



world revolution

Ukraine, Russia Against imperialism: the internationalism of the working class

Since WW1
100 years
of capitalist
decadence

see page 5

When Russian troops seized key buildings in the Crimea, John Kerry, the US Secretary of State, pronounced these weighty words of condemnation:

"You just don't in the 21st century behave in 19th century fashion by invading another country on completely trumped up pretext."

Putin, meanwhile, taking out a loan from the Tony Blair word-bank, insists that the semi-invasion of Ukraine is a "humanitarian intervention", and in any case, the forces who took over the Crimean parliament were just local "self-defence units" who bought their Russian uniforms in a second-hand store.

It is not hard to see the emptiness and hypocrisy of these mouthpieces of capital. Kerry's statement was met with an on-line storm from the left, pointing out that trumping up pretexts and invading other countries has been the exact behaviour of the USA for the last two decades and more, with the 2003 invasion of Iraq with the excuse of looking for weapons of mass destruction as the high point of America's "19th century" behaviour. As for Putin's appeal to humanitarian motives, this is a further cause of hollow laughter around the world, not least in Grozny which was reduced to rubble in the 90s when the Russian military ruthlessly suppressed Chechnyan moves to break away from the Russian Federation.

19th century behaviour is a code for imperialism. In that period of capitalism's history, the developed powers built up enormous empires by invading whole swathes of the surrounding pre-capitalist world in pursuit of markets, raw materials and cheap labour power. Most of these areas were ruled as colonies by the conquering powers, and the desperate push to grab, hold onto or divide up the last of these regions was a major factor in the First World War.

Rosa Luxemburg, who of all Marxists, in our view, had the clearest view of the origins and nature of imperialism, drew out the significance of this transition from "19th century imperialism" to the imperialism of the 20th century:

"With the high development of the capitalist countries and their increasingly severe competi-

tion in acquiring non-capitalist areas, imperialism grows in lawlessness and violence, both in aggression against the non-capitalist world and in ever more serious conflicts among the competing capitalist countries. But the more violently, ruthlessly and thoroughly imperialism brings about the decline of non-capitalist civilisations, the more rapidly it cuts the very ground from under the feet of capitalist accumulation. Though imperialism is the historical method for prolonging the career of capitalism, it is also a sure means of bringing it to a swift conclusion. This is not to say that capitalist development must be actually driven to this extreme: the mere tendency towards imperialism of itself takes forms which make the final phase of capitalism a period of catastrophe".

These words were written a year or two before the outbreak of the First World War. And we are still living in that "period of catastrophe", marked by global economic crises, two world wars, murderous proxy wars (often fought in the name of decolonisation) during the Cold War period, the chaotic conflicts that have swept the globe since the collapse of the old bloc system.

In these conflicts, imperialism may have changed its form – holding onto colonies, as in the case of Britain and France for example, became a sign of imperial decline rather than strength, and the most powerful capitalist nation, the USA, supplanted the old empires using its immense economic resources to assert its domination of large areas of the planet. But even the US has been obliged again and again to back up its economic influence with military action up to and including the invasion of other countries from Korea to Grenada and from Vietnam to Iraq. As for its main rival during the Cold War, the USSR, which was far weaker economically, brutal military control was the only way of holding its bloc together, as we saw with the invasions of Hungary and Czechoslovakia. And although the USSR is no more, Putin's Russia relies no less on the military option to defend its national interests.

In short: imperialism, far from being a 19th century phenomenon, still rules the world. And as Luxemburg wrote from the prison which was her

punishment for opposing the bloodbath of 1914,

"Imperialism is not the creation of any one or any group of states. It is the product of a particular stage of ripeness in the world development of capital, an innately international condition, an indivisible whole, that is recognisable only in all its relations, and from which no nation can hold aloof at will." (The Junius Pamphlet)

In other words: all nations are imperialist today, from the biggest to the smallest, all are pushed by the constricted conditions of capitalist accumulation to expand at the expense of their rivals, to use war, massacre and terrorism to defend their own economic and diplomatic interests. As for patriotism and nationalism it is nothing "but a cloak that covers imperialistic desires, a battle cry for imperialistic rivalries, the last ideological measure with which the masses can be persuaded to play the role of cannon fodder in imperialistic war." (Junius Pamphlet)

Luxemburg, like Lenin, Trotsky, Pannekoek, Rosmer and others was an internationalist. She didn't look at society from the standpoint of "my country", but of "my class", the working class, which is the only truly international class because it is exploited and attacked by capitalism in all countries. She knew that nationalism had always been a way of hiding the fundamental reality that capitalist society is divided into classes – one which owns the national economy and controls the nation state, and the other which owns nothing but its capacity to work. In the past, when capitalism was a step forward from the old feudal society, the ideal of national liberation could serve the needs of a progressive bourgeois revolution, but in the period of capitalism's decline, nothing positive remains of nationalism except to drag the exploited off to war in the service of their exploiters.

This is why internationalists, in 1914, stood for the continuation and deepening of the class struggle against their own ruling class; for solidarity with workers in other countries fighting their own rulers; for the eventual unification of the world's workers in a revolution against capitalist rule everywhere. This is why they took up the same position in relation to the Second World War, the proxy

wars between the USA and USSR, and this is why we take up the same position against all of today's wars. We don't side with 'lesser evils' against 'enemy number one', we don't support 'small nations' against more powerful ones. Neither do we argue that there is a 'nationalism of the oppressed' which is morally superior to the 'nationalism of the oppressor'. All forms of nationalism today are equally reactionary and equally murderous.

In today's conflict in the Ukraine, we don't support the 'sovereignty' of Ukraine, backed up by the imperialism of the US, nor do we support Russian militarism which is pitted against US or European influence on their southern flank. We are not 'neutrals' or pacifists either. We are partisans of the class struggle in all countries, even when, as in Ukraine and Russia today, the class struggle is being drowned in the battle between competing factions of the ruling class.

Against the barricades of national flags dividing the workers of Ukraine and Russia, against the threat that patriotic intoxication will drag them towards a terrible slaughter, internationalists have no reason to deviate from the old watchwords of the workers' movement: the working class has no fatherland! Workers of the world, unite!

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Scottish referendum campaign

All nationalism divides the working class

Workers of the world unite! This fundamental principle of the proletariat is an anathema to the ruling class. It expresses the possibility of a future united humanity free of national divisions, hatreds and classes. All that the capitalist class has to offer is the prospect of dragging a divided humanity into ever more destructive wars and worsening national hatreds. This choice between communism and barbarism is the only real choice the proletariat has.

The idea of a united humanity is a distant prospect but the proletarian revolution is the only means to attain it. It is thus vital that the ruling class do all it can to stop the development of the proletariat's sense of its own strength, not only at the national level but above all as an international class. Nationalism is one of the ruling class's main weapons against the working class's ability to offer humanity a future.

The development of the nation state was one of the great accomplishments of the emerging capitalist system. By overcoming the old feudal system, with its divisions into numerous fiefs and principalities, capitalism laid the foundations for the emergence of the unified national capital, and for a formidable development of the productive forces. However the rise of the nation state also meant the eventual emergence of imperialism as each national unit had to compete for its place in the consolidating world market. It was this process that ultimately led to the slaughter house of World War One. Confronted with the horror of the war the most advanced battalions of the proletariat posed the proletarian alternative: the revolutionary overthrow of capital and its warring national states. The revolutions in Russia, Germany and Hungary, along with revolutionary movements across the planet between 1917 and 1923 were defeated but they did hold out the prospect of the possibility of a global communist society.

It's in this context that revolutionaries address the question of the nation state and nationalism. The nation state is the implacable enemy of the working class and of humanity, be that state a superpower such as the US or the most ludicrous product of imperialist tensions such as South Sudan. Support for the national state is support for class exploitation, imperialism and the basest hatreds.

The mystification of Scottish independence

The support of the national state is the core of the whole campaign around the referendum on Scottish independence, to be held in September. Workers and the general population in Scotland are being asked to choose which gang of capitalist exploiters they prefer. They are being called on to identify the prospect of some form of improvement in their lives as being dependent upon which national state they prefer. Fundamentally they are being told to abandon any sense of being an exploited class and to line up behind their exploiters.

This campaign is not only aimed at trying to crush any sense of class identity in Scotland but throughout Britain. The constant media coverage of the campaign has only one aim: to get workers to side with national state. We are encouraged to think about and discuss whether an independent Scotland should share the Pound, be a member of the European Union, maintain the monarchy... The hypocritical sight of David Cameron lecturing "the people of Scotland" about the dangers of not being able to be members of the EU if they vote for independence, at the same time as the Tory party is calling for a referendum on withdrawing from the EU, is lost on no one but that is the whole point: we are meant to become engrossed in the arguments about independence because this is predicated on the idea that the national state is the most important question facing the working class.

There can be no underestimating the destructive impact of this nationalist campaign against the working class at this time. The proletariat is on the back foot. Faced with the massive attacks on living and working conditions impelled by the economic crisis, the working class has found it extremely difficult to resist the onslaught. In a

situation marked by low levels of struggles, by an erosion of the proletariat's sense of class identity and of its self-confidence, the nationalist campaign around independence can only add to the disarray. Ideas about an independent Scotland being able to offer the prospect of less attacks than under the "government in Whitehall" can have a real impact. Meanwhile in the rest of the UK the idea of the break-up of the country increases fears of even worse attacks on workers. The desire to find a sense of security by lining up behind this or that state is very powerful.

This is being manipulated very cleverly by the ruling class. The Scottish National Party portrays itself as the only real alternative to the feared Tories. The SNP government in Scotland has held back on attacking the proletariat too openly in order to feed the idea that it is not as bad as the Tories. In the rest of the country all of the main political parties have "united" to defend the Union and to issue stern warnings to the population of Scotland about the dangers of independence. In Scotland if workers don't want independence the only alternative is seen as supporting the Union.

The campaign is also whipping up deep passions. The SNP is playing on reactionary dreams about Scotland's great past, its historical rivalry with the English. In the rest of Britain the campaign is taking place in the context of the mounting nationalist campaigns about the "sacrifices" of the First World War. Thus no matter the outcome of the referendum it will have led to a deepening of the nationalist poison in the proletariat, creating divisions at the very time when the working class needs to be developing its unity.

Real tendencies towards the break-up of the nation state

In a previous article on the question of the referendum¹ we underlined that the ruling class, while believing that there would not be a vote for independence, was faced with an increasing difficulty in completely controlling the campaign. The British bourgeoisie in general is against Scottish independence. The formation of the Union in the early 18th Century was a very important moment in the growth of the national state and the development

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201201/4655/scottish-nationalism-shows-growing-divisions-ruling-class>

of capitalism in a unified country². It also meant that the ruling class was not faced with having any rivals physically neighbouring it. The solidity of its national structure has been vital for the development of British imperialism and is a basis of its renowned political intelligence. For this to be put in danger generates real fear in the ruling class.

So why agree to the referendum? The context of the referendum was the great service that devolution has done for the ruling class in its struggle against the proletariat. The Labour government used devolution very intelligently to take advantage of the weaknesses in the proletariat in order to reinforce national divisions. The proletariat in Scotland and Wales have played a central role in the history of the working class. The massive industrial concentration along the Clyde in the 19th and early 20th century saw the raise of a powerful battalion of the class, the famous Red Clydeside, while the huge concentration of mines in South Wales meant that the miners there were at the forefront of the most important struggles of the class. In the miners' strike in the 80s miners in Scotland and Wales played an important role. The ruling class thus has every interest in crushing this memory and replacing it with nationalism. Hence devolution has been a pre-emptive strike against the development of proletarian solidarity.

The referendum is aimed at driving home this nationalist onslaught against the potential future struggles of the proletariat. However with the deepening of the economic crisis the fraction of the ruling class around the SNP have started to really believe that independence may be the best means for them to exploit the working class and build their own imperialist state. This desire is shared by important factions of other regional/national bourgeoisies, for example among the Catalan ruling class in Spain or the Flemish bourgeoisie in Belgium.

However, there are also important fractions of the "Scottish" ruling class that do not want independence; and internationally there is a real fear amongst the ruling classes in Europe that Scottish independence would encourage secessionist movements against their national states. Hence the great reluctance of the EU to say that an in-

2. For a historical analysis of the making of the UK, see <http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201203/4721/making-uk-state>

dependent Scotland would automatically be able to join.

These contradictory dynamics are also seen in the SNP's gyrations over its plans for an independent Scotland. A few years ago it was the idea of Scotland as one of the Celtic Tigers, but the Tigers ended up looking distinctly moth eaten; then it was to be Scotland as part of the Euro but then there was the Euro crisis; now the idea is Scotland as a new Norway and its huge sovereign investment fund, but unfortunately oil revenues are falling. Every time the SNP puts forwards a plan for a shining future its goes up in smoke. These contradictions are also expressed by the somewhat bizarre idea of an independent Scotland keeping the monarchy and the Pound, and having a monetary union with what is left of the Union. In short: independence, but with the enemy ruling class providing the financial backing! The instability of the prospects offered for justifying independence demonstrates how irrational the idea is in capitalist terms.

The sheer irrationality of the idea that there really could be an independent Scotland does not stop this issue being a difficulty for the ruling class. The growing demands for independence in Catalonia, the Flemish parts of Belgium, the North of Italy and so on are taking on a dynamic of their own and obliging the national bourgeoisies to devote energy to dealing with these centrifugal forces. Until now the British bourgeoisie has managed to keep such tendencies in tight control; the outcome of the referendum has looked like a foregone conclusion with a large majority against independence. Nevertheless the centrifugal tendencies will not go away because a fraction of the bourgeoisie in Scotland will see its future prospects as being fulfilled by independence; and if the proletariat is unable to develop its own struggles such nationalist illusions will gain increasing ground within its ranks.

The proletariat is faced with incredibly difficult conditions for developing its struggles and its consciousness, but one thing is certain: submitting to the nationalist lies of Scottish independence or defence of the Union will only increase and worsen these difficulties. The rejection of all nationalism is fundamental to the proletariat's ability to impose its alternative of a united and free humanity. **Phil, 15.3.14**

Attacks on benefits Impoverishing the poor

This month Vince Cable and the government have magnanimously announced an increase in the minimum wage by 3%, increasing it by 19p an hour more, bringing the minimum hourly rate to £6.31p a week. What generosity! The 'working poor' can do a lot with that, but what's that you say? It is an above inflation increase! And it's only fair that our poorer citizens are treated more generously. Ah well, we're sure we'll all rest in our beds easier with that knowledge and our 19p an hour tucked safely into our pockets. Likewise, the bourgeoisie's largesse has extended to the NHS, awarding nurses a generous 1% in line with inflation, well it's only right and fair, as our masters repeat ad infinitum.

Yet the deadly dance goes on. The Spending Review, now in the second year of its implementation here in Britain, is hitting the working class like a pole-axe. The capitalists know that it is only by attacking our wages and cutting our benefits that it can exert some control over its own economic crisis. Speaking in January this year Chancellor George Osborne promised that the attacks will continue: "A further £25 billion spending cuts, much of it from the welfare budget, will be needed after the next election". He also said that more austerity lay ahead as "the job was not even half done". A further £25 billion is the saving target after the election. The main recipients for these cuts are perhaps the weakest sectors of the

working class - the young and the disabled. As we reported in *WR* 364 the under 25's have been viciously targeted with their benefits being stopped and the imposition of the 'bedroom tax' pushing them into homelessness.

Also targeted are the resources available to local authorities: the worse off authorities have been singled out because they have a bigger proportion of claimants, according to a BBC online news report. The indices used to calculate 'deprivation' are unemployment, health and social housing, with funding affecting those areas with the greater need for benefits and social housing. The most deprived areas - Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, Newcastle, Glasgow - are the areas which are hit the hardest by the cuts. "Between 2010/11 and 2015/16, it says the percentage cut in spending will be 10 times greater in the most deprived areas than those least deprived" (source -BBC -30/01/14).

Another vicious aspect of the Spending Review cuts is the requirement that the long term unemployed and the disabled have to take compulsory medical examinations in order to qualify and stay on the new benefits. To this end the government has enlisted a French consultancy firm, ATOS, to carry out the mickey mouse examinations. The contract between the DWP and ATOS, which has existed for over two years now, allows this cowboy 'health agency' to conduct medical as-

sessments for Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Industrial Injuries Disability Benefit (IIDB). These are all the areas which the government has vowed to cut drastically.

If you are unlucky enough to be 'examined' and declared 'fit for work', it can take months to register an appeal, a period where you receive no benefits (just a referral to a food bank). There have been a number of recorded suicides as the result of benefit sanctions. Shaun Pilkington and the registered blind man Tim Salter both committed suicide as a result of benefit sanctions and the bedroom tax. Another important aspect of the benefit sanction is the withdrawal of housing benefit which often plunges claimants into debt....

"The figures released today are truly shocking:

- In the last two and a half years, the number of unemployed people sanctioned have averaged 64,307 a month, compared with 27,108 a month between 2000 and 2010, a 137% increase.

- ESA sanctions issued to disabled people have increased by 156% in the last year.

- It is also a concern to PCS that the sanctions are lasting longer and at higher rates and are completely disproportionate to the so-called offense" (Public and Commercial Services Union, January 28th 2014, quoted in *Aurora*, broadsheet of the In-

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Floods in UK, a foretaste of capitalism's future

The floods which hit Britain this winter, especially in the south west of the country, brought further evidence that the impact of climate change is already being felt, and not only in poverty-stricken and low lying countries like Bangladesh and the Maldives, but in the 'rich world' too: most recently, in last summer's droughts and wild fires in Australia and parts of Europe, and the droughts and unusual storm activity in the USA. Now even 'Tory heartlands' like Surrey and Somerset are being bitten by weather conditions that seem more and more unpredictable. *The Daily Telegraph* – not a paper that normally shouts loudest about the ecological crisis – wrote about a new report which links the floods to man-made climate change: “*Devastating floods which wreaked havoc across Britain in 2000 were made more likely by global warming, according to the first study to link flooding in this country to climate change.*”

*The Oxford University study said the floods, which damaged nearly 10,000 homes and cost £1.3 billion, were made twice as likely by a warming climate. This is because warm air holds more moisture, making outbreaks of heavy rainfall more frequent*¹.

The jokes about ‘so much for global warming’ when winters get colder than usual or the rain keeps falling and falling are beginning to fall flat, and the *Daily Mail* and other right-wing tabloids would now have to think twice about using this witticism as a lead story. There is a greater understanding that climate change, even if attributable to a general increase in global temperature, will make itself felt in all kinds of perturbations and extremes in weather conditions.

The climate change deniers, who seemed to be making progress when people's concerns about the deepening economic crisis had a tendency to push ‘green concerns’ down on the agenda compared to more immediate worries like losing your job or having your wages or benefits slashed, are finding it increasingly difficult to make their case stand up. Many of them accept that the climate is changing but deny that this is anything to do with human activity: it's just the result of sunspots or other distant cosmic processes, which blithely ignores the fact that the most consistent temperature rises also coincide with the emergence of ‘industrial civilisation’ and above all with the period since the end of the Second World War.

1. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/earthnews/8328705/Floods-caused-by-climate-change.html>

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ternationalist Communist Tendency).

The manner in which ATOS conducts its examinations is highly suspect. ATOS uses a ‘tick box’ system to make an assessment where claimants have to register certain points to be eligible for benefits. This has led Geoff Douglas (a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians), who has been assessing people for their eligibility for disability benefits for more than ten years, to send an e-mail to ATOS management to complain that the task of assessors was “*becoming more and more complex and ever more futile, as we bend over backwards to satisfy the demands of a government that wants and needs cuts to the welfare budget.*”

Another doctor, Margaret McCarthy, writing in the *British Medical Journal*, described the ‘training programme’ of a doctor, Steve Bicks, who went undercover for the Channel 4 *Dispatches* programme and uncovered the ‘medical’ criteria that ATOS uses to assess claimants. The doctor who trained Bicks explained the distinctions: oral chemotherapy or hormone therapy, say for prostate cancer, don't get any points, whereas intravenous chemo does. Disabled claimants were assessed as though they were using a ‘hypothetical wheelchair’. Having one hand or one leg is not enough to generate points. To achieve enough points she maintained was “*almost unachievable*”. Dr McCarthy then went on to declare “*ATOS has been allowed to take over the assessment of the most vulnerable people in society without proper*

If the ‘hand of man’ (or rather, of capitalism) is becoming increasingly recognisable in the overall pattern of climate change, then it has become even more obvious that the same hand is wielding a very large spanner against any attempt to deal with its effects. Just considering the present UK government, for example:

- It made massive cuts in flood defences in the period leading up to the floods, despite mounting evidence that flooding was becoming an annual nightmare in parts of the country;

- It has encouraged agricultural policies which have greatly increased the risk of flooding. George Monbiot wrote two articles in the *Guardian* arguing that the government was actively subsidising the denudation of trees and other vegetation in hillside areas in order to focus on animal pasturage, with the effect that natural ‘soaks’ in the hills no longer function and more water, swelled by increasing rainfall, is now descending into the valleys². Meanwhile in the low lands farmers are also being encouraged to adopt policies which further increase flood risk:

“*Six weeks before the floods arrived, a scientific journal called Soil Use and Management published a paper warning that disaster was brewing. Surface water run-off in south-western England, where the Somerset Levels are situated, was reaching a critical point. Thanks to a wholesale change in the way the land is cultivated, at 38% of the sites the researchers investigated, the water – instead of percolating into the ground – is now pouring off the fields.*”

*Farmers have been ploughing land that was previously untilled and switching from spring to winter sowing, leaving the soil bare during the rainy season. Worst of all is the shift towards growing maize, whose cultivated area in this country has risen from 1,400 hectares to 160,000 since 1970. In three quarters of the maize fields in the south west, the soil structure has broken down to the extent that they now contribute to flooding. In many of these fields, soil, fertilisers and pesticides are sloshing away with the water. And nothing of substance, the paper warned, is being done to stop it*³

These kinds of revelations have contributed to a minor political disaster for the Tory Party, which has gone from touting itself as leading “the green-

2. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jan/13/flooding-public-spending-britain-europe-policies-homes>

3. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/17/farmers-uk-flood-maize-soil-protection>

scrutiny” (*BMJ* 8th August 2014). Bravo doctors! Expose the false medical criteria for such assessment, show it up for what it is: a bare faced trick to cut benefits.

Also, DWP staff are all struggling to keep up with imposed government targets, although the existence of such targets are vehemently denied by the DWP.

So desperate are the assessors of ATOS that even a trivial thing like being a few minutes late can throw you off benefits. Instances have been recorded of people attending funerals of loved ones being classified as ineligible for work, therefore you're off benefits! Not conducting a job search on Christmas Day can count against you: it's recorded, so do it again and you're off benefits!

This government is distinguishing itself in the scale and sheer nastiness of its attacks on the most vulnerable sectors of the working class, while justifying it all with an equally nasty ideological campaign against the shirkers and scroungers who suck the blood of ‘ordinary hard working people’. But let's not have any illusion that this is all due to the fact the present governing team is made up of posh Bullingdon Club bully boys. In squeezing the working class for everything they've got, they are only doing what any bourgeois government, right wing or left wing, is compelled to do by the impersonal laws of a capitalist accumulation process in deep and historical crisis. **Melmoth, 15.3.14**

est government ever” at the start of the coalition to David Cameron being caught muttering about his wish to “get rid of all this green crap” which is more and more seen as an obstacle to the number one requirement for any serious government: to cut public spending while stimulating economic growth. Appointing Owen Paterson as environmental minister – he has a reputation for being a climate change sceptic – has further confirmed that “voting blue to go green” was never going to work.

Another left wing contributor to the *Guardian's* comment pages, Seamus Milne, published an article about the floods, linking them to a growing list of phenomena from all around the world that confirm that the effects of man-made climate change are already with us⁴. He also exposed the hollowness of the arguments of the right wing climate deniers, who in most cases simply follow the agenda of the gas and oil industries which have liberally subsidised propaganda against the now overwhelming body of scientific evidence for man-made climate change.

Milne argues that the hostility of many right wing, free market ideologues towards the theory of man-made climate change is the product of a profound anxiety: if it can be shown that unfettered, market-led economic growth is leading us towards ecological catastrophe, then it must be curbed, and the only force capable of doing this is the state. So the left love climate change because it gives them the excuse they need to push for further state tyranny. Of course Milne himself doesn't see state intervention as synonymous with tyranny because he believes in popular control of the state and the economy.

What Milne doesn't do is argue that the ecological crisis, like the economic crisis and the spread of war and militarism, provide further proof that capitalism, as a historic mode of production, has reached the end of its tether and needs to be destroyed from top to bottom if humanity is to emerge from these inter-twining crises. As we wrote in our resolution on the international situation at our last international congress⁵:

“*although the bourgeoisie tries to attribute the destruction of the environment to the wickedness of individuals 'lacking an ecological conscience' – thereby creating an atmosphere of guilt and anguish – the truth revealed by its vain and hypocritical attempts to resolve the problem is that this is not a problem of individuals or even of companies or nations, but of the very logic of devastation inscribed in a system which, in the name of accumulation, a system whose principle and goal is profit, has no scruples about undermining once and for all the material premises for metabolic exchange between life and the Earth, as long as it can gain an immediate benefit from it.*”

*This is the inevitable result of the contradiction between the productive forces – human and natural – which capitalism has developed, compressing them to the point of explosion, and the antagonistic relations based on the division between classes and on capitalist competition*⁶.

It is this fundamental problem, rooted in the social relations of bourgeois civilisation, which prevents capitalist governments – whether of the right or the left – from taking any effective action against climate change. In a world system made up of national units competing to the death for markets and profits, reining in ‘economic growth’ (i.e. accumulation) would be suicidal.

Capitalism's inbuilt rush towards environmental destruction is not a new discovery for marxists. In the 1950s, the Italian left communist Amadeo Bordiga, an engineer by training, wrote a number of articles on the subject of contemporary capitalist disasters like the flooding of the Po and Piave rivers and the sinking of the Andrea Doria liner. These essays have been collected into a volume called *Murdering the Dead: Amadeo Bordiga on Capitalism and Other Disasters* (Antagonism Press, 2001)⁶

4. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/20/climate-change-deniers-markets-fix>

5. <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/201310/9219/20th-icc-congress-resolution-international-situation>

6. A slightly different version of this collection can be found here: <http://72.52.202.216/~fenderse/Murder.htm>

Bordiga denounced the capitalist argument that unrestricted economic growth (which during the post-war ‘prosperity’ seemed to many to have overcome all limits) must be accepted as ‘progress’. He showed, for example, that deforestation and the sacrificing of many traditional means of flood defence had actually increased the impact of the Po flooding (a similar point as that made by Monbiot). He also challenges capitalism's very notion of progress by showing that it is necessarily a blind movement, entirely lacking in any coherent plan for the future, even in the short term. Capital's drive for the fastest possible buck obliges it to cut corners when it comes to the safety of human beings, as in the case of the Vajont dam on the Piave whose shoddy design resulted in a disastrous breach and in devastating floods in the valley below. In a broader sense, capitalism's insatiable thirst for profit necessarily undermines any attempt to harmonise economic needs with the health of the natural world on which we depend. And Bordiga also had no doubt that the left wing of capitalism's political spectrum is equally dependent on the profit motive: it wants the accumulation of value to be directed by the state, but it doesn't question the need to accumulate.

Bordiga went further in his argument. He saw that capitalism's drive for profit also has an in-built tendency towards destruction. Since capitalist profit can only be derived from living labour, it is periodically driven to destroy dead labour in order to rebuild through the exploitation of living labour. “*Modern capital, which needs consumers as it needs to produce ever more, has a great interest in letting the products of dead labour fall into disuse as soon as possible so as to impose their renewal with living labour, the only type from which it 'sucks' profit. That is why it is in seventh heaven when war breaks out and that is why it is so well trained for the practice of disasters. Car production in America is massive, but all, or nearly all, families have a car, so demand might be exhausted. So then it is better that the cars last only a short time*” (*Murdering the Dead*, p35)

But what Bordiga does not see so clearly, even if he is on some occasions led in that direction, is that at a certain point in its evolution the destruction of dead labour serves not as a stimulus to fresh accumulation, but produces only the accumulation of ruins. This was the underlying logic traced by the Gauche Communiste de France in the wake of World War Two, when it saw that the tendency towards destruction embodied in war and militarism was leading to the point where all the economic benefits accruing from war would be swallowed up, annihilated – as would certainly have been the case in a Third World War. This is an expression of the irrationality and decadence of a mode of production that is increasingly undermining its own economic needs and its own future. Today, capitalism in decay has added the threat of planetary ecological catastrophe to the threat of the destruction of humanity by imperialist war; in fact, the insolubility of the ecological crisis has become an added factor sharpening imperialist competition over dwindling material resources – including one most essential for life, water:

“*The US security establishment is already warning of potential conflicts – including terror attacks – over water. In a 2012 report, the US director of national intelligence warned that overuse of water – as in India and other countries – was a source of conflict that could potentially compromise US national security*”⁷.

Following the floods in the south of England, some leftist comedians have tried to entertain us with sneering jokes about the ‘Tory voters’ who have been having a hard time of it in their once comfortable suburbs. This is truly ridiculous: in all such situations, it's the rich minority which suffers the least and the less well off who suffer the most. But what communists have to draw out from these events is that they are a small foretaste of the global nightmare capitalism has in store for all of us if we allow it to continue. **Amos 8/3/14**

7. <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/feb/09/global-water-shortages-threat-terror-war>

Ukraine battlefield for capitalist powers

The ousting of Ukrainian President Yanukovich to Russia was greeted by some as an expression of another 'Ukrainian Revolution'. From the point of view of the Russian state it was denounced as an illegal 'coup' by 'fascists' in Kiev. In reality bankrupt Ukraine is a zone of combat between major capitalist powers.

What's been happening is no more a revolution than the 'Orange Revolution' of 2004/5 in Ukraine which led to the installation of Yanukovich's predecessor Viktor Yushchenko. As for being a 'coup', such language is the common currency of any regime when describing political arrangements that it doesn't approve of.

Strategic importance of Ukraine

Obama and Kerry have warned of the dangers of a Russian advance in the area, and insisted that the consequences of a 'back-door annexation' of Crimea will be very serious. The EU is prepared to impose sanctions on Russia and its allies in Ukraine. This is not a re-run of the tensions of the Cold War, although it is clear that Russia can't accept a pro-west Ukraine. This is not because of any wealth of resources in Ukraine. The importance of Ukraine for Russian capitalism is essentially strategic. The importance of Russia for Ukraine is limited, although, for example, in 2010, it was able to get a discount on Russian gas imports in exchange for extending Russia's naval base in Crimea.

Since the time of Peter the Great, Russia's rulers have striven for ports that can function throughout the year. You only need look at a map of Russia to see major ports like St Petersburg on the Baltic sea, and Vladivostok in the far East (ice-locked for four months a year), to appreciate the importance to Russia of access to the Black Sea. The Russian Black Sea Fleet is based in Sevastopol in Crimea; indeed Russia has had a base here since 1783. Any influence that Russia might have in the Eastern Mediterranean, Balkans and Middle East is backed up by the Black Sea Fleet. Although it's the smallest Russian fleet, in comparison to the Northern fleet based in Murmansk, the Baltic Fleet, and the Pacific fleet based in Vladivostok, it is an essential part of Russian capitalism's intervention in key areas of conflict. *"For Russia, the fleet and its Sevastopol base are a guarantor of its southern borders and a platform for projecting power into the Black Sea and from there into the Mediterranean. Its base is also a docking point for Russian oil tankers bound for the Bosphorus and the fleet will be tasked with protecting Russia's South Stream gas pipeline once it is finished. ... Russia's only alternative, its port at Novorossiysk, is buffeted by winds, is sometimes forced to shut because of bad weather, and would need billions of dollars of investment to house the Black Sea Fleet."* (Reuters 7/3/14)

The response to the Russian military build up has varied between different powers. The US and France have been able to make generous denunciations because they don't have particular interests in the area that might be put at risk. German capitalism is in a different position because it has closer links with Russia on a number of levels and is likely to be more cautious about applying (rather than just calling) for sanctions. It wants to avoid

an escalation of conflict to protect its economic interests. British capitalism also is very keen to protect Russian investment in the City and keep its concern over Ukraine at a rhetorical level.



Russian and Ukrainian troops confront each other

It is not possible to be definitive about the build up of tanks, troops and military vehicles on Russia's borders with the Ukraine. It's not clear how far Russia will go. This is not because of the personality of Putin, or the bellicose Russian personality. It's because war and the threats of war can't be neatly analysed into particular causes and probable outcomes. What we do know is that in the phase of capitalist decomposition, the tensions and antagonisms between capitalist states increasingly take on irrational and unpredictable forms. The result of the Crimean referendum is predictable, but not what it will lead to. And, for example, in the Baltic, the Caucasus, and other countries neighbouring Russia, there is the concern that the Moscow regime could again claim to be 'protecting Russian minorities' in other areas far from Ukraine.

The position of the working class

In the protests in Ukraine that led to Yanukovich's flight to Russia there were many elements. Some had illusions in the potential of deals with the EU, some were just anti-Russian, a rather large number were indeed very close to traditional fascism; at the same time many were on the streets because of a discontent with their worsening material conditions. In practice, whatever the initial motivations, all these energies became channelled behind the nationalism of the bourgeoisie.

In parts of Eastern Ukraine, in the steel and mining areas, as well as a strong pro-Russian sentiment, there is also a discernible anger about the billionaire 'oligarchs', the ultra-rich bourgeoisie that has accumulated great wealth with the downfall of the Stalinist state. There have been demonstrations in Donetsk directed against the pro-Russian authorities. There might be the germs of protest about the social situation, even though, at this stage it is likely that any such movement could easily be diverted into nationalist dead-ends. The working class in Ukraine and Russia faces a very difficult and dangerous situation and it is not likely that it will be able to break out of the nationalist trap on its own – which only emphasises the crucial role of the international class struggle in opposing the austerity of the bourgeoisie and its flight into irrationality and war. **Car, 15.3.14**

Internationalist declaration on Russia – Ukraine conflict

We are publishing a statement produced by the KRAS, an internationalist anarchist group in Russia, and signed by various other groups and individuals. We think that it responds to the elementary duty of internationalists to oppose imperialist war not by supporting one camp against the other, but by supporting the interests of the international working class against all its exploiters, and by denouncing the nationalist hysteria which the rulers always try to stir up when war threatens or breaks out.

We don't think, as the statement implies, that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine could spark off a third world war. The conditions for such a conflict are absent in the present period: the constitution of stable imperialist blocs and a defeated working class in the major capitalist countries.

Nevertheless, the conflict does express a grave deepening of world-wide imperialist tensions and

a further descent of capitalism into chaos and militarism. And yet – in apparent contradiction with the idea that this conflict could be the precursor of a worldwide conflagration – the statement also gives the impression that a central motivation for Russia's actions is to divert or forestall a proletarian response to the crisis. Nationalism is indeed used in this manner during any war situation, but it is not the danger of class struggle which pushes the bourgeoisie towards war: rather the opposite is the case.

Despite these criticisms, we want to affirm our solidarity with the comrades of KRAS and those in Ukraine who have signed this statement, since they are facing a particularly difficult situation: an atmosphere of rampant nationalism, ubiquitous state repression against dissenters, and the unofficial violence of the gangs of the 'new right', which is just a reheated version of the old fascism.

War on war! Not a single drop of blood for the "nation"!

The power struggle between oligarchic clans in Ukraine threatens to escalate into an international armed conflict. Russian capitalism intends to use redistribution of Ukrainian state power in order to implement their long-standing imperial and expansionist aspirations in the Crimea and eastern Ukraine where it has strong economic, financial and political interests.

On the background of the next round of the impending economic crisis in Russia, the regime is trying to stoking Russian nationalism to divert attention from the growing workers' socio-economic problems: poverty wages and pensions, dismantling of available health care, education and other social services. In the thunder of the nationalist and militant rhetoric it is easier to complete the formation of a corporate, authoritarian state based on reactionary conservative values and repressive policies.

In Ukraine, the acute economic and political crisis has led to increased confrontation between "old" and "new" oligarchic clans, and the first used including ultra-rightist and ultra-nationalist formations for making a state coup in Kiev. The political elite of Crimea and eastern Ukraine does not intend to share their power and property with the next in turn Kiev rulers and trying to rely on help from the Russian government. Both sides resorted to rampant nationalist hysteria: respectively, Ukrainian and Russian. There are armed clashes, bloodshed. The Western powers have their own interests and aspirations, and their intervention in the conflict could lead to World War III.

Warring cliques of bosses force, as usual, force to fight for their interests us, ordinary people: wage workers, unemployed, students, pensioners... Making us drunkards of nationalist drug, they set us against each other, causing us forget about our real needs and interests: we don't and can't care about their "nations" where we are now concerned more vital and pressing problems – how to make ends meet in the system which they found to enslave and oppress us.

We will not succumb to nationalist intoxication. To hell with their state and "nations", their flags and offices! This is not our war, and we should not go on it, paying with our blood their palaces, bank accounts and the pleasure to sit in soft chairs of authorities. And if the bosses in Moscow, Kiev, Lviv, Kharkiv, Donetsk and Simferopol start this war, our duty is to resist it by all available means!

No war between "nations" - no peace between classes!

KRAS, Russian section of the International Workers Association
Internationalists of Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, Israel, Lithuania
Anarchist Federation of Moldova
Fraction of the Revolutionary Socialists (Ukraine)

Declaration was supported by:
Workers Solidarity Alliance (North America)
An Internationalist from USA
Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative of Romania
Libertarians of Barcelona
Left Communists and Internationalists from Ecuador, Peru, Dominican Republic, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela
Workers-Communist Initiative (France)
Leicester group of Anarchist Federation (Britain)
An Internationalist from Ireland
French-speaking Anarchist Federation (FAF)
International of Anarchist Federations (IFA)
Union workers and precarious of Clermont-Ferrand CNT-AIT (France)
"World Revolution" (Croatia)
A Libertarian Socialist (Egypt)
libcom.org group
World in Common network
The statement is open for signature
From <http://www.aitrus.info/node/3608> Individuals or organisations wanting to co-sign the statement should send their name/organisation name to KRAS by e-mail at comanar30@gmail.com

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Social movements in
Turkey and Brazil:
**Indignation at the heart of the
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20th congress of the ICC

- Balance sheet of the congress
- Report on imperialist tensions

- Resolution on the international
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**Bilan, the Dutch left, and the
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**Discuss with the ICC and others
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100 years of capitalist decadence

For a century now, humanity has stood at a crossroads in its history. Already in the 19th century the working class starkly outlined this historical watershed in the expression: “socialism or barbarism”. The lucid marxist analysis revealed and expressed in this slogan cannot however be reduced to an empty slogan. Hence we want here to insist briefly on its historical importance and depth.

When we look at the human species’ distant, obscure beginnings, we cannot help but be astounded at the immense steps forward that have marked mankind’s emergence from the animal realm and marked its development since then: language, dance, art, architecture, the production of an immense wealth of material goods, and the ability to create a wealth and diversity of cultural, moral, and intellectual needs – all this represents a historical acceleration which takes the breath away.

Yet, when we focus our attention on the different epochs of human history, we must also acknowledge that mankind’s development has never been a smooth progression. Still less has this been the case since the emergence of class society and the first great civilisations, all of which have long disappeared: only a very few of them have been able to transform themselves into something new. History reveals to us many epochs of cultural regression, the loss of skills and knowledge, generally accompanied by moral stultification and a brutalisation of human relationships.

The foundation of man’s progress lies in his ability to transform nature with a view to the satisfaction of his own needs, and in the first place of his material needs, through the improvement and development of his tools and techniques – what Marx called “the productive forces”. Fundamentally, it is the degree of development of these productive forces, and of the division of labour that they imply, which determine the way that society is organised to put them into operation: the “relations of production”. When the framework provided by these relations allows the development of the productive forces, then society flourishes, not just on the material but also on the moral and cultural levels. But when the relations of production become a barrier to the continued development of the productive forces, then society undergoes repeated and worsening convulsions: it is threatened with a return to barbarism. To take just one historical example: one of the pillars of the Roman Empire was the exploitation of slave labour, especially in agriculture. The appearance of new farming techniques which could not be put into operation by producers whose status was lower than cattle was one of the causes of the Empire’s decadence and final collapse.

The steps forward achieved by human culture¹, from the Neolithic revolution to the Renaissance, the emergence of humanism, and the Russian revolution, appear to us today as a grandiose prelude to the world revolution. These giant strides of human culture have always been the product of long periods of struggle, where new social relationships overcame and replaced the old. Today, they carry us towards a new leap forward: socialism, the first conscious and worldwide socialisation of the human species! Marxism, the theory that the proletariat adopted to light the way in its struggle against capitalism, is able to study this history with lucidity, free from mystification, and to recognise its major tendencies. This has nothing to do with crystal-ball gazing. We cannot predict when, or even whether, the world revolution will take place. What we can do is to understand in depth – and defend against all comers, including the incomprehension of some revolutionaries – the immense historical importance of capitalism’s entry into its decadence. For 100 years, we have been faced with an alternative which can be summed up thus: either we succeed with the next social and cultural leap forward to socialism, or we fall back into barbarism.

The gravity of this alternative is greater than ever before in history, because today the growth in the

1. It should be clear that when we use the term “culture” here, we do so in the scientific sense, englobing the whole production of human society: technical and material of course, but also artistic, organisational, philosophical, moral, etc.

contradictions between the productive forces and the relations of production has reached a point where it threatens humanity not just with social and cultural decline, but with complete destruction. For the first time in history, a mode of production’s decadence is a menace for the very survival of the human species. Yet at the same time, it bears with it immense, historic possibilities for its future development: the beginning of humanity’s truly conscious history.

The capitalist model of socialisation is the most successful in human history. Capitalism has absorbed – when it has not simply destroyed – all previous social and cultural milieux, and has for the first time created a worldwide human society. Its basic form of exploitation is wage labour, which makes possible the appropriation and the accumulation of surplus labour, as well as the unpaid appropriation of the enormous productive capacity created by associated, socialised labour. This is what explains the unparalleled technical and scientific explosion which is part and parcel of capitalism’s rise. But one of capitalist socialisation’s specificities is that it is carried out unconsciously. It is determined by laws which – although they are the expression of given human social relationships based on the exchange of labour power for wages, between the producers and the owners of the means of production – appear to be “natural” and “unchangeable”, and so beyond the reach of human will. In this mystified – reified – view of reality, where human beings and the relations between them have become mere objects, the enormous increase in material resources and productive power appears as the product of capital rather than of human labour. Capitalism set out to conquer the world, but it turns out that the world is round. A world market has been created (on the ruins of alternative forms of production, like the textiles of China, India, or the Ottoman Empire for example). The success of the capitalist mode of production is a progressive step in human history; nonetheless for the vast majority of the population at the heart of capitalism the industrial revolution meant the destruction of previous ways of life and ferocious exploitation, while in much of the rest of the world it meant famine, epidemics and slavery. Capitalism is undoubtedly the most modern form of exploitation, but in the end it is every bit as parasitic as its predecessors. To keep the machine of accumulation going, capitalist socialisation demands ever more raw material and markets, and must constantly dispose of a reserve of human beings forced to sell their labour power to survive. This is why its victory over previous modes of production meant the ruin and starvation of the previous producers.

Capitalism presents itself as the aim and apogee of human development. If we are to believe its ideology, there is nothing beyond capitalism. But this means that capitalist ideology must hide two things: first, that historically capitalism is largely dependent on an environment and relations of production outside itself; second, that capitalist socialisation, like all the social forms that have preceded it, is only a stage in the process of humanity’s coming to consciousness. The driving force of capitalist accumulation constantly creates internal contradictions which erupt in crises. During capitalism’s ascendant phase, these crises were overcome by the destruction of excess capital and the conquest of new markets. With the new equilibrium thus achieved came a further extension of capitalist social relations – but once the world market had been shared out among the central capitalist powers the limits of this extension were reached. At this point, the great nation states can only pursue their world conquest at each other’s expense. Since all the cake has been shared out, each can only increase his share by taking from the others.

The nation states plunge into an arms race and hurl themselves at each others’ throats in the First World War. In a world wide slaughter, the productive forces chained in by historically obsolete relations of production are transformed into a destructive force of enormous power. With capitalism’s entry into decadence, warfare becomes a matter of equipment, and subjects the best part of production to military needs. The blind machine of



German and British troops fraternise on the western front in 1914

annihilation drags the whole world down into the abyss.

Well before 1914, the left wing of the Socialist International, the revolutionary forces around Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin, fought with all their strength against the threat of imperialist war. Living marxism – the only real marxism – which is not enclosed in dogmas and formulae supposedly valid for all time, realised that this was not just another war between the nations like those before it, but that it marked the entry of capitalism into its decadent phase. The marxists knew that we were then, as we still are today, at a historical crossroads which threatens for the first time to become a struggle for the very survival of the human species. Capitalism’s entry into decadence 100 years ago is irreversible, but this does not mean that the productive forces have come to a halt. In reality, these forces are so enchained and compressed by the logic of capitalist exploitation that society’s development is dragged down into an ever more barbaric maelstrom. Only the working class can give history a different direction and build a new society. We have seen just what capitalism’s unadulterated brutality is capable of after the defeat of the revolutionary upsurge in the years 1917-23. The course towards a new world war was opened, men reduced to ciphers, shut up in camps destined to murderous exploitation or plain extermination. Stalinist mass murder was surpassed by the annihilating madness of the Nazis; nor did the “civilised” ruling classes intend to miss the festivities of barbarism: the “democratic” atom bombs wiped two Japanese cities from the map and inflicted hideous suffering on the survivors.

The state capitalist machine may have learnt from history to the point of avoiding its own self-destruction – the bourgeois class will not simply commit suicide and abandon the historical stage to the proletariat – but only the return of the working class after 1968 offers any guarantee against a new course towards war. However, if the working class has proven capable of barring the road to a new world holocaust, it has not so far been able to impose its own perspective. In this situation, where neither of its two determining classes are capable

of imposing a decisive response to an irreversible and ever deeper economic crisis, society is more and more rotting where it stands; a growing social decomposition makes it ever more difficult for the working class to achieve a clear awareness of its historical perspective – a historical perspective which a century ago was widely shared in the workers’ ranks.

One hundred years ago, the working class faced a gigantic historic task, and so it still does today. The class of associated labour as such bears in itself the whole of human history: it is the central class in the struggle for the abolition of classes, and it must rise up against this barbarism. In the struggle against capitalism’s nihilistic and amoral barbarity, the working class is the incarnation of a humanity become conscious of itself. It is the productive force of the future still in chains. Within it lies the potential for a new leap forward in human culture.

In the struggle against capitalism’s entry into decadence, a whole generation of revolutionaries worldwide stepped forward, to set against capitalism’s perverted and reified socialisation the conscious association of the working class, guided by the beacon of the Communist International.

With the Russian revolution, it took in hand the struggle for world revolution. For us today, one hundred years later, this great task of taking up our responsibilities for humanity’s future remains an electrifying prospect. Even in the face of general stultification, a moral indignation arises in the heart of the working class, which gives us our bearings today. The working class suffers with the rest of humanity under the burden of decadence. Atomisation and the absence of perspective for the future attack our very identity. In the confrontations to come the working class will show whether it is capable of becoming conscious once again of its historical duty.

In the sweep of history, it is only a short step from moral indignation to the politicisation of an entire generation. A new leap forward in the history of human culture is both possible and vital. This is what living historical experience tells us. **ICC**



Russian and German troops fraternise on the eastern front in World War 1

1914: Labour and the unions mobilise the workers for war

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 was a decisive moment in history. Not only did it mark the entry of capitalism into its period of decadence but it was also the point at which large parts of the workers' movement betrayed the working class and went over to the camp of the bourgeoisie. In country after country the social democratic parties and the trade unions, built up with so much struggle and sacrifice of the preceding decades, rallied to the national flag and called on the proletariat to sacrifice itself on the altar of capitalism.

The article that follows was originally published in *World Revolution* 236 in July 2000. It was the penultimate article in a 14-part series on 'The struggle for the class party in Britain', which we aim to republish online. We are publishing this particular article here as part of our response to the growing media and political campaign about the 'commemoration' of the First World War

The weakness of the workers' movement in the face of war

The question of war has always been an important one for the working class, not least because the proletariat has been slaughtered time and again in the interests of its exploiters. Marx and Engels closely followed and analysed the military rivalries and wars of the ruling class. The First International actively followed both the American Civil War and the Franco-Prussian War. The Second International, faced with the rising tide of militarism that marked the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century, repeatedly discussed the response of the working class to war at its international congresses (see parts 8 and 9 of this series in WR 225 and 226). The Stuttgart congress of 1907 adopted a resolution that called on the working class "to use every effort to prevent war by all the means which seem to them most appropriate" and, if war were to break out "to intervene to bring it promptly to an end, and with all their energies to use the political and economic crisis created by the war to rouse the populace from its slumbers and to hasten the fall of capitalist domination". A minority within the International, led by Jean Jaures and Keir Hardie, argued for a general strike to prevent war. The majority, including figures like Bebel, Guesde and Plekhanov, opposed this position as unrealistic. Trotsky, writing in 1914, argued that in war, "the social democrats come face to face with the concentrated power of the government, backed by a powerful military machine" (quoted in Braunthal, *History of the International 1914-1943*, p4).

The main organisations of the British workers' movement had a long involvement with the International but showed themselves to be confused and divided over the question of war. One part, under the leadership of Keir Hardie, supported the idea of general strikes as we saw above. Another part, led by H.M. Hyndman, the leader of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) and subsequently the British Socialist Party (BSP), and Robert Blatchford, editor of *The Clarion*, were ardent patriots who had long warned of the 'threat' posed by Germany. The smaller socialist organisations, the Socialist Labour Party (SLP) and the Socialist Party of Great Britain (SPGB) were hostile to working with most other organisations, the International included, so played no part in the discussion. In fact, participation in the International often hid the reality that the international situation was not considered that important by the main workers' organisations, the Labour Party and the trade unions. Thus, Hardie's support for the use of the general strike to prevent mobilisation had no consequences for his actual practice of reformism and opportunism. The experience of the Boer war had already shown that the main workers' organisations in Britain had no understanding of internationalism other than at the level of rhetoric, and thus no ability to fight the tendency towards war by the only means possible: intensifying the class struggle. As we said in WR 225 these lessons were not lost on the British ruling class. The outbreak of the war was to show that the weaknesses evident at the start of the century had not just persisted but were actually deeper.

The Labour Party and the unions cross the class line

In the period leading up to the war both the socialist movement and the radical wing of the ruling class were loud in their opposition to war and to the foreign policy of the government. The 1912 Labour Party conference had denounced the policy of the Government as anti-German and, despite the official denials, it was widely suspected that a secret deal guaranteeing British support for France had tied Britain into the Franco-Russian alliance. In late July 1914, as the crisis was reaching its climax, the British section of the International issued a manifesto under the names of Hardie and Glasier denouncing the threat of war and calling for mass demonstrations. These were held on the 1st August in many of the major cities of Britain, with resolutions adopted calling on the government to make every effort for peace. This reflected the lack of any objective analysis behind the grand rhetoric. Very rapidly after the declaration of war the Labour Party and the unions gave it their open support. The class war was put on hold in order to give the imperialist war free rein.

Ramsay MacDonald, then leader of the Labour Party, after opposing the declaration of war in the House of Commons, resigned the leadership of the party to make way for the openly pro-war Henderson. However, in practice MacDonald, like the other 'pacifist' leaders of the Independent Labour Party, kept his principles pure by putting them aside for the duration: "... we cannot go back now, nor can we turn to the right or the left. We must go straight through. History will in due time apportion the praise and the blame, but the young men of the country must, for the moment, settle the immediate issue of victory" (quoted in Tiltman, *James Ramsay MacDonald*, p96). Kier Hardie was even more explicit: "A nation at war must be united... With the boom of the enemy's guns within earshot the lads who have gone forth to fight their country's battles must not be disheartened by any discordant note at home" (quoted in Cole and Postgate, *The Common People*, p507). MacDonald joined the recruiting campaign, as did the party's only national organiser.

The trade unions did not respond immediately at the start of the war. In late August the Parliamentary Committee of the TUC called for an end to strikes currently underway and for its constituent unions to ensure that any subsequent disputes should be settled by agreement. In fact disputes were already sharply declining, from 100 at the start of August to about 20 at the end of the month. On September 2nd the Parliamentary Committee published a manifesto supporting the war and welcoming the decision of Labour to support the recruitment campaign. The manifesto also indicated a willingness to accept conscription. While their declarations of support for the war showed that these organisations had gone over to the ruling class, the full significance of this can only be understood by tracing subsequent developments that led to their integration into the state. This had been the aim of the most intelligent parts of the bourgeoisie for many years. We have already shown how the leadership of the Liberal Party sought to draw the Labour Party towards the state by agreeing a secret deal to share out some seats (see part 7 in WR 222). Significant parts of the Fabian Society, in particular Sydney Webb, had worked assiduously towards this aim. The culmination of their efforts came after the war with the adoption of a new 'socialist' platform (containing the famous Clause IV) drafted by Webb, and Labour's transformation into the second party after the Tories as large numbers of Liberals changed allegiance.

The integration of the Labour Party into the state

The major role given to the Labour Party was not direct recruitment for the army but the containment of the working class by acting as its champion. One of the main vehicles for this in the first years of the war was the War Emergency National Workers' Committee (WENWC) which was formed in the first few days of the war (arising in fact from a meeting originally called to organise opposition to the war). It included trade



Recruitment of workers to fight in the trenches was a complete betrayal

union leaders, members of the Labour Party, the ILP, the BSP and the Fabians. One of its features was that it included both 'super-patriots' like Hyndman and 'opponents' of the war as well as 'sane patriots' like Webb. This unity was its great strength; but it wasn't a unity that protected the interests of the working class, as it pretended in its public pronouncements, but a unity that protected the interests of the ruling class by containing working class concerns and anger. Its activities appear prosaic and even benign, being concerned with things like food and rent controls, rates of poor relief as well as individual cases of hardship. However, its first statement made it clear that it stood for a strengthening of the state: "The Nation is at the beginning of a crisis which demands thorough and drastic action by the state and the municipalities" (quoted in Harrison, 'The War Emergency Workers National Committee', in Briggs and Saville, *Essays in Labour History*, p225). An attempt was made to hide this with a radical smokescreen calling for the 'conscription of riches'.

As the war progressed and the state began to organise production and the workforce more effectively, the WENWC became less significant. In 1915 Henderson joined the coalition government as a Cabinet Minister. When Lloyd George came to power more Labour MPs joined the government, one union leader being made Minister of Labour and another MP Food Controller. Lloyd George was very clear about the importance of the 'Labour Movement' as a whole to the war: "Had Labour been hostile, the war could not have been carried on effectively. Had Labour been lukewarm, victory would have been secured with increased and increasing difficulty" (quoted in Williams, *Fifty Years March*, p230).

The integration of the unions

The trade unions strongly supported the war throughout its duration. At the 1915 TUC Conference a resolution in support of the war was passed with only seven votes against. In 1916 it opposed the call for an International Labour Conference because it included socialists from 'enemy' countries. More significantly still, it actively supported measures to control the working class and increase the level of exploitation.

From 1915 on the unions worked with the Committee on Production appointed by the government. The Committee made recommendations to relax trade practices and was also given powers to arbitrate in disputes in order to prevent industrial action. This led to the Treasury Agreement of March 1915 when the unions agreed to suspend industrial action for the duration of the war and to take measures to increase output. The unions and government were cautious in their implementation of the Agreement in order not to anger the workers. The decision by the government some months later to make the terms compulsory

through the introduction of the Munitions of War Act allowed the unions to maintain the notion that they were independent representatives of the interests of their members. The government prepared the ground with a campaign attacking workers for impeding production. In reality the National Labour Advisory Council, which had been set up to mediate between government and unions, and included trade unionists among its members, was asked by the government to draft the Bill. The Act prohibited strikes and lockouts unless 21 days' notice had been given. It also established 'controlled' workplaces, where workers could only leave if granted a certificate allowing them to go.

As the war progressed and opposition and working class militancy grew, the unions joined in the campaigns promising a bright future. The TUC participated in the work of the Committee on Reconstruction, giving its support to the Whitley Report which proposed measures to increase state control, such as the establishment of Joint Industrial Councils and the regulation of wages in certain industries.

A victory for the bourgeoisie

1914 marked the point at which the Labour Party and the trade unions joined the bourgeoisie. However, the dynamic had existed before 1914 and continued afterwards. The bourgeoisie had long worked to corrupt individual union and Labour leaders but now it was the organisations themselves that they captured. These developments were not the result of the betrayals of the leaders but expressed the conscious transformation of instruments created by the working class into weapons to oppress them. Ultimately, they were a consequence of the change in historic period. The ascendancy of the Labour Party after 1918 and its 'conversion' to socialism were a consequence of its change in class character. Similarly, the extension of the vote that followed the war was not a step forward for the working class but a reflection of the new reality that bourgeois democracy could no longer be of any use to the working class, but was a great deal of use to the bourgeoisie. Working class interests could now only be defended outside of and against both the unions and the Labour Party.

The outbreak of war did not, nonetheless, mark the death of the working class movement in Britain. Revolutionary voices were still raised, both from within organisations which were part of the Labour Party (it was not possible to join the Labour Party as an individual member at this point) and from those opposed to it. This political struggle will be examined in the final part of this series.

North, July 2000

Tony Benn, Bob Crow

How the heroes of the left are used against the working class

All the obituaries of Tony Benn and Bob Crow have tried to play up their credentials as socialists or, in the case of Bob Crow, with a bust of Lenin in his office, as a communist. The truth lies elsewhere.

Tony Benn is remembered as a courteous, pipe-smoking gentleman, a great parliamentarian and a rousing orator who would fill any hall for the meetings he held after leaving parliament to, as he said, spend more time on politics. He first came to notice for renouncing his hereditary title so that he could pursue a career in the House of Commons. In the 1960s he was in the mainstream of the Labour Party and as a minister in the Wilson and Callaghan governments was an enthusiast for the "white heat of the technological revolution". In the 1980s he turned to the left and this above all is where his critics want to credit him with socialist policies. He certainly continued to stand for nationalisation when it fell out of favour, but that is not socialism. A business taken over by the state still belongs to the ruling capitalist class and the workers it employs are still exploited. In fact the state itself belongs to the bourgeoisie, and not, as Tony Benn would have us believe, to the 'people'. Economically he stood for a sort of siege economy with strict import controls – his little England, anti-EU views are close to those of UKIP. He stood for nuclear disarmament, one of the policies that only ever thrives in opposition. However many ministers claim such a position, it has no effect on government policy, as the Labour governments of the 1960s and 1970s demonstrate. But it does give the illusion that the state can choose not to be imperialist under the impact of public opinion.

If Benn was a national treasure, as so many of his obituaries have claimed, he couldn't be a socialist, since socialism (which for us is precisely the same thing when it goes under the less respectable name of international communism) is the sworn enemy of the nation state and of its 'treasure' – capital. Tony Benn on the other hand devoted his life to serving the national capitalist state under the false brand of socialism. It is precisely that state that the working class needs to

destroy. The radical opposition between serving the capitalist state and fighting for the working class was demonstrated by Benn himself during his spell as energy minister in the 70s, when he directly confronted the unofficial power workers' strike against Labour's Social Contract (i.e. government imposed wage cuts). This included a plan to use troops to carry out the power workers' jobs (i.e., strikebreaking).

Bob Crow, a man who worked on the railways from the age of 16 and lived in a council house despite his £133,000 a year as RMT chief executive, has the reputation of old style radical trade unionist and is credited with the fact that his members have above average pay. He led the union away from the Labour Party in 2004 and the Labour transport secretary, Alistair Darling refused to meet him for 18 months. Aside from that piece of theatre he had the reputation of a very good negotiator with great attention to detail. He described himself as always ready to call a strike, but these were limited token strikes, always secondary to negotiation while enough to keep up his militant reputation. As the *Economist* states "he did not pick fights he could not win: many of his 'victories' were in reality careful compromises" (15-21 March 2014) and despite his reputation he was also "all in favour of co-operating with management" (Bob Crow interview December 2010, <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2010/dec/13/bob-crow-strikes-rmt-union>). So was it his militancy that led to rail and tube workers getting above average pay? Here both Crow and the *Economist* are in agreement that the nature of the industry was key. "Few workers are in the position that RMT members are. Becoming a train driver means hurdling remarkable barriers to entry, which helps keep wages high. And transport, unlike car manufacturing or coal mining, cannot be exported overseas" (*Economist*) and "It's not the same playing field, I will accept. Working on the railway compared to working in a call centre" (Bob Crow interview December 2010). It is not that workers with a militant union get better pay, but that the bourgeoisie need an apparently militant union leader to keep a militant section of the

working class in line.

Like Benn, Bob Crow also comes across as a pleasant and reasonable man in all the obituaries, and like Benn gets fulsome praise from those who opposed him politically. Like Benn, that does not make him a communist or a socialist, nor even a fighter for the interests of the working class. In fact, the ruling class is highly adept at using the personal qualities of this or that figure as a means of strengthening ideas which are crucial to maintaining the present order: in Benn's case, the identification of socialism with the capitalist state, and in Crow's, the illusion that the working class can really defend itself through a more militant form of trade unionism, when in reality the unions everywhere are the capitalist state's last line of defence. **Alex 15.3.14**

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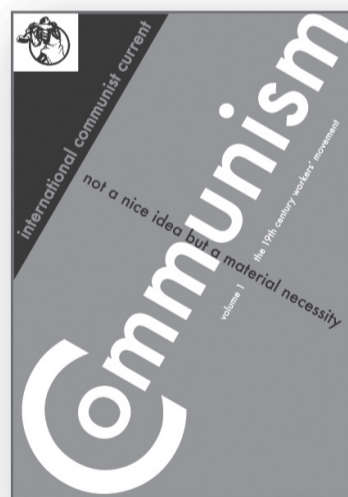
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Protest in Bosnia comes up against the dangers of nationalism and democracy

Despite the difficulties facing the international class struggle, especially with the containment of the big social movements of the last few years ('Arab spring', Spanish indignados, etc), despite the tide of nationalism that has drowned many expressions of protest and discontent, as in Ukraine, here and there we are still seeing signs that the ruling class is not always having things its own way. The outbreak of mass protests against 'socialist' austerity in Venezuela and the re-ignition of mass anger against the regime in Turkey are examples of this. In this article our sympathiser Baboon detects the same elements of real class struggle in the recent movements in Bosnia.

August 24 2011, a strike broke out at the DITA detergent factory in Tuzla in Bosnia. The strike was spontaneous and erupted over the lack of wages, back-pay, paid transportation to work and the loss of pensions and health-care for the workers. It lasted for 7 months until March 2012. And then having been locked-out by the bosses, the striking workers, again spontaneously, organised a permanent blockade of the factory in order to stop the asset-stripping of their plant - which they'd seen happen at neighbouring factories. The strike committee organised pickets to other workers and went to other plants and factories and other workers, some of whom were on strike or protesting themselves, also came to the DITA factory in shows of support and solidarity. Local peasants bought food to the pickets, as did miners and bakery workers. Health workers and postal workers also came to the site in solidarity. One of the strike committee said that "not a single local union supported us" because the strike was deemed "illegal" (For a fuller account of this movement see the video on the libcom internet discussion forum thread "Protests in Bosnia", Ed's post 17.2.14¹. The video has the catchy title of "Here's something for you Granny, thank you! Thank you! That is huge!" - it's very interesting and a profoundly moving expression from the working class expressed by one of the strike leaders).

Just after the beginning of February this year, suffering from similar indignities and attacks from the bourgeoisie, the anger of the workers of Tuzla exploded again. Government buildings,

1. <http://www.libcom.org/news/protests-bosnia-07022014>

symbols of the workers' misery, were attacked and burnt, and the bosses' protectors, the police, were also attacked, provoking the latter here to surrender and there to dish out more beatings and repression. Ten per cent of the hundred thousand inhabitants of Tuzla were on the streets, including students who joined the workers, and movements of solidarity broke out in the towns of Zenica, Mostar, Bihac, Sarajevo and elsewhere in the region, where the unemployment rate goes up to anything around 75% and where wages and conditions are being dramatically cut. For all its weaknesses, lack of direction and confusion, what occurred in Tuzla and beyond was, in the first instance, an expression of the working class and, in the face of the dangers of nationalism and democracy, an example of workers saying "enough".

The imperialist carve-up of Bosnia, after the war in the early 90's, which itself was an expression of the decomposition of capitalism, was engineered by "peace envoy" Richard Holbrooke - a worthy successor to Henry Kissinger - in the 1995 "Dayton Accords" which unfolded under the auspices of American imperialism. In this process Bosnia was split into two entities and one autonomous district - Brcko (where there were also protests recently); the Bosniak-Croat Federation is divided into ten cantons that work alongside local government. "The result" says *The Economist*, 15.2.14, "is a system that pays large salaries to politicians in a country of just 3.5 million people". In other words, the whole system imposed by the major powers favours corruption, nepotism and gangsterism. Indeed many of these politicians and top bureaucrats in the Balkans are out and out gangsters and traffickers who make up the local bourgeoisie. All those, on the right and left, who maintained that this war would lead to a major reconstruction of the region and that there was an "economic rationale" behind it, have been proved decidedly wrong. Not only did the war and the subsequent "peace" agreement lay the ground for further irrationality and gangsterism, not only do vast areas of the Balkans remain devastated and sprinkled with minefields, but unemployment and savage attacks on workers are everywhere. Here, on our doorstep in Europe, we find not reconstruction but the ravages of imperialism and capitalist destruction persisting and deepening.

Various nationalist factions put forward their own conspiracy theories around the protests or labelled them the work of "hooligans", with the

EU's High Representative in Bosnia, Valentin Inzko, threatening to bring in EU troops against the protesters (Malatesta's Blog, 12.2.14). Going from the correct idea that these protests put forward no demands based on ethnic divisions and that there was a certain solidarity expressed across the inter-ethnic lines imposed by Dayton, a number of intellectuals and academics, including Noam Chomsky, Tariq Ali, Naomi Klein and Slavoj Zizek, wrote a couple of letters to *The Guardian* (see *Balkans Insight*, 13.2.14) "supporting" the "citizens" of the region. But this support is like that of a noose supporting the hanged man. They call on the "international community" to sort things out - the same international community that provoked the war in the first place and imposed these divisions and conditions in the second. In essence these leftist supporters of capitalism simply tail-end the forces of the bourgeoisie in general and the machinations of the EU over the protests in particular. For example, the EU's call for Bosnia's leaders "to show more accountability and transparency" (Reuters, 17.2.14), and the Bosnian government's appeal to "dissatisfied workers to seek to achieve their rights through union institutions with whom (this) government has had continual good relations" (World Socialist Website, 6.2.14). We've seen above how the unions, themselves divided up along nationalist lines, are not only hand in hand with the state but openly against the workers' struggles.



The outburst of anger from the workers of Tuzla hasn't come from out of the blue. There was a miners' strike for more wages last September; around Bosnia there have been demonstrations that have challenged ethnic divides and express concern for unemployment and the future, reflected in such slogans as "Death to nationalism!", "We support uprisings all around the world!", "School never taught us to be unemployed!", "Fuck you in three

languages!" They were painted on government buildings or on hand-made posters held by protesters of all ages including the unemployed and retired workers. Strikes and blockades organised by workers broke out in Krležjevo, Serbia, and there have been protests in Belgrade and in Drvar, Republic Srpska. Further afield there have been demonstrations against unemployment in Skopje, Macedonia (Bosnia-Herzegovia Protest Files, 18.2.14) and violent unemployment protests by students were reported in Pristina, Kosovo (BBC News, 8.2.14)².

Clearly this movement is very small scale and prone to the dangers of division, nationalism and democracy. The latter can be seen in the "Plenums", "Governments of Experts" and "Technical Governments" that have been established and called for. These are the sort of bourgeois organisations that will be welcomed by the letter-writing leftist academics above. We lack sufficient information to say whether some of these plenums may have been real general assemblies, genuine products of the movement, but there are reports that the Tuzla plenum has completely ignored the demands of workers. This concretely expresses the danger of a class movement being subsumed into a "democratic" mobilisation which ends up looking for new ruling faces. And the other side of the dangers of nationalism is the idea of a vague "multi-nationalism" which aspires to everyone "getting on" and to "cultural tolerance" in order to take the steam out of any further developments. Against all this the working class must attempt to develop its struggle on its own ground even though at the moment it appears to be very confused and has significant forces ranged against it.

But, "Here's something for you Granny": Bosnia is no Ukraine. There are no western politicians, spies, ambassadors, delegations and dollar bills backing the workers' struggles. These struggles are more in line with the fight and anger of the "Indignant" in Spain, the protests in Egypt, Turkey and Brazil, and they are prone to the same or similar dangers. But taking place in this region decimated by imperialism they are an important sign that the international working class has not been crushed by the material and ideological attacks of the enemy. **Baboon, 19.2.14**

2. Whether by coincidence or not, Nato KFOR troops were mobilised for training against protests in their joint multi-national command centre at Hehenful, Germany.

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

organisation, whether 'official' or 'rank and file', serve only to discipline the working class and sabotage its struggles.

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

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

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

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

* The revolutionary political organisation constitutes the vanguard of the working class and is an active

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

OUR ACTIVITY

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

Organised intervention, united and centralised on an international scale, in order to contribute to the process which leads to the revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The regroupment of revolutionaries with the aim of constituting a real world communist party, which is indispensable to the working class for the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a communist society.

OUR ORIGINS

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