

Workers of the world, unite!

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RE-ELECTION OF PRESIDENT OBAMA

The Bourgeoisie Prepares to Enact Austerity

The 2012 Presidential election has come and gone with a positive result for the main factions of the U.S. bourgeoisie. Beating back a firm challenge from his Republican rival Mitt Romney, President Obama has secured re-election meaning the Democratic Party will now survive to guide the ship of state for another four years.

The post-election media narrative has been deafening. Obama won in a landslide they tell us, taking 332 Electoral College votes to Romney's 206 and beating his rival by over 3 million popular votes. All the doomsday scenarios of another contested election like 2000 came to naught ⁽¹⁾. All

1) It is worth noting that the election in Florida was another disaster. Although it was ultimately decided

of the state level GOP attempts to suppress the votes of likely Obama supporters hardly mattered at all. Obama now has a national mandate to govern and Obamacare is set to remain the uncontested law of the land. The Republicans, still licking their wounds from a trouncing that also saw them lose seats in the Senate, will almost certainly have to moderate their rhetoric and come to the negotiating table. Finally, after four years of obstinate obstructionism, the GOP will be forced to get a grip on reality and strike the grand bargain on deficit reduction that elud-

ed in Obama's favor—it was by a razor thin margin and it took nearly a week to count the votes, amidst allegations that the election was run in third world fashion.

ed the US bourgeoisie throughout Obama's first term.

The more rosy pundits even expect that this election will spell the end of the Tea Party insurgency within the Republican Party. They claim the more rational elements within the GOP (Jeb Bush perhaps?) will now be able to assert themselves and regain control of the party, reinvigorating a healthy two party system once again. Still others foresee a civil war in the GOP as it struggles to come to grips with a new demographic reality in which its commitment to race baiting, retrograde sexual politics, anti-science conspiracy theory and immigrant bashing will never again permit it to secure the Presidency.

For our part, against the optimistic interpretations, we feel the results of the election, and the preceding campaign, confirm the analysis we have developed since Obama's initial election regarding a developing "political crisis" of the American bourgeoisie.

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ISRAEL/PALESTINE

Populations held hostage by imperialist war

Again, Israeli jets and missiles have been pounding Gaza. In 2008, "Operation Cast Lead" led to almost 1,500 deaths, the majority of them civilians, despite all the claims made about "surgical strikes" against terrorist targets. The Gaza Strip is one of the most impoverished and densely populated areas in the world and it is absolutely impossible to separate "terrorist facilities" from the residential areas that surround them. With all the sophisticated weapons at the Israelis' disposal, the majority of casualties in the current campaign are also women, children, and the old.

Not that this concerns the militarists at the



head of the Israel state. Gaza is once again being collectively punished, as it has been not only through the previous onslaught but

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We should review what we have analyzed as some of the main features of this crisis:

The effects of social decomposition have been asserting a centrifugal weight on the bourgeoisie itself leading to an increasing inability for certain factions of it to act in the overall interests of the national capital. However, this process has not affected all factions of the bourgeoisie equally. The Republican Party has suffered disproportionately from an ideological degeneration calling into question its ability to act as a credible party of bourgeois government.

The inability of the bourgeoisie to find any solution to the continuing economic crisis has only strengthened the tendencies towards vicious factional infighting within the bourgeoisie. The ideological decomposition of the Republican Party means that it more and more abandons any attempt to manage the economic crisis in a rational way falling back on thoroughly discredited conservative economic dogma and aggressively pursuing anti-union policies that threaten to strip the state of its best bulwark against the working class.

Given its current condition, it is too risky for the main factions of the bourgeoisie to risk putting the Republican Party back in charge of the national government. This is despite the fact that the continuing economic crisis and the accompanying need to enact austerity would tend to suggest that it would adopt a strategy of the putting the left of its political apparatus into opposition in order to capture and divert working class anger into dead-ends that are not threatening to the capitalist social order.

As a result of the Republican Party's degeneration, the Democrats are left to run the national government and carry through the needed austerity. This risks upsetting the traditional ideological division of labor within the bourgeoisie making the Democrats responsible for painful cuts to social programs and the Republicans running against the rhetoric of economic recovery.

Whatever its reservations about the Republicans assuming control of the national government, the main factions of the bourgeoisie are faced with a situation in which it is increasingly difficult for it to impose its will on the electoral process. The ideological decomposition of the Republican Party has been accompanied by a generalized ideological hardening of society itself. More and more, the nation is divided into two—roughly equal sized—political blocks. In a Presidential election, each candidate is assumed to start out with about 47 per-

cent of the vote. With the Republican Party increasingly unwilling to accept the discipline of the main factions, each election is fiercely contested. Election campaigns turn more and more into a zero sum fight over the remaining “undecideds” in which fewer and fewer tactics are ruled out. Moreover, the structures of the US state—the Electoral College, equal representation of each state in the Senate, the management of national elections by state and local officials, tend to favor the less populated, more backward areas of the country, giving the GOP a certain advantage.

Obama's Presidency, while providing an initial revitalization of the electoral myth among a population that had been turned off by eight years of the Bush Presidency, has only sparked an even more intense, and much more durable, right wing backlash. With conspiracy theories and racist stereotypes coming to define the President in the eyes of many, his Presidency has faced questions about its legitimacy from the very beginning, threatening to bring down his signature achievements such as the passage of Obamacare.

So, does Obama's reelection spell the end of these difficulties, what we have labeled a “political crisis”? Are the main factions of the bourgeoisie right to celebrate their victory, believing, as they do, that it will mark a return to political normalcy in which the business of the nation will be the top priority once again? What about the working class? What role did it play in this election? Was the bourgeoisie able to maintain its momentum from 2008 and keep the population convinced that electoral democracy is the best way to protect its interests? What does Obama's victory mean for the working class? What can it expect from his second term in office? We will try to shed some light on these questions, from a Marxist perspective, here.

The Meaning of Obama's Victory for the Working Class

We should have no illusions about what Obama's second term will mean for the working class. We can sum it up in one word: austerity. For all the campaign rhetoric the Obama team spewed, aided by their union and “progressive” allies, about protecting Social Security and Medicare from the right-wing “evil genius” Paul Ryan, it is clear that cuts to both programs have always been on the agenda for Obama's second term. The only question is how deep

the cuts will be and how fast they will be implemented.

It is pretty simple really. The US bourgeoisie, Democrat or Republican, left or right, are all in agreement that the nation's fiscal course is simply unsustainable. They all recognize that in order to attempt to get the deficit under control “reforms” will have to be made to the so-called “entitlement” programs, which account for a large share of the nation's budget woes. It is true that the policies advocated by former VP candidate Ryan, such as turning Medicare into a voucher program, were simply too draconian to enact at this time. It is also true that the main factions of the bourgeoisie reject the right-wing trope by which Social Security must be privatized in order to “save it”. However, none of this means that they will endeavor to preserve these programs as they are now. On the contrary, painful cuts are in the offing.

President Obama has already signaled his willingness to slash these programs. It was a major part of the so-called “grand bargain” he was in the process of negotiating with Republican House of Representatives Speaker John Boehner in the lead up to the debt ceiling crisis in the summer of 2011. The only real difference in that matter was the President's desire to bundle the cuts with certain tax increases on the wealthy in order that he could sell the bargain to the population with the poll-tested language of “shared sacrifice.” It was only Tea Party intransigence that prevented Boehner from agreeing to the grand bargain, forcing the complex machinations that now pose the threat of the so-called “fiscal cliff”: automatic tax increases and draconian spending cuts to kick in at the beginning of the new year unless a deal can be reached.

In fact, the political pundits are already on record that this is the real import of the election. Obama now has the political capital he needs to force the Republicans into a grand bargain that, at the very least, includes some tax increase for the wealthy that can be sold to the population as “shared sacrifice.” We don't know for certain how deep the cuts will be or how fast they will be implemented, but there is little question that they are coming. The left of the Democratic Party can cry all it wants about “protecting the Big Three”⁽²⁾, but can one really doubt that in the aftermath of whatever deal is reached, they won't try to sell

2) This is left wing Democrat and talk show host Ed Schultz's term for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid.

us on the idea that it could have been much worse if the Republicans controlled the White House? Or try to make us feel a little bit better that at least the billionaires will be kicking in their fair share? Of course, how exactly any of that helps the Medicare beneficiary who just saw their benefits slashed or their premiums go up, or the 65 year old coal miner, who will now have to wait another year or two to collect his measly Social Security check is never explained.

In terms of the overall economic picture, it is not at all clear that the situation can get any better in Obama's second term. While the bourgeoisie turns its attention to deficit reduction, any thought of providing more stimulus for the economy is completely abandoned. There is simply no political will for any more government spending, despite the fact that the more serious bourgeois economists like Paul Krugman and Robert Reich have continuously called for another round of stimulus in order to try to pull the economy out of the doldrums.

It's symbolic of the dead-end the bourgeoisie finds itself in that its focus on deficit reduction runs smack into the face of stimulating economic growth. The best the pundits can do on this score is to hark back to the glory days of President Clinton, who raised taxes and balanced the budget while presiding over the "largest economic expansion in American history." So ahistorical and short sighted has the bourgeoisie become that they fail to remember that much of the "growth" of the Clinton years was the result of the debt fueled tech-stock and real estate bubbles that led to the current Great Recession! They seem to believe that the recipes of the Clinton era can be resurrected and applied today, regardless of the historical and economic context.

It is unclear whether or not the Obama administration really believes all its campaign hype about how much better the economy is getting under its tutelage. Regardless, even if it does recognize the need for further stimulus, there isn't a whole lot it can do about it. Whatever new mood of cooperation the GOP may acquire as a result of their electoral "trouncing," it is unlikely they would agree to a new round of stimulus. With Congress gridlocked on this issue, the Federal Reserve has recently been compelled to act on its own by buying up more mortgage securities, but most serious economists

agree that this amounts to nothing more than a peashooter, when what is needed is something closer to a howitzer. In the end however, even if there were political will for such an endeavor, its unclear where all the money would come from—the printing press? Borrow more from China? All of this would fly directly in the face of the pressing need for deficit reduction. The bourgeoisie is truly stuck between a rock and a hard place. Even if they are able to pull off another round of stimulus, this would—in the end—amount to nothing more than kicking the can down the road.

All of this makes it patently clear that Obama's triumph was not as victory for the working class. On the contrary, he now has enough political cover to enact the austerity he has planned all along and which the needs of the national capital demand. While there remains a certain danger to the bourgeoisie that the Democratic Party will be perceived as the party that presided over the looming cuts, this is tempered to some degree by the Obama administration's ideological success in selling the population on the fact that under the Republicans, the cuts would have likely been much worse. It is most likely for this reason, rather than through a deep conviction and support for Obama's policies, that many working class people bit the bullet in this election and voted for the Democrats. The logic of the lesser of the two evils appears to have carried the day ⁽³⁾.

However, those workers who still have illusions in Obama's Presidency, who still believe that he can "restore the middle class" or that he is some kind of champion of "workers" rights, need look no further than the events surrounding the Chicago Teachers' Strike to get a real sense of where the President stands on these issues. We must not forget that it was the President's cronies in Chicago that carried through these assaults on the teachers ⁽⁴⁾. Can there be any doubt that this vision for the education sector – indeed for the entire working class – is ultimately shared by the President himself? The original architect for Mayor Emanuel's plan to reform the Chicago school system was none other than former Chicago School Chancellor

3) It should be noted, however, that the electorate was about 10 percent smaller this year than it was in 2008.

4) See our article/leaflet "Solidarity With the Chicago Teachers" here: <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalismusa/201209/5162/solidarity-chicago-teachers>

Arne Duncan—Obama's current Secretary of Education!

We must assert against all the possible electoral calculations that the interests of the working class lie elsewhere—in its autonomous struggles to defend its working and living conditions at the point of production. It is understandable that workers fear the Republicans' draconian attacks. It is quite possible that this party has lost any mooring in reality and would proceed to enact the most retrograde policies at the national level if it ever makes it back into office. However, should this mean we have to find solace in the Democrats? It's clear that the only real difference between the parties at this point is how fast and how dramatic the cuts will be. In the end, both roads lead to the same place. When we vote for Democrats, it is we workers who are kicking the can down the road. The only real solution for our condition is to return to the road of our own autonomous struggles around class issues.

Is the Political Crisis Finished?

This brings us to the issue of the political crisis of the US bourgeoisie itself. Will Obama's re-election put an end to the all the rancor within the ruling class as the bourgeois media has been telling us? Will the Republicans' electoral "trouncing" cause the more rational factions in that party to reclaim it from the Tea Party lunatics? Is a new era of cooperation and progress in the offing in which both parties will turn their attention toward governing in the best interests of the national capital?

In answering these questions, it is first necessary to address the issue of the alleged electoral "trouncing." It is true that Obama won by a large margin in the Electoral College, but only in the context of recent American politics can a 51 to 48 percent margin in the popular vote be considered a "landslide." On this level, the election results only seem to confirm the reality that the United States is a deeply divided country. The population is so sharply divided that even month after month of relentless campaign propaganda painting Romney as a greedy vulture capitalist and Obama as an un-American socialist barely moved the final election tallies from 2008, when Obama bested McCain by 53 to 46 percent. So hardened have the ideological lines in society become that the challenge of building a national narrative is more severe than ever.

It is likely true that the emerging demo-

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graphic trends within the electorate spell serious trouble for the GOP. If it is intent on continuing its brand of hard right policies based in large part in playing to white racial fear and gender based demagoguery, it is unlikely a Republican Presidential candidate will ever be able to build a broad enough electoral coalition to make it competitive against a strong Democratic one ⁽⁵⁾. However, can we conclude from this reality that the GOP will necessarily be able to right its ship as the media predicts? This seems unlikely. Having stoked the flames of the white male backlash it does not seem reasonable to expect this element in the party to go quietly into the night. Should the Republican leadership compromise with Obama on comprehensive immigration reform (as most pundits suspect it will try to do), it seems quite possible that there could be a split in the Republican Party – something that would throw a major spanner in the works of the US two-party system. While we can't say for certain that this will happen, the fault lines within the GOP are clear. It will be torn for some time between a wing of the party seeking to refurbish its image in order to maximize electoral success, and another intent on preserving ideological purity.

However, the Republicans are not the only ones with a demographic problem. Obama lost the white vote by a large margin. Whatever his advantages among blacks, Latinos, single women and young voters, he suffered severe deficits among blue-collar whites (in particular men). While in the context of a high turnout Presidential election, this arrangement favors the Democrats going forward, it remains unclear whether or not this will translate into lower turnout mid-term, state and local elections. The GOP, in whatever form, reformed or retrograde, will likely continue to be a force at these levels. In fact, even in the current Presidential year – largely due to corrupt gerrymandering – the GOP was able to retain control of the House of Representatives. The perspective appears to be one of continued partisan bickering rather than real cooperation.

On another level, the US bourgeoisie will continue to be dogged by the practical “reversal” of its traditional division of ide-

5) Of course, it is worth considering that even a “rock star” candidate as Obama was barely able to move the results much beyond a “margin of error” victory. One wonders what the results would have been with a less sensational candidate without such compelling personal appeal?

ological labor. If it were obliged to keep the Democrats in power indefinitely pending a resolution of the Republican Party's meltdown, this would pose serious problems for the legitimacy of the Democratic Party itself. Forced to preside over the coming austerity, the Democrats would have to own the policies they enact. This is something we saw play itself over the course of the recent campaign. What an odd sight it was, in the midst of a terrible recession, for the Democratic candidate to have to run on the illusion that the economy was improving, while the Republican candidate ran as the voice of the long-term unemployed whom the President had failed to help! How long can this situation hold? The Democrats only response to this is to argue that an intransigent GOP forces them into these policies and prevents them from being able to act to their fullest capabilities. While they have had some success with this tactic so far, how much longer can they keep it up before the Democrats become viewed as the party of austerity?

We should also acknowledge that President Obama's first term was marked by the emergence of a genuine extra-parliamentary movement around the issues of the economic crisis in the Occupy Movement, which captured the public imagination for a period of time in the fall and winter of 2011. It appears that the U.S. bourgeoisie was able to recuperate much of the energy of this movement into Obama's re-election campaign under the same “lesser of the two evil” logic that moved many workers to support the President. However, now that the election is over, it is reasonable to consider whether or not there is a perspective for the reemergence of similar movements should the economic situation fail to improve given that there will no longer be a pressing electoral campaign with which the bourgeoisie can blackmail it? If the Democrats come to be viewed as the party of austerity, will it continue to be able to divert the energy of future extra-parliamentary social movements into the electoral dead-end?

In the realm of foreign policy, it is clear that the Obama administration will continue to face growing threats to US hegemony, which it will find increasingly difficult to head off. Although foreign policy may not have been a major issue in the Presidential campaign, as evidenced by the third and final debate in which Romney basically agreed with Obama on most major issues of foreign policy, this does

not mean that there are no tensions within the US bourgeoisie on these issues. Already, just a week after the election, President Obama is dealing with a major public relations debacle regarding the sexual indiscretions of CIA Director and Iraq surge hero General Petraeus.

While it is not clear what the ultimate import of this crisis will be, it seems the Republicans smell blood in the water and will certainly use this scandal to ramp up their investigations into the administration's mishandling of the Benghazi consulate attack that left the US Ambassador to Libya dead. However this plays out, the US bourgeoisie will continue to face severe challenges to its imperialist hegemony including the possibility of a wider war emerging from the Syria crisis, continued tensions with Iran, increasing difficulties keeping its Israeli running dog in line and the growing threat to its hegemony coming from an increasingly aggressive Chinese imperialism.

In the end, while we think the main factions of the US bourgeoisie may have won another victory with Obama's re-election, this does not completely reverse the tendency towards political crisis that has been gripping the US bourgeoisie for over a decade. While we do not have a crystal ball and we cannot tell how this situation will play out exactly, it seems likely that the road will continue to be very rocky. It is instructive that some political scientists who study US politics think we are on the verge of another party realignment. What shape that will take is not quite clear. The reality of decomposition makes it very difficult to predict with any certainty.

From our perspective, the re-election of President Obama does not herald a new era of peace, prosperity and cooperation. While it is true that there will probably be an attempt by the more rational factions of the Republican Party to retake it from the Tea Party, this does not guarantee success. Moreover, it would be a mistake to reduce the problems of the US bourgeoisie to this alone. The challenges facing it are immense and in all probability insurmountable. For the working class, the conclusion is clear –there is no salvation in this mess of bourgeois electoral politics. We can only pursue our interests on a fundamentally different terrain– that of our autonomous struggles around class issues.

Henk, 11/14/12

“SUPER STORM” SANDY

The Wrath of Mother Nature or the Irrationality of the Ruling Class?

All around the world people have seen the images of coastal towns’ destruction and the desolation of the hundreds of thousands left homeless – 40,000 in New York City alone. They evoke the recent memories of last year’s tornado in Joplin, Missouri; of last year’s hurricane Irene; of 2005’s hurricane Katrina, to name only a few, and only the ones that struck the US. Each time the same questions are raised: Why, with growing awareness of the link between of global warming, rising sea levels, shifting sea currents and weather patterns, and more frequent and violent storms, is nothing done to prevent similar catastrophes from inflicting the damage which is to be expected? Why are the so-called rescue efforts never enough to address the needs of the population? Why aren’t the pre-storm evacuations better planned and organized? Is there even a way to prepare for and then to organize the necessary relief, given the chaotic and irrational way in which urban development is “planned” and implemented? Each time these questions are raised after a new disaster, the ruling class avoids a direct confrontation with them, resorts to outright lies, or chooses to focus on how to make political hay out of real human loss and suffering.

Pre-storm preparedness: the bourgeoisie is unfit to rule

Much of the blame for the human hardship in the aftermath of “Superstorm Sandy” has been laid on the choice individuals made not to leave their homes and relocate to shelters. Indeed, ever since the criticisms prompted by the response to Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the ruling class has been intent on refurbishing the image of its state. In an attempt to restore the masses’ confidence in its apparatus, it needs to project the idea of a state capable of safeguarding the well-being of its population. However, cutting through the state apparatus’ byzantine layers of bureaucracy to get the help required in an appropriate time frame has proved impossible time and again.

Even making the communication fast-

er and better between the various federal agencies charged with warning of the potential dangers of a storm is a task that the capitalist state is not able to fulfill. In the words of Bryan Norcross, a well-respected meteorologist for more than twenty years, “*They [the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, NOAA] made outstanding forecasts. Their strength forecast was essentially perfect, and their storm surge forecast for New York City was absolutely as good as a forecast can be these days.*” Indeed, forecasts of potentially destructive storms can be made quite accurately one week ahead of their hitting land these days. But the National Hurricane Center chose not to issue any hurricane advisory until just one day before Hurricane Sandy landed because it kept receiving information that the storm may change its path and weaken to a tropical storm. By the time it had become clear the storm wasn’t changing its path and wasn’t weakening, and the Center finally issued the hurricane warning, not enough time was left for people to clearly understand what was about to happen and prepare accordingly. Considering the magnitude of the storm and the fact it was on course to slam into the most populated part of the country, it really was not rational, certainly not responsible, on the side of the agencies and authorities in charge, to decide not to issue the hurricane warning earlier. It certainly is not rational to downplay a storm that was described as a “super-mega-combo” freak of a storm the like of which had never been seen.

NOAA has one set of warnings for tropical storms and another set for northeaster or winter storms. Partly because Hurricane Sandy was a hybrid-type storm which did not fit the description of any prior storm, NOAA got tangled up as to which warning to issue, not knowing which guideline to follow. Without a doubt this had the effect of hindering the ability of the Center to issue the most appropriate warning in time. However, the Center’s decision to issue a clear hurricane warning only one day before the storm’s impact cannot be explained by its

sclerotic bureaucracy alone. It also offers a view into the tattered infrastructure of capitalist metropolises and begs the question to our rulers as to what solution, if any, they have to confront similar storms in the future? It seems impossible, under the present conditions of urban “development” under capitalism, to organize a rational protection and evacuation of areas at risk for several reasons:

- 1) the sheer number of people living in those areas;
- 2) the lack of infrastructures needed to mobilize them for the evacuation and shelter them in the aftermath of a storm;
- 3) the destruction of the natural environment and the continued urban development of areas that should not be developed for urban uses;
- 4) the displacement of financial, human, technological resources toward military goals. These resources could be used for research, innovation, and building of new infrastructure capable of confronting the threats to the environment and human life posed by climate change.

In the case of New Jersey, which was hard hit by the storm, most of the communities on the barrier islands along its coast have been developed to attract tourists and summer residents. For decades, concrete sea walls, rock jetties, or other protective barriers have lined the barrier islands to spur the development of the tourist industry. This kind of urban development has meant that since 1985 80 million cubic yards of sand has been applied on 54 of the state’s 97 miles of developed coast line: a truckload of sand for every foot of beach. Aside from the fact that this periodic replenishment of artificial beaches with natural sand from elsewhere means an increased toll on the highways (trucks filled with sand are extremely heavy) and the depletion of a natural resource, rising sea levels and more frequent storms wash away replenishment projects sooner than expected. Buildings, houses, and roads also pin down the beaches, which contributes significantly to making these communities

“Super storm” Sandy

more vulnerable to rising sea levels and storms and to the further deterioration of the natural protection once provided by undeveloped beaches. Undeveloped beaches deal well with storms. Their sands shift; barrier islands may even migrate toward the mainland, in this way protecting it. But the need for capitalist profit, rather than a harmonization of nature’s own principles with human needs, is what drives the choice to continue the development of artificial beaches. In the logic of capitalism, economic benefits, even though temporary, outweigh the cost of protecting human lives.

New York City has suffered a similar fate, but on a much larger scale. Now that Superstorm Sandy hit and everyone realizes how vulnerable the city and its millions of inhabitants are, the inevitable cacophony about what to do for the future has started again. Proposals for the human engineering of what used to be the harbor’s own natural protective barriers are being considered. Some of these proposals are quite interesting and creative; some even take into account the recreational uses of such projects and their aesthetic attraction. This shows that at the technological and scientific levels humanity has developed the ability to potentially put science at the service of human needs. Storm-surge barriers have been built around the city of St. Petersburg in Russia; Providence, Rhode Island, and in the Netherlands. The technological know-how is available. However, the geography of New York City is such that building a storm-surge barrier to protect Manhattan and parts of Brooklyn could affect tidal flow in such a way that a surge bouncing back against the barrier would double-up its strength against parts of Staten Island and the Rockaway, among the hardest hit by Superstorm Sandy. It is not impossible that an engineering solution can be found to this problem, but, given the track record of capitalist development and the realities of the economic crisis, it is not far-fetched to imagine that New York City will rather recede in what engineers call “resilience”, a term that describes small scale interventions such as installing floodgates at sewage plants and raising the ground level of certain areas in Queens. Considering that New York City is a multi-million inhabitant city that runs part of the world economy and whose infrastructure is very complex, old, and extensive, small interventions of

this sort clash against the simplest common sense. It is also not far-fetched to foresee that if the choice will go in favor of a proposal for a storm-surge barrier, the question of who gets included to be behind the gate, and who doesn’t will be answered by the needs of capitalist profit rather than those of human beings.

The aftermath of the storm: we are on our own

President Obama’s electoral campaign saw in Hurricane Sandy an opportunity to revamp the dispute between the most conservative right wing of the ruling class and its more liberal wing over the role of government. Of course, it did so to its own political advantage. It has been claimed that the present administration’s response has been more effective than the response of the George W. Bush’s administration in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. The images of the New Orleans convention center, where thousands were stranded for days and where the most awful conditions of survival set in, have been juxtaposed to the images of the National Guard in Hoboken, New Jersey moving in the day after the storm struck to deliver food and water and rescue stranded residents. The message was to be clear: the government is there to help people in need and can do a better job at it if Democrats are at the helm of the state. It was quite obvious from the publicity the Obama administration received from the supposedly “prompt” response by the mass media, and their bashing of the Bush administration’s response to Hurricane Katrina, that the media were completely open to helping Obama out in winning the election.

But human reason must stand to the test of facts. Anybody can read or watch the news to get a sense of the real catastrophic conditions in which hundreds of thousands of people are living in two weeks –at the time of writing– after the storm. From reopening schools that are also serving as shelters, to the continued power shortages for vast swaths of the population across the area, to the fuel rationing and the recent plan by mayor Bloomberg to have the most devastated neighborhoods in the metropolitan area resuscitated through his Rapid Repair program –which promises to be a quick-fix aimed at quelling the population’s rising anger and frustration, the test of facts shows that the ruling class and its exten-

sive bureaucratic state apparatus have hit an impasse and are unable to efficiently and meaningfully address the urgent and long-term needs of its population.

But we do not conclude from this, as the right wing conservatives do, that we need to replace the government with charities and encourage people to save for the rainy days. This is would link the masses to the whims of the ruling class anyway, either by making them dependent on the magnanimousness of philanthropic and religious organizations, or the capitalist market’s swings between periods of employment and unemployment, with the resulting instability as to the ability to save. This does not help the exploited masses raise their consciousness from the level of resignation to the system of exploitation they are subjected to, since it makes no difference whether we are directly repressed and exploited by the state, or by the market, or by the individual capitalist who also happens to be a philanthropist. What we think is needed is the revolutionary and autonomous action of the masses aimed at taking political power. This is the only way to ensure that all important decisions are made in the interest of what needs to be done to create, administer, deliver, and distribute the resources of society for society’s own needs, and not for the needs of profit, capital, the government, or the philanthropist.

Probably learning from the experience of the recent climatic events linked to climate change, most notoriously Hurricane Katrina, that the ruling class and its various agencies, such as FEMA, won’t help, or won’t give the help needed, or enough of it, or as promptly as needed, it is the population itself that poured in its resources, time, money in a significant show of real solidarity. This shows the fundamental and significant sense of identity that exists among the exploited and that it is them who have the potential to create a new world.

The working class is the only class with a future

In each instance of a “natural disaster”, the ruling class has been particularly keen on preventing deeper questions of a more general nature from being posed and given a revolutionary answer: What is the perspective for the future of the planet and the human species under the rule of a social class that shows no

regard for the safety and well being of the classes it exploits? If the future under capitalism has nothing more to offer other than more environmental destruction and greater threats to the survival of the human species, what needs to be done? What alternatives for the construction of a different, new world? Because it has no

particular economic interests to protect and no position of power to maintain and defend in capitalist society, the working class and its revolutionary minorities are the only social forces who can give answers that are stripped of ideological mystifications and that aim at searching for the truth. It is only on the basis of

knowing the truth about how economic, social, and political factors determine our human existence that the exploited classes can find in themselves the confidence in their own ability to offer a different vision of the world and ultimately concretize it.

Ana, 11/12

Continued from page 1

Israel/Palestine: populations held hostage by imperialist war

through the blockade which has crippled its economy, hampered efforts to rebuild following the devastation of 2008, and kept the population at near starvation levels.

Compared to the firepower wielded by the Israelis, the military capacities of Hamas and the more radical jihadist groups in Gaza are puny. But thanks to the chaos in Libya, Hamas has got its hands on longer-range missiles. Not only Ashdod in the south (where three residents of a block of flats were killed by a missile fired from Gaza) but Tel Aviv and Jerusalem itself are now in range. The numbing fear that grips Gaza residents every day is also beginning to make itself felt in Israel's main cities.

In short: both populations are held in hostage to the opposing military machines that dominate Israel and Palestine – with a little help from the Egyptian army that patrols the borders of Gaza to prevent undesirable incursions or escapes. Both populations are in the firing line in a situation of permanent war – not only in the form of rockets and shells, but through being compelled to shoulder the growing burden of an economy distorted by the needs of war. And now the world economic crisis is forcing the ruling class on both sides of the divide to introduce new cuts in living standards, new increases in the prices of basic necessities.

In Israel last year, the soaring price of housing was one of the sparks that lit the protest movement which took the form of mass demonstrations, street occupations and assemblies – a movement directly inspired by the revolts in the Arab world and which raised slogans like “Netanyahu, Assad, Mubarak are all the same” and “Arabs and Jews want affordable housing”. For a brief but exhilarating moment,

everything in Israeli society – including the “Palestinian problem” and the future of the occupied territories – was open to question and debate. And one of the main fears of the protestors was that the government would respond to this incipient challenge to national “unity” by launching a new military adventure.

This summer, on the occupied West Bank, rises in fuel and food prices were met by a series of angry demonstrations, road blockades and strikes. Workers in transport, health and education, university and school students and the unemployed were on the streets facing the police of the Palestinian Authority and demanding a minimum wage, jobs, lower prices, and an end to corruption. There have also been demonstrations against the rising cost of living in the Kingdom of Jordan.

For all the differences in living standards between the Israeli and Palestinian populations, despite the added oppression and humiliation of military occupation suffered by the latter, the roots of these two social revolts are exactly the same: the growing impossibility of living under a capitalist system in profound crisis.

There has been much speculation about the motives behind the recent escalation. Is Netanyahu trying to stir up nationalism to boost his chances of re-election? Has Hamas been stepping up rocket attacks to prove its war-like credentials in the face of a challenge from more radical Islamist gangs? Does the Israeli military aim to topple Hamas or merely to degrade its military capacities? What role will be played in the conflict by the new regimes in Egypt? How will it affect the current civil war in Syria?

These are all questions worth pursuing but none of them affect the fundamental issue: the escalation of imperialist con-

flict is totally opposed to the needs of the vast mass of the population in Israel, Palestine and the rest of the Middle East. Where the social revolts on both sides of the divide make it possible for the masses to fight for their real, material interests against the capitalists and the state which exploits them, imperialist war creates a false unity between the exploited and their exploiters and sharpens divisions between the exploited on one side and the exploited on the other side. When Israeli jets bomb Gaza, it produces new recruits for Hamas and the jihadists for whom all Israelis, all Jews, are the enemy. When the jihadists fire rockets into Ashdod or Tel Aviv, it makes more Israelis turn to “their” state for protection and for revenge against the “Arabs”. The pressing social issues which lay behind the revolts are buried in an avalanche of nationalist hatred and hysteria.

But if war can push back social conflict, the opposite is also true. In the face of the current escalation, “responsible” governments like those of the USA and Britain are calling for restraint, a return to the peace process. But these are the same governments currently waging war in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iraq. The USA is also Israel's main military and financial backer. We cannot look to them for “peaceful” solutions any more than we can look to states like Iran who have openly armed Hamas and Hezbollah. The real hope for a peaceful world does not lie with the rulers, but with the resistance of the ruled, their growing understanding that they have the same interests in all countries, the same need to struggle and unite against a system which can offer them nothing but crisis, war, and destruction.

Amos, 20/11/12

THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE U.S.

What point has it reached? How to go forward?

It is often said that the history of the class struggle in America for the last four decades, that is, since the late 1960's, is the history of an almost uninterrupted wave of defeats and rollback. Indeed, looking across the Atlantic toward Europe, and south, and east, we would have to make the same conclusion. This is perhaps more spectacularly so in the case of Greece, where in the last year alone six general strikes have been called by the unions, yet not even this has stopped the onslaught of brutal austerity measures in that country. To come back to America, over the course of the last four decades the decline in the standard of living of the American worker has been relentless, quite brutal, and undeniable. In the course of the last four decades, the ruling class has imposed a series of very deep cuts and changes to the entire apparatus of exploitation needed to secure the reiteration of the process of capitalist production: from cuts to education and its increasing costs, to cuts to real wages, to the increase in the work week and the intensification of exploitation, to the erosion of employer-sponsored health care benefits, all the way down to the more recent practice of creating new tiers for new hires in which traditional defined benefit pensions are shifted to 401k-type schemes. The working class has often put up very intense struggles and it has also gone through somewhat lengthy periods of relative quiet, all of which we have written about in this press. However, its attempts at defending its living and working conditions, attempts at times very bold and courageous and carried out notwithstanding the threat of losing one's job, have not succeeded, for the most part, in deterring the ruling class from proceeding with what have become ever more brutal, more frequent, and more frontal attacks. The frontal nature of the more recent attacks, and those to come, are without a doubt a reflection of the economic impasse in which the bourgeoisie finds itself.

Is it then correct to conclude that the working class has lost its battle against capitalism? Should we accept that we

are at the point where the reversal of the balance of forces in favor of the working class is no longer possible? Are the struggles that the working class still engages in a sign of its waning, a reflection of a slow, but irreversible process toward all-out defeat? Does all of this mean that the working class is no longer the social force in society that has the potential and historic mission to destroy capitalist relations of exploitation and give birth to a communist world? Yet, as quiet as it's kept, the working class in the United States continues to wage struggles and there are some signs of reflection and strategizing in the willingness to fight for a younger generation of workers as this has become a subject of capital's particularly vicious attacks. Despite the weakness and lack of confidence workers feel—which gives the unions a relatively free hand to run the struggles—workers don't exactly trust the unions either.

We do not think that the working class has exhausted its potential. We think that it is going through, and has for some time, a very difficult process of re-discovering its class identity and confidence, of understanding how to confront the class enemy on its own class terrain, and of transforming the lessons and defeats of the past into acquisitions that can be used as sign-posts for the struggles to come. We think that the most decisive struggles for the fate of humanity have not been waged yet, and that the working class is still at the center of history and is a fundamental actor in its development. But in order to have this conviction, we need a method of analysis and understanding. We need to place the struggles of the class in a wide historical setting and assess the balance of forces between the two major classes in society not on the basis of the number of struggles waged and not even in terms of any temporary victory, or painful defeat. A struggle can be massive and protracted without bringing to the class any fundamental theoretical, organizational gain and without helping the class to strengthen solidarity and class-

identity, as in the recent examples from Greece. On the other hand, a struggle which on a strictly economic level does not bring even the least of temporary relief, can foster an important sense of self-identity and confidence, politically much more significant than a temporary economic victory—if any can still be obtained. As the economic crisis that started in 2007-2008 continues unabated, it is particularly important that the class continues to develop its struggles with a new understanding of what is at stake, and that its self-identity and confidence be restored.

The class struggle in the U.S.: a brief summary of its context and of the bourgeoisie's strategy

From 1989 to 2003 the working class globally went through a protracted reflux in its consciousness and combativeness, the result of the campaigns about the "end of communism", and "the end of history" unleashed after the fall of the Berlin Wall. The first signs of the return of the class struggle were seen in Austria and France starting in 2003, and in the U.S. these struggles were echoed in the New York City MTA (transport) strike of 2005. More struggles happened everywhere, with a significant increase in combativeness, and, most importantly, the emergence of intergenerational class solidarity. In particular, the MTA strike of 2005 was waged in support of the younger generation of workers, for whom the MTA bosses had proposed a new tier with a reduced benefits package. This went on until about the 2007 financial crisis, which, when it hit, created a momentary paralysis amongst workers at the point of production. In 2009 there were record lows of only 5 major work stoppages, after which there has been an uptick in the combativeness of the class, most notably with the mobilization of students and public sector workers in Madison, Wisconsin in 2011, which clearly linked itself to the movement of social protest going on in the Arab world. Soon after, the Verizon strike involved 45,000 workers and then

The class struggle in the U.S.

in the same year we saw the movements of protest of Occupy Wall Street, borrowing methods of struggle of the working class through the formation of the General Assemblies, but also going beyond bread and butter demands, opening up a space for a wider questioning of capitalism, of humanity's future under it. A big component of the context of the struggles in the US has been the election campaign, which had a dampening effect on the class struggle, and which also gave ammunition to the unions against the working class. The unions have made use of the union-busting posture of many Republicans and even some Democrats to rally the workers to their defense. This proved somewhat problematic to do, especially in the case of the Chicago teachers' strike of last September, which saw a Democratic mayor pitted against the teachers union, a stance that threatened to abort the unions' usual work of mobilizing public sector workers votes in favor of the Democratic candidate. Notwithstanding the deafening noise of the electoral campaign, disputes at the work place returned as early as the summer of 2012.

In New York City Con-Edison workers went on strike over changing pension plans for new hires. The union decided to call the strike, but when the company asked for one week's notice, the unions refused, and Con-Edison locked out the workers. The whole campaign then turned to reinstating the workers who had been locked out, and the proposed changes to the contract receded in the background, until on the verge of a storm Governor Cuomo intervened by forcing Con-Ed to reinstate the workers. This tactic has been utilized in the past, particularly during the Verizon strike: the union went on strike because of stalled negotiations. Workers ultimately went back to work without a contract.

Attacks against the workers are being implemented even without contract negotiations. In some cases, step increases linked to longevity have been frozen. New budgets assume no raises for any number of years, when contracts for city workers already expired in some cases as long as four years ago. Retired workers are not being replaced. In New York State, a new tier for new hires at the Department of Education has been approved by the legislation of the state, without any contract negotiations. The

issue becomes one of getting the workers back to work or re-starting the negotiations, rather than talking about the new contract per se. This is a strategy of the unions and the bourgeoisie to confront the older, more experienced workers who have shown on several occasions that the attacks against the young generation of workers only stimulate their willingness to struggle in the youngsters' defense. It seems clear that the ruling class, at least where the workers are more greatly concentrated and experienced, consciously tries to avoid a direct confrontation with the existing workforce because it has learned that the older generation of workers is in a different mood than during the years of its reflux from 1989 to 2003.

This strategy has happened consistently enough to have become a pattern--whether it was a well thought out strategy at the beginning or whether the ruling class has learned from it. It started with General Motors about four years ago with the creation of two tiers for different pension and salary plans. After GM every company has tried to do the same thing. This situation does add the element of demoralization to workers who have struggled--the Lockheed strike, which also was going on during the summer, went on for a couple months, also over the creation of a new tier for the next generation of workers. The strike ended in a terrible defeat for the workers, with all major concessions won by the bosses, including the provision about the new tier. However, as it was apparent by the reactions of many Lockheed workers, workers are having a deeper reflection on the role of the unions. This time, the union could not brag about its outcomes.

While the Lockheed strike was going on, janitors in Houston also walked out, followed by a number of other janitors in several cities across the country. Their demands were around wages and working conditions, and their struggle was successful. But this was not at all thanks to the unions' mobilization. Indeed, their demands, even though they were on the class terrain, were very modest: a wage increase to a little over \$10 an hour is something that JPMorgan--who contracts out the janitors' bosses--can afford, especially after four years of bad publicity! This little victory by the Houston janitors poses a larger question: what do the

Lockheed workers think about seeing the janitors get a little bit while they've gotten nothing? Does it make them doubt their own strength or does it put union methods in question? It is a terrible thing to have to go back to work having lost a struggle for one's posterity; however, this has not succeeded in inflicting a sense of defeat amongst the working class and it has not destroyed the sense of solidarity people feel. In fact, while this strategy has been successful in the past, it is now resulting not as much in a sense of demoralization but in resentment about this strategy--the working class is starting to see that this is what is becoming a pattern. There's an attempt to recuperate the sense of solidarity that the bourgeoisie has tried to attack. As we wrote before, this intergenerational solidarity is something that appeared clearly already in 2005 with the MTA workers' strike. This is an important dynamic that has the potential for an interesting development in the struggles to come.

That the workers doubt their own strength may not be all that negative after all, if they are able to turn that sense of doubt in a deeper reflection on how to struggle more effectively. The reason the unions make such a deafening noise in cases of small victories is not simply to refurbish their own image, but specifically to try and sap the incipient questioning of union tactics among the larger, more experienced sectors of the working class. The strategy is to isolate and wear down the larger workforces while showcasing small victories in less important and insecure sectors of the working class such as the janitors.

Also in the summer we saw the Palermo pizza workers strike over wages, benefits, and conditions of work. The company fired more than 80 workers on pretense of a presumed immigration check by ICE at the same time as the unions were running a unionization campaign. The company was ultimately forced by ICE to reinstate the fired workers. This strike showed the mood of defiance the working class is getting in. Even immigrant workers without papers showed they did not fear to struggle. However, we should be cautious and not conclude from this that the working class is prepared to defend itself against the attacks of the repressive apparatus of the ruling class. ICE--and Palermo--took a step back in the face of the angry complaints

The class struggle in the U.S.

by the union, who pointed out that federal intrusion into illegal immigration—a vital source of cheap labor for small and medium-size companies like Palermo—risked sabotaging the drive to unionize immigrant workers, an important sector of the working class which the unions across the country have been courting in an attempt to shore up the dwindling numbers of their membership. Again, this instance was showcased as a union victory.

Another component of the ruling class” strategy is, in struggles where there are no gains to be won, long battles of attrition lock the workers in desperation and demoralization. This has been the case of the Crystal Sugar workers strike, run by the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union, which is part of the AFL-CIO and which also represents the Hostess workers, 15,000 of whom have just recently been fired by the company after being locked out. 1,300 Crystal Sugar workers were locked out after a majority of its workers rejected a contract proposal three consecutive times. The company hired replacement workers for the sugar beet season, and shows no intention of wanting to re-hire the fired workers, while the AFL-CIO is launching a boycott campaign to “force Crystal Sugar to rehire its workers”. In both instances, Crystal Sugar and Hostess, the lockout followed stalled negotiations and workers were drawn into a protracted battle of attrition. This is an example of how the unions mystify the workers on several accounts:

1. By creating the illusion that under the decadence of capitalism and the most serious economic crisis in its history, it is still possible to wage struggles for immediate gains and improvements
2. By isolating the workers in their company and fostering corporatism
3. By posing as the guarantor of workers” rights through the use of the boycott or reliance on the National Board of Labor Relations, which, when it is called to intervene and decide on the bosses” favors, supports the unions by obscuring their responsibility in the workers” defeat. Isolated by the unions in the corporatist strait-jacket, workers cannot find a way to extend their struggles and their solidarity.

Unions may talk about unity. During the Con-Ed strike in New York City, all

the major unions came out. Yet, at the Con-Ed pickets the union had posted a banner clearly reading: “At this time we are not addressing any other union’s grievances”, while workers belonging to a different union stood across the streets with signs that expressed their solidarity with the Con-Ed workers. In a similar way, in the case of the janitors” strike where the unions really conducted a national campaign of support, demonstrating with other workers, engaging in rolling strikes city by city, the Lockheed workers were totally isolated and not a word was said about them. At the end, concessions are made behind the backs of the workers, not enshrined in the contracts.

What assessment?

What is the way forward?

It is clear that the working class has not given up its fight. Its combative mood under the most difficult historical conditions since the counterrevolution—a ferocious economic crisis, the threat of an environmental catastrophe, ever bloodier and more dangerous wars, the decomposition of the social fabric—can lay the foundations for even more combative struggles tomorrow. The most fundamental dynamic that surfaces in all the struggles the working class in America has undertaken since 2005 with the MTA workers strike is an incipient development of class identity and solidarity which is apparent in the working class” open willingness to fight on behalf of the next generation of workers. Its potential to develop further is linked to a series of factors: the bourgeoisie’s ability to manipulate and mystify the workers, the dynamic of the class struggle world-wide, the aggravation of the crisis. The stakes are very high, but the decisive battles are yet to be fought.

The bourgeoisie is always very keen on spreading the idea among the working class that the class struggle does not pay, even that it is over. Indeed, if we were to base ourselves on the statistics, trends, academic studies and the propaganda of the ruling class, we would be very hard placed in making an adequate and dispassionate assessment of where the class struggle is now, and worse placed yet in tracing its perspective. This is because the bourgeoisie has an obvious interest in trying to destroy the working class sense of self-confidence and discredit the class” own theory of history and its

revolutionary project. Our rulers dream of a proletariat without a vision. For the class itself and its revolutionary minorities, though, the whole question about how to assess the class struggle, its history, its weaknesses, strengths, and perspectives is a very serious business that cannot be understood through statistics alone, by ignoring the historic context or through academic studies the aim of which is not to understand reality, but rather to mystify it. The class and its revolutionary minorities must study and understand as carefully and objectively as possible the development of the class struggles in order to be able to see the underlying dynamics and tendencies, because their task is to help to orientate, to give a general line of march to their movement, to foster reflection and generate an understanding of how to move forward in the struggles to come.

The importance for the working class to develop and strengthen its own class identity, its confidence, and its solidarity cannot be overstated. As the first exploited class in history that also has the potential to take humanity to the next level of historical development, the working class is in a unique and contradictory historical situation. On one hand, capitalism itself has developed the productivity of labor necessary to make abundance—the freedom from necessity and the realm of communism—possible. On the other hand, the unleashing of society’s productive potential at all levels, including, but not limited to, the economic level, cannot be concretized until capitalist relations of production are destroyed. As an exploited class, the proletariat is constantly subjected to the pressure of bourgeois ideology and propaganda about the superiority of the capitalist system. This includes the mystification of how wealth and value are created through the separation of the laborer from the means of production, the specialization of production, the piecemeal fashion in which production takes place, and also, very importantly, the expropriation of the producer’s ability to make decisions about how to produce, for which goals, and how to distribute production to the full benefit of all of society’s members. In the chaos generated by the anarchic way capitalism produces—each capitalist entity blindly setting in motion tremendous human resources as it furiously seeks profit in an ever-

shrinking market- the worker experiences the entire process of production as an incomprehensible, alien and alienating activity. However, because it is only the proletariat that can produce value which capital transforms into profit, the worker inevitably becomes the target and victim

of ferocious attacks against his own conditions of life and work. The relations of capitalist production inevitably force the capitalist to attack, and the worker to defend himself. It is during this struggle that the worker can become aware of being part of a social class, not just

an alienated member of society. Historically, it is this confrontation against the exploitation by capital that has helped the class forge its own identity, understand the need for solidarity, and become attracted to the theory of communism.

Ana, 11/22/12

SPAIN

Debate on the general strike

As the CGT and the CCOO-UGT regrouping five different unions in Spain called for yet another 24-hour "general strike" for October 31 and November 14 respectively, comrades of the Assembly movement –Indignant and Self-Organized Alicante Workers– published and distributed a declaration called In the face of the 24-hour strikes: What strike do we want? The mass strike.

These workers have been actively involved in a struggle for more than two years and have the merit of having denounced mobilizations which only de-mobilize and demoralize, and which only complement the attacks of the Rajoy government. But this is not all they have done. They have posed a perspective: to struggle for the mass strike. Faced with the unions' demobilizations, this is the orientation which the workers' struggles have tended to take since the 1905 Russian Revolution.

It is a mistake to think that there are no alternatives to the unions "mobilizations to demobilize". Following in the steps of the Alicante workers, we think a debate has to develop to clarify the alternative which the proletariat has had since 1905. The two contributions by two workers which we are publishing here go in that direction.

We salute the declaration and the contributions, and we would like to encourage other workers and groups to give their input.

ICC 11/01/12

Faced with the "24 hour strike", which strike do we want? The mass strike!

Why is a 24-hour strike, a strike? Most importantly, how can it benefit the working class?

We identify with the political positions of internationalism and proletarian autonomy. We think that all action by conscious minorities should be orientated toward generating class consciousness, unity, and the self-organization of the working class. We know that there have been many mobilizations as of late and a great effort toward organization by the working class. This period of new and massive mobilizations has started, symbolically, in May 2011 and is the answer against the ever more brutal attacks against the population's conditions of life. This development has not been linear and has gone through different phases. At first, there is a strong impulse toward self-organization and an embryonic, yet wide-spread movement toward the creation of General Assemblies. Later, the unions and the left of capital take advan-

tage of the exhaustion and visible decrease in the masses' participation to gain the center-stage. This leads the mobilizations toward the typical union-inflicted defeat: mobilization which are controlled by them, mobilizations which break the unity and are carried out sector by sector, demoralizing mobilization led into dead-ends and which only generate a sense of isolation and disgust in the participants. This is why the absence of a majority of the workers in these mobilizations is only logical, since they are perceived as alien to their own interests, opening the possibility of reflection.

We need to think, learn from our experiences and look for the path toward our own self-organization. This will not be given birth to by "specialized vanguards" or anxious impulses, even if these may have the best of intentions.

It is the workers themselves who have to call for and extend everywhere, the kind of strike which we is needed and efficacious. It is the workers who have to occupy all the spaces and create new

types of relationships and social communication. This type of strike does not detain life, it rather generates it. This type of strike is the mass strike, which during the last century has become a feature of the struggles, and which all its enemies –all bourgeois strata– have conscientiously silenced until its memory has become blurred. This is because the bourgeoisie fears its attraction and legitimacy for the proletariat.

A true strike is a massive and integral movement which does not consist solely in a work stoppage. It is the fundamental weapon of a working class in the process of taking control of its life, expressed by the fact that the working class struggles against all aspects of exploitation. In this process, the exploited class also expresses the human society to which it aspires. However, this is not a process that can be prepared ad hoc, not even with the best intentions. It is a part of the process by which the class struggles and comes to its consciousness. It is not a question of 24, or 48 hours, or of indefinite time. Its radical nature is not a matter of time. Its radical nature is based in the real movement of the working class as it organizes and leads itself.

What is the mass strike?

The mass strike results from a particular phase in the development of capitalism starting in the XX century. Rosa Luxemburg developed it from the revolutionary movement of the workers in Russia in 1905. The mass strike "is a historic phenomenon at a given moment because of a historic necessity resulting from social conditions".

The mass strike is not an accident of history. It is neither the result of propaganda nor of preparations taking place ahead of time. It cannot be created artificially.

Spain: Debate on the general strike

It is the product of a specific stage in the development of capitalist contradictions. The economic conditions which produced the mass strike were not inscribed in one country only. Rather, they had an international dimension. Such conditions generated a type of struggle which has historic impact, a struggle which was a fundamental aspect of the birth of proletarian revolutions. In short, the mass strike *“is nothing more than the universal form of the working class struggle, resulting from the present stage of capitalism’s development and its relations of production.”* This “present stage” was capitalism’s final years of prosperity. The new historic circumstances accompanying the birth of the mass strike were: the development of imperialist conflicts and the threat of world war; the end of the period of gradual improvements in the conditions of life of the working class; the growing threat against the very existence of the class under capitalism. The mass strike is the product of a change in the economic conditions at a historic level. Today we know those conditions marked the end of capitalism’s period of ascendance and heralded capitalism’s decadence.

The great concentrations of proletarians in the advanced capitalist countries had acquired great experience with collective struggles, and their conditions of life and work were similar everywhere. In addition, as a result of economic development, the bourgeoisie was growing into a more concentrated class who more and more became identified with the state apparatus. Like the proletariat, the capitalists too had learned how to confront their class enemy. The new economic conditions made it more and more difficult for the working class to gain durable reforms at the level of production. In a similar way, the decomposition of bourgeois democracy made it more and more difficult for the proletariat to consolidate gains at the level of parliamentary activity. Therefore, the political and economic contexts of the mass strike were not the product of Russian absolutism, but rather of the growing decadence of bourgeois rule in every country. In the economic, social, and political spheres, capitalism had laid the foundations for the great class confrontations at a world level.

The form of the mass strike

The goal of the union form of organization was to obtain reforms and betterments within the framework of capitalist life. Under decadent capitalism, this was more and more difficult to accomplish. In this period the proletariat does not engage in struggles with a perspective of gaining real improvements. The great demonstrations of today, the strikes of today gain nothing. As a result, the role of the unions to obtain economic improvement within capitalism has disappeared. But there are other revolutionary implications deriving from the dislocation of the unions by the mass strike:

The mass strike could not be prepared ahead of time. It emerged without a plan and became the “method of the proletarian masses” movement”. The unions, which were devoted to a permanent organization, were concerned about their bank accounts and membership lists, and could not even envision having the stature necessary for the organization of the mass strike, because this is a form which evolves within and through the struggle itself.

The unions divided the workers and their interests into industrial branches, while the mass strike “integrated itself from the particular and the different”. In this way, it tended to the elimination of all divisions among the proletariat.

The unions only organized a minority of the class, while the mass strike brought together the class as a whole.

The decadence of capitalism

The struggle needs to be joined to the reality in which it happens. It cannot be posed as a separate entity. Since the beginning of the last century the decadence of the system has dried up the extracapitalist markets. In this way capitalism’s insatiable need for growth has been severely blocked. In turn, this has caused a constant crisis and constant social cataclysms –wars and unprecedented misery for humanity.

The period since 1968 expresses the permanent nature of capitalism’s crisis. It expresses the impossibility for the system to expand and the acceleration of imperialist antagonism, the consequences of which threaten the entire human civilization.

Everywhere the State takes charge of the interests of the bourgeoisie and extends its repressive apparatus. It is confronted with a working class who, admittedly numerically weakened in relation to the rest of society since the 1900’s, is ever more concentrated, and whose conditions of existence are becoming shared in all countries at an unprecedented level. At the political level, the decomposition of bourgeois democracy is so evident that it can barely mystify its true function as a smokescreen for the terror of the capitalist state.

In which way do the objective conditions of the present class struggle correspond to the conditions of the mass strike? Its nature rests in the fact that the characteristics of the present period express the highest point reached by the contradictions of capitalism, starting in the 1900’s. The mass strikes of that period were the answer to the end of capitalist ascendance and the dawn of decadence. Taking into account the fact that these conditions today are chronic, we can conclude that what pushed toward the mass strike is today much stronger and much more wide-spread. The general consequences of the development of international capital which were at the root of the historic birth of the mass strike have continued to ripen since the beginning of the century.

What we can do

What can we do to foster the development of the mass strike, the international self-organization of the proletariat, and its indispensable unity? Our contributions cannot be more than that: contributions of a conscious part of our class. We cannot do more, nor less.

One such contribution is the very critique of the mistakes which fetter self-organization and the deepening of consciousness. Even with the best intentions activism, base-unionism, leftism... all are part and parcel of the barriers that workers have to overcome to accomplish class autonomy. Another contribution is to encourage reflection and the clarification of the experience of the struggle. We can also aid in the re-appropriation of the memory of our struggles and their fundamental weapon: the mass strike

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ALACANT 2010

Assembly Indignant and Self-organized Workers “for a pro-worker, anti-capitalist 15M”

Analysis and reflections on the Alicante “critical bloc”

At the end of 2011 comrades of the Indignant and Self-organized Workers (“Take the Square” commission) proposed the idea to collaborate with various groups in favor of the workers’ assemblies. We made the proposal to TLP and addressed ourselves mainly to organization such as the CNT, CGT, and SO which had taken part in joint actions and theorized in favor of the workers’ assemblies. This is what we call “the extension of the assemblies movement”, a project which sponsored what its name suggests from the point of view of the exploited and going beyond party divisions. We put it in writing and made a first attempt at contact. At the time of the 29M strike a Critical Bloc ⁽¹⁾ is formed, reflecting our idea about unifying initiatives in order to extend the movement of workers in the assemblies in a wide sense, and question the present situation globally. In the assemblies that were generated that day, a rough outline of how to continue to work was drafted. From this outline followed different orientations. Several supported self-management, others centered on the organization and the struggles by the workers. I took part in the second, which gave birth to several interesting proposals: a solidarity commission with the workers to take care of the work-places, a solidarity fund –which TIA ⁽²⁾ still keeps–,

1) The Critical Bloc is a space in Alicante where comrades from different organization or with no affiliation have converged ever since the last general strike (29M) and who have an orientation toward the general assemblies. It was born to give an answer to the strikes called by the unions, with the intention to extend the assembly movement. On September 26 from this bloc a day of struggle is organized, at the same time as the Euskadi called a strike and the base unions called for a day of struggle at the national level. This is the first time where organizations appear. This day of struggle was preceded by long debates in which very distinct currents expressed themselves on the question of what the bloc is and should be. On this occasion the “bloc” changes its name to “space”.

2) TIA is a collective born out of the spontaneous regrouping of comrades from the autonomous assembly terrain in Alicante around the assemblies of May



protocols for the realization of assemblies after massive mobilizations –and many assemblies took place–, protocols for how to respond to repression.

In the summer of 2012 TIA makes an attempt to re-start the Bloc through summer meetings centered on the debates taking place in the Carolinas Community Garden. The initial idea was to meet workers and militants to share experiences and see if activities would surge. This is how the first meeting took place, in which it did not matter at all which group any one participant belonged to. This dynamic changes once a group who had not attended any meeting makes the proposal to take part in the day of struggle of September 26 within the framework of the national day of struggle organized by several organizations. This was the last act by this bloc-transformed into “Space”: the September 26 day of struggle. This day of struggle changed for me the meaning of what I understood to be the aim of the bloc: “the ex-

2011. They took charge of the organizational structure of the movement and joined up with other comrades with whom in common they posed the questions of the assemblies, anti-capitalism, and proletarian internationalism. Their many differences with the rest of the 15M led them to formally split from the organizations which took this name (15M) and started to function independently. The incorporation of comrades from the Open Workers’ Assemblies made it so that the group called itself TIA-of the assemblies

tension of the movement of the workers’ assemblies”.

What happened in this day of struggle? We can analyze it in two parts, according to how the events were posed. On the one hand, there was the assembly. It was participatory, sometimes dispersed, as it often happens. We talked about many subjects but not of the fundamental issue: the workers’ means of struggle, without labels or party identification. It was respectful and at times emotional. It provided a sense of unity and posed the question of a collective reflection.

On the other hand, there was the demonstration. There were many slogans, many blocs separated from each other, a superficial “radicalism” and the absence of common perspectives that go beyond the slogans, totally isolated from the few people in the street who looked on with strange gazes. The feeling was of a disconnect with reality and a lack of unity. In my opinion, the wide-ranging debates that took place before the two events were joined in a kind of consensus which only peddled a false unity. On the one hand there were people who posed the question of a contribution to the generation of consciousness, unity, and workers’ self-organization and who thought that the best place for this is the general assembly.

Spain: Debate on the general strike

For us, the movement is the autonomous movement of the proletariat, and nothing can change it or direct it other than itself. Obviously, this movement only comes to the forefront in small and short explosions, but this only reinforces the idea that the emancipation of the workers is either the workers' own action, or it won't happen. This is why we give priority to "horizontal" spaces that have no labels and where we look for all that we can have in common and what we can pose in common, even though we are open to collaborate with comrades who belong to organizations with their own slogans and ideology.

However, those who defend the idea that it is the organizations of the "radical left" who must unify because they represent the workers, want a common front with a minimum common program, yet they also want to preserve their differences (which are many) and peculiarities and even their own activities. It is not difficult to see who was in favor of the assembly and who for the demonstration, who wanted labels and who didn't, and who valued a common, general, name with each any worker could identify with, and who was more interested in the particular labels, but not in the importance of a common name.

After all this, we need to pose what we want to do. We were wise in leaving the disputes for later and to postpone the assessment of the event. An assessment will necessarily imply a confrontation of the two tendencies which appeared and which are not likely to consent with each other eternally. However, a serious assessment needs an understanding of the reality in which we move and needs to answer a number of questions: why did the bloc's conception change? How is it possible to move from posing the question of a space for reflection to a leftist posture within a day? How can we consider a success the fact that we had a night stroll with other 500 people? Certainly, the dynamic has changed. When the bloc developed the idea to extend the assembly movement, this was then a possibility because of the number of massive struggles taking place, and a certain tendency toward self-organization-i.e., the first assemblies of the 15M, the first moments of the mobilization of the teachers...). But the situation has changed and the mobilizations have been first controlled by the unions and others, and then de-mobilized or taken into a dead-end. The extreme left sees this movement as its property, where they have to denounce

the role of the "bad managers" in order to create a pole of attraction toward their positions. From this perspective, the present mobilizations have a meaning. For us, **They Don't**.

If the workers are not mobilized right now, it is because they know that they can't get anything with these "leaders" and these "struggles", even though they know things have to change... but they do not know how. For us, this is a moment of collective reflection. We have to contribute toward helping the workers develop a sense of confidence and find the path toward their autonomous organization and their own direction of the future struggles. It is now the time to learn the lessons, be loyal to our class, and not abandon our class.

About one year ago something like the day of struggle of September 26 was inconceivable because the masses would have gone beyond it, since they would have not allowed any organization to take center stage. If today these organizations try to substitute themselves for the participation of the masses, it is precisely because the masses are not ready to mobilize at all. Without understanding this we cannot understand anything else, and we can only end up following the dynamic of activism, which has nothing to do with the real rhythm of the working class struggles. It is possible that some of us felt less lonely in these actions than if we were in our small groups, but the need for "company" is not a political imperative, at least for a working class politics. What is indeed needed are coherence and honesty. Revolutionaries are not "lonely". We are a part of a class that needs and can change the world. Outside of this we lack meaning and we become something else.

What are the conditions for the formation of a permanent collaboration amongst comrades of different groups? We need to understand two things:

- I mean permanent collaboration, not an occasional one based on tactical questions.
- I mean honest comrades with whom we have serious differences, but of whom we don't doubt their commitment to the cause of the exploited.

Here, I will explain how, in my opinion, we can have a permanent space for meetings and discussion. Assuming the following premises:

- That it be a space of debate, struggle, and meeting with comrades who may or

may not be in other organizations, but who give priority to creating common organizational spaces for the working class.

- That it be a space for assemblies, both in form and content. Not only is it organized as an assembly, but it also tries to transmit this model to the working class as the embryonic form of the future society.
- That it be radically critical of the capitalist system and that it search for the way to transform reality to create a society capable of satisfying all human needs.
- That it be a unitary space which searches for a workers' unity that goes beyond borders, categories, sectors, and organizations. It is a space without labels.
- That it be an internationalist space because workers unite as a world community who defends human interests. We belong to the same class, not a fatherland, flag, ideology, or organization.

I am aware that these premises do not exist today, and I have no pretensions of coming to an agreement on questions which each one of us considers fundamental. That is the false unity I referred to before. If I think that these positions are necessary and basic for the struggle of our class, it is obvious I cannot renounce them in favor of a "consensus". When do I think will these conditions exist? When the very autonomous dynamic of the proletariat imposes them. Therefore, debating over them would be absurd. Until then, until the moment that history decided, we can only keep discussing all of the above and much more. I think that we cannot aspire to anything more or less than this in the present period.

V

Reflections on the present situation and the methods of struggle

I am adding some incomplete reflections in the context of the present situation, taking account of the recent texts, "The organization of the proletariat outside periods of open struggle" and "Analysis and reflection about the Alicante's bloc".

The present situation offers a principal characteristic regarding the class struggle: a lateness in its political abilities (nature and depth of the crisis, role of the state and of democracy) and also in its ability to struggle (proletarian methods and weapons of struggle, ability to self-organize. Both levels, political and class struggle,

are interconnected and feed on each other, be it in a vicious or virtuous circle.

For now, this delay does not appear as a defeat: notwithstanding the great confusion and fear, there is no total and resigned acceptance and understanding of the “needs of the economy“. Also, neither atomization nor decomposition has reached the levels of dehumanization which would completely empower the bourgeoisie.

The fertile terrain for the historic resurgence of the proletarian struggle is, without a doubt, the depth of the crisis, the sharpening of social antagonisms and the decomposition of the ideological, political, and union apparatus of the bourgeoisie.

In the previous epoch of great proletarian struggles –from May 1968 in France, to Poland in 1980) which in some local and punctual places even reached pre-insurrectionary levels, the delay which we talked about above did not happen in the same way. While there was an important delay at the political level– democratic illusions, illusion in the unions and the “workers” parties, in self-management or cooperatives, in nationalism, etc- this did not impede a great ability to struggle and to develop proletarian methods-workers” assemblies, revocable delegates, extension of the struggle, self-organization, etc. It is also important to point out that neither the crisis nor unemployment were, generally, as serious as they are today. That is why they were not a brake on the development of the struggle. In addition, not many states had at their disposal a whole arsenal of anti-proletarian tricks that they have today.

Approximately 40 years after this wave of struggles, with a dramatic break of the social fabric –a product of the capitalist crisis and of unemployment, and also of a bourgeois strategy of attacks on multiple levels: ideological, social, urban, at the work place against the threat of the proletarian struggle–, with a “forgetting” of the methods of the struggle of the working class, with great atomization and apoliticism, and an immense level of precariousness and unemployment, can we expect now great proletarian struggles? Would, in the present period, a “class instinct” be enough, without a minimum of political ability to develop the struggle, as it existed in previous epochs?

In my opinion, it is not possible. The present period in the decadence of capital-

ism requires that the class struggle develops the political and economic struggle at the same time much more than in previous epochs. In a more concrete way: the development of struggles with a proletarian method going further than the explosions of anger or desperation required requires a much greater political ability of the class. The class needs a minimum of an understanding of the terrain, of our allies, our enemies, and our false friends. This is because of the same reasons expressed above and the greater sophistication of the bourgeoisie than in the past.

Because of this, the political, the “intellectual” aspects will play a decisive role in the present period. Is it possible to confront austerity and misery-which are presented in a fatalistic way, without a minimum of understanding of reality? Is it possible, under such difficult circumstances, to find a path of struggle minimally efficacious, without putting in question the role of the unions? The volcano on which bourgeois society is sitting is hotter than ever, but its crater is obstructed by something that requires more than just good will, anger, and indignation to make it explode.

In this sense, the minorities that surge within the proletariat in search of theoretical-practical and political weapons to confront the capitalist system are an expression of the struggle against the existing conditions of life, of a confrontation happening outside of periods of open struggles and are very important for a

political vanguard of the proletariat. Underestimating their role and importance is the equivalent of negating the fact that the class reflects, and that this is a crucial element in its struggle, both for its economic and political interests. To give these minorities no role other than to “dilute” themselves in confused movement, or in artificial “unitary organs” put in place by “radical” syndicalism and by the extreme left is to contribute to disarming the proletariat and opening the door to the worse kind of politics, the worse of substitutionism: by the bourgeoisie, its unions, and its left.

Therefore, my opinion is that the more politically advanced elements are a part of the proletariat and of its struggle against capitalism. The unitary organs of the class cannot be created or prepared ahead of the real struggle because they surge in and for the struggle. The minorities have an important role to play on the path leading to self-organization and class consciousness. However, this role will be neutralized if the minorities dilute themselves in “spaces”, “coordinations”, etc, and even in genuine organs which surged from the class struggle if they limit themselves to defending proletarian positions –of course, depending on the context and the needs of the moment. In this case, these minorities would not be acting as revolutionary minorities, but will turn into something else.

Draba



IMPERIALISM

Turkey, Syria and war

Recently, the Turkish agenda has been shaken by the possibility of war with Syria; a situation which is still, more or less, intact. Following the deaths of five civilians as a result of the shelling of a town called Akçakale, near the city of Urfa, the government rapidly included Syria in the new bill it was preparing, giving it the right to militarily intervene in Iraq. It was altered to give the government the authority to militarily intervene abroad in general. It was also declared that Turkey had started shelling Syria. As the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and members of his Justice and Development Party started openly expressing the possibility of the war option, death dealers quickly appeared among the Turkish bourgeois press, going as far as accusing those opposed to war of cowardice.

Despite all this, what actually happened remains uncertain. It turns out that while it didn't claim lives, the Turkish side of the border had been a target for bombs before the Akçakale attack. Moreover, it isn't really certain who launched these bombs or the Akçakale shelling. The Syrian government's reaction was one of denial, declaring they will investigate the situation and expressing how sorry they were at the deaths of the victims and expressing their condolences to the relatives of the deceased, thus denying any responsibility for the shelling. The part

of Syria bombed by Turkey, on the other hand, is a zone where the clashes between the Free Syrian Army and the Assad regime are quite intense and which is mostly under Free Syrian Army control. It seems that Turkey, under the guise of retaliation, has been responding in kind to all the previous shellings as well. Soon followed the rumour that the shells have been fired from the area controlled by the Free Syrian Army, that the shell itself was produced by NATO and was not used by the military forces of the Assad regime, and that indeed the Free Syrian Army had fired the shells.

Whatever the truth of this rumour, it is not in the Syrian regime's interests to bomb the Turkish border, an act which would obviously increase Turkey's enmity towards the Assad regime, while fighting a fully-fledged civil war against the Free Syrian Army and suppressing Sunni dissidents in an extremely brutal fashion. Besides, Syria does not have anything to gain from such shellings or from killing a handful of civilians in Akçakale. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see that these shellings did indeed work to the advantage of Erdogan's government and the Free Syrian Army, giving Turkey the legal basis for giving the Free Syrian Army the much needed strategic air support against Assad, as well as enabling Erdogan to pass the war bill in the parliament and

strengthen the pro-war nationalists. The strongest possibility is that the Free Syrian Army did this attack in contact with and under the orders of Turkey itself.

Nevertheless, despite the pro-war mood which the government is trying to create, a Turkish invasion of Syria still remains rather unlikely. The first reason for this is that the Turkish state itself is already engaged in war in Turkish Kurdistan, and far from looking like winning it, they seem to be doing rather poorly. At the moment, there are territories within the borders of the Turkish state which are controlled by the Kurdish nationalist PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) which the Turkish army can't enter by land and which are expanding, although slowly. It wouldn't be very reasonable for a state which is fighting such a war within its own borders to attempt to invade another country.

The second and more important reason is that the working class doesn't want to fight, and even has a certain reaction against the idea of war. The war between the Turkish state and the PKK, which has been going on for over thirty years, has resulted in a growing hostility to war among a significant amount of people living in Western Turkey, and in the recognition of the fact that those who died weren't the children of the rulers but their own children. In this sense, it is possible to say that there isn't a pro-war



mood among the Turkish working class in general.

In this situation there have been a number of ‘anti-war’ demonstrations across Turkey. Although called to oppose the government on a pro-Assad, populist or pacifist basis they have attracted far more people who would not usually attend such demonstrations and may not support the reactionary slogans of the groups who called them. While we cannot be sure what this represents, we can see that the state has responded by brutally repressing them.

There were clashes at the demonstrations in the city of Hatay, where the Syrian refugee camps are located. Called by an ultra-nationalist and Turkish chauvinist structure called the Workers’ Party, it was themed “Syria and Turkey are brothers” (by which they mean support for the Assad regime) and held on September 16th, attended by well over ten thousand people. Although the governorship of Hatay officially banned the demonstration, thousands who didn’t have a relation to any political organization gathered in the declared demonstration area. These masses argued with the Workers Party representatives and eventually kicked them away from the demonstration after the supposedly dissident Workers’ Party members made a press announcement and told the masses to disperse. The Hatay residents were attacked by the police after the Workers’ Party members left and some of them were taken into custody. However the masses fought back against the police who kept attacking them. Clashes lasted till night in neighbourhoods of the city, until the police eventually had to release those who were detained.

Other than that, it’s worth mentioning the demonstration in Akçakale itself right after the shelling, where hundreds including the relatives of the deceased participated, shouted anti-government slogans and called for the resignation of



the governors of Akçakale and Urfa. The mayor of Akçakale, a member of the ruling Justice and Development Party who was on TV during the demonstration, which clearly showed that something was going on in the area, declared that he didn’t understand why this demonstration was taking place; in the meanwhile the police were attacking the demonstrators. This demonstration also led to clashes with the police.

Lastly there were the anti-war demonstrations in numerous cities in Turkey on 4 October when the war bill was passed. All of these demonstrations, the largest of which took place in Istanbul, where according to some accounts up to a hundred thousand gathered, were violently attacked by the police.

The state reaction manifests itself in the form of brutality against all sorts of anti-war demonstrations, from the tiniest ones to the most massive. This pushes the masses to face and clash with the armed forces of the state more or less instantly and shows the masses that in order to

succeed against war, there is a need to struggle – the fact that the demonstrators in Hatay and Akçakale, an overwhelming majority of which were apolitical before the demonstrations, effectively resisted the attacks and spontaneously clashed with the police is a proof of this phenomenon. This being said, especially the organizations of the bourgeois left are creating very large illusions and confusions among the anti-war masses, with pro-Assad, populist or pacifist slogans. In this way they help to prevent the reaction against imperialist war developing on a class basis.

Against all sorts of pro-Assad, populist and pacifist illusions, for the anti-war movement to be successful and the working class to avoid giving the lives and blood of its children for the interests of the imperialist Turkish state, we can only raise the slogan Lenin put forward against World War I in 1914:

“Revolutionary class war against the imperialist war!”

Gerdün October 2012

Public Forums of the ICC in the USA

Internationalism has held public forums last August in several cities across the United States. It was supported by elements and contacts in the milieu in the US who have been open to revolutionary politics, including those of left communism, and have been active in the struggles of the class. We want to take this opportunity to thank them. The main focus of the forums was on the significance of the protest movements of 2011 and was based on the ICC statement on

these events, which can be found here: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201203/4766/statement-social-movements-2011>. The public forums took place in San Francisco, Greensboro, NC, Philadelphia, and New York City. Below, we are publishing the reports of the discussions at the forums, testimony to the vitality of the legacy left by these significant movements.

In Los Angeles – August 7th

In Los Angeles the ICC was invited by the Insane Dialectical Posse (IDP) to hold a PF with debate at the “Public School” about the movements of the “Indignados & Occupy”. 10 people attended the meeting, of whom 3 were completely new to the political milieu.

However, since a number of people were “newcomers” to the political milieu, a brief intro was made about the “Origins of Left Communism and the ICC”, whose political positions and activities stand in total contrast with leftist organizations, who all defend some form of reformism under capitalism.

The introduction presented the international leaflet of the ICC on the social movements in 2011, with a extra focus on the “Indignados” in Spain, highlighting the proletarian tendencies against the reformist proposals by “Democracia Real Ya”, who tried to channel this movement toward “reformist demands”. At the end the audience was invited to comment also on their own experiences in Occupy.

In the discussion afterward some of the participants came forward with their experiences in Occupy in LA, where they faced much more difficulties than in Oakland to reach out toward the working class. If the occupying of the space was an important statement in the beginning, the fact that they were confined to a fix space isolated the movement later on.

Some other important aspects were brought forward about how the insistence on “consensus” was really hampering the movement. But on the other hand some cultural and human aspects were important as a first step in overcoming the individual alienation, coming together to debate, read and discuss poetry, make music, eat together, etc. the human joy of being together.

It was absolutely clear to most participants that the movements contrasted starkly with the traditional behavior of the

organizers, professional activists, and the leftists, who did the same job in Occupy as in Real Democracy Now (DRY) in Spain, channeling the movement toward “concrete” proposals.

It was said that in those radical movements politics develop in a “natural” way, just as solidarity, arts and poetry spring up spontaneously. They tend to eliminate the low level of politicization, caused by the parliamentary professional politics. It is the breeding ground for a new society that can only be born out of and through the most open debate about all aspects of life in our confrontation with the impasse capitalism is pushing humanity in, with its endless crises, wars, and drive for profit.

Other aspects in the discussion were related to the concrete situations at work and how to be able to stand up against the growing pressure of the worsening working conditions, not only through attacks on salaries but also on our dignity as human beings.

An aspect that was only slightly touched upon was the role minorities can play once the struggle has ebbed, taking up the lessons for next confrontations, because the next time the ruling classes will not be that “surprised” as they were this time. Foods and drinks were shared during the meeting and afterward there was still some time to socialize especially with the people who were new.

In Oakland – August 10th

In Oakland the ICC was invited to make a presentation on the movement of the “Indignados in Spain” during the year 2011, in the framework of the Summer School held at Nybiel Proctor Marxist Library. During this whole week a whole variety of items were presented and debated and every day there was an assistance of 30 to 100 people. The presentation of the ICC was held in a panel around social and political actions: actions against the “globalization” of Food Supply Lines world-

wide, the class struggle in Ancient Greece and its imperium. The discussion ended at 12 pm, when still around 30 people were present. The ICC reader was pretty much appreciated. The ICC international leaflet was also distributed.

The discussion that followed was a lively debate where the good habits of Occupy were put into practice: everybody spoke up (35 people). In relation to the presentation of the ICC, questions arose that were common to these movements, such as how to respond to the “violence” of repression, which is more present in the US than in Europe; the meaning of the General Assemblies, the elected committees, and how these GA’s were manipulated by leftist tactics (they tended to forget the minutes, filtered the themes and the speakers, etc.). These were aspects that were similar in the two movements. Other aspects touched upon were the explosion of popular culture (art, poetry, music), the joy of being together, breaking the terrible alienation in capitalism (in the US one third of the population lives alone!), the spirit of open debate and the will to reflect, the fusion of different generations during the protests, the refusal of bowing to the proposals of “concrete demands”.

Another important question was how capitalism tends to ruin the planet and humanity (due to its vision on nature as a “free gift”) and could only present more attacks on living and working conditions due to its blind drive for profit. Although there had been a very positive drive to unite with the actions of the working class, there was hardly any discussion on this important experience. However interesting these discussions were, their weakest point was on which role radical minorities could play in reflecting upon and preparing for the future confrontations, when the ruling class will not be “surprised” anymore.

The ICC will hold Public Forums in August in San Francisco, Greensboro, NC, Philadelphia, and New York City. Visit our website for details

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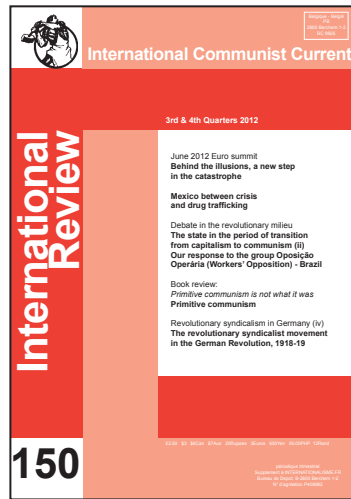
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Political positions of the CCI

Internationalism is the section in the USA 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 stratified 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 Political positions of the ICC 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 organizations (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 organization, 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 organization 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 organized 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 nationalization 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 organization constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalization of class consciousness within the proletariat. Its role is neither to “organize 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. Organized 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 organizations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organizations 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.