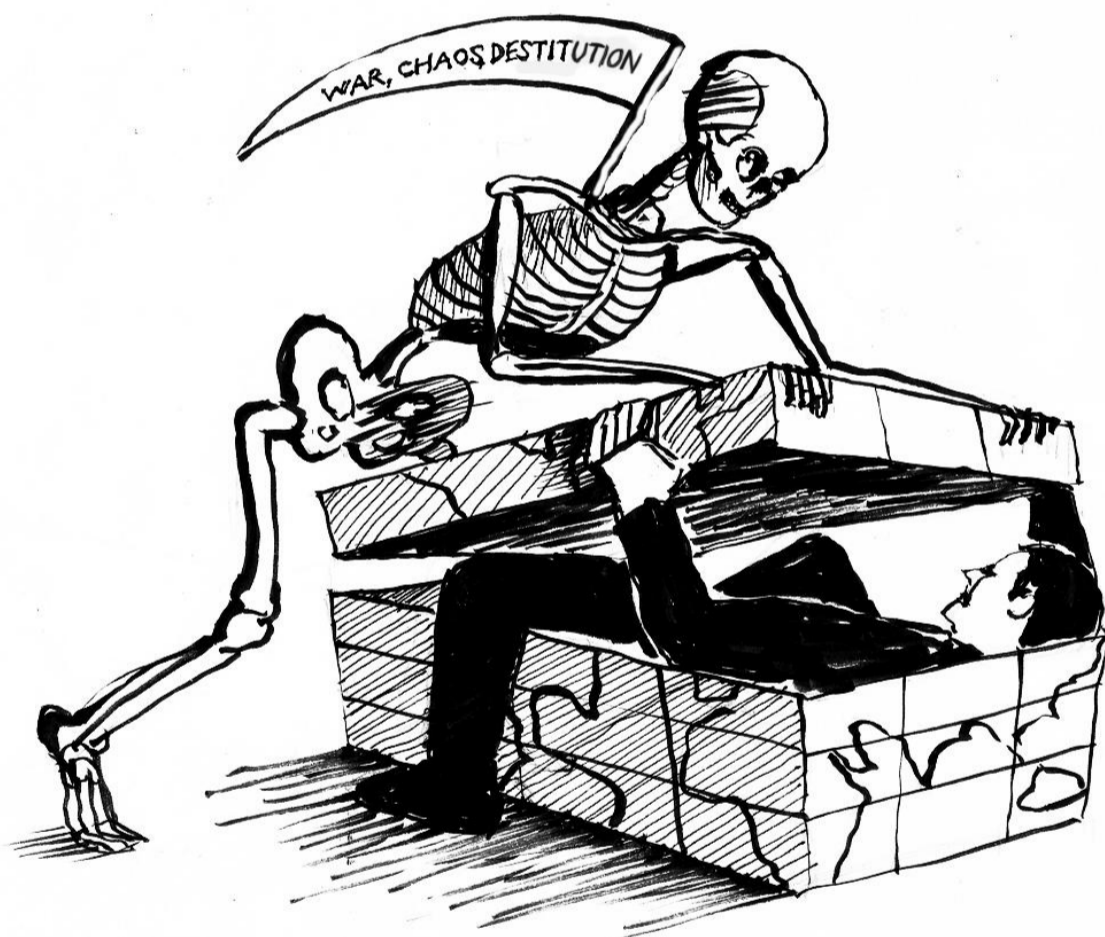




world revolution

Economic depression, war, social decay

Only the class struggle offers a way out



The dramatic worsening of the world economic crisis over the summer gives us a clear indication that the capitalist system really is on its last legs. The 'debt crisis' has demonstrated the literal bankruptcy not only of the banks, but of entire states; and not only the states of weak economies like Greece or Portugal but key countries of the Eurozone and on top of it all, the most powerful economy in the world: the USA.

And if the crisis is global, it is also historic. The mountain of debt that has become so visible over the last few years is only the consequence of capitalism trying to postpone or hide the economic crisis which surfaced as far back as the late 1960s and early 70s. And as today's 'recession' reveals its real face as a genuine **depression**, we should recognise that this is really the same underlying crisis as the one which paralysed production in the 1930s and tipped the world towards imperialist war. A crisis expressing the historical obsolescence of the capitalist system.

The difference between today's depression and

that of the 1930s is that capitalism today has run out of choices. In the 1930s, the ruling class was able to offer its own barbaric solution to the crisis: mobilising society for imperialist war and re-organising the world market. This re-organisation created the conditions for launching the 'boom' of the 50s and 60s. This was an option at that time, partly because world war did not yet automatically imply the destruction of capitalism itself, and there was still room for new imperialist masters to emerge in the aftermath of the war. But it was an option above all because the working class in those days had tried and failed to make its revolution (after the First World War) and had been plunged into the worst defeat in its history, at the hands of Stalinism, fascism, and democracy.

Today world war is only an option in the most abstract theoretical sense. In reality, the road to a global imperialist war is obstructed by the fact that, in the wake of the collapse of the old two-bloc arrangement, capitalism today is unable to forge any stable imperialist alliances. It's also obstructed by the absence of any unifying ideol-

ogy capable of persuading the majority of the exploited in the central capitalist countries that this system is worth fighting and dying for. Both these elements are linked to something deeper: the fact that the working class today has not been defeated and is still capable of fighting for its own interests against the interests of capital.

Dangers facing the working class

Does this mean that we heading by some automatic process towards revolution? Not at all. The revolution of the working class can never be 'automatic' because it requires a higher level of consciousness than any past revolution in history. It is nothing less than the moment where human beings first assume control of their own production and distribution, in a society with relations of solidarity at its heart. It can therefore only be prepared by increasingly massive struggles which generate a wider and deeper class consciousness.

Since the latest phase of the crisis first raised its head in the late 60s, there have been many important struggles of the working class, from the

international wave sparked off by the events of May 1968 in France to the mass strikes in Poland in 1980 and the miners' strike in Britain in the mid-80s. And even though there was a long retreat in the class struggle during the 1990s, the last few years have shown that there is now a new generation which is becoming actively 'indignant' (to use the Spanish term) about the failure of the present social order to offer it any future. In the struggles in Tunisia, Egypt, Greece, Spain, Israel and elsewhere, the idea of 'revolution' has become a serious topic for discussion, just as it did in the streets of Paris in 1968 or Milan in 1969.

But for the moment this idea remains very confused: 'revolution' can easily be mistaken for the mere transfer of power from one part of the ruling class to another, as we saw most clearly in Tunisia and Egypt, and as we are now seeing in Libya. And within the recent movements, it is only a minority which sees that the struggle against the current system has to declare itself openly as a **class** struggle, a struggle of the proletariat against the entire ruling class. After four decades of crisis, the working class, especially in the central countries of capitalism, no longer even has the same shape that it had in the late 60s. Many of the most important concentrations of industry and of class militancy have been dispersed to the four winds. Whole generations have been affected by permanent insecurity and the atomisation of unemployment. The most desperate layers of the working class are in danger of falling into criminality, nihilism, or religious fundamentalism.

In short, the long, cumulative decay of capitalist society can have the most profoundly negative effects on the ability of the proletariat to regain its class identity and to develop the confidence that it is capable of taking society in a new direction. And without the example of a working class struggle against capitalist exploitation, there can be many angry reactions against the unjust, oppressive, corrupt nature of the system, but they will not be able to offer a way forward. Some may

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The riots in Britain and capitalism's dead-end

In the aftermath of the riots which broke out across the country this week, the spokesmen of the ruling class – government, politicians, media, etc – are subjecting us to a deafening campaign aimed at getting us to support their ‘programme’ for the future: deepening austerity and increased repression against anyone who complains about it.

Growing austerity, because they have no answer to the terminal economic crisis of their system. They can only continue to keep cutting jobs, wages, social benefits, pensions, health and education. All this can only mean a worsening of the very social conditions that gave rise to the riots, conditions which are convincing a large part of an entire generation that they have no future ahead of them. Which is why any serious discussion about the social and economic causes of the riots is being denounced as ‘excusing’ the rioters. They are criminals, we are told, and they will be dealt with as criminals. End of story. Which is all very convenient, because the state has no intention of pouring money into the inner cities as it did after the riots of the 80s.

Increased repression, because that is what our rulers can offer us. They are going to take maximum advantage of public concern about the destruction caused by the riots to increase spending on the police, to equip them with rubber bullets and water cannon, even to bring in curfews and put the army on the street. These weapons, along with increased surveillance of web-based social networks and the summary ‘justice’ being handed out to those arrested after the riots, will not only be used against looting and random mayhem. Our rulers know full well that the crisis is giving rise to a tide of social revolt and workers’ struggles which has spread from North Africa to Spain and from Greece back to Israel. They are perfectly aware that they will face such massive movements in the future, and for all their democratic pretensions they will be just as prepared to use violence against them as openly dictatorial regimes like Egypt, Bahrain or Syria. They already showed that during last year’s student struggles in Britain.

The ‘moral high ground’ of the ruling class

The campaign about the riots is based on our rulers’ claim that they are occupying the moral high ground. It is worth considering the substance of these claims.

The mouthpieces of the state condemn the violence of the riots. But this is the state that is now inflicting violence on a far bigger scale against the populations of Afghanistan and Libya. Violence that is presented every day as heroic and altruistic when it serves only the interests of our rulers.

The government and the media condemn lawlessness and criminality. But it was the brutality of their very own forces of law and order, the police, which sparked the riots in the first place, from the shooting of Mark Duggan to the arrogant treatment of his family and supporters who demonstrated outside Tottenham police station demanding to know what had happened. And this comes on top of a long history of people from areas like Tottenham dying in police custody or facing daily harassment on the streets.

The government and the media condemn the greed and selfishness of the looters. But they are the guardians and propagandists of a society which functions on the basis of organised greed, on the accumulation of wealth in the hands of a tiny minority. Meanwhile the rest of us are ceaselessly encouraged to consume the products that realise their profits, to identify our worth with the amount of stuff we can afford to buy. And since inequality is not only built into this system, but is getting worse and worse, it is no surprise when those at the bottom of the pile, who can’t afford the shiny things they are told they need, think that the answer to their problem is to nick what they can, when they can.

The rulers condemn this petty looting while participating in a vast operation of looting on the scale of the planet – the oil and logging corpora-

tions who ravage nature for gain, the speculators who are richly rewarded for pushing up the price of food, the arms dealers profiting from death and destruction, the respectable financial institutions who launder billions from the proceeds of the drug trade. An intrinsic part of this robbery is that a growing part of the exploited class is pushed into poverty, hopelessness, and crime. The difference is that the lowly law-breakers usually get punished, while the masters of crime do not.

In short: the morality of the ruling class does not exist.

The real question: how to resist

The real question facing those of us – the vast majority – who do not profit from this gigantic criminal enterprise called capitalism is this: how can we defend ourselves **effectively** when this system, now visibly drowning in debt, is obliged to take everything from us?

Do the riots we have seen in the UK this past week provide a method for fighting back, for taking control, for uniting our forces, for carving out a different future for ourselves?

Many of those taking part in the riots were clearly expressing their anger against the police and against the possessors of wealth, who they see as the main cause of their own poverty. But almost immediately the riots threw up more negative elements, darker attitudes fed by decades of social disintegration in the poorest urban areas, of gang culture, of buying into the dominant philosophies of every man for himself and ‘get rich or die trying’. This is how an initial protest against police repression got derailed by a chaos of frankly anti-social and anti-working class actions: intimidation and mugging of individuals, trashing of small neighbourhood shops, attacks on fire and ambu-

lance crews, and the indiscriminate burning of buildings, often with their residents still inside.

Such actions offer absolutely no perspective for standing up to the thieving system we live under. On the contrary, they only serve to widen divisions among those who suffer from the system. Faced with attacks on local shops and buildings, some residents armed themselves with baseball bats and formed ‘protection units’. Others volunteered for clean-up operations the day after the riots. Many ordinary people complained about the lack of police presence and demanded stronger measures.

Who will profit most from these divisions? The ruling class and its state. As we have said: those in power will now claim a popular mandate for beefing up the machinery of police and military repression, for branding all forms of protest and political dissent as forms of criminality. Already the riots have been blamed on ‘anarchists’ and only a week or two ago the Met made the mistake of publishing recommendations about grassing on people who are in favour of a stateless society.

The riots are a reflection of the dead-end reached by the capitalist system. They are not a form of working class struggle; rather they are an expression of rage and despair in a situation where the working class is absent as a class. The looting was not a step towards a higher form of struggle, but an obstacle in its way. Hence the justified frustration of the Hackney woman who has been watched by thousands on Youtube, denouncing the looting because it was preventing people from actually getting together and working out what the struggle was about. *“You lot piss me off...we are not all gathering together and fighting for a cause. We’re running down Footlocker...”* (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G18EmYGGpYI>)

Gathering together and fighting for a cause: these are the methods of the working class; this is the morality of the proletarian class struggle, but they are in danger of being eaten away by atomisation and nihilism to the point where whole sectors of the working class have forgotten who they are.

But there is an alternative. The re-emergence of class identity, the reappearance of the class struggle, can be discerned in the massive and inclusive movements in Tunisia, Egypt, Spain, Greece or Israel. These movements, with all their weaknesses, give us a glimpse of a different way of fighting: through street assemblies where everyone can have a voice; through intense political discussion where every issue can be discussed; through organised defence against attacks by police and thugs, through workers’ demonstrations and strikes; through raising the question of revolution, of a completely different form of society, one based not on dog eat dog but on solidarity between human beings, not on production for sale and profit but on the production of what we really need.

In the short term, because of the divisions created by the riots, because the state is having some success in plugging its message that any struggle against the present system can only end in wanton destruction, it is likely that the development of a real class movement in the UK is going to face even greater difficulties than before. But worldwide, the perspective remains: deepening crisis of this truly sick society, and increasingly conscious and organised resistance by the exploited. The ruling class in Britain will not be spared from either.

ICC, 14.8.11

In the face of the riots, the bourgeoisie offers repression and lies

The ruling class in Britain has offered a number of explanations for the recent riots.

Whatever their individual analyses, those in parliament recalled to discuss the four nights of riots stood united behind the wave of state repression in some of the country’s most deprived areas. Speakers queued up with suggestions about how the capitalist state can exercise social control, intimidate groups and individuals, monitor all our communications, and beef up its ability to physically confront any threat it chooses to identify. In practice, courts have carried on sentencing overnight, people have been remanded for sentencing in higher courts; there have been dawn raids with doors broken down, and the press have published galleries of people in the hope that others will, in the words of the *Sun*, “shop a moron.”

After riots in the 1980s the Conservative government acknowledged that poverty and unemployment were factors in the situation. Today Prime Minister Cameron says *“This is criminality, pure and simple.”* Beyond that he’s said *“There are pockets of our society that are not just broken but, frankly, sick.”* Leaving aside the reality of a capitalist society that is actually incurably sick in its fundamentals, Dr Cameron’s ‘treatment’ following this ‘diagnosis’ seems to be mostly violent state repression.

Opposition leader Ed Miliband has attacked Cameron for being *“shallow and superficial”* and thinks there’s something more *“complex”* that has to be understood. He thinks the riots echo something beyond ‘criminality’. *“We have got to avoid simplistic answers. There’s a debate some people are starting: is it culture, is it poverty and lack of opportunity? It’s probably both.”* On the ‘culture’ side of the equation Miliband says *“It’s not the first time we’ve seen this kind of ‘me-first, take what you can’ culture”* and goes on to list *“The bankers who took millions while destroying people’s savings”* and *“the MPs who fiddled their expenses”* and *“the people who hacked phones at the expense of victims”* all of them described as

“greedy, selfish and immoral.”

The differences with Cameron are only at the level of rhetoric. When it comes to supporting repressive measures Miliband had no hesitations; indeed he complained that Cameron had *“undermined”* the police. On the left wing of the Labour Party, Ken Livingstone and Dianne Abbott were among those who backed an increase in police numbers, with the latter also in favour of curfews, that would have to be enforced by police swamping of the poorest areas.

SWP conflate riots and struggles

The riots mostly occurred in areas of high unemployment and deprivation. Many people have a natural sympathy for those living in the poorest circumstances and left-wing groups have for a long time tapped into that feeling. Posing as an ‘alternative’ to the consensus in parliament the Socialist Workers Party in various headlines (13/8/11) announced an *“urban revolt spreading across Britain”*, declared the riots (using an expression from Martin Luther King) as *“the voice of the unheard”* and as *“One of the most powerful expressions of anger for decades.”* In the articles themselves they write about an *“explosion of bitterness and rage.”*

Anger can be channelled into activity that is productive. It can also lead to behaviour that is destructive and counter-productive. In the recent events, the initial protests against Mark Duggan’s killing, and the attacks on a number of police stations expressed a basic response to state repression. But this initial focus was very quickly overwhelmed by the indiscriminate burning of vehicles and buildings, muggings, looting of status symbols, attacks on strangers, and all the rest of the phenomena that the media has had such a feeding frenzy over. These actions were expressions of nihilism, despair and the emptiness in people’s lives. There was anger to start with, but, as time went on, there was little left but cynical outbursts of imitation.

In an article in *WR* 344 on the class struggle we identify three distinct responses from the working class: survival, struggle and capitulation. The majority of workers are still tending to accept the current situation and just trying to survive through fear of poverty and unemployment. A small minority has taken the path of struggle. However, *“part of the working class is overwhelmed by its situation and falls into a lumpen mass where it may resort to crime, preying on other members of the class, or it may become lost in drugs and alcohol or become fodder for racist and other extremist groups. There are many variations in the individual route taken but they are all marked by the absence of a sense of being part of a class defined by the qualities of solidarity and collective struggle.”* Whatever the social origins of those who participated in the riots, the dead-end and destructive actions were in continuity with those who have capitulated in the face of the force of the economic crisis. It’s true that not only workers (in work and out of work for various lengths of time) but also those still at school or college, petit-bourgeois, career criminals, and others took part in the random burnings and similar acts. The social position becomes secondary in such events; but we can say quite unambiguously that the working class as a class was absent from the riots. No matter how many were involved across the country they only ever amounted to a mass of desperate individuals.

The SWP protest that *“It’s not about people smashing up their local area for no reason. It’s about them expressing their anger, wherever they happen to be.”* If you’re at home and you smash it up, you might well be expressing your anger, but you’re certainly not fighting for anything¹.

1. For more on some of the issues raised here see http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2005_suburbs for an ICC article on three weeks of rioting in the Parisian banlieues in 2005.

Murdoch scandal: The lies of the rich and famous

"You cannot hope to bribe or twist, (thank God!) the British journalist. But, seeing what the man will do, unbribed, there's no occasion to."

(Humbert Wolfe)

Many workers know from bitter experience the nasty, lying nature of the British media¹. The 'free press', 'unbiased' TV, are merely means for the ruling class to frame the way we see and understand the world: an important part of totalitarian state capitalism's repressive apparatus aimed at ensuring that we don't even want to think about changing it².

If nothing else, the top-rated scandal around Rupert Murdoch's News International (NI, the UK arm of Murdoch's global, US-based News Corporation) over the summer of 2011 briefly cast this truth in the spotlight. The phone-hacking scandal showed how police, politicians and the media have for years worked with and for each other 'in the national interest' against the majority of the population. It revealed a world of bribery, corruption, hypocrisy and cynicism – including the flouting of its own 'laws' when it suits – which truly reflects the life of the ruling class.

To highlight just some examples:

- For decades, top politicians from all parties maintained close personal relations with members of the Murdoch clan and their senior employees. They brought ex-Murdoch hacks into the heart of government. Current Prime Minister David Cameron hired ex *News of the World* (NoW) editor Andy Coulson (who had previously resigned

¹ Recall *The Sun*'s disgusting campaign against those who died at the Hillsborough football tragedy in 1989; or the BBC's disinformation during the 1984/5 miners' strike, in particular when the Corporation cut and pasted film to make it appear that mass pickets had attacked police at the Orgreave works, when in fact it was the other way around.

² During WW1, nation states almost everywhere tried to control all economic and political activity to mount a war economy – a universal trend which has persisted and increased to the present day. Concerning relations with the press in GB, this was exemplified by the appointment of William Max Hastings (Lord Beaverbrook), owner of *The Daily Express*, as wartime Director for Propaganda, and of Alfred Harmsworth (First Viscount Northcliffe), the biggest media magnate of his day and owner of *The Daily Mail*, as Minister of Information. In WW2, Beaverbrook held several ministerial posts within the wartime coalition headed by Churchill.

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Against the accusations of "mindless violence" one SWP article insisted that "the destruction of property has been targeted". This is blatantly untrue. The burning of the furniture store in Croydon, the derelict buildings that were torched just to make a spectacular blaze, the homes that people lost when they were gutted by fire – none of these were planned, and, whether they were or not, it rather seems that the SWP writes them off as so much 'collateral damage'.

The SWP (15/8/11) claims that "The state lost control". This is clearly a lie. Those on the street were not organised to do anything much more than loot, nor were they around in the sort of numbers that could cause the police any problems. Right wing Tories might bang on about the difficulties faced by the police, but the police tactics seemed to be a typical response to the situation, in line with what they've done in the past.

Ultimately the SWP's propaganda conflates rioting and class struggle. This is what all factions of the bourgeoisie habitually do. Any protest can be described as a 'riot' in order to justify an attack from the forces of law and order. On the other hand, confusion over the significance of anti-social rioting can undermine workers' capacity for struggle. To those who live on the poorest estates, and in the most deprived neighbourhoods, revolutionaries need to offer their solidarity, but also the only perspective for the transformation of society, that is, the conscious, self-organised struggle of the international working class. **Car 22/8/11**

from NI because of illegal phone hacking 'on his watch') as his top communication strategist. Coulson again resigned – this time from his Tory post – but that didn't prevent his subsequent arrest on suspicion of illegally obtaining information and bribery of police, along with (so far) 12 other current or former NI employees. Labour Leader Ed Milliband appointed another former NI toady to his team who in January sent a text to Labour Parliamentarians telling them not to pursue questions of phone hacking and NI!

- For years, police have been involved in "inappropriate" links with NI, from low ranking officers taking bribes for passing on information to close ties between the leadership of the Metropolitan Police and NI. This includes top brass being wined and dined regularly by NI during the period when the Met was "investigating" allegations about NI's use of illegal information-gathering and the Met employing large numbers of ex-NI employees in its PR Department. Britain's top three police chiefs resigned during the scandal.

But now the 'great and the good' say that's going to change. The mighty Murdoch Empire – the 'unacceptable face of media capitalism' – has been, via newspaper exposes and televised proceedings of a Parliamentary Committee, humiliated and humbled so normal service can resume. As if Murdoch's media outlets were the only ones pushing the ruling class's propaganda; the only ones involved in lies, hacking, bribery or employing private investigators to spy. As if all this wasn't intrinsic to capitalism!³

Like last year's furore over the corrupt misuse of MP's expenses, the ruling class has tried to use the exposure of the sordid realities of its own life to pretend that it's merely a problem of a few rogues who don't represent the norm and who've now been vanquished. At the same time, it's trying to manipulate the scandal to clean out its own stable, heal its own divisions and to ensure that its all-important media mouthpieces function as they should.

So what lay behind the eruption of this scandal, and why did it explode when it did?

From saviour to sinner

Murdoch and NI have played a particular role in the life of the British bourgeoisie over the past 40 years. At election time, Murdoch's papers always support the team the ruling class wants to get into power, and were integral to the state's ability to gain the result it wants. NI also drove through the 'modernisation' of the print industry in the 1980's through its role in crushing the print workers, who along with the miners, steel and car workers were important battalions of the working class in Britain. Murdoch print media (*The Sun*, *The News of the World* and *The Times*) have been at the forefront of the state's dissemination of Islamophobia, nationalism, xenophobia and scapegoating of the weakest elements of society. Like Margaret Thatcher, Rupert Murdoch has played the role of the great right wing hate figure for the left-wing of British capitalism.

As long as NI and the Murdochs were useful to the British bourgeoisie's domination of society, these ties and activities were tolerated and encouraged.

But three elements contributed to the relative diminution of Murdoch's standing in the UK – a fall from grace which also has ramifications for his influence in the US.

(1) Murdoch and his son James got greedier. Not content with some 40 per cent share of the UK press market, not content with 39 per cent ownership of the most profitable arm of the British me-

³ *The News of the World* came 5th in a list of those who used a private investigator to gain information illegally. This list was compiled by the government's Information Commissioner in 2006 from the meticulous records kept by the NI-employed private investigator who had been arrested. Top of this list was *The Daily Mail*, then *The Sunday People*, followed by *The Mirror*, then *The Mail on Sunday*. 9th on the list was *The Guardian*'s sister paper *The Observer*. Thus there is potential for the hacking scandal to "run and run". In addition the report also shows that insurance firms and loan companies also used PI's (but doesn't dwell on the prying and spying conducted by the state's own secret services). See the Information Commissioner's website <http://www.ico.gov.uk>

dia – satellite broadcaster BSkyB – the Murdoch machine wanted more: total control of BSkyB, enabling NI to 'bundle' TV, satellite, telephone, internet and newspaper packages at the expense of other UK outlets, threatening the "plurality" of the British media and undermining the whole illusion of a 'free press.' Indeed, Murdoch Jnr, head of NI's UK operations, had declared in 2009 his intention to "cut down to size" his main domestic and international broadcasting rival, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC). However, the BBC is the bedrock of the British bourgeoisie's media control: a formidable and well-respected plank of "soft power"⁴ at home and abroad. The response to Murdoch's grab was the formation of a powerful alliance of NI's media rivals and their supporters in the political arena. This cabal saw the right wing *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily Mail* join the left wing *Mirror* and *Guardian* and the BBC to sign an appeal for NI's bid to be blocked. Other sections of the British bourgeoisie recognised the validity of their case, notably Coalition Business Secretary Vince Cable, who said he would "wage war" against the proposed deal but who was then taken off the case by Cameron. The inexperienced Prime Minister was one of the slowest to recognise Murdoch's increasingly destabilising and divisive role, which is why, to bring him to heel, his links to Murdoch were highlighted more than any other politician's.

(2) The recent role of Murdoch's empire in the US in fostering the rabidly right-wing Fox News Network (while also being a major contributor to the President Obama's campaign coffers) has contributed to real difficulties for, and exaggerated divisions within, the US bourgeoisie⁵. This convinced more and more members of the UK ruling class that they needed to avoid such a polarisation within their ranks and to unify against Murdoch for the good of the state.

(3) Murdoch's support of US imperialism and strong Euro-sceptic views had helped reinforce powerful, pre-existing conflicts within the Brit-

⁴ So-called "soft-power" is essentially the new buzzword for state-sponsored propaganda which doesn't appear as such, part of the battle to win 'hearts and minds' at home and abroad, considered by the bourgeoisie as a necessary adjunct to imperialist domination. It includes the 'reach' obtained, for example, by Britain whose influence via the "independent" BBC World Service is the envy of its rivals. The importance of radio, press and broadcasting in this regard cannot be underestimated – witness the efforts at disinformation spread by US and British secret services around the issue of 'weapons of mass destruction' prior to the invasion of Iraq (See 'Deceiving the Public – The Iraq Propaganda Campaign' in *Unpeople* by Mark Curtis, published by Vintage, 2004, ISBN 0-099-46972-3).

⁵ See 'Political Decay and Economic Crisis: US Ruling Class Faced With No Easy Options': <http://en.internationalism.org/intern/159/us-ruling-class-no-easy-options>

Southern Cross: Capitalism doesn't care

The modern Southern Cross Care Home building on the apex of Bisterne Avenue, Walthamstow, East London, today stands empty. What's happened to its vulnerable residents – have they been transferred to hospitals, unsuited to their special needs, taking up beds designed for the temporarily sick? Or the minimum-waged carers who tended for them: are they now swelling the ranks of the unemployed?

When Britain's largest care home operator Southern Cross went out of business this summer – the end result of frenzied speculation – 31,000 residents (and their relatives) in 750 homes across the country and more than 43,000 employees were left in a state of acute anxiety. 3000 staff lost their jobs immediately.

While implementing major cuts in services and budgets, government and local authorities issued placebo assurances of an "orderly transfer" of residents and staff. But private care operator BUPA estimates that some 100,000 care home

ish ruling class and was increasingly at odds with post-Blair UK imperialist policy (pursued by both Brown and Cameron), which was to try to play a more independent role following the fiascos of the Afghan/Iraq wars which left the UK weakened.

Dog Eats Dog: Murdoch snared by his own methods

All the above factors combined to launch the 'phone-hacking scandal' only days before Murdoch's BSkyB bid was to have been rubber-stamped.

The timing was obviously no accident. Police (and thus the state) have known about *The News of the World*'s use of phone tapping for years – a NoW correspondent and a private investigator hired by NI were jailed in 2007 for related offences! And more: the story 'broke' at precisely the moment a controversial and well-publicised court case ended. Millie Dowler was a 13 year old schoolgirl brutally murdered in 2002. Following the trial of her killer, there emerged a carefully manipulated media campaign about the way her innocent family had been traumatised by their questioning during the case. This fomented a tremendous sense of outrage and into this fevered atmosphere *The Guardian* released 'news' that the police had known that *The News of the World* had hacked the dead girl's mobile and had even removed messages from her phone.

There could not have been a better moment to turn the public against Murdoch. In addition, *The Guardian* then revealed that *The NoW* had hacked the phones of the families of two other girls murdered in 2002 and those of soldiers killed in Afghanistan. After denying all culpability, amidst a Parliamentary hue and cry which drowned genuine public outrage, Murdoch and NI were forced onto the back foot, closed the *News of the World*, were publically pilloried in Parliament, then made their excuses and left.

In short, Murdoch was snared by his own methods: a well orchestrated witch-hunt combined with cynical manipulation of the news.

For the moment this campaign has gained the objectives of those backing it: the BSkyB bid is dead; NI's exclusive rights to Hollywood movies in GB have been called into question; Murdoch's spell over UK political life is broken and rifts in the British bourgeoisie temporarily papered-over with PM Cameron finally disciplined. On the back of all this, a sickening, united 'clean-up' campaign to restore the 'integrity' of media and politicians is underway.

Workers could well reflect on the nauseous nature of all this and raise the question: if this is how the ruling class treats its own, how much more vicious and venomous are they when confronting the working class? Media coverage of the recent riots may answer that. **JJ Gaunt: 23/8/11**

places could be "lost" in the coming 10 years while the number of people over 75 is expected to rise from 2008's figure of 4.8 million to 7.9 million by 2028.

The situation of the elderly being 'cared' for in their own homes is also bleak: state quango, the Quality Care Commission, this summer issued a damning report on services provided, citing cases of the infirm being left alone for up to 17 hours a day, of ill-trained and under-paid carers forced by time restraints to choose between changing their "customers" soiled clothes or feeding them.

The crisis-ridden state can't and won't take responsibility for this mess – in fact it's the source of it – while private companies say there's not enough profit in it for them and shut up shop.

While youth unemployment soars, there's nothing but misery at the end of their lives for millions of the elderly. Capitalism can't cope with them and doesn't care. **JJ Gaunt 24/8/11**

World economic crisis: a murderous summer

July and August were marked by some stunning economic developments. We saw a general panic involving governments, politicians, central banks and other international financial bodies. The masters of this world seem to have totally lost it. Every day, there were new meetings between heads of state: G8, G20, the European Central Bank the US Federal Bank....there were all kinds of ad hoc, improvised declarations and decisions, but none of them stopped the world economic crisis continuing its catastrophic progress. Generalised bankruptcy is advancing. The depression has become irreversible. In a few weeks, the plan to bail out the Greek economy has become out of date and the debt crisis has had a spectacular impact on countries as significant as Italy and Spain. The world's number one economic power, the USA, is itself going through a major political crisis faced with the necessity to deal with a debt of between 14,500 and 16,600 billion dollars. All of this in the context of a battle against a public deficit which has directly resulted in the fall in the credit rating of this giant with feet of clay. This is a first in its history. The train is going off the rails and the drivers are losing control of the engine. But where is the world economy as a whole going? Why does it seem to be tumbling into a bottomless pit? Above all: where is this leading humanity?

From lies to reality

We need to go back a bit. At the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 the collapse of the US bank Lehman Brothers pulled the economy to the edge of the abyss. The whole financial system was threatened to fall like a house of cards. The state had to take on a large part of the debts of the banks, which had already reached incalculable proportions. As a result the central banks themselves were put into a very dangerous situation. And throughout this whole time, the bourgeoisie showed its profound cynicism. We were treated to a series of arguments, each more dishonest than the one before. Of course, to some extent the bourgeoisie is duped by its own discourse. The exploiters can never have a truly lucid view of the collapse of their own system. However, lying, cheating, hiding the facts is a necessity for the exploiters if they are to keep the exploited under their yoke.

They began by saying that all this wasn't as serious as all that, that they were in complete control of the situation. Already this looked a bit ridiculous. However, the best was yet to come. At the beginning of 2009, after a near 20% fall in world growth, they promised us, with straight faces, a rapid exit from the crisis. It was all a passing storm; but the facts proved to be stubborn. The situation continued to deteriorate. Our famous leaders then moved on to the crudest nationalist arguments. We were told that it was all the fault of the American population who had taken out credit without any thought and bought houses without having the means to pay back the loans. It was all about the 'sub-primes'. Of course this explanation wasn't much use when the crisis hit the Eurozone, when it became obvious that the Greek state would not be able to avoid defaulting. The arguments then became even more shameful: the exploited in this country were described as cheats and profiteers. The crisis in Greece was specific to that country, just as it had been in Iceland and as it would be a few months later in Ireland. On the TV and the radio all the world leaders added their murderous little phrases. According to them, the Greeks were spending too much. The lower orders were living above their means, living like lords! But faced with the legitimate anger growing within these countries, the lies once again went up a notch. In Italy, good old Berlusconi was identified as bearing the sole responsibility for a totally irresponsible policy. But it was a bit harder to do the same with the very serious president of Spain, Zapatero.

Now, the bourgeoisie was pointing fingers at a part of itself. The crisis was in part at least the fault of the world of finance, those sharks greedy for growing profits. In the USA, in December 2008, Bernie Madoff, a former leader of Nasdaq and one of the best known and most respected investment advisers in New York, overnight became one of the worst crooks on the planet. And the credit ratings agencies were also used as scapegoats. At the end of 2007, they were accused of incompetence for neglecting the weight of sovereign debt in their calculations. Now they are accused of making too much of sovereign debt in their assessment of the Eurozone (for Moody's) and of the USA (for Standard and Poor's).

The crisis was by now openly, visibly world wide, so a more credible lie was needed, something closer to reality. Thus for a few months there have been growing rumours that the crisis is due to

an insupportable and generalised debt organised in the interest of the big speculators. In the summer of 2011, with the new explosion of the financial crisis, this line of argument has begun invading our screens.

Even if all these examples show that the bourgeoisie is finding it harder and harder to find credible lies, we can trust it to come up with new ones all the time. This is proved by the din coming from the parties of the left, the extreme left, and a number of economists, for whom the current aggravation of the crisis is down to the finance sector, and not to capitalism as such. Of course, the economy is buckling under the weight of debts which it can neither pay back or even service. This is undermining the value of currencies, raising the prices of goods and opening the door to a series of failures in the banks, the insurance companies, and states. It is threatening to lead to the paralysis of the central banks. But the fundamental cause of all this debt is not the insatiable greed of the financiers and speculators, and even less the consumption of the exploited. On the contrary, this generalised debt has been a vital necessity for the survival of the system for half a century, enabling the system to avoid massive overproduction. The progressive development of financial speculation is not the cause of the crisis, but a consequence of the means used by states to try to deal with the crisis for the last 50 years. Without the policy of easy credit, of debt growing to the point of becoming uncontrollable, capitalism would not have been able to sell its commodities in increasing amounts. It has been the accentuation of debt which has enabled the system to maintain growth throughout this period. The monstrous development of financial speculation, which has indeed become a real cancer for capitalism, is in reality only the product of capitalism's mounting difficulty in investing and selling at a profit. The historic exhaustion of this capacity, at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008, has opened the door wide to today's depression¹

A time of depression and bankruptcy

The events that unfolded in August are a clear expression of this. The president of the European Central Bank, JC Trichet, has recently declared that "the present crisis is as serious as the one in 1930". As proof, since the opening of the present phase of the crisis at the end of 2007, the survival of the world economy can be summed up in a few words: accelerated, titanic printing of bank notes by the central banks, and above all by the USA. What they called "Quantitative Easing" One and Two² were just the tip of the iceberg. In reality the

1. By depression we mean a long period of falling economic activity like in the 1930s. The media talk today about the risk of a new 'recession'. The American administration defines a 'recession' as a fall in production over three consecutive quarters. If we can call the current period a depression, it's because the period of stagnation and falling production we are now going through has nothing in common with what the ruling class defines as a recession, with its very limited time frame.

2. The central banks create more and more money to allow the mass of commodities created by the national capital to circulate. In normal times increases in the production of money depends on the growth of production. In fact, since the aggravation of the crisis in 2007, the central banks have produced more money than was necessary for the circulation of commodities (which in a global sense has diminished in the developed countries) since it very quickly became necessary for the central banks to buy up from the

Fed has literally inundated the economy, the banks and the American state with new dollars; and by extension it has done the same for the world economy as a whole. The banking system and world growth has been sustained thanks to this blood transfusion. The depression that began four years ago has been attenuated. But it's now coming back to haunt them in the summer of 2011.

One of the things that most scares the bourgeoisie is the current brutal slowdown in economic activity. The growth at the end of 2009 and 2010 has collapsed. In the USA, GNP in the third quarter of 2010 reached a value of 14,730 billion dollars. It had gone up to 3.5% since the low point of mid-2009, which was still 0.8% lower than where it had been prior to late 2007. Now, whereas an annual growth rate of 1.5% was predicted at the beginning of 2011, the real figure for the first quarter fell to about 0.4%. For the second quarter growth had been estimated at 1.3% but it's really closer to zero. We are seeing the same thing in the UK and the Eurozone. The world economy is seeing falling growth rates, and in certain major countries, like the USA, it's even heading to what the bourgeoisie calls negative growth. And yet in this recessionary context, inflation is on the rise. It is officially at 2.985% in the US but at 10% according to the calculations of the former director of the Fed, Paul Volcker. For China, which gives us the keynote for all the 'emerging' countries, it stands at over 9% annually.

This August, the general panic on the financial markets led, among other things, to an understanding that the money injected since the end of 2007 was not going to get the economy moving and coming out of the depression. At the same time it had in four years exacerbated the development of the world debt to the point where the collapse of the financial system is once again on the cards, but in an altogether worse economic situation than in 2007. Today the economic situation is so bad that the injection of new liquidities, even on a more reduced scale, is as vital as ever. The European Central Bank is daily forced to buy up the Italian and Spanish debt for a sum of around 2 billion euros or see these countries go under. So while this new money is indispensable for the day to day survival of the system, this cannot have even the limited impact that increasing the money supply has had since the end of 2007. It would require a whole lot more to soak up the debts which for Spain and Italy (and they are not the only ones) stand at hundreds of billions of euros. The possibility of France losing its AAA credit rating would be a step too far for the Eurozone. Only countries rated in this category can finance the European reserve fund. If France can no longer do this, the whole zone will fall apart. The panic we have seen in the first half of August is not yet over. We are seeing the bourgeoisie being brutally forced to recognise that maintaining continuous support for economic growth has become impossible, even on a limited scale. This is what is provoking the current lamentable spectacle. These are the underlying reasons for the splits in the American bourgeoisie on the question of raising the debt ceiling. The same goes for the much-fanfaired accords drawn up by the leaders of the Eurozone to bail out Greece, which had to be put into question a few days later by certain European governments. The conflict between the Democrats and the Republicans in the USA are not simple disagreements between responsible people and irresponsible people on the right as the bourgeois press presents it – even if the dogmatic, absurd demands of the right, and the Tea Party in particular, are certainly aggravating the problems facing the American ruling class. The inability of the leaders of the Eurozone to come to an ordered, consensual agreement towards European countries unable to repay their debts are not only

banks and states loans which could not be repaid at value by the borrowers. Despite this increase, since it became evident that neither the central banks nor the American state would be able to repay many of their debts, the Federal Reserve was obliged to create more money than its accounts and its rules usually allowed it to do, in order to make up for these 'toxic' debts. Thus at the end of 2009, it decided to issue an additional sum of 1700 billion dollars (this was QE1) and in November 2010 it decided to issue another 600 billion dollars – QE2

the product of the sordid interests of each national capital. They express a deeper reality, one which is dramatic for capitalism. The bourgeoisie is quite simply becoming aware that a new massive boost for the economy like the one carried out between 2008 and 2010 is particularly dangerous. It risks resulting in the collapse in value of the treasury bonds and the currency of these countries, including the Euro; a collapse which announces, as we have seen over the last few months, a surge in inflation.

What perspectives for the world economy?

The depression is there and the bourgeoisie can't stop it. This is what the summer of 2011 has brought us. The storm has broken. The world's leading power, around which the economy of the entire planet has been organised since 1945, is going towards defaulting on its debts. It would have been impossible to imagine this a while ago, but this historic reality is a sign of the bankruptcy of the whole world economy. The role the USA has played as an economic locomotive for more than 60 years is now finished. The USA has demonstrated this in public. It can no longer go on as before, however much part of their debt is taken over by countries like China or Saudi Arabia. The latter's own finances have become a major problem and they are not in a position to finance global demand. Who will take up the reins? The answer is simple: no one! The Eurozone is going from one crisis to another, at the level of both public and private debt, and is heading towards a break-up. The famous 'emerging countries', like China, are, in turn, completely dependent on American, European and Japanese markets. Despite their very low production costs, the last few years have shown that these economies have developed as what the media call 'bubble economies', i.e. on the basis of colossal investments than can never be returned. It's the same phenomenon we saw with what the specialists call the 'housing crisis' in the US and the 'new economy' a few years before. In both cases, the result is well known: a crash. China can raise the cost of its credit but crashes lie in store for the Middle Kingdom as they have done in the west. China, India, Brazil, far from being future poles of economic growth, can only take their place in the slide towards global depression. All these cracks in the economy will further destabilise and disorganise the system. What's happening now in the USA and the Eurozone is propelling the world into depression, with each bankruptcy feeding the next at an increasing pace. The relative respite we have been through since mid-2009 is now over. The mounting bankruptcy of the capitalist world economy poses to the exploited of the world not only the need to refuse to pay for the effects of this crisis. It's no longer just a question of massive redundancies or the reduction in real wages. It's a question of a drive towards the generalisation of poverty, a growing inability for proletarians to meet their most basic needs. This dramatic perspective obliges us to understand that it's not a particular form of capitalism which is collapsing, such as finance capital, but capitalism as such. The whole of capitalist society is rushing towards the abyss, and us with it if we allow it. There is no alternative but its complete overthrow, prepared by the development of massive struggle against this futureless, moribund system. Faced with the failure of capitalism we have to fight for a new society in which human beings will no longer produce for the profits of a few but to satisfy their own needs: a truly human, collective society, based on solidarity – communism (which has nothing to do with the political regimes and models of economic exploitation supplied by the former USSR or China). This society is both necessary and possible. **TX**

14/8/11

Libya: the masters change, exploitation and poverty remain

After six months of fighting, the Libyan 'rebels' are celebrating their victory over the once all-powerful Gaddafi, who for 42 years had been flouting the western democracies, and playing cat and mouse with their leaders. He was also a member of the Socialist International. The democracies, in fat years and lean, had made every effort to get into the good books of Libya's Guide, but from the moment when a real popular revolt against the Libyan dictator's *Jamahiriyah* regime was turned into a sinister struggle between factions of the bourgeoisie (see <http://en.internationalism.org/wr/342/libya>), they have been giving their active support to the Transitional National Council (TNC).

The western powers, led by France and Britain, orchestrated all the operations of the 'rebels'. How many dead and wounded and maimed for life in this capitalist war which the obedient media have tried to pass off as the continuation of the 'Arab spring'? For months we have seen no clear figures showing the number of victims, and yet to justify the NATO intervention the press has given us plenty of details about the massacres committed by Gaddafi's forces. Since the first Gulf War, we have been fed the cruel lie about 'targeted strikes' which only kill bad guys and not civilians, even though there are thousands of examples to the contrary.

According to its own estimates, NATO has carried out 20,000 air raids and 8,000 'humanitarian' strikes since 31 March. And even though NATO was bombing towns to 'prepare the way for the rebels', only nine deaths were officially recognised. But despite this black-out, whole villages and neighbourhoods were pulverised in the various battles, as in Tripoli and other 'liberated' towns, 'guilty' of the fact that the loyalist army or even Gaddafi himself were holed up in them. It's not unlike what Assad's army is doing with its ruthless bombardments of the Syrian population, which is currently being subjected to a real massacre. On top of this, a humanitarian disaster is taking shape:

in Tripoli, there is no water, no electricity, no food supplies, while bodies are rotting in the streets. This is the face of 'liberation' in Libya.

The NATO forces have not limited themselves to bombing with the aim of 'giving cover' to the rebels. They have also sent out ground forces: 500 British special service personnel and hundreds of French commandos. And they have also armed the anti-Gaddafi military forces. France has acknowledged supplying 'self-defence' weapons such as rocket-launchers, assault rifles, machine-guns and anti-tank missiles. Not counting the presence of CIA forces, even though the USA has supposedly withdrawn from direct military intervention.

In this war where lies, generalised disinformation, inhumanity and contempt towards the population have been ever-present, the murderous hypocrisy both of the tribal chiefs in Libya and of the big and medium powers is going to be a trademark of the post-Gaddafi order. Obviously, few will regret the downfall of this odious and bloody dictator, who for months has been exhorting the population to sacrifice itself while using it as a human shield. But behind the speeches of the opposition and their international backers, there has been a real clash of interests and this is now going to become more and more dominant. After Iraq, ex-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Ivory Coast etc, 'international aid to the oppressed' is the royal road to a situation of endless chaos. Never in history have so many countries and regions been the permanent prey of wars, terrorist attacks, and human and material destruction. Libya has just joined this world-wide concert.

We are being told that the 'freedom fighters' of the TNC are now going to work towards a regime of 'stability, democracy and respect for human rights', with the support of an 'international community' ready to unfreeze Libyan assets in order to finance the new regime. The coalition government (which envisages elections in...20 months) is a mish-mash of tribal chiefs, militant Islamists and former eminent members of the Gaddafi regime.

The head of the TNC's military council is himself a former jihadist, close to al-Qaida, with a murky past in Afghanistan. The president of the TNC was up till recently the justice minister of the hated Gaddafi regime – the same man who condemned the Bulgarian nurses to death. The prime minister was a childhood friend of the deposed dictator....

The short history of the TNC has already shown its shadowy side. Younes, a military head and leader of a powerful tribe, was killed at the end of July in very obscure circumstances. These ingredients, to which you would have to add the ancestral tribal rivalries which the 'Leader' managed to keep under wraps, are combining to make sure that there will be a general free for all. And if that wasn't enough, the rush by the European, American and Arab raptors (like Qatar, Jordan, Algeria, etc) to grab their piece of this oil-producing cake will only further aggravate instability.

France, whose head of state is strutting around more than ever, is posing as the saviour of the Libyan people. Together with Britain it organised an "international conference in support of the new Libya" in Paris on 1 September. A pretty but deceptive spectacle: behind the facade of unity among the 60 delegations representing the 'friends of Libya' a stormy future is taking shape. At stake above all is the prize of Libyan oil. Paris and London, advertising their active support for the rebellion, are seeking preferential contracts from the new government, as is the USA, which is already set up there with two oil companies. Sarkozy seems to have negotiated for the French state a 35% share of Libyan crude in exchange for its good and loyal services to the TNC.

But countries like Italy, Germany, and Russia are also queuing up. Whether before or during the conflict, we saw these countries mounting a more or less open opposition to the intervention. Italy, 21% of whose exports went to the former Libyan government (as opposed to 4% for France), and which is worried about seeing its present oil agreements revised downwards, consistently tried

to counter the intervention ('for humanitarian reasons'), both before and after UN resolution 1973 on 31 March, although it was in the end obliged to participate rather than risk losing everything. As the TNC spokesman said to the conference: "the Libyan people know who supported its fight for freedom and those who did not". The message towards Russia and China is clear, but the game is far from over.

The Libyan territory is important not only for its oil but also as regards strategic control of the region. The NATO mission is supposed to finish at the end of September, and it's clear that that Gaddafi's departure has to be speeded up (or his capture dead or alive – there is already a high price on his head) so that the military forces of the powers that took part in the operations can have a pretext for installing themselves in the country: the story about 'stabilising' the country. A UN document officially envisages sending a military and police force "for disarming the population" and "establishing a climate of confidence". It's clear that the countries of the UN are not going to let go of this morsel: "The mandate of protecting civilians coming from the Security Council and applied by NATO forces will not end with the fall of the Gaddafi government". If a free-for-all between the bandits of the TNC is a certainty, this is no less the case for the big powers who will step in and stir up the tensions even more. The last 40 years, and especially the last 10, have shown us what all this means: grab what you can, play on the disensions between the various factions, of which there are many in a country which has remained largely tribal. But the old imperialist powers like France and Britain, just like the USA, have a long experience in sowing discord and in the strategy of divide and rule. Except that here, there won't be anyone really ruling, just an explosive struggle of each against all.

The permanent instability taking shape in Libya is the latest example of the madness of the capitalist system. *Wilma 3/9/11*

Gaddafi's links with the British state

In *The Independent* of 3/9/11 there appeared an article based on secret files that the paper had unearthed. We are reprinting here substantial extracts from that article. *The Independent* says that they "reveal the astonishingly close links that existed between British and American governments and Muammar Gaddafi."

The documents chart how prisoners were offered to the Libyans for brutal interrogation by the Tripoli regime under the highly controversial "rendition" programme, and also how details of exiled opponents of the Libyan dictator in the UK were passed on to the regime by MI6.

The papers show that British officials actually helped write a draft speech for Colonel Gaddafi while he was trying to rehabilitate his regime from the pariah status to which it had sunk following its support for terrorist movements. Further documents disclose how, at the same time, the US and UK acted on behalf of Libya in conducting negotiations with the International Atomic Energy Agency.

With the efforts they had expended in cultivating their contacts with the regime, the British were unwilling, at times, to share their "Libya connection" with their closest ally, the US. In a letter to his Libyan intelligence counterpart, an MI6 officer described how he refused to pass on the identity of an agent to Washington.

The documents, many of them incendiary in their implications, were found at the private offices of Moussa Koussa, Col Gaddafi's right hand man, and regime security chief, who defected to Britain in the days following the February revolution...

The material raises questions about the relationship between Moussa Koussa and the British government and the turn of events following his defection. Mr Koussa's surprising arrival in Britain led to calls for him to be questioned by the

police about his alleged involvement in murders abroad by the Libyan regime, including that of policewoman Yvonne Fletcher and opponents of Gaddafi. He was also said to be involved in the sending of arms to the IRA. At the time David Cameron's government assured the public that Mr Koussa may, indeed, face possible charges. Instead, he was allowed to leave the country and is now believed to be staying in a Gulf state.

The revelations by *The Independent* will lead to questions about whether Mr Koussa, who has long been accused of human rights abuses, was allowed to escape because he held a 'smoking gun'. The official is known to have copied and taken away dozens of files with him when he left Libya.

The papers illustrate the intimate relations Mr Koussa and some of his colleagues seemingly enjoyed with British intelligence. Letters and faxes flowed to him headed 'Greetings from MI6' 'Greetings from SIS', handwritten Christmas greetings, on one occasion, from 'Your friend', followed by the name of a senior British intelligence official, and regrets over missed lunches. There were also regular exchanges of gifts: on one occasion a Libyan agent arrived in London laden with figs and oranges.

The documents repeatedly touched on the blossoming relationship between Western intelligence agencies and Libya. But there was a human cost. The Tripoli regime was a highly useful partner in the 'rendition' process under which prisoners were sent by the US for 'enhanced interrogation', a euphemism, say human rights groups, for torture.

One US administration document, marked secret, says "Our service is in a position to deliver Shaykh Musa to your physical custody similar to what we have done with other senior LIFG (Libyan Islamic Fighting Group) members in the past. We respectfully request an expression of interest from your service regarding taking custody of Musa".

The British too were dealing with the Libyans

about opposition activists, passing on information to the regime. This was taking place despite the fact that Colonel Gaddafi's agents had assassinated opponents in the campaign to eliminate so-called "stray dogs" abroad, including the streets of London. The murders had, at the time, led to protests and condemnation by the UK government.

One letter dated 16th April 2004 from UK intelligence to an official at the International Affairs Department of Libyan security, says: "We wish to inform you that Ismail KAMOKA @ SUHAIB [possibly referring to an alias being used] was released from detention on 18th March 2004. A panel of British judges ruled that KAMOKA was not a threat to national security in the UK and subsequently released him. We are content for you to inform [a Libyan intelligence official] of KAMOKA's release."

Ironically, the Libyan rebels who have come in to power after overthrowing Colonel Gaddafi with the help of the UK and NATO have just appointed Abdullah Hakim Belhaj, a former member of the LIFG, as their commander in Tripoli.

Other material highlights the two-way nature of the information exchange. One document headed "For the attention of the Libyan Intelligence Service. Greetings from MI6 asks for information about a suspect travelling on [a] Libyan passport..."

One of the most remarkable finds in the cache of documents is a statement by Colonel Gaddafi during his rapprochement with the West during which he gave up his nuclear programme and promised to destroy his stock of chemical and biological weapons.

The Libyan leader said "we will take these steps in a manner that is transparent and verifiable. Libya affirms and will abide by commitments... when the world is celebrating the birth of Jesus, and as a token of contribution to a world full of peace, security, stability and compassion the greater Ja-

mahiriyah renews its honest call for a WMD free zone in the Middle East and Africa."

The statement was, in fact, put together with the help of British officials. A covering letter, addressed to Khalid Najjar, of the Department of International Relations and Safety in Tripoli, said "for the sake of clarity, please find attached a tidied up version of the language we agreed on Tuesday. I wanted to ensure that you had the same script."

The Independent 3/9/11

**Economic depression, war, social decay
Only the class struggle
offers a way out**

Continued from page 1

take the form of rioting and looting with no direction, as we have seen in Britain over the summer. In some parts of the world legitimate rage against the rulers can even be dragged into serving the needs of one bourgeois faction or one imperialist power against another, as we are seeing in Libya.

In the most pessimistic scenario, the struggle of the exploited will be dissipated in futile and self-defeating actions and the working class as a whole will be too atomised, too divided to constitute itself into a real social force. If this happens, there will be nothing to stop capitalism from dragging us all towards the abyss, which it is perfectly capable of doing without organising a world war. But we have not yet reached that point. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence that a new generation of proletarians is not going to let itself be pulled passively into a capitalist future of economic collapse, imperialist conflict and ecological breakdown, and that it is capable of rallying to its banners the previous generations of the working class and all those whose lives are being blighted by capital. **WR 1/9/11**

Nuclear energy, capitalism and communism

The scale of the catastrophe that has taken place at the nuclear power plant at Fukushima in Japan has once again revealed the predatory exploitation of nature by capitalism. The human species has always lived by transforming nature. But capital today poses a new problem: this system doesn't produce for the needs of humanity but for profit alone, and it is ready to do anything necessary to ensure its profits. Left to its own logic, this system will end up destroying the planet. The article that follows looks at nuclear energy within a broad historical context, with the aim of developing a communist point of view on the problem.

New debates about nuclear energy

The disaster at the Fukushima nuclear power reactor in Japan this March has reopened the debate about the role of nuclear power in meeting world energy needs. A number of countries, including China, have announced reviews or temporary halts to their building programmes while Switzerland and Germany have gone further and pledged to replace their nuclear capacity. In the case of the latter, 8 of the country's 17 plants will be closed this year with all shut down by 2022 and replaced by renewable energy sources. This move has brought forth warnings from the nuclear industry and some big energy users of problems with supply, and large price increases. Over recent years there have been reports of a renaissance of the nuclear industry with 60 plants under construction and another 493 planned according to the industry group the World Nuclear Association.¹ In Britain there has been a debate about the risks and benefits of nuclear power with one of the most high profile greens in the country, George Monbiot, not only announcing his conversion to nuclear power as the only realistic way to prevent global warming² but also going on to attack former colleagues in the anti-nuclear movement for ignoring scientific data about the real risk of nuclear power.³

In reality the issue of nuclear power cannot be understood as a purely technical question or as an equation determined by the various costs and benefits of nuclear power, fossil fuels and renewable energies. It is necessary to step back and look at the whole question of energy use in the historical perspective of the evolution of human society and differing modes of production that have existed. What follows is a necessarily brief outline of such an approach.

Energy use and human development

The history of humanity and of the different modes of production is also a history of the use of energy. Early hunter-gatherer societies relied principally on human energy and lived from the animals and plants produced by nature with fairly minimal intervention, although some use was made of fire to clear the ground to allow regrowth or to bring down trees. The development of farming in the Neolithic period marked a fundamental change in humanity's use of energy and its relationship with nature. Human labour was organised on a systematic basis to transform the land, with forests cleared and walls erected to manage domesticated animals. Animals began to be used to assist in farming and subsequently in some productive processes such as powering mills. Fire was used for heating and cooking and for industrial processes such as the making of pottery and the smelting of metals. Trade also developed, again relying on human and animal muscle power but also harnessing wind power to traverse oceans.

The Neolithic revolution transformed human society. The increased food supply that resulted led to significant population growth and to a greater complexity of human society, with part of the population gradually moving from direct production of food to more specialised roles linked to the new productive techniques. Some groups also became freed from production and took on religious and military roles. Thus the primitive communism of the hunter-gatherer societies became transformed into class societies, with the religious and military elites supported by the labour of others.

These societies' achievements in agriculture, architecture and religion all required the concentrated and organised use of human labour. In the first civilisations this resulted in the coercion of a mass

1. *Financial Times* 06/06/11 "Nuclear power: atomised approach".
2. *Guardian* 22/03/11 "Why Fukushima made me stop worrying and love nuclear power".
3. *Guardian* 05/04/11 "The unpalatable truth is that the anti-nuclear lobby has misled us all".

of human labour, which found its typical form in slavery. The enforced expenditure of energy by a subject class allowed a minority to be freed from labour and live a life that required the mobilisation of a level of resources far beyond that which any individual could achieve for himself or herself. To give one example: one of the glories of Roman civilisation was the heating systems in villas that circulated hot air below floors and inside walls; nothing comparable was seen for centuries afterwards where even kings lived in buildings that were so cold that the wine and water was reported to freeze on the table in winter.⁴ These systems were often built and run by slave labour and used large quantities of wood or charcoal. The warmth enjoyed by the ruling class came from the appropriation of both natural and human energy.

The relationship between humanity and nature

The development of the productive forces and the class societies that were both the consequence and spur of the latter changed the relationship between humanity and nature as it changed the relationship between people. The hunter-gatherer societies were immersed in and dominated by nature. The agricultural revolution sought to control nature with the domestication of crops and animals, the clearing of forests, the alteration of soils through the use of natural fertilisers and control of water supplies.

Thus the natural world and human labour became resources to be exploited but also threats to be dominated. The result was that humans – both the exploited and the exploiters – became distant from nature and from each other. Writing in the mid 19th century Marx pointed to the intimate inter-relationship between humanity and nature that he saw as the "life of the species": "*Physically man lives only on these products of nature, whether they appear in the form of food, heating, clothes, a dwelling etc. The universality of man appears in practice precisely in the universality which makes all nature his inorganic body – both inasmuch as nature is (1) his direct means of life, and (2) the material, the object and the instrument of his life activity. Nature is man's inorganic body – nature, that is, insofar as it is not his human body. Man lives on nature – means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is part of nature.*"⁵ Capitalism, wage labour and private property tore this apart, turning the product of the worker's labour into "an alien object exercising power over him" and transforming nature into "an alien world, inimically opposed to him."⁶ The alienation that Marx saw as characteristic of capitalism, and experienced most sharply by the working class, actually emerged with the appearance of class society but accelerated with the transition to capitalism. While all of humanity is affected by alienation the impact of it and their role in it is not the same for the exploiting and the exploited classes. The former, as the class that dominates society, drives forward the process of alienation as it animates the process of exploitation and rarely senses what it does, even though it cannot escape the consequences. The latter feels the impact of alienation in its daily life as a lack of control over what it does and is but it also absorbs the ideological form that alienation takes and repeats part of it in its human relationships and its relationship with the natural world.

The process has continued since Marx described

4. Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation and Capitalism 15th – 18th Century, Volume one: The Structures of Everyday Life*, p.299. William Collins Sons and Co. Ltd, London.
5. Marx *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, "Estranged Labour".
6. *Ibid.*

it. In the last century alienated humanity has devoured itself in two global wars and has seen the systematic effort to annihilate parts of itself in the holocaust of the Second World War and the 'ethnic cleansing' of recent years. It has also ruthlessly exploited and destroyed nature to the point where the natural world and all life faces extinction. However, it is not humanity in the abstract that has done this but the particular form of class society that has come to dominate and threaten the earth: capitalism. Nor is it all who live within this class society who bear responsibility: between the exploiters and the exploited, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, there is no equality of responsibility just as there is no equality of power. It is capitalism and the bourgeois class that has created this world and that bears responsibility. This may upset those who want us all to pull together for the 'common good' but history shows this conclusion is correct.

Energy and the dawn of capitalism

The industrial revolution was also a revolution in energy, in the utilisation of energy sources that allowed society to go beyond the boundaries imposed by the 'organic economy' that relied on the seasonal growth of natural sources of energy to meet most of its needs. However, the industrial revolution predates the large scale use of coal that is synonymous with it and it is in the changed relations of production, in the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class, that the impetus for the development of the technology to extract and utilise the latter lies.⁷ Just as the first days of capitalism saw a more systematic and extensive use of the existing means of production, so it made use of the existing sources of energy and pushed them to their limits.

In the organic economy that existed from the Neolithic revolution until the widespread adoption of coal during the industrial revolution, human power, animal power and wood were the main sources of energy. In 1561-70 they made up 22.8%, 32.4% and 33.0% respectively of the energy consumed in England and Wales. Wind and water power made up scarcely more than 1% combined while coal accounted for 10.6%.⁸ The abundance of wood in Europe gave it an advantage over societies where it was scarce, but the development of production drained these supplies and impeded growth. Thus in 1717 a blast furnace in Wales was not fired until four years after construction when enough wood and charcoal had been accumulated and subsequently could only operate for an average of fifteen weeks a year

7. This finds additional support in the case of China "Coal was mined and consumed on a substantial scale in parts of China from the fourth century onwards and may have reached a peak in the eleventh century, but it did not lead to a transformation of the economy." E. A. Wrigley, *Energy and the English Industrial Revolution*, p. 174, Cambridge University Press, 2010.
8. Wrigley, op.cit., p.92.

for the same reason.⁹ Before the 18th century it has been calculated that an average blast furnace working two years on and two years off required 2,000 hectares of forest.¹⁰ In South Wales, subsequently famous for its coal mining, the first stages of the industrial revolution witnessed the development of ironworks and led to the deforestation of the valleys that had once been densely wooded. The growth of demand for wood led to price increases and shortages that affected the poor most of all. In parts of France there was insufficient wood to fire the bread ovens and in others it was reported that "*the poor do without fires.*"¹¹

The limits to production imposed by the organic economy can also be seen by calculating the amount of timber that would have been required to match subsequent consumption of energy from coal. Wood is not as efficient a source of energy as coal: two tons of wood are required to produce the same energy as a ton of coal and 30 tons to produce a ton of iron. An acre of managed woodland can produce about the equivalent energy to one ton of coal in a year. In 1750 4,515,000 tons of coal were produced in England and Wales. To produce the equivalent amount of energy using timber would have taken 4.3 million acres, or 13% of the land surface of the two countries. In 1800 coal production was 13,045,000 tons requiring 35% of the land surface (11.2 million acres). Half a century later production had risen to 65,050,000 tons, requiring no less than 150% of the land (48.1 million acres).¹² One of the keys to Britain's rise to world dominance was that it had coal reserves that were accessible using the existing technology. This created the momentum to develop the means of production to allow the extraction of coal from deeper levels.

The increasing use of energy has been a feature of value. On the other hand, it leads to the denial of access to energy and to the products of energy for millions of humans who lack the money to be of interest to the capitalists. This is illustrated in Nigeria where Shell pumps out billions of dollars worth of oil while the local people go without or risk their lives by trying to illegally tap the oil from the pipeline. The price is also paid by those working in the energy industries in lives lost and bodies maimed or poisoned and by the environment and all that lives in it, from the polluted, toxic waters of the Thames that characterised 19th century London to the warming of the globe that threatens the future of humanity today. **North 19/06/11**

9. Braudel, op. cit., p.366-7

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*

12. Wrigley, op. cit, p.37 and p.99

The second part of this article will follow in a future issue, and can already be found online at <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/august/nuclear>.

International Communist Current Public forum

Capitalism in meltdown: is there a working class response?

7.30 pm, Tuesday 20 September

Lucas Arms,
245A Grays Inn Road,
London WC1X 8QY

This forum will focus on some of the most important developments in the world situation in the last few months:

- the deepening of the 'debt crisis', now hitting not only weaker countries like Greece but the world's most powerful economy, the USA
- the explosion of social protests across North Africa, Spain, Greece, and most recently Israel
- the war in Libya
- the riots in Britain.

We will try to show that all these events have a common root: the historic dead-end reached by capitalism. We will try to discuss both the dangers and the potential in the situation, focusing on questions such as:

- Does capitalism have any way out of the current crisis, or is it actually reaching the terminal stages of its decline?
- What is the class nature of the social revolts, demonstrations and assemblies we have seen in the recent period?
- How did the protests in Libya get diverted into an imperialist war?
- Do the riots in Britain contain the potential for a movement against capitalism?

Short presentation followed by open discussion. All welcome

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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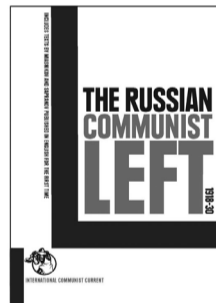
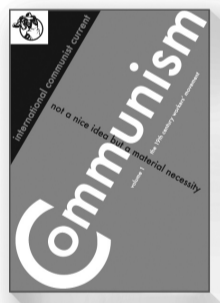
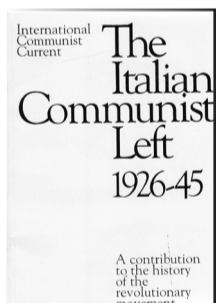
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Israel protests continue despite war tensions



“Bibi exploits his poor and bombs the neighbour’s poor. Stop bombing in Gaza”

In the article on the ‘social justice’ movement in Israel we published on 7 August¹, we wrote that “numerous demonstrators have expressed their frustration with the way the incessant refrain of ‘security’ and of the ‘threat of terrorism’ is used to make people put up with growing economic and social misery. Some have openly warned of the danger that the government could provoke military clashes or even a new war to restore ‘national unity’ and split the protest movement”.

These fears proved to be well-grounded. On 18 August, there was a spate of armed attacks on Israeli civilians and military patrols. Two public transport buses in southern Israel were raked with gunfire, leaving several dead and wounded. There was some confusion as to whether the Popular Resistance Committees or Hamas carried out these attacks: neither claimed responsibility. Either way, the Israeli government responded in its characteristically brutal manner, with air strikes in Gaza that killed members of the PRC but also children and a group of Egyptian border guards. This in turn provoked further rocket attacks launched from Gaza on southern Israeli towns.

Whoever initiated this latest spiral of violence, an increase in war tensions can only benefit the nationalists on both sides of the Israel-Arab conflict. It will create major difficulties for the development of the protest movement and will make many hesitate about continuing with the tent cities and demonstrations at a time when there is

¹ <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/08/social-protests-israel>

enormous pressure to maintain ‘national unity’. Calls to cancel the protests came from the like of National Union of Students leader Itzik Shmuli, but a significant core of the protestors rejected this call. On the night of Saturday 20 August demonstrations went ahead although they were to be ‘muted’, and were on a far smaller scale than in previous weeks. The same was true for the demonstrations on Saturday 27 August.

And yet what is significant is that these demonstrations **did** take place, attracting up to 10,000 in Tel Aviv and several thousand in other cities. And there was no shying away from the question of war: on the contrary, the slogans raised on the demos reflected a growing understanding of the need to resist the march to war and for the oppressed of both sides to fight for their common interests: “*Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies*”, “*social justice is demanded in Israel and the territories*”, “*Life in dignity in Gaza and Ashdod*”; “*No to another war which will bury the protest*”. The “Tent 1948” Palestinian-Jewish group on Rothschild Boulevard issued a statement of its own: “*This is the time to show real strength*”, the statement read. “*Stay on the streets, condemn the violence and refuse to go either home or to the Army to take part in the revenge attack on Gaza.*”

A speech by Raja Za’atari in Haifa also expressed the emergence of internationalist sentiments, even if still couched in the language of democracy and pacifism: “*At the end of the day, a homeless family is a homeless family, and a hungry child is a hungry child, regardless whether he*

speaks Arabic, Hebrew, Amharic or Russian. At the end of the day, hunger and humiliation, just like wealth, have no homeland and no language... We are saying: it is time to speak of peace and justice in one breath! Today more than ever, it is obvious to everyone that in order to curb talk of justice, this government might begin another war”. <http://onedemocracy.co.uk/news/we-will-be-a-jewish-arab-people/>

The fact that these slogans and sentiments should become so much more popular than they were only a year or two ago indicates that something profound is happening in Israel, and especially among the younger generation. We have seen comparable glimmerings of youthful protest against the Islamic status quo in Gaza².

As in Israel, the ‘Gaza youth’ are a small minority and they are weighed down with all kinds of illusions – in particular, Palestinian nationalism. But in a global context of mounting revolt against the existing order, the foundations are being laid for the development of a genuine internationalism based on the class struggle and the perspective of an authentic revolution of the exploited. **Amos 28/8/11**

²A radical manifesto from Gaza: <http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2011/gaza>

- In a further sign that the protests in Israel have not disappeared, *The Guardian* of 28/8/11 reported that a number of unoccupied buildings in Jerusalem have been taken over by demonstrators who are demanding that they be used to house people at affordable rents. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/28/israel-squatting-campaign-housing>

“*Social justice activists have embarked on a series of lightning squats of unoccupied buildings as part of a six-week protest against rising rents and house prices in Israel.*

The protesters, who aim to “inspire a national squatting movement”, unveiled Jerusalem’s first “People’s House” on Saturday night, occupying an abandoned state-owned building close to prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s official residence, where several thousand demonstrators called for social justice and better living standards....

The flicker of hundreds of candles lit up poems inspired by the social justice protests which were daubed in white paint on the walls.”

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

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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*.

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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