever the improviser, the borrower. Being an empiricist, he undoubtedly developed his policies as he went along.

But the fact that he was in essence an anti-internationalist, a national-Bolshevik with deep-rooted and unshakable prejudices against the great movements of the west, the leaders with a western education and a high culture, would seem to indicate quite accurately the insularity of the man and how this insularity determined the course he pursued as dictator of Russia.

This is further borne out in the utterly reactionary campaigns he has repeatedly initiated against internationalism, cosmopolitanism, and all things progressive in the fields of culture.

Stalin's power, and the power of his movement, rested, as it still does, on the failures of the working-class movements

of socialism to turn the tide of social retrogression.

Because capitalism is bankrupt in the struggle against Stalinism, the new totalitarianism has been able to grow and ex-

pand.

He is the architect of the greatest totalitarian slave state the world has ever known. He is the architect of a new exploitive society, a society based upon collectivised property and ruled by a new bureaucratic class. He is the architect of bureaucratic collectivism, an anti-capitalist, anti-socialist society that has emerged from the chaos of modern capitalism and the defeat and disappearance of a socialist revolution.

It is a new kind of society never before seen in history,

a society of modern slavery based upon an immense industrial structure in an atomic age. This is his "contribution" to history. For this his name will live — but in the blackest pages of infamy.

• Slightly abridged. Full text:

[www.workersliberty.org/glotzer-stalin](http://www.workersliberty.org/glotzer-stalin)

# Time running out for fight on teachers' pay

By Patrick Murphy,  
NUT Executive (pc)

**The National Union of Teachers (NUT) Executive meets on 28 February to consider the next steps in the campaign to defend national pay.**

By the time *Solidarity* is published, the outcome should be known. The key issue is whether and when the union is prepared to strike to oppose government proposals to move to individualised pay. At two recent Executive meetings, proposals to call strikes on specific dates were defeated. In January, a proposal to strike on 13 March fell by only two votes. The policy that was carried, however, stated that the February meeting would decide on national strike action to take place in the summer term.

In the last two months a series of pay meetings have taken place across England

and Wales, led for the most part by the General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary. By far the largest was a meeting of over 200 in London in January which overwhelmingly voted for strikes to start in March and be part of a planned series of actions. Meetings in Leeds, Liverpool, Sheffield, Coventry, and another in London repeated that pattern. A second survey of 10,000 random members and 5,000 young members found very strong support for strike action, even if the NUT was acting alone, from both groups. Those who voted against urgent action quibbled about the small return from these surveys but the fact is that every measure of membership opinion since the pay proposals were announced has shown clear support for strike action.

As ever the major factor holding the NUT back is the fact that the other major

teachers' union, NASUWT, are showing no sign of a willingness to take joint coordinated action with us, despite a live joint campaign of action short of strikes over workload and observations.

As the new pay arrangements are due to come into effect in September and will need to be legislated for in the next few months it makes no sense to delay our response any longer. More than that we are still in dispute about the government's pension proposals. With the second round of contribution increases due on 1 April now is the time to return to action on that issue linked to national pay.

## DEBATE

**The debate at the Executive will hopefully be between different strike dates rather than no action at all.**

It may be that supporters

of the rank-and file-network, LANAC, re-table the proposal for action on 13 March or on budget day (20 March). The date favoured by the union leadership at the last Executive appeared to be 27 June. There is some possibility that, under the pressure of local meetings and member responses and in the knowledge that waiting for the NASUWT is no longer relevant, an earlier summer date will be proposed as well as 27 June. That would be real progress, though the failure of the second largest teachers' union to respond properly to this threat is a major problem.

In a further indication of the mood of members, a recent Executive by-election fought directly on this issue was won comfortably by a LANAC supporter. The Merseyside and Cheshire seat was won by Pete Glover of Liverpool who defeated Beth Purnell

(of the "Broadly Speaking" faction).

Pete asked members in his area to "send a clear message to your union. No more half-measures and decision". The members responded as he expected.

**It is to be hoped that the Executive gets the message.**

• More —

<http://bit.ly/YSC8L0>

## Tube drivers' safety fight

By Ollie Moore

**Tube drivers demonstrated at Queen's Park station in northwest London on Friday 23 February as part of an ongoing campaign about passenger safety.**

Drivers on the Bakerloo Line have been refusing to take trains into sidings or depots until they have performed manual detrainment checks (which were previously performed by station staff, before staffing cuts). Over 3,000 passengers have been overcarried into sidings or depots, including a 12-year old boy who wandered out of a train onto live track before being rescued by a driver.

Since the industrial action, which involves members of the Rail, Maritime, and Transport workers union (RMT) and drivers' union ASLEF, began in January, London Underground has consistently misinformed passengers about the real cause of the delays on the Bakerloo Line.

An RMT statement said: "After the Queen's Park incident, drivers decided

that we were no longer prepared to go along with London Underground's dangerous policy. Both our unions — RMT and ASLEF — balloted us for industrial action, and since 15 January, we have been insisting on checking that our trains are empty before we take them into sidings or depots.

This is what has caused the delays. We are not striking, and we are not demanding higher pay. We are insisting on a procedure for taking trains out of service that is safe for passengers and staff."

"You could easily miss an announcement to get off the train, and get 'overcarried' into a depot or sidings. London Underground claims that new barriers between the carriages make it impossible to escape from the train and that therefore it is safe for passengers to be accidentally taken into depots and sidings. This is not true.

"We have tried to persuade London Underground to bring back the station staff it got rid of, to carry out the checks without delaying the service.

There are 33 laid-off agency workers who want to work for London Underground and can do this work.

**"But London Underground is not listening. When we discussed the dispute at ACAS, London Underground offered little more than to make more announcements!"**

## Unite derecognised by Yorkshire Ambulance Service

By a health worker

**Yorkshire Ambulance Service have derecognised Unite, which represents around 400 workers within the service.**

The derecognition came shortly after the imposition of the Trust's reorganisation of front line workers, including the downbanding of Assistant Practitioners, who work alongside paramedics and technicians on emergency ambulances. The downbanding will give a less skilled response in emergency situations.

Unite had opposed the plan and had a strong indicative vote for industrial

action. The branch committee of Unison, the biggest union with around 3,000 members, had not recommended rejection of the plan, resulting in a 59% acceptance on a low 30% turnout. Rumours that the derecognition had been part of a deal with the Unison leadership have been denied.

**Since the derecognition, Unite's membership in the Trust has grown significantly, although Unite has not used this on the ground to launch any significant campaign for re-recognition or for action against the attacks on pay and conditions.**

## More industrial news online

- Tanker drivers strike — <http://bit.ly/YSB0an>
- Department for Education workers vote to strike — <http://bit.ly/ZuKQ4e>
- GMB rejects NHS cuts — <http://bit.ly/X67Nw3>

## LMU fight

By Darren Bedford

**150 people demonstrated at London Metropolitan University (LMU) in solidarity with victimised trade unionists Max Watson and Jawad Botmeh as they faced a hearing on Monday 18 February.**

Max and Jawad, who are activists in Unison, are suspended from their jobs because of alleged "gross misconduct".

A statement from the union branch said: "Thank you to all those who attended the lobby and helped to publicise it and build support. The huge turnout sends a strong message to university management that we will not tolerate victimisation and intimidation of trade union members."

**University management has continued its offensive against trade unionists at the institution and has also suspended Professor Steve Jefferys of the Working Lives Research Institute.**

## Post Office strike ballot

By Clarke Benitez

**The Communication Workers Union has begun balloting 4,000 of its members who work in Post Offices for strikes.**

The workers, who have been waiting for an annual pay offer since April 2012, recently received what CWU officer Andy Furey called "the most appalling pay proposal I have seen in 20 years of being on the union's executive".

The Post Office also plans to close 70 Crown offices (offices which are directly managed by Post Office Ltd., rather than subpostmasters or franchisees), risking 700 jobs.

**The ballot opened on Friday 22 February and will run until Friday 8 March.**

# Solidarity & Workers' Liberty

## Cuts in emergency services will cause deaths

# Campaign to save the NHS!

By Rosalind Robson

**London hospitals are failing patients who need emergency care, according to a just-published NHS audit (researched undertaken in 2011). According to the audit none of London's 28 Hospital Trusts are meeting minimum standards.**

The report is published as an inquest takes place into the death of seven week old Axel Peanberg King who died of pneumonia despite calls and visits to a privatised out-of-hours GP service based at the Whittington Hospital in north London.

The current wave of government-driven initiatives and "shake ups" in London's NHS are certain to make a bad situation worse.

The government wants a 24-7 NHS, one where, for example, seriously patients who are admitted at the weekend are able, if necessary, to access senior clinical staff. The government is not prepared to pay for it, despite the fact that it would according to Dr Andy Mitchell, medical director of NHS London, "save hundreds of lives".

Meanwhile Accident and **Axel Peanberg King was failed by privatised out-of-hours GP service**

Emergency units at hospitals in both south and north London (Lewisham, Charing Cross, Central Middlesex, Hammersmith and Ealing) are being downgraded. Remaining A&Es in those areas are likely to be overcrowded and over-run.

Hospitals losing their A&E units will become GP-led "urgent care" centres and these, under the new Tory NHS regime, will be up for privatisation. The case of baby Axel showed clearly the results of privatisation: over-run due to a lack of adequate staff and poor procedures.

The government lies when its says they are trying to achieve the best care

for local people in London and elsewhere where emergency services are being "rationalised". Many more babies, and others, particularly the old and disabled people who can no longer access emergency services at a local hospital, will die because of the cuts and reforms.

**Join your local campaign to save NHS services. Don't let them destroy our NHS!**

## Stop the cuts at Whittington!

**Whittington hospital is planning reduced maternity services, ward closures, fewer beds for the elderly, 570 job cuts and no onsite accommodation for nursing staff.**

**Demonstrate against the cuts Saturday, March 16, 11.30 am  
Highbury Corner, Holloway Road to Whittington Hospital**

## "Born in Lewisham" protest

Afternoon Saturday 16 March

**If you, your children or anyone you know were born in Lewisham Hospital — or if you just want to show your support — come along and join hands around the hospital. Protest against the planned closure of full maternity services at the hospital.**

Contact [savelewishamhospital@yahoo.com](mailto:savelewishamhospital@yahoo.com)

## 100 million strike in India

Around 100 million workers struck on 20 and 21 February in India, as unions launched a general strike against government austerity measures.

The strike paralysed public sector workplaces, shutting down transport and other services across many states. Banks and post officers were also shut down.

There were clashes between strikers, employers and the police in many areas, including the industrial suburbs of Noida, near New Delhi, where 65 people were arrested.

One striker, Narender Singh, was killed as he attempted to stop a scab-driven bus leaving his depot in the city of Ambala. Unions are demanding minimum wages, fairer contracts, and improved health and safety at work.

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry estimated losses for the Indian bosses from the strike at more than £2.4 billion.

## Italian polls: politics adrift

Italy's general election has produced a stalemate. The electoral coalition headed by the Democratic Party's Pier Luigi Bersani has failed to get a working majority. The populist Five Star Movement has done well. Writing before the result, Hugh Edwards looks at the background.

**All the major parties are committed to austerity. Both the Democratic Party of Pierluigi, Bersani and Berlusconi's Party of Liberty gave their wholehearted backing to the principle and practical thrust of the offensive of Mario Monti's "technocrat" government, with only a few selective reservations.**

Both of them pledged themselves to Monti's "fiscal pact", the achievement of balanced budgets — a goal now enshrined in the constitution! — and to wholesale restructuring of economic and social life.

Then Berlusconi pulled the plug at the end of last year, withdrawing support for the government, and the Democrats too suddenly discovered their anti-austerity credentials.

Berlusconi launched a massive media blitz against Monti and the "communist" Bersani, promising to regain the support of the millions of his racist and bigoted petit-bourgeois following hit by the crisis and to undo some of the measures that capped their room for "creative accountancy" and dodgy manoeuvre.

### ABJECT

**He announced that to find the resources to finance his largesse and solve the crisis, he would cut public expenditure by 80 billion euros.**

Bersani made pious and vague pledges of a feeble Keynesianism, tax cuts to promote growth, and defence of labour regulation already eroded with his party's consent. The more radical sounding platitudes regarding inequality from his coalition partner Vendola could not hide the fact that the Democratic Party's victory was what the ruling classes were counting on as the surest guarantee of stability and business as usual.

One cannot suppress the uncomfortable thought that the abject failure in the last year or so of every attempt at resistance on the ground has signalled a setback so profound that the election of Bersani was seen by workers as the only and least-worst scenario. The leaders of the main trade union federation backing him, CGIL, think so.

### GRILLO

**The other main contender, Beppe Grillo's 5 Star movement, emerged as the largest force in the elections in Sicily several months ago, with demagogic populist attack on the grotesque corruption, decay and hypocrisy of bourgeois Italy.**

It has tapped into the well of mounting anger. Grillo's programme of an egalitarian, anti-hierarchical transparency in all aspects of public life, copper-fastened with an infrastructure of socially provided, ecologically sane public services, also appeals.

But Grillo represents a symptom of crisis — of bourgeois rule on the one hand, and on the other, that of the paralysis of the working class and socialist movement.

Among sections of bourgeois opinion and of the left there is a one-eyed view that the utopian, eclectic, half formed ideas of Grillo and his network of "movement" disciples will collapse like a house of cards at the first serious tilt.

They may be right. But the forces increasingly coming into political life around him indicate the outlines of a social bloc still in the process of being hammered into ideological shape by the force of events. Grillo is as much subject to these as anyone else.

**Thus his declaration a few days ago that he hadn't reckoned on the movement being where it might be in a few days. It echoes Oliver Cromwell's remark regarding his own path to power: "No one travels further than he who does not know where he is going".**