



# world revolution

## Workers, unemployed, pensioners, students... We all need to fight back together

Faced with the coalition government's multiple schedules of cuts in public spending, which will mean increasing poverty and unemployment for millions (see article below), the reaction has often been one of shock and awe: where and how do we begin to fight back against such an onslaught? And looking across the channel, where millions have been out on the street resisting the Sarkozy government's 'reform' of pensions, the response has often been: 'why can't we be more like the French? They really know how to protest over there' (see pages 4 and 5).

But the working class in Britain has just as much reason to be angry. And there are signs that this anger is taking visible form:

- among the firefighters who have been out on strike against new shift patterns, using mass

pickets to prevent the professional strike breakers of AssetCo using fire-engines;

- among the tube workers who have been out on a number of strike days over jobs and safety

- among BBC journalists who have been out on a 48 hour strike against the erosion of pensions

- among students who will be demonstrating against cuts in university funding and hikes in tuition fees.

The problem facing workers here is that these and other reactions have been dispersed. In France, the demand to ditch the new pension reforms has been taken up by the whole movement, creating the possibility of massive mobilisations against not only this attack but all the others which the

economic crisis is forcing the bosses and the state to impose. This doesn't mean that the French are on the verge of revolution: there as well the state can count on its political and union apparatus to prevent a real unification and self-organisation of the struggle, despite small steps in that direction.

In the UK, however, the fragmented nature of the response is more obvious: the fire-fighters are called out on one issue, the transport workers around another, and so on. And yet there is no doubt that the government's attack is aimed at the entire working class, employed, unemployed, students, pensioners, part-time workers, and so on. There is a crying need for a mobilisation which all can identify with and join.

In the past, the trade unions were a force that stood for the interests of the workers against the

needs of capital. But for many decades now the unions have been part of the forces of order, tied to capital and an integral part of the state. They have to respond to workers' discontent by calling strikes, but they will do all they can to keep strikes divided and ineffectual.

If there is to be a real response to the state's assault on living standards, it will sooner or later have to break out of the official channels: workers will have to take charge of their own struggles directly, they will have to fight together and demonstrate together, raising common demands that can bring all the different parts of the working class into the same movement.

Such a massive response won't come out of nowhere: it can only be prepared by taking part in the existing struggles, however much they are contained and limited by the unions. But it is vital that those who see the need for a truly independent movement of the working class should begin right now to combine their forces and ideas. Amos 6/11/10

### Spending review – an attack on the whole working class

"Ouch! That hurt" was the *Sun* headline after the government's October Comprehensive Spending Review. "Osborne whacks Britain" also sounds pretty uncomfortable but, as the paper's other front page headline explains, the "£81bn cuts for all" are "to save our finances." It might be unpleasant, but it's all supposed to be for the good of the nation.

The next day the *Sun* reported a survey in which 58% of people thought that "the way the government is cutting spending to reduce the government's deficit" was "unavoidable". This was despite the fact that a majority thought it was a "desperate gamble" and would affect them personally.

It's hardly surprising that people think cuts are inevitable. Attacks on living standards were already well underway under the Labour governments of Blair and Brown. This year's general election had the main parties all offering slight variations on the main cuts theme, and Osborne's budget and other measures have continued the process since.

As for who is going to be most affected, the *Mail* and *Telegraph* both thought that 'middle class' households with an income of more than £48,000 would be hardest hit. Two workers in a household both earning about £25,000 are still workers, and still hit, however the right-wing press want to label them.

Most papers took up the report of the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) which demonstrated that the poorest would be hit the hardest. The poorest 10%

(households with an annual income under £10,200) would be hit 15 times harder than the richest 10%. This comes on top of the Labour years where the gap between rich and poor widened throughout their time in office. It also doesn't take into account things like food inflation, now running at about 10%, when food is a much more larger proportion of expenditure for the poorest.

It can't be said too often: we're not 'all in this together'. We live in a class-divided society in which a capitalist class and the repressive power of its state rule over and exploit those who only have their labour power to sell. Those who are being asked to pay for the economic crisis of capitalism are not from the ranks of the capitalist class but from the working class.

#### What will happen as the measures take effect?

The fact that people think that widespread cuts are a 'desperate gamble' only reflects the conflicting predictions and proposals of economists. In the US the Federal Reserve has just embarked on a second round of 'quantitative easing', pumping more liquidity into the economy at the same time as the European Central Bank is withdrawing some of its emergency liquidity measures. If you look at the economy of the Irish Republic, as another example, its ongoing programmes of severe government cut-backs have led to nothing except further cuts, with even more harsh measures due to

be announced in the next budget on 7 December. Cuts don't actually seem to work any more than the recourse to debt.

With the question of unemployment in the UK the only guarantee is that it will continue to rise. The government's estimated figure for the increase in unemployment over the next five years is some 490,000. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has done its sums and come up with some different figures. Its projections actually see a greater impact on the private sector, with, ultimately, the loss of 900,000 jobs, in comparison with the elimination of an estimated 725,000 (about 1 in 8) jobs in the public sector.

Also, it is worth looking at those areas which have been 'protected'. Many will have reflected on the cuts in spending on prisons and defence and thought 'if they can cut them they can cut anything'. Look at the NHS. Spending in real terms is advertised as rising by an annual rate of 0.01%. In reality, with an ageing population and the soaring cost of drugs, this will, on some projections, mean a 6% cut in resources available to the NHS. In addition, it should be recalled that Labour had already planned £20 billion worth of 'savings' in the NHS through 'efficiency' and 'productivity' measures before the election. These particular cuts will of course now be undertaken by the Lib-Con coalition.

When surveying his handiwork George Osborne was proud to say that while Labour had proposed

### Struggle against pension reform in France see p 4 & 5

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# The crisis is material, not ideological

The British bourgeoisie has discovered that the state of the economy means it cannot put a battle fleet to sea without the cooperation of the French. However, their political acumen in presenting the crisis to the British public has not diminished in any way. The Tories and the bit part players from the Lib-Dems, with manful assistance from the unions and Labour party apparatchiks, have put across the idea that the whole business about the crisis was a kind of April Fool's joke and the sole driving idea behind the government's policy is simply to pare down the size of the state.

The left-wing of the bourgeoisie completely agrees with this. In fact the Labour party and unions, along with the SWP and its like, are the principal players putting forward the idea that the 'Tory cuts' are driven by ideology and not economic necessity. Images of customers queuing up outside Northern Rock demanding their savings, nationalisation of the banks, emergency measures taken at the international level to save the world economy: all these phenomena apparently belong to another epoch.

Len McCluskey, the favourite to win the leadership of the Unite union, told the *Financial Times* about the cuts:

*"It's an ideological agenda pursued by the government that is not necessary. Once it starts impacting on hundreds of thousands of jobs – in the private as well as the public sector – more and more people will get angry."*

So there it is. There is no crisis requiring cuts and austerity. People are entitled to 'feel angry' with ideologically driven Tories, but should not think that capitalism is riven by some kind of fundamental crisis that renders it incapable of providing for people's needs. Basically, it will be all right once the Tories are out of government and we can go back to Labour cuts. After all, the unions are a key element in choosing the Labour party leader and are an integral part of the Labour party apparatus, so we can be assured that any cuts coming from that direction were not ideologically driven but actually necessary.

## The 'phoney' crisis

The theme that the crisis is in some measure unreal is well reflected in an article in the *Evening Standard*: 'For most people, it's just a phoney crisis'. The article quotes Rachel Lomax, a former deputy governor of the Bank of England, who puts forward the idea that for most people in Britain, this has been a phoney crisis – something got up by the bankers and the markets, but of little concern to everyday folk. Presumably, 'everyday folk' would not be a category that includes those who have been made redundant or those in line to lose a good portion of their housing benefit. Ms Lomax disapproves of this because she thinks that there is insufficient support for the very severe spending cuts announced by Mr. Osborne, and that the government will water them down. In the article the present situation is contrasted with previous episodes of open crisis:

*"There have been none of the attention-seizing, stomach-churning moments that grab everyone's attention as in 1992 when Norman Lamont raised interest rates to 15%."*

There is truth in the idea that Lamont's hike in interest rates had immediate repercussions for a vast swathe of people, including (and especially) those with mortgages (those whom the *Standard* deems to be 'everyday folk'). It is true, also, that the bourgeoisie has been successful in creating the impression that the crisis has been contained in the sense that the economy is at least out of the recession and 'recovering', albeit in a very limited way. And, more important, it has created a sense that the effects of the crisis are not as generally distributed as might have been feared – particularly not for the better off sections of the population. The worst effects are for the present concentrated on the poorest – although anyone might become one of the poorest depending on the lottery of who loses their job.

This is not a mistake on the part of the bourgeoisie. On the contrary it is quite deliberate. It is necessary to put aside momentary appearances and understand that the crisis deepens over the

decades. It does not retreat or become less severe. It is also necessary not to identify the underlying crisis with its secondary manifestations. The threats posed to the financial system a short time ago are not matters that belong to the past and have now 'gone away' as the bourgeoisie would very much like us to believe. Undoubtedly Ms Lomax, since she worked for the Bank of England, is aware of this and thinks a little intellectual rigour is in order to 'pull people along' behind the government's cuts. But she should leave the politics to those who know about such matters. There is no 'pulling people along' behind the level of austerity implied by the present evolution of the crisis. Above all, there are no sections of the population that are not affected (apart, possibly, from the very rich).

Furthermore, the bourgeoisie would be in a better position if the measures it was taking were actually likely to slow down the evolution of the crisis in a definite way. When Thatcher got rid of industries that were taking their toll on the national economy, because they needed permanent subsidies by the state to make them at all viable, the benefit was clear from the point of view of the bourgeoisie, even if it left behind a legacy of permanent unemployment on a great scale. But the government's present plans to deal with the large scale deficits left over after the 'triumphant' period of '40 quarters of uninterrupted growth' have to address more difficult problems.

Undoubtedly, from the bourgeoisie's point of

view, it is necessary to try and stop the escalation of the state's expenditure on benefits, but, since the overall plan to scale back spending also requires making 1.5 million unemployed, it is not exactly an easy thing to accomplish.

Similarly, the bourgeoisie require workers to take pay cuts, to accept cuts in hours, to work on a casualised basis (and therefore to earn less). But, to a certain extent, the state has to pick up the tab for this. This is particularly clear in terms of housing benefit.

The number of claimants has risen due to the acceleration in the crisis, the increase in the unemployed in particular. Mr. Osborne is quite right in thinking that it makes no sense for the state to be artificially propping up the level of rents by simply paying the 'going rate' to landlords. His response is to put on caps that will cause a great deal of hardship to those dependent on benefits. This is especially so in London where rents are exorbitantly high.

It is necessary to know that housing benefit is not only paid to the unemployed, but many employed workers are dependent on it as well. To see the scale of the problem we can note that the cap that Osborne has put on the benefit is £400 a week. This is admittedly for a 4 bedroom house, but it is over £20,000 a year. That is more than many people earn altogether – certainly after tax (and rent is paid out of after-tax income, after all). Even the bourgeoisie has to accept (as long as they intend people to be housed at all) that a

worker cannot spend his or her entire income on rent. Even if there are two earners, it is a lot to ask that one earner only pays rent and one income is left for a family to live on. Furthermore it is easy to find properties advertised in London for nearly £400 a week that have only 3 bedrooms, or two or even one. There is no proportionality between rents and wages. It is a complete understatement to say merely that rents are 'expensive'. And the capitalist state is not going to pay out its subsidies forever.

What is the underlying problem here? The problem is that the runaway increase in property prices and the attendant growth of buy-to-let landlordism were key drivers of 'growth' during the 10 years prior to the open financial crisis and the recession. The *Financial Times* reported at one point during this period that the landlord sector was the leading growth sector in the economy. The problem with this is that this is not real growth and although individuals may feel a 'wealth effect' from higher house prices, higher prices actually make everyone poorer (just as with any other type of inflation). The housing benefit bill covers some of those who are conspicuously and obviously poorer as a result of all this. This is not something the government can wave a magic wand at and it will go away. Nor can it simply distance itself from the problem. The idea of a 'downsized' state is a pure illusion as the bourgeoisie try to attend to the accumulation of problems that are attendant on the crisis. **Hardin 5/11/10**

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## Spending review – an attack on the whole working class

across-the-board cuts of 20% the current government's proposals only amounted to an average figure across departments of 19%. The IFS has actually shown that Osborne's cuts are bigger. What the real figures do show is the essential continuity between the parties in the management of the economy – following the demands of the economic crisis with the imposition of austerity.

### We've been this way before

In many commentaries on the measures adopted or proposed since the onset of the 'credit crunch' crisis there have been references to cuts in public spending made under Margaret Thatcher's government in the 1980s. Alistair Darling, for example, openly said that the cuts Labour would introduce if re-elected would be 'worse than Thatcher.' Now Labour spokesman Alan Johnson is saying, as an accusation rather than as a complement, that Cameron/Osborne/Clegg's cuts will be 'worse than Thatcher'.

It is worth looking at what happened in the late 1970s/early 1980s to see what is similar and what has changed. The Labour government of Jim Callaghan had entered into an agreement with the unions, the Social Contract, which kept wages down and tried to keep a lid on the class struggle. Towards the end of the Callaghan government the unions were having a great deal of difficulty in selling the 'Social Con-trick' (as leftists tended to call it) to the working class. Also, the government's majority had almost vanished, so it entered into a pact with the Liberal party. Under this arrangement came Phase 4 of Labour's pay policy. One aspect of this was a 5% limit on wage rises. At a time when inflation was at 20% this was a major attack on working class incomes. Simultaneously, following desperate pleas for support from the International Monetary Fund, Labour introduced massive cuts in public spending. These measures, introduced by Chancellor Denis Healey were the forerunners to the monetarist policies of the Thatcher government. They also led to the wave of struggles of 1978-79 known by the media as the 'winter of discontent' which involved Ford workers and lorry drivers as well as workers throughout the public sector.

How do the Labour measures of the late 1970s and the Lib-Lab pact compare with the current Lib-Con Coalition? Total managed expenditure is due to decline in real terms by 3.3% by 2014-15.

Compare this with Labour in 1977-78 where real spending was cut by 3.9% in just one year. Add in the rate of inflation that so eroded real wages and it's easy to see why workers took to the streets to demonstrate and why so many went on strike. Rapid changes in material conditions soon lead to angry protests.

While reflecting on events of thirty years ago it's a good moment to consider a recent poll of 18-24-year-olds that found 76% favouring spending cuts against just 16% for tax rises. And the most popular targets for cuts were unemployment benefit (JSA) and building new homes. On the surface this might look strange: after all, aren't younger people more rebellious than their elders? And wouldn't those from an age group with high rates of unemployment and with currently large numbers still living with parents actually benefit from not having cuts in these areas?

The first thing to say is that the question on spending cuts is loaded as it asks what measures a government should take if it wants to balance the books. The question effectively demands that we accept the reality of the capitalist crisis, which means 'heads they win, tails we lose'. For an individual being polled a tax rise seems very real, actual money being taken out of a wallet or purse; whereas the prospect of public spending cuts could seem rather abstract. If you're 24 or younger you'll have had no direct experience of the sort of cuts made in the late 1970s and early 80s, no exposure to high inflation rates, and little idea of the solidarity that exists in collective struggles. If the young can sometimes sound just like the least enlightened of their parents' generation it's because the reactionary ideas of capitalist society weigh on us all, and it's in only in times of great social upheaval that the questionings of a minority become increasingly more widespread.

### Against the 'logic' of capitalism

The richest have done well out of both Labour and Lib-Con governments, and the rescued banks must surely be grateful for the lashings of state hand-outs that have come their way. However, it is important to remember that the domination of capital does not only mean billionaires and their bankers but is a whole mode of production which touches every aspect of social life.

For leftists like the Socialist Workers Party, who talk of socialism and revolution while putting forward ideas that serve the cause of neither, there is the possibility of a democratic capitalism, an exploiting society which can benefit the majority.

Following Osborne's latest announcements *Socialist Worker* (21/10/10) declared "There is no need to cut any job or service. But even if cuts were necessary, there are plenty of other ways to raise cash. The richest 1,000 people in Britain have £336 billion and they are getting richer all the time — their wealth rose by £77 billion last year. The government could raise money by increasing corporation tax and taxing the super-rich. Yet Osborne has promised to cut corporation tax every year that the Tories are in office. The review included a small levy on the banks, but cuts in corporation tax mean they will actually come out with more cash."

In *Socialist Review* (November 2010) you can read "According to HM Revenue and Customs, the UK's 'tax gap' – the amount lost through tax evasion, avoidance and non-payment – is £42 billion a year. Why not clamp down on businesses that break the law or exploit tax loopholes? Or why not nationalise Britain's big five banks, which made state-subsidised profits of over £15 billion in the first half of 2010 alone?"

What's proposed here are a number of economic reforms inside the capitalist system. More state intervention, some changes in taxes, and a more vigorous approach to tax collection: with such measures there is supposedly 'no need to cut any job or service' or, 'if cuts were necessary,' there are always ways to raise cash. And haven't most big British banks been nationalised already?

This vision is in direct opposition to the marxist tradition. Where the SWP call on measures from the capitalist state, the tradition of Marx and Lenin looks to the struggle of the working class and the destruction of the state. Where the SWP looks for ways of raising cash, marxists look toward a society without money, based on human solidarity, where the main principal is 'from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs'.

The logic of the capitalist crisis leads to state-imposed austerity; the struggles of the working class give a perspective towards a world-wide human community. **Car 5/11/10**



## Radical Workers' Block on anti-cuts demo What lessons for the future?

The first Saturday after the government's spending review was announced, 23 October, there were a number of demonstrations against cuts up and down the country called by various unions. The number of people participating, varying from 25,000 in Edinburgh, 15,000 in Belfast to 300 in Cardiff, shows that workers here are angry, just as they are in France.

However, the trade union demonstrations provide no viable framework for struggling against cuts in jobs, pay and services, quite the reverse. That's why we supported the call "*on all anarchists and militant workers to join us in forming a 'Radical Worker's Bloc' on the demonstration, not to beg the trade union bureaucrats to take action, but to argue that we fight the cuts based on the principles of solidarity, direct action, and control of our own struggles*". This came from South London Solidarity Federation (see libcom).

The problem with the approach of the unions and their supporters is that they focus on 'Tory cuts', putting the deficit down to the bail out of the bankers, to financial speculation – when these are nothing but symptoms of the crisis of capitalism. The cuts are just some policy choice by "*a government of millionaires*" (Socialist Party leaflet) when "*The government could have taxed the rich*" (Karen Reissman, health campaigner and Socialist Workers Party member at the rally in Manchester). They know perfectly well that the shadow chancellor, a former postman, sees the need for cuts, and that until 6 months ago a Labour government, including trade union sponsored MPs, was imposing them. The leaflets handed out at the London demo could even remind us of this – but only in order to try and draw us back into the an alternative version of the same old policies behind the unions or some alternative electoral bloc (eg the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition).

After all the radical talk of joint action at the TUC this year, the focus of its campaign about the cuts is a demonstration at the end of March next year. So the message we hear is "*We should bombard the TUC and trade union leaders with demands for action now*" (according to the National Shop Stewards Network), "*Push trade union leaders into calling local and national strikes*" (Socialist Worker online). In the first place, if we have to do all this bombarding and demanding and pushing on the TUC and trade union leaders, it does raise the question of why we need them in the first place – after all plenty of workers have gone into struggle without any union support from China and Bangladesh, to workers at Vestas on the Isle of Wight who occupied the factory without

belonging to a union in the first place.

The reality is that the unions are not just useless at organising struggles; it is not just a question of their "*lethargy*" as the South London SolFed leaflet calls it, they actually divide us. For instance keeping BA cabin crew and BAA workers apart even when they were struggling at the same time. The London demonstration was another example of where the unions really stand. Called by the RMT, FBU and UCU, all of which have ongoing disputes, it only attracted 2,000 people, less than a tenth of the number in Edinburgh. Clearly the unions did not mobilise their members, afraid of what might happen if striking workers got together on the streets. This is how we understand Bob Crow's call for the TUC to move quickly to organise mass action against the cuts – as a way to prevent workers taking the struggle into their own hands.

The Radical Workers' Block attracted between 50 and 100 people according to the estimates on libcom, demonstrating that a minority in the working class is putting the unions in question, even here where they are traditionally so strong.

### ...trade union demonstrations provide no viable framework for struggling against cuts in jobs, pay and services, quite the reverse...

Efforts to make its distinctive voice heard included a megaphone, leaflets and press of those on the Bloc, although this was difficult given the myriad of competing union, Trotskyist and anti-cuts groups. At the end a comrade from the ICC discussed with one from the Anarchist Federation whether the Bloc should attempt to speak, concluding it should – next time. Next time too we can learn from the example of the recent struggles in France where internationalist anarchists and left communists worked together to call meetings at the end of demonstrations where instead of listening to union speeches the real issues of the struggle were discussed. As Solfed say "*We can't put our faith in anything other than our solidarity and ability to organise*". Alex, 5.11.10

## Obama has no solutions for the Middle East

September 26<sup>th</sup> marked the end of 10 month Israeli moratorium on West Bank settlements. Since that date the media has reported anywhere between 540 & 600 new houses in the process of being built on the Palestinian West Bank by Israeli settlers. This will inevitably increase tensions between Israel and the Palestinians and damage the US led peace talks.

The Palestinian authority is opposed to all the Gaza settlements and has threatened to leave the peace talks if the moratorium is not continued. At the time of writing the Palestinians have left the talks and they won't return unless the Israelis agree to freeze future settlements.

The Israelis meanwhile are playing down the impact of the Jewish settlements, saying that the peace settlement is the most important thing. But the Israelis have made the recognition of Israel as a Jewish state a precondition for any freeze on Jewish settlements. This is guaranteed to stall any peace talks. Israel also wants a demilitarised Palestine as pre-condition.

Meanwhile in Umm al-Fahm, an Israeli Arab town, the Israeli authorities allowed a march of

the right wing Israeli nationalist group, Kach. The march was heavily protected by the police who fired tear gas and stun grenades at the Arab protesters, who were hurling stones at the demonstration.

The US has only just got the two parties back to the negotiation table after 20 months. After the election of Obama the US bourgeoisie re-orientated its foreign policy towards the Middle East. It recognised that it couldn't afford to fight big conflicts on several fronts and ignore international opinion. One of the biggest barriers is the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. The US decided to go against its previous unconditional support for Israel and push more strongly for the creation of a Palestinian state. The USA's plans took a blow with the election of Benjamin Netanyahu as Prime Minister.

The US has been weakened by its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The decline in power of the US is shown in Israel's unwillingness to fall into line with US plans. **Hugin 1.11.10**

## Withdrawal from Iraq is not the end of imperialist slaughter

On February 17, 2010, Defense Secretary Robert Gates approved in a memo to Central Command head David Petraeus the rebranding of the American mission in Iraq. He stressed that 'Operation Iraqi Freedom,' the US Military's name for the 2003 invasion and seven-year occupation of that country, "has ended and our forces are operating under a new mission." Six months later, on August 19, the last American 'combat' brigades crossed the Iraqi border into Kuwait, and twelve days after that—over seven years after President Bush made a similar announcement—President Obama announced "the end of our combat mission in Iraq." As communists, we have a threefold responsibility to take up in response to this maneuver by the American bourgeoisie. First, we must relate this event to a broader analysis of the international situation. Second, we must examine the real intentions of the US bourgeoisie, the impression this announcement is meant to make in and outside the United States. Finally, a balance sheet for the war must be drawn up, both in terms of its effect on American imperialism, and in terms of how the proletariat has learned to respond to war.

### US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era

The early years of the Iraq occupation were difficult ones for the American bourgeoisie. While the initial invasion showcased the ability of the American military to destroy its target state the American bourgeoisie's real strategic objectives were not immediately accomplished. In the 1991 Gulf War, the American bourgeoisie's main concern was to reinforce its control over an imperialist bloc whose secondary members had lost their reason for adhering to the US overlord following the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the reduced threat posed by Russia. Back then it was largely successful, drawing not only the NATO countries into the military intervention, but including even the collapsing USSR in the effort, via the UN sanctions. The following decade saw the strengthening of the tendency of 'every man for himself' at the level of imperialist tensions, with second and third rate powers increasingly emboldened to defend their own interests (ex-Yugoslavia, Middle East, Africa). The aim of the US in 1991 was thus to establish military control of strategically important zones in Asia and the Middle East that could be used to exert pressure on its rivals, large and small.

The 9/11 attacks provided an opportunity to launch the 'war on terror' and justify the first foray into Afghanistan in 2001, but the impetus didn't last long. In 2003, the US was unable to mobilize its old coalition for the second effort in Iraq. France and Germany, in particular, while unable to marshal their own imperialist bloc, proved unwilling to simply follow the US, seeing the 'war on terror' precisely for what it was – an attempt by the US to reinforce its position as the dominant global superpower.

### Real intentions of the US withdrawal from Iraq

In 2007 there was a noticeable shift in US strategy in Iraq in the face of several difficulties. First was a bloody counter-insurgency that eventually saw 4,400 US troops killed, 36,000 injured and over 100,000 Iraqi civilians dead (though some estimates put the figure at more than half a million – far above the 'tens of thousands' mentioned in the mainstream media). The war in Iraq was becoming a veritable quagmire and the mother of all PR disasters, given the non-existence of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction' used to justify the invasion. The ghost of Vietnam stalked the corridors of Washington. There was also the growing cost of the war: even Obama admits it has cost over a trillion dollars, contributing massively to the budget deficit and hampering the US economy's ability to deal with the economic crisis. The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan – expelled by US force in 2001, but not defeated – and the spread of terrorist attacks in Europe and Asia backed by elements based in the Afghanistan/Pakistan border region was another concern.

When Kerry, who focused on reassembling the old imperialist bloc, proved unelectable, America claimed supremacy in the region for itself. The bourgeoisie adopted this strategy, and its debate began to center around the troop numbers appropriate to such a goal. Rumsfeld clung to his project of a leaner, more automated military. The Democrats allied with certain elements on the right to support the 'surge' – a temporary deployment of more troops to Iraq to keep order, defend the fledgling 'democracy' and ensure the transition of military responsibility to Iraqi forces. This was the policy of Bush in his last years, and it is now the policy of Obama in Afghanistan.

The overall strategy adopted by the US bourgeoisie has remained essentially the same. While the Obama administration may put more emphasis on diplomacy, there is overall continuity with the previous administration. As Obama said in his speech of August 31, "...one of the lessons of our effort in Iraq is that American influence around the world is not a function of military force alone. We must use all elements of our power – including our diplomacy, our economic strength, and the power of America's example – to secure our interests and stand by our allies... [T]he United States of America intends to sustain and strengthen our leadership in this young century..."

### Balance sheet of the war in Iraq

Does the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq mean the world is now a safer place? Far from it! Defense Secretary Bob Gates was even more explicit than Obama: "Even with the end of the formal combat mission, the U.S. military will continue to support the Iraqi army and police, help to develop Iraq's navy and air force, and assist with counterterrorism operations."

Publicly, the administration says it is broadly satisfied with the state of government and civil society in Iraq. However, Iraq now holds the record for the amount of time a modern nation state has gone without an effective government. The US still has to strengthen the Iraqi state by training more military and police. It is leaving fifty thousand 'non-combat' troops in Iraq for at least another year. These forces will allow it unrivalled domination over the Iraqi government – no other power has such a large force so near the centers of Iraqi power, or one that is so necessary for that power's continued existence. There are similarities with the US approach in South Korea after World War 2, where 40,000 troops were stationed to maintain a presence in the region. Having military bases in modern-day Iraq – even on a much reduced scale – will ensure the US can maintain pressure on Iran and other regional powers.

We should be careful not to take the administration's line too much at face value. In actual fact it is quite possible that Iraq will disintegrate when the US leaves, with all the different parties contributing to the break-up of the country, notably the Kurdish nationalists, or with it simply disintegrating into civil war. Similarly, the situation in Afghanistan is absolutely catastrophic and shows every sign of getting worse, with the disintegration of Pakistan and the war spreading there as well.

Despite its setbacks, the American bourgeoisie, has at least internalized the fact that it exists in a world of each against all, and has learned some valuable lessons on how to wage war and conduct occupation today. The withdrawal of troops from Iraq does not mean the end of war. On the one hand, American troops will have a continuing presence in the country, and the United States, Turkey, Israel, Russia, Iran, and Germany will go on playing their games for imperial influence in the region just as before. On the other, the US will now be more able to focus its efforts on Afghanistan, and will have freed up some capacity to intervene elsewhere in the world. The end of the Iraq War, in the hands of imperialism, is really the continuation of war where it is already raging, and the beginning of war elsewhere. Imperialism's logical end is the destruction of humanity. In the face of this, humanity's defender is the proletariat, the bearer of communism. **RW, 1/10/10**

# A brief chronology of the struggle against pension reform in France

Below is a brief chronology of the events and different stages in the movement against pension reform which has developed in France over the past few months. It takes us to the point the struggles had reached towards the end of October. In the coming weeks we hope to update the chronology and produce an analysis of the dynamic of the struggle and its main lessons.

This movement is already rich in lessons for the proletariat. In the face of the lies of the state's propagandists, the French media and the international press, the following testimonies and details about the struggle should be disseminated as widely as possible, here as in all countries. We encourage our readers to complete the timeline below (at the moment very fragmented and incomplete) using our discussion forum. We will strive, to the extent of our forces, to translate these texts into the other main languages.

## March 23rd

The 'Intersyndicale', which includes almost all the French unions - from those most openly 'collaborationist' with the government, to the so-called 'radical' ones - calls for a first Day of Action.

800,000<sup>1</sup> protesters took to the streets. The atmosphere is rather subdued, resignation dominates. It must be said that the pension reform has been prepared for months and even years in advance. Politicians, the media, "experts" of all kinds have been saying that reform was in effect necessary and unavoidable, that the very survival of the "welfare state" and "the balance of the national budget" were at stake. Besides, the watchword of the unions is not "withdrawal of the attack on pensions" but "planned reform". They call for "more negotiations," for the trade unions and state to find reform that is "more just, more humane."

In short, the state, employers, and unions all say that the sacrifice is "a sad necessity." In the face of this juggernaut, discontent is great but heads are bowed.

## May 26th

It's Groundhog Day. The unions call a second Day of Action under the same terms and slogans. There is a slight increase in participation (1 million) but the atmosphere is still marked by desperation.

## June 24th

The unions believe they are giving the movement the *coup de grace*. A third Day of Action is announced. Given the relatively bleak atmosphere of the previous two, with the third taking place a day before the holidays, this one should be a "protest funeral." The machinery is well oiled. A Day of Action on the same scale as the previous means that "the game is over".

With two months of summer holidays ahead, the goal is to scatter any remaining crumbs of hope of the struggle developing. The unions had certainly prepared their speeches well: "We tried, but the workers don't have the stomach for a fight". Discouragement is guaranteed!

This technique has been used many times in the past, often with success. But... wham! June 24th, 2 million workers, unemployed and temps in the streets!

Besides the greater scale, the atmosphere also changes: anger, frustration. Since the acceleration of the crisis in 2008, poverty and injustice continue to grow. Pension reform has become the symbol of a sharp deterioration in living conditions.

1. All figures for participation are those given by the unions. There is little correspondence between the figures given by the unions and the police. Sometimes there is a difference of 10 to 1! The media also speak of a "war of numbers". This tussle can give the impression of a radical opposition between the unions and the state, although in reality they are just playing different instruments in the same orchestra, serving the same interest: sowing division and confusion. Nobody really knows how many people participate in the demonstrations. We have always used the numbers from the unions, who are probably the most realistic, because it at least it helps to identify trends, whether decreases or increases.

## July-August

The June Day of Action has pumped up the proletariat's morale. The idea that a more powerful struggle is possible begins to gain ground. The unions also evidently feel the winds of change. They know that the question "How can we fight?" is running through people's heads. So they decide to immediately occupy the ground and minds: there is no question that the workers themselves begin to think and act for themselves, outside the control of the unions. So next day they announce another Day of Action for the autumn. To ensure any "independent thinking" is nipped in the bud, they fly airplanes over the beaches pulling advertising banners calling for the demonstration on Tuesday September 7th!

But another event, in fact quite trivial, is feeding the workers' anger over the summer: the "Woerth Affair". There is collusion between the politicians currently in power (notably Nicolas Sarkozy and Eric Woerth) and one of French capital's richest heiresses, Ms Betancourt, boss of L'Oreal, a background of tax evasion and all kinds of illegal arrangements. However, Eric Woerth is none other than the Minister in charge of pension reform! The feeling of injustice is total: the working class must tighten their belts while the rich and powerful manage "their little affairs."

## September 7th

From the outset the Day of Action looks well attended. However, this is the first time one is organised so early in the school year. Even before September 7th, recognizing the extent of discontent within the ranks of the proletariat, the unions promised to organise another one without waiting for a Saturday so that everyone can participate.

The day arrives: 2.7 million demonstrators. With the summer break over, the return looks hot and resumes where it left off. Calls for renewed strikes begin to bloom. Given the scale of the mobilisation, the unions react immediately: the demonstration on Saturday is cancelled, precluding the possibility of a renewed strike, until September 23rd... 15 days away! The aim is to break the momentum, to waste time. This "sense of responsibility" by the unions is hailed by the highest representatives of the French state.

## September 23rd

3 million protesters on the streets! The movement then swells again. For the first time, processions are reluctant to disperse. Rather, in many cities, a few dozen people here, a few hundred there, are discussing at the end of the event. Inter-professional leaflets begin to call for the control of struggles by the workers themselves<sup>2</sup>. In some cities, the CNT-AIT organizes "Popular Assemblies" for "free speech" (and the ICC joins this excellent initiative.) From that moment, these street assemblies begin to have some success, managing to gather each week several dozen participants, including in Toulouse<sup>3</sup>. This willingness of minorities to organ-

2. Examples of these leaflets are published on our French language forum under the thread 'Prenons nos luttes en main' (<http://fr.internationalism.org/forum/312/tibo/4365/prenons-nos-luttes-main>).

3. Here, for example, is one of the calls to these people's assemblies "This new school year is marked by massive protests fuelled by the pension reform. Hundreds of thousands of us participate in these union organised rallies. How many go without fatalism? How many do not return home frustrated? Past experience has amply shown that these days of action are a dress rehearsal, nothing but brick walls. If we do nothing, if we have no voice to decide together how to lead and develop our struggle, all the attacks against our living conditions - including the one on pensions - will be imposed, and others will follow. That is why we welcome you to come and debate, to break the constraints imposed on us. What happens

ise themselves reveal that the whole class is beginning to ask questions about the unions' strategy.

## October 2nd

The first Day of Action held on a Saturday. There is no real trend in the number of participants. But the 3 million protesters found themselves side by side with "man on the street", workers' families and the public who cannot usually go on strike. Several attempts to arrange meetings at the end of street demonstrations fail:

- In Paris, a leaflet distributed by the inter-profession *Turbin* (named after their email, [turbin@riseup.net](mailto:turbin@riseup.net), which is also slang for hard labour) calling all to rally under its banners - "The best retirement is to attack" and "Take our struggles in hand", under a gazebo at the start of the procession. Evidence that this appeal has circulated is clear: at the meeting point you will be physically met by dozens of police officers... with a camera! Without a suitable place to conduct a discussion, the meeting cannot be held, but those present decided to continue anyway. Fifty people congregate together and leave their old banners. In an hour, nearly 300.

- In Tours, the committee "for the extension of the struggle" hands out leaflets calling for "keeping the streets."

- In Lyon, a few dozen protesters expressed their wish not to leave immediately, to remain there to discuss, meeting on the street, and to reflect collectively on how to continue and expand the movement. But the sound systems of the CGT (the main French trade union) are ultimately fatal to their initiative: the deafening noise prevents any real debate.

These failed attempts to express both the efforts of our class to take control of their struggles and the difficulties that still exist in the current period are mainly due to the lack of self-confidence which inhibits the exploited.

By contrast, in Toulouse, popular assemblies continue to be held. The initiative is called for by the CNT-AIT and the ICC, who at the end of the demonstration plant a banner at the assembly point that reads "Employed, unemployed, students, retirees: TAKE THE STRUGGLES INTO OUR HANDS!" and a street meeting is organised below them. This debate brings together a few dozen people.

## October 12th

The new Day of Action brings together 3.5 million people in struggle! A record!

More importantly, the atmosphere is relatively vibrant. General Assemblies begin to multiply, with several dozen taking place across the whole of France. Each time they gather each between 100 and 200 participants. The policy of the unions is to increasingly openly criticise many of these leaflets, even claiming that they lead us to defeat<sup>4</sup> The evidence of this dynamic, in Toulouse, in addition to the Popular Assemblies organized by the CNT AIT (and to a lesser extent, the ICC), is a call made to hold a street meeting every day outside the Labour Exchange at 6pm...

The majority of the unions finally decide to continue the strike. Given this marathon (the movement began seven months ago!), and the many strikes held by workers during the previous Days of Action, this renewal of the strike comes very late. Workers' wages are already hit hard. In any case, the unions have made a calculation. Yet this movement, too, will be relatively well attended.

Among teachers and railway workers in the Paris region, many unions organise general assemblies. Division and sabotage reach a ridiculous level. At the train station, the union GA are organised by

*when people, forced into silence and isolation, assemble and start talking? Should we wait for the 'right time' or permission to do this? Let's meet Monday, October 11th at 13:00 on the steps outside the Arch to discuss together ways to conduct and develop a response. Against dispersion! Let us seize this moment to develop a real discussion, fraternal and open to all."*

4. Read the leaflet 'ADDRESS TO ALL WORKERS' signed by "workers and temps of the joint General Assembly of the Gare de l'Est" (available on our forum: <http://fr.internationalism.org/forum/312/tibo/4365/prenons-nos-luttes-main>). A quote from this leaflet begins our article 'The unions lead us to defeat' in this issue.

sector (drivers on one side, guards on the other, the administration again in another corner). In some hospitals, each floor has its own GA! Moreover, they are definitely not sovereign. For example, at Gare de l'Est in Paris, while the continuation of the strike must be voted on Thursday morning at 2pm, the union bureaucracy have their vote on the preceding Wednesday. This strategy has a double effect:

- Emptying the GA of its relevance: staff do not attend because everything is already decided;

- It also allows the media to present the votes of the GA in favour of continuing the strike as the result of an extreme minority, in order to make them unpopular.

Moreover, the unions can play their strongest card: paralyse transport. From October 12th, fewer trains are running, more refineries are blocked, raising the spectre of fuel shortages of gasoline. This creates tension within the working class and pushes those who want (need) to work against the strikers.

## October 16th

The second Day of Action on a Saturday. Once again, nearly 3 million people find themselves pounding the pavement.

A new dimension emerges: school children, who entered the struggle a few days earlier, start taking to the front line in the demonstrations.

The following Monday, nearly 1,000 schools are blockaded and many spontaneous protests by school children take place. The UNL, the main student (and non-student) union, which started the movement, acknowledges that it's overwhelmed by the scale of the mobilisation.

The state exploits the presence of young thugs within the students' ranks to violently repress certain "blockaders" and young demonstrators (a 17-year-old nearly loses an eye after police fire a Flash-Ball in the Montreuil suburb of Paris). The police themselves fan the anger at "police provocation". The goal is clear: to derail the movement by dragging it into the mire of mindless violence and a sterile confrontation with the cops. By the same token, the state is seeking at all costs to make the struggle unpopular, to scare young people, their parents and the whole working class.

## October 18th

The students, who were at the heart of the victorious movement against the CPE in 2006, seem to be getting into the dance. Some colleges (in Paris, Rennes and Toulouse in particular) have announced they are blockaded, but so far they have remained in the minority.

## October 19th

The threat to blockade the refineries, which soared after October 12th, is effectively implemented. The troops of the CGT union cripple many sites, on the order of their union, without even a decision made in a General Assembly. Very soon there are fuel shortages at between 1,000 and 2,000 petrol stations.

The mobilisation also grows at the train stations. More and more trains are cancelled.

Despite transportation being paralysed, the movement didn't become unpopular. Even the media, usually so keen on "vox pops" where travellers can vent their anger about being stuck in a train station, this time must admit that these travellers are in favour of the movement and fully support the strikers as "they are fighting for everybody." Some union general assemblies decide to support the refinery blockades and physically support the pickets, which are subject to numerous, sometimes brutal assaults by the police, to "liberate the refineries", "restore order" and "stop the thugs" (to quote the President, Nicolas Sarkozy).

Despite the fuel shortage and the lack of trains, despite intimidation and repression, 3.5 million protesters are still on the streets on October 19th. This shows the depth of the anger brewing in the ranks of the workers!

Given the scale of this latest mobilisation, the state tightens the grip of the baton and the Flash-

Continued on page 5



The two articles on this page are part of a supplement produced by our section in France in response to the very wide-scale mobilisations against the state's 'reform' of pensions. Contrary to some ironic comments in the UK press, this struggle is about more than the raising of the pension age from 60 to 62. For a start, the new reform will actually raise the full state pension age to 65 and later on to 67, in line with what other European governments have been doing. And in fact the issue of the pension, while very real, has been the catalyst for massive protest against a much wider attack being mounted on workers' living standards in response to the economic crisis – an attack that is going on throughout Europe and the world. The struggles in France are thus an important source of lessons for workers everywhere – not least about the role of the unions and the necessity for workers to organise themselves.

## The unions lead us to defeat

*"There were millions of us protesting and on strike in the recent Days of Action. The government has not yet backed down. Only a mass movement can make them do this. This idea made its way into the discussions on an indefinite, general, renewable strike, bringing the economy to its knees..."*

*"The form that the movement will take is our business... It's up to us to decide what actions to take, what demands to make... And to anyone else. Letting Chèreque (CFDT), Thibault (CGT) and company decide for us is to prepare for future defeats. Chèreque is in favour of 42 years<sup>1</sup>. We cannot be sure that Thibault wants the withdrawal of the Law: we can't forget that in 2009 he was drinking champagne with Sarkozy as thousands of us were laid off, leaving us divided and beaten. We can't have any more faith in the supposed 'radicals' either. The uncompromising Maily (FO) shook hands with Aubry while the Socialist Party voted for 42 years. [...]"*

*"If today they ride the horse of renewed strikes, it's to avoid losing control of our struggles, which they use as a bargaining chip to ensure they're at the negotiating table... Why? Because, as is written in the letter signed by the seven unions of the CFTC to the SUD-Solidaire union, they want ensure that 'the trade unions' point of view on a set of fair and effective measures to ensure the sustainability of the pension system' is heard. Can anyone*

1. The French state is proposing to increase the number of years worked before a pension can be received from 40 to 42.

### Continued from page 4

Ball. In particular, in Lyons, a massive deployment of cops awaits the arrival of the demonstration. Challenged, the police deliberately fan hatred among the young. A handful gives in to this provocation. The crackdown turns into a rampage, cops hitting everything in sight: young people who "look like thugs" or those who just look young, but also the old. The end of the demonstration would have borne the brunt of the "rule of law". The state certainly felt it had gone too far this time: some ministers led calls for calm (in reality aimed at their own troops). The demonstration in Paris went much "smoother", as strongly emphasised by the media.

To summarize, the movement has swelled for 7 months. Anger is immense. The demands against pension reform tend to be overshadowed: the media recognize that the movement is becoming "politicised." The cause of this is the general misery, insecurity, and exploitation, etc... which is being openly rejected. Solidarity between different sectors also increases. **But for the moment, the working class is failing to really take control of its struggles. It wants more, it tries to here and there. It's increasingly wary of the unions, but it still fails to really organise collectively through sovereign and autonomous general assemblies, and therefore outside the unions. This is why such assemblies formed the heart of the movement against the CPE in 2006 and gave it its strength. The working class still seems to lack self-confidence. The future course of the struggle will tell us whether it can overcome this difficulty. If not now, then next time! This movement holds great promise for future struggles.**

To be continued...

ICC, 22/10/10

*believe, for one moment, that there can possibly be a deal with those who have wrecked our pensions since 1993, with those who began the systematic demolition of our living and working conditions?*

*"The only force capable of making the government and the ruling classes back down is the unity of public and private sector workers, of the unemployed, pensioners and youth, of the illegal immigrants, of the unionised or non-unionised, based in common general assemblies where we can control the struggles ourselves."*

These quotes are taken from a leaflet circulated widely during demonstrations in Paris and signed by "workers and temps of the Inter-professional General Assembly at Gare de l'Est"<sup>2</sup>.

Many other appeals with a similar meaning and tone are coming from other inter-professional general assemblies, struggle committees or small political organizations, emphasising their growing distrust of the unions, as we watch them lead us to defeat. All encourage the workers to take control of their own struggles.

### Union methods of struggle in question

In fact, the sabotage of the struggle by the unions in 2003, 2007 and now in 2010 raises the broader question of the true nature of the unions. Are they still in the camp of the working class? A brief overview of the struggles of recent decades shows that they have indeed passed into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

For over 100 years, the only major struggles were wildcat strikes, spontaneous and on a mass scale. And all these struggles have seen the same basis for organisation, not the union form, but mass meetings, where all workers discuss their own struggles and the problems that have to be solved, with elected and revocable committees to centralise the fight. The great strike in May 1968 in France was triggered despite the unions. In Italy, during the strikes of the Hot Autumn of 1969, workers drove the union representatives from strike meetings. In 1973, the Antwerp Dockers' strike attacked the local unions. In the 1970s, workers in England often bullied the unions. The same thing happened in France in 1979 during the Longwy Denain strike in Dunkirk.

In August 1980, in Poland, the workers rejected the unions (which were formally part of the state) and organised a mass strike through general meetings and committees made up of elected and revocable delegates (the MKS). Microphones and PA systems were used during negotiations with state officials so that all workers could follow them, intervene and control the delegates. Of course, we can't forget how this particular strike ended: with the illusion of a new union, free, independent and combative to which the working class could entrust the reins of the struggle. The result was immediate. This new, shiny union called *Solidarity*, cut the microphones and entered into secret negotiations with the Polish state and, together with them, orchestrated the dispersal, division and, ultimately, violent defeat of the working class!

Following the unions is always going to lead to defeat. To develop a massive struggle, animated by workers' solidarity, it is necessary to take control.

*"The emancipation of the workers is the task of the workers themselves."* ICC 22/10/10

2. An 'inter-professional' general assembly regroups workers from different sectors. With the inter-pro GA at Gare de l'Est, rail, education, post, food, IT etc

## How can we control our struggles?

A living movement of struggle follows many twists and turns. Flying pickets, barricades, blockades occupations, leafleting, spontaneous demonstrations, etc., are familiar expressions of class action, and we can expect the working class to conjure up others in its future combats. But at the heart of every struggle there is unavoidably the general assembly or mass meeting. It's where we can discuss, debate, and agree together the way forward. The assembly/ mass meeting is THE place where the workers' struggle can be discussed openly and decisions can be reached collectively. And it's for this reason that there is always a great risk of all kinds of sabotage.

### The assemblies, lungs of workers' struggle

When the struggle is not active, the unions hold many humdrum meetings of their own. They are all very much the same. Firms all allocate time for union meetings which are conducted by the 'officials' who discuss among themselves with a few rank and file unionists or non-unionists as on-lookers who get asked their opinion from time to time. Not surprisingly, these meetings attract few people. Most workers have no interest to them.

When the struggle breaks out, like it has recently, the unions adapt and play a different game: • Insofar as they can, they restrict discussion to as few people as possible. Either they do nothing at all or they sneakily keep publicity to a minimum. • Sometimes, the anger in the proletarian ranks boils over. Then, to avoid the appearance of impromptu meetings and discussions outside their control, the unions call an array of meetings. But these meetings are organised sector by sector, plant by plant, trade by trade ... And in this way the unions orchestrate divisions, carve things up, disperse and dissipate energies, instead of strengthening and unifying class forces. Currently, on the railways, there are specific meetings for the train crews, the station staff and the office workers ... In some hospitals in the Toulouse region, the sabotage borders on the ridiculous: each floor has separate meetings! • The unions will resort to all sorts of dirty tricks to keep control of these meetings. At the Gare de l'Est in Paris, a mass meeting was scheduled for Thursday, October 14th, in the morning. The railway workers were faced with deciding collectively whether to continue the strike or not. But eventually, the union officials revealed they had decided this vote amongst themselves the day before, Wednesday 13th. There was no reason to attend en masse for the assembly on the Thursday because the decision was already taken. And indeed, hardly anyone was present on that day. That's how to kill the collective life of the working class in its struggles! That is union sabotage according to the rule book!

**This is where it can decide upon and organise the extension of the struggle, by going itself or by sending massive delegations to places (factories, office blocks, hospitals ...) where it can call on workers' who are the closest geographically and the most combative to join them in the struggle.**

In its article "What is a general assembly?", the CNT-AIT of Gers (Sia32.lautre.net) very correctly describes many other "dangers for the general assemblies": • "Monopolising debate: the assembly is not democratic. The classic case is that of the union official appointing himself to the role of chairman, participating in the discussions by answering back or systematically giving his opinion. [...]" • "Undemocratic practices of the assembly: votes are not respected. Agendas are manipulated and votes are called for on several occa-



The banner reads: "still teaching at 67?". Workers in France, as elsewhere, are being asked to work many more years before getting a pension

sions when decisions have already been taken, exhausting everyone in the process. Often, at the end of meetings there are conclusions that destroy the coherence and forwards dynamic. • Neutralising the assembly: no matter how rich the meetings have been, there is no capacity to build on what has been achieved because no follow-up meetings are arranged. Often the assembly of striking workers is made to look like an echo chamber for workers to register their anger, which nullifies their revolt by transforming their desire for direct action into so many empty words."

### Real workers' assemblies must be the exact opposite.

They must immediately break with all sectoral or corporatist divisions. They should be open not only to every employee, no matter what category they fall into, but also, and especially, to workers from other firms, to the retired, to temporary and unemployed workers, to college and high school students... to all those who want to participate in the extension of the movement and ask themselves "How do we fight back?". And again, as the anarcho-syndicalist organisation from Gers writes:

*"The Assembly is democratic, and therefore guarantees everyone an equal chance to speak in the time slots and space provided for the different discussion topics. This chance to speak is guaranteed under a mandate entrusted to the Chair. [...]"* • *The Assembly takes decisions, and these decisions take place by a show of hands [...].* • *The Assembly is durable, its details recorded by a secretary appointed when the meeting starts who is responsible for recording and distributing the debate details and decisions of the Assembly. It also plans the date and place of the next Assembly."*

These last points are crucial. An Assembly is really not just an "echo chamber for workers to register their anger." It is much more. Obviously this is a place for speaking, in fact it is one of the only places where workers can really express themselves. But the Assembly is also the place where the working class can unite: • This is where our class can take collective decisions. It is therefore essential that holding such a meeting takes place through the adoption (voted by show of hands) of written texts and eventual actions. • This is where it can decide upon and organise the extension of the struggle, by going itself or by sending massive delegations to places (factories, office blocks, hospitals ...) where it can call on workers' who are the closest geographically and the most combative to join them in the struggle. • And this is how coordination between the different sites and sectors in the struggle is built. Indeed there must be coordination between the general assemblies by their own committees, by elected delegates, fully answerable to them and therefore revocable at any time.

The current attacks on pensions have demonstrated the depth of the workers' anger, the scale of unrest, their determination and ability to mobilise en masse. But our class has not yet managed at the current time to actually organise itself collectively in the struggle with sovereign and autonomous assemblies. This is the prime weakness of this struggle. This is the step the proletariat must of necessity take in the future if it is going to take proper control of its struggles and demonstrate its unity and solidarity against capital. ICC 22.10.10



# Looking for revolutionary ideas...

Since the early 1980s and the first Anarchist Bookfair in London, the event has gradually got larger, with bigger venues, more stalls and more meetings. In the early years there was an anarchist hardcore, but, as time has gone on, an increasing variety of meetings has attracted people from all sorts of political backgrounds. It's true that there are familiar faces who seem to be there every year, but the new faces have not just come along to see the 'big stars' – this year John Pilger and Paul Mason were in the line-up – but to seek out ideas that might be alternatives to the political mainstream.

Of course, there is no such thing as a homogenised anarchism. There are many varieties of ideas in anarchism and on its fringes. Some defend internationalist positions, some recognise an important role for the working class, some are anarcho-syndicalists, some are abstract advocates of freedom, and some are not very different from Trotskyists and other forms of leftism that anarchists profess to despise.

Every year the militants of the ICC participate in a number of meetings at the Bookfair. It's not always obvious which ones will provoke productive discussion, and the imposition of 50 minute limits for many meetings means there's often little opportunity for discussion to develop. What follows are some of the more positive features of this year's Anarchist Bookfair.

Among the regular events in recent years have been the meetings of the Radical Anthropology Group. This year they held a meeting on 'Primitive communism and its contemporary relevance'. For most of the 100,000 or so years human being have been around they have lived neither in groups under a dominant alpha male like most of the great apes, nor in class societies. Human nature is clearly not the unchanging dog-eat-dog affair that characterises so much of life in capitalist society.

Chris Knight's anthropology studies look at how we evolved, at the human revolution that led to egalitarian hunter-gatherer societies without state or private property. His talk and the discussion that followed raised many important questions about what it means to be human; about the relations between the sexes; and about the relation of theory to discovery in science – in this case Chris Knight's prediction of the finding of red ochre for body decoration in the earliest human habitations about 100,000 years ago.

These are very interesting and important topics for the revolutionary class that can put an end to class society, some of which we responded to in a review of Knight's *Blood Relations: Menstruation and the Origins of Culture* (online at <http://en.internationalism.org/2008/10/Chris-Knight>).

In another meeting that involved Chris Knight there was a debate on ideas developed in an article on Chomsky that first appeared in 2002. Noam Chomsky is a contradictory figure. On one hand he calls himself an anarcho-syndicalist and libertarian socialist; on the other hand his approach to linguistics, and the so-called 'cognitive revolution' seems to mean turning his back on the scientific revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, turning attention from collective, social activity to individuals and parts of individuals. Chomsky sees language at 'an individual phenomenon' in contrast to the earlier view of language as 'a social phenomenon, a shared property of a community'. If Chomsky's approach to language lacks a sense of humanity, his politics lack a scientific approach.

The official title of the meeting was "Noam Chomsky: Does the anarchist revolution need science?" This was only partly touched on when peace campaigner Milan Rai answered the question "Do we need a scientifically grounded theory for revolution?" with a firm No. He was not against rational enquiry, or a concern for evidence, logic and consistency – but would take this concern no further.

A militant of the ICC defended the importance of theory and a scientific approach. If it's productive to have a scientific approach toward everything from galaxies to sub-atomic particles, then

an understanding of the underlying principles of capitalism or the potential of the working class surely gains from a commitment to drawing out the most profound theoretical conclusions. Yes, all ideas for the emancipation of humanity will be tested in the laboratory of revolution, but they benefit enormously from a serious attempt to scientifically grasp, for instance, the characteristics of previous struggles.

One of the most interesting groups to have participated in struggles in Greece over the last couple of years is TPTG (some of whose analyses we have published in our press). In a well organised meeting that allowed time for discussion they described events at first hand along with some of the ideas that have emerged. They warned of the glorification of violence, which could be a problem in the long run. They showed how left-wing nationalism presented the debt crisis as a national crisis, a national catastrophe, and how leftist ideology defended nationalisation and self-management while blaming corrupt politicians and calling for economic re-organisation.

It was interesting to contrast the movement of December 2008 with March/April 2010. The strikes and demonstrations this year were all called, organised and determined by the unions without any grass roots initiatives. Union control fragmented and sabotaged the movement.

In the December movement they had mixed feelings about the move from the streets to the occupations and the assemblies. They thought something had been lost. A militant of the ICC intervened to point to what was positive in December with the discussions that took place in the assemblies and occupations. For the TPTG there were positive and negative aspects of the assemblies. They thought that it was necessary to see how discussion developed, but it was important not to glorify the assemblies.

A meeting entitled "Will Cameron's cuts lead to working class defeat or to a new anti-capitalist movement?" started with some celebrity speakers. Once these were over the discussion evolved in a way that allowed everyone to participate and to address the meeting as a whole, very much assisted by the chairing of the meeting. Few interventions were directed specifically to the presenters, rather speaking to the meeting as a whole.

The ICC spoke to take issue with the idea that the government's cuts were 'ideological' and pointed to the underlying reality of the crisis.

We agreed with a comrade who said that the most important issue for the working class was to take an internationalist position. We said that it was important to take note of the strikes in France, for example. These struggles showed that the working class in Britain did not have to confront the crisis alone. We also noted that the crisis

is just as real in China as it is in Europe or the US, so that workers there share the same experience as the working class elsewhere and fight on the same basis.

The Wine and Cheese Appreciation Society gave a talk entitled 'Freedom: a bourgeois concept or a weapon of criticism?' The discussion wasn't helped by people still arriving 30 minutes into a 50 minute discussion, and by the chair inviting people to interrupt or raise questions as they went along. Nonetheless, some interesting points were raised about the concept of 'freedom' as one reason why some people look for an alternative perspective.

The general view of the presenter was that 'freedom' – of speech, the right to criticise etc - is a concept which is perfectly compatible with the liberal form of capitalism, giving the example that 'the people' are actively encouraged to criticise and, as citizens, suggest improvements to the functioning of society. The ICC indicated our general agreement with this – even the fact that there is a

place in the capital of Britain where anarchists, communists and those seeking alternatives can meet annually without facing harassment from the state is in itself indicative of the flexibility of the most advanced countries to tolerate certain levels of criticism. The W&CAS have interesting views, and made reference to *Capital* and arguments used by Marx in their presentation; however there was no mention of the working class as a force within society, or its perspective as the gravedigger of all forms of capitalism. Perhaps it will be possible to raise these points, and others, at future meetings.

The usually accepted explanations for the current state of society are increasingly undermined by people's experience of a decomposing, crisis-ridden capitalism. When the dominant ideas fail to convince, discussion of alternative views can be productive. Being convinced of the need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism does not come overnight; it requires a whole process of open discussion... wherever it can be found. Barrow 6/11/10

## ICC online

### CPGB: a dedicated follower of Lenin?

Article written by a sympathiser in response to a debate going on within the CPGB (the Communist Party of Great Britain that publishes *Weekly Worker*) which has found expression in a series of articles about the formation of the Communist Party of Great Britain on the 80th anniversary of its founding. The particular article our sympathiser is replying to is an attempt by Jack Conrad to respond to an alleged 'ultra-left' tendency within the CPGB who criticised the organisation's support for Diane Abbot in the Labour leadership election. Conrad makes copious use of Lenin's *Left wing Communism, an Infantile Disorder* to justify his position.

"Conrad informs us that Lenin advocated supporting the Labour party 'like a rope supports a hanged man'. He then claims that this was the kind of support which the CPGB gave to Dianne Abbot in the Labour leadership election. In the first place the idea that this support was similar to what Lenin advocated is clearly absurd. The meaning of Lenin's phrase was that in power it would become clear that the Labour party leadership 'are petty-bourgeois and treacherous by nature, and that their bankruptcy is inevitable', and because of this clarity in the bankruptcy of the Labour party 'it [would] be possible, with serious chances of success, to overthrow the government of the Hendersons at once'. This exposition first occurred clearly in 1924 when the Labour minority government threatened to use its emergency powers against striking transport workers, and it would be needless to recount how it has occurred in practically every Labour government since. But despite the presence of the 'Official Communist' party which the CPGB so dearly loves because of its apparent relevance for the class, the latter certainly did not succeed in carrying out Lenin's expectations and overtaking the Labour party in terms of mass support.

In my humble opinion, the failure lies in the confusionist nature of the affiliation tactic. On the one hand, you have a Communist party which advocates voting for the Labour party, which therefore appears to support it, on the other hand you have this same Communist party trying to expose the treachery of the Labour leadership. Excuse me if I am unable to comprehend the clearly quite profound and dialectically advanced reasoning behind this tactic, but to me it seems to be the most ridiculous and contradictory course of action, and I am sure it must have seemed that way to workers looking for an alternative to Labour treachery and finding only a Communist party which supported that same treachery, almost the same as building a second Labour party. I have no doubt that such an absurd course of action would produce a similar effect in the future".

[en.internationalism.org](http://en.internationalism.org)

### Aquino regime Defender of the Filipino bourgeoisie

### France: What is a general assembly? Refinery blockades are a double-edged sword

### Spain: Workers! Faced with the fiasco of 29<sup>th</sup> September, organise the struggle yourselves!

### Mesut Özil, Angela Merkel and Islamophobia in Europe:

"The banning of the burqa in France is a similar issue. To read the international media, one would think that France was overrun by women covered in black. In reality there are about 1,000 women in the whole of France who wear a burqa. This ban in France follows the passing of a similar law in Belgium back in April, and similar bans are now being discussed in other European countries such as the UK, Spain and Italy, and have already been introduced in specific cities in Italy and Spain, such as Barcelona. The question this raises is why the political elites of Europe have suddenly found a passion for women's rights, or whether it is not a question of women's rights anyway but a question of demonising outsiders. UK Conservative MP Philip Hollobone puts it very clearly wearing a burqa is "offensive", and "against the British way of life".

What is happening here is not about women's rights, but a racist campaign. Racism in Western European countries and the US is a lot more subtle than it was 40 years ago. Back in the 1960s during the period when mass immigration to Western Europe began, the British Conservative party could openly play the racist card. "If you want a nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour" was a slogan that it used in one election. Nor was it just restricted to the political sphere. Immigrant workers looking to rent a flat were often confronted with the letters NBNi at the end of newspaper ads, which meant 'No Blacks, No Irish'.

Such overt racism is no longer possible today. That doesn't mean that racism has disappeared, but has just changed its face. Today it orchestrates its campaigns against immigrants and ethnic minorities by appealing to workers in a different way. Islamists are accused of trying to destroy democratic values, and take away women's rights. These are the arguments used both in defence of imperialist interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan or when campaigning against the other at home. The racist right today paints a picture of a Europe on the point of being overwhelmed by Islam".

### Out soon

## International Review 143

### Economic debacle, 'natural' disasters, imperialist chaos: capitalism is a bankrupt system which needs to be overthrown

### Hot Autumn in Italy 1969, a moment in the historic revival of the class struggle, part II

### What are workers' councils, part IV: 1917-21, the soviets attempt to exercise power

### Manifesto of the Workers' Group of the Russian Communist Party, continued

### Decadence of capitalism: the age of catastrophes

## 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.

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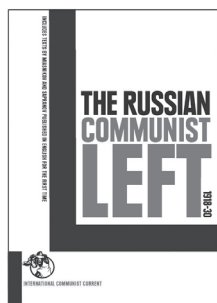
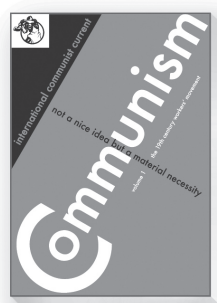
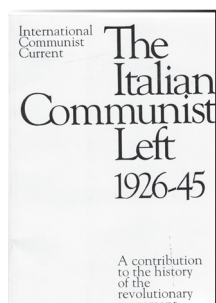
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# Mexico – the gangsterisation of the state

The growth of the political and economic power of drug gangs in Mexico has led the US bourgeoisie to express concern about the possibility of “contagion”, leading it to put pressure on the Mexican government. James Mattis of the US Navy stated in February 2009 that Mexico is a “*failed state*.” According to the US military there are similarities between Mexico and Pakistan, these states are losing control of their political and economic apparatus: in Mexico because of drugs, in Pakistan because of the tensions with India and the continued attacks by the Taliban.

This argument reveals that there certainly is a greater involvement of the mafia in the life of the bourgeoisie, but the denunciation mystifies reality, making it harder to see that the state is an instrument of the ruling class which synthesizes the interests of all factions of the bourgeoisie. These interests include those of the mafia. Their interests and practices have become unified, the ‘lawful’ activities of the state have become mixed and confused with regard to drug trafficking. But at the same time, the gangsterisation of the ruling class encourages and increases the conflicts within the state itself, which undoubtedly makes it difficult for the bourgeoisie to control all the aspects of its political life. However, this doesn’t imply that the state has lost power.

## The unity of government and drug traffickers... advancing decomposition

Some commentators have said that the mafia has become a “real power” through its military action, financial corruption and the submission of the judiciary to the drug cartels in effect blocking the action of the State, that these mafia groups now act as a “parallel state.” This idea is consistent only if we stick to the bourgeois definition of the modern state, which is conceived as an institution that ensures compliance with the “social contract”, organises the nation, creating an indivisible unity with its citizens. If you follow this line of argument then the state is a neutral entity, one that, as Weber theorised, has a monopoly of force, but which tries on a “rational-legal” basis to legitimise its power through popular representation. So, if the mafia practices terror, not only through its paramilitary apparatus, but even using the repressive forces of the State, the “accepted” image of the state is weakened and you can be held up as an example of a “failed state”.

## 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

But this approach has no basis if we go to the heart of the problem. First it is necessary to have a materialist explanation of the modern state. As Lenin said in *State and Revolution*, “*The state is a machine for one class to suppress another, a machine for subjecting another class...*” The state is not a “neutral” structure whose primary function is the protection of its “citizens”. Its primary function is to ensure the rule of capital. If there are internal disputes within the bourgeoisie, with terror being inflicted on the whole population, the state ‘fails’ to fulfil its function, to ensure the control and subjection of the exploited. On the contrary, the actions of the mafia have been cleverly manipulated by the government to intimidate and prevent the working class from struggling. In regions such as Sinaloa, Michoacan and Guerrero, where the workers have a tradition of militancy, the actions of the mafia have - to the delight of the whole bourgeoisie! - intimidated and inhibited mobilisations of discontent.

## For the bourgeoisie a drug operation is a business just like any other, and as in every branch of production experiences fierce competition ... the only difference being that protection from an opponent requires bloody operations.

So, there is no doubt that the presence of the Mafia dominates all aspects of the life of the bourgeoisie, exposing it to fierce in-fighting, tearing apart the political parties and business relationships that make up the government structures... but the question is: where have the internal struggles within the ruling class made it impossible for it to perform its real role? So far, the state still acts with impunity against the working class, even more so, as was stated above, by making it harder for workers to struggle for improvements in their living and working conditions. Assuming otherwise would lead us to forget that drug gangs are not outside the realm of the state, but a part of the ruling class, placed squarely within it.

The mafia and the drug cartels have had an important place in the life of the bourgeoisie for decades. In recent times capitalism has undergone

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

a process of decomposition, characterised by a difficulty of the bourgeoisie to build stable, lasting relationships, which means domestic disputes turn into wars of “each against all”. It’s this weakness that makes it difficult to control the impetuosity of youth gangs. This breakdown of the social fabric within the bourgeoisie, of “gangster” style behaviour, leads to hails of bullets that not only kill other mafiosi and the army (who are in reality cannon fodder) but also civilians who cross their paths (which the government classifies as “collateral damage”), and even those higher up in the bourgeoisie involved in politics. However serious this may seem, it doesn’t call into question the state’s ability to fulfil its primary function: it only demonstrates the difficulty the bourgeoisie has in maintaining order within its ranks.

## The gangsterisation of the State

Life in Mexico shows decomposition in the raw, as identified in our ‘Theses on Decomposition’ (published in *International Review* 62): “*it is more and more difficult to distinguish the government apparatus from gangland*”.

For the bourgeoisie a drug operation is a business just like any other, and as in every branch of production experiences fierce competition (also accelerated by the worsening of the economic crisis), the only difference being that protection from an opponent requires bloody operations. The existence of the bourgeoisie’s mafia-style practices can be seen in states such as Russia, and although there is a different government, it still finds it difficult to discipline its forces.

In the 60’s and 70’s the ‘fight’ against drug plantations in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca was combined with the pursuit of the guerrillas, so the drug trade was used as a kind of compensation to the military who met resistance head on. In this framework, the drug gangs were placed under the command of governors, such as Raul Caballero Aburto, Ruben Figueroa (both governors of Guerrero between 1957-61 and 1975-81 respectively), or military officers such as Acosta Chaparro. The relationship of the gangs to Figueroa was taken for granted. In the case of Acosta, he was dismissed from the military and jailed for 5 years for working with groups of drug traffickers (and killing 22 people during the “dirty war”). But in 2007 he was freed, exonerated from blame, returned to the ranks, and in 2008 was even given a new award for 45 years of service with “*patriotism, loyalty, devotion, dedication and service to Mexico and 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

*its institutions.*”

In “Operation Condor” (1977-1987), carried out in the “golden triangle” (consisting of the areas of Durango, Sinaloa and Chihuahua), the military operation against drugs also hid persecution of the guerrillas. It was no coincidence that these tasks were designated to General Hernández Toledo (whose troops lead the slaughter of Tlatelolco in 1968). With this type of operation the government can organise the interests that are created around the drug trade, dishing out privileges to the governors and military commanders. A remarkable fact is that since these operations began 10 years ago not a single mafia leader has been stopped. On the contrary, they have been given power to extend their domain to Jalisco.

In earlier decades when there were conflicts within the bourgeoisie they bonded together as a “revolutionary family” (and mostly represented in the PRI), the bourgeoisie had the ability to impose discipline. For example, in 1947 groups around Cárdenas publicly accused General Pablo Macías. However, this is not possible in the current situation, not only because the ruling party is now the PAN, but also because the struggles are also taking place in states governed by the PRI. There is also the risk that struggles will even extend into the federal government, which the fractures in the tissue of the state will widen even further. After all, as the ICC has stated: “*Amongst the major characteristics of capitalist society’s decomposition, we should emphasise the bourgeoisie’s growing difficulty in controlling the evolution of the political situation*” (Thesis 9).

In short, it is possible to see that certain powerful groups within the state are linked to a mafia group, collaborating with them if not merging, that allows them to work with impunity. Even if the various actors know which mafia gang is linked to their neighbour or opponent, at least they can live together to a certain extent. The limit is the intersection of interests, so the state has the difficult task of controlling the activity all of them and preventing the explosion of conflicts. In this sense the placement of the military in the first row of the conflict is a demonstration of the position of strength of the group in power, but the army itself is fractured: not even the protection it is afforded to act with impunity ensures its discipline. But while the bourgeoisie has trouble controlling itself, it can still push the most harmful effects of its decomposition onto the workers.

## Tatlin August 2010

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*.