



world revolution

June 30th: it's time to take control of our own struggles!

Why are nearly a million workers – from education, the civil service, local councils – preparing to go on strike on June 30th?

For the same reason that half a million workers marched through the streets of London on 26 March. And for the same reason that tens of thousands of university and school students took part in a whole movement of demonstrations, occupations and walk-outs last autumn. They are more and more fed up with the never-ending attacks on their living standards being organised by the government, whether in the form of cuts in healthcare, rising tuition fees, growing unemployment, wage freezes or – a major issue in the June 30 strike – an assault on pensions, so that teachers for example will pay more towards their pension, retire later, and get a smaller pension at the end of it.

Workers and students, the unemployed, pensioners...are also less and less convinced by the justifications offered by the government (and, with few tiny differences, the Labour 'opposition'): 'we need to make these cuts to get the economy going again, so really they are in everyone's interest'. People have been making all kinds of sacrifices in response to similar arguments for a long time now, and still the economy keeps going downhill and our living standards with it.

And the idea of striking together, of making the response to the attacks as widespread and as inclusive as possible, has also appeared more and more logical to a growing number of us, given that we are all facing the same attacks, and given that so many isolated, dispersed struggles have been doomed to defeat.

But there's another question raised by the planned 'day of action'. What are the real motivations behind the decision of the official trade union machinery to call this strike? Do they really want to organise an effective response to the government's attacks? If this were the case, why did they put all that energy into bringing so many thousands of workers to London on 26 March, only to march them up and down, subject them to hypocritical speeches from the likes of Ed Miliband, and send them home again? Why do the trade unions sell us the illusion that the problem of the cuts is something specific to this present government, implying that Labour would be able to offer an alternative?

And why are only a part of the public sector being called out? What about the rest of the public sector and all the workers in the private sector? Are they also not under attack? And why just a one

day event? Could it be that, like on 26 March, the trade unions want to provide us with a semblance of action, a mock-up of fighting back, which will have the net effect of reinforcing divisions and wasting our energies?

The ruling class has reason to fear us

The ruling class has good reason to fear that its attacks will provoke a bigger response than it can comfortably handle. It has in front of it the evidence not only of what happened in Britain in autumn, and the numbers who turned out on 26 March, but also the growing tide of revolt that has swept across North Africa and the Middle East, and has now hit Europe with the massive movements in Spain and Greece, where tens of thousands, the majority of them young people facing a very uncertain future, have occupied city squares and held daily assemblies where participants are free to express their concerns not only about this or that government measure but about the whole political and social system that rules our lives. This movement is not yet a "revolution" but it is certainly creating an atmosphere where the question of revolution is being discussed more widely and more seriously.

Little wonder that the state in Britain wants to keep resistance trapped inside the safe walls of official protest. The trade union apparatus has a key role in this, keeping us to the strict guidelines laid down in the trade union rulebook which stipulates: no strike action to be decided by mass meetings; no solidarity strikes; if necessary, cross picket lines of workers in other sectors because otherwise you might be engaging in illegal "secondary action"; only strike if you are a properly paid up member of the union, etc etc.

Take the struggle into our own hands!

Does this mean that the action on 30 June is a waste of time?

No, not if we use it as a means to come together, discuss and decide on more widespread and effective forms of resistance. Not if we use it to overcome our fear of taking charge of our own struggles.

The examples of Tunisia, Egypt, Spain or Greece are there in front of us: when people gather together in large numbers, when they occupy public spaces and begin to demand the right to speak and to take collective decisions, they can overcome their fear of repression by the police or of punishment by the bosses.

They offer us the 'model' to follow - a model which in any case is not a new invention but which has appeared in all the major workers' struggles of



We don't need another passive march behind the unions like 26 March

the last century: the open general assembly, which maintains control of all its delegates or commissions by making them elected by a show of hands and recallable at any time.

Before June 30th, we can call for general meetings at work, open to all employees regardless of job or union, where we can decide how to spread the action as widely as possible. In the schools and colleges, there is a real need to overcome the divisions between teachers and non-teaching employees, between staff and students, and to work out how to bring everyone into the struggle. In the councils and government departments, the same applies: discussion groups and general meetings of all kinds can help to overcome these divisions and make sure that the struggle involves many more than are 'officially' on strike.

On the day of the strike, we need to make sure that pickets are not just token affairs but are used to widen and deepen the movement: by persuading everyone in your workplace to join the strike; by sending delegates to other workplaces to support their struggle; by acting as a focus for discussion about how to take the struggle forward in the future.

Demonstrations must not be passive parades ending in a ritual rally. Demonstrations provide an opportunity to hold street assemblies where the aim is not to listen to pre-arranged speeches by politicians and union hacks but to allow as many people as possible to exchange their experiences and express their views.

There's much talk, especially from the 'left', about how the cuts and other attacks are not really 'necessary' and are 'ideologically' driven. But the truth is that for capitalism in crisis it is totally necessary and unavoidable to try to reduce our living standards. What's necessary for us, the exploited, is not to try to convince the exploiters that they should organise their system in a better way. It's

to resist their attacks today and tomorrow, and in doing so to gain the confidence, the self-organisation and the political awareness needed to pose the question of revolution and the need for the complete transformation of society. 4.6.11

Solidarity with the "indignant" in Spain: The future belongs to the working class! - See page 4

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Leftists offer recipe for defeat

The strikes and demonstrations planned for 30 June by teachers' unions and the PCS public sector union are being hyped in a way that follows inevitably the precedent set by the big demonstration of 26 March. After that demo *Socialist Worker* (2/4/11) headlined with "Magnificent march - now let's strike to beat the Tories" - reporting that all speeches in favour of a strike next time round were greeted enthusiastically.

So the 30 June is the next in a series and leftists are already discussing what the big event after that will be in the autumn. The *Socialist Worker* headlines read "30 June strikes can turn the tide against the Tory government" (4/6/11) and "30 June: we must seize opportunity for a mass strike" (23/4/11).

These items should be put in the context of what they said before the 26 March demo: "A huge protest could give millions of people confidence to fight against every cut and for every job—and to bring down this rotten Tory government of the rich." And how did the huge protest of 26 March make people feel? Many were impressed by the size of the demo, but deflated when they reflected afterwards on what could have been. Some felt, right from the start, that it might be a pointless procession leading nowhere. Others saw something more positive in the occupation of buildings in the London's West End.

Whichever way you look at 26 March, it was dominated by the unions and their supporters, in the banners, in the speeches, in the way that so much anger and frustration was transformed into a passive stroll. The SWP think it's possible to "Kick out Cameron's crumbling coalition" (14/5/11) but 30 June is still dominated by unions and, as things stand, based on the proposals of Left and unions, will have no more effect than 26 March.

Also, it is necessary to look a little closer at the idea of a "mass strike" that might be part of the process of 'kicking out' the government. The Office for National Statistics has released the figures for the number of days' work lost due to industrial action in the 12 months to March. At 145,000 it's the lowest since records in their current form began in 1931. Obviously government statistics exist as much for propaganda as anything else, and they don't include the significant struggles in schools and universities last autumn. Nevertheless the numbers do reflect a reality - a hesitation faced with the gravity of the economic crisis. Many people were inspired by the student protests last year in Britain, by the social movements in Tunisia and Egypt, and more recently by the demonstrations and assemblies in Spain and Greece, but this inspiration has not yet been transferred into widespread action.

To make anything of the 30 June actions workers need to prepare to go beyond union boundaries, to discuss in advance what could be achieved if workers took control of their own struggles. When it comes to the unions' 'big day', the strike can be extended 'from the bottom up' by calling on workers in other unions and sectors to take unofficial action; instead of the usual pre-arranged rallies, we can be thinking in terms of genuine assemblies where everything can be discussed and we don't have to bow down to the slogans of the Left and unions.

The Left talks about 'mass struggles' only to undermine the possibility of their appearance. Any movement today, however small, that starts to discuss the needs of the struggle, the issues and obstacles that face the working class, and the longer term perspectives for the class struggle, has far more to offer than all the big talk of the unions and the Left. **Car 3/6/11**

Crisis brings ever deepening poverty

As we approached the 2010 general election in Britain the ICC reminded workers of what the experience of the Labour government had been. Not only was the gap between the wealth of the rich and the poverty of the poor much the same as it was 60 years ago: the impoverishment of a great many was worsening.

The statistics, official and unofficial, that are produced on an endless carousel, continue to show that the state of the capitalist economy means further deterioration in the conditions of life of the working class.

In March, for example, it was confirmed that, with official price inflation rising faster than official wage levels, real household income had fallen for the first time in 30 years, and by the greatest amount since 1977. It doesn't take a genius to work out that, with a pay freeze and pay cuts in the public sector, and the private sector imposing the 'discipline of the market', incomes are down and the real level of price rises is higher than official inflation.

The official acknowledgement of the decline in incomes is not only bad news for those whose incomes are directly under attack but also for the overall state of the economy. If, as some claim, consumer spending accounts for 65% of the economy, then lack of spending power, with real earnings falling and with cuts to benefits and tax credits, is going to lead to more businesses going under, more unemployment, and even less money in the economy.

The most recent forecasts of the OECD for the British economy have unsurprisingly been further revised down. More dramatically, another forecast, by the Resolution Foundation, suggests that average pay in 2015 will be no higher than in 2001. This puts into clearer focus the 'real household income' question. Continuous inflation over

14 years means a continuing erosion of living standards for those in work. For those out of work the many cuts in benefits will further worsen the quality of life for the unemployed.

Meanwhile, the difference between the top earners and the rest of the working population is back at 1918 levels, or approaching the situation in Victorian times - according to who is interpreting the figures. The top 0.1% has the same proportion of national income as it did in the 1940s. The income of those in the top 1.0% went up 13% in 2009-10. The annual income of the chief executives of the FTSE 100 companies went up 32 per cent last year to an average £3.5million. The income of the top 0.1% is now 145 times that of those on median full-time incomes. Between 1996-97 and 2007-8 the income of the bottom 50% went from £16,000 to £17,100; by 2019-20 this is predicted to reach £18,700, while the top 0.1% will average £901,600. Most of these increases in social inequality took place under a Labour government that was supposedly committed to 'social inclusion.'

The fact that lots of the big money is made in financial speculation, hedge funds, insurance, banking, property, land, advertising and all sorts of other dubious 'services' is particularly galling when you consider the meagre rewards given to those who work at the sharp end in health, education, construction, manufacturing, transport and other areas of activity from which people can directly benefit.

Every tranche of figures tends to confirm an ever-widening impoverishment. Those who claim that capitalism can be reformed so that all can benefit have no evidence for such a proposition. The development of the class struggle is the only basis for tackling the problem.

The class struggle isn't simply between the rich and the poor. The fundamental conflict in capitalist society is between the ruling bourgeoisie and the working class that produces all value in society. Workers' struggles don't consist in attacks on the rich as individuals but need to attack, dismantle and replace the basic social relations of capital (wage labour and production for profit) and the state which tries to keep them alive, despite the fact that they are the fundamental reason for the impoverishment of the vast majority of human beings. **Car 3/6/11**

Policing the decline in health care

The police are playing an increasingly prominent role in the NHS and social services. As health services are more and more stretched there is a greater emphasis on maintaining public order.

One example of this is the increasing tendency to treat the mentally ill as if they were criminals. You can get a ridiculously sanitised idea of this from the police training video on vimeo.com/23913544 in which the handcuffs go on as part of a caring and calming process leading to the patient, who's been causing a disturbance, being delivered to a place of safety. The reality is not so pretty - half a dozen police raid the home of someone who is already frightened and unable to cope, cuff him and take him away in an ambulance. Sometimes dawn raids are carried out as though the mentally ill individual is some sort of terrorist.

If the way the police deal with the mentally ill has become more systematically brutal in recent years, there never was any golden age within capitalism. Not only does the stress of daily life within capitalism directly trigger mental illness, capitalist society is also incapable of providing adequate support that might enable the mentally ill to continue to lead normal lives. Instead, it relies on repression and compulsory treatment (organised in Britain under the various 'Sections' of the Mental Health Act) - necessary because the most severely mentally ill cannot cope in what passes for 'normal' society within capitalism. As conditions worsen, what care there was tends to be progressively replaced with an inflexible and terrorising mode of enforcement prioritising naked repression.

In terms of treatment of the mentally ill, the closure of the old asylums in the 1960s and 70s

was presented as - and believed to be - a great liberation from the old repressive impersonal institutions. But hopes were dashed by the paucity of provision and 'care in the community' was really about 'neglect in the community'. It turned out to be just another cost cutting measure, enabled by the development of new drug treatments. But the overall issue of the treatment of mental illness throughout capitalism is beyond the scope of a short article.

Another example of the increased weight of repressive forces relates to the laxer rules for divulging patient information to the police. For decades it was believed that information was confidential unless the law (in the case of road accidents and terrorism) or a Court demanded it be divulged. Now the Department of Health's Code of Practice on Confidentiality, 2003, states "Under the common law staff are permitted to disclose personal information in order to prevent and support detection, investigation and punishment of serious crime..." Furthermore, unlike the disclosure of patient information for medical research, or the disclosure of Oyster travel information to the police, there is no clear framework for making such decisions which are simply left to the particular organisation or individual members of front line staff who are likely to be most vulnerable to police pressure. There are not even any records kept of police requests for information or whether these were acceded to or refused. (See 'Police access to NHS confidential medical records' <http://webjcli.ncl.ac.uk/2010/issue4/pdf/dickson4.pdf>).

Lastly, there is no denying that there are more attacks on health service staff, particularly in Accident and Emergency Departments. This is a product of a worsening social situation: higher unemployment, greater despair about the future, greater atomisation, in short with the worsening of the crisis and decomposition on the one hand; and on the other more stretched health services

after decades of cutting. Hence the stationing of police in NHS departments at particularly bad times such as Friday and Saturday nights when alcohol is the cause of more than 40% of admissions. Those working in the NHS obviously need to be safe, but while the police presence may keep a modicum of order, the only real answer is to get rid of the causes of the problem: declining health service resources and worsening social decomposition. Capitalism cannot achieve either.

The NHS is often seen as a protector, in contrast to private institutions which are presented as being solely driven by the profit motive. And we have seen 2 glaring examples of the dangers of the profit motive recently with the torture of people with learning disabilities at Winterbourne View care home; and with the example of Southern Cross which has put its residents' homes at risk though a sell and lease back financial manoeuvre. However, while the private enterprises are motivated by their immediate profits, the state and its institutions - including the NHS - exist to ensure the smooth running of the capitalist system, to provide the best conditions for the private institutions to carry on making their profit. So it is hardly a surprise to find the same kind of cost cutting in the NHS that creates the conditions for the sort of scandal that occurred in the Castlebeck home. Nor is the NHS immune to leaseback financial manoeuvres - isn't that exactly what the PFI is?

The way a society treats the sick and vulnerable is one way in which it can be judged. On this standard, state and private capitalism are to be condemned. **Alex 3.6.11**

International Review 145

Social revolts in North Africa and the Middle East, nuclear catastrophe in Japan, war in Libya

Only the proletarian revolution can save humanity from the disaster of capitalism

What's happening in the Middle East?

Contribution to a history of the workers' movement in Africa

What are the workers councils?
(V)

1917-21: the Soviets and the question of the state

Decadence of capitalism
The Comintern and the virus of 'Luxemburgism' in 1924

The Communist left in Russia
The Manifesto of the Workers' Group of the Russian Communist party (IV)

Western intervention in Libya: a new militaristic hell

Since March 19th there has been no let-up in the military intervention in Libya under the dual banner of the UN and NATO. But we needn't worry: the last G8 summit has reaffirmed that the members of the coalition, putting their differences to one side, are "determined to finish the job", having called on the Libyan leader to relinquish power because he has "lost all legitimacy". Russia has allied itself with the new anti-Gaddafi front, offering its assistance to mediate with the man it "no longer regards as the leader of Libya." As a sign of their support for the "Arab revolutions" and thus also for the Libyan people, world leaders are split over pressing Saudi Arabia to put its hand in its pocket for a gift to the "Arab revolutions" of 45 billion dollars. Meanwhile, this beautiful outpouring of "solidarity" towards the anti-Gaddafi insurgents united in the National Transitional Council of Libya, whose representatives spend more time in Western embassies than in the combat zones, seems incompatible with a war that has got more and more bogged down. Gaddafi's forces, despite being on the end of some 2700 aerial attacks, continue to pound the rebels, both in Benghazi and Misrata. We are far from seeing the eviction of the Libyan forces, denounced by the "international community" for their cruelty, and from the advent of democracy that was the pretext for this new imperialist military adventure. The "leader of the Green Revolution" is desperately clinging on to power. The country presents a spectacle of desolation, far away from the hopes and enthusiasm that were raised by the movements in Tunisia and Egypt. There are dozens of deaths every day in Misrata (according to the World Health Organisation) and carcasses of tanks and military vehicles litter the roads, while the towns are looking more and more like Beirut in the 1970s and 1980s. Evidently our hallowed representatives have continued castigating the Libyan government, demanding that "those responsible for attacks against civilians be made accountable" and threatening them with being brought before the International Criminal Court for these crimes. It's a familiar refrain based on dishonesty and hypocrisy: they are themselves responsible for deaths on both sides,

including those of civilians. For those who advocate "aerial attacks", it's only those on the side of the "baddies" that get killed, just like it is in the B movies. Let's recall specific examples, such as the so-called "targeted" attacks in the two wars in Iraq: they resulted in hundreds of thousands of "collateral" deaths; there's the situation in Afghanistan where logistical "errors" have regularly led to whole villages being devastated. The list of civilian deaths that the great powers are responsible for is very long – though that's not to minimise the part played by the small states.

Thus, the commitment of the last G8 summit to increase military pressure on Gaddafi by deciding to deploy French and British attack helicopters to be "closer to the ground" is leading towards a longer term presence "on the ground." If the military intervention was launched on a rather unsure and unsettled basis, with the United States dragging its feet, along with Italy, and with Russia opposed, it now seems the goal is clear: to

fight over the spoils. The Libyan people, that all the champions of Western democracy have come to "help" and to "rescue", are now suffering the same plight as those suffering under the yoke of any dictator or from international terrorism. The future, in the post-Gaddafi period, will be one of a more or less simmering confrontations between the various Libyan tribal groups, supported by the various regional powers, with the motto: every man for himself and all against all. And the question that is posed today is whether the same fate is soon to face the Syrian population, which has seen at least a thousand killed since the anti-Assad protests began there two months ago, with tens of thousands imprisoned by the repressive forces of the Damascus government. Torture, beatings and murders are the daily lot of the Syrian population: in fact the same brew which in Libya has so "offended" the representatives of the European Union. Registering their half-hearted objections to the "bloody repres-

sion" in Syria at the UN Security Council, France, Germany, Great Britain and Portugal called for "international sanctions" to be imposed on the Syrian regime, which is about as frightening for it right now as the story of the big bad wolf. Unlike what happened with Libya, the UN is far from reaching any agreement and adopting a resolution that would commit it to military action against Syria. First, because the Syrian state has a military machine much larger than Gaddafi's, and because the region is far more significant strategically than the terrain around Libya. And this is the true measure of the Western powers' support for the "democratic Arab revolutions". Their words gush from the mouths of patent liars who have supported the Assad family regime for many years.

The imperialist stakes concerning Syria are of the highest order. Neighbour and ally of Iraq where the United States is still struggling to find a credible military exit, Syria is also increasingly supported by Iran, which in the recent events has supplied it with seasoned militias that have a long experience of carrying out massive repression against the population. The world's leading power cannot afford to find itself in a new quagmire in Syria, a quagmire that would discredit it still further in the Arab countries at a time when it is having more and more difficulty calming Israeli-Palestinian tensions, which are being fuelled by Israel and Syria in particular. In addition, the momentary bonus achieved in the world arena by the United States - and particularly Obama, virtually assuring him the prestige for his future re-election – thanks to the elimination of bin Laden, which the media hyped as "washing away the discredit of September 11", does not mean the eradication of terrorism, which has been proclaimed as the great goal of the American crusade for the last ten years. On the contrary, this situation exposes the world to a growing upsurge in deadly attacks, as the recent bloody attacks in Pakistan and Marrakech were quick to demonstrate. Everywhere there is a multiplication of military conflicts, a headlong rush into imperialist tensions heightened by the rivalry between the big powers. **Mulan (28 May)**

The US gains from bumping off Bin Laden

(Extract from the resolution on the international situation, 19th ICC Congress)

These failures of the USA have not discouraged Washington from pursuing the offensive policy which it has been carrying out since the beginning of the 1990s and which has made it the main factor of instability on the world scene. As the resolution from the last congress put it: "*Faced with this situation, Obama and his administration will not be able to avoid continuing the warlike policies of their predecessors... if Obama has envisaged a US withdrawal from Iraq, it is in order to re-inforce its involvement in Afghanistan and Pakistan*". This was illustrated recently with the execution of Bin Laden by an American commando raid on Pakistan territory. This 'heroic' operation obviously had an electoral element as we are now a year and a half away from the US elections. In particular it was aimed at countering the criticism

of the Republicans, who have reproached Obama with being soft in affirming US hegemony on the military level; these criticisms had been stepped up during the intervention in Libya where the leadership of the operation was left to the Franco-British tandem. It also meant that after using Bin Laden in the role of Bad Guy for nearly ten years it was time to get rid of him in order not to appear completely impotent. In doing so the USA proved that it is the only power with the military, technological and logistical means to carry out this kind of operation, precisely at the time when France and Britain are having difficulty in carrying out their anti-Gaddafi operation. It notified the world that the US would not hesitate to violate the national 'sovereignty' of an 'ally', that it intends to fix the rules of the game wherever it judges it necessary. Finally it succeeded in obliging the governments of the world to salute the value of this exploit, often with considerable reluctance.

Explosion at Chevron refinery Four workers killed Chevron disaster

On the evening of 2 June there was an explosion at the Chevron refinery in Pembrokeshire in which 4 workers were killed and one seriously injured. Sky News quoted an unnamed person as saying that this was a "tragic industrial accident". It went on to say that the blast was not "thought to pose any ongoing threat" (from contaminants). They have apparently been safely blown away. This magical disappearance of contamination is exactly what was reported from the blast at the Coryton refinery in Essex in October 2007. Chevron and Total ran the Buncefield oil depot that exploded in December 2005, resulting in 40 injuries and serious contamination. These companies were found to have committed 20 serious health and safety breaches at Buncefield and despite specific safety measures demanded in 2007, these have still not been complied with and, according to the HSE, were still being designed and will be in place at the end of 2012. While the lawyers get rich (company and union) the HSE says that there are ongoing talks with the companies. And of course, Chevron's thoughts are for those killed and injured in, in this case, "a tragic accident".

(thread on www.libcom.org begun by our sympathiser Baboon)

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Notes on internationalist anarchism in the UK (part 2)

there are numerous comrades calling themselves anarchists or libertarians who defend proletarian positions on unions, nationalism, and imperialist war, and that this includes members of groups or traditions we would have in the past dismissed as leftist, such as the AF and Solfed. This led to a re-evaluation on our part, reinforced by our international discussions, and even common work, with groups like the CNT-AIT in France and KRAS in Russia, or newer anarchist groups in Latin America. This re-evaluation has been welcomed by some anarchists, although many continue to see it as an opportunist 'recruiting' tactic on our part, and our relations with this milieu still go through some alarming ups and downs. But for us, the maintenance of an active dialogue with the proletarian elements in anarchism is the only basis for overcoming the suspicions which exist between the marxist and anarchist wings of the revolutionary movement, and arriving at a sound basis for common activity in spite of our differences. **Amos**

ICC online

19th ICC Congress: The economic crisis reveals the failure of capitalism

We are publishing here the first part of the resolution on the international situation adopted by the ICC at its 19th Congress, which was held in May.

From the forum discussions

respect for the youth, the inability of the communist left to do this etc

"I think one of the problems of the communist left is that I think a lot of its militants don't respect the youth, or rather, they think they do but they don't really know how to ..."

"... the younger generations have their own pathologies from the culture they have to make the effort to overcome as well: democratism, eclecticism, immediatism, "worldisflatism," hipsterism, anti-hipsterism, etc. How can the communist left contribute to this process without: a.) validating these things or b.) patronizing people? ..."

"...this problem can not be overcome by changing merely the style or jargon. I am not saying this because I see the problem as superficial. On the contrary I think it is a deeper problem of lost of an alive link in organisational and daily continuity of communist left between periods..."

Ascendance/Decadence Periodisation and Colonialism

"... if we view capitalism prior to 1914 as a 'progressive' stage in human history, then what do we think of British colonialism and foreign policy in places like India and China? After all, the horrors of British imperialism brought these kind of 'backward' countries with pre-capitalist social relations kicking and screaming into modern 'civilisation'..."

"...I think he saw it as progressive because it transformed the labour process into a necessarily collective process and socialised the productive forces, which removed the basis for the previous isolated forms of social life and laid the basis for a communist society based on 'world-historic' productive intercourse. In this sense I agree that capitalism was 'progressive'. But it's 'progressive' historical function was fulfilled almost the instant that it came into being ..."

"Marx ... hoped that revolution in the advanced countries would enable countries like Russia to forego the horrors of a capitalist stage, which was a reasonable hypothesis at the time, so you are quite right to say that he was against the idea of capitalism having to go through this stage in every single country..."

Join in our discussions online!

en.internationalism.org

Solidarity with the “indignant” in Spain: The future belongs to the working class!

While the media has been full of Obama’s ‘triumphant’ visit to Europe, or the scandal about Dominique Strauss-Khan, they have not told us much about the real earthquake hitting Europe: a vast social movement which is centred in Spain but which is having an immediate echo in Greece and threatens to break out in other countries as well.

The events in Spain have been unfolding since 15 May with the occupation of the Puerto del Sol Square in Madrid by a human wave made up mainly of young people rebelling against unemployment, the Zapatero government’s austerity measures, and the corruption of politicians. The movement spread like wildfire to all the main cities in the country - to Barcelona, Valencia, Granada, Seville, Malaga, Leon – making use of social media like Facebook and Twitter, and videos uploaded onto Youtube; and that’s largely how we have got information about the movement outside of Spain, because the bourgeois media have pretty much imposed a black-out on the events. If they would far rather have us thinking about Obama, or DSK, or the travails of Cheryl Cole, it’s because this movement represents a very important step in the development of social struggles and of the combat of the world working class faced with the dead-end that is capitalism.

The premises of the movement

The movement of the ‘indignos’, the ‘indignant’, in Spain has been fermenting since the general strike of 29 September 2010 against the planned reform of pensions. This general strike ended in a defeat mainly because the trade unions sat down with the government and accepted its proposed changes (which involves workers who have been active for 40-45 years getting 20% less when they retire than they had expected). This defeat gave rise to considerable bitterness within the working class. But it also provoked a profound anger among the young people who played an active part in the strike movement, in particular by expressing their solidarity with the workers’ pickets.

From the beginning of 2011 the anger began to take shape in the universities. In March, in Portugal, a call-out to a demonstration by the group ‘Precarious Youth’ mustered 250,000 people in Lisbon. This example had an immediate impact in the Spanish universities, especially in Madrid. The great majority of students and young people under 30 have to live on 600 euros a month by taking on part-time jobs. It was in this context that a hundred or so students formed the group ‘Jovenes sin Futuro’ (Young People with no Future). These impecunious students, who come mainly from the working class, called for a demonstration on 7 April. The success of this initial mobilisation, which brought around 5000 people together, incited the Jovenes sin Futuro group to plan another demo for 15 May. In the meantime the collective Democracia Real Ya (Real Democracy Now) appeared in Madrid. Its platform denounces unemployment and the “dictatorship of the market”, but claims to be “apolitical”, neither left nor right. Democracia Real Ya also launched an appeal to demonstrate on 15 May in other towns. But it was in Madrid that the procession had the greatest success, with about 250,000 demonstrators. It was meant to be a well-behaved march that would end tranquilly in Puerto del Sol.

The anger of the ‘no future’ youth spreads to the whole population

The demonstrations of 15 May called by Democracia Real Ya were a spectacular success: they expressed a general discontent, especially among young people faced with the problem of unemployment at the end of their studies. Everything was due to end there, but at the end of the demonstrations in Madrid and Granada some incidents provoked by small ‘Black Bloc’ groups led to a police charge and about 20 arrests. Those arrested were treated brutally in the police stations, and afterwards they formed a collective which issued a communiqué denouncing the police violence. The publication of this communiqué immediately provoked an indignant reaction and widespread solidarity against the forces of order. Thirty totally unknown and unorganised people decided to set up a camp on Puerto del Sol. This initiative immediately won popular sympathy and the example spread to Barcelona, Granada and Valencia. A second round of police repression lit the touch paper and since then increasingly massive gatherings in central squares have been taking place in over 70 towns.

On the afternoon of Tuesday 17 May, the organ-

isers of the ‘15 May movement’ had envisaged holding silent protests or various dramatic performances, but the crowd that had come together in the squares shouted loudly for the holding of assemblies. At 8 in the evening, assemblies began to take place in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and other cities. From Wednesday 18th, these assemblies became a real avalanche. Everywhere gatherings took the form of open general assemblies in public spaces.

In the face of police repression and given the prospect of municipal and regional elections, the Democracia Real Ya collective launched a debate around the theme of the “democratic regeneration” of the Spanish state. It called for a reform of the electoral reform in order to put an end to the two-party system monopolised by the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the right-wing Popular Party, calling for a “real democracy” after 34 years of “incomplete democracy” since the fall of the Franco regime.

But the movement of the ‘indignos’ to a great extent went beyond the democratic and reformist platform of Democracia Real Ya. It did not restrict itself to the revolt of the “600 euro generation”. In the demonstrations and the occupied squares of Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga, Seville etc, on the placards and banners you could read slogans like “Democracy without capital!”, “PSOE and PP, the same shit!”, “If you won’t let us dream, we won’t let you sleep!”, “All power to the assemblies!”, “The problem is not democracy, the problem is capitalism!” “Without work, without a home, without fear!”, “Workers awake!” “600 euros a month, now that’s violence!”

In Valencia a group of women shouted “They tricked the grand-parents, they tricked their children too – the grandchildren must not allow themselves to be tricked as well!”

Mass assemblies, a “weapon loaded with the future”

In the face of bourgeois democracy which reduces “political participation” to every four years “choosing” between politicians who never keep their election promises and who just get on with implementing the austerity plans required by the remorseless deepening of the economic crisis, the movement of the ‘indignos’ in Spain has spontaneously re-appropriated a working class fighting weapon: the open general assemblies. Everywhere massive urban assemblies have sprung up, regrouping tens of thousands of people from all the generations and all the non-exploiting layers of society. In these assemblies, everyone can speak up, express their anger, hold debates on different questions, make proposals. In this atmosphere of general ferment, tongues are set free, all aspects of social life are examined (political, cultural, economic...). The squares have been inundated by a gigantic collective wave of ideas that are discussed in a climate of solidarity and mutual respect. In some towns “ideas boxes” have been set up, containers where anyone can write down their ideas on a piece of paper. The movement organises itself with a great deal of intelligence. Commissions on all sorts of questions are set up, and care is taken to avoid disorganised clashes with the forces of order. Violence within the assemblies is forbid-

den and drunkenness banned with the slogan “La revolucion no es botellón” (rough translation: “the revolution is not a piss up”). Each day, clean-up teams are organised. Public canteens serve meals, volunteers set up nursing centres and crèches for children. Libraries are put in place as well as a “time bank”, where talks are given on all sorts of questions – scientific, cultural, artistic, political, economic. “Days of reflection” are planned. Everyone brings along their knowledge and skills.

On the surface, this torrent of thought seems to lead nowhere. There are few concrete proposals or immediately realisable demands. But what appears clearly is first and foremost a huge sentiment of being fed up with poverty, with austerity plans, with the present social order; and at the same time a collective will to break out of social atomisation, to get together to discuss and reflect. In spite of the many illusions and confusions, in what people say as well as on the placards and banners, the word “revolution” has re-appeared and people are not afraid of it.

In the assemblies, the debates have raised the most fundamental questions:

- should we limit ourselves to “democratic regeneration”? Don’t the problems have their origin in capitalism, a system which can’t be reformed and which has to be destroyed from top to bottom?

- Should the movement end on 22 May, after the elections, or should it continue and develop into a massive struggle against the attacks on living conditions, unemployment, casualisation, evictions?

- Should we not extend the assemblies to the workplaces, to the neighbourhoods, to the employment offices, to the high schools, to the universities? Should we root the movement among the employed workers who have the strength to lead a generalised struggle?

In the debates in the assemblies, two tendencies have appeared very clearly:

- a conservative one, animated by non-proletarian social strata, which sows the illusion that it is possible to reform the capitalist system through a “democratic citizens’ revolution”;

- the other, a proletarian tendency, which highlights the necessity to do away with capitalism

The assemblies that were held on Sunday 22 May, the day of the elections, decided to continue the movement. Numerous speakers declared: “we are not here because of the elections, even if they were the detonator”. The proletarian tendency affirmed itself most clearly in the proposals to “go towards the working class” by putting forward demands against unemployment, casualisation, social attacks. At Puerta del Sol, the decision was taken to organise “popular assemblies” in the neighbourhoods. Proposals were made to do the same thing in the workplaces, the universities, the employment offices. In Malaga, Barcelona and Valencia, the assemblies posed the question of organising demonstrations against reductions in the social wage, proposing a new general strike: “a real one this time” as one of the speakers put it.

It was in Barcelona, the industrial capital of the country, that the central assembly at Catalonia Square seemed to be the most radical, the most infused by the proletarian tendency and the most distant from the illusion of “democratic regeneration”. Thus, the workers from the Telefonica, the hospitals, the firefighters, the students battling social cuts joined up with Barcelona assembly and began to give it a different tonality. On 25 May, the Catalonia Square assembly decided to give active support to the hospital workers’ strike, while the assembly at Puerta del Sol in Madrid decided to decentralise the movement by convoking “popular assemblies” in the neighbourhoods in order to put a participatory, “horizontal” democracy into practice. In Valencia, demonstrating bus workers got together with a demonstration of local residents against cuts in the schools budget. In Zaragoza, bus drivers joined the assemblies with the same enthusiasm.

In Barcelona, the “indignos” decided to maintain their camp and to continue the occupation of Catalonia Square until June 15.



Assembly in Spain di

The future is in the hands of the young generation of the working class

Whatever direction the movement goes in, whatever its outcome, it is clear that this revolt, initiated by a young generation confronted with unemployment (in Spain 45% of the population aged between 20 and 25 is out of work) is definitely part of the struggle of the working class. Its contribution to the international movement of the class is undeniable.

It is a generalised movement which has drawn in all the non-exploiting social strata, and all the generations of the working class. Even if the class has been part of a wave of “popular” anger and has not affirmed itself through massive strikes and specific economic demands, this movement still expresses a real maturation of consciousness within the only class that can change the world: the proletariat. It reveals clearly that, in front of the increasingly evident bankruptcy of capitalism, significant masses of people are beginning to rise up in the “democratic” countries of western Europe, opening the way towards the politicisation of the proletarian struggle.

But, above all, this movement has shown that the young people, the great majority of them casual workers or unemployed, have been able to appropriate the weapons of the working class struggle: massive and open general assemblies, which has allowed them to affirm their solidarity and take control of the movement outside the political parties and trade unions.

The slogan “all power to the assemblies” which has emerged from within the movement, even if only among a minority, is a remake of the old slogan of the Russian revolution: “all power to the soviets”.

Even though today people are still fearful of the word “communism” (owing to the weight of the bourgeois campaigns after the fall of the Stalinist regimes of the old eastern bloc), the word “revolution” doesn’t scare anyone, on the contrary.

But this movement is in no way a “Spanish Revolution” as the Democracia Real Ya collective presents it. Unemployment, casualisation, the high cost of living and the constant deterioration of living conditions for the exploited are not at all a Spanish specificity! The sinister face of unemployment, especially among the young, has made its appearance in Madrid as in Cairo, in London as in Paris, in Athens as in Buenos Aires. We are all together in this downward spiral. We are all facing the decomposition of capitalist society, which expresses itself not only in poverty and unemployment, but also in the multiplication of disasters and wars, in the dislocation of social relations and a growing moral barbarity (which expresses itself, among other things, in the growth of sexual aggression and violence against women both in the “Third World” and the “advanced” countries).

The movement of the “indignos” is not a revolution. It is only a new step in the development of the working class struggle on global scale – the only struggle that can open up a perspective for the youth “with no future” and for humanity as a whole.

Despite all the illusions about the “Independent Republic of Puerta del Sol”, this movement is evidence that the horizon of a new society is taking shape in the entrails of the old. The “Spanish earthquake” shows that the new generations of the working class, who have nothing to lose, are already becoming actors on the stage of history. They are precursors of even greater storms that will clear the road to the emancipation of humanity.

Through the use of the internet, of social networks and mobile phones, this young generation



discusses the struggle

has shown that it can break through the black-out of the bourgeoisie and its media, laying the basis for solidarity across national borders.

This new generation emerged on the international social scene around 2003, first in the protests against the military interventions of the Bush administration, then with the first demonstrations in France against the reform of pensions in 2003. It reappeared in the same country in 2006 with the massive movement of university and high school students against the CPE. In Greece, Italy, Portugal, Britain, young people in education made their voices heard in response to the future of absolute poverty and unemployment that capitalism is offering them.

The tidal wave of this “no future” generation recently struck Tunisia and Egypt, resulting in a gigantic social revolt which toppled Ben Ali and Mubarak. But it should not be forgotten that the decisive element which forced the bourgeoisie in the main “democratic” countries (especially Barack Obama) to dump Ben Ali and Mubarak was the emergence of workers’ strikes and the danger of a general strike movement.

Since then, Tahrir Square has become an emblem, an encouragement to struggle for the younger generation of proletarians in many countries. This was the model the “indignos” in Spain followed when they set up their camp in Puerta del Sol, occupied the main squares of over 70 towns and drew all the oppressed social layers into the assemblies (in Barcelona, the “indignos” even renamed Catalonia Square “Plaza Tahrir”).

The movement in Spain is, in reality, much more profound than the spectacular revolt which was crystallised in Tahrir Square in Cairo. It has broken out in the main country of the Iberian peninsula, a bridge between the two continents. The fact that it is unfolding in a “democratic” state in western Europe (and, what’s more, one led by a “socialist” government!) can only help to undermine the democratic mystifications deployed by the media since the “Jasmin revolution” in Tunisia.

Furthermore, although Democracia Real Ya describes this movement as a “Spanish revolution”, hardly any Spanish flags have been flown, whereas Tahrir Square was awash with national flags!

Despite the inevitable confusions accompanying this movement, it is a very important link in the chain of today’s social struggles. With the aggravation of the world crisis of capitalism, these social movements will more and more converge with the proletarian class struggle and contribute to its development.

The courage, determination and deep sense of solidarity displayed by this “indignant” generation shows that another world is possible: communism, the unification of the world human community. But for this old dream of humanity to become a reality, the working class, the class which produces the essentials of all the wealth of society, has to rediscover its class identity by developing massive struggles against all the attacks of capitalism.

The movement of the “indignos” has once again started to pose the question of the revolution. It is up to the world proletariat to resolve the question by giving the movement a clear class direction, aimed at the overthrow of capitalism. It is only on the ruins of this system of exploitation based on commodity production and profit that the new generations can build a new society, achieve a really universal “democracy” and restore dignity to the human species. **Sofiane, 27.5.11**

1. On the contrary, we have even seen slogans calling for a “global revolution” and for the “extension” of the movement across national frontiers. An “international commission” has been created in all the assemblies. In all the big cities in Europe and America, and even in Tokyo, Phnom Penh and Hanoi, we have seen solidarity demonstrations by Spanish expatriates.

The movement reignites in Greece

Banners at protests in Madrid made fun of Greek ‘apathy’ in the face of the austerity attacks they have already suffered and those which are to come. In reality strikes and demonstrations have been continuing in Greece, but a new wave of ‘indignant’ protests was soon ignited, in Athens and in towns across the country, explicitly following the Spanish example. At the time of writing this has been going on for more than a week.

The bourgeois press was quick to notice that there was something different in the demonstrations. The Greek daily *Kathimerini* (27/5/11) observed “*The absence of political parties, unions, violence and traditional slogans from the protests.*” In a country with very active unions and political parties this is very significant as there has been no absence of ‘official’ protest from the Left against the ‘socialist’ PASOK government of George Papandreou.

What’s also been different has been the character of the protests, which have often taken the form of assemblies where all points of view have been present. On 25 May in Athens’ main Syntagma Square, for example, there was a solid three hours of discussion in which 83 people spoke. Some spoke in terms of democracy and patriotism, but others put forward the importance of the self-organisation of the working class and the need for a revolutionary struggle. There were also few Greek flags on display at the start of this wave of protests, although the number has clearly increased over time.

A difference with the protests in Spain is that in Greece there has been a wide range of ages involved, far more workers and their families, with not such a focus on the young unemployed. This is understandable as the range of attacks on living standards in Greece is so extensive. The main-

stream *Kathimerini* (27/5/11) states the obvious: “*Decisions, it seems, are being taken to satisfy the pressing demands of banks, markets and creditors rather than to safeguard the interests of the people. It’s enough to make even the most patient person indignant.*”

The Greek Deputy Prime Minister denounced the movement as “*a movement without an ideology or organization, which bases itself on only one feeling, that of rage.*” Against this view *Kathimerini* (31/5/11) does distinguish something more than anger as “*at these rallies we see a large part of society come together, most of whom will say that they don’t see any of our politicians as being fit to govern in opinion polls and who will opt to abstain from general elections. Their physical presence, even if it is without a statement, is authentically political.*”

Opposition to the movement has taken many forms. When, for example, protesters prevented MPs leaving parliament (until extra police detachments arrived) the Speaker of the Greek Parliament warned that “*History has shown that a climate of across-the-board rejection of parliamentary democracy has had tragic consequences wherever it has been expressed.*” In Greek terms, from a PASOK spokesman, such warnings should be taken as references to the Right-wing dictatorships of Pangalos, Kondyles and Metaxas in the 1920s and 30s, and the Colonels’ regime from 1967-74. The intention is to obscure the role of democracy and PASOK in particular at the heart of the repressive Greek capitalist state.

Other critics of the protests include the main Greek Stalinist party (the KKE) which says (25/5/11) that “*A planned people’s struggle is necessary*”. In an interview its General Secretary spoke of “*certain outbursts which have no organization, are not rooted in the workplaces, the*

industries, either in the private or public sector, they have no basic political direction” and that “*Without wishing to underestimate the intentions of many ordinary people to protest against the continual downgrading of their standard of living, it is more than certain that mobilisations which seek to release a sense of frustration are more easy to manipulate.*” She said that the KKE is always sympathetic to “*attempts by people to find a way to express themselves*” but, in reality, workers’ experience shows that the Stalinists prefer situations which they can manipulate, the one day strike, or the formal demonstration under their slogans.

In Greece the cult of militarist actions which affects a significant part of the anarchist milieu also means that there are those who will criticise anything that doesn’t involve violent attacks on cops or fascists. For them the latest Greek protests are ‘pacifist’ and ‘reactionary’. It’s true that any movement can potentially go in a number of directions. The claims of nationalism and democracy echo throughout all the media of the bourgeoisie. The possibilities of reforming decaying capitalism are still put forward at every opportunity by the Left. The unions pretend that they are the true forms for the advance of workers’ struggles, rather than for their sabotage. And the impotent posturing of the advocates of bombings and shootings still attracts those who can’t see the potential for mass working class struggles.

In Greece many of the assemblies have committed themselves to joining with workers in struggle, and to keeping the movement under their direct control. They are not the only ideas put forward. They might amount to very little. But, following on from the protests in Spain, and all the discussions on the significance of these movements, we have seen another spark of a response to capitalism’s unavoidable austerity. **Car 2/6/11**

Continued from page 8

90 years after Kronstadt A tragedy that’s still being debated in the revolutionary movement

Bolsheviks to distance themselves from the class. In the end, it was isolation within isolation. The Party was both judge and jury and thus couldn’t understand the revolt of their comrades in the soviets. Underthegun rightly says: “*the ‘Bolshevik government’ is really the problem of this isolated revolution which was besieged from all sides. The urgency of the situation, the multiple dangers, led the Bolsheviks, from 1918 and Brest-Litovsk, to secure the exercise of power. But (...) the dictatorship of the proletariat is not the dictatorship of the party*”. The party does not just represent the interests of a particular soviet or of a part of the working class: it must defend the interests of the world proletariat, and it is precisely because the party became confounded with the state that it lacked the clearheadedness to give orientations based on the interests of the world proletariat. Caught in the trap of the immediate perspective linked to the organisation of the revolution, it lost sight of the final aim: the liberation of humanity. That’s why it wasn’t a passing error but one of failing to understand that the dictatorship of the proletariat must be exercised by the soviets and this within a world revolution. Here are the material and objective causes of the crime of fratricide, but it is clear that contrary to what Prodigy, Jeannotrouge and Mouhamed think, the material conditions they talk about are incomplete if they don’t integrate the ethical dimension.

The question “has one the right to draw up a moral balance-sheet of this drama?” has been debated for a long time.

Underthegun insists a lot on the fact that there is no determinism and that among revolutionaries within the party, some, in identically urgent conditions, made the choice of defending their brothers at Kronstadt. Lenin and Trotsky had the choice and made theirs the massacre of the workers at

Kronstadt. In my opinion, the question merits being posed but comrades Mouhamed and Prodigy object in their posts that: “*a marxist analysis does not consist of making a moral balance-sheet, but of making one that’s objective and materialist. It’s not a question of condemning, of saying that it’s immoral or not. It’s a matter of drawing lessons without humanist sentiments*”. A moral balance-sheet and contextual analysis are not opposed but complement each other. Morality is not the Manichean morality of the bourgeoisie, it is the fruit of a long evolution coming from the fact that man has chosen civilisation and expressed itself in the preservation of the species through solidarity: it is thus inherent in the material conditions. The Bolshevik Party had degenerated and found itself in unprecedented situations for which there was no recipe. Then, yes, it chose the path which led to its ruin and, no, the crushing of Kronstadt did not go in the direction of the revolution. Could it have done otherwise? Perhaps. Should it have done so? Certainly! Why did some order this massacre and others oppose it? Simply because faced with the same situation consciousness is not homogenous, the link between consciousness and material conditions is not mechanical. That’s why we cannot look on the repression of Kronstadt with the eye of an unfailing morality forged during nine decades of proletarian struggles. Revolutionaries will be faced with equally essential choices in future struggles and Kronstadt is a sombre “treasury of lessons” because its unfortunate outcome underlines one essential lesson: “no violence within the working class!” The end doesn’t justify the means, but it does determine them.

We have not been able to debate this question without clarifying our positions on marxism and also Trotskyism and anarchism. Join in this passionate debate! Fraternal debate is our best weapon faced with bourgeois ideology.

Fraternally, Youhou

Death of comrade Enzo: a painful loss for the ICC

It is very painful for us to tell our readers and contacts about the death of our comrade Enzo on Sunday 15 May. Although we knew he was ill, nothing prepared us for such a sudden and tragic end. The news of his death hit everyone like a bolt out of the blue, leaving us stunned and also with the regret that we were not able to be with him in the last moments of his life.

A number of contacts in Italy knew Enzo and have expressed the same sorrow about his death. They knew him not just as a communist militant but as someone who, in his political activity, in his interventions at public meetings, in discussions, was so well able to express his own pain at the sufferings capitalism inflicts on the human species, often with tears in his eyes. Enzo was a young proletarian who had lived through exploitation, redundancy and unemployment but who was at the same time convinced that it is possible to react, to fight against all this barbarism and build a truly human society. His militant activity in the ICC was always characterised by this conviction, and his determination, even in very difficult circumstances, to contribute to this fight. His death is a loss for the ICC and for the whole working class.

We want convey our deepest solidarity with Enzo’s family, his parents, and his friends in a very bitter moment for us all, and to reaffirm our determination to carry on with the struggle for a human society which Enzo stood for. **ICC 19.5.11**

Notes on internationalist anarchism in the UK (part 2)

From the 1950s till today

This is the concluding part of a contribution aimed at clarifying the ICC's analysis of the main anarchist groups in Britain.

7) The 1950s have been described as a "period of somnolence" for anarchism in Britain¹. But the upheavals of the 1960s brought a revival of libertarian ideas on various fronts, for example as a radical wing of the CND protests or as an element in the emergence of 'movements' around sexual politics, the environment, and daily life in general. British anarchism in the late 60s and early 70s also had a brief flirtation with Propaganda by the Deed in the form of the Angry Brigade. Also important was the work of the Solidarity group descended from Socialisme ou Barbarie, and like the latter initiated by people who had broken away from Trotskyism. Though closer to councilism than anarchism, Solidarity's publications had a big impact on a much wider anarchist/libertarian audience². In 1963 a new Anarchist Federation of Britain was set up to bring together all the various strands of anarchist activity, but as Nick Heath (a founding member of the present-day AF) recalls in his essay on the anarchist movement since the 60s³ this was not even a Federation but a mosaic of contradictory tendencies from anarcho-syndicalists and anarchist communists to individualists, pacifists and 'lifestylers'. Heath even uses the term "swamp" to describe the weight of anarcho-liberalism and faddism of all kinds in the AFB.

8) Under the impact of the international revival of workers' struggles after May 1968, there was a reaction against this swamp and various attempts to develop a class struggle anarchist tendency with a more effective form of organisation. The Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists, formed around 1970, was an attempt to put this effort into practice, mainly by relating to the 'Platform' of the Libertarian Communists produced in 1926 by Arshinov, Ida Mett, Makhno and other fugitives from the defeat in Russia. The Platform had, quite correctly, argued that one of the reasons for the crushing of resistance to the counter-revolution in Russia had been that those doing the resisting, and in particular the anarchists, had lacked any organisational and programmatic coherence. This was fundamentally a healthy class response to the problem of opposing the degeneration of the revolution. Unfortunately, the history of platformism seems to have been one in which the search for such a coherence has led to the **bourgeois** consistency of leftism, generally in its Trotskyist form. The fate of ORA underlined the strength of this difficulty, with a large part of its elements sliding towards different forms of leftism – some towards Trotskyism pure and simple, some towards a more libertarian brand of the same thing, as exemplified by the Libertarian Communist Group of the 1970s, part of which fused with the neo-Maoists of Big Flame. More recent forms of this kind of 'anarcho-Trotskyism' include the Anarchist Workers group, which supported the Saddam regime against 'imperialism' in the first Gulf war, and the current Workers' Solidarity Movement in Ireland which doesn't hesitate to call for the nationalisation of Irish resources and pledges support for the 'anti-imperialist' (i.e. nationalist) struggle in Ireland.

9) In the middle to late 80s, there were two main

1. George Woodcock, *Anarchism, A history of libertarian ideas and movements*, 1986 edition, p 386. Describing the same period in France, he uses the term "official anarchism" to describe the fossilised remnants of the movement

2. A similar phenomenon can be found in the influence of the Wildcat group and its heir Subversion in the 80s and 90s: they also developed a blend of councilism and anarchism which had a fairly wide appeal within the libertarian scene in general. A more developed history of anarchism in the UK would have to include an evaluation of these groups, whose origins lie more in a branch of left communism than anarchism per se.

3. <http://libcom.org/library/the-uk-anarchist-movement-looking-back-and-forward>

developments in the organised anarchist movement: the spectacular rise of Class War, and the more modest but ultimately more substantial development of the Anarchist Communist Federation, today the AF. On Class War, Nick Heath's summary of these developments, from his essay mentioned above, can be quoted in full: "*Class War, which had emerged as a group around the paper of the same name in the mid 80s, transformed itself into the Class War Federation in 1986. The latter group was made up of activists who rejected the pacifism, lifestylism and hippyism that were dominant tendencies within British anarchism. In this it represented a healthy kick up the arse of that movement. Again, like the Stop the War actions, it rejected apathy and routinism. It groped towards organisational solutions in its development of a Federation. But it was trapped in a populism that was sometimes crass, and in a search for stunts that would bring it to the attention of the media. In its search for such publicity, it went so far as to immerse itself in populist electoralism with its involvement in the Kensington by-election. These contradictions were eventually to lead to the break-up of the old CWF, with some offering a sometimes trenchant critique of their own politics up to that time. However, no organisational alternative was offered beyond a conference in Bradford that attempted to reach out to other anarchists and to offer a non-sectarian approach at unity of those seriously interested in advancing the movement. Alas, these moves were stillborn and many of those who had offered critiques of the old ways of operating dropped out of activity altogether. A rump remained that has carried on maintaining Class War as both a grouping and a paper in the same old way*".

The next quote is from 'ACF- The first ten years': "*The shipwreck of anarchist communism in the late 70s meant that there was no anarchist communist organisation, not even a skeletal one, that could relate to the riots of 1981 and to the miners strike of 1984-5 as well as to mobilisations like the Stop the City actions of 1984. But in autumn 1984 two comrades, one a veteran of the ORA/AWA/LCG, had returned from France where they had been living and working and where they had been involved in the libertarian communist movement. A decision was made to set up the Libertarian Communist Discussion Group (LCDG) with the aim of creating a specific organisation. Copies of the Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists, left over from the AWA/LCG days, were distributed to bookshops, with a contact address for the Anarchist-Communist Discussion Group (ACDG). Progress was slow, until contact with the comrade who produced *Virus*, a duplicated magazine that defined itself as 'Anarcho-socialist'. This comrade had broken with the politics of the SWP and rapidly moved in an anarchist direction. Apart from its sense of humour, *Virus* was defined to a certain extent by its critiques of Leninism and of Marxism-not surprising considering the comrade's past experiences. From issue 5 *Virus* became the mouthpiece of the LCDG, and there were a series of articles on libertarian organisation. Other people were attracted to the group, and it transformed itself into the ACDG, which proclaimed a long-term aim of setting up a national anarchist-communist organisation. This came much sooner than expected, with the growth of the group, and a splinter from the Direct Action Movement, Syndicalist Fight, merging with the group. In March 1986 the Anarchist Communist Federation was officially founded, with an agreed set of aims and principles and constitutional structure that had been developed in the previous six months*"⁴.

10) Given that some of the elements involved in the formation of the AF had been through the route which led from the ORA to the neo-leftist Libertarian Communist Group, it is not altogether surprising that the ICC originally saw the Anarchist Communist Federation as another expression of this leftist type of anarchism⁵, especially because from the start many of its activities ap-

4. <http://www.afed.org.uk/org/issue42/acf10yrs.html>

5. http://en.internationalism.org/wr/238_leftcom.htm

peared to offer little more than an anarchist gloss on a whole plethora of leftist campaigns, not least its involvement in anti-fascism. However, what this assessment missed was the fact that the ACF contained components that indicated an attempt to avoid a complete descent into leftism. The desertion to Trotskyism by some of ORA's founding members did not go unopposed at the time and resulted in splits that gave rise to various short-lived groups such as the Anarchist Workers' Association; but perhaps more importantly, those who formed ACF tried to draw some key lessons from this whole experience, not least on the questions of unions and national liberation: "*What should be remarked upon is the quantum leap that the ACF made in its critique of the unions. A critique of anarcho-syndicalism was deepened and strengthened. At the same time the ACF broke with the ideas of rank-and-file which had characterised the ORA/AWA/LCG period, as well as any false notions about national liberation and self-determination*" ('ACF – the first ten years'). At the same time, rather than dogmatically adhering to the 'platformist' tradition, the ACF saw a number of different currents as part of its inheritance, as can be seen in the series of articles 'In the tradition' that began in *Organise* 52. These included the 26 platform, the Friends of Durruti, Socialisme ou Barbarie, situationism and the left communists of Germany, Holland and Britain. But lacking a real understanding of the internationalist tendencies in anarchism, and convinced that the ACF had emerged out of leftism without ever really questioning its origins, we responded to these developments by dismissing the ACF's interest in the communist left as a form of parasitism, even though the ACF hardly fulfilled our definition of a parasitic organisation⁶. These false assumptions were reinforced by the ACF's decision to drop the 'communist' from its name at the end of the 90s.

11) In London in 1896, at a stormy Congress of the Socialist International, the application of the anarchist delegations to join the organisation was rejected, marking the definitive exclusion of the anarchists from the International. The vote to exclude them was conducted on a basis that has been disputed in some quarters, and a number of the socialists present in body or spirit (including Keir Hardie and William Morris) opposed the decision. This is not the place to evaluate these events; but they do illustrate the difficult and often traumatic relationship between the anarchist and marxist wings of the workers' movement, which had only recently been through the split between Marx and Bakunin at the end of the First International. Moments of attraction and repulsion continued to occur throughout the history of the movement. The tremendous vistas opened up by the revolutionary wave that began in 1917 also gave rise to hopes that the traditional split between marxist and anarchist revolutionaries would be healed, with anarcho-syndicalists attending the first congresses of the Third International and anarchists fighting alongside Bolsheviks in the overthrow of bourgeois power in Russia. These hopes were to be dashed very quickly, to a considerable extent because the Bolsheviks, imprisoned in the new soviet state, began suppressing other expressions of the revolutionary movement within Russia, most notably the anarchists. It's certainly true that some of the anarchists – such as those who attempted to blow up the Bolshevik Moscow HQ in 1918 – lacked all sense of revolutionary responsibility, but the repression meted out by the Bolsheviks encompassed clearly proletarian trends like the anarcho-syndicalists around Maximoff. The world-wide triumph of the counter-revolution

6. Thus, we have generally defined a parasitic group as one that has the same platform as an existing communist organisation and exists largely to attack it and undermine it. But the ACF's platform was still nowhere near that of any of the left communist groups and it showed a rather consistent lack of interest in these organisations. On the other hand there have been leftist groups which have acted as destructive parasites on the communist left, such as the Iranian UCM or the Spanish Hilo Rojo group, and we based our view of the ACF on our experience with these groups. In other words, the notion of the ACF as parasitic was consequent on seeing it as leftist.

then reinforced the isolation and separation of the remaining revolutionary minorities, although there were moments of convergence, for example between the council communists and some expressions of anarchism, between the Italian left and the group around Camillo Berneri in Spain (Camillo was the father of Marie Louise Berneri, who had been active in the War Commentary group in the UK, as mentioned in the first part of this article). But the role of the CNT in Spain, and the overt participation of some anarchist tendencies in the Resistance and even in the official armies of the 'Liberation', increased the divide between anarchism and the marxists, particularly those who had descended from the Italian communist left, who were inclined to conclude that anarchism as a whole had gone the way of Trotskyism in definitively abandoning internationalism, and thus the workers' movement, during the war⁷.

12) The battles of May 1968 were often fought under the black and red banner – symbolically expressing an attempt to recover what was genuinely revolutionary in both the anarchist and marxist traditions. A number of the groups that formed the ICC had begun their lives in anarchism of one kind or another, so from the beginning of our organisation there was an understanding that anarchism was anything but a monolithic bloc and that many of the new generation, in its fervent rejection of social democracy and Stalinism, would initially be attracted to the ideals of anarchism. At the same time, this more open attitude was accompanied by a need to mark ourselves off as a distinct tendency with coherent positions; and under the influence of political immaturity and a lack of historical knowledge this necessary response was often marred by a somewhat sectarian attitude. The ICC's debate about proletarian groups in the late 70s was the first conscious attempt to go beyond these sectarian reactions. But the proletarian political milieu went through a phase of crisis at the beginning of the 1980s and this included the 'Chenier' affair in the ICC. To a considerable extent the crisis that affected the ICC had its epicentre in Britain, and its aftermath created a wall of suspicion around the ICC, most notably among the libertarian currents who tended to see our efforts to defend the organisation as expressions of an innate Stalinism. This wall has never really been breached. Despite moments of dialogue⁸, the relationship between the ICC and the anarchist/libertarian milieu in Britain has been particularly difficult: by the end of the 1990s, the ICC had been expelled from the No War But The Class War group formed in response to the Balkans war and banned from AF meetings in London. It must also be admitted that the ICC's own errors contributed to this poor state of affairs: in particular, a hasty dismissal of Direct Action and the AF as leftist groups, based on an ignorance of their historical background, and a schematic and heavy-handed application of the notion of political parasitism in the context of the NWBTCW group. At the same time, the anarchists' suspicious and sometimes uncomradely attitude towards the ICC has deeper roots in history and theory, above all in relation to the question of the organisation of revolutionaries, and these roots also need to be thoroughly examined. Despite all these obstacles, the appearance since the early 2000s of a new generation of elements attracted to revolutionary ideas, largely mediated through libertarian communism, has provided the possibility of a fresh beginning. Through our participation in online discussion forums like libcom.org, it became evident to us that

7. There were exceptions. For example, Marc Chirik of the French communist left maintained a very fraternal relationship with Voline during the war: Voline's group was certainly internationalist. Similarly, although the French communist left vigorously opposed inviting the main anarchist organisations to the post-war conference of internationalists in Holland, they had no objection to an old anarchist militant, a contemporary of Engels, chairing the meeting.

8. For example, the ICC's participation in the meetings of the London Workers' Group in the 1980s and in the 'third' incarnation of No War But The Class War around the war in Afghanistan in 2001.

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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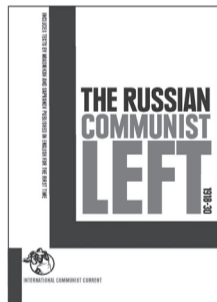
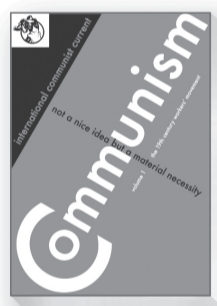
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90 years after Kronstadt

A tragedy that's still being debated in the revolutionary movement

The discussion on the ICC's French internet forum has been particularly animated and passionate these last few weeks around a tragic event: the bloody crushing of the insurgents at Kronstadt.

Ninety years ago, in 1921, the workers stood up to the Bolshevik Party demanding, amongst other things, the restoration of real power to the soviets. The Bolshevik Party then took the terrible decision to repress them.

A participant in this forum debate called Youhou sent us a letter which we warmly welcome and which we publish here below. She makes both the effort to synthesize the different points of view coming out of the posts and to clearly take a position.

Here, it's not at all our aim to close the discussion. On the contrary, it seems to us that in the spirit of the comrade, her text is just one stage in the debate.

Finally, we agree with her in the last lines when she says: "*Join in this passionate debate! Fraternal debate is our best weapon faced with the ideology of the bourgeoisie*"¹.

1. That's why we are not responding here to comrade Youhou. Not only do we share the essential points of her analysis but this debate needs to carry on. To read the position of the ICC on this tragic event, we refer our readers to two of our articles:

a) 'The repression of Kronstadt in March 1921: A tragic error of the workers' movement' (<http://en.internationalism.org/book/export/html/117>)

b) '1921: Understanding Kronstadt' *International Review* 104 (http://en.internationalism.org/ir/104_kronstadt.html)

On the occasion of the 90th anniversary of the repression of Kronstadt, a very lively discussion has just taken place on the ICC's French forum which merits some comments. The discussion is very interesting because it turns out to be very representative of the positions within the working class on this subject. The crushing of the working class revolt of the Kronstadt soviet by the revolutionary army on the orders of the Bolshevik Party in 1921 is approached without taboo and without any stilted language on the forum. The will to draw lessons from this massacre, so important for the future revolution, brings together all the comrades on this forum and confirms what Rosa Luxemburg wrote on the Russian revolution: "*it is clear that only a deep critique, and not a superficial apology, can draw from these events the treasures of lessons that they carry*". For decades this debate has been marked by two diametrically opposed tendencies: the Trotskyists who think that the repression was a "tragic necessity" and the anarchists who think that the Bolshevik Party, as a formally constituted party, contained within itself the germs of this degeneration, and that this calls into question the very necessity for the existence of a party of the working class.

Was it an "error" or a tragic "necessity"?

Here's one of the ideas put forward by Jean-notrouge: "*The proletariat cannot constitute itself into a class and then, after the revolution, into a dominant class without a tenacious political struggle within itself, against bourgeois influences borne by different so-called 'workers' institutions, organisations and parties, a struggle which can only involve episodes of confrontation and violence*".

Mouhamed, a little more nuanced, explains that the Bolsheviks could not have done otherwise.

But on this point, I fully agree with Tibo and Underthegun: the crushing of Kronstadt did not go in the direction of the revolution. This massacre was absolutely not necessary and precipitated the defeat of the Russian revolution. Why? These were workers that were killed and massacred and not some white-collar counter-revolutionaries as Trotsky himself conceded: "*We waited as long as possible for our blind comrades, the sailors, to open their eyes and see where the mutiny was leading them*". Communist society cannot be born from fratricidal struggles: such a massacre cannot be a weapon of revolutionaries. Tibo cor-

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 stultified regimes which arose in the USSR, eastern Europe, China, Cuba etc and were called 'socialist' or 'communist' were just a particularly brutal form of the universal tendency towards state capitalism, itself a major characteristic of the period of decadence.

* Since the beginning of the 20th century, all wars are imperialist wars, part of the deadly struggle between states large and small to conquer or retain a place in

the international arena. These wars bring nothing to humanity but death and destruction on an ever-increasing scale. The working class can only respond to them through its international solidarity and by struggling against the bourgeoisie in all countries.

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

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

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

* With the decadence of capitalism, the unions everywhere have been transformed into organs of capitalist order within the proletariat. The various forms of union



rectly says: "*Yes, we have a 'finally human' world to build. And that cannot be based on the bodies of workers killed by other workers*". I would add: and above all in the manner of taking their families hostage and condemning the Red Army soldiers to death if they refused to fire on them... Class violence is certainly necessary, but for the working class it is determined by the final aim, which is the liberation of humanity from the yoke of exploitation. Comrades disagreeing with this point rightly recalled the support the Bolsheviks gave to the working class. The party, under the leadership of Lenin, had never betrayed the interests of the proletariat and by refusing all political alliances to form a mass party, it made the choice to remain a minority among the workers and tirelessly repeated the necessity not to have any confidence in the Social Democrats. The party defended internationalism to the hilt. The Bolsheviks supported the workers in their struggle and stayed at their side even when they knew that they were making mistakes.

How did the Bolsheviks commit such a crime?

Comrade Mouhamed writes: "*For me, if there had been a world revolution, there would have been no Kronstadt, nor anything like it*". It is true that the isolation of Russia is a fundamental cause of the downfall of the revolution. Many workers were killed in the civil war; the soviets were partially depopulated and were to a large extent limited to military committees, with a few members deciding which strategies to adopt. When the President of the Bund (Jewish Communist Party) asked at the 7th Soviet Congress what the Central Committee was doing, Trotsky responded "*The CC is at the front!*" Added to this was the draconian food rationing, a result of the starvation in the Ukraine, Russia's bread basket. The involvement of the German proletariat, by infecting other European sections of the proletariat, then the 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

world, would have given the Russian revolution a second breath. In its pamphlet on the period of transition, the ICC says: "*But the worse danger of the counter-revolution didn't come from the 'Kulaks' or from the workers lamentably massacred at Kronstadt, nor from the 'White plots' that the Bolsheviks saw behind this revolt. It was over the bodies of the German workers massacred in 1919 that the counter-revolution prevailed and it was through the bureaucratic apparatus of what was supposed to be the 'semi-state' of the proletariat that it was most powerfully expressed*". With the wearing out of the soviets, the foundation stone of the dictatorship of the proletariat; with the revolution hemmed in by the national frontiers of Russia, the Bolshevik Party found itself faced with choices that were very heavy with consequences and chose the worst: physically eliminating their class brothers.

The isolation of Russia in the process of the world revolution partly explains the attitude of the Bolsheviks but doesn't explain why the soviets turned against the party: if they hadn't rebelled, then the question wouldn't even be posed. As I maintain, along with Underthegun, we very clearly see in the demands of the Kronstadt soviet ("all power to the soviets"), but also in the waves of strikes that hit Moscow and Petrograd (all three regions that had been at the avant-garde of the October insurrection), that a gulf was opening up between the party and the working class. This is a radio broadcast aimed at the "workers of the entire world" recorded on March 6, 1921: "*We are partisans of soviet power, not of parties. We are for the free elections of representatives of the worker masses. The soviet puppets manipulated by the Communist Party have always been deaf to our needs and demands; we have only received one response: bullets (...) Comrades! Not only do they mislead you, but they deliberately misrepresent the truth and defame us in the most despicable fashion (...) In Kronstadt, all power is exclusively in the hands of revolutionary sailors, soldiers and workers (...) Long live the revolutionary proletariat and peasantry! Long live the power of the freely elected soviets!*" Whether one agrees with the demands or not, it is incontestable that the soviets directly put themselves against a party that they henceforth saw as an enemy. For my part, I think that the assimilation of the party into the state, a reactionary and conservative organ by nature, led the

Continued on page 5

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*.