

# WORLD REVOLUTION

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From New York to Delhi, from Belfast to Paris

## The rebirth of workers' solidarity

In France, the massive struggles of young students and workers – of the new generation of the working class – forced the government to withdraw its new 'employment' law, the CPE. The organisation of the struggle through general assemblies, the capacity of the students to discuss collectively and avoid many of the traps laid by the ruling class, their understanding of the necessity for the movement to spread to the wage earners, all these are signs that we are entering a new period of confrontation between the classes.

This is shown not only by the movement in France, but also by the fact that this was only one of a whole series of movements by the working class against capitalism's growing assault on its living standards. In Britain, the strike called by local government unions on 28 March was taken up by 1.5 million workers, concerned to resist new inroads into their pensions. In Germany, tens of thousands of state employees and engineering workers have been involved in strikes against wage cuts and increases in the working week. In Spain the SEAT workers came out spontaneously against sackings agreed between bosses and unions. In the USA, workers in the New York transport system and Boeing workers also struck in defence of their pension benefits. In the summer of 2005 Argentina was hit by its biggest wave of strikes for 15 years. In India, Mexico, South Africa, Dubai, China and Vietnam, the working class has been showing in its actions that, contrary to all the propaganda of our exploiters, it has not disappeared from the social scene. On the contrary, it remains the class which keeps the wheels of capitalist production turning and which creates the vast bulk of social wealth. These movements are becoming more widespread, more simultaneous, and more determined.

A central theme in nearly all these movements has been that old proletarian principle of solidarity. We saw it in France not only in the exemplary way students from different universities supported each other, but also in the active mobilisation of a growing number of wage earners in the movement, and in the unity between different generations. We saw it in Spain when workers came out in defence of sacked comrades. We saw it in Belfast when postal workers, on strike against the advice of their union, openly crossed the sectarian divide by marching together through Catholic and Protestant areas of the city. We saw it in New York where the transit workers ex-



General assembly in France: an example for the working class

plained that they were fighting not just for themselves but for the next generation of workers. In India, striking Honda workers in Delhi were joined by masses of workers from other factories, especially after clashes with the forces of repression.

The principle of solidarity – and workers' increasing willingness to defend it in action – is central to the very nature of the working class. This is a class which can only defend its interests in a collective manner, by spreading its struggles as widely as possible, by overcoming all the divisions imposed by capitalist society: divisions into nations, races, religions, professions or trade unions. The search for solidarity thus contains the seeds of massive social movements which have the capacity to paralyse the workings of the capitalist system. We had a definite glimpse of this in France this spring. We are still only at the beginning, but the present resurgence of workers' struggles is paving the way to the mass strikes of the future.

And beyond the mass strike lies the perspective not only of bringing capital to a halt, but of reorganising the very basis of production, of creating a society where social solidarity is the norm, not a principle of opposition to the existing order, which is founded on ruthless competition between human beings.

This perspective is contained in the present struggles of the working class. It is not merely a hope for a better future, but a necessity imposed by the bankruptcy of the capitalist social system. The recent class movements have been provoked by continuing and growing attacks on workers' living standards – on wages, hours, pensions, job security. But these attacks are not something the rulers and their state could dis-

pense with in favour of some other policy. They are obliged to reduce workers' living standards because they have no choice, because they cannot escape from the pres-

sure of the capitalist economic crisis and the deadly war for survival on the world market. This is true whatever political party is in power, whatever group of bureaucrats manage the state.

Neither does the bourgeoisie have any choice when the breakdown of the economy pushes it towards militarism and war. The generalisation of war across the planet – currently manifesting itself most strongly in the 'war against terrorism' and the threat to launch a new military front against Iran – expresses capitalism's inexorable drive towards self-destruction.

The exploiting class and the class of wage workers have nothing in common. They have no choice but to try to drive us into the ground. We have no choice but to resist. And it is in resisting that we will discover the confidence and strength to raise the prospect of abolishing exploitation once and for all. *WR, 6.5.06*

### NHS: Investing in cuts

For the last 2 months health service trusts have been announcing job cuts, 750 at North Staffs, 400 at NHS Direct...totalling at least 6,000 so far, with estimates that the final number could reach 15,000-20,000 as the NHS battles to deal with overspending of around £700 million. Thousands of student nurses will not find jobs after they qualify this year, having paid through the nose for their training. After government spending on health has increased by 4.5% a year under Gordon Brown's various budgets, everyone tells us that this overspending, and therefore the cuts, must be due to mismanagement, or privatisation, or both. Patricia Hewitt defends the cuts, telling us that it is simply a question of some health authorities that need to be taught best practice by those who are better at managing their resources for patient care. The Tories blame Labour for not managing its 'reforms' properly. Those crying out against the cuts also blame poor management: "staff and patients are paying the price for poor management ... Ian Ducat, the regional secretary for Unison South West ... said 'I shall expect the resignations of NHS Trust chairs and chief executives and dismissal of finance directors...'" (article from *Freedom* on [libcom.org/news/article](http://libcom.org/news/article)). NHS chief executive, Sir Nigel Crisp, seems to agree, and resigned. But everyone is wrong. Things are far, far worse than that.

Let us assume that we were talking about some other kind of business, a bank for instance. A huge investment is made in upgrading and centralising computers, new managers are hired with a tough new attitude to financial and workplace discipline, a call centre is opened, wholesale re-grading of jobs, and finally large scale redundancies are announced and many workers have to reapply for their jobs. Do we cry 'poor management'? Do the shareholders demand the heads of chief executives and finance directors? No, we recognise the normal working of the capitalist system as the conditions of the crisis force each capitalist to increase exploitation. All these things are happening in the NHS, and we are asked to blame the managers – for doing what managers do in the capitalist system, for doing what they were hired to do.

The policy of cuts is not new for the NHS. It is a continuation of the 'reforms' started in the 1980s, with one reorganisation and initiative following another. First of all ancillary services were put out to tender in the 1980s, jobs were cut, rates of work increased, cleanliness put at risk. In the 1990s private finance was introduced for hospital building, always with fewer beds. The first attempt to bring in competition between hospitals was made with the division between

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# Unison strike: a workplace intervention

This account of a workplace intervention by an ICC militant in Britain was originally posted on the libcom internet discussion forum (<http://libcom.org/forums/viewtopic.php?t=9413>).

The question of how revolutionaries relate to the trade unions at work has come up on a number of threads recently. The left communist position of 'outside and against' the unions is often criticised as being divorced from the real world. It is often argued that unless you are working inside the unions, you have no way of reaching the rest of the workforce. I don't agree, obviously. It is perfectly possible to discuss with fellow workers in all sorts of informal situations outside the context of union meetings. It is also possible to put out agitation and propaganda which reaches everyone. It is more effective if this is part of a collective effort – through a 'struggle group' or 'workplace resistance group' or whatever you want to call it, but it is also possible to act as an individual worker.

I work as a teacher in a sixth form college. In the week leading up to the UNISON strike on 28 March I distributed the following leaflet to teaching and non-teaching staff.

## *Solidarity with Tuesday's strikers*

*Some of our colleagues will be on strike next Tuesday. They will be part of one and a half million members of UNISON who are coming out in protest throughout the country against a government attack on their pension rights. They have already seen - with union approval - their basic retirement age raised from 60 to 65. Now the government wants to get rid of the '85 year' rule which would mean that long-serving employees would lose the opportunity to retire at 60.*

*At the moment this is aimed at local government employees but it is part of a wider attack on all pensions. In the private sector final salary employers schemes are fast disappearing; the Turner report wants the state pension to be raised from 65 to 68. Teachers are being balloted over government schemes to raise their retiring age to 65 as well.*

*In sum, there is every reason for all of us to express our solidarity with the strikers on Tuesday. There is every reason for the UNISON workers to ask us to join their action. It's in all our interests for us to be fighting together, not separately.*

*In practice, however, we are stumbling towards a situation where most of us will be faced individually with the choice of whether or not to cross the UNISON picket line. There has been no discussion of the issue by the other unions, and the official UNISON line is that the picket line won't be there to persuade other employees to join them.*

*Exactly the same thing happened three years ago when UNISON members came out against low pay. The NUT and other unions instructed its members to cross their picket lines, even though most people felt deeply uneasy about it.*

*This situation highlights the necessity for a forum where every employee - of any union or none - can come together, discuss what's happening, and take their own decisions as a united workforce. In the revolt among the younger generation now going on in France, the heart of the movement has not been in the trade unions but the general assemblies where all can speak and participate in decisions.*

*The first step towards this kind of organisation may be just a handful of people getting together to talk about the situation we all face, and what to do about it.*

The leaflet produced quite a lot of discussion. Most people I spoke to agreed that it was ridiculous that different sectors were acting separately when pensions is an issue that affects everyone. They also saw the logic of holding a general meeting open to all workers. Partly in response to these discussions, the college NUT rather shamefacedly called a meeting where the members

were told that the official line (not just from the national leadership but also the 'militant' local branch) was that they should cross the UNISON picket line and work normally. The union rep said that it would have to be up to members individually to follow their conscience on this, but they would get no backing from the union. Some members said they wouldn't cross, but others were rather intimidated by a stern letter put out by the principal reminding employees that they would not be protected legally if they took unofficial action.

On the day of the strike, the dozen or so UNISON members (learning support assistants, admin, library, caretakers, etc) held quite a lively picket line. They expressed no ill will to employees who went in to work, understanding that many – especially probationers and part-time workers – would be especially vulnerable to disciplinary action. In any case, the official UNISON line was not to ask other workers to join the strike. Despite this about ten teachers decided to join the picket line and not go in to work – a few came out after having initially gone in. It was a small but encouraging expression of basic solidarity. The widespread feeling of support for the strikers from all the employees seems also to have persuaded the principal to adopt a more conciliatory stance, and she made it pretty clear that no disciplinary action would be taken. Those of us who had decided to stay out received a letter telling us that we would be docked a day's pay, but that was it.

I am not claiming that my intervention 'produced' this solidarity action. A few years ago, when I was working at a secondary school during the UNISON low pay strike, I put out a similar statement and although some people were sympathetic, there was no solidarity action. I ended up being hauled into the head-teacher's study and given an informal warning. The action of this small group of teachers was part of a much wider change of mood within the working class, in which solidarity is once again a central element of the struggle. However, what I did was certainly an active element in the movement. It is also not accidental that the unions are now talking about holding a "joint union meeting" to discuss the pensions issue next term. Naturally I will argue that this meeting should be open to all employees.

In a recent post, Peter said that the ICC position on belonging to trade unions was a bit more purist than his. He says that the ICC forbids its members from being union members unless there's a closed shop. Actually the phrase we use is "professional constraints" – in many workplaces, you are more under pressure to join a trade union from the bosses than from the unions themselves. We don't think that comrades should martyr themselves over this. Neither do we campaign for workers to leave the unions on an individual basis. However, we do think it's much clearer for revolutionaries not to be in the union.

In the 80s and early 90s, I was a member of the NUT, feeling "professionally constrained" by all the scare-stories about what would happen to you if you don't have union protection. I would go along to union meetings and consistently argue for the need to break out of the union framework. When members asked me "why are you in the union then?" I would respond, rather sheepishly, that, well it's like using a lawyer, OK for individual cases but useless for any collective defence. However, I was later on convinced that I should resign from the union by two things:

- discussions in the ICC about these problems, which aimed at having a more consistent practice throughout the organisation

- the fact that, after spending all this time as an NUT member arguing against the union way of doing things, I was asked by several members if I would stand for school union rep when the job fell vacant!

It then became obvious to me that if I was going to carry on arguing against the unions, it would be clearer all round if I did so as someone who was completely and explicitly independent from them. I resigned from the NUT and put out a written statement

explaining why I had done so.

The recent experience I have described here offers evidence against two of the main arguments used to support the "inside the unions" position:

- That you will be completely unprotected if you're not in a union, especially if you take strike action. I took part in an illegal, unofficial strike, and I had no more or no less protection than the union members who had done so. The only protection is the solidarity of your fellow workers.

- That you can't have any influence on your fellow workers if you're not in a union. In practice, in this case, this meant that I was 'restricted' to standing outside the NUT meeting giving out my leaflet, but in any case it was only a very small meeting. I reached more NUT members in the staffroom or in the corridors. And being in the NUT wouldn't have enabled me to go to meetings of the UNISON workers.

When I look at some of the recent posts on these boards (in particular the ones in the thread about the WSM's union policy), it seems to me that these 'pragmatic' arguments for revolutionaries working inside the

unions are not the real issue. In fact, the problem is the basic methodology of leftism. The Trotskyists are always telling us that of course the Labour party, and even the trade unions, will have to be cast aside, even destroyed during the revolution, but meanwhile, they're all we have. So in fact, the Trotskyist become the principal canvassers for the Labour party at election time, the pillars of the union structure, recruiting union members, trying to make the union more democratic, etc. They actually help to preserve the unions' hold over the workers and thus are acting directly against the possibility of any massive action outside and against them in the future. Those anarchists (like the WSM) who are helping to strengthen the unions today are doing this just as much as the SWP or other Trotskyists.

For a more developed argument about the role of the trade unions, the original text of our pamphlet *Unions against the working class* is online: <http://en.internationalism.org/pamphlets/unions.htm>

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## NHS: Investing in cuts

'purchasers' and 'providers', with the money following the patient. Throughout, beds have been cut, services moved into the 'community' where they can be done more cheaply if they are done at all.

*"Under Labour this process has been accelerated. Labour has extolled the virtues of 'local autonomy' and 'community' control of health services, while introducing the most brutal financial and clinical controls. Every level of the health service has been placed under the most harsh regime of payment by results. There are 700 targets an acute hospital has to meet in order to get its full funding. Labour has introduced the direct financial incentives for senior managers to attack workers' working conditions and pay, because chief executives' pay is dependent upon the meeting of targets. This means that at every level of management there is the utmost pressure to meet targets, that is, to make workers work even harder"* (WR 291).

### Investment

Let us look at a few recent examples of investment in the NHS. A couple of years ago £6 billion was put into computers. Lab test results now come electronically and there is – usually – less delay in receiving them. There is a plan to put basic health information on a central electronic health record for each patient. Above all there will be more choice through 'choose and book', so appointments can be made in the GP surgery, cutting delays and increasing choice. What could possibly be wrong with that? The reality is that choice has decreased markedly, with commissioning authorities saying where patients may or may not be seen, with departments being organised to review and reject 'inappropriate' referrals, which is the only way they can possibly reach their targets on waiting lists. More and more minor treatments are being ruled out for the NHS. Nevertheless, 'choose and book' has a huge amount of government money invested in it. The investment in IT and 'choose and book' is not for patient choice or safety, but for cost-cutting in the long term. What is the long term plan for hospital central appointment departments when appointments are all made electronically from outside?

A part of the NHS overspend in 2005-6 is accounted for by the new GP contract, costing £300 million over the intended cost. The whole basis of this contract is the introduction of targets as the basis of payment. Obviously the targets have not yet been set high enough, but each year will see new targets, just as in hospitals. In particular, it marks a trend to move more and more work, particularly minor surgery and chronic disease management, out of the more expensive hospital environment.

One other aspect of the recent government investment is the army of those needed

to check up on the achievement of targets whether in hospital or 'community'. These people save the NHS money in the long run; they will be needed to balance the books.

The attacks on the health service are not a question of this or that government policy. They have been brought in by Tory and Labour administrations with equal vigour. They are not a question of mismanagement, but of deliberate policy. Patricia Hewitt has been quite clear that, redundancies and all, this is very good year for the NHS, and she is one of the very few ministers to keep her job in the reshuffle after the government's local election losses. And there is far more of the same to come: "a report by the Reform think-tank said government changes to the National Health Service could lead to a 10 percent cut in staff – or 100,000 job losses – but that that would result in a more efficient system" ([uk.news.yahoo.com/12042006](http://uk.news.yahoo.com/12042006)).

It raises the question of why a government that is investing so heavily to prepare the cuts in the NHS should send a minister to the RCN to tell them what a good thing it is that lots of nurses are being made redundant. This was no gaff, but a necessary piece of theatre, an opportunity for the RCN to act like any other union, to shout, to make a lot of noise. The unions are an essential part of bringing in the attacks, with responsibility for giving a false framework for workers to express their anger. With attacks on the level we see in the NHS today, the RCN will need to be fully involved, and this altercation with the minister allows it to drop its 'professional' image a little to do so.

The idea that investment alongside cuts means mismanagement only arises because the NHS is portrayed as something different from an ordinary capitalist concern. In one sense it is, since it does not sell a product on the open market, but is financed by the state. But health workers do treat workers whose labour power is the basis for the creation of all value. The NHS has therefore been very useful to the state since its formation after World War 2. It has helped keep the working population healthy and prevented too many potential workers being occupied with the care of their sick and ageing relatives at a time of full employment. It has also had an important ideological function in giving workers the impression that they have a stake in the capitalist state, that its nationalised industries are a gain for the working class. Just like the universal subsistence level state pension introduced at the same time, the NHS made it appear that workers could have a future within capitalism, that they could be provided for in illness and old age. Like the attack on pensions, the attack on the health services shows that the only perspective capitalism has for the working class is more misery. Alex 6.5.06



# Movement against CPE: a rich experience for future struggles

**The movement of the students in France against the CPE has succeeded in pushing back the bourgeoisie, which withdrew the CPE (First Employment Contract) on 10 April. But if the government was obliged to retreat, it was also and above all because the workers mobilised in solidarity with the children of the working class, as we saw at the demonstrations of 18 March, 28 March and 4 April.**

Despite the strategy of trying to undermine the movement by degrees, the students were not intimidated by capital, with its cops, agents and informers.

Through their exemplary courage and determination, their deep sense of solidarity, their confidence in the working class, the students in struggle (and the most mature and conscious high school pupils) managed to convince the workers and bring them out onto the street with them. Numerous wage earners from all sectors, public and private, were present at the demonstrations.

This movement of solidarity within the working class as a whole was a real worry for the world bourgeoisie. This is why the media systematically deformed reality and why the German bourgeoisie was forced to hold back the application of the CPE's twin law in Germany. In this sense, the international impact of the struggle of the students in France was one of the great victories of the movement.

The most mediocre scribblers of capital (like those who work for *Liberation*, which announced that the movement was a new dawn for the children of the 'middle class') can always chant a mass or sing the Marseillaise, but the combat against the CPE was not a rerun of the French revolution led by later-day Jacobins, nor was it some kind of 'Orange Revolution'.

Even if, owing to their lack of experience, their naivety and their limited knowledge of the history of the workers' movement, the great majority of the students in struggle didn't yet have a clear understanding of the historic significance of their struggle, they have opened the gates to the future. They have taken up the torch from their forebears: those who put an end to the war of 1914-18 by standing up for the international solidarity of the working class across the battlefield; those who continued to defend, in clandestinity, the principles of proletarian internationalism during the second world war; those who from May 68 on, put an end to the long period of the Stalinist counter-revolution and prevented the outbreak of a third world war.

## **The trade unions come to the government's aid – and vice versa**

If the bourgeoisie retreated, it was also to save its trade unions a lot of problems. The ruling class (which benefited from the solidarity of the capitalist class in all the major countries of Europe and in the US) understood in the end that it was better for it to 'lose face' temporarily than to expose its trade union apparatus. This is why the leader of the bosses, Laurence Parisot, who performed brilliantly in his role of mediator and partner in social peace, went to 'negotiate' with the joint union committee, the Intersyndicale.

The government gave in to pressure from the streets because in many workplaces questions were beginning to be asked about the attitude of the unions. The latter did nothing to help express the workers' solidarity with the students, far from it. In the great majority of companies, public and private, there were no union leaflets calling for the demonstration of 18 March. The announcement of a strike – "a day of action and mobilisation" – on 28 March and 4 April was made by the union leadership at the last minute in a situation of utter confusion. And the unions did all they could to prevent the holding of sovereign general assemblies, using the argument that the wage workers "don't have the same methods of struggle as the students" (as Bernard

Thibault put it on *Le Grand Jury* on TV on 26 March)! As for their threat of calling a 'rolling general strike' at the end of the movement, numerous workers saw this for what it was – a complete bluff.

The only sector where the unions put a real effort into calling the workers out on strike during the days of action on 28 March and 4 April was in transport. But these strike calls had the precise goal of sabotaging the solidarity of the whole working class with the struggle against the CPE. The total blockage of transports is a classic manoeuvre of the unions, especially the CGT, aimed at making strikes unpopular and setting workers against each other. The fact that the union calls for a shut-down of transport were not widely followed made it possible for a maximum number of workers to get to the demonstrations. Another thing that showed the unions' loss of credibility in the workplaces was the fact that at the demos a large number of wage workers gathered together on the pavement as far away as possible from the union banners.

And it was because the workers of the private sector, like those of SNECMA and Citroen in the Paris region, began to mobilise in solidarity with the students, with the unions being forced to 'follow' the movement in order not to lose control of it, that the bosses put pressure on the government to draw back before spontaneous strikes began breaking out in key enterprises in the private sector.

***"This movement of solidarity within the working class as a whole was a real worry for the world bourgeoisie... In this sense, the international impact of the struggle of the students in France was one of the great victories of the movement."***

To prevent the unions being completely by-passed and discredited by an uncontrolled movement of wage earners, the French bourgeoisie had no alternative but to rush to the assistance of the unions, withdrawing the CPE as soon as possible after the demonstration of 4 April.

The most intelligent journalists had already foreseen this – for example Nicolas Domenach who said on TV on 7 March that the country was full of inflammable material.

In this sense Monsieur Villepin was not lying when he told the clowns at the National Assembly after one of the 'days of action' that his main concern was not the defence of his personal pride, but 'the general interest' (ie the interest of the national capital).

Faced with this situation, the less stupid sectors of the ruling class sounded the alarm by announcing the decision to find a quick exit to the crisis after the day of action on 4 April, when several million demonstrators came out onto the streets, including many workers from the private sector.

Despite this wonderful demonstration of solidarity by the capitalist state towards its trade unions, the latter had lost too many feathers to be able to mystify the working class with a load of 'radical' speeches. It was precisely in order to be able to occupy the whole social terrain that the traditional card of 'trade union divisions' was brought out at the end of the movement, pitting the bigger union federations (CGT, CFDT, FO, CGC, UNEF) against the 'radical' ones (SUD, CNT).

As for the 'national coordination', by the time the movement ended it could be seen very clearly that its main aim was to exhaust the students, to demoralise them and make them look ridiculous in front of the TV cameras (as happened in Lyon on the weekend of 8 and 9 April when delegates from all over France spent two days voting on... whether they should be voting).

## **The contribution of the leftists and the 'strategy of undermining'**

Faced with the diminishing credibility of the unions, we saw the leftists coming to centre stage in this Comedie Francaise (whereas at the demo of 18 March the militants of Lutte

Ouvriere - LO- seemed content to blow up balloons and put LO stickers on anyone that would wear them).

While the government and its 'social partners' had decided to open negotiations to find an 'honourable' way out of the crisis, leading to the withdrawal of the CPE on 10 April, we saw LO making all kinds of radical gestures at the 11 April march in Paris, which had the job of burying the movement. A maximum of 'jusqu'au-boutiste' ('fighters to the bitter end') students and high school pupils were called out to 'radicalise' the movement behind the red flags of LO (alongside the blue and white scarves of SUD or the red and black of the CNT).

All the leftist or anarchoid cliques were there in a touching display of unity behind the slogan "withdraw the CPE, the CNE and the equal opportunity law" or "Villepin resign!"

The most experienced workers know very well what the purpose of this kind of exhibition is. It's to deceive the students looking for a political perspective, offering them a superficial radicalism which hides a fundamentally capitalist policy. The card of 'rank and file unionism' is also being played by these phoney revolutionaries in order to complete the strategy of undermining the movement. The leftists and the most excitable anarchists tried at Rennes, Nantes, Aix or Toulouse to push the 'jusqu'au-boutiste' students into a series of physical confrontations with their own comrades, who had

begun to vote for an end to the strike in the universities.

The resort to this radical form of trade unionism is a manoeuvre manipulated by certain branches of the state. It is aimed at dragging the most militant workers and students into the ideology of reformism.

Today most of the discussion and reflection about these events is being controlled by the professional saboteurs of LO, of SUD (born out of a split in the CFDT in the transport sector in 1988) and above all of the Trotskyists of LCR (which has always seen the universities as its private hunting ground and which again called on the students to 'put pressure' on the union leadership so that they would call the other workers into the struggle). All these 'radical' factions of the apparatus for controlling the working class have tried to run with the student movement in order to deform it and pull it back onto the terrain of elections (all these people present candidates to the elections), into the defence of legality and democracy.

It's because the CPE was a symbol of the historic bankruptcy of the capitalist mode of production that the whole 'radical' left – red, pink and green – is now hiding behind the chameleons of the anti-globalisation front ATTAC, with the idea of convincing us that we can build an 'alternative world' inside a system where exploitation and the search for profit still exist.

As soon as the workers began to express their solidarity with the students, we saw the unions, the left parties and the leftists of all stripes trying to occupy the entire field, trying to herd the students into the trap of inter-classism and petty bourgeois thinking. The grand supermarket of reformism was opened wide, selling us the tasty recipes of Jose Bove, of Chavez (the president of Venezuela much touted by the LCR), of Bernard Kouchner or other NGO figures who regularly try to make the workers feel guilty and think that their charitable donations can end the famines or epidemics in Africa...

As for the wage workers who mobilised against the CPE, they were now called upon to have confidence in the unions, which allegedly have the monopoly on strike action (and above all on secret negotiations with the government and the bosses).

## **After the withdrawal of the CPE, what is the perspective?**

In the general assemblies held after the holidays, the students showed considerable maturity by voting to end the strike and resume their courses, while at the same time affirming their determination to continue reflecting on the formidable movement of solidarity they had just experienced. It is true that many of them who wanted to maintain the strike felt frustrated because the government had really only made a small step backwards by reformulating an article from the law on 'equal opportunity'. But the main gain of the struggle is located at the political level because the students succeeded in drawing the workers into a vast movement of solidarity involving all generations.

Many of the students who wanted to carry on the struggle felt nostalgic about the mobilisation, "when we were all together, united in action".

But unity and solidarity can also be developed through collective reflection, because in all the universities and enterprises links have been made between students and between workers. The most conscious students and workers know that tomorrow "if we fight alone, we will be eaten alive", whatever the colour of the future government. (the Socialist minister Allegre talked about the need to "slim down the mammoth" of National Education?).

This is why the students, and the whole working class, must understand the need to draw a clear balance sheet of the struggle against the CPE around the following questions: what was the strength of the movement? What traps do we need to avoid? Why did the unions drag their feet so much and how did they regain control of the movement? What was the role played by the 'coordination'?

In order to carry forward this process of reflection and prepare for future battles, students and workers need to form discussion groups and reject the advances of those who want to use their movement for electoral purposes. They must not forget that those who now present themselves as their best defenders worked to sabotage the movement by negotiating behind its back, or by leading it into dead-end confrontations (didn't the Intersyndicale on more than one occasion march the students towards the trap of the Sorbonne and allow the 'wreckers' to attack the students?).

The movement against the CPE showed the need for the politicisation of the new generation of the working class in the face of the cynicism of the bourgeoisie and its 'equal opportunities' law. You don't need to study Karl Marx's *Capital* to understand that 'equality' under capitalism is just a mirage. You would have to be a complete idiot to believe that the children of unemployed workers who live in the ghettos can have a smooth path to their university studies. As for 'equal opportunity', the whole working class knows that it exists only in the lottery. This is why the government's proposed law was such a provocation for the student youth.

The dynamic towards the politicisation of the new proletarian generation can only really move forward by developing a more global, historical, and international vision of the attacks of the bourgeoisie. And in order to be able to get rid of capitalism and construct another kind of society, the new generations of the working class will have to face up to all of the traps laid by the guard-dogs of the ruling class, whether in the universities or business or the state.

The time has come to close the 'box of dead-end actions' offered by the unions, leftists and anarchists and to once again open the 'box of ideas', so that the whole working class can reflect upon and discuss the future that capitalism has in store for us. Only this process of collective action and debate can enable the new generation to return tomorrow, stronger and more united, to the struggle against the incessant attacks of the bourgeoisie. ICC 23/4/6



# General Strike reveals the bankruptcy of the trade unions

The general strike in Britain took place 80 years ago. The following article first appeared in the sixth issue of *World Revolution*, in 1976. It clearly sets out the lessons of this famous struggle, placing it firmly in the historical context of the defeat of the revolutionary wave of 1917-1921.

However, thirty years on, we also have to note that it displays certain weaknesses. Most seriously there is a tendency to write off the Communist Parties too early, shown in the comment that, in calling on the workers to follow the TUC, the CP in Britain was already "confirming its Stalinist role". The CP's official line in the strike clearly showed that the leadership acted as the left-wing of the bourgeoisie, but the process of 'Stalinisation' in the British party was not yet complete, as shown by very weak expressions of proletarian resistance right up until the early 1930s (albeit undermined by defence of Trotsky's opportunist positions).

The reference in the article to attempts to organise workers' militias also hints at the fact that, even with the odds stacked against it, there were efforts in the working class to go beyond the confines of the struggle set by the trade unions and the CP leadership.

Less seriously, the article is spare in its description of the political minorities of the class and in particular of the history of left communism in Britain, being written in a period when newly re-emerged revolutionary movement was still re-appropriating the buried history of the communist left fractions. For more information on this subject we can now refer readers to the ICC book on the history of *The British Communist Left*.

Fifty years ago, the proletariat and bourgeoisie in Britain confronted each other on a scale not seen in this country before, or to this day. After less than two weeks of strike action, the proletariat began drifting back to work confused, demoralised and defeated. This confrontation between the classes was one of the last thrusts of that global revolutionary wave which reached its peak between 1917 and 1923.

Today, this episode - the General Strike of 1926 - is being 'celebrated' by the very organisations which helped to smash it. Today the trade unions, the Labour Party, the Communist Party, together with their bastardised offspring, the Trotskyists (who largely postdate those events of fifty years ago), are dancing on the corpses of millions of workers who have been butchered by capitalism throughout the last fifty years of counter-revolution; with slight variations they sing the same disgusting song: 'Three cheers for the plucky British workers of 1926 who, unfortunately, were sold down the river by a small group of traitorous union leaders ... but three cheers for the trade unions anyway.'

Fifty years ago, the proletariat in Britain was defeated - not by brute force, but by lies, mystifications, and confusions. The events of 1926 showed, irrevocably and totally, the reactionary nature of the trade union apparatus, and the integration of all union organisations into the bourgeoisie.

## Reformist organisations and decadent capitalism

The General Strike can only be understood in terms of the epoch in which it occurred. It certainly was not merely a sectional struggle between the miners and the mine-owners; the entire proletariat in Britain was defeated. The first inter-imperialist war of 1914-18 had marked the end of the period of capitalism's ascendancy. With the saturation of world markets in the decade preceding World War I, capitalism entered its decadent phase and could from then on only follow one path - that of crisis, war, reconstruction, and so on. With the onset of decadence, capitalism was no longer able to grant lasting, general reforms to the working class; thus working class reformism was no longer possible. The end of reformism, with the onset of decadence, had been perceived in the workers' movement as early as 1898:

*"Trade Union action is reduced of necessity to the simple defence of already realised gains and even that is becoming more and more difficult. Such is the general trend of things in our society. The counterpart of this tendency should be the development of the political side of the class struggle."*(1)

The working class had built up massive, reformist institutions in the period of capitalism's ascendancy. In decadence, however, a completely new question was posed: 'What becomes of such reformist organisations, what role do they fill in the development of the class struggle?'

The outbreak of war essentially answered that question. The Social Democratic and trade union organisations throughout the

world capitulated to the needs of their various national capitals; the class struggle was officially 'suspended' for the duration of the war, as the proletariat was led off to the slaughter. But lessons as historically new and fundamental as this, the lesson that the organisational forms created by the proletariat could go over to the bourgeoisie, are not learned that easily. The support given by the reformist organisations to the inter-imperialist carnage, threw the class into disarray and temporarily diverted into nationalistic sentiment the rising wave of class struggle which had been mounting since the beginning of the century. But very quickly, the struggle began again.

In Russia, the **revolutionary** demands of the new epoch were most quickly assimilated. The Bolsheviks consistently opposed the war, insisting that the imperialist war had to be turned into a civil war, and calling for 'enemy' troops to fraternise. The Russian proletariat quickly began to understand the nature of the trade unions in the context of the new period. The slogan "All Power to the Soviets" not only cast aside old, reformist organisational conceptions, it also emphasised and affirmed the necessity for the working class to overthrow the bourgeois state; that capitalism could only be overthrown by the conscious, political, activity of the proletariat. This revolutionary interpretation of the onset of capitalist decadence enabled the proletariat to seize power in Russia in 1917.

Elsewhere, the questions brought to the fore by the onset of decadence were not posed, nor answered, in such a clear manner as in Russia. In Germany, the proletariat was faced with the huge reformist political apparatus, Social Democracy, which the proletariat had created in the period of capitalist ascendancy to fight for reforms. Although the capitulation of Social Democracy to the bourgeoisie in World War I was recognised with horror by revolutionaries, they found it difficult to abandon this mass political machine. During and after World War I they still hoped that somehow, perhaps, it could be 'saved' from within. In Germany this error was learned in the most brutal way possible, with the Social Democracy actively helping to put down the German Revolution between 1918 and 1923.

In Britain, it was that other arm of reformism, trade unionism, which the bourgeoisie throughout the world had used to its own ends, was used to finally smash the proletariat in 1926. The events of the General Strike were proof enough against any lingering doubt of the bourgeois class nature of unions in decadent capitalism.

## The struggle in Britain: 1914-1921

The revolutionary wave which raged over the world did not leave Britain untouched. From 1910 onwards strikes increased; between the January and the June of 1914 over nine million working days were lost. There was a brief lull at the outbreak of the War, in Britain as elsewhere, but very quickly the class struggle recovered. The ending of the war did not lessen these struggles for long:

in 1919 the Clyde workers were in revolt and by 1921, the miners were again fighting to preserve their living standards.

However, throughout the worldwide period of heightening class struggle, the fight in Britain never really crystallised into a clear political awareness that the period of reformism was over, and with it the rule of the bourgeoisie. The strikes, while implying it, never openly challenged the political supremacy of the bourgeoisie, incarnated in the state. The revolutionary minority within the class in Britain was small, fragmented, and itself unclear about the necessity to confront the state. The lessons which had been clearly grasped much earlier by revolutionaries in Germany, for example, were still not understood in Britain:

*"It is contrary to history to represent work for reforms as a long drawn-out revolution and revolution as a condensed series of reforms. A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content. The secret of historic change through 'the utilisation of political power resides precisely in the transformation of simple quantitative modification into a new quality, or to speak more concretely, in the passage of a historic period from one given form of society into another.'"(2)*

In 1914, the strongest anti-war voices could be heard on the Clyde (3). But these tended to be negative - against conscription and against the war effort in the munitions factories - but not calling the class to organise itself in opposition to the state. The left communists around Sylvia Pankhurst and the *Workers' Dreadnought*, who did uphold a revolutionary defeatist position on the question of the war, and who saw the need to smash the bourgeois state, did not emerge until 1917, developing very largely in response to the events in Russia. Nonetheless Pankhurst's group, anti-parliament and aware of the importance of the workers' councils, was unable to prevent the Communist Party, formed in late 1920, from pledging to work within the existing trade union structure. There were many features peculiar to the British situation which help to explain the confused way in which questions were posed by the British proletariat during the revolutionary wave of the early 1920s. First, the British bourgeoisie had emerged 'victorious' at the close of the war, and the immediate share-out of the raw materials and markets of the defeated countries created a seeming post-war boom. This apparent 'recovery' gave support to the view that reform was still possible and thus bolstered the long, deeply entrenched acceptance of trade unionism within the working class. But the period of post-war reconstruction was short-lived. By 1921, the full pressures of savage international competition were felt again and the bourgeoisie had the urgent task of reducing the living standards of the class. But how were they to do this, faced with increasingly combative workers?

Ironically, the very confusions which were rife within the proletariat concerning the class nature of the trade unions also abounded within the ranks of the bourgeoisie in 1921. In spite of the absolute co-operation capitalism had received from the unions during the war, when hard-fought gains won by the proletariat in the previous epoch were **totally** lost, including the 'right' to strike - the bourgeoisie was unsure of the trade unions. The groundswell of proletarian combativity since the war pushed the trade unions willy-nilly into taking a stand on issues they would sooner have ignored; the backing given by the Labour Party and the TUC to the 'Hands off Russia' movement was inevitable given the mass popular following this campaign had. The Clyde dockers, for example, were refusing to load the ships taking supplies to the White Armies fighting the proletarian bastion in Russia. But such a stance by the trade unions - in reality a necessity if they were to **appear** to represent the working class - was not fully

understood as such by the bourgeoisie. So, in 1921, given the exigencies of the crisis, the bourgeoisie had to reduce the wages of the miners and other workers, but they were unclear as to what role the unions and TUC would play.

The declaration of a reduction in miners' wages brought an immediate response from the whole working class, and once again the unions were swept along by the groundswell. The long since defunct 'Triple Alliance' of mines, railway, and transport unions was resuscitated as workers in these vital and massive industrial sectors demanded united action. A mass strike, at least, seemed inevitable. The bourgeoisie reacted in a nervous, panicky fashion; troops were sent into the coalfields, and machine guns were mounted at pit-heads. But the confrontation never occurred. At the last minute the transport and railway unions withdrew their support from the Triple Alliance and strike notices were withdrawn. Once again, in 1921 as at the onset of the war, the proletariat was effectively confused and in disarray, still unclear about the reactionary nature of the union apparatus. The miners struck on their own and, three months later, when driven back to work out of hunger, faced wage cuts of between 10% and 40%. Wage cuts for other workers followed as the earlier strike impetus waned in the confusion and demoralisation of the ensuing events. Shipyard, engineering and textile workers had wage cuts forced upon them, and living standards dwindled to levels comparable to those suffered by the class at the turn of the century.

## The bourgeoisie prepares: 1921-1926

The bourgeoisie, for its part, was quick on the uptake following 1921 - it recognised clearly which side of the class line the trade unions, as organisations, now stood. It was not that some 'sectors' or 'leaders' had betrayed their class, but that the trade union structure as a whole had capitulated to the bourgeoisie and the interests of capital. And the trade unions were seen to be indispensable to the state from the bourgeoisie's point of view in that the working class retained a belief that these organisations were still its own and fought for them as they had in the past. So, when the miners' union in 1921 talked in the name of the miners, and didn't visibly betray the class as the other two-thirds of the 'Triple Alliance' had done, the bourgeoisie could reap the benefits of not only a demoralised, sectionalised working class, but a working class which retained mystifications about what and who had been responsible for its defeat.

The coming to power of a Labour Government in 1924 proved to be largely irrelevant: the mystification of parliamentarism had little impact upon the proletariat. The Labour Government was largely seen for what it was - a bourgeois government acting in the interests of the national capital. Indeed, within a few days of MacDonald's government coming to office, a strike of 110,000 dock workers took place. The strike was settled after three days, but not before the Government had made arrangements to use troops for the movement of essential supplies. However, this reaffirmation that parliament was to be rejected as a means for furthering working class struggle was still identified by the proletariat with a rejection of all political action. There was still a strong belief within the class that despite the savage blow dealt it by the events of 1921, industrial action alone could herald the onset of socialism.

Towards the end of 1924, when the worldwide revolutionary wave was on the wane, the combativity of the British proletariat swelled up again, in the face of further onslaughts upon its standard of life. The bourgeoisie prepared itself once more for a confrontation. As in 1921, the miners were the focus of the struggle. This time, the bour-

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geoisie did not panic; there was no frenzied movement of troops to the mines. This time they carefully delayed the struggle. A threatened reduction in miners' wages of 25%, and a lengthening of the working day was postponed by the government; instead a subsidy was given to the industry, to last the nine months until 1 May 1926. This time, the bourgeoisie and its state, knew full well which side the trade unions were on. Indeed, the unions reacted to the announcement of the subsidy in an appropriate manner; 31 July 1925 was declared 'Red Friday' and hailed as a great victory for the miners. **But there are no partial 'victories' for the proletariat within decadent capitalism.** All that was gained by the granting of the subsidy was the postponement of inevitable conflict. Years later Baldwin, the then Prime Minister, was asked why the government had 'given way' on Red Friday. He replied, quite simply, "We were not ready". The postponement of the confrontation enabled the bourgeoisie to prepare for its attack on the class.

During the subsequent nine months while the subsidy was in effect, the state prepared for battle. Assured by the unions of their 'great victory' on Red Friday, the miners went on busily digging coal while the bourgeoisie, just as busily, went on stockpiling it in order to soften the blow on the economy when industrial action ultimately came. By late November 1925, a scheme was outlined for the control of transport, food and fuel, for the maintenance of law and order, for the encouragement of the recruitment into the army, and for the taking over of the nation's haulage companies. In September there was a 'private' call for volunteers to join an Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (OMS) which, on the eve of the General Strike, was handed over by its 'private' organisers to the state.

During these months the unions continued to play their part by bombastically talking of working class interests and thereby providing the smokescreen behind which the bourgeoisie could quietly mobilise its resources. The Trade Union Congress at Scarborough in September 1925 was an enthusiastic riot of rhetoric and left-wing demagoguery. The leftist verbiage managed to further confuse the proletariat into thinking that, perhaps, at long last, the trade unions were going to show some muscle, and maybe even become transformed into revolutionary organisations. Not content with one smokescreen, the bourgeoisie invented others. The Samuel Commission was set up during this period to examine 'impartially' the structure of the coal industry. After lengthy deliberations it finally announced the necessity for long-term "radical re-organisation". Hence the lie was propagated that the problems of the industry were due to mismanagement, not that, capitalism itself was suffering the ill-effects of increasingly cut-throat competition on the world market. (As it happened, this 'radical re-organisation' had to wait until the fifties, when the unions so effectively reduced manning levels, closed pits, and generally acted in the best interests of British capital.) While the Samuel Commission was prepared to blame management for not managing well, it also could not help insisting that wages be cut and hours increased. Nothing had changed. A general strike was on the cards: even the TUC General Council realised it had no other option.

The class militancy which had resurged throughout 1925, finally burst forth and millions of workers responded to the strike call. The TUC, with Pandora's box open before it, exclaimed in horror that the response "surpassed all expectations".

Given the immense, but directionless, mass movement, where was the revolutionary communist minority to point the way forward? By 1926, the communist groupings which had existed previously, were practically nonexistent. The Communist Party, though genuinely revolutionary in its early days if confused about trade unionism, was with the reflux of the world revolution, by 1926 acting as the tool of Russian state capitalism. The isolated proletarian bastion in Russia had, by then, passed into the counter-revolution. What revolutionary elements which remained were fragmented and scattered in the wake of the growing counter-

revolution. Even the Pankhurst group of left communists had more or less disappeared from the scene in 1924, and did not re-emerge in 1926. It was in this context then that the British proletariat went on strike in 1926; ready to fight but totally uncertain as to what it was fighting for, and with little or no hope that its brave efforts would find any reverberations in other sections of the world class.

The TUC did its best to sabotage any spontaneous class activity. The first issue of the TUC paper, *The British Worker*, counselled the class to have a good time:

"The General Council suggests that in all districts where large numbers of workers are idle, sports should be organised and entertainments arranged."

Some of the 'entertainments' even included football matches between the striking miners and the local police forces. But the Cardiff, union-dominated, strike committee went one better:

"Keep smiling. Refuse to be provoked. Get into your garden. Look after your wife and kiddies. If you have not got a garden, get into the country, the parks and playgrounds."

To re-inforce its vital role at local level, the trade unions set up local councils of action, largely based upon existing local trades councils. Spontaneous class activity was thereby channelled into these trade unionist organisations which concentrated their efforts on distributing food and fuel. In many areas where attempts were made to organise workers' militias, these attempts were immediately condemned by the union apparatus.

The Communist Party, active in many of the local councils of action, was confirming its Stalinist role by urging the workers to "follow the TUC and insist on the formation of the Workers' Alliance under the supreme authority of the General Council". Its long-term goal was to assist in the formation of another Labour government pledged to a policy of nationalisations.

What was being played out in the General Strike was the charade of 'Who Rules Britain?' - the government or the trade unions? Meanwhile, the proletariat was being indiscriminately trampled underfoot by both. The Home Secretary, Joyson-Hicks, (the Ted Heath of his day) set this up:

"Is England to be governed by parliament and the cabinet or by a handful of trade union leaders?"(4)

The more backward elements of the bourgeoisie were wheeled out to help perpetuate the myth that the unions were against the government. Winston Churchill called the strike "a deliberate, concerted, organised menace" and warned of a "Soviet of Trade Unions" (sic). He was put in charge of the government newspaper, *The British Gazette*, and pumped out hysterical, anti-union tirades throughout the course of the strike. This extreme anti-union posturing served two functions. Not only did it get the proletariat to identify with the unions, but it also helped to mobilise the petty-bourgeoisie behind capital under the rallying cry: 'Come help us preserve democracy and the constitution'. Thousands of petty-bourgeois people, including large numbers of university students, answered the call in a well-orchestrated attack on the working class.

After nine days, and after secret negotiations between Samuel, acting in an 'unofficial' capacity, and the TUC General Council, the latter called off the strike. No assurances had been given by the government, no concessions had been made. Circulars were sent to union headquarters throughout the country telling them to call off the strike.

This time the disarray of the proletariat was complete. There was some attempt to continue the struggle unofficially and indeed on the days immediately following the 'official' stoppage, the number of strikers rose. But the process by which the spontaneous action of the class had been funnelled into the councils of action and the local trades councils had been extremely effective. Slowly, defeated and demoralised, the workers returned to work.

The mystifications, however, had yet to run their full course - the workers had to be provided with a good safe explanation of

## Internationalist leaflet

This leaflet was written by Enternasyonalist K munist Sol (Internationalist Communist Left) a new proletarian group in Turkey. We very much welcome the appearance of this group and in a future publication we will look at their statement of basic principles, which we have received recently.

The EKS gave out the leaflet at the May Day demonstration in Istanbul. In London the ICC took charge of producing it and distributing it at the May Day demonstration. It was also given out by some participants in the libcom.org internet forum.

Despite some secondary differences with formulations used in the leaflet, the ICC fully associates itself with the internationalist outlook it defends. The leaflet is correct in denouncing the way that the left wing of capital has turned May Day into a meaningless ritual, a position already reached by the Communist Left of France after World War 2. But we think that it is also correct to affirm the perspective that a new generation of the working class will one day be able to reclaim May Day and other symbols of its international unity against capitalism.

## May Day is the day of the international working class

For too long May Day has been a ritual with no meaning for the working class. May Day was originally meant to be a day of international workers' solidarity, but today on the May Day demonstrations all we see is leftists of various colours calling on the working class to back different nationalist groups. Whether it be the Turkish nationalist left calling for an "independent Turkey", and screaming against the imperialists while at the same time ignoring the fact that Turkey is a member of NATO, or those who disgusted by the state's barbarity in the South East side with the Kurdish nationalists, and their hideous mirror image of Turkish nationalism, or even the anti-Americanism of the left loudly shouting "Yankee go home". What for? Then we can have our own 'nice' Turkish capitalist bosses. All of this disgusts us. It saddens us that it is left to a small group of internationalists to defend the principles of international working class solidarity.

When we look to America, we see not only Bush, but also the 100,000 workers that marched against racist immigration laws on March 10<sup>th</sup> in Chicago .

We see not only the imperialist war machine, but also the over 6,000 American soldiers who have deserted, and crossed the Canadian border rather than go to fight for 'their' country in Iraq.

When we look at Britain, we see not only Blair, but also the 1,000,000 people who marched on the streets of London against the Iraq war.

their defeat. And there was one quick in coming. The General Council had 'betrayed' the class, and individuals - especially the TUC General Secretary, J.H. Thomas, were singled out as class traitors and much vilified. But, after all, the bourgeoisie could afford a few martyrs in such a cause as the destruction of the proletariat.

### Fifty years on

The real defeat of the proletariat occurred, not with the General Strike, but earlier with the failure of the revolutionary wave of 1917 to spread throughout the world class. The trade union mystifications could have been overcome within the context of a deepening world-wide struggle. For its part, the bourgeoisie in Britain successfully managed to put off its final confrontation with the proletariat until a time when the wider struggle was on the wane. But also, its delayed confrontation enabled it to learn the lessons which the decadent era of capitalism had thrust to the fore, and particularly it grasped the changed nature of the trade unions more clearly than did the working class.

Fifty years ago, it was difficult for the class to discard those organisational forms it had created in the ascendant epoch of capitalism - organisations which had, over and over again in the nineteenth century, delivered the goods in terms of realising material reforms. Today, after fifty years of counter-revolution, the evidence of the bankruptcy of unions and other reformist organisations is plain to be seen. Fifty years ago it was at least plausible to think that a 'few evil men' might be responsible for the attacks on the class by the trade union apparatus - today, the integration of the trade unions into the

We see not only the British Government's obedience to America, but also Malcolm Kendall-Smith, the RAF officer who was sent to prison on April the 14<sup>th</sup> for refusing to go to Iraq.

Similarly, when we look to Iraq, it is not only nationalist, and Islamic resistance that we see, but also the thousands of workers who demonstrated in Kirkuk to protest against the high cost of living and lack of electricity and fuel.

When we look to Iran, it is not only President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and the states drive to obtain nuclear weapons that we see, but also the massive strike wave all across Iran, which has included bus drivers, textile workers, miners, and car workers.

Workers, look to the recent strikes in France: thousands of students demonstrating alongside striking workers to defeat a law making it easier to sack young workers. Look to Britain, where over 1,000,000 workers struck in the biggest strike for eighty years to defend their pension rights. Look to the workers of Iran struggling valiantly against capitalism, and the state despite the oppression from the regime. Look to the working class not nationalists of whatever shade.

### THE WORKERS HAVE NO COUNTRY FOR INTERNATIONALISM AND WORKERS' STRUGGLE

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state is unmistakable.

The very same mystifications that the left face of capitalism was forced to adopt in the 1920s are being reused today; but, like old clothes, are a bit thin and moth-eaten. Organisations, like the trade unions, the Communist Party, the Labour Party, and the ragbag of leftists who give 'critical' support to all the rest, continue to be presented as 'workers' organisations'. But that sham is wearing out, and such organisations increasingly expose themselves as none other than capitalism dressed in another guise.

Fifty years ago, the balance of class forces had moved in favour of the bourgeoisie. It could use these mystifications against a proletariat which was already sinking into defeat. Today, it trots out the same, old devices, but in totally altered circumstances. For today the working class is confident, undefeated - and a class with over fifty years experience of decadent capitalism can recognise that history only poses two alternatives: socialism or barbarism. Fifty years of barbarism has taught us that. *Ruth Peterson*

### Notes

1. Rosa Luxemburg, *Reform or Revolution*.
2. Ibid.
3. In particular, John Maclean and others in the Clyde Workers' Committee took a strong anti-war line initially, but were quickly pulled into the confusions of the Shop Stewards' Movement. See 'The First Shop Stewards' Movement' by Frank Smith in *World Revolution*, no.4.
4. Chris Farman, *The General Strike: Britain's Aborted Revolution?*, (Panther).



# Homage to our comrade Clara

Our comrade Clara died at Tenon hospital in Paris on Saturday 15 April, at the age of 88.

Clara was born on 8 October 1917 in Paris. Her mother, Rebecca, was of Russian origin. She came to France because, as a Jew in her birthplace of Simferopol in the Crimea, she was not allowed to study medicine. In Paris, she became a nurse. Before coming to France, she was already a militant of the workers' movement since she had participated in the foundation of the section of the social democratic party in Simferopol. Clara's father, Paul Geoffroy was a skilled worker in the jewellery trade. Before the First World War, he was a member of the anarcho-syndicalist CGT, then moved towards the Communist Party after the Russian revolution of 1917.

Thus, since her earliest years, Clara had been educated in the tradition of the workers' movement. At the age of 15 she joined the Jeunesse Communiste (Communist youth movement). In 1934, she went with her father to Moscow to visit the sister of her mother, who had died when Clara was only 12. What she saw in Russia, among other things the fact that new homes were reserved for a minority of privileged elements and not for workers, led her to pose questions about the 'socialist fatherland', and on her return she broke with the JC. At that time she had already had a lot of discussions with our comrade Marc Chirik (whom she had met when she was nine since Clara's mother was a friend of the sister of Marc's first wife), despite opposition from her father who, having stayed loyal to the CP, didn't want her hanging around with 'Trotskyists'.

In 1938 Clara, now 21, no longer needed her father's consent and she and Marc got married.

At this point, Marc was a member of the Italian Fraction, and although Clara was not a member, she was a sympathiser of the group. During the war, Marc was mobilised into the French army (although he wasn't French and for many years his only identity paper was an expulsion order whose deadline was prolonged every two weeks). He was based in Angouleme at the time the French army collapsed. With a comrade of the Italian Fraction in Belgium (who had fled the advance of the German troops because he was Jewish), Clara left Paris by bike to join up with Marc in Angouleme. When she arrived, Marc, along with other soldiers, had been imprisoned by the German army who, fortunately, had not yet found out that he was a Jew. By bringing him civilian clothes, Clara helped Marc, and another Jewish comrade, escape from the barracks where he was a prisoner. Marc and Clara reached the 'free' zone and got to Marseille by bike in September 1940. It was in Marseille that Marc played a leading role in reorganising the Italian Fraction, which had been dislocated at the beginning of the war.

Without formally being a member, Clara participated in the work and discussions which made it possible to reconstitute the Italian Fraction. Despite the dangers posed by the German occupation, she succeeded in transporting from one town to another political documents addressed to other comrades of the Italian Fraction.

During this period, Clara also participated in the activities of the Organisation de Secours des Enfants, which looked after and hid Jewish children in order to protect them from the Gestapo.

But it was at the moment of the 'Liberation' that Marc and Clara had their closest encounter with death. The Stalinist 'Resistors' of the Parti Communiste Français arrested them in Marseille. They were accused of being traitors and of collaborating with the 'Boches', since when they raided their home the Stalinists found notebooks written in German. In fact these notebooks were inscribed during the German lessons that Marc and Clara had been receiving from Voline (a Russian anarchist who had participated in the 1917 revolution). Voline, despite the terrible poverty in which he lived, did not want to receive any material help. So Marc and Clara asked him to give them German lessons, after which he would agree to

share a meal with them.

During this raid, the Stalinists also found internationalist leaflets written in French and German and addressed to the soldiers of both camps.

It was thanks to a Gaullist officer who was in charge of the prison (and whose wife knew Clara, having worked with her in the OSE), that Marc and Clara were able to escape the justice of the PCF killers. This officer had initially prevented the Stalinists from shooting Marc and Clara (they had said to Marc, "Stalin hasn't got you but we will have your skin"). Surprised that Jews were accused of being 'collaborators', he wanted to 'understand' the political standpoint which had led Marc and Clara to put out propaganda in favour of fraternisation between French and German troops. The officer recognised that their attitude had nothing to do with some kind of 'treason' in favour of the Nazi regime. He thus helped them to escape from prison in his own car, advising them to leave Marseille as quickly as possible before the Stalinists could find them.

Marc and Clara went to Paris where they joined up with other comrades and sympathisers of the Italian Fraction and the French Fraction of the Communist Left. Up until 1952, Clara continued to support the work of the Communist Left of France (GCF – the new name taken by the French Fraction).

In 1952, the GCF, faced with the danger of a new world war, took the decision that some of its militants should leave Europe in order to preserve the organisation in case the continent was once again plunged into war. Marc left for Venezuela in June 1952. Clara joined up with him in January 1953 when he finally succeeded in finding a stable job.

In Venezuela, Clara returned to her profession as a primary school teacher. In 1955, with a colleague, she founded a French school in Caracas, the Jean-Jacques Rousseau College which at the beginning only had 12 pupils, mainly girls who were unable to go to the only other French school in town, which was run by monks. The College, with Clara as principal and Marc as caretaker, gardener and driver of the school bus, eventually had over a hundred pupils. Some of them, upon whom Clara's qualities as a teacher and a human being had made a considerable impact, stayed in contact with her until her death. One of her former pupils, now living in the USA, visited her in 2004.

After the departure of Marc and other comrades, the GCF broke up. It was only in 1964 that Marc was able to form a small nucleus of very young elements, who began to publish the review *Internacionalismo* in Venezuela. During this period, Clara was not directly involved in the political activities of *Internacionalismo* but her school provided materials and was the meeting place for the group's activities.

In May 1968, Marc went to France to participate in the social movement and re-establish contact with his former comrades of the communist left. It was during his stay in France that the Venezuelan police raided Jean-Jacques Rousseau College and found political material there. The College was closed and indeed demolished. Clara was forced to leave Venezuela in a hurry to join up with Marc. It was during this period that Marc and Clara again settled in Paris.

From 1968 onwards, Marc participated in the work of the group Revolution Internationale, which was formed in Toulouse. From 1971, Clara was fully integrated into the activities of RI, which was to become the ICC's section in France.

Since that time she was a faithful militant of our organisation, playing her part in all the activities of the ICC. After the death of Marc in December 1990, she continued her militant activity within the organisation, to which she was always very attached. Even if she was personally very affected by the departure of certain old comrades who were involved in the foundation of the ICC, these desertions never put her commitment to the ICC into question.

Up to the last moment, despite her age and her health problems, she always wanted to be actively involved in the life of the ICC.

In particular, she was very assiduous about paying her monthly dues and in trying to keep up with the discussions, even when she could no longer take part in the meetings. Even though she had very serious eyesight problems, Clara continued reading the press and internal documents of the ICC as much as possible (the organisation provided them in large letter format for her). Similarly, every time a comrade paid her a visit, she always asked to be brought up to date with the discussions and activities of the organisation.

Clara was a comrade whose sense of fraternity and solidarity had a big effect on all the militants of the ICC, to whom she always extended a very warm welcome. She also maintained fraternal contacts with older members of the communist left, showing them solidarity when they faced the test of illness (as in the case of Serge Bricanier, a former member of the GCF, or Jean Malaquais, a sympathiser of the GCF whom she visited in Geneva shortly before his death in 1998). After Marc's death, she carried on transmitting this tradition of fraternity and solidarity which was a characteristic of the past workers' movement to the new generations of militants. It was with great joy that she saw this solidarity, the hallmark of the class that is the bearer of communism, reappear in a magnificent way in the movement of the students in France. A movement which Clara greeted with enthusiasm before leaving us.

Clara faced her physical weakness and her

very taxing health difficulties with remarkable courage. She left us at a moment when a new generation is opening the doors to the future.

Clara gives us the example of a woman who, throughout her life, fought alongside the working class and showed more than ordinary courage in doing so, notably by risking her life during the years of the counter-revolution. A woman who remained loyal to her revolutionary commitment and ideas to the end.

When the ICC as a whole learned of her death, the sections, and individual comrades sent a large number of testimonies to the ICC's central organ, saluting her human warmth, her devotion to the cause of the proletariat and the great courage she showed all her life.

Clara was buried on Saturday 22 April at the Paris cemetery of Ivry (the same place where the husband of Clara Zetkin, Ossip, was buried on 31 January 1889). After the funeral, the ICC organised a meeting to pay homage to her memory, attended by several international delegations of the ICC, a number of sympathisers who had known Clara personally as well as members of her family.

To her son Marc and her grandchildren Miriam and Jan-Daniel, we send our greatest solidarity and sympathy.

We are publishing below extracts from the letter that the ICC sent to her son and his family.

ICC 25.4.06

## The ICC To comrade Marc

Dear comrade Marc

With these few words, we want first of all to express our solidarity and sympathy following the death of Clara, your mother and our comrade. We also want to try to convey to you the emotions felt by all the comrades of our organisation.

Most of us knew Clara first as the wife of Marc, your father, who played such an important role in the combat of the working class, especially in some of its worst moments, and also as the principal architect of the ICC. In itself, that is a reason for our respect and affection towards Clara: "Marc's wife could only be a good person". The courage and dignity she showed when your father died, despite the immense love she had for him, confirmed to us her great strength of character, a quality we already knew and which she continued to display until the day she died. But Clara was very far from just being Marc's partner. She was a comrade who remained loyal to her convictions to the end, who continued to share all our struggles, and who, despite the difficulties of age and sickness, continued to play her part in the life of our organisation. All the comrades were impressed by her will to live and the total lucidity she maintained to the very last moments. This is why the affection and respect we had for her from the beginning have only been reinforced over the years.

## International Review 125

### A new period of class confrontations

The mobilisation of the young generations of future proletarians in France, in the universities and high-schools, and in demonstrations, as well as the inter-generational solidarity around the struggle, confirms the opening of a new period of class confrontations. The real control of the struggle by the general assemblies, the latter's combativeness but also the reflection and maturity that found expression within them are signs that a profound development is under way in the class struggle.

### The IWW and the failure of revolutionary syndicalism in the USA, part ii

How far did the IWW's theory and practice allow it to live up to its own goals, and to the greatest challenge yet faced by the workers' movement: the outbreak of history's first great inter-imperialist conflict in 1914?

### The implication of the 1905 revolution

The emergence of the soviets was inseparable from the mass strike, which appeared as the means for struggling against capitalism when partial reforms and palliatives were no longer attainable. It arose from the needs of the class as a whole and not only drew the working class together but developed its class consciousness.

### Communism: the beginning of mankind's real history (part iii)

This article is a summary of the second volume in the series. We examine the lessons drawn from the practical experience of proletarian revolution and power in Russia and Germany at the start of the 20th century.

### Theses on the spring 2006 students' movement in France

## Contact the ICC

Debate is vital to the revolutionary movement. One of the most important elements of our activity, defined in our Basic Positions, is the "Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions". This, we are convinced, is only possible through the confrontation and discussion of differing views and positions within the revolutionary camp.

For this reason, we urge our readers to write to us with their comments, opinions and disagreements on the positions and analyses that we defend in our written press, including our web site.

We will do our best to reply to all serious correspondence as quickly as possible, although given our limited resources we may not always be able to do so immediately. Should the subject matter be of general interest, then we may publish both correspondence and our reply in our press.

While debate amongst revolutionaries is vital, it is equally necessary not to fall into the trap of thinking that our activity is something anodyne and acceptable to the bourgeois dictatorship disguised under the trappings of the "democratic" state. We will not under any circumstances publish our correspondents' real names, nor their home or e-mail addresses.

**Write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:**

**ACCION PROLETARIA** Apartado Correos 258, Valencia, SPAIN.  
**COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALIST** POB 25, NIT, Faridabad, 121001 Haryana, INDIA.  
**INTERNACIONALISMO** DUE to the political situation in Venezuela, we ask that all correspondence be sent to Accion Proletaria in Spain.  
**INTERNATIONALISM** Post Office Box 288, New York, NY 10018-0288, USA.  
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Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan

## Capitalism plunges into barbarity

The triple bombings on April 24 in Dahab, a major tourist centre in Egypt, which left 30 dead and 150 wounded, is another reminder that no one in the world is safe from the fury of terrorism and war. And this will not be changed by all the 'unanimous condemnations' of hypocritical statesmen who tell us that they reject these acts of violence with 'horror and outrage'.

On the contrary, this attack aimed at innocent civilians who had come to spend a few days on holiday enabled the politicians to once again reaffirm their commitment to the 'war against terrorism', in other words, to the continuation of massacres on an even grander scale.

Today we can measure the effectiveness of this 'intransigent struggle' against the 'scourge of terrorism' and for 'peace and freedom' waged by the great powers, with the US to the fore. Never has there been such an explosion of warlike tensions, of military conflicts, of blind terrorist attacks, in short of barbarism, from Africa to Asia via the Middle East.

### The failure of the US military and political offensive

The war in Afghanistan and the war in Iraq have ended in disaster, creating a huge zone of irredeemable chaos and instability.

We have already dealt at length with the daily horrors of the situation in Iraq (see *WR* 293). In Afghanistan, the invasion by the troops of the US coalition was 'legitimised' by the struggle against terrorism in the shape of Bin Laden in the wake of the attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001. Today the country is in a total mess. The Kabul government is under constant attack and the capital is regularly bombarded by missiles launched by the various Pathan and Afghani cliques vying for power. In the south and east of the country, the Taliban have gained ground through a series of commando raids and terrorist outrages. This has obliged the US to mount a new military operation, codenamed Mountain Lion, mobilising 2500 men with impressive air cover. It was clearly stated that the aim of this operation was to carry out massive destructions on a scale equal to that of 2001 and 2002. However, the media have played down the significance of this offensive by referring to the US State Department's description, which underlines its mainly 'psychological' character, the primary goal being "to make an impression on the neo-Taliban and to reduce their impact on the local population and on international public opinion". This is what you might call massive psychological dissuasion.

In the Middle East, we are also seeing a plunge into barbarism. Not only has the US been unable to impose a consensus between

Israel and the Palestinian Authority; its incapacity to rein in the aggressive and provocative policies of Sharon led to a political crisis both in the occupied territories and Israel itself. The various Israeli political factions are at loggerheads about what to do next. But the failure is even more striking on the Palestinian side, with the arrival in power of Hamas, a particularly retrograde and extremely anti-Israeli Palestinian faction, which is also in opposition to Fatah. We are already seeing the different Palestinian factions settling scores with each other at gunpoint in Gaza. The latter region of 1.6 million people, 60% of whom are refugees, is now being reduced to even greater misery, not only by the Israeli checkpoints which made it increasingly difficult for people to go to work in Israel, but also by the ending of international aid following the Hamas election victory.

The Israeli state's building of the 'apartheid wall' on the West Bank of the Jordan can only sharpen tensions further and push more and more young, desperate Palestinians into the arms of the Islamic terrorists. When the wall is finished, 38 villages housing 49,400 Palestinians will be turned into enclaves and 230,000 Palestinians in Jerusalem will be on the Israeli side of the separating line. The wall will create a series of 'bantustans', all of them cut off from each other.

### The Iranian offensive, a thorn in America's foot

The face-off between Iran and the great powers on the question of Tehran's nuclear energy programme has got even more tense this year. With the ultimatum set by the UN Security Council, demanding that Iran end any enrichment of uranium by 28 April, and Iran's refusal to comply, diplomatic relations have sharply deteriorated. In a world-wide context where the insanity of war is spreading all the time, this confrontation between Iran and the UN is full of dangers. It contains the risk of a new extension and aggravation of barbarism.

It is obvious that Iran is doing all it can to equip itself with nuclear weapons – this has been the case since 2000. The speeches by Iran's leaders about the purely civilian and peaceful use of nuclear energy are just lies. Formerly a key bridgehead of the American bloc in the region, then relegated to maverick status when the Khomeini regime came to power and bled dry by the war against Iraq in the mid-80s, this country has gradually built up its strength since the 90s. Benefiting from Russian military aid and by the weakening of Iraq, its historic rival for the control of the Persian Gulf, from the first Gulf war to the 2003 invasion, Iran today is aiming to affirm itself as the new rising power

of the region. It has quite a few assets at its disposal. This explains the increasingly provocative declarations by the Iranian government, aimed at the UN and above all at the US.

The Iranian state, which has seen the return to power of the most reactionary Islamist faction, presents itself as a strong and stable state, when all around it, in Iraq and Afghanistan, all is chaos and confusion. This situation allows it to carry out a pro-Arab ideological offensive and to put itself forward as the spearhead of an independent pan-Islamic identity, in contrast to Saudi Arabia which is portrayed as being a tool of the US.

Washington's inability to impose a *Pax Americana* in Iraq and Afghanistan is grist to the mill of this anti-American propaganda and lends support to Iran's insinuations that the threats from the White House are empty of substance.

The situation in Iraq itself can only strengthen Iran's military ambitions. Apart from the obvious failure of the US occupation, the predominant influence of Shiites in the Iraqi government has further whetted Iran's quest for imperialist influence, not only in Iraq but throughout the Persian Gulf.

At the same time, the patent disagreements between the countries participating in the Security Council have also emboldened the Iranians. While all these countries state that they are opposed to Iran developing nuclear weapons, the open divisions between them make it all the easier for Iran to harden its tone in the face of the world's leading power. The US – and to a lesser extent the UK – have reacted by brandishing the threat of military intervention; but we have seen

France take a position against any military intervention in Iran. China and Russia, as well as Germany (which is currently trying to move closer to Russia) are completely opposed to any forceful measures, above all military ones. We should remember that Russia and China have both provided Iran with material for its nuclear programme.

This has created a difficult situation for the Bush administration. Iran's provocative attitude is forcing it to respond. However, whatever military options the US is considering – most likely air strikes, even though these would have to be against vaguely identified targets in areas of urban density – there are big risks at the domestic level. The new phase of the war in the Middle East is likely to further exacerbate the anti-war sentiments that are growing in the US population over the war in Iraq. At the same time any intervention would result in a radicalisation of the Arab countries and of all the Islamist groups, not to mention the wave of terrorist attacks in the west and rocket attacks on Israel that the Iranian state itself has promised in retaliation to any military strikes.

Whatever the outcome of the Iran crisis, there is no doubt that it will lead to an aggravation of warlike tensions, not only between the US and the countries of the Middle East, but also between the US and its main imperialist rivals, who are just waiting for the world's gendarme to make its next bad move so that they can reap the benefits and present it as the only real warmonger. As for the populations who will be decimated by war, this is the last concern for any of these imperialist gangsters. *Mulan 25.4.06*

## ICC online

### "Latino" demonstrations in the USA: Yes to the unity of the working class! No to unity with the exploiters!

Nationalism has poisoned the movement, whether it was Latino nationalism, which was cropped up in the opening moments of the demonstrations, or the sickening rush to affirm Americanism that followed more recently, or the nationalist, racist-based opposition to the immigrants

### In Germany and in France, the future is in preparation

The determining facts are the increasingly evident bankruptcy of capitalism, the sharpening of the attacks against the working class of all countries, and the international resurgence of the class struggle. Once this is understood, what the social situations in France and Germany have in common becomes clear.

### 50 years since the Hungarian workers' uprising

It was the intervention of the **working class** which transformed a protest movement into an insurrection, and it was the infection of the workers' insurrection with all the democratic and nationalist ideology of the intellectuals which was to **weaken and confuse** the proletarian movement.

### Council elections

**Using the BNP to strengthen democracy**  
The BNP makes some electoral gains. The fascist menace is made to seem a little more tangible. People must no longer be 'apathetic', they must take up their civic responsibilities, they must vote for anyone but the BNP.

It is in this process the ruling class tries to persuade workers to forget their own class interests and fall in behind their exploiters.

## Political positions of the ICC

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

\* Since the first world war, capitalism has been a decadent social system. It has twice plunged humanity into a barbaric cycle of crisis, world war, reconstruction and new crisis. In the 1980s, it entered into the final phase of this decadence, the phase of decomposition. There is only one alternative offered by this irreversible historical decline: socialism or barbarism, world communist revolution or the destruction of humanity.

\* The Paris Commune of 1871 was the first attempt by the proletariat to carry out this revolution, in a period when the conditions for it were not yet ripe. Once these conditions had been provided by the onset of capitalist decadence, the October revolution of 1917 in Russia was the first step towards an authentic world communist revolution in an international revolutionary wave which put an end to the imperialist war and went on for several years after that. The failure of this revolutionary wave, particularly in Germany in 1919-23, condemned the revolution in Russia to isolation and to a rapid degeneration. Stalinism was not the product of the Russian revolution, but its gravedigger.

\* The 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 ever-increasing scale.

The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

\* All the nationalist ideologies - 'national independence', 'the right of nations to self-determination' etc - whatever their pretext, ethnic, historical or religious, are a real poison for the workers. By calling on them to take the side of one or another faction of the bourgeoisie, they divide workers and lead them to massacre each other in the interests and wars of their exploiters.

\* In decadent capitalism, parliament and elections are nothing but a masquerade. Any call to participate in the parliamentary circus can only reinforce the lie that presents these elections as a real choice for the exploited. 'Democracy', a particularly hypocritical form of the domination of the bourgeoisie, does not differ at root from other forms of capitalist dictatorship, such as Stalinism and fascism.

\* All factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. All the so-called 'workers', 'Socialist' and 'Communist' parties (now ex-'Communists'), the leftist organisations (Trotskyists, Maoists and ex-Maoists, official anarchists) constitute the left of capitalism's political apparatus. All the tactics of 'popular fronts', 'anti-fascist fronts' and 'united fronts', which mix up the interests of the proletariat with those of a faction of the bourgeoisie, serve only to smother and derail the struggle of the proletariat.

\* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

\* In order to advance its combat, the working class has to unify its struggles, taking charge of their extension and organisation through sovereign general assemblies and committees of delegates elected and revocable at any time by these assemblies.

\* Terrorism is in no way a method of struggle for the working class. The expression of social strata with no historic future and of the decomposition of the petty bourgeoisie, when it's not the direct expression of the permanent war between capitalist states, terrorism has always been a fertile soil for manipulation by the bourgeoisie. Advocating secret action by small minorities, it is in complete opposition to class violence, which derives from conscious and organised mass action by the proletariat.

\* The working class is the only class which can carry out the communist revolution. Its revolutionary struggle will inevitably lead the working class towards a confrontation with the capitalist state. In order to destroy capitalism, the working class will have to overthrow all existing states and establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale: the international power of the workers' councils, regrouping the entire proletariat.

\* The communist transformation of society by the workers' councils does not mean 'self-management' or the nationalisation of the economy. Communism requires the conscious abolition by the working class of capitalist social relations: wage labour, commodity production, national frontiers. It means the creation of a world community in which all activity is oriented towards the full satisfaction of human needs.

\* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active factor in the generalisation of class consciousness within

the proletariat. Its role is neither to 'organise the working class' nor to 'take power' in its name, but to participate actively in the movement towards the unification of struggles, towards workers taking control of them for themselves, and at the same time to draw out the revolutionary political goals of the proletariat's combat.

### OUR ACTIVITY

Political and theoretical clarification of the goals and methods of the proletarian struggle, of its historic and its immediate conditions.

Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat. The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

### OUR ORIGINS

The positions and activity of revolutionary organisations are the product of the past experiences of the working class and of the lessons that its political organisations have drawn throughout its history. The ICC thus traces its origins to the successive contributions of the *Communist League of Marx and Engels* (1847-52), the three Internationals (the *International Workingmen's Association*, 1864-72, the *Socialist International*, 1884-1914, the *Communist International*, 1919-28), the left fractions which detached themselves from the degenerating Third International in the years 1920-30, in particular the *German, Dutch and Italian Lefts*.