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**Ukraine: IMF threatens shock treatment**  
**Police racism and corruption**  
**We want schools, not education factories**  
**ATOS down but not out**

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# **FIGHTING OPPRESSION**

is at the heart of socialism

## Best of the web

regular news updates and analysis from our website

## Unite cuts fee to Labour

The Unite Executive Council voted on 5 March to cut its affiliation to Labour to 500,000 members, reducing its affiliation fee from over £3m to about £1.5m. The move reflects the discontent in the unions caused by Labour's failure to stand up for workers, and is a reaction to the Labour leadership's attacks on union links. It shows the potential for campaigning within the unions for a radical alternative to Labour.

After Falkirk, Miliband decided to go on the offensive against Labour's union links to try to weaken union influence in his party and pander to the Tory press. His original plan was for union members to individually opt in to Labour affiliation, rather than just contribute to the political levy. This was initially opposed by most unions, as well as the Labour left.

Len McCluskey was unusual in welcoming the proposed changes, arguing that the status quo wasn't worth defending. The proposals were watered down a little, and Miliband was eventually able to persuade most union leaders to support the Collins review. By 2020, union members will have to opt in to affiliate to the Labour Party, but unions retain half of the votes at Labour conferences – for now.

Unite's decision to cut its affiliation should be welcomed. It gives Unite more control over its financial support to Labour, but the left cannot afford to be complacent about how this will be used. If they really wanted to pile the pressure on Miliband, the unions would spend their political fund money campaigning for their own policies – in defence of the NHS and public services, against the anti-union laws and to raise the National Minimum Wage. If Labour backed these policies, they would be the main electoral beneficiaries of the campaigning. If not, their problems would be of their own making. ■

by Ian Allinson and Amy Gilligan

# Ukraine on the brink of default—a shock doctrine in the making

EU and IMF loans will hurt ordinary Ukrainians, reports **Kate Deer**



Amakuha/wikipedia

**Russia, EU and IMF: none will improve life for ordinary Ukrainians**

As Russia threatens to invade the Ukraine, media coverage has focused on the military threat to the Ukrainian revolution – yet economic challenges will soon become a key aspect of this battle. The interests of ordinary Ukrainians are unlikely to be served by either Russia or the West.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Yatsentyuk is currently working with the EU and IMF on an 'emergency plan' to borrow \$2 billion in April and at least \$9 more billion later this year to prevent a default. An IMF 'fact finding mission' visited the country in March.

The IMF mission is likely to recommend a devaluation of the Ukrainian currency so as to boost exports and make the country more competitive. Wages will be slashed, and the IMF also intends to push for a freeze in

the minimum wage. While Russia will probably continue pushing up energy prices, the IMF will recommend cutting energy subsidies sharply. Ordinary Ukrainians will suffer horribly, caught between imperialist rivals.

## Ukraine is not the first country to face the IMF's shock doctrine

What is the alternative? The Ukraine is not the first country to face the IMF's shock doctrine, and lessons can be learned from previous

defaults. A government in the interest of ordinary Ukrainians should refuse to repay the debt, as the president of Ecuador did in 2007. It should seize the wealth of oligarchs such as Akhmetov and invest the money in social services, pensions and decent wages. The Ukrainian people have already overthrown Yanukovich, they now need to continue fighting for genuine freedom. ■



**T**he 2011 riots that gripped Britain were sparked by gang violence. The gang in question is called the Metropolitan Police Service, and the act of violence that triggered the country's greatest unrest in 30 years was the murder of Mark Duggan, a young black man from Tottenham, in broad daylight.

Studies carried out in the aftermath of the riots confirmed that large numbers of rioters took to the streets for revenge – against a political system that marginalised them, against an economic system that condemned them, and most of all against the police, the daily face of oppression.

### Coppers' crimes

The rioters' anger reflects generations of police racism, brutality and violence. From stop and search to deaths in custody, the crimes of the police – carried out with impunity – have blighted the lives of black and ethnic minority people in this country and elsewhere.

Since 1990, 1484 people have died in police custody or following police contact. Apart from direct killings, such as the shootings of Mark Duggan, Azelle Rodney or Jean Charles de Menezes, a disturbing number of inmates have committed suicide while incarcerated. No police officer has ever been brought to justice over these deaths. Often, officers escape scrutiny or disciplinary action by taking early retirement or even simply transferring to another force.

Black and ethnic minority people make up a disproportionate number of those killed by police. The same is true of stop-and-search, a tactic inflicted daily upon huge numbers of people – often young, black men. Some rioters had been subjected to these humiliating public searches several times a week.

**The 2011 riots were sparked by gang violence. The gang in question is the Met Police**



Cops line up in Lewisham during the 2011 riots

Stuart Bannocks/flickr.com/wikicommons

## Policing the system

racism, violence and the crimes of the cops

**Suhail Ilyas** asks if the violence of the police can be reformed away

When Stephen Lawrence was murdered in 1993, the police victimised his friends and family and failed to robustly pursue his murderers. It has recently been revealed that they went as far as to spy upon and attempt to discredit the Lawrence family, who established themselves as tenacious campaigners for justice. Such steadfast campaigning by the loved ones of those killed by police – such as the Lawrence, Rigg and Duggan families – has repeatedly brought the crimes of the police to national attention and furthered the fight for justice.

Campaigns against the militarisation of the police and in defence of the right to protest continue to be vital. The issues go further than racism. Police assigned to help rape victims have themselves turned out to be rapists; homophobia

within police ranks has led to suicide. Earlier this month, police in Luton attacked a man with autism because he “looked suspicious”.

### Divide and rule

Such behaviour is routine, and rooted in the very reason the police exist – in order to protect the powers that be by oppressing, intimidating and dividing ordinary people so as to defend property and the status quo.

So we can't agree with Owen Jones when he argued in the Guardian that the Met should be closed down – only to be replaced with a reformed police force. Violence and injustice and built into every police force worldwide. The only way to end that is to end a society divided by class where the rich depend on the cops for protection. ■



# FIGHTING OPPRESSION

is at the heart of socialism

Marxism is about human liberation, not just economic justice, explains **Colin Wilson**



**M**arx condemned oppressions such as racism and sexism throughout his life. On racism, for example, he wrote that "labour in the white skin cannot emancipate itself where in the black skin it is branded." He made substantial notes about women in different cultures, from which his collaborator Engels wrote *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* as part of the struggle against women's oppression.

Marxist authors have traced how oppression is rooted in capitalism. Previous cultures had no concept of "race" based on features like skin colour. The concept developed in the contexts of slavery and colonial empire. The growth of Islamophobia in the last ten years in the context of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars shows something similar today. LGBT oppression also developed under capitalism. The idea that only a minority of "homosexuals" experienced desire for the same sex first emerged in the Victorian era as part of defending the respectable family.

The oppression of women had existed for thousands of years before capitalism, but was reshaped to meet the needs of the new society. Women's lives were to centre on the family, on nurturing and support the current and next generations of workers – who were key to capitalism's ongoing profitability. Under neo-liberalism, as publicly provided care services are cut, the centrality of the family to capitalism and to women's oppression remains.



## What Marxism means today | fighting oppression

Marx wrote comparatively little about oppression, and three large volumes of *Capital* about political economy and class. This wasn't because he thought it was unimportant, but because he believed that understanding and destroying capitalism made possible a society without oppression. Capitalism was hugely productive – for the first time, an equal society was possible without everyone living in equal misery. It also created the working class, which could only take power collectively – there is no point controlling my desk and computer in isolation, for example. Workers must take power through revolution, because the ruling class would not give up power, but also because only in a revolution could most workers be won from long-standing beliefs like racism and sexism – what Marx called “all the muck of ages.”

Since then, workers have united to reject oppression in many revolutionary and near-revolutionary situations. The best example is the October 1917 Revolution in Russia. Despite centuries of anti-semitism, one of the main revolutionary leaders, Trotsky, was Jewish. Laws against sex between men were abolished. The new government began to take over the burden of childcare from women: 150,000 children were fed in Moscow schools every day.

Seeing the fight against oppression in this way, as part of the anti-capitalist struggle, is vital. It gives us a strong argument – that workers should reject ideas like sexism and racism, not because it makes them morally better, but because oppression divides the working class and the movement. It is



Chicago teachers fought and won

in the self-interest of men, white and straight workers to reject sexism, racism and homophobia.

The huge struggles of the 1960s led to the modern anti-racist, women's and LGBT movements. But they also gave rise to a different approach to fighting oppression, based on the assumption that each oppressed group should lead the fight against its own oppression. This approach is now reflected in the structures of many unions and the NUS. Those structures reflect the fact that oppression is taken seriously, and were a step forwards. But there are also serious problems with the ideas behind them.

The first problem is the idea that protection for oppressed groups must be guaranteed by structures, because non-oppressed people don't know how to fight oppression at best – and at worst, are the cause of it. In reality, while many white people accept some racist ideas, for example, many have also been part of anti-racist and anti-fascist campaigns.

Also, the idea that each group fights its own oppression has often involved the assumption – until black feminists in the 1980s began to stress what's now called intersectionality – that oppressed groups were more or less separate. Finally, such ideas exaggerated how much oppressed groups have in common – terms like “the LGBT community” overlook important differences, such as those of class. American anti-racist struggles of the 60s and 70s made possible the growth of a “black bourgeoisie” of elected officials and professionals which has little in common with black workers. Barack Obama is part of that trend. It was good to see a black person elected president, but his presidency has seen the gap in wealth between white and black people increase, not lessen.

The fight against oppression needs to be fully integrated into the fight against capitalism and for socialism. Opposing sexism, racism and homophobia is something everyone should do, not just those most affected. That's the only way to make the vision of Marx, and millions of socialists since, into reality. ■

### International Women's day meeting

#### No more blurred lines: sexism and exploitation in the neoliberal era

We are seeing globally revived women's movement – young, confident, responding to both examples of violent experiences and women's emancipation. The fact that over eighty people attended rs21's International Women's Day meeting also reflected this, as did an international platform of speakers.

Women in revolutionary Egypt are pushing back against systematic sexual violence while fighting for the right to organise in OpAntiSH within the revolutionary left: not polite “executive feminism”, but women on demonstrations with meat cleavers as symbols of strength. The right is confident too, though. The “It's my Belly” abortion campaign in Spain is fighting for women's right to choose, against a version of “womanhood through motherhood” that sees women's contribution to society as simply biological reproduction.

The economic crisis continues to disproportionately affect women, who are most of the workforce in a funding-stripped public sector while bearing the ideological and material pressure from the state to resume ideals of a “traditional” family. Speakers discussed how “social reproduction” contributes to maintaining and sustaining a workforce under neoliberalism. Women in the family are expected to play a key role reproducing workers for the next day's labour, caring for those too young or old to work and giving birth to future labourers – all this is necessary for capitalism production to continue.

A lively discussion addressed how we can apply Marxist ideas on women's oppression and resistance today. The event was an excellent contribution to these important and ongoing debates.

by **Sophie Williams**

# Schools not factories

We need schools, not education factories, argues **Rob Owen**

The headline issues behind the 26 March teachers strike are cuts to pensions, introduction of performance related pay and breaking teachers' national pay scale. Yet for many teachers the reason for striking runs deeper – we want to defeat Gove's vision for education. His speeches in favour of a "traditional" education are dragging the educational agenda to the right. Attacks on the teaching of black and feminist history are just one example of attempts to re-centre education around Tory values.

Gove openly defends his vision of an education where the "most able" (and usually most well off) students are rewarded at the expense of the rest. He has been widely attacked, even by former Tory education minister Lord Baker for thinking that "if he did it, then anybody in the country could do what he did: whether they're orphans, whether they're poor, whether they're impoverished, they can all rise to

the top." Sometimes Gove may just be playing to the Tory right, yet on other occasions, notably the English GCSE grading fiasco he has had an immediate impact.

That scandal saw the government move the goal posts for a C grade in English halfway through the year, failing thousands of students in the process. In the long term this move towards a quota or cap on the number of C-A\* grades means that a given percentage of students must "fail" irrespective of their competence. The idea that some must fail to give grades value runs counter to the ambition of all teachers to fight for the best outcomes for every pupil.

Sadly, Gove's impact runs deeper than the final grades. His changes to the artificial market in education are intensifying pressure on schools with more disadvantaged students. The spread of academies and "free

schools" may be more visible, but the impact inside individual schools is just as damaging. As funding cuts bite, league tables and fear of inspection are forcing schools to focus on assessing students' academic levels from infant school onwards and managing their "progress data" in pursuit of headline A\*-C grades. The adoption of aggressive performance management has combined with external pressure from league tables to put teachers under huge stress. In many academies almost half of all teachers will have responsibilities for managing an area of progress data. This exceeds the norm in the private sector where there is on average 1 manager for every 8 workers.

The introduction of performance related pay will judge success not on what pupils learn, but how successfully teachers meet school targets. Performance related pay will become another way of increasing workload when an average teacher in an academy already works about 60 hours a week. Studies of performance management in other industries show it acts to drive up the workload of all staff and drive down overall pay. The risk aversion performance management creates will further undermine the potential for creative and progressive approaches to education.

Targets, pressure and workload are driving good teachers out of the profession. We need a political vision for the future of education and a national campaign that motivates teachers to fight. Activists in the teaching unions can help to promote a discussion over the direction of education, linking it to increases in workload and the undermining of collective control over what is taught. We face a real danger that Gove might win the battle over pensions and pay, but whatever happens we are still fighting to win the war. ■



TUC Library

Trade unionists defend abortion rights in the 70s – not Gove's kind of history



Wasi Danyu/flickr

## Atos: down but not out

We've won the battle but not the war, says **Gill George**

Atos and the DWP have been forced onto the retreat by the self-organisation of disabled people and people with severe illness, and by countless others standing in solidarity with them. Atos and the Tories are running for cover.

The slogan on anti-Atos protests is an accurate one: "Atos kills". The latest Government figures show that a horrific 10,000 sick and disabled people have died within six weeks of their benefits being stopped.

The individual stories behind the deaths are heartbreaking. Terry McGarvey died in February, the day after he dragged himself into an Atos Work Capability Assessment. He was terrified of losing his benefits if he failed to turn up. He was taken by ambulance straight from the assessment to hospital. Last October, David Coupe died of cancer. He was blind, deaf and in terrible pain, but Atos said he was fit to work and slashed his benefits.

The Tory plan for getting rid of Incapacity Benefit and replacing it with ESA was

brutally simple. Around 11,000 people a week have been dragged through crude 'Work Capability Assessments' so as to cut their benefits or bully them into stopping claiming. Medical evidence is ignored. People with severe congenital impairments or terminal illness are being told they are fit to work.

Tory indifference to human misery turned to nervousness as the intended victims of Atos organised and fought back. Information on challenging the system was shared. Campaigns were built, with organisations such as DPAC and Black Triangle playing a leading role. Charities and MPs asked awkward questions. And disability campaigners, anti-cuts activists and socialists took part in the magnificent national day of action against Atos on 19 February. Atos was confronted by 144 demonstrations across the country – in Southend, Atos staff themselves walked out to join the protest.

The day after the national action, Atos announced an 'early exit' from the contract – and has even changed

its name for corporate work because the Atos brand is so toxic! Iain Duncan Smith vanished, leaving junior ministers to take the flak. The degrading repeat assessments are on hold, at least for now. Our victory will save lives. All of us who have organised against Atos should be very proud.

It's great to have won the battle – but the war goes on. The Tory onslaught on disabled people continues. Atos itself has 75% of the 'PIP' contract, and will also be leading the sell-off of our confidential health data. And when it comes to ESA, Atos will be replaced and the Tories will drive forward the attack as soon as they dare. Sadly, we can't rely on a future Labour government either, because Miliband and Balls have pledged further public spending cuts.

Our history shows us that workers win gains by fighting for them. It's blindingly obvious that we need a society that looks after us when we're sick or disabled. Our fight for that has to continue. ■



**rs21** is a group of socialists committed to revolutionary change – the self-emancipation of the working class and the liberation of humanity from capitalism. We are not a mass party, but want to work with others in today's struggles against austerity, oppression and imperialism, aiming towards a genuinely mass revolutionary movement capable of transforming the whole of society in the future.

We are part of a tradition of international socialism. This means we reject the idea that socialism can be imposed from the top of society, but believe it has to be won through the actions of ordinary people themselves – in other words, socialism from below. It also means we see working class struggles across the globe as intrinsically linked in the fight against global capitalism, and aim to build international solidarity wherever we can.

We do not subscribe to a set of dogmas. Marxism is a method, not an ideology: it means we seek to understand the world in order to change it.

There are important debates taking place in the working class movement which we would like to contribute to, in the course of the struggles ahead.

We do not have all the answers, but want to build a revolutionary organisation that seeks to learn by asking the right questions.

We aim to build an organisation that is inspired by a vision of a different kind of society, one in which 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all'.

**We encourage anyone who wants to contribute to such an organisation to work with us, debate with us, and join us ...**

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