

RESISTANCE

anarchist paper

No. 118

Dec/Jan 2009
Free/Donation

Edinburgh workers stand up to council cuts

David beats Goliath in New York

Manual workers employed by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) are approaching the sixth month of a dispute over the implementation of its equal pay adjustment. Among the hardest hit by the settlement would be the refuse and street

cleansing workers, some of whom face a wage cut of up to £4000-5000. In response, they have declared an overtime ban and strict adherence to the Council's health & safety manual. The work-to-rule includes all CEC manual workers in the Unite

union, from gravediggers to catering staff, and has held steady over the period. In an attempt to save face during the Festival month, CEC began an expensive buying-in of scab labour. Initially these were brought from Liverpool

► Continued inside

The Movement for Justice in el Barrio (MJB), a group of impoverished working-class people in New York largely made up of Mexican immigrants, are currently celebrating a stunning victory over a multi-national corporation which attempted to evict them from their homes. The Dawnay, Day Group, a company based in London, had bought up 47 buildings in East Harlem and announced their intention to take advantage of lax tenant protection laws in NYC to raise rents by "tenfold", a massive rent hike that

► Continued inside



Inside: Bastard of the year, SDL in Glasgow, Greece one year on, and more

S-D-Legging it!

On November 14th, the Scottish Defence League (SDL), a racist group modelled on the English Defence League (EDL) attempted to hold a demonstration against Islamic extremism in Glasgow city centre. As soon as the SDL announced their intention, anti-fascists began to organise a response. Having seen the chaos the EDL had tried to cause in England, local people resolved to stop them in their tracks and a broad coalition of anti-fascists called for people to meet in the city centre to confront them. The SDL, realizing the people of Glasgow were not going to put up with scum like them in their city, refused to give out the location of their meeting point for the demo in a fit of paranoia. Not only did this fail to dampen the anti-fascist response, but it also caused widespread confusion and disorganization amongst the SDL themselves. As a result, small groups of the SDL mooched about the city centre in dribs and drabs and were consistently refused the opportunity to gather in any large numbers.

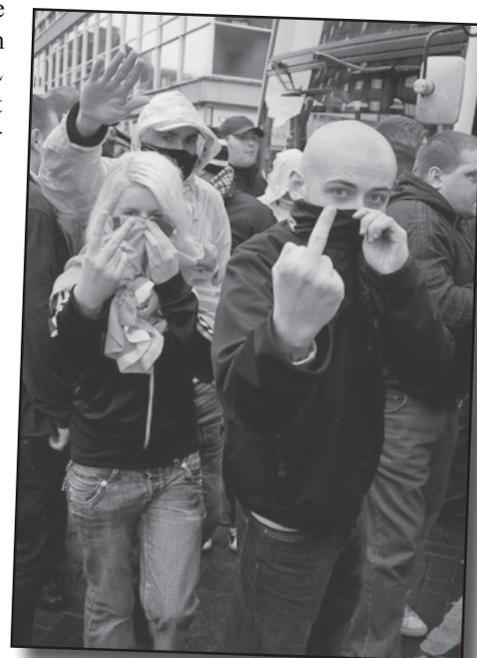
The largest single SDL contingent of around 40 was holed up in a pub on Cambridge Street for most of the day, protected on all sides by hundreds of police, with a police helicopter tracking anti-fascist movement and chartered buses waiting round the corner to whisk them to safety. After the 400 or so anti-fascists who'd assembled at St Enoch's square received word of this, they marched the mile or so towards the pub in question to give the fascists their greetings. Along the way, members of Unite Against Fascism somehow attached themselves to the front of the march and saw fit to begin giving orders. Once it was discovered that the SDL were holed up safe behind police lines, the UAF 'leaders' sent people in the opposite direction to the 'Scotland United' demo on Glasgow Green to listen to the likes of Nicola Sturgeon (Deputy First Minister, Labour) and Annabel Goldie (head Tory MSP).

Lacking a direct, united anti-fascist opposition, the job was left to smaller groups to chase the SDL off the streets. In addition to

the brief stand-off at Cambridge Street, a number of smaller confrontations took place throughout the day, with groups of anti-fascists playing a game of cat-and-mouse with SDL stragglers. At one point, a gang of sieg-heiling nazis were chased through the streets and ended up in the waiting arms of a large contingent of anti-fascists who promptly saw them off. The police soon swooped in and, as well as two SDL being escorted away, at least one demonstrator was arrested for 'breach of the peace'. By the afternoon, the main SDL group at Cambridge Street had been bussed out of the city centre to Loyalist pubs across the river, where they carried out at least one racially motivated assault.

Despite dire weather and UAF sabotage, both of which have become fairly predictable, a victory of sorts

was won on the 14th. The SDL, when they weren't cowering in a pub protected by police, were denied the ability to carry out any of their planned events and were quite literally chased off the streets. It has been plainly demonstrated that the people of Glasgow won't stand idly by while the SDL spread their filth in our city. No Pasaran!



Edinburgh workers stand up to council cuts

► Continued from cover

by the agency Assist, but since it was revealed that public funds were being used to put them up in a £100-per-night hotel, scabs are being recruited locally.

In response, local people (including members of the Anarchist Federation and Industrial Workers of the World) have picketed scab bin lorries on 4 or 5 occasions, "ambushing" them and preventing them from moving along their route. CEC workers have welcomed the actions as putting the issue back on the public agenda and raising their morale. Two issues of a solidarity news-sheet, The Edinburgh Muckraker, have been distributed to council manual workers and members of the public. The first issue was popular enough that 4000 copies of the next issue 2 will be published thanks to funds collected by bin workers.

In mid-October, a mass meeting

of affected workers was held, 400 from all sites and departments. The mood there was angry, and union officials were barracked for their inaction over management harassment techniques such as withholding pay for so-called "partial performance". The meeting demanded that the union go back to negotiations on the condition that "not a penny less" be offered by the Council.

At time of writing, anger remains high in the workforce. There are mutterings of one-day-a-week strikes but for now the work-to-rule will continue over the Xmas & Hogmanay bank holidays and the Council is continuing to pay over the odds for scab workers, worsening its self-inflicted budget crisis. The manual workers believe that Edinburgh's lack of funds will work in its favour - the dispute is hurting the Council more than it is hurting the manual workers.

David beats Goliath in New York

► Continued from cover

would only be possible by evicting the current low-income and immigrant families from their homes. They made their intentions explicit when they launched their "Buy-back Program" and began pushing tenants to abandon their apartments for a lump sum of \$10,000. This was accompanied by severe harassment in the form of dangerous negligence to the physical conditions of the buildings and apartments and illegal efforts to collect fictitious debts.

The MJB fought back in a variety of ways, such as by filing a groundbreaking legal suit which recently won a settlement that will benefit thousands of tenants by putting an end to the practice of charging tenants thousands of dollars in false and illegal charges and instituting a new 3% cap on late fees for all tenants. The settlement also awarded money directly to the tenants who brought the case,

among other victories. Alongside this, they also launched an international campaign to defend their area, travelling to London to make links with community groups here and take action against the company at their headquarters. And now it appears the MJB's determined campaign is really paying off: the Dawnay, Day Group has come crashing down in East Harlem, selling off all the properties it owns in the area. A powerful threat to the local community has been defeated.

Members of the Movement for Justice in El Barrio have pledged that they will "continue the struggle for dignity and against displacement with more strength and energy than ever before". To those of us fighting back against high rents and dodgy landlords in our own areas, the MJB offers an inspiring example of what can be achieved.

On the Front Line

workplace roundup



Unions scupper postal strike

After two rounds of national strike action, the Communication Workers' Union has called off further walkouts without any deal on the table.

To some degree this was unsurprising. Though Royal Mail workers are fed up with bullying, arbitrarily imposed working practices, a pay freeze that doesn't affect managers and an increasing workload despite claims that post is on its last legs, the union's angle has always been that they only want to participate in modernisation.

The union called off strikes without anything being put on the table by Royal Mail. They managed to get an agreement to "suspend strikes and further changes to working practices until a final agreement on modernisation and job security is reached by the end of December." In other words, they negotiated more negotiations. The "local issues" which have led to both wildcat and official strike action at depots around the country have been effectively left hanging, as Royal Mail and the union agreed to nothing more than "genuine negotiations to reach local agreement".

Cancelling strikes now effectively means handing over the workers' strongest card – the ability to strike in the run-up to Christmas, Royal Mail's busiest period. Workers need to continue to show the bravery and determination they have until now to force concessions from union and Royal Mail bosses alike.

Bus strikes in East London

Bus drivers and engineers in East London walked out in a 24-hour action which stopped around 750 buses and either froze or disrupted 58 routes. The East London Bus Company employs 2,600 workers, of which all but 200 are members of the Unite union. The union balloted its members after the company imposed a pay freeze on its staff, claiming the recession had forced their hand. 84% voted in favour of strike action. Drivers and engineers working out of Barking, Bow, Leyton, Romford, Upton Park and West Ham bus garages took part in the walkout.

Though company bosses are claiming that the recession is forcing them to impose pay freezes on staff, the East London Bus Company is owned by the Macquarie investment bank, which openly expects to make significant profits this year, 10% above those of the previous year. The bank has remained profitable throughout the financial crisis.

Train drivers on overtime ban

Almost half of the trains on the Bedford to Brighton line, which runs through King's Cross, have been cancelled due to an overtime ban by Train drivers.

The services rely on the goodwill of the train drivers in order to

function, as train drivers are expected to work overtime and on rest days in order to meet normal timetables. It is the simple withdrawal of this goodwill in the face of cuts to pay which has led to the cancellations. First Capital Connect, which runs the services, has offered its employees a 0% pay rise which amounts to a pay cut in real terms.

The action until now has been unofficial, although all it represents is workers sticking to their contracted hours. Nonetheless, the workers have been subjected to non-stop attacks by the press, with the 'strike' even being raised in parliament. The ASLEF union, which represents train drivers, is balloting its members on the affected services for official action, which could take place before December.

Sheffield - strike city

Sheffield saw an intense level of industrial action in late October and early November, as striking post workers were joined by firefighters walking out over attempts by management to bully them into accepting new contracts, and bus drivers striking over both pay and abusive behaviour by bosses. On October 31st, in a heartening display of solidarity across different sectors, bus and post workers joined the firefighters for a well-

attended joint rally outside the fire station. Fire service bosses initially attempted to enforce a lockout on their workers, but then backed down and agreed to negotiate. The bus strikes were suspended after bosses agreed to revoke several disciplinarys, although the workers are ready to strike again if management refuse to change their attitude.

BA ballots

As *Resistance* goes to press, British Airways cabin crew were voting on whether to strike over proposed changes to contracts, which would reduce staff numbers and freeze pay for two years. Strike action over the Christmas holiday period could potentially have a massive impact, so this dispute looks like one to watch. Meanwhile, the threat of strike action over pensions and redundancies at Fujitsu forced bosses to extend consultations with the Unite and PCS unions, leading to the strikes being suspended. But as with the others, this dispute is far from over.



Read more news
on libcom.org



Bastard of the Year

It's that time of year again, and we at Resistance are proud to present our traditional festive favourite, the Bastard of the Year awards. As the economic crisis has forced the bosses to squeeze our class even harder than before, this year's seen a real bumper crop of bastards, so we've only had space to include a few of the very many worthy candidates:

Local Politician Bastard of the Year: Stephen Purcell, Leader of Glasgow City Council



Bastard:
Stephen Purcell

While every city can boast its own local politician bastard, not many can compete with Stephen Purcell, who's pushed through the closures of 13 primary schools and 12 nurseries. Supposedly this is to save money, but he doesn't seem so strapped for cash when he's throwing millions of pounds at the Commonwealth Games. But then, of course, schools and nurseries don't help when you're trying to promote a "modernisation" and "regeneration" project that means making life in the city increasingly unaffordable for poorer local residents, building more yuppie flats, and a wildly unpopular and stunningly expensive motorway through Glasgow's suburbs. The list goes on...

Runner-up for this category is Doncaster's newly elected mayor Peter Davies, the impressively useless English Democrat who's praised the Taliban (for their family values, of course), promised to get rid of translation services for non-English speakers (only to

discover that he wasn't legally allowed to do so, which makes you wonder how much attention he was paying when drawing up his manifesto), threatened to slash funding for Doncaster's Gay Pride parade (a major tourist attraction for the town that brings in over 8,000 people...he had to back down on this one as well), and angrily hung up when, during a painfully embarrassing interview with Radio Sheffield, he was asked how he was going to deliver on his election manifesto. He would be scary if he wasn't so incompetent.

Police Bastards of the Year: All of the Metropolitan Police



Bastards:
The Met

It was too hard to pick just one. The coppers who deliberately inflated the threat of violence before the G20 protests in order to justify their own behaviour on the ground that killed Ian Tomlinson? Delroy Smellie, the goon who attacked Nicola Fisher? Or the police medics who were seen beating protesters (perhaps with special medicine sticks)? And that's before we get on to Cress-

ida Dick, the officer in charge of shooting Jean Charles de Menezes in 2005, who got a big promotion this year. The entire force has been notable for their bastardly behaviour this year, so it's only right that they should all share in this award.

(Dis)honourable mentions go to the folk who had tea with the police at Climate Camp this August, a bizarre display of masochism when you consider that it was just a few short months after the peaceful Climate Camp in April was brutally attacked and evicted by the cops, and the Unite Against Fascism stewards who handed an anti-fascist over to the police at a recent demonstration against the English Defence League in Leeds. Apart from anything else, you have to question how well they understand the idea of "uniting"...

Trade Union Bastard of the Year: Billy Hayes, General Secretary of the Communication Workers Union.



Bastard:
Billy Hayes

Billy Hayes is actually a repeat winner of this

award, as he first earned it back at the end of 2007 for leading what could have been a strong and powerful strike with the power to seriously affect the economy right before Christmas and then completely selling it out. But you might think that surely the man who, this time round, proclaimed that he was stronger than Scargill and was preparing for "upping the dispute... not scaling it down" must have learnt a thing or two from the defeat that he inflicted on his own side in 2007? You might think that he couldn't just do exactly the same thing again. You'd be wrong. But at least he's been putting his expertise in defeating workers to good use: this year he spoke at a conference for bosses on the subject of "How to prevent disputes escalating to strikes and industrial action."

Of course, Hayes couldn't have won this award on his own: we should also recognise the contribution of the entire CWU national executive, who voted unanimously for the sell-out, despite including Jane Loftus, the president of the union who also claims to be a revolutionary socialist. A strange kind of socialism.

**Continued on
page 5 ►**

A damp squib in Edinburgh

Friday 13th of November saw the commencement of 5 days of protest against the NATO parliamentary assembly in Edinburgh, with the main action being a protest march on the Friday morning. The week of actions was organised by the Autonomous "NATO Welcoming Committee", and showed up the problems that are inherent in "unplanned" protests, frequently used by autonomous groups such as the NATO WC or SmashEDO.

The Text system used to announce the location of the protest was a complete failure, leading to only 30-40 people managing to meet up before the entire protest was kettled and a "Section 60" announced by the Police. Demonstrators were hassled and attacked by around 30 coppers, with one officer drawing his baton before the protest had even begun moving. The sound system was broken by a copper, who pulled a handful of wires out of the machinery, in a blatant destruction of private property.

After a short stand-off, protesters dispersed and re-assembled for 1:30pm at the conference centre (where the NATO meeting was held), drawing a crowd of about 50 people and two re-enforced banners. The police again attempted to kettle protesters, and after a bit of "pushy-shovey", the demonstration broke out and engaged in a small but energetic march through the centre of town, chanting "You're out shopping, while bombs are dropping!". Throughout the day, the demonstrators were ac-

companied by multiple FIT teams, who insisted on photographing every single protester individually.

On the Saturday evening, people sitting in the convergence space received news that the NATO delegates were holding a party at a Hotel in Parliament square. 6 people and a photographer headed down with a single banner to engage in a two hour picket. Initially the police reaction was very heavy. The picketers were pushed away from the delegates by a line of coppers, and the FIT went wild with cameras, photographing everyone close up in a very threatening manner, and then trying to gather people's details without the legal right. However, undeterred, protesters continued to chant at the leaving delegates, and occasionally breaking into a hearty round of "Bohemian Rhapsody" by Queen!

Throughout the weekend there were no arrests.

LATEST UPDATE:

Six anti-war protesters were arrested at 8:30 in the morning of Tuesday 17th, after blockading the front entrance to the International Conference Centre, under the banner of Trident- Ploughshares. The protesters wore t-shirts emblazoned with the victims of the Afghan conflict and blocked the door of the centre, visible to delegates going between meeting and in the elevator.

Photos and summaries of the whole event are available on Indymedia Scotland.

► Continued from page 4

Hypocritical Bastard of the Year: Alan Johnson



Two years ago, Alan Johnson (MP for Hull West and Hessle) made a 'life or death' appeal to Home Office ministers to intervene in the case of an asylum seeker who had found refuge in his constituency but was facing deportation. To return the man to his country with it's dangerous human rights record 'would be devastating for him and his family, indeed it could prove fatal' pleaded

Johnson. 'There are few cases where we need our system to work more than this one.'

Last month, the man was returned to that very country (not named, nor the man, for obvious reasons) by none other than... the current home secretary, Alan Johnson! This was despite a detailed report from The Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture which concluded that the many scars on the man's head, stomach, legs, hands, toes and soles of his feet were 'highly consistent' with his detailed accounts of the torture he endured as an opposition activist. Johnson recently wrote to a campaigner 'Having looked at the case in detail I am satisfied that the proper processes have been followed and that it would be inappropriate for me to intervene in this matter.' The man was living openly in the UK, integrated into society and was going through proper legal processes in the belief that he would be granted refugee status.

Fightback against open-cast mine

A solidarity camp was set up in Mainshill woods in June of this year to prevent Scottish Coal from going ahead with its decision to mine 1.7 million tonnes of coal from the area, despite a decade of vehement opposition from the local community. South Lanarkshire Council received 700 complaints over the plans - that's 70% of the local population! As well as affecting the local community in terms of noise and pollution, there is also the environmental impact to take into account, with the new mine affecting local ecology as well being a sign of the state's refusal to seriously tackle climate change. Work has been halted and delayed through various means, from machinery being locked onto and sabotaged to blockades and barricades. Patch, a 23-year-old

camper, said "the response from the local community has been really positive. For example Scottish Water keeps turning off our mains supply, but immediately locals come, collect all our empty water containers and refill them for us! People bring saucepans of hot soup, homemade cakes, and bags of shopping. They've been campaigning against this mine for ten years. Their style of campaigning isn't the same as ours, but it all kind of works together." A local activist continued "We've got the worst health rate in Scotland because there's already 4 open cast mines in the area. This camp is opening a fresh way people can stop this shit going on in their communities."

<http://mainshill.noflag.org.uk/>



Students occupy across Europe

Students in universities in Germany, Austria and London have occupied their universities since the end of October. They have taken over lecture theatres and offices, as well as taking strike action, in opposition to the wave of cuts hitting education in different ways across Europe.

In Austria, new tuition fees, cuts in courses and changes in the way universities are run that gave the administration more power created a massive response from the students. Buildings across the University of Vienna have been repeatedly occupied by thousands of students and a rally on October 28th in Vienna attracted 40,000 people. In Germany, in response to rising workloads and shortened courses (from four to three years without any reduction in the amount of work) students in 20 cities have occupied lecture theatres and issued demands. And in London, students of the London College of Communications occupied management offices and lecture theatres to oppose course cuts and 180 redundancies.

This wave of action is part of a longer term trend which has seen students fighting back against attacks on their education. Spain has seen waves of very similar strikes and occupations and groups exist in many British universities fighting course cuts and redundancies. These attacks on the education system is part of the broader attack on the services we all rely on – the post, the NHS, bin workers and so on and so on. The student resistance to this is part and parcel of the fightback that all of need to be part of.

La Minga fights on

British revolutionaries have a lot to learn from Colombians. I am not talking about FARC, ELN, M19 and all the other Marxist Guerrilla forces that dot the countryside, imposing their “revolutionary taxes” on farming communities and occasionally kidnapping the odd journalist. Their ideology of setting up an elite armed vanguard in the jungle which supposedly represents the will of the people has been proven bankrupt by 40 years of ceaseless conflict.

This conflict has long provided a smokescreen for western multinationals (BP, Coca-Cola and The Body Shop to name just a few), paying the numerous right wing paramilitary forces that fill Colombia to brutally displace rural populations in order to exploit the resources (including cheap labour power) of their territory. This has been going on for years, but the causes of the conflict are portrayed by the governments of both Colombia and the US (who provide much funding for military operations in Colombia) as being solely about stopping the Leftist guerrillas’ supposed “narco-trafficking” (which the international press dutifully echo). In fact, direct evidence for drug trafficking by guerrillas is scarce, while the paramilitaries’ involvement in the drugs business is well documented and has even been admitted by many paramilitary leaders. It is also an open secret that President Uribe (currently seeking re-election for a 3rd time, unconstitutionally) is himself highly complicit in both narco-trafficking and paramilitary activities, and that paramilitaries and State forces are working together.

It is against this horrific backdrop that a new social movement is arising - the Minga (from an indigenous word for “building together”) and it is this that we in Britain should be learning from. The Minga started in 2004 as a mobilisation of the indigenous people of the Choco region, who are among the worst victims of this modern day imperialism, based around opposition to the “free trade” model, all the various armed forces in the



region, and to evictions of indigenous people. Against this, they stress the importance of building links between different oppressed communities.

In 2006, the indigenous communities marched hundreds of miles to Bogota, to camp in the Universidad Nacional (the National University, a hotbed of radical student activity). They used this camp as a base for negotiations with the government (which failed) and, crucially, to build up support amongst other sections of Colombian society. In the words of Feliciano Valencia, an indigenous leader “we have to go beyond these particular identities that make each of us fight in our corner. I’m indigenous but an indigenous struggle is not going to change this country. This is a fight between the rich and the poor. And one day, we will win.”

Thus began the agonisingly complicated process of “weaving an agenda of the peoples” - reinterpreting the original principles of the Minga as a rallying cry for all of Colombia, and of building up from the grassroots a shared political platform with the support of the most marginalised and oppressed groups in Colombian society, as they themselves play a part in shaping it. This is as far from the elitist vanguardism of the guerrillas as it is from the single issue politics and disorganisation of British “radical” circles. The “mingueros” are in this for the long run - and their movement is growing.

Throughout October (which was

declared “month of the Minga”) demonstrations, popular assemblies and huge marches all around the country prepared the ground for 3 “People’s Pre-congresses” in different regions, which themselves were just preparations for a huge “People’s Congress” planned for July 2010. This will hopefully decide upon a “proposal” for the country as a whole, a truly revolutionary proposal - for the people to take control of their communities, make their own laws and enforce them themselves, in spite of the government which claims to represent them.

The process is long and hard with many internal tensions and sticking points, such as the difficulty in reconciling the traditional, social democratic labour movement in the cities with the autonomous social movements of campesinos and ethnic minorities in the countryside. But the process is definitely moving forward, especially in the south, where the movement started. Over 20,000 people marched to Cali, the biggest city in the region, for the pre-congress there, enduring police repression along the way, for example in Popayan when on the 14th of October demonstrators were beaten and tear gassed, with many important figures detained illegally.

Solidarity with the people of Colombia is crucial as they undertake this historic process. See www.espacio.org.uk and www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk for more information.

The Greek December – One year on

It has now been a year since the events of Greece captivated the world as students, workers, immigrants and the unemployed took to the streets of the country's major cities. The Greek December saw widespread examples of working class direct action from strikes and sabotage to the occupation of schools, workplaces and municipal buildings. This article will reflect on key currents that emerged out of the uprising, what the events meant and what they mean for the future.

A 15-year old boy

The Greek uprising was a shock. While we had witnessed recent comparable examples of working class revolt across Europe in France and Italy, the scale and ferocity of the December events took many by surprise. It was the murder of a 15-year-old boy, Alexis Grigoriopoulos, by Greek police that sparked the outrage that inflamed Greek society. Police brutality is a daily reality for many Greeks – especially in the inner cities against immigrants and anti-authoritarian youth. Corruption and embezzlement are rife among politicians and civic leaders, such as those in the church, and there is a real crisis of trust in politics amongst large sections of the population. The economic crisis had also meant widespread cuts in pay, job losses and greater insecurity for many. While the initial riots were largely confined to inner city youth, the raw injustice of the murder of an innocent 15-year-old stirred up deeper and more general frustrations with the social and political order. The uprising brought together different sections of Greek society in ways that had not been seen before.

We demand nothing

A central cause of the decline of the uprising was its failure to spread the struggle to other sections of the working class. The popular and neighbourhood assemblies attempted to popularise the struggle, and the occupation of the GSEE



trade union offices (one of the most well attended assemblies) also took steps towards this. However, overall much of the activity in the streets, although it gained a great deal of popular support, failed to spread to workplaces. Workers in many key industries did, and continue to, engage in disruptive action (strike action by dockworkers in Piraeus is reported to have cost around 5 million Euros a day) against cuts and job losses, but this never seemed to fully connect with the occupations and riots on the streets.

A positive outcome of the uprising was that, thanks to its radical and totally anti-capitalist message, the best activity of December was never pushed in a reformist direction. Despite the fact that the is now attempting Socialist Party to label itself as “anti-authoritarians in power”, there were no new sets of “leaders” or political alliances emerging out of the events. Many of the popular initiatives eventually ran out of steam, but they still stand as positive and inspirational examples of contemporary working class self-organisation.

The rise of the far-right

In the recent European elections, there was growing support for organisations of the far-right (including in the UK) across the continent.

Greece was no different, with LAOS (a right-wing populist party) securing two representatives with 7.14% of the vote. The Greek state has also been keen to pursue new anti-immigration policies. In May the Minister of Public Order pledged to “clean” the centre of Athens of immigrants, attempting to push plans to convert an old NATO base into a holding camp for these displaced people. Throughout December, collaboration between the police and paramilitary fascist groups (such as the neo-Nazi “Golden Dawn”) was well documented. Fascists were photographed assisting in arrests, attacking protesters and even using police equipment against demonstrations. Since December, fascist groups have been targeting what they see as the key elements behind the uprising – largely immigrants and anarchists – including an attack with a hand grenade in February against a popular squat. Anti-fascist and anti-racist activity, however, has remained strong and in spite of the reports of escalating repression, anti-fascists were able to celebrate the world over in March as the news spread that the headquarters of “Golden Dawn” had been torched to the ground.

The traditional Left and the trade unions

The parties of the traditional Left and the trade unions were quick to show their true colours at the outbreak of the events. The Greek Communist Party swiftly denounced the riots as the work of “foreign dark forces” and called for its members to stay away from the riots. Members of its youth wing were also active in attempting to block occupations. The Socialist Party, now in power, has overseen widespread state repression against anarchists, including a mass raid of squats and social centres in the Exarchia district (the district where Alexis was shot). The trade union leadership were also keen to not let their members become infected by the spirit of revolt. During December they cancelled a key demonstration that would have coincided with the uprising, and since then the leadership have continued to restrain the activity of workers.

The fate of a tree

The image of the burning Christmas tree in Syntagma Square came to be a powerful symbol of the rebellion. So strong, in fact, that in later demonstrations the police showed a far greater interest in protecting the replacement tree than the surrounding banks and luxury shops! The holiday season, however, was not friendly to the up-

► Continued overleaf

The Greek December - One Year on

► Continued from inside

rising. Traditional celebrations like Christmas have a strong hold over communities and many initiatives failed to get back on their feet after the break. The frenzied consumerism that is the modern "Christmas spirit" also became a real barrier between the demands of the uprising and the experience of the general public.

The return of armed struggle?

Armed groups have always been a feature of the Greek left. The Marxist "17 November" group orchestrated a sustained assassination and bombing campaign against Greek police and public officials for 29 years before disbanding in 2002. The December events saw 17 November's successors, "Revolutionary Struggle", claim responsibility for the shooting of a police guard at the Culture ministry. However the 17 November group never really had any mass appeal. The December events prompted the emergence of other groups that appear to be gathering some sympathy. These include "Popular Action" and the "Nuclei of Fire Conspiracy" (NFC) which have both claimed responsibil-

ity for detonating small-scale explosive devices and are yet to cause a fatality. The NFC communiqué, which has been widely reported in the mainstream media, has become particularly popular amongst the new wave of high school occupations. Of course, all of this has served as a pretext for the authorities to seize and detain anarchists and other activists who have been involved in the uprising. Heavy raids in the Exarchia district are justified by referring to the guerillas' activity, while three 20-year-old men were jailed under anti-terrorist laws for their alleged involvement in the NFC (this was despite the fact that the prosecution's case quickly collapsed and they had to be held "in expectation" of evidence against them). The mainstream media has also been keen to highlight the guerilla groups' activity as a way to discredit the uprising in general.

One, two, many Decembers

While December 2008 may have been the high point, the struggle very much continues throughout Greece. There is still widespread unrest throughout major industries and 2009 has already seen some highly mili-

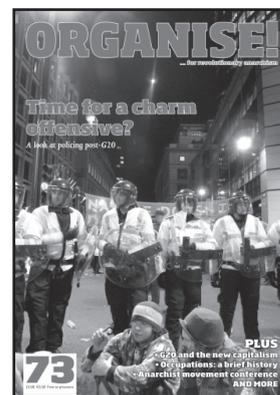
tant expressions of workplace action. Many activists also continue to struggle against the backlash to the events, whether that is the state's turn to racist social policies, increasing repression against activists, or even targeted state violence. As this article is written, it is a week before the official start of the "unrest season", the 30 days between the anniversary of the 1973 Polytechnic Uprising (November 17), the anniversary of the assassination of Alexandros Grigoropoulos and the start of the 2008 December Uprising (December 6) and the trial of Grigoropoulos murderers (December 15), and things are looking tense. Workers of the Social Security Organisation of Self-Employed (AOEE) have occupied the two buildings of the organisation to demand the renewal of temporary contracts. Even the union of basketball players has announced a two day strike demanding a series of labour conditions reforms! At the moment, it's not clear whether we'll see an eruption of the kind of scenes we saw a year ago. One thing is for sure: that we can continue to look to the Greek working class as an inspiration for the ongoing struggle of our class, even in the toughest of social and economic climates.

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The Anarchist Federation is a growing organisation of class struggle anarchists which aims to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is **Anarchist Communism**.

We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: **the ruling class** which controls all the power and wealth, and **the working class** which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction, the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the **direct action** of working class people can defeat these attacks and

ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it such as working through parliament and national liberation movements as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them, they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations.

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