



workers of the world, unite!

world revolution

International leaflet

Only the international class struggle can end capitalism’s drive towards destruction

One of the more popular banners on climate change protests reads: “System Change, not Climate Change”.

There is no question that the present system is dragging humanity towards an environmental catastrophe. The material evidence piles up every day: increasingly dangerous heatwaves, unprecedented wildfires in the Amazon, melting glaciers, floods, extinction of whole species – with the extinction of the human species as the ultimate result. And even if global warming were not happening, the soil, the air, the rivers and seas would continue to be poisoned and depleted of life.

No wonder that so many people, and, above all, so many young people who face a menacing future, are deeply concerned about this situation and want to do something about it.

The wave of protests organised by Youth for Climate, Extinction Rebellion, the Green parties and the parties of the left are presented as a way forward. But those who are currently following their lead should ask themselves: why are these protests being so widely supported by those who manage and defend the present system? Why is Greta invited to speak to parliaments, governments, the United Nations?

Of course the likes of Trump, Bolsonaro or Farage constantly vilify Greta and the “eco-warriors”. They claim that climate change is a hoax and that measures to curb pollution are a threat to economic growth, above all in sectors like automobiles and fossil fuels. They are the unabashed defenders of capitalist profit. But what about Merkel, Macron, Corbyn, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and others who have heaped praise on the climate protests: are they any less part of the present system?

Many of those taking part in the present protests would agree that the roots of ecological destruction lie in the system and that this is the *capitalist* system. But the organisations behind the protests, and the politicians who trumpet their hypocritical support for them, defend policies that *hide* the real nature of capitalism

Consider one of the main programmes the more

radical among these politicians put forward: the so-called “New Green Deal”. It offers us a package of measures to be taken by the existing states, demanding massive capital investment to develop “non-polluting” industries that are supposed to be able to turn a decent profit. In other words: it’s framed entirely within the confines of the capitalist system. Like the New Deal of the 1930s, its aim is to save capitalism in its hour of need, not replace it.

What is the capitalist system?

Capitalism doesn’t disappear if it’s managed by state bureaucrats instead of private bosses, or if it paints itself green.

Capital is a world-wide relation between classes, based on the exploitation of wage labour and production for sale in order to realise profit. The constant search for outlets for its commodities calls forth ruthless competition between nation states for domination of the world market. And this competition demands that every national capital must expand or die. A capitalism that no longer seeks to penetrate the last corner of the planet and grow without limit cannot exist. By the same token, capitalism is utterly incapable of cooperating on a global scale to respond to the ecological crisis, as the abject failure of all the various climate summits and protocols has already proved.

The hunt for profit, which has nothing to do with human need, is at the root of the despoliation of nature and this has been true since capitalism began. But capitalism has a history, and for the last hundred years it has ceased to be a factor for progress and has been plunged into a profound historic crisis. It is a civilisation in decay, as its economic base, forced to grow without limit, generates crises of overproduction that tend to become permanent. And as the world wars and “Cold War” of the 20th century have demonstrated, this process of decline can only accelerate capital’s drive towards destruction. Even before the global massacre of nature became obvious, capitalism was already threatening to obliterate humanity through its incessant imperialist confrontations and wars,

which are continuing today across a whole swathe of the planet from North Africa and the Middle East to Pakistan and India. Such conflicts can only be sharpened by the ecological crisis as nation states compete for dwindling resources, while the race to produce more and more nightmarish weapons – and above all, to use them - can only further pollute the planet. This unholy combination of capitalist devastation is already making parts of the planet uninhabitable and forcing millions to become refugees.

The necessity and possibility of communism

This system cannot overcome the economic crisis, the ecological crisis, or the drive towards war.

It is therefore a deception to demand that the governments of the world “get their act together” and do something to save the planet - a demand put forward by all the groups organising the current marches and protests. The only hope for humanity lies in the *destruction* of the present system and the creation of a new form of society. We call this communism - a world-wide human community without nation states, without the exploitation of labour, without markets and money, where all production is planned on a global scale and with the sole motive of satisfying human need. It goes without saying that this society has nothing in common with the state-run form of capitalism we see in countries like China, North Korea or Cuba, or previously the Soviet Union.

Authentic communism is the only basis for establishing a new relationship between humanity and the rest of nature. And it’s not a utopia. It’s possible because capitalism has laid down its material foundations: the development of science and technology, which can be freed from their distortions under this system, and the global interdependence of all productive activity, which can be freed from capitalist competition and national antagonisms.

Deal or no deal: Capitalist democracy is a fraud

From all sides of the political spectrum, we are being called upon to defend democracy.

The “rebel alliance” of politicians opposed to a no-deal Brexit denounce Boris Johnson’s “coup” against parliament, organising marches and rallies against the 5-week suspension of parliament in the period leading up to 31 October, and uniting their forces to compel Boris to respect the hallowed parliamentary customs and procedures.

The hard Brexiteers from Farage to *Spiked* magazine reply that it is the “Remoaners” who are insulting democracy because they refuse to respect the “will of the people” embodied in the June 2016 referendum. They also claim to be the defenders of British democracy against the interfering bureaucracy of the EU.

But we live in a society which makes the very terms “democracy” and the “people” empty of meaning. We live in a capitalist society based on the exploitation of one class by another. The exploiting class holds the vast bulk of wealth in its hands, and the state, political power, is there to guarantee its privileges, as are the means of ideological domination such as the press, the TV, and the mainstream social media. In such a society, the “people” is a term used to hide these class divisions and “democracy” serves to mask the monopoly of power held by the ruling class.

The exploited class, on the other hand, even though it generally comprises the majority of the population, is not permitted to express its own real needs. Its efforts to organise against exploitation are either suppressed by force or tamed and incorporated into the state: that’s the history of the trade unions and “workers” parties (such as the Labour party) over the last 100 years or more.

Of course, in contrast to the early days of capitalism, workers are not only allowed but positively exhorted to vote in local and national elections and referendums. But they can only do so as atomised “citizens”, as a mass of isolated individuals.

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Australia A\$2.25, Canada C\$1.50, Europe €1.3, India 10 rupees, Japan ¥300 USA 90¢

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Brexit: a quagmire for all factions of the ruling class

The following article was written before many of the most recent twists in the continuing Brexit drama, such as the confirmation of the prorogation of parliament, the bill designed to prevent a No Deal Brexit, Boris Johnson's attempt to have a general election, and the expulsion of 21 moderate Tory MPs from the party. Events have confirmed that the "situation is a clear expression of the fragmentation resulting from the present phase of capitalist decline". The fact that the opponents of a No Deal Brexit have made advances in parliament shows that the Brexiteers do not have things all their own way. But defeats in parliament for Prime Minister Johnson do not mean the cause of Brexit is lost, especially if the threats to break the law by Johnson and Gove are followed up in practice. It is possible to see other expressions of the rally of moderates elsewhere. In Italy, for example, when Matteo Salvini's League withdrew from the government, instead of being a step towards a Salvini takeover, it led to a coalition between the Five Star Movement and the Democratic Party. This might only be a short-lived interlude, but it does show that the battle between the factions of the ruling class is not a one-way street toward populism and the extremes. However, the underlying problem is still there for the bourgeoisie. The loss of control of the political apparatus, the escalation of the conflicts between different factions means the deepening of the political crisis, which will be further worsened by the development of the economic crisis.

The formation of a new government in London under Boris Johnson does not resolve the political crisis and the power struggle within the British ruling class which became a dominant factor in the political life of that country since the Brexit Referendum of June 2016. On the contrary: with the appointment by the Conservatives of Johnson as their new leader and Prime Minister, this crisis has reached a new stage, the power struggle a new degree of intensity. The new phase of this power struggle is not in the first instance one between Johnson and his so called moderate inner party opponents, or between Johnson and the Labour opposition, or between the PM and the staunchly Remainer First Minister of Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon. As the London Sunday paper *The Observer* and the Swiss *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* both concluded, the opponent Johnson and the Tories are mainly trying to counteract is Mr. Brexit himself: Nigel Farage. The calculation (or the gamble) of Johnson is to 'deliver Brexit' by October 31, with or without a deal (as Johnson puts it, 'do or die') and if possible without calling a General Election beforehand. Otherwise, in the event of an election, he risks being obliged to form a coalition government with the new Brexit Party of Farage in order to deliver his Brexit. Farage, the reckless outsider of British politics, would thus gain a direct say on government policy (something the established so-called elites want to avoid). On the other hand, should he be prevented by the present parliament to deliver his Brexit on time as promised, this would be likely to give considerable additional momentum to the political career and ambitions of Farage. The problem for Johnson about this (at the time of writing) is that it is not sure that the present parliament would accept whatever deal (or no deal) Johnson presents to it. It would also be possible for the Prime Minister to sidetrack parliament (for example by temporarily suspending it). But some of his opponents in Westminster have already declared they would consider such a procedure to be a *coup d'État*, a veritable Putsch. In a word: The mess is becoming a quagmire. This situation is a clear expression of the fragmentation resulting from the present phase of capitalist decline, of each for himself, at every level: economic, military, social, political. The actors in this process, while not being passive, are largely determined by it.

The political situation (which, for the moment, is much worse than the economic one) is going from bad to worse. The creeping paralysis of the past three years threatens to get out of hand. In this context, it should be noted that, if the new PM is putting all his bets on a quick Brexit at all costs, this is not because he thinks this course of action is necessarily in the best interest of British capitalism. In fact it is well known that Johnson was not particularly convinced of the benefits of Brexit at the time of the referendum, that he reacted with surprise and some dismay to the result. His main motive for supporting the Leave camp seems to have been his ambition to build up his own power base in the Conservative Party in order to challenge the party leader and PM of the time, David Cameron. Caught on the wrong foot by the victory of the Leave camp at the referendum, he soon re-

alised that the putting into practise of this verdict would prove to be a thankless task. He thus momentarily withdrew (or rather: postponed) his bid for party leadership, preferring to leave the dirty work to someone like Theresa May. The main concern of Johnson, therefore, seems in reality not to have been Brexit, but his own political career. The fact that today, three years on, he has successfully bidden for party and state leadership, tells us something about the changes in the balance of forces within the ruling class which have taken place since 2016. At the time the Referendum was called, the two opposing camps were clearly drawn up, each behind their respective leader: Cameron and Farage. Farage was an upstart, operating outside the established party-political apparatus. Cameron, as opposed to this, was not only Prime Minister, he had the support of a majority of the Powers That Be both within his own Tory party and in Labour (the main opposition party) as well as that of the even more firm Remainers from the Liberal Democrats and the Scottish Nationalists. Initially, the outcome seemed almost a foregone conclusion. But the more the campaign of Farage's UKIP gathered momentum, the more Tories (including Johnson) began to join in with the Brexiteers. For the most part, this was probably not because they had been convinced by UKIP's arguments. Not that they did not share the latter's resentment against Europe for having made the country turn its back on its former Empire. But their main motivation seems to have been a tactical one: that of taking the wind out of the sails of Farage in order to sidetrack him.

But the Tories miscalculated. The Remainers lost. And this, in turn, altered the balance of forces within British bourgeois politics. It will suffice to recall that 'Brexit means Brexit' Theresa May, who became the successor to Cameron, had originally been a Remainer, as had been many of those who today present themselves as hard-line Brexiteers within the Conservative Party. Indeed the remaining clear cut, Cameron-style Remainers in the Tory Party ('grandeess' like Heseltine, or current MPs such as Dominic Grieve) are currently having a hard time. As of now, the Brexiteers have more or less taken over the Party, and above all they have taken over the government. One of the architects of the Brexit campaign, Dominic Cummings, has become chief advisor to the government.

The situation transformed by the referendum result
Before the Referendum, the choice was between leaving or remaining in the European Union. As long as this was the case, a majority within the ruling class clearly favoured the latter option. But after the Referendum this choice was no longer on the table. Theoretically, of course, it could still be attempted to hold a second referendum with the aim of winning a majority for Remain. But such a manoeuvre would be difficult. It is by no means certain that the outcome would be any different from the first time round. And such an attempt would even be dangerous. It would risk deepening the already existing divisions around the Brexit is-

sue, including those within the ruling class itself. This is why this option is at present not much favoured among its representatives. So today, the momentum is heading towards a no-deal Brexit, although, as shown in the European parliament elections, there is a polarisation between no-deal and no Brexit. Theresa May spent most of her premiership trying to persuade the 'political class' that her Brexit with a deal should be accepted as the lesser evil. Without success. From the point of view of the ruling class, May's deal is certainly a much less attractive option than remaining in the EU had been. The lesser evil? For many of the country's 'policy makers' and 'opinion makers' it is not really an option at all. They see it as amounting to the UK still by and large having to follow EU policy on many issues, but no longer having a say in formulating them.

This dilemma has caused a growing disorientation within sizeable parts of the state apparatus. One of the products of this mess has been the development of a whole swathe of what we might call waverers. Their state of mind is brought to light by the rhetorical and voting behaviour of a number of members of parliament: MPs who either advocate one thing today and the opposite tomorrow, or who have no idea how to position themselves, and who apparently would prefer not to do so for as long as possible. Impossible to know in advance which side they might take in the end.

Another result has been the crystallisation, within the Conservative Party, of a growing axis of real hardline Brexiteers. 'Real' in the sense that they advocate a no-deal Brexit, not out of career opportunism or tactical considerations, but because they really agree with Nigel Farage. This hard core re-groups around figures like Jacob Rees-Mogg, who argues that a no-deal Brexit is the best thing which could possibly happen. This group undoubtedly played a leading role in the downfall of May (after repeatedly sabotaging her different attempts to get her deal accepted) and her replacement by Johnson. Although possibly still a minority within the party, it has the advantage over the other Tories right now of knowing exactly what it wants. And indeed, its internal party opponents are at present pushed very much onto the defensive, their radius of action restricted by the fear that their time-honoured Conservative Party is in existential danger. Their fear is that the hard-liners, if they do not get their way, might rebel and, by one means or another, join up with Farage. Possible scenarios: a split in the party, or its 'hi-jacking' along the lines of what Trump has done with the Republican Party in the United States.

Populism and the manipulation of social discontent

One thing at least emerges clearly, which is that the established so-called elite has underestimated the factor of political populism in general, and the role of Farage in particular. We can readily agree that the term 'populism' is not very precise and in need of further elaboration. This notwithstanding, the term 'populism' itself already contains an important kernel of truth, as the present example of Britain clearly illustrates. One of the main reasons for the success of Farage has been that he knows how to mobilise popular discontent, stoke up diffuse resentments, and manipulate widespread prejudices, in order to counter the propaganda of the leading factions of his own capitalist class. Britain was far from being the only European country where the ruling class, whenever it could, blamed the effects of its attacks against its 'own' working population on 'Brussels'. But in Britain, this ploy was used consistently over such a long time, with an intensity, and to a degree of hysteria, almost unparalleled anywhere else. Moreover, this policy reached a new crescendo at the beginning of the new century, when a number of Eastern European countries joined the European Union. Part of the deal accompanying their integration was that the already existing member states were allowed to restrict the influx of labour from the East during a transitional phase of up to eight years. The concern behind this was to ensure that the downward pressure on wages in Western Europe which the competition from the east on the labour market

was going to exert could be phased in, in order to avoid a too-sudden exacerbation of social tensions. Only three countries renounced the use of this transitional mechanism: Sweden, Ireland and... the United Kingdom. In the case of the latter, the main motive was not hard to detect. Whole sectors of British industry were losing out to a German competition which was benefiting, among other things, from radically lowered wages thanks to the (in)famous 'Agenda 2010' austerity policy put in place there under the Social Democratic/Green government of Gerhard Schröder. In face of this, an enormous influx of cheap Eastern European labour was exactly what British capitalism needed in order to counteract this German offensive. And at the level of labour market policy, the measure was a complete success. Many workers in Britain lost their jobs, replaced by imported 'EU citizens' in a more or less desperate economic situation, and as such obliged to work more for less. Not only were the latter correspondingly 'highly motivated' (as the capitalist euphemism likes to put it), many of them were also highly qualified. This policy did not only help to lower real wages. It had a series of additional drastic consequences at the social level, best described under the term: capitalist anarchy. Almost no preparations had been made for such an influx of hundreds of thousands of new inhabitants. The already acute situation at the level of housing, health care and public services like transport and health, was brought to the brink of collapse. And this not only in the Greater London area, but also in regions which until then had been much less a destination of European Union labour migration. An example of the mood reigning at the time was the announcement by the National Health Service in the London area that it was contemplating ceasing to train nurses, since more than enough already trained ones from abroad were now pouring in.

But that is not all. When Cameron made his capital blunder of calling his referendum about the continuation or not of Britain's EU membership, Farage knew exactly what he was doing when he made 'taking back control of our frontiers' a lynchpin of his Brexit strategy. In so doing he was able to kill two birds with one stone: directing popular frustration against his own bourgeois rivals, and at the same time turning worker against worker and thus undermining working class solidarity. The only difference, at this level, to his populist counterparts in Europe such as Salvini in Italy or the AfD in Germany is that he mobilised against European Union migrants more than against refugees.

A transatlantic cooperation against the European union

But there is also a second means which enabled Farage to take his political opponents by surprise. This was the support he obtained from powerful bourgeois factions outside the UK. Much has been said about the role of Russia in the Brexit campaign. It is evident that Moscow had an interest in the UKIP side winning the Referendum, and probably did everything in its power in favour of it. However, it is nothing new that the British ruling class likes to blame everything and anything on Russia, and in fact has a vested interest in exaggerating its role. No, the foreign aid we are referring to here is that coming from the other side of the Atlantic. It's not for nothing that the US media have started to refer to the Brexit Referendum as having been a kind of dress rehearsal for Trump's victory at the 2016 American presidential elections. Both were, to an important degree, taken in hand by the same structures such as the (now defunct) electoral algorithms of the Cambridge Analytica firm owned by the American mathematician and hedge fund billionaire Robert Mercer, or the media empire of the Australian Trump supporter Rupert Murdoch.

There is a long tradition of close collaboration between leading factions of the British and American bourgeoisie, including on economic questions. Famous (or infamous) is the leading role in the establishment of the 'neo-liberal' world economic order played by the combined ef-

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forts of Margaret Thatcher (GB) and Ronald Reagan (US). More recently, in face precisely of the Brexit Referendum, Barack Obama tried to come to the rescue of David Cameron by throwing in his own political weight and rhetorical skills in his favour. But on this occasion (perhaps the first time ever on such a scale), the ‘official’ support of the Obama administration for the British government was counteracted by a second, ‘unofficial’ transatlantic collaboration: that of the future ‘Trumpists’ for the Brexiteers. The latter collaboration was motivated by a shared conviction that, in the present historic phase, ‘multilateralism’, whether in the form of the European Union or, for example, of the Chinese One Road One Belt Initiative are increasingly likely to be used as battering rams against the interests of the remaining world power, the United States, but also against those of the former world leader, the United Kingdom. Above all, they suspect structures such as the European Union of being prone to manipulation by potential challengers such as China and Germany. The two latter powers in particular are seen in London and Washington as profiting from the single EU market to spread their influence throughout continental Europe. According to this point of view, held by Trump and others, in a more fragmented world deprived of much of its previous ‘multi-lateral’ structure, the strongest power, the USA, would fare best, being in a better position to impose itself on the others. But according to the Brexiteers, the UK could also benefit from a more unilateral/bilateral (dis)order thanks to its historic experience, its longstanding world-wide connections and its status as a world financial power. In this context, the long-term goal of the hard-line Brexiteers cannot restrict itself to taking the UK out of the European Union. As has been pointed out again and again (already by Cameron during the Referendum campaign), in a world in which Britain coexists with, but is outside of the EU, London risks finding itself considerably at a disadvantage compared with the EU. This is why the hard-line Brexiteers cannot be satisfied with withdrawing the UK from the EU. Their final goal is to contribute to the demolition of the existing capitalist order – which lends this unlikely project a degree of plausibility.

It goes almost without saying that this policy is a gamble of the most hazardous kind. No wonder it was not at all what the traditional political establishment wanted. It is the objective world historical situation – the crumbling of the existing capitalist order – which lends this unlikely project a degree of plausibility.

The response of the European Union

It certainly did not go unnoticed in London how, in recent years, Germany has taken important steps towards affirming its leadership ambitions within the European Union. It has in particular used economic means to that end. It has largely succeeded in converting Eastern Europe into a kind of extended assembly line of Western European, but above all of German industry. And it has profited from its key role as guarantor for the Euro (the currency shared by a majority of EU member states) to at least partly impose its economic policies on Southern Europe. These measures helped, at least for a while, to counter the centrifugal tendencies within the European Union. However, the past few years have witnessed a series of developments threatening this cohesion. As we have discussed in this article, both Brexit and the policy of Trump in the United States at least partly represent an attack against the EU. But also within the European Union itself, in continental Europe, the already fragile cohesion has been more and more strained by developments such as the rise of populism (which in general tends to be more or less hostile towards ‘Brussels’) or the growing discontent of other member states with German economic policy (including the two heavyweights France and – in particular – Italy).

The interaction of these different tendencies and counter-tendencies is complicated and always good for surprises. Indeed, the 27 Remainer EU states have surprised themselves by how well they have succeeded so far in closing ranks in the Brexit negotiations, resisting, up until now, all the attempts of London to divide them against each other. Indeed, the very global turbulences of which Brexit is a part, and in particular the explosion of trade wars centred around, but not restricted, to the big two USA and China, have reminded the Remainers of the benefits of being part of a

Homelessness: product of the capitalist crisis

Today, if you walk the streets of the towns and cities of Britain it seems that a permanent feature of city centres are desperate people, young and old, squatting in shop doorways begging for change. A common assumption is that homeless people, many of them young, little more than kids, are begging in order to fuel a drug or alcohol habit. People pass them by, indifferent, never looking at them, not making eye contact, ignoring them. But they are homeless, they are destitute. Just look at what they are lying on: cardboard boxes, which serve as mattresses, covered up and protected from the cold night by layers of duvets and blankets. They are the victims of capitalism, even if they are on drugs or plonked up on cheap alcohol, they are among the most vulnerable in capitalist society. The homeless are prone to mental instability, fundamental illnesses caused by sleeping rough, drug and alcohol addiction. Again and again they are kicked in the teeth, by local authorities denying them accommodation, by being kicked out of the family home, by landlords who want ‘reliable’ tenants. The homeless include people who have been in a variety of institutions, from the armed forces, those who have lost their jobs, or have been refused asylum. Anyone with a precarious existence can become homeless.

The latest figures from homeless charity Shelter number 320,000 homeless in the UK. While only a few thousand are rough sleepers, many are in temporary accommodation, in shelters, hostels, B&Bs, refuges or other social housing. Recorded deaths among rough sleepers and those in temporary accommodation have more than doubled in the five years to 2018. Homeless people die much younger than the general population. Homeless men die on average aged 44, while homeless women die on average aged 42. The charity Crisis attributes rising homelessness to a shortage of social housing, housing benefits not covering private rents, and there not being homeless prevention schemes for people leaving care. There can be no doubt that this explosion in homelessness can only be attributed to the austerity drives which have led to cuts in social services. From 2010 to 2018 there was a relentless drive to cut benefits including housing allowances and this was particularly marked with young people, in the under 23s who were denied housing allowances and access to social housing.

In 2018, the government introduced the Homelessness Reduction Act (HRA) which was supposed to reduce homelessness. Although 52% of

commercial bloc which is a real heavy weight on the world economic scene. This goes all the more so for the smaller EU member countries who, in addition, are devoid of the economic and political advantages which the British bourgeoisie can at least place its hopes on. There is also the fact that a number of populist governments have been made to consider how difficult leaving the EU can be because of the example of Britain – hence the EU’s uncompromising stance on the question. Another factor of the present resilience of the EU has been the concern of many of its member states about the successes of Russia in recent years. Germany, which does not dispose of the military might which would be needed to impose itself on the European continent, and is thus obliged to employ elements of collaboration and the search for common denominators in its attempt to develop its leadership, has responded to this by developing a foreign policy increasingly hostile towards Russia (with whom it could also have common interests). In the process, it is trying to get the celebrated Franco-German ‘motor’ going again, and to improve its strained relations with Poland.

Capitalism has always been, in a sense, a casino game, a gambling den, and London is one of its centres. Today, in the phase of capitalist decomposition, this is more than ever the case. A reckless game at the expense of the well-being and the future of humanity. When does this roulette game become a form of ‘Russian Roulette’? We will not even attempt to predict the outcome of the Brexit Game. Except that it will certainly not be to the benefit of the working class either in Britain or anywhere else in the world. **Steinklopfer 06/08/2019**

homeless young people who received no help last year should now receive support under the HRA, the homeless charity, Centrepoint, said councils were not properly funded to meet their new responsibilities. Just 13% of young people who presented to councils as homeless were deemed eligible to be housed, while 35% received alternative support, ranging from mediation aimed at moving them back into the family home, to help with a rent deposit etc. Being thrown out of the family home after a row was the biggest cause of youth homelessness (37%), followed by being forced to move out of shared accommodation or a friend’s home (15%), and the ending of a tenancy by a private landlord (12%).

Sajid Javid (the new Chancellor of The Exchequer) introduced a one-year Spending Review which would supposedly alleviate the crisis of social deprivation by providing extra funding to Local Authorities. Besides being widely denounced as a cynical electoral ploy, the Institute for Fiscal Studies decried the levels of funding necessary to ‘reverse’ the massive loss in funding for the local councils. *“Day-to-day public service spending was cut by around 9% between 2010–11 and 2018–19, equivalent to roughly £30 billion in today’s prices. An increase in spending in 2019–20, along with today’s announcements, means that in 2020–21 day-to-day spending will be just 3%*

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Capitalist democracy is a fraud

als; and the very act of voting in bourgeois elections has become an expression of powerlessness, of the absence of the working class as a class.

What’s more, the themes around which elections, referendums, and parliamentary debates are organised provide clear evidence that we live under an ideological monopoly. For or against Brexit? To enter into this debate you have to assume that the interests of the nation, of “Britain”, are our interests. But the workers have no fatherland, and the nation, like the people, is a false community which obscures irreconcilable class divisions. And more: neither of the options in the Brexit conflict will protect workers from the mounting attacks on their living standards demanded by the world economic crisis. If Brexit goes ahead, there will no doubt be savage attacks on immigrant workers, whether illegal or legal, like the recent rules insisting that EU residents sort out their “settled status” prior to October 31st: almost a guarantee of future “Windrush” scandals. But the EU, which supposedly stands up for workers’ rights, has already shown its willingness to impose draconian austerity on different parts of the working class: the case of Greece is the most eloquent here (and it was the “left wing” Syriza government which applied the belt-tightening demanded by the EU).

The religion of democracy

Democracy and the nation have become today what religion was in the days when Karl Marx first coined the term *“opium of the masses”*. Democracy and the national interest are the *“spiritual aroma”* of bourgeois society, *“its moral sanction, its solemn complement, and its universal basis of consolation and justification”*¹. In other words, you cannot argue outside the assumptions of democracy and the nation, which are the ultimate truths of this society, the justification for all the sacrifices demanded in work and at war.

But this “aroma” has now become a very bad stench because parliament, like capitalist society itself, is a profoundly decadent institution. In the days of Marx and Engels, when capitalism was still an ascendant system, it made sense for workers’ parties to have a presence in bourgeois parliaments because they were the theatre for real conflicts between progressive and reactionary sectors of the ruling class, and there was still the space to fight for durable reforms on behalf of the workers. But such activities always contained the risk of the corruption of workers’ delegates, who became the main vehicles for “parliamentary cretin-

below its level a decade earlier. Around two-thirds of the real cuts since 2010 will have been reversed, and around one third of the cuts to per-person spending. Much of this increase is driven by additional funding for the NHS, however. Once we strip out the Department of Health and Social Care, spending next year is set to be around 16% below its 2010–11 level. Only around a quarter of the cuts to non-Health areas of spending will have been reversed, and only around 15% of the per capita cuts to those areas.” (IFS August 2019)

This means that the situation of homelessness and rough sleeping will persist, it will not go away, it is a condition of a rotten system. Javid’s Spending Review is part of the preparation for a possible election. There will be no alleviation from the attacks that cause social deprivation. It is the crisis of capitalism that lies at the root of poverty, of squalor, of despair, and the loss of hope. In Engels’ *The Housing Question* from 1872 he goes to the root of the question *“As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself.”* **Melmoth 7/9/19**

ism”, the belief that capitalism could be overcome simply by amassing votes for workers’ parties in bourgeois elections.

In decadent capitalism, all factions of the ruling class are equally reactionary, and there is no scope for any lasting improvement in living standards. And the profound impotence of parliamentary procedures faced with the growth of the totalitarian state as a whole has become increasingly obvious – not least in the current Brexit pantomime.

The dead-end of parliament and the rise of populism, with its fake criticism of the “elite”, has led many to conclude that it would be better to have an “illiberal democracy”, the rule of “strong men” who can get things done. But this is yet another false choice for the working class.

The proletarian alternative

The historical movement of the working class has shown another way. The Paris Commune of 1871 already went beyond the limits of parliamentarism, so that *“instead of deciding once in three or six years which member of the ruling class was to misrepresent the people in Parliament”*², the working population began to organise itself in neighbourhood assemblies whose delegates were not only elected and mandated but could be recalled at any moment. The soviets or workers’ councils that arose in Russia in 1905 and 1917 took these principles a step further, since they were based on assemblies of workers in the factories and other workplaces, making the contours of proletarian power even clearer than in 1871.

During the world-wide wave of revolutionary movements in 1917-21, the workers’ councils arose in direct opposition to parliamentary (and trade union) institutions; and the bourgeoisie understood this very well, because - above all in Germany, where the fate of the world revolution was to be decided – it did everything it could first to annex the councils, to turn them into a powerless appendage of parliament and the local state, and then to violently crush any attempt to restore their real power, as in Berlin in 1919.

Capitalist democracy has shown itself to be the deadly enemy of the proletarian revolution, of the emancipation of the exploited. And the goal of this revolution is to create a society where there will be no classes. Then for the first time, it would make sense to talk about the “the people”, or rather, a unified humanity. And a true human community will have no need for what the Greeks called “kratos”, for any kind of state or political power. **Amos 7.9.19**

1. Marx, *Introduction to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, 1843

2. Marx, *The Civil War in France*, 1871

April 1939: End of the Spanish Civil War and prologue to the Second World War

Eighty years ago, one of the most important events of the 20th century, the Spanish Civil War, came to an end. This major conflict was at the heart of the world situation in the 1930s. It had been at the centre of international political attention for several years. It would provide a decisive test for all political tendencies claiming to be proletarian and revolutionary. For example, it was in Spain that Stalinism would play a part, for the first time outside the USSR, as the executioner of the proletariat. Likewise, it would be around the Spanish question that a decantation would take place within the currents that had fought against the degeneration and betrayal of the communist parties in the 1920s, a decantation dividing them into those who would maintain an internationalist position during the Second World War and those who ended up participating in it, such as the Trotskyist movement. Even today, positions on the events of 1936-1939 in Spain are central in the propaganda of the currents that claim to support proletarian revolution. This is especially the case for the different tendencies of anarchism and Trotskyism which, despite their differences, both agree that there was a “revolution” in Spain in 1936. A revolution that, according to the anarchists, went much further than that of 1917 in Russia because of the constitution of the “collectives” promoted by the CNT, the anarcho-syndicalist trade union, an analysis rejected at the time by various currents of the Communist Left, by the Italian Left and also by the German-Dutch Left.

The first question for us to answer therefore is: was there a revolution in Spain in 1936?

What is a revolution?

Before answering, we need to agree on what exactly is meant by “revolution”. It is a particularly overused term since it is claimed in France for example by both by the extreme left (Melenchon with his “Citizen Revolution”) and by the extreme right (the “National Revolution” of the Front National). President Macron himself entitled the book setting down his political programme, “Revolution”.

In fact, beyond all the fanciful interpretations, the term “Revolution” has historically expressed and entailed a violent change of political regime where the balance of power between social classes is overturned in favour of those representing progressive change in society. This was the case with the English Revolution of the 1640s and the French Revolution of 1789, both of which attacked the political power of the aristocracy in the interests of the bourgeoisie.

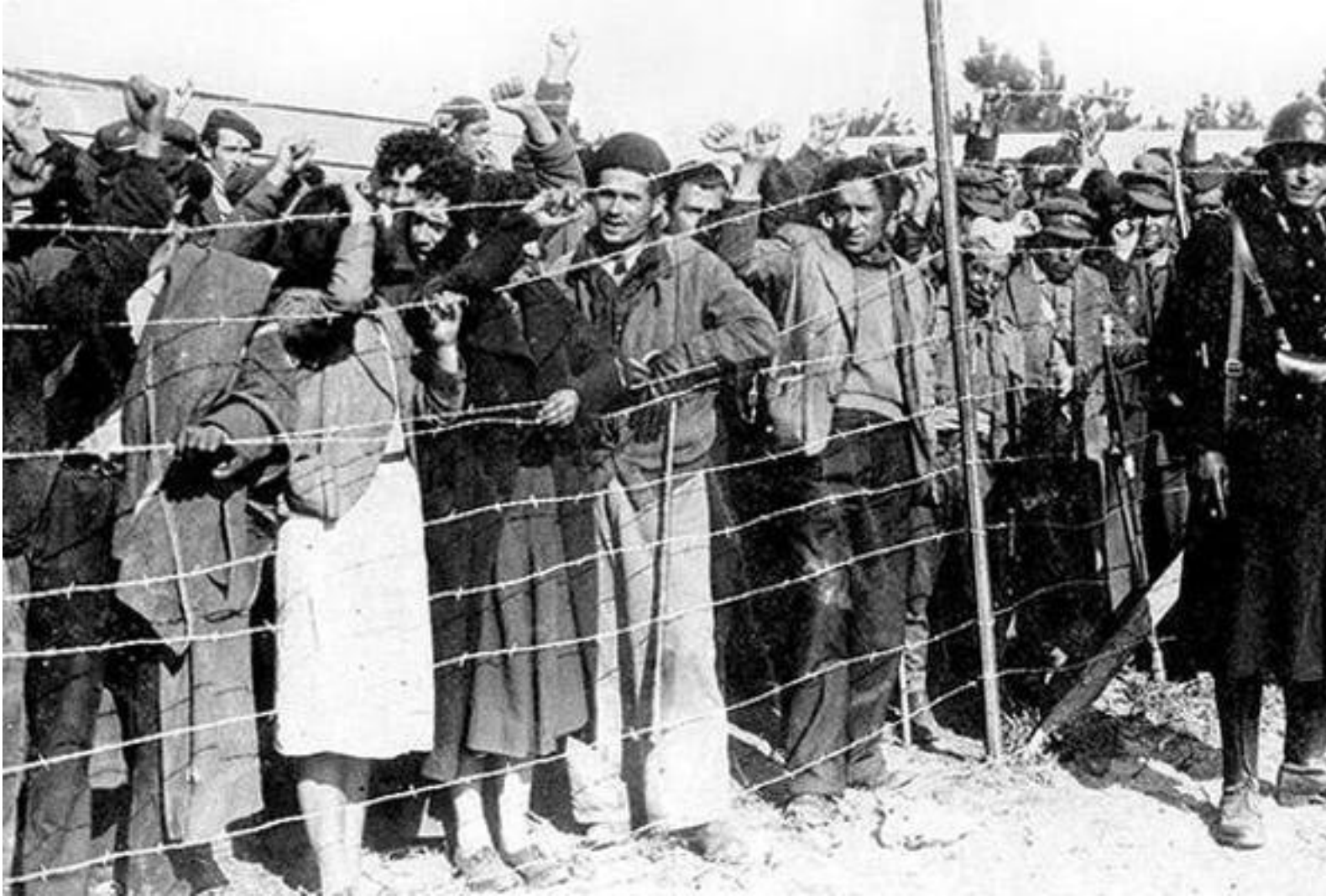
Throughout the 19th century, the political advances of the bourgeoisie at the expense of the nobility represented progress for society. And this is because at that time the capitalist system was experiencing growing prosperity and setting out to conquer the world. However, this situation would change radically in the 20th century. The bourgeois powers had finished sharing out the world between them. Any new conquests, whether colonial or commercial, would involve challenging the claims of a rival power. This gave rise to the increase in militarism and the outbreak of imperialist tensions that led to the First World War. This was a sign that capitalism had become a decadent and obsolete system. The bourgeois revolutions were no longer relevant. The only revolution on the agenda was the one to overthrow the capitalist system and establish a new society free of exploitation and war, i.e. communism. The only subject of this revolution is the class of wage earners that produces most of the world’s social wealth, the proletariat.

There are fundamental differences between bourgeois revolutions and the proletarian revolution. A bourgeois revolution, i.e. the seizure of political power by the representatives of a country’s bourgeois class, is the outcome to a whole historical period during which the bourgeoisie has acquired a decisive influence in the economic sphere through the development of trade and techniques of production. The political revolution, the abolition of the privileges of the nobility, constitutes an important (although not indispensable) step in the growing control by the bourgeoisie over society, which enables it to achieve and accelerate this process of control.

cess of control.

The proletarian revolution does not in any sense emerge at the end of a process of economic transformation of society, but on the contrary is active from the very start. The bourgeoisie had been able to establish its own economic “islands” within feudal society, with trade in the towns and other commercial networks, ‘islands’ that gradually would grow and be consolidated. It’s nothing like this for the proletariat. There can be no islands of communism in a global economy dominated by capitalism and market forces. This was the dream of the utopian socialists such as Fourier, Saint-Simon and Owen. But, despite all their goodwill and their often profound analyses of the contradictions of capitalism, their dreams clashed with and were shattered by the reality of capitalist society. The fact is that the first stage of the communist revolution consists in the seizure of political power by the proletariat worldwide. It is only through its political power that the revolutionary class will be able to gradually transform the global economy by socialising it, by abolishing private ownership of the means of production along with market relations.

There are two other basic differences between bourgeois revolutions and the proletarian revolution:



Spanish civil war refugees welcomed by democratic France

- Firstly, while bourgeois revolutions have taken place at different times depending on the economic development of each particular country (there is more than a century between the English and French revolutions), the proletarian revolution must be concluded within the confines of the same historical period. Should it remain isolated within a single country or within a few countries, it would be condemned to defeat. This is what happened to the Russian revolution of 1917.

- Secondly, bourgeois revolutions, even extremely violent ones, still retained most of the state apparatus of feudal society (the army, police, legal system and bureaucracy). In fact, the bourgeois revolutions took charge of modernising and perfecting the existing state apparatus. This was possible and necessary since this type of revolution provided for a process of succession between the two exploiting classes, the nobility and the bourgeoisie, to the helm of society. The proletarian revolution is completely different. In no way can

the proletariat, the exploited class at the heart of capitalist society, use the state apparatus designed and organised to guarantee this exploitation, and to suppress the struggles against this exploitation, for its own benefit. The first of the tasks of the proletariat in the course of the revolution will be to arm itself in order to destroy the state apparatus from top to bottom and to set up its own organs of power based on its mass unitary organisations with elected delegates revocable by general assemblies: the workers’ councils.

1936: a revolution in Spain?

On July 18, 1936, following a military coup against the Popular Front government, the proletariat took up arms. It was successful in defeating the criminal enterprise led by Franco and his associates inside most major cities. But did it then take advantage of this situation, of its position of strength, to attack the bourgeois state? A bourgeois state which, since the establishment of the Republic in 1931, had already distinguished itself in the bloody repression of the working class, particularly in the Asturias in 1934 where 3,000 were killed. The answer is ‘absolutely not!’

For sure the workers’ response was initially a class action, preventing the coup from succeeding. But, unfortunately, the workers’ energy was

as the state no longer acts as an organism that divides society into classes. Both will oppress the people much less now that members of the CNT are involved in them”. The anarchists, who claim to be the state’s “worst enemies”, were thus able, using this type of rhetoric, to lead the Spanish workers into a pure and simple defence of the democratic state. The working class was diverted from its own political goals into supporting the “democratic” faction of the bourgeoisie against the “fascist” faction. This reflects the full extent of the political, moral, and historical bankruptcy of anarchism. Where it was politically dominant in the Iberian peninsula, anarchism showed its total inability to defend class politics, to stand up for working class emancipation. The class was simply led to defend the democratic bourgeoisie and the capitalist state. But the bankruptcy of anarchism did not stop there. By pretending it could lead the revolution on the basis of local actions that gave rise to the “collectives” of 1936, it actually rendered a proud service to the bourgeois state; - on the one hand, it made possible the reorganisation of the Spanish economy in the interest of the war effort of the republican state, i.e. it supported representatives of the democratic bourgeoisie, against the “fascist” faction of the same bourgeoisie;

- on the other hand, it diverted the proletariat away from taking a generalised political action and into taking direct charge of the management of the factories and plants. This also benefitted the State and therefore the bourgeoisie. The workers were recruited into the “collectives” to deal with day-to-day production, into abandoning a global political activity and all concern for the real needs of the working class in favour of managing local enterprises, leaving them with no contacts between them.

While the proletariat was master of the streets in July 1936, in less than one year it was displaced by the coalition of republican political forces. On May 3, 1937, it made one last attempt to challenge this situation. On that day, the “Assault Guards”, police units of the Government of the Generalitat of Catalonia - in fact they were tools of the Stalinists who had gained control over them - tried to oc-

Continued from page 4

cupy the Barcelona telephone exchange that was in the hands of the CNT. The most combative part of the proletariat responded to this provocation by taking control of the streets, erecting barricades and going on strike; an almost general strike. The proletariat was fully mobilised and certainly had weapons, but it didn’t have a clear perspective. The democratic state had remained intact. It was still on the offensive, contrary to what the anarchists had said, and had in no way given up plans to suppress attempts at resistance by the proletariat. While Franco’s troops voluntarily brought an end to the offensive at the Front, the Stalinists and the republican government crushed the very workers who, in July 1936, had defeated the fascist coup d’etat. It was at this moment that Federica Montseny, the most prominent anarchist minister, called on the workers to stop fighting and to lay down their arms! So it was a real stab in the back for the working class, a real betrayal and a crushing defeat. This is what the magazine Bilan, publication of the Italian Communist Left, wrote on this occasion: “*On July 19, 1936, the proletarians of Barcelona overpowered the attack of Franco’s battalions THAT WERE ARMED TO THE TEETH USING THEIR BARE HANDS. On May 4, 1937, these same proletarians, NOW DISARMED, left behind them many more fallen victims on the streets than in July when they had had to repel Franco; and now it was the antifascist government (even including the anarchists, to which the POUM indirectly gave solidarity) that unleashed the scum of the repressive forces against the workers*”.

In the widescale repression that followed the de-



feat of the May 1937 uprising, the Stalinists were actively engaged in the work of physically removing any “troublesome individuals”. This was what happened, for example, to the Italian anarchist activist, Camilo Berneri, who had had the lucidity and courage to make a damning criticism of the CNT’s policy and the action of the anarchist ministers in an “*Open Letter to Comrade Federica Montseny*”.

To claim that what happened in Spain in 1936 was a revolution that was “superior” to the one that took place in Russia in 1917, as the anarchists do, not only totally turns its back on reality, but constitutes a major attack on the consciousness of the proletariat by discarding and rejecting the most precious experiences of the Russian revolution: in particular those of the workers’ councils (the Soviets), the destruction of the bourgeois state, the appeals to proletarian internationalism and the fact that this revolution was conceived as the first stage of world revolution and gave an impetus to

the constitution of the Communist International. Despite the anarchists’ assertions to the contrary, proletarian internationalism was proven to be quite alien to the majority of the anarchist movement, as we will see later.

The Spanish Civil war, a preparation for the Second World War

The first thing that confirms our view that the Spanish Civil War was only a prelude to the Second World War and not a social revolution, is the very nature of the fighting between different fractions of the bourgeois state, republicans and fascists, and that between nations. The CNT’s nationalism led it to call explicitly for the world war to save the “Spanish nation”: “*Free Spain will do its duty. In the face of this heroic attitude, what will the democracies do? It is to be hoped that the inevitable will not be long in coming. Germany’s provocative and blunt attitude is already unbearable. (...) Everyone knows that, ultimately, the democracies will have to intervene with their air squadrons and armies to block the passage of these hordes of fanatics...*” (*Solidaridad Obrera*, CNT newspaper, 6 January 1937, quoted by *Proletarian Revolution* No. 238, January 1937). The two battling bourgeois factions immediately sought outside support: not only was there a massive military intervention by fascist states that delivered air support and modern army weapons to the Francoists, but the USSR was also involved in the conflict, supplying arms and “military advisors”. There was enormous political and media support, all over the world, for one bourgeois camp or the other. By contrast, no great capitalist nation had supported the Russian Revolution in 1917! Quite the opposite: they had all done what they could to isolate it and fought against it militarily, trying to drown it in blood.

One of the most spectacular illustrations of the role of the war in Spain in preparing the ground for the Second World War was the attitude of many anarchist militants towards it. Thus, many of them became involved in the Resistance, i.e. the organisation representing the Anglo-American imperialist camp on French soil that was occupied by Germany. Some even joined the regular French army, notably the Foreign Legion or General Leclerc’s Second Armoured Division; this same Leclerc would later be actively involved in the colonial war in Indochina. Thus, the first tanks that entered Paris on 24 August 1944 were driven by Spanish soldiers and sported the portrait of Durruti, an anarchist leader and commander of the famous “Durruti column”, who himself died outside Madrid in November 1936.

All those who, while claiming to be part of the proletarian revolution, took up the cause of the Republic, of the “democratic camp”, generally did so in the name of the “lesser evil” and against the “fascist danger”. The anarchists promoted this democratic ideology in the name of their “anti-authoritarian” principles. According to them, even if they admit that “democracy” is one of the expressions of capital, it still constitutes a “lesser evil” for them compared to fascism because, it is obviously less authoritarian. That’s total blindness! Democracy is not a “lesser evil”. On the contrary! It is precisely because it is capable of creating more illusions than the fascist or authoritarian regimes, that it constitutes a weapon of choice of the bourgeoisie against the proletariat.

Moreover, democracy is not to be underestimated when it comes to suppressing the working class. It was the “democrats”, and even the “Social Democrats”, Ebert and Noske, who had Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg murdered, along with thousands of workers, during the German revolution in 1919, bringing to a halt the extension of the world revolution. Where the Second World War is concerned, the atrocities committed by the “fascist camp” are well known and documented, but the contribution of the “democratic camp” cannot be forgotten: it was not Hitler who dropped two atomic bombs on civilian populations, it was the “democrat” Truman, the president of the great “democracy” of the United States.

And in looking back at the Spanish Civil War, we should remember the welcome that the French Republic, the champion of “human rights” and “Liberte-Egalite-Fraternite”, gave to the 400,000 refugees who fled Spain in the winter of 1939 at the end of the civil war. Most of them were housed in concentration camps like cattle surrounded by barbed wire, under the armed guard of the gendarmes of French democracy.

The proletariat must learn the lessons of the Spanish War:

- Unlike those who want to bury the proletariat and seek to discredit its struggle, those who think that the tradition of the Communist Left is “obsolete” or “old fashioned”, that we should free ourselves from the revolutionary past of the proletariat, that Spain was a “superior” revolutionary experience and that finally we should forget the past and “try something different”, we affirm that the workers’ struggle remains the only way forward for the future of humanity. Therefore it is essential that we defend the working class’s legacy and its traditions of struggle, in particular the need for class autonomy in fighting uncompromisingly for its own interests, on its own class terrain, with its own methods of struggle and its own principles.

- A proletarian revolution is not at all the same as the “antifascist” struggle or the events in Spain in the 1930s. Quite the contrary, it has to situate itself on the political terrain of the conscious workers’ struggle, based on the political force of the workers’ councils. The proletariat must maintain its self-organisation and its political independence from all factions of the bourgeoisie and from all ideologies that are alien to it. This is what the proletariat in Spain was unable to do since, quite the contrary, it bound itself, and therefore surrendered, to the left-wing forces of capital!

- The Spanish Civil War also shows that it is not possible to begin “building a new society” through local initiatives at the economic level, as anarchists choose to believe. Revolutionary class struggle is first and foremost an international political movement and not limited to preliminary economic reforms or measures (even through seemingly very radical “experiments”). The first task of the proletarian revolution, as the Russian Revolution has shown us, must be a political one: the destruction of the bourgeois state and the seizure of power by the working class on an international scale. Without this, it is inevitably doomed to isolation and defeat.

- Finally, democratic ideology is the most dangerous of all those promoted by the class enemy. It is the most pernicious, the one that makes the capitalist wolf look like a protective lamb and “sympathetic” to the workers. Antifascism was therefore the perfect weapon in Spain and elsewhere used by the Popular Fronts to send workers to be massacred in the imperialist war. The State and its “democracy”, as a hypocritical and pernicious expression of capital, remains our enemy. The democratic myth is not only a mask of the state and the bourgeoisie to hide its dictatorship, its social domination and exploitation, but also and above all, the most powerful and difficult obstacle for the proletariat to overcome. The events of 1936/37 in Spain amply demonstrate this and it is one of their most important lessons. **ICC, June 2019**

Read ICC online article

Nuevo Curso and the “Spanish Communist Left”:

What are the origins of the Communist Left?

The communist revolution can only be victorious if the proletariat arms itself with a political party of the vanguard able to take up its responsibilities, as the Bolshevik party was able to do in the first revolutionary attempt in 1917. History has shown how difficult it is to construct such a party. It is a task which demands numerous and diverse efforts. It demands, above all, considerable clarity around programmatic questions and the principles of organisational functioning, a clarity which is necessarily based on the entirety of the past experience of the workers’ movement and its political organisations.

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Only the international class struggle can end capitalism’s drive towards destruction

But above all it’s possible because capitalism is based on the formation of a class with nothing to lose but its chains, a class which has an interest both in resisting exploitation and overthrowing it: the international working class, the proletariat of all countries. This is a class which includes not only those who are exploited at work but also those studying to find a place in the labour market and those whom capital throws out of work and on to the scrap-heap.

Citizens’ protests or workers’ struggle?

And it is here in particular that the ideology behind the climate marches serves to prevent us from grasping the means to fight against this system. It tells us, for example, that the world is in a mess because the “older generation” got used to consuming too much. But talking about generations “in general” obscures the fact that, yesterday and today, the problem lies with the division of society into two main classes, one, the capitalist class or bourgeoisie, which has all the power, and one far larger class which is exploited and deprived of all power of decision, even in the most “democratic” of countries. It’s the impersonal mechanisms of capital that have got us into the current mess, not the personal behaviour of individuals or the greed of a previous generation.

The same goes for all the talk about the “people” or the “citizens” as the force that can save the world. These are meaningless categories which cover up antagonistic class interests. The way out of a system which cannot exist without the exploitation of one class by another can only take place through the revival of the *class struggle*, which starts with workers defending their most basic interests against the attacks on living and working conditions inflicted by all governments and all bosses in response to the economic crisis – attacks which are also more and more being justified in the name of protecting the environment. This is the only basis for the working class developing a sense of its own existence against all the lies which tell us that it’s already an extinct species. And it’s the only basis for the class struggle fusing the economic and political dimensions - drawing the link between economic crisis, war, and ecological disaster, and recognising that only a world-wide revolution can overcome them.

In the lead-up to the First World War, hundreds of thousands marched in pacifist demonstrations. They were encouraged by the “democratic” ruling classes because they spread the illusion that you could have a peaceful capitalism. Today the illusion is being spread far and wide that you can have a green capitalism. And again: pacifism, with its appeal to all good men and true, hid the fact that only the class struggle can really oppose war – as it proved in 1917-18, when the outbreak of the Russian and German revolutions obliged the rulers of the world to bring the war to a rapid close. Pacifism has never stopped wars, and the current ecological campaigns, by peddling false solutions to the climate disaster, must be understood as an obstacle to its real solution.

International Communist Current
27 August 2019

A new recession

Capital demands more sacrifices from the proletariat

Despite sophisticated means to hide the rise in unemployment, bad news on this front is arriving suddenly everywhere, even if paradoxically, as in France and the UK, there are reports of a decline in job seekers. But it is becoming more and more difficult to make people believe that all this is not so serious. As every year, the summer period was once again used by the ruling class in all countries to make serious attacks on the conditions of exploitation and living conditions of employees. But this time it's worse. Whether behind closed doors or out in the open, with or without sedative propaganda, there are countless measures and reforms that have been planned or implemented everywhere by the bourgeoisie to deal with the accelerating economic crisis.¹

Increase in brutal attacks

In “emerging” countries the situation of the proletarians is deteriorating very sharply. In Argentina, the peso crisis and galloping inflation are plunging the country into a very dramatic scenario that reminds us of the dizzying fall of 2001, with the increased poverty it caused for the workers.² In Brazil, the effects of labour reform with wage reductions are weighing heavily on the working class. And in addition, the pension system is under attack. In Turkey, an austerity plan was launched and in April there was a 32% increase in food prices. In Europe, at the heart of capitalism, the economic crisis is beginning to hit hard. In Germany redundancy plans are multiplying. Deutsche Bank announced the loss of 18,000 jobs in July, the largest “restructuring plan” in its history (20% of the workforce). Another worrying sign for employment is that “*orders for machine tools, the spearhead of the economy, fell by 22% per annum between April and June*”.³ But job losses are already spreading to almost all sectors: supermarkets (for example, the merger of Karstadt and Kaufhof will lead to the loss of 2,600 full time equivalent jobs, but in reality it will affect between 4,000 and 5,000 people because many workers are part-time), 5,600 at T-Systems, Deutsche Telekom’s IT subsidiary, insurance (700 fewer jobs at Allianz), in industrial conglomerates: Thyssenkrupp (6,000 worldwide including 4,000 in Germany), Siemens (2,700 worldwide, 1,400 in Germany), Bayer (12,000 by 2121), etc...

Short-time work which had disappeared from the automobile sector five years ago is now returning in force, affecting 150,000 people.⁴ In the United Kingdom, in the chaotic context of Brexit, the situation is also worsening. For example, the British banking giant HSBC is planning a restructuration with 4,000 job losses, following the 30,000 redundancies announced in 2011. The British car industry also faces around 10,000 redundancies as Ford, Honda, Nissan and Jaguar Land Rover have all made major cuts in their global workforce. In the United States the trade war and the rise in customs duties are already having an impact on manufacturing companies: “*What interests us today are the reasons given by employers to justify job losses. In the last report in July, tariffs were one of the main reasons. Indeed, 1,053 reductions due to tariffs were announced in one month, from a total of 1,430 this year and against 798 in 2018.*”⁵

1. Those who read French can see our article on the attacks in France on our French language website <https://fr.internationalism.org/content/9947/bourgeoisie-profite-des-faiblesses-du-proletariat-lattaquer-plus-fortement>.
2. The Argentine peso was at parity with the dollar at the beginning of the century; it is now worth only about 0.02 dollars. Prices have increased over 50% over the last 12 months. The IMF’s loan of 57 billion in 2018 was granted only in exchange for a plan of drastic austerity and severe budget cuts that have already caused 5 general strikes since the beginning of the year. According to official statistics, one third of Argentines already live below the poverty line (Web source: *BFM Business* August 13, “Argentina: the descent into hell of the 3rd largest economy in Latin America”).
3. <https://lexpansion.lexpress.fr/actualite-economique/allemanne-la-croissance...>
4. Not to mention Volkswagen’s new plan to cut between 5,000 and 7,000 additional jobs by 2023 (more than 30,000 since 2017) or Ford-Germany’s plan to cut 5,000. In addition to 570 redundancies, Mercedes-Benz is eliminating temporary and fixed-term contracts.
5. <https://www.capital.fr/entreprises-marches/etats->

In India an industry source told Reuters that early estimates suggest that the car industry, including manufacturers, parts and dealers, have laid off about 350,000 workers since April. We could give many more examples. And yet despite all the job losses announced, unemployment figures remain strangely stable across the board. The explanation is simple. Everything is based on sophisticated statistics and new evaluation methods. In addition to the growing number of unemployed who are no longer included, the phenomenon has been totally disguised in recent years by an explosion in precarity and the deterioration in the quality of jobs. In all countries unemployment benefits are being reduced at the same time as low paid, short time jobs have increased the amount of casual work. It is these “active policies” that artificially “increase the employment rate” at the expense of the proletarians and their families.

In the United Kingdom the flexibility of the labour market and “uberisation” have boosted “zero hours” contracts, which offer no guarantee of working hours. Employers are free to draw on these workers as they see fit, depending on the needs of their deteriorating business and declining order books. In Germany the Harz reforms of 2003-2005 allowed the development of casual work at 450 euros per month, and these jobs are now increasing. In many other countries, such as Sweden, part-time, low-paid fixed-term contracts have grown strongly. In the Netherlands, “zero hours” contracts and German-style “casual work” are also on the rise. In Portugal, the “*recibos verde*”⁶ and in France so-called “self-employed” status go in the same direction, that of increasing precariousness. Everywhere, for those who still have a permanent contract, layoffs are facilitated. Today these measures, which were taken in the 1990s and especially after the 2008 crisis, are bearing fruit and are progressing at an ever faster pace as a result of the crisis. To limit the decline in profit, capital is constantly increasing the exploitation of labour power which leads to a sharp deterioration in the living conditions of the working class: so inequality and poverty are constantly increasing.⁷

This increased greatly during the summer. This is partly visible through strikes, which affected some sectors such as Amazon in Europe and the United States in July, or in different airlines in Spain or Italy for example. The strikes were provoked by a deterioration in contracts and pay levels.

Working conditions are therefore becoming less and less tolerable: “*We have so many people out of work that we accept harmful working conditions, like a kind of sacrificial act*”.⁸ The fear of losing one’s job generates various pathologies and the terror at work causes suicides or irreparable damage: “*We have ‘top’ managers whose brains are permanently damaged and who will never be able to work again. It is a premature wear and tear of the body due to mad levels of over-use*”⁹ Of course, while more and more workers are damaging their health at work it is also increasingly difficult to get treatment, when it is still possible to do so. The attacks on the hospital sector will not reverse this trend. Such attacks on health services have been seen over many years in Britain and France is seeing a new measure attacking its hospitals called “Ma santé 2022”.¹⁰

Unlike the years following the Second World War when the anaemic labour force had to be rebuilt for reconstruction by developing the “welfare state”, today’s overabundant workforce whose costs have to be lowered to maintain “competitiveness” no longer requires the “luxury” of adequate social and health coverage.

On the other hand, the duration of exploitation of the labour force is constantly being extended. Pensions are being violently attacked everywhere.

unis-la-guerre-commerci...
6. The “*recibos verde*” is a green form that has to be filled in by freelance or self-employed in Portugal.
7. Since 1982, fixed-term contracts have doubled and temporary employment has increased fivefold!
8. <https://www.europe1.fr/sante/epuisement-professionnel-un-tiers-des-salar...>
9. Idem
10. Even in 2012, a third of the population in France had to give up care for financial reasons, 33% more than in 2009 (according to Europe Assistance-CSA).

The retirement age is rising everywhere and pensions are steadily being eroded. In Germany the retirement age is being increased from 65.5 to 69 by 2027, in Denmark from 65.5 to 67 this year and to 68 in 2030. In the Nordic countries, such as Sweden or Norway, a so-called “flexible” system will encourage later departures and this is also the case in France. In the United Kingdom, the law even encourages people to work until they reach the age of 70. In practice, low pensions are increasingly pushing older people to work. In the United States people over 80 years of age are still in work. In the face of the new open crisis that is looming one thing is certain: proletarians all over the world will see their situation deteriorate sharply and the future will therefore only get darker.

Entry into recession

All this has become all the more pronounced as the global situation of the world economy has further deteriorated: “*On the economic level, since the beginning of 2018, the situation of capitalism has been marked by a sharp slowdown in world growth (from 4% in 2017 to 3.3% in 2019), which the bourgeoisie predicts will be worsening in 2019-20. This slowdown proved to be greater than expected in 2018, as the IMF had to reduce its forecasts for the next two years, and it is affecting virtually all parts of capitalism simultaneously: China, the United States and the Euro Zone. In 2019, 70% of the world economy has been slowing down, particularly in the ‘advanced’ countries (Germany, United Kingdom). Some of the emerging countries are already in recession (Brazil, Argentina, Turkey) while China, which has been slowing down since 2017 and is expected to grow by 6.2% in 2019, is experiencing its lowest growth figures in 30 years.*”¹¹

The summer period clearly confirms and highlights this tendency to sink into crisis. On the one hand, trade tensions between China and the United States increased sharply this summer and on the other hand the main economic indicators remain in the red. In the heart of Europe, Germany is already being hit hard by the effects of the onset of a recession, which confirms that it has thus become Europe’s new sick man. Many specialists point more generally to the possibility of a major financial crisis in the future, probably even more serious than in 2008 due to the record level of debt accumulated since then and the weakened position of the state in this regard. As we also point out in the resolution from our recent international congress: “*Concerning the proletariat, these new convulsions can only result in even more serious attacks against its living and working conditions at all levels and in the whole world*”.¹² Even if not all states carry out attacks at the same intensity and pace, all must adapt in the same way to the conditions of competition and the reality of increasingly glutted markets. States must also make drastic cuts in their budgets in order to make savings at all costs.¹³ And in the end, the ruling class is making the proletariat take the load of its desperate efforts to curb the effects of the historical decline in its mode of production. As always it’s the working class that must pay the price!

What perspectives for the working class?

The proletariat is exposed to the blows of attacks which are already planned and those to come in the future. Sooner or later, it will have no choice but to react with a massive and determined struggle. But for this to happen it will need, on the one hand, to develop the conditions for in-depth reflection in order to better understand how the bourgeoisie is preparing to face the class struggle, and on the other hand, to try to define how to effectively conduct the class struggle inside and outside the workplace. This means going back to the lessons of the proletarian movements that have taken place

11. ‘Resolution on the international situation’ from the 23 ICC Congress (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/16704/resolution-international-situation-2019-imperialist-conflicts-life-bourgeoisie>)
12. Idem
13. See ‘The reality of poverty in Britain’ (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/16682/reality-poverty-britain>) for more on attacks in the UK.

in the past, in history, and particularly during the period between 1968 and 1989. This means taking into account the traps and mystifications orchestrated by the class enemy in order to better identify them in the future and not to be caught out by them again. The working class needs to become aware of its strength, to break out of isolation of struggles by countering the state’s democratic propaganda and the manoeuvres of trade unions, especially in their most radical and pernicious forms. In addition the proletariat must always remain vigilant against the dangers that threaten the autonomy of its struggle. In particular, it will have to fight against the influence of alien class ideologies belonging to the intermediate layers, in particular the petty bourgeoisie, which are a way of diluting the class, which risks being drowned in the undifferentiated mass of “the people”, an abstract notion. The interclassist movement of the Yellow Vests in France, mixing isolated proletarians with the petty bourgeois layers, is in this respect one of the most significant examples of the growing dangers facing the proletariat. Far from being a model of struggle, this movement has been its antithesis because it has been locked into the democratic values of capital and in its nationalist or even xenophobic prejudices.¹⁴ On the contrary, only proletarian methods of struggle, from strikes to mass assemblies, provide the conditions for a truly autonomous and conscious movement that can raise the perspective of revolution and an end to class exploitation. **WH 17.8.19**

14. See ‘The “Yellow Vest” movement: the proletariat must respond to the attacks of capital on its own class terrain’ (<https://en.internationalism.org/content/16609/yellow-vest-movement-proletariat-must-respond-attacks-capital-its-own-class-terrain>).

ICC online

Recent additions

Nuevo Curso and the “Spanish Communist Left”: What are the origins of the Communist Left?

Extracts from some correspondence on the question of elections

**Reader’s contribution
Trump v the squad
The deterioration of the US political apparatus**

**Ecological disaster
The poison of militarism**

Debate on the balance of class forces

Massive street protests in Hong Kong: Democratic illusions are a dangerous trap for the proletariat

**Discussions on the ICC forum
2019 Resolution on the International Situation
Some Observations and Questions**

Recent discussion at contact meeting organised by the ICC

Rather than a fatalist acceptance along the lines of panic and the idea that "we are all doomed", the present descent of capitalism into the abyss can be a spur, an element in the development of class consciousness in the sense that it is becoming apparent that, as Marx and Engels indicated in *The Communist Manifesto*, the present state of things has rendered the present society and its perspectives untenable. Thus the only possible result that can avoid the future destruction that capitalism holds for us, the only possible result for the defence of the whole of humanity, is the active emergence of the proletariat: a class with a future.

See the ICC website for details:

<http://www.internationalism.org>

India revokes Kashmir’s special status: Crisis, communal conflict and imperialist tensions

Situated and divided between India, Pakistan and China, all three of them nuclear powers, and claimed by both India and Pakistan, Kashmir has been a region of instability since the British left in 1947. It has been fought over in two wars between the states of the Subcontinent, and a war between India and China, which have cost an estimated 45,000 lives. The conflict has been continued with the Pakistan-backed Muslim separatists, costing tens of thousands more lives since 1989. The working class can expect nothing from these conflicts but to see workers and peasants, civilian or in uniform, being used as hostages and cannon fodder. Whether Kashmir is ruled by India or Pakistan, or divided between them, or independent, there is nothing to be gained by the working class, or the peasantry.

Six months after the confrontations at the Line of Control between Pakistan and Indian administered regions of Kashmir last February, Modi’s BJP government has revoked the territory’s status as an autonomous state, dividing it into two union territories ruled from Delhi. India began by turning away the 20,000 tourists and pilgrims that visit Kashmir in the summer months, on the grounds of possible terrorism from separatists. Then it prepared for the constitutional change by sending tens of thousands of troops ready to put the territory in ‘lockdown’, cutting communications and using pellet guns against the protests which arose. On the Pakistani side villagers have fled the line of control, fearing further fighting along it.

Economic crisis

The Modi government has claimed that it has acted to allow Kashmir to benefit from India’s economic growth, just when the Indian economy is heading into crisis. Moody’s has downgraded its forecast for Indian growth for 2019 from 7.5% to 6.2%, and it looks as if it will fall below 6%. Private sector investment is at a 15 year low. Car sales in July were 30% down, with an expected loss of around a million jobs, including those in the supply chain. Imports from China have doubled since 2014, while exports remain at 2011 levels. “*Rajiv Kumar, the head of the government’s think tank Niti Aayog, recently claimed that the current slowdown was unprecedented in 70 years of independent India*”¹

Of course, the problems with the Indian economy

1. www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-india-49470466.

my are not specific to one country, but an aspect of the difficulties of the world economy. Pakistan has called on the IMF for help with its economic crisis.

Of course the action in Kashmir, fuelling Hindu nationalism, along with a campaign against corruption, particularly when carried out by the government’s foes, are distracting attention from these economic woes. The *Economist* has even suggested this is the purpose of the anti-corruption campaign. However, there are deeper underlying problems behind the move in Kashmir.

Feeding communal conflict

The removal of Kashmir’s special status was no whim, but part of the BJP programme at the last election. Nor did it just annul its autonomous status; it also rescinded the constitutional ban on outsiders buying land, which has been relied on by Kashmiri nationalists (and Pakistan) to prevent its Muslim majority population from being diluted by an influx from the rest of India. The BJP in fact propagates and benefits from a very divisive Hindu nationalism that has gained great popularity in India and even among the minority high caste Hindu population in Kashmir. A similarly divisive policy has been carried out in Assam where 1.9 million residents have been robbed of citizenship because they were unable to prove they had not moved from Bangladesh since 1971.

Unlike the nationalism of the 19th Century, which saw the unification of Germany and Italy, today’s nationalism tends to feed centrifugal tendencies. The Hindu nationalism of the BJP undermines the secular nationalism that has been necessary to the unity of India as a country with numerous religions and languages.² This is not a specifically Indian problem: we see parallels across the world. If Modi’s Kashmir policy has increased divisions in the Indian state, in the UK Brexit is fuelling Scottish nationalism and putting in question the conditions of the Good Friday Agreement that brought an end to the sectarian ‘troubles’ in Northern Ireland.

2. The book *Malevolent Republic* by Kapil Komireddi, recently reviewed by the *Financial Times* argues that Hindu nationalism is “*putting the very fabric of the country at risk. His core thesis is that secularism is ‘the condition of India’s unity’.*” (<https://www.ft.com/content/dee2bdde-b9d4-11e9-8a88-aa6628ac896c>). This is not however something created by Modi and the BJP, nor a simplistic result of the corruption of the previous Congress Party governments, as the author thinks.

Neither nation faces an imminent break-up, but in both there are increased centrifugal tendencies. The measures against residents of Assam echo the Windrush scandal in Britain, in which thousands of people who had lived in the country since early childhood lost jobs and access to healthcare, and were even deported if they could not prove they had lived in the UK all their lives. It’s a similar story with the deportations of undocumented migrants in the USA. There have been increased murders of people accused of killing cows in India, murders of those accused of blasphemy in Pakistan, just as there were increased xenophobic attacks in Britain after the Brexit vote.



Indian soldiers enforce curfew in Kashmir

These are all examples of the rotting of a society that can give no perspective to humanity, not even the completely insane perspective of mutually assured destruction in war, while at the same time the working class is not able to show society its own revolutionary perspective³.

Shifting alliances exacerbate instability in Kashmir

Despite Indian government protests, its action in Kashmir is anything but an internal matter, with repercussions felt far away. Pakistan’s PM, Imran

3. See ‘Report on the impact of decomposition on the political life of the bourgeoisie’ from the ICC 23 Congress, <https://en.internationalism.org/content/16711/report-impact-decomposition-political-life-bourgeoisie-23rd-icc-congress>

Khan, has protested loudly, calling for it to be discussed in the UN Security Council, (a call supported by China), and threatening to take it to the International Court of Justice, as well as accusing India of acting like Nazis. Pakistan, with its porous Afghan border and tacit support for the Taliban, has threatened to move troops from the Afghan border to Kashmir, just when the US wants it to control that border because it is in talks with the Taliban with a view to withdrawing its troops. “*Pakistan’s ambassador, Asad Majeed Khan, emphasised ... that the Kashmir and Afghanistan issues were separate and that he was not attempting to link them. On the contrary, he said, Pakistan*

hoped the US-Taliban talks would succeed and that his country was actively supporting them. ... India’s moves in Kashmir ‘could not have come at a worse time for us’, because Islamabad has sought to strengthen the military control along the western border with Afghanistan, an area long infiltrated by Taliban militants”⁴. Meanwhile, the Taliban has just invaded Kunduz in the North of Afghanistan.

4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/pakistan-may-redeploy-troops-to-kashmir-border-pak-envoy-to-us/articleshow/70662669.cms>

Continued on page 7

Political positions of the ICC

World Revolution is the section in Britain of the **International Communist Current** which defends the following political positions:

- * Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.
- * The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.
- * The statified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called ‘socialist’ or ‘communist’ were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.
- * Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in

- the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.
- * All the nationalist ideologies - ‘national independence’, ‘the right of nations to self-determination’ etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.
- * In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. ‘Democracy’, a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.
- * All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called ‘workers’, ‘Socialist’ and ‘Communist’ parties (now ex-‘Communists’), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism’s political apparatus. All the tactics of ‘popular fronts’, ‘anti-fascist fronts’ and ‘united fronts’, which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.
- * With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union

- organisation, whether ‘official’ or ‘rank and file’, serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.
- * In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.
- * Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it’s not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.
- * The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers’ councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.
- * The communist transformation of society by the workers’ councils does not mean ‘self-management’ or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.
- * The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

- factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to ‘organise the working class’ nor to ‘take power’ in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat’s combat.
- OUR ACTIVITY**
- Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.
- Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.
- The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.
- OUR ORIGINS**
- The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League* of Marx and Engels (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen’s Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.