



world revolution

1914: The Socialists betray socialism

We can hardly get away this year from a whole variety of historical experts telling us how the First World War actually got started and what it was really about. But very few of them – not least the left wing ideologues who are full of criticism about the sordid ambitions of the contending royal dynasties and ruling classes of the day – tell us that the war could not be unleashed until the ruling classes were confident that plunging Europe into a bloodbath would not in turn unleash the revolution. The rulers could only go to war when it was clear that the ‘representative’ of the working class, the Socialist parties grouped in the Second International, and the trade unions, far from opposing war, would become its most crucial recruiting sergeants. This article begins the task of reminding us how this monstrous betrayal could take place.



Front cover of the newspaper of the German Social Democratic Party on August 4 1914, announcing that it was prepared to defend the ‘fatherland in danger’

When war broke out in August 1914, it hardly came as a surprise for the populations of Europe, especially the workers. For years, ever since the turn of the century, crisis had followed on crisis: the Moroccan crises of 1905 and 1911, the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913, just to name the most serious of them. These crises saw the great powers going head to head, all of them engaged in a frantic arms race: Germany had begun a huge campaign of naval construction, which Britain had inevitably to answer. France had introduced three-year military service, and huge French loans were financing the modernisation of Russia’s railways, designed to transport troops to its frontier with Germany, as well as that of Serbia’s army. Russia, following the debacle of its war with Japan in 1905, had launched a thoroughgoing reform of its armed forces. Contrary to what all today’s propaganda about its origins tells us, World War I was consciously prepared and above all desired by all the ruling classes of all the great powers.

So it was not a surprise – but for the working class, it came as a terrible shock. Twice, at Stuttgart in 1907 and at Basel in 1912, the Socialist parties of the 2nd International had solemnly committed themselves to defend the principles of internationalism, to refuse the enrolment of the workers in war, and to resist it by every means possible. The Stuttgart Congress adopted a resolution, with an amendment proposed by its left wing – Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg: “In case war

should break out [it is the Socialist parties’] duty to intervene in favour of its speedy termination and with all their powers to utilize the economic and political crisis created by the war to rouse the masses and thereby to hasten the downfall of capitalist class rule”. Jean Jaurès, the giant of French socialism, declared to the same Congress that “Parliamentary action is no longer enough in any domain... Our adversaries are horrified by the incalculable strength of the proletariat. We have proudly proclaimed the bankruptcy of the bourgeoisie. Let us not allow the bourgeoisie to speak of the bankruptcy of the International”. In July 1914, Jaurès had a statement adopted by the French Socialist Party’s Paris Congress, to the effect that: “Of all the means used to prevent and stop a war, the Congress considers as particularly effective the general strike, organised internationally in the countries concerned, as well as the most energetic action and agitation”.

And yet, in August 1914 the International collapsed, or more exactly it disintegrated as all its constituent parties (with a few honourable exceptions, like the Russians and the Serbs) betrayed its founding principle of proletarian internationalism, in the name of “danger to the nation” and the defence of “culture”. And needless to say, every ruling class, as it prepared to slaughter human lives by the millions, presented itself as the high point of civilisation and culture – its opponents of course, being nothing more than bloodthirsty brutes guilty of the worst atrocities...

How could such a disaster happen? How could those who, only a few months or even a few days previously, had threatened the ruling class with the consequences of war for its own rule, now turn round and join without protest in national unity with the class enemy – the *Burgfriedenpolitik*, as the Germans called it?

Of all the parties in the International, it is the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*, the Germany Social-Democratic Party (SPD) which bears the heaviest responsibility. Not that the others were guiltless, especially not the French Socialist Party. But the German party was the flower of the International, the jewel in the crown of the proletariat. With more than a million members and more than 90 regular publications, the SPD was far and away the strongest and best organised party of the International. On the intellectual and theoretical level, it was the reference for the whole workers’ movement: the articles published in its theoretical review *Neue Zeit* (New Times) set the tone for marxist theory and Karl Kautsky, *Neue Zeit*’s editor, was sometimes considered as the “pope of marxism”. As Rosa Luxemburg wrote: “By means of countless sacrifices and tireless attention to detail, [German Social Democracy] have built the strongest organization, the one most worthy of emulation; they created the biggest press, called the most effective means of education and enlightenment into being, gathered the most powerful masses of voters and attained the greatest number of parliamentary mandates. German Social Democracy was considered the purest embodiment of Marxist socialism. German Social Democracy had and claimed a special place in the Second International – as its teacher and leader” (*Junius Pamphlet*).

The SPD was the model that all the others sought to emulate, even the Bolsheviks in Russia. “In the Second International the German ‘decisive force’ played the determining role. At the [international] congresses, in the meetings of the International Socialist Bureau, all awaited the opinion of the Germans. Especially in the questions of the struggle against militarism and war, German Social Democracy always took the lead. For us Germans that is unacceptable’ regularly sufficed to decide the orientation of the Second International, which blindly bestowed its confidence upon the admired leadership of the mighty German Social Democracy: the pride of every so-

cialist and the terror of the ruling classes everywhere” (*Junius Pamphlet*). It was therefore down to the German Party to translate the commitments made at Stuttgart into action and to launch the resistance to war.

And yet, on that fateful day of 4th August 1914, the SPD joined the bourgeois parties in the Reichstag to vote for war credits. Overnight, the working class in all the belligerent countries found itself disarmed and disorganised, because its political parties and its unions had gone over to the enemy class and henceforth would be the most energetic organisers not of resistance to war, but on the contrary of society’s militarisation of war.

Today, legend would have it that the workers were swept away like the rest of the population by an immense wave of patriotism, and the media love to show us film of the soldiers seen off to the front by a cheering population. Like many legends, this one has little to do with the truth. Yes there were demonstrations of nationalist hysteria, but these were mostly the actions of the petty bourgeoisie, of young students drunk with nationalism. In France and in Germany, the workers demonstrated in their hundreds of thousands against the war during July 1914: they were reduced to impotence by the treason of their organisations.

In reality of course, the SPD’s betrayal did not happen overnight. The SPD’s electoral power hid a political impotence, worse, it was precisely the SPD’s electoral success and the power of the union organisations that reduced the SPD to im-

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The incoherence of British imperialism

In Iraq and Syria Britain condemns the advance of the Islamic State while insisting it will not take part in any military intervention; in Gaza it supports Israel's right to self-defence while freezing export licences for military equipment in protest at the growing slaughter; while in the Ukraine it supports sanctions against Russia so long as the impact on its financial sector is not too great. Such apparent contradictions are often seen in the opaque and convoluted manoeuvres of participants in the 'international community'. However, for the British state today they express not just the usual twists and turns of imperialist tactics but a growing incoherence at the level of imperialist strategy. This has its roots in the growing fragmentation and barbarism that has come to dominate the international situation since 1989 and in the long term decline of British power.

The decline of a global power

The decline of British imperialism from global domination to a distrusted second rate power has often been analysed. Nonetheless, it is worth recalling that before the First World War the British Empire encircled the globe and its military power, especially naval, was superior to its nearest rivals. Even then, however, the economic dominance that this was based on had already been eroded by the rise of rivals headed by Germany and America. The 'Great War' revealed this weakness to the world, perhaps with the exception of the

British ruling class. The inter-war period was one of turbulence and uncertainty, above all because the revolutionary threat posed by the international working class meant that the reshaping of the imperialist world order was effectively interrupted.

In this sense, the Second World War can be seen as a completion of the First, in that it confirmed America's dominance and Britain's demotion to the second rank. However, the division of the world into the two blocs that emerged from the ruins of the war created an unprecedented situation, characterised on the one hand by a confrontation which if unleashed could have destroyed the planet and, on the other, by a certain level of stability as the lesser powers curbed their ambitions in exchange for the protection of the bloc leaders. This in no way meant that this was some kind of peaceful balance of power; on the contrary, it was marked by endless and bloody proxy wars as the two blocs probed each other and sought to gain the upper hand. Nor, indeed, did it mean peace and harmony within the blocs: ambitions were curbed, not abandoned.

The British ruling class generally recognised that its interests were best served by staying close to the US. This both reflected the existence of real common interests against the Russian Bloc and acquiescence to a situation it could no longer challenge – as the US had made clear in the 1950s when it slapped down Britain's attempt to act independently over Suez. One consequence of this

was that Britain effectively maintained a position in the global order that its own economic strength no longer warranted. The unravelling of the Western Bloc that followed the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989 changed this irrevocably.

British imperialism in the new world order

For many states this situation presented them with new possibilities. Old vassals of the USSR turned towards the US and Europe, others such as Germany and Japan that had been constrained after their defeat in the war began to stretch their muscles. The failure of American attempts to hold the line through the first Gulf War and beyond emboldened lesser powers, such as Israel and Iran, to assert themselves regionally.

For Britain however, this was less an opportunity than a threat because it was once again confronted by the full reality of its decline and the legacy of its past global swagger that had sown hatred and distrust amongst allies and enemies alike. At the same time, its ruling class not only had the imperialist ambitions common to all ruling classes, but also the pretensions of its past power and glory. In the new world order, the British state found itself caught between a US that was struggling to maintain its old authority and which was increasingly drowning parts of the world in blood in its attempts to do so, and a Europe that was increasingly dominated by a resurgent Germany. In our press we have charted British imperialism's efforts to steer an independent line over the last quarter of a century and analysed the development of factions within the ruling class arguing for differing imperialist strategies. In the last decade we have shown the impasse into which the Blair government drove British imperialist strategy as a result of the turn towards the US that followed 9/11 and the disastrous interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Cameron came to power with an idea of breaking out of this impasse by reaching beyond its parameters to new powers such as India, Pakistan, Turkey, Brazil and China, but this vision also foundered in the deserts of Iraq and the mountains of Afghanistan. Today it seems that every move Britain makes backfires. The intervention in Libya in 2011 to help the rebellion against Gaddafi was hailed a success at the time because it achieved its aim rapidly and with no loss of British military personnel. Today, the country is torn apart by a myriad factions of former 'freedom fighters' and the British embassy has been closed and its staff have fled. As we show in other articles in this issue, barbarism is spreading in many parts of the world, being particularly concentrated in those places where the US has led efforts to defeat 'extremism' and restore 'order' and where its former protégés and pawns have gone freelance.

The result within the British ruling class has been to increase its divisions and to force them into the open. This was seen most explicitly a year ago when the attempt to sanction military intervention in Syria was defeated in the House of Commons (see "Syria intervention vote: Impasse of British imperialism" in *WR* 362, September/October 2013¹). The impasse that now exists within the ruling class means that it has been unable to develop a coherent imperialist policy in the last 12 months and it is this, rather than tactical oscillations, that lie behind the apparent contradictions noted at the start of this article.

The growing incoherence of British imperialism

In Iraq and Syria, Britain has joined the condemnation of the Islamic State but has been hesitant in getting involved. Nonetheless, there has been a gradual move from initially only providing 'humanitarian' aid, to agreeing to transport weapons to the Kurds supplied by others and then to declaring its willingness to supply British military equipment. The fighter aircraft originally deployed to aid the humanitarian mission are now carrying out military surveillance while ministers repeatedly state there will be no 'boots on the ground'. Divisions have already come into the open, with military figures, such as Lord Dannatt, calling not

only for armed intervention, but also for direct talks with President Assad of Syria. He has been joined by the former Foreign Secretary Malcolm Rifkind who said Britain had to be "harshly realistic" and likened working with Assad to the wartime alliance with Stalin, arguing that "history judged them right in coming to that difficult but necessary judgement" (*Guardian* 22/08/14).

There have also been demands for Parliament to be recalled, which Cameron has resisted on the grounds that the intervention in response to the humanitarian crisis does not require an emergency debate. Most recently, the possibility of joining the US air strikes has been raised in a report in the *New York Times* (26/08/14), which quoted unnamed US officials saying they expected that Britain and Australia would be willing to participate. Britain's position does not exclude this possibility since ministers have only ruled out the use of ground troops. Thus it is possible that Cameron is trying to move towards intervention gradually, testing out the level of opposition as he goes in order to avoid a repeat of the humiliation over Syria. The execution of the journalist James Foley, because it may have been carried out by a British member of the Islamic State, could help to provide a pretext, although Cameron did not immediately take this opportunity.

During the latest violence in Gaza the British Government has condemned the rocket attacks by Hamas and reiterated its position that Israel has a right to defend itself, while gradually increasing its criticism of Israel over the number of civilian deaths and the attacks on UN buildings. There have been divisions across the political parties, coming to a head with the resignation of Baroness Warsi who condemned her government's policy as "morally indefensible" and claimed that it was no longer acting as an 'honest broker' in the region. She was attacked by some fellow Tories, including the Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, for over-reacting, suggesting that it was more a matter of pique over her demotion in the recent cabinet reshuffle than of principle as she claimed. There have also been tensions in the coalition over military exports to Israel, with Vince Cable, the Lib Dem Trade Minister stating that exports would be suspended if violence resumed.

Turning to the Ukraine, Britain supported its move towards Europe as part of its long-term support of the expansion of the European Union as a way of counter-balancing Germany's position. Thus it supported the protestors in Kiev, playing down the fascist sympathies of many of the organisations involved in it, and has been happy to portray Russia as causing the current conflict for its own territorial ambitions. It has also supported the imposition of sanctions, suggesting that the restrictions on the movements and financial transactions of various senior figures in Russia would somehow have a real impact. However, it was far less willing to impose effective financial sanctions because of the possible impact on Britain's financial sector, which remains one of the few profitable parts of the economy.

The confusion and indecision currently evident should not be seen as implying any lessening of Britain's imperialist ambitions. The challenge is over precisely what those ambitions are and how to achieve them. So, intervention, whether in Iraq, Syria or elsewhere should not be ruled out. Nor should further attempts to develop new relationships amongst all the competing powers. But the historic decline of British imperialism cannot be reversed and the impasse it has reached remains. On paper, Britain remains a strong military power, ranked sixth in the world in terms of expenditure. Despite recent cuts, the current level of spending at 2.3% of GDP is only slightly lower than a decade before when it was 2.4% ("Trends in world military expenditure, 2013", SIPRI 2014). But this reveals the real problem for Britain: the disorder and uncertainty of the international situation and its own history means that it faces the possibility of under-performing, of punching below its weight.

Just as Britain has ordered aircraft carriers without aircraft to carry, so today it has imperialist ambitions without a coherent strategy to realise them. **North, 29/08/14**

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potence as a revolutionary party. The long period of economic prosperity and relative political freedom that followed the abandonment of Germany's anti-socialist laws in 1891 and the legalisation of the socialist parties, ended up convincing the union and parliamentary leadership that capitalism had entered a new phase, and that it had overcome its inner contradictions to the point where socialism could be achieved, not through a revolutionary uprising of the masses, but through a gradual process of parliamentary reform. Winning elections thus became the main aim of the SPD's political activity, and as a result the parliamentary group became increasingly preponderant within the Party. The problem was that despite the workers' meetings and demonstrations during electoral campaigns, the working class did not take part in elections as a class, but as isolated individuals in the company of other individuals belonging to other classes – whose prejudices had to be pandered to. Thus, during the 1907 elections, the Kaiser's Imperial government conducted a campaign in favour of an aggressive colonial policy and the SPD – which up to then had always opposed military adventures – suffered considerable losses in the number of seats in the Reichstag. The SPD leadership, and especially the parliamentary group, concluded that it would not do to confront patriotic sensitivities too openly. As a result, the SPD resisted every attempt within the 2nd International (notably at the Copenhagen Congress in 1910) to discuss precise steps to be taken against war, should it break out.

Moving within the bourgeois world, the SPD leadership and bureaucracy increasingly took on its colouring. The revolutionary ardour which had allowed their predecessors to oppose the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 faded in the leadership; worse still it came to be seen as dangerous because it might expose the Party to repression. By 1914, behind its imposing façade, the SPD had become "a radical party like the others". The Party adopted the standpoint of its own bourgeoisie and voted the war credits: only a small minority stood firm to resist the debacle. This hunted, persecuted, imprisoned minority laid the foundations of the Spartakus group which was to take the lead of the 1919 German revolution, and found the German section of the new International, the KPD.

It is almost a banality to say that we are still living today in the shadow of the 1914-18 war. It represents the moment when capitalism encircled and dominated the entire planet, integrating the

whole of humanity into a single world market – a world market which was then and still is today the object of all the great powers' covetous desires. Since 1914, imperialism and militarism have dominated production, war has become world-wide and permanent.

It was not inevitable that World War I should develop as it did. Had the International remained true to its commitments, it might not have been able to prevent the outbreak of war but it would have been able to encourage the inevitable workers' resistance, give it a political and revolutionary direction, and so open the way, for the first time in history, to the possibility of creating a world-wide human community, without classes or exploitation, so bringing an end to the misery and the atrocities that a decadent and imperialist capitalism has ever since inflicted on humanity. This is no mere pious wish. On the contrary, the Russian revolution is the proof that the revolution was not, and is not only necessary, but possible. It was the masses' immense assault on the heavens, this great upsurge of the proletariat, that made the international ruling classes tremble and forced them to bring the war to an end. War or revolution, socialism or barbarism, 1914 or 1917...: humanity's only alternative could not be clearer.

Sceptics will say that the Russian revolution remained isolated and finally went down to defeat by the Stalinist counter-revolution, and that 1914-18 was followed by 1939-45. This is perfectly true. But if we are to avoid drawing false conclusions, then we need to understand the whys and wherefores rather than swallow whole the endless official propaganda. In 1917, the international revolutionary wave began in a context where the divisions of war were profoundly anchored, and the ruling class exploited these divisions to overcome the working class. Disoriented and confused, the proletariat failed to unite in one vast international movement. The workers remained divided between "victors" and "vanquished". The heroic revolutionary uprisings, like that of 1919 in Germany, were drowned in blood, largely thanks to the traitorous workers' party, the Social Democracy. This isolation made it possible for international reaction to defeat the Russian revolution and prepare the ground for a second world-wide butchery, confirming once again the historic alternative that is still before us: "socialism or barbarism"! **Jens 6.8.14**

1. http://en.internationalism.org/files/en/wr_362.pdf

Israel/Gaza: war, pogroms, and the destruction of consciousness

According to recent polls, 87%, even 97% of Israelis supported the military onslaught on Gaza when it was at its most intense. Some held parties on the hills overlooking the Strip, drinking beer while watching the deadly firework display from afar. Some of those interviewed in the wake of Hamas rocket attacks said that the only solution is to kill all of Gaza's inhabitants - men, women and children. The *Times of Israel* published a piece from an American Jewish blogger Yochanan Gordon entitled 'When Genocide is Permissible'¹. In the marches that followed the murder of the three Israeli youths on the West Bank - the event that sparked off the present conflict - the slogan "death to the Arabs" became a crowd favourite.

In Gaza, it is reported that the population subjected to the merciless Israeli bombing and shelling cheered when Hamas or Islamic Jihad unleashed a new round of rockets, intended, even if rarely with any "success", to kill as many Israelis as possible - men, women and children. The cry "death to the Jews" can be heard once again, just like in the 1930s, and not only in Gaza, and the West Bank but also in "pro-Palestinian" demonstrations in France and Germany where synagogues and Jewish shops have been attacked. In Britain there has also been an increase in anti-Semitic incidents.

Three years ago, in the summer of 2011, in the wake of the 'Arab spring' and the "Indignados" revolt in Spain, the slogans were very different: "Netanyahu, Assad, Mubarak, same fight" - that was the watchword of tens of thousands of Israelis who had come out onto the streets against austerity and corruption, against the chronic housing shortage and other forms of social deprivation. Tentatively, nervously, the unity of interests between impoverished Jews and impoverished Arabs was addressed in meetings that crossed the national divide and in slogans about the housing question being an issue for everyone regardless of nationality.

Today, there have been reports of small gatherings of Israelis chanting that Netanyahu and Hamas are both our enemies, but they have been surrounded, drowned out and even physically attacked by the right wing Zionists with their increasingly blatant racist appeals. Ironic fate of the Zionist dream: a "Jewish Homeland" supposed to protect Jews from persecution and pogroms has given birth to its very own Jewish pogromists, typified by gangs like Betar and the Jewish Defence League.

In 2011, speakers from the protest movement voiced the fear that the government would find an excuse to start another assault on Gaza and thus drive social protest into the dead end of nationalism. This latest conflagration, more murderous than any of the previous wars over Gaza, seems to have begun with a provocation by Hamas or possibly a separate jihadist cell - the brutal kidnap and murder of the Israeli youths. But the Israeli government, with its spectacular deployment of troops to find the youths, and the arrests of hundreds of Palestinian suspects, was only too eager to seize on the events to strike a blow against the recently formed coalition between Hamas and the PLO, and at the same time, against those who stand behind Hamas, in particular Iran, the Shia "Islamic republic" currently being wooed by the US as an ally in Iraq against the advance of the fundamentalist Sunnis grouped in ISIS. But whatever the Israeli government's motives in "accepting" the Hamas provocation (which of course includes the constant firing of rockets into Israel), there is no question that the current upsurge in nationalism and ethnic hatred in Israel and Palestine is a deadly blow against the fledgling growth of social and class consciousness that we saw in 2011.

A Kishinev air

It being the much-trumpeted centenary of the outbreak of World War One, we are reminded of what the internationalist revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg wrote from her prison cell in the *Junius*

1. It was quickly withdrawn following widespread criticism, but the fact that it could be published at all is indicative of a growing state of mind in Israel.



Pamphlet (originally titled *The crisis of social democracy*) about the atmosphere of German society at the outbreak of the war. Luxemburg tells us about

"the patriotic noise in the streets, the chase after the gold-coloured automobile, one false telegram after another, the wells poisoned by cholera, the Russian students heaving bombs over every railway bridge in Berlin, the French airplanes over Nuremberg, the spy hunting public running amok in the streets, the swaying crowds in the coffee shops with ear-deafening patriotic songs surging ever higher, whole city neighbourhoods transformed into mobs ready to denounce, to mistreat women, to shout hurrah and to induce delirium in themselves by means of wild rumours....the atmosphere of ritual murder, the Kishinev air where the crossing guard is the only remaining representative of human dignity"

As a matter of fact, by the time she wrote these words, in 1915, she was making it clear that this initial nationalist euphoria had been dispersed by the growing misery of the war at home and at the front, but the point remains: the mobilisation of the population for war, the cultivation of the spirit of revenge, destroys thought, destroys morality, and creates a disgusting "Kishinev air" - the air of the pogrom. Luxemburg was referring to the pogrom in 1903 in the city of Kishinev in Tsarist Russia where Jews were slaughtered on the medieval pretext of the "ritual murder" of a Christian boy.

Like the feudal powers who were happy to stir up anti-Jewish riots to divert attention from popular discontent against their rule, and not infrequently to make sure that the destruction of the Jews also destroyed the large debts that kings and lords had incurred at the hand of Jewish moneylenders, the pogroms of the 20th century also have this dual characteristic of a calculated, cynical manipulation on the part of the ruling class, and the awakening of the most irrational and antisocial feelings amongst the population, most notably amongst the desperate petty bourgeoisie and the most lumpenised elements of society. In Kishinev and similar pogroms, the Tsarist regime had its Black Hundreds, gangs of street thugs ready to do the bidding of their aristocratic masters. The Nazi authorities who stirred up the horrors of Kristallnacht in 1938 presented the beatings, lootings and murders as an expression of "spontaneous popular anger" against the Jews following the assassination of the Nazi diplomat Ernst vom Rath by a Polish Jewish youth, Herschel Grynszpan.

The powers of the netherworld and the power of the proletariat

The imperialist powers that rule the world today continue to stoke up these kinds of irrational forces in the defence of their own sordid interests. Bin Laden began his political career as an agent of the CIA pitched against the Russians in Afghanistan. But the destruction of the Twin Towers by Bin Laden's al Qaida provides a potent example of how these forces can easily escape the control of those who try to manipulate them. And yet the progressive weakening of the USA's world hegemony has led it to make the same mistake in Syria, where, alongside Britain, it was happy to covertly back the radical Islamists opposing the

Assad regime - until they threatened to install in Syria and now in Iraq a regime even more hostile to US interests than the rule of Assad. Even Israel, with its highly trained secret service agencies, repeated the error when it initially encouraged the growth of Hamas in Gaza as a counterweight to the PLO.

At its most advanced stage of decline, capitalism is less and able to control the forces of the netherworld that it has conjured up. A clear manifestation of this tendency is that the spirit of the pogrom is spreading across the planet. In Central Africa, in Nigeria, in Kenya, non-Muslims are massacred by Islamist fanatics, provoking counter-massacres by Christian gangs. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, Sunni terrorists bomb Shia mosques and processions, while ISIS in Iraq threatens Christians and Yazidis with conversion, expulsion or death. In Burma, the Muslim minority is regularly attacked by 'militant Buddhists'. In Greece, immigrants are violently attacked by fascist groups like the Golden Dawn; in Hungary, the Jobbik party rails against Jews and Roma. And in "democratic" Western Europe xenophobic campaigns against Muslims, illegal immigrants, Romanians and others have become the political norm, as in the recent European elections.

In response to the Kishinev pogrom, the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party, at its historic 1903 congress, passed a resolution calling on the working class and revolutionaries to oppose the threat of pogroms with all their might:

"In view of the fact that movements such as the all too sadly well-known pogrom in Kishinev, quite apart from the abominable atrocities they commit, serve in the hands of the police as a means by which the latter seek to hold back the growth of class consciousness among the proletariat, the Congress recommends comrades to use all in their power to combat such movements and to explain to the proletariat the reactionary and class inspiration of anti-Semitic and all other national-chauvinist incitements"

How right was this resolution in seeing pogromism as a direct attack on proletarian class consciousness! In 1905, faced with mass strikes and the appearance of the first workers' soviets, the Tsarist regime unleashed the Odessa pogrom directly against the revolution. And the revolution responded no less directly: the soviets organised armed militias to defend Jewish neighbourhoods against the Black Hundreds.

Today this question is more universal and even more vital. The working class is seeing its class consciousness, its very sense of itself as a class, sapped and undermined by the relentless juggernaut of capitalist decomposition. At the social level, this decomposition of capitalist society means the struggle of each against all, the proliferation of gang rivalries, the sinister spread of ethnic, racial and religious hatreds. At the level of nation states, it means the spread of irrational military conflicts, unstable alliances, wars that both escape the control of the great powers but also drag them further into the very chaos they have created. And we are seeing in the wars in Israel/Palestine, in Iraq, in Ukraine, how the spirit of the pogrom becomes a direct adjunct of war, and threatens to turn into its ultimate avatar: genocide, the state-organised extermination of entire populations.

This sombre picture of a global society in its death agony can induce feelings of anguish and despair, especially since the hopes that sprang up in 2011 have been almost totally shattered, not only in Israel, but across the whole Middle East, which has seen protests in Libya and Syria submerged in murderous "civil wars" and Egypt's so-called "revolution" giving rise to one repressive regime after another. And yet: these movements, above all the one in "democratic" Spain, did begin to create a perspective for the future by showing the potential of the masses when they come together in demonstrations, in assemblies, in profound debates about the direction of capitalist society and the possibility of getting rid of it. They were a sign that the proletariat is not defeated, that it has not been totally overwhelmed by the advancing putrefaction of the social order. They revived, in however confused and halting a manner, the spectre of the class struggle, of the international proletariat, which made the revolutions of 1905 and 1917-18, which put an end to the First World War with its strikes and uprisings, which blocked the road to World War Three with the renaissance of its struggles after May 1968 in France, and which has again begun to show its hand in the class movements between 2003 and 2013. The exploited class in capitalist society, realising the common interests that unite it across national, ethnic and religious barriers, is the only social force that can stand against the spirit of revenge, against the scapegoating of minorities, against national hatreds and against nation states and their endless wars. **Amos 16/8/14**

ICC Online: recent additions

Struggles in Burgos, Spain: the importance of assemblies and solidarity

The struggle of Gamonal can't be compared with other kinds of protest where people come along and make a lot of noise before quietly retreating to the whence they came, home to their atomised and solitary existence. Every day without exception the assembly was held at noon and at 7:00 in the evening following the day's demonstrations.

The assemblies were the brain and the heart of the movement. The **brain**, because here there was a collective reflection about how to struggle, about what actions to take next, about the decisions to make. The **heart**, because the assembly is a real expression of the means of communicating, developing understanding and establishing links to break the isolation and the atomisation, which are the terrible stigma of a society where everyone is trapped "in their own little world", dominated by the commodity..

As some people who actively participated in the struggle wrote on a blog: *"The failure of the old structures of pseudo-participation such as political parties and the creation of the self-organised assemblies, without leaders, everyone participating as equals, opens the door to a new world"*, but even more important was the insistence that *"we all are needed, the elderly, youth, the mothers and fathers and children"* and it is inside the assembly (the method specific to the working class) where they all have a place and can each make specific contributions.

Review of Melvin's Bragg's documentary on John Ball

Film: How the working class brought an end to World War One

The weakening of a superpower

An axis of military chaos is engulfing a swathe of the planet, stretching from Nigeria, through Mali, Sudan, Libya to Iraq, Syria, and reaching up to Ukraine. Ancient cities such as Aleppo left in ruins, increasing military tensions on the borders of Europe as Ukrainian and Russian nationalists slaughter each other, millions uprooted by wars in Syria and Iraq, hundreds of men, women and children killed in Gaza as Israeli and Palestinian imperialist gangsters fight it out, hundreds of schoolgirls kidnapped in Nigeria by Boko Haram. Humanity is naturally profoundly fearful for the future faced with this descent into hell.

Humanity should weep to see this, and greatly fear what it foretells. But to paraphrase the great philosopher Spinoza weeping is not enough; it is necessary to understand.

This growing nightmare is getting out of control but it is not impossible to understand. The cause of this upsurge in barbarism is the same one that resulted in the First World War: imperialism. That is, the life and death struggle by each national capital for a greater share of the world market.

In the nineteenth century the emerging capitalist nations could gobble up the rest of the planet. Millions died in the process. The major powers armed themselves to the teeth from the end of the century as each advance by one threatened the interests of the others. This culminated in World War I when Germany was forced to strike out to counter its strangulation by the other main powers. Millions upon millions of proletarians were slaughtered on the industrialised killing fields of France, Belgium, Turkey, Russia. This was the barbaric price humanity paid for capitalism's continued existence. A tribute that increased the longer capitalism continued.

The Second World War turned much of the Eurasian land mass into one vast battlefield where there was no or little difference between military and civilians. In this war the 'other side' was the entire population of the enemy countries; thus destruction of the men women and children became the 'legitimate' aim of the war. It was now total war for the total destruction of the enemy. World War I had slaughtered millions of men, World War II annihilated tens of millions of men, women and children. This barbarism did not end with the war. Europe and the US may have had 'peace' but the rest of humanity suffered endless war as the two imperialist blocs reduced one country after another to ruin. North Vietnam had more tonnage of explosive dropped on it than the US used in the whole of World War Two. If this was not enough imperialism held out the prospect of the total annihilation of humanity in a third world war.

The US faced with the end of the 'old order' of imperialism

The end of the old imperialist blocs was hailed as the end of the threat of nuclear destruction and the opening of a New World Order. However, the last quarter century has witnessed an accelerating process of the decay of the US's superpower status. It could not have been otherwise. Freed from the threat of destruction by the other bloc, every capitalist nation has been compelled to place its national imperialist interest first. Initially the US could use its might to get its rivals to tow its line, as seen in the "international coalition" during the first Gulf War, but by the 2003 war in Iraq it was faced with open hostility from many of its former allies like Germany and France.

As its power has weakened so its rivals have become emboldened. Russian imperialism's recent push into Ukraine would not have happened if it had feared the response of the US. The Russian bourgeoisie, confronted with the US and Europe's efforts to pull Ukraine away from its sphere of influence, had no choice but to act. But the Russian land-grab in Crimea and part of Eastern Ukraine was encouraged by the US withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. Russia has also used its support for the Assad regime to put pressure on the US. Its military, intelligence and diplomatic resources have propped up the regime. At the same time it blunted the USA's efforts to step up its military campaign against the regime by agreeing to get rid of its chemical weapons.

At the global level the US has also been confronted by the rise of Chinese imperialism which is challenging its domination of the Far East, the Indian Ocean and even into Africa¹. This growing imperialist power is also backing the USA's main rivals in the Middle East: Syria and Iran. This has led to the US pivoting its imperialist policy towards the Far East. China is no military rival to the US, but it can certainly use the USA's weakness to its own ends.

The weakening of US imperialism is being paid for in blood and suffering of millions around the world. Africa is another example. Only two years ago the US boasted about the 'freeing' of Libya from the terror of Gaddafi: this July the US ambassador, as well as the British, had to flee from Tripoli as this country went into free fall as rival militia, army units, and gangs fought for control of all the major cities in the country. The USA's 'freeing' of Libya has certainly freed up the supply of looted arms from the collapsed Libyan army's weapons dumps. These weapons have flowed across North Africa in order to feed numerous wars and armies, for example the upsurge of the jihadists in Mali last year was stimulated by the flow of arms and Islamist fighters from Libya.

In the Sudan, the US-backed break away South Sudan had no sooner declared itself as a new state, with great fanfare in the Western media, than it began to be torn apart by a bloody war between parts of the bourgeois faction that had been supported by the US. This collapse of the USA's effort to undermine the Sudanese government can only have stimulated the ambitions of Khartoum and its Chinese backers.

If the US cannot even stop some puppet government dependent upon it from falling apart, why would other countries and factions in the region have any confidence in the US?

In 1914 it was the weaker imperialism's desperate effort to try and break the strangle-hold of its main rivals that struck the match of the conflagration, and the same scenario was repeated in 1939. Today it is the actions, or the inability to act, of the world's main imperialist power that is stoking up barbarism. The American military is by far the biggest, most sophisticated and powerful in the world, dwarfing its rivals, but each time the US has used its military power it brings about more instability and barbarity. This is evident in Pakistan where the increasing use of drones, cruise missiles and secret special forces operations to assassinate the "enemies of the US" (including 4 US civilians), and the consequent slaughter of civilians, is further shaking the foundations of a state like Pakistan which is already failing, whilst at the same time supplying ever more recruits into armed groups who claim to be fighting the US.

And the evolution of the "Islamic State" is the clearest proof that the USA's efforts to manipulate different factions of the bourgeoisie are producing the disastrous phenomenon of 'blow back'. Like al Qaeda before it, set up to oppose the Russians in Afghanistan but then becoming an avowed enemy of the USA, Isis or Islamic State was initially fed by the US and regional allies like Qatar as a force capable of confronting the ruthless Assad regime in Syria, but this 'pawn' has now become such a danger to the stability of the region that the US is now sending out feelers not only to Iran but also to Assad to see whether they can come to an agreement about fighting this new threat! This about-face speaks volumes about the increasing incoherence of US foreign policy, a reflection of its underlying weakness.

The USA will not be able to respond to this situation by retreating into a new isolationism. It will be forced, as the Obama administration is now being forced in Iraq and Syria, to launch itself into new military adventures. This is a spiral of barbarism which can only be halted by the elimination of its source: capitalism in its epoch of imperialist decline. **Phil 28/8/14**

1. For a more detailed analysis the imperialist situation in the Far East, read the special issue of the International Review dedicated to this question: <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/2012/5305/november/international-review-special-issue-imperialism-far-east-past->

Iraq: the "Islamic State" is a product decomposing world order

At the beginning of 2014, the ICC wrote: "Today, the phased withdrawal of American and NATO troops from Iraq and Afghanistan is leaving those countries in an unprecedented state of instability, threatening to aggravate the instability of the whole region" (ICC 20th Congress International Situation Resolution, point 5). That is clearly the present situation and the present situation itself presages a further downward spiral of war and instability throughout the region and beyond. Our leaders have promised us years, a generation of war.

Iraq and Syria are no strangers to capitalist war and the very existence of these countries comes directly from the imperialist war of 1914-18. Iraq and Syria were created by imperialism along the Sykes-Picot border drawn up by Britain and France in 1916 to carve up the region from the lands of the Ottoman Empire. These two countries were born in and from a war that in some ways has continued ever since. Both were assets for the Allies in the Second World War against Germany and subsequently subject to coups and manipulations by the British and Americans in the Cold War against Russia from the 50s. Iraq was again used by the West against Iran in the bloody war of 1980 and was the whipping boy in 1991 where many tens of thousands were killed in a failed effort to keep the western bloc together while the butcher Saddam Hussein and his Revolutionary Guards were left intact. The 2003 invasion, led by the US and Britain, saw thousands more killed and injured by fuel-air and cluster bombs, phosphorus bombs and uranium-tipped shells. The peoples of Iraq are not unfamiliar with the embrace and kiss of imperialism, particularly the American, British and French kind.

The taking of Mosul on June 10, a city of over one million people, by IS (the "Islamic State", known until June this year as "The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant"), has opened up a whole new descent into capitalist barbarity, chaos, terror and war across the already blighted region of the Middle East. IS is no rag-tag army of loose affiliations like Al Qaeda (which formally disavowed IS in February this year) but an efficient and ruthless fighting machine that is presently capable of waging war on three fronts: south towards Baghdad; east towards Kurdish territories and west into Aleppo, Syria. The Baghdad-based expert on IS, Hisham al-Hashimi says that the force is 50,000 strong (*The Guardian*, 21/8/14) and the same report says that it has "...five divisions' worth of Iraqi military weapons, all of them US supplied" and suggests that "the large numbers of foreign fighters are increasingly holding sway in many areas". IS has spread its particular reign of terror by growing from Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), then spread into the maelstrom of Syria where it absorbed, either willingly or under pain of death, other jihadist or 'moderate' anti-Assad forces; it now controls significant areas of the Euphrates Valley where it has established its 'Caliphate' across what little remains of the Iraq/Syria border, i.e., the Sykes-Picot line. The destruction of this border is significant of the deepening decay and chaos that is more and more the mark of capitalism across greater regions of the world.

With the regression into this particular shambles of the Middle East, comes a force, the Islamic State, whose tenets of a Muslim Caliphate are based on religious divisions and arguments of over a thousand years ago. The completely reactionary nature of this Caliphate is both a deepening and a reflection of the reactionary and irrational nature of the whole world of capitalism - a tendency in continuity with the First World War and all the subsequent imperialist massacres. The Islamic State has no possible future except as another destabilising gang of bandits, thugs and killers, an expression of imperialism which has stepped into the bloody mess of the wars tearing the region apart. Despite being a force of religious reaction, as shown in its brutal terror against civilian Shias, Christians, Yazidis, Turkmen, Shabaks, IS is fundamentally an expression of capitalism that has been supported and built up by local imperialist powers then assimilated into becoming the front line in an anti-Assad, anti-Iranian front. This development has been supported by the actions - direct or indirect,

it doesn't matter - of America and Britain.

Biting the hand that feeds you

Surely not, some would say, where's the sense in that? But capitalism has a history of creating its own monsters: Adolf Hitler was democratically put in place with the assistance of Britain and France in order to act as a force of terror against the working class in Germany primarily. Saddam and his killer regime were made in the west, particularly Whitehall. The same for Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe and Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia. The Islamic fundamentalist madrasas and Osama bin Laden were essentially products of the CIA, and of MI6 with the Pakistani secret service ISI, acting on their behalf in order to confront Russian imperialism in Afghanistan - a concoction which then gave rise to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The establishment of Hamas was initially encouraged by Israel as a means of weakening the PLO and jihadi forces have been armed, encouraged and supported by the west in Libya and the ex-Russian republics.

All the above have turned and bitten the hands that reared and fed them, showing that it's not a question of evil individuals, but efficient capitalist psychopaths armed and encouraged by democracy. And now in the Middle East, more than ever, everything that the local and major imperialisms do to try to confront their rivals, play their cards or shape events ends not just in failure but contributes to the general deterioration of the situation, piling up more profound and widespread problems in the longer term.

Al-Qaeda in Iraq has been a force for over ten years but its offshoot, IS, under the new leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - released from US prison in the US Iraqi facility of Umm Qasr on Obama's orders in 2009¹ - has been backed by Saudi and Qatari monies laundered through the compliant Kuwaiti banking system with their fighters given access to and fro across the border of Turkey. They have been armed, directly or indirectly, by the CIA and there are ongoing reports of IS fighters trained by US and British special forces in Jordan and the US base in Ircilik, Turkey². Why? Because they wanted an effective fighting force against the Assad regime - much more effective than the 'moderate' forces. Even the Syrian regime has done business with IS and used it in the age-old strategy of supporting one's enemy's enemy. By supporting the forces of IS the local powers and the west sought to counter the growing strength of the Iran/Hezbollah/Assad fighting machine backed by Russia.

The Caliphate of IS doesn't have much long term perspective but at the moment it is expanding and growing, particularly attracting a sort of 'international brigade' of nihilist youth. It has billions of dollars of equipment and a cash-flow from its many businesses. In another absurd twist US fighter power is 'degrading' its own material in selected areas. That's not the only twist in events: US air power has given cover to the Kurdish PKK in their fight against the jihadis, even though it is a group designated as 'terrorist' by the US. Iran, Assad's Syria and the West are in some ways now on the same side with reports (*The Observer*, 17/8/14) of Iranian warplanes operating from the massive Rasheed air base south of Baghdad and dropping barrel bombs on Sunni areas. There are undoubtedly Iranian forces on the ground in Iraq and Syria confronting IS. Turkey and Jordan, even the Saudis are now concerned about the threat of this organisation. Nothing is settled here; everything is in flux - imperialist flux.

When Sunni elements from Anbar Province joined IS to take Mosul in June, it was clear that the war in Syria had spread into Iraq. This was a complete reversal of the situation of 2006/7, where the Sunni tribal leaders of Anbar joined with US forces in the 'Awakening' to defeat Al-Qaeda. But the US-backed, Shia-dominated al-Maliki government in Baghdad excluded the Sunnis from any power, encouraged a pogrom-like attitude against

1. <http://www.politifact.com/punditfact/statements/2014/jun/19/jeanine-pirro/foxs-pirro-obama-set-isis-leader-free-2009/>
2. <http://guardianlv.com/2014/06/isis-trained-by-us-government/>

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Ukraine: reverberations of an imperialist 'civil' war

them by Shia gangs, and treated their populations as would an occupying army. The new 'inclusive' government in Iraq can readmit some of its Sunni MPs but the latter are likely to be beheaded if they dare to go back to their constituencies. The US can hope for a stable government but the perspective for Iraq looks very much like a break up. The US cannot control or contain this chaos which it has, on the contrary, facilitated. For the moment it has decided to defend the Kurdish capital Irbil, where it has American 'boots on the ground', oil and other interests. There's no 'humanitarian' intervention here, that's just a blatant lie³. More lies from Cameron with "Britain is not going to get involved in another war in Iraq" (BBC News, 18/8/14) alongside lies about the 'humanitarian' nature of its intervention. The decision to arm the Kurds by the US, France, Britain, Italy, Germany and the Czech Republic, though by no means a common policy, can only strengthen the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), strengthen the tendency towards Iraq's likely break up and cause more problems in the region.

In Irbil there are 60,000 refugees and in Dohuk, one of the poorest regions of Iraq, there are 300,000 more. Over a million in Iraq and millions across the region. These unprecedented numbers on the move, along with collapsing borders, is an expression of the further decay of this rotten system. The Iranian regime has been strengthened, the borders of Turkey (a NATO member) and Jordan weakened and threatened and yesterday's terrorists and evildoers become today's allies. And the 'blowback' danger to western capitals and industrial areas, always a threat as Prime Minister Blair was warned of by the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC) in 2005⁴, is now much more acute as the eventually defeated Jihadis return to the major centres and look for ways to continue their brutal attacks. IS encapsulates the putrefying, regressive nature of capitalism and its flight into militarism, barbarity and irrationality: killing and dying for religion⁵, the wholesale slaughter of civilians, the rape and slavery of women and children. The US and its 'allies' may be able to push back IS, but it cannot contain the imperialist chaos that has given rise to it. On the contrary, the major and local powers can only deepen this instability further. What they don't want is exactly what they have worked for and will continue to work for, because the whole capitalist system drives them blindly in this direction. **Baboon 23/8/14**

3. Obama and Prime Minister Cameron took credit for rescuing the Yazidis from Mount Singar but they were more concerned with defending Irbil and the same for the Kurdish Peshmergas who abandoned these civilians, giving the more radical PKK the opportunity to step into the breach and present themselves as the true saviours of the Yazidis, although many of them still remain stranded and in considerable danger.
4. <http://warisacrime.org/node/22644>
5. One of the more effective and absurd defences by IS against US-led Iraqi forces trying to re-take Tikrit was the flying suicide bombers who launched themselves out of windows and off roofs onto the advancing columns.

When Poroshenko was elected president of Ukraine he promised to defeat the "separatist terrorists" in the Donbass region, and in the last month the combination of Kiev's regular army and irregular militias has gained a lot of ground particularly around Luhansk, with increasing cost to life as the fighting moved into more populated cities with more civilians caught in the crossfire. Estimates of the dead are all above 2,000. To this can be added the 298 killed when flight MH17 was shot down when Russia put powerful anti-aircraft guns in the hands of separatists without the ability, or even the concern, to recognise civilian transponder signals, compounded by capitalism's way of balancing the risk of flying over a war zone against the cost of extra fuel to go round it.

"Europe's most serious security crisis"¹

Ukraine is an inherently unstable and artificial country² grouping the majority Ukrainian population with a minority of Russian speakers as well as various other nationalities. The component populations are divided by historic hatreds going back to the famines of Stalin's forced collectivisation, to the divisions in the Second World War, the expulsion of Crimean Tartars, all of which is played on by the extreme nationalist politicians and gangs. Added to this, with the economy already in disastrous straits the Ukrainian west of the country sees its salvation in closer trade with the EU while the East remains tied to trade with Russia.

For all that, this 'civil' war is not a fundamentally Ukrainian affair, but one whose genesis and implications are completely integrated into the wider imperialist conflicts in Europe and beyond. Before 1989 Ukraine was part of the USSR and divisions were held in check. Today Russia finds itself more and more tightly squeezed by the expansion of the EU and of NATO to include much of its former Eastern European sphere of influence, so much so that Barack Obama says the challenges Russia represents are "effectively regional" (*The Economist*, 9.8.14). But even with this former superpower cut down to regional size, there are some things it cannot give up, including its Crimean base on the Black Sea, a warm water port giving access to the Mediterranean and via the Suez Canal to the Indian Ocean. Likewise it cannot allow Ukraine and its South Stream pipeline to fall entirely under the control of its rivals and enemies. Hence the encouragement and support to the separatists in Donetsk and Luhansk. In this Russia has benefited from the fact that the USA's attention has turned to the Far East and the need to counter the rise of China.

So no way could Russia stand by and let 'Nov-

1. Polish foreign minister Radoslaw Sikorski has described the Ukraine civil war as "Europe's most serious security crisis over the past decades".
2. See 'Ukraine slides towards military barbarism' in *WR* 366 (<http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201406/9958/ukraine-slides-towards-military-barbarism>).

rossiya' be destroyed. Russia has not only supplied heavy weapons to the separatists, but also has 20,000 troops massing near Rostov and carrying out manoeuvres on the Ukrainian border. The incursion of an estimated 1,000 troops has not only gone to the rescue of Donetsk, but started to make a land corridor towards Mariupol in the south. Clearly the 'Novorossian' separatists are not doing enough towards Russia's desire to forge a land bridge to Crimea, which it annexed last March, and perhaps also towards the pro-Russian separatists in Trans-Dniester in Moldova. For the moment, this is only a not-so-covert incursion, not an open invasion. The perspective for now is continued destabilisation.

Meanwhile Ukraine wants to join NATO. Poroshenko and Putin may have met in Minsk at the Eurasian Union meeting in Minsk, but there was no basis for negotiation.

The 'west' cannot let Russia get away with this incursion, even if it is now only a regional power, even when Obama admitted the US has yet to develop a strategy to counter it. First of all there is diplomatic condemnation. Then there are increased sanctions, this time affecting Russian banks, decided after the Malaysian airliner was shot down. Then the question of supplying Kiev with aid: \$690m from Germany as well as \$1.4billion from the IMF (the second instalment of \$17billion promised when Russia cut off aid last winter). No doubt the aid will also include sale of weapons. Lastly, Britain is to lead a new multilateral Joint Expeditionary Force of 10,000 from 6 countries, none of them NATO heavyweights, and Canada may also become involved – at this stage this is largely symbolic and certainly does not presage a military response to the Ukraine crisis. While all the EU countries are united in their interest in countering the Russian offensive, we should not imagine that there is a united 'international community' or 'west'. In fact the neighbouring countries and European powers are all busy protecting their own interests: France is still delivering helicopter carriers to Russia, Britain still wants Russian businesses to invest through the City of London, and Germany still depends on Russian gas, and each wants the others to bear the cost of any sanctions. There are also divisions with those countries which take a much more hawkish view of the Russian incursions, usually because they have their own Russian minorities and fear the same kind of instability could be fomented at home. Meanwhile Serbia is caught in the dilemma of trying to keep its old Russian ally while also orientating itself towards the EU, a situation that cannot hold.

Internal ruin

The conflict in Ukraine is very destructive. In addition to the loss of life and physical destruction of infrastructure, particularly in the East, there is the effect on the economy. Although the mining and heavy industry in the Donbass is out of date and dangerous, the loss of a region that accounts for 16% of GDP and 27% of industrial production is a disaster for Kiev, whose GDP is predicted to fall by 6.5% by the end of the year and whose currency, the hryvnia, has fallen by 60% against the dollar since the beginning of the year. It is truly dependent on the aid it is getting. Things will only get worse in the winter if Russia withholds the gas it depends on – with particularly disastrous implications for the population facing a Ukrainian winter.

117,000 people have been internally displaced and there are nearly a quarter of a million refugees in Russia.

The nature of the fighting, with both sides depending on militias made up of some of the worst fanatics, mercenaries, terrorists and adventurers, not only inflicts these killers on the civilian population now, but is also creating a really dangerous situation for the future. Who controls these irregular forces? Who will be able to call them off? We have only to look at the proliferation of various fanatical gangs in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria or Libya to see the threat.

The working class and the danger of nationalism

The greatest danger for the working class in the Ukrainian conflict is that it could be recruited behind the various nationalist factions. One very concrete guide to the success or failure of this recruitment can be seen in the willingness of workers to allow themselves to be drafted into the army, and in Ukraine there have been a number of protests against this. Mothers, wives and other relatives of soldiers have blocked roads in protest at their deployment to the Donbass: "after six soldiers originally from the region of Volhynia were killed, mothers, wives and relatives of soldiers of 51st brigade blocked the roads in the region of Volhynia to protest against further deployment of the unit in Donbas... Demonstrations and protests organized by wives and other relatives of draftees asking return of soldiers home or trying to block their departure to the front meanwhile spread to other regions of the



Protesters in Ukraine

Ukraine (Bukovina, Lviv, Kherson, Melitopol, Volhynia etc.). Families of the soldiers were blocking the roads with chopped down trees in the region of Lviv at the beginning of June" (article by the Czech group *Guerre de Classe* posted on the ICC discussion forum)³. There have been occupations of recruitment offices, military training grounds, even an airport.

Not all protests have managed to avoid the siren songs of nationalism. For instance the same article reports demonstrations in the Donbass calling for peace and an end to the "anti-terrorist operation", in other words only for the end to the military action by the other side. In spite of this they report strikes by miners in the region with demands for safety (not going underground when bombardment could lead to them being trapped) and for higher wages.

These protests reported by *Guerre de Classe* are an important sign that the working class is not defeated, that many workers are not willing to throw their lives away on such a military adventure for the ruling class. It does not mean that the working class in Ukraine and Russia is already strong enough to directly call the war into question and the danger of the working class being recruited by the various nationalist gangs remains. To truly put the war into question would require a much more massive and above all much more conscious struggle of the working class on an international scale. **Alex, 30.8.14**



In every imperialist troublespot the population faces the same terror as these civilians in Ukraine

3. <http://en.internationalism.org/forum/1056/guerredeclass/9820/ukraine-battlefield-imperialist-powers> (<http://www.autistici.org/tridnivalka/neither-ukrainian-nor-russian/>), and video of protests can be seen on here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWi0Daf228M>.

Left wing communism and the left wing of capital

“Communist University” talk

The Communist Party of Great Britain, which each summer hosts the “Communist University” in London, is different from the Socialist Workers Party. It's extremely difficult for revolutionaries to speak at SWP meetings because they pack the floor with their own members who are pre-arranged to monopolise the brief period of debate that usually follows a lengthy introduction (or three). At the Communist University meeting titled ‘Left wing communism, an infantile disorder?’ the period of discussion was long enough and open enough for an ICC member to develop his argument. The SWP, in contrast, is not in the least open to critical theory. For example, internal discussion of the anthropological ideas of Chris Knight and Camilla Power, who have both spoken several times at ICC congresses, was ruled out by the SWP leadership. Both anthropologists gave talks at the Communist University and their ideas are given a regular airing in the CPGB paper *Workers Weekly*. When the SWP talk about the degeneration of the Russian revolution, they generally argue that it all went wrong under Stalin and readily agree with Lenin's dismissal of the left communists as childish sectarians. At the meeting on left wing communism, several CPGB members or supporters agreed that the degeneration of the Soviet power began right from the beginning and expressed doubts about the leftist habit of using Lenin's book *Left wing Communism* as a tactical manual for all occasions; one said that the Bolsheviks' suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion in 1921 had been a kind of “friendly fire” tragedy.

Does this mean that there is a *class* difference between the CPGB and the SWP? We don't think so. Both groups provide examples of a genuine crisis among the organisations that make up the ‘left wing of capital’: the SWP with its mass defections following the revelations about sexual violence by a member of the central committee against a female member; and (as we argue in this issue to a CPGB member who has written to us), the CPGB with its curious meandering trajectory that has led it from Stalinism (it began as a faction within the old CP) to a kind of Trotskyism and now towards a flirtation with Kautskyism and pre-1914 social democracy. But the CPGB has only moved from one location to another within the horizon of leftism without ever once questioning its historic roots in the Stalinist counter-revolution, and its adoption of a more ‘democratic’ approach than that of the more brutal SWP does not change this. This is a question we can come back to in another article but it is relevant to the sense of the intervention we made at this meeting.

The talk on Lenin's book was given by David Broder, a former member of the Commune group which originally split from the Trotskyist Alliance for Workers' Liberty to work on a synthesis between Trotskyism and a sort of libertarian or councilist outlook, calling for ‘communism from below’. This group was a further product of the crisis of leftism and although it gave rise to some interesting discussions in and around it, the group has never really broken the umbilical cord connecting it to the capitalist left. And although Broder has now left the group you can still say the same about his own political history.

The presentation by Broder, who had previously contributed an article on Bordiga and Bordigism to the *Weekly Worker*¹ and has been in Italy researching the revolutionary movement in Italy during World War Two, contained some very accurate observations about how the survival needs of the early Soviet state pushed the Bolsheviks and the Communist International towards opportunist tactics - in particular the United Front with the social democratic parties and organisational fusion with centrist currents in Italy and Germany. This criticism had a certain councilist flavour: at one point the October revolution was described as a “coup” and the Communist International defined more or less as a tool of the Soviet state from day

1. <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/991/bordiga-and-the-fate-of-bordigism/>

one. But Broder did emphasise the importance of the left communists' defence of principles against tactical concessions which essentially reflected the increasingly national interests of the Soviet state rather than the necessity for international revolution. The intransigent internationalism of the communist left in the revolutionary period that followed the First World War was emphasised, even if it was also pointed out that they were never unified into a coherent international fraction.

And yet when it came to sketching out the history of the communist left after the 1920s, the talk descended into caricature. There was virtually no mention of the communist left in the 1930s and during World War Two, and no mention at all of the still existing political organisations of the communist left which have, in one way or another, tried to develop the work initiated in the early 1920s by the KAPD in Germany or Bordiga's Communist Party of Italy. The impression given was that the left communist tradition evolved as follows: Socialisme ou Barbarie, with its ideas about ‘workers self-management’ in the 1950s and 60s, then the ‘communisation’ current which is uninterested in the defensive struggles of the class and demands communism right now. Included in this trend were the TPTG and Blaumachen in Greece (already inaccurate because only the second group fits this category), but particularly well-known individuals rather than political groups: Gilles Dauvé, Jacques Camatte and John Zerzan. The latter two were surely added to make the subsequent history of left wing communism look as ridiculous as possible: Camatte because, while he did begin his political life with the ‘orthodox’ Bordigists and later developed an interest in other currents of the communist left, ended up deciding that capital had become so all-powerful that the only solution was to “leave this world”, and Zerzan, who was never part of the communist left anyway, because he drifted into a kind of deep primitivism which came to the conclusion that human beings began to go wrong when they invented language.

These criticisms of Broder's version of the subsequent evolution of left communism were included in our intervention at the meeting. Some of the previous participants had criticised Broder for not clearly drawing out any political lessons from his presentation; in defending the real continuity of the communist left, we insisted on the vital theoretical work the surviving fractions carried out in the dark period of the 30s and 40s, which led the most clear-sighted tendencies to the lesson that the role of a communist party is not to take power on behalf of the workers or identify itself with the transitional state – an error which not only pulled the Bolsheviks towards crushing working class opposition but also towards their own destruction as a party of the revolution. In particular, we insisted that the left communists were the only consistent internationalists during World War Two, along with a handful of anarchists and dissident Trotskyists, and that those currents that supported the anti-fascist war passed to the other side of the barricade, as had the social-chauvinists in 1914. This question of the integration into capitalism of the organisations of the official ‘Labour Movement’ – not of the working class itself, as the communisation theorists tend to argue – was seen in embryo by the left communists of the 20s and developed by their political descendants, who had experienced first-hand that Stalinism, for example, was not an opportunist or mistaken trend within the workers' movement, but a direct agent of bourgeois repression against workers and revolutionaries.

This affirmation – which implies that to be a communist today you have to stand outside and against the organisations of the bourgeois left - was aimed not only at the CPGB but also at Broder who remains within the horizons of Trotskyism. This was confirmed in his response to our intervention regarding the Second World War: although he has always maintained that, unlike the Trotskyists, he

regards the 1939-45 conflict as an imperialist war on both sides, at this meeting he rejected the position of the communist left that saw the patriotic Resistance as an integral part of the imperialist war fronts and opposed working inside them². For

2. In fact, the left communist Partito Comunista Internationalista, formed in Italy in 1943 on an unclear basis that was criticised by our more direct political ancestors, the Gauche Communiste de France, was ambiguous about whether or not to participate in the partisan groups, as we argue in this article from no. 8

him, it was necessary to be ‘inside’ the partisans because that is where the workers were - a classically Trotskyist pretext, and itself a degenerated version of Lenin's argument, in *Left Wing Communism*, in favour of working inside the reactionary trade unions. **Amos 30/8/14**

of our *International Review*: <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/197701/9333/ambiguities-internationalist-communist-party-over-partisans-italy-19>

Correspondence with a member of the CPGB

Comrades,

I recently had a letter published in the CPGB *Weekly Worker*. It appears that there are some ‘Communists’ that consider such views as Ultra Left (I am quite happy with being Ultra Left) what would the ICC consider such views?

Below is a copy of my letter.

“In recent weeks there has been some debate as to whether believers can be members of the party or not. That is for CPGB members to decide. However, the CPGB is not the only group involved in revolution.

As a revolutionary socialist, I think that people who believe in god should be forewarned that all religious buildings after the revolution will be bulldozed and replaced with hospitals and decent housing for the working class.

The problem with god and religion is that it goes hand in hand with capitalism (in god we trust - and the US dollar) and monarchy, thus making god an enemy of the people. Even the Vicar of Rome does not really believe in god's existence, as is proved by his lack of faith as he travels around in his bulletproof vehicle.

Religions create division even within the same religion, let alone between Christians, Muslims and Jews and others. Let's leave this superstition where it should be - in the distant past. Let's get on with the job in hand and get rid of this rotten system.

Now, if you can excuse me, I am off to start my present list ready to send to Father Christmas.”

From the ICC

Thank you for your letter, and our apologies for the delay in replying. But that doesn't mean we haven't discussed it. After some consideration, we decided to focus on the fact that you seem to have written to us as an expression of the ‘ultra-left’, since this poses some very basic questions about what we mean by the ‘left’ in general.

While we do refer to ourselves as left communists, we don't call ourselves ‘ultra left’, since the latter has so often been used as a term of abuse hurled either by opportunists or outright bourgeois apologists at those who are seeking to defend and develop authentic communist politics. The term ‘communist left’ arose during the 1920s when the Communist Parties were entering into a phase of opportunist degeneration; and those like the tendencies around Bordiga, Pannekoek, Pankhurst and others who opposed this trajectory were frequently labelled ultra-leftists or infantile leftists¹ by those most caught up in the opportunist course. Since that time the Communist Parties haven't stayed in a kind of opportunist half-way house: during the 1930s they became direct agents of the capitalist counter-revolution and of imperialist war. They were absolutely central in the mobilisation of the working class for the slaughter of 1939-45, and in the defence of the imperialist Russian state.

In our view, once an organisation has crossed the class line which separates the bourgeoisie from the working class, there is no going back. In general, crucial historical moments like war or revolution provide us with the criteria for judging whether this definitive passage has taken place.

1. Our views on this are explained at greater length here: <http://en.internationalism.org/the-communist-left>

This was certainly the case with the ‘social chauvinists’ when they supported the war in 1914 and helped to crush the revolution (especially in Germany) in 1918-19, and history repeated itself with the Communist Parties originally formed to fight against this betrayal.

The organisation which you belong to, the CPGB, is an offshoot of the Stalinist CP in the UK and has never called into question its origins in a bourgeois party. The fact that it has subsequently veered first towards a kind of Trotskyism and then towards a strange attempt to revive pre-First World War social democracy certainly does not mean that such a fundamental self-critique has taken place. On the contrary: both social democracy and Trotskyism have also proved themselves to be part of what we call the left wing of capital – social democracy in 1914-18, Trotskyism with its participation in the second world war, its defence of the USSR and of wars of ‘national liberation’, and its critical support for the Labour and Stalinist parties. So moving from one variety of bourgeois politics to another does not mean that the essential question has been posed.

The characterisation of social democracy, Stalinism and Trotskyism as capitalist political tendencies is of course the ultimate in ‘ultra-leftism’ as far as any of these tendencies are concerned, but for us it is simply the necessary defence of class principles – the same path as that taken by Lenin and the Bolsheviks, or Luxemburg and Liebknecht, when they denounced those who had abandoned internationalism in 1914, and by the left communists in the 30s who understand that the Communist Parties had become the mortal enemy of the revolutionary movement. For these revolutionaries this was in no sense an academic or semantic dispute; it was the social democracy who directed the hunting down and murder of Luxemburg and Liebknecht in 1919, and it was the Stalinists who carried out the assassination of thousands of revolutionaries in the 30s and 40s.

One of the main functions of the organisations of the capitalist left is to recruit people who are beginning to question capitalism and then turn this questioning into dead-end forms of thought and activity. This is why we have never rejected discussion with individual members of such organisations even though we reject any form of cooperation with the organisations as such. But equally we have always stressed that any political progress by such individuals cannot avoid a radical break with the organisations of the capitalist left and their whole world outlook.

We will not enter here into the questions about religion that you pose, except to make it clear to you that the policies you advocate – such as the destruction of cathedrals and, apparently, the forcible suppression of religion by the proletarian dictatorship – may be called ‘ultra-left’ by your fellow CPGB members, but they certainly have nothing to do with the real traditions of the communist left and of Marxism in general. In fact the state repression of religion has always been a feature of the Stalinist regimes and proof that they were incapable of addressing the problem of religion at its roots: the alienated social relations which are equally the source of capitalism, whether in its democratic or Stalinist forms. [...]

For the ICC, A

International Communist Current Day of discussion

World War One: how the workers were mobilised for war, and how they put an end to it

September 20, 2014,
11 am to 6 pm
Lucas Arms, 245A Grays Inn
Rd, Kings Cross, London
WC1X 8QY

In all the noisy commemorations about the First World War, some things are more or less left in silence. First, that a crucial responsibility for the war lay with the 'Labour' and 'Socialist' parties who in 1914 voted for war credits and set about mobilising the workers for the war effort; and second, that the war was ended by the revolutionary struggles of the working class.

In the first session of this day of discussion, we will look at how the majority of the parties of the Second International came to betray the fundamental principles of internationalism and integrate themselves into the bourgeois state. This treason did not come about overnight, but was the product of a long process of degeneration which still contains many lessons for today. We will focus in particular on the German Social Democratic Party, the great jewel of the International, whose capitulation in 1914 was a decisive factor in the collapse of the International.

In the second session we will begin the discussion by showing a short film about how the working class recovered from its disarray in 1914 and, after three years of slaughter, began the wave of strikes, mutinies and uprisings which forced the ruling class to end the war and, for a while, threatened the very existence of the world capitalist system.

All welcome. Comrades who envisage coming to the meeting from outside London and will need accommodation should write to us at uk@internationalism.org.

Out soon International Review 153

Main articles:

**1914: how German social
democracy came to betray the
workers**

**1936-37: the war in Spain
reveals anarchism's fatal flaws
(part one)**

**Gauche Communiste de
France**

**1948: on the function of the
political party of the proletariat**



**Karl Liebknecht defended the
internationalism of the working
class against the First World War**

Continued from page 8

A Fire in the Master's House is Lit

the murder of black children. Neither is looting strip malls.

The only solution is a social revolution, which can only be carried out by working people like you and me. No matter how much we appeal to our handlers, the ruling class, to improve the condition of our lives it is fundamentally in their interest not to help. This decadent system can barely stay afloat in its current condition. And to demand from the government and the people who control us respect of our "democratic rights" and basic needs is to overload this system's capacity. Unless we all want to go down sinking together, workers have to unite together across racial lines in order to save society and possibly all of human civilization from destruction.

What rights can they give us, democratic or not, that would stop our bosses from taking a cut of our work and our pay for their profit? As long as the exploitation of workers continues, and the extraction of profit from the labor of the working class continues, no amount of "civil" disobedience is going to stop poverty! We are being clubbed over the head by capitalism. It doesn't help if the club was democratically elected.

We have to take away the stick.

What our rulers have continued to show us is that no matter how peaceful we are, there are always violent reprisals to be had at the hands of the state. Many times when people talk about social and economic justice, the redistribution of the wealth, it assumed the system is in a position to grant these reforms. But the wealthy are not just going to hand over their wealth! Do you think they store their billions under their mattress, or in massive piggy banks? No, their wealth is in hedge funds, stocks and bonds, and to demand economic justice is a direct hit to their money. Money extorted from the profit of our labor.

If all the people in Ferguson, including the police and the politicians, just stopped going to work, who would be around to protect us from each other? Would we be killing and stealing from each other? Or is it the system itself that encourages the killing? If one day we all woke up and just said, "No", what would happen to the world?

Maybe places like Ferguson, Missouri could be a better place. **Jamal 8.20.14**

Subscriptions to World Revolution

Readers will be aware that we have reduced the frequency of the publication of *World Revolution*.

On the positive side, our website is now our main publication, which we can update as necessary between publication dates giving a proletarian view on significant events in the world. It is also able to reach readers in parts of the world that our papers cannot.

At the same time, the rise in postal charges means that producing and selling papers is increasingly expensive.

From this issue we will be producing *World Revolution* quarterly, 4 issues a year. Our new subscription prices will appear in the next issue. All existing subscribers will get the full number of issues they have paid for.

ICC books on the history of the workers' movement

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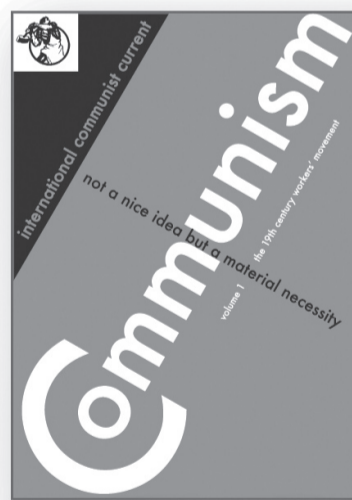
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Contact the ICC

Write to the following addresses without mentioning the name:
COMMUNIST INTERNATIONALIST POB 25, NIT, Faridabad, 121001 Haryana, INDIA.
WORLD REVOLUTION BM Box 869, London WC1N 3XX, GREAT BRITAIN

Write by e-mail to the following addresses:

From Great Britain use uk@internationalism.org
From India use India@internationalism.org
From the rest of the world use international@internationalism.org

<http://www.internationalism.org>

A fire in the master's house is lit

The contribution that we are publishing below was posted on our online discussion forum by an ICC sympathiser in response to the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in early August, and the subsequent protests and unrest¹.

Among the strengths of the posting are that it criticises the rhetoric of black nationalism and left liberalism. It acknowledges that looting, setting things on fire, and undirected expressions of anger are not in themselves going to change the world. It identifies the violence of state repression as a global phenomenon. It sees the importance of workers' struggle and the need for social revolution.

The shooting of a young black man by police in the US followed by protests is not unusual. The text obliquely refers to the shooting of Trayvon Martin in Sanford, Florida in 2012, and the shooting of Oscar Grant in Oakland in 2009. These are among the incidents that are known internationally, for the angry responses they provoked. In fact the latest available figures show that a white police officer kills a black person in the US on average 96 times a year. In total the figure reported by local police to the FBI of all killings by the police is typically more than 400 a year (and that self-reported figure is probably a great underestimation). It could be suggested that, alongside the protests, it is also significant the number of times that there have been no protests.

The text also insists that "*working people have to continue to defend themselves against the brutal repression of the ruling class*". We would add that, in the face of repression, elementary self-defence can be the beginning of self-organisation. If you look at what happened in Greece with the December 2008 Athens killing of Alexandros Grigoriopoulos and the subsequent protests, there were many occupations of universities and schools, which often devoted time to discuss questions way beyond the current situation. It is not just a matter of carefully considering "*our tactics and methods and their effectiveness*", or finding out the best way to deal with tear gas and rubber bullets, important though that is. The extension of protests into a wider movement is posed with every struggle. The "*more reflection and discussion*" that is necessary is not limited to the tactics of struggle, but requires a serious attempt to understand capi-

talism, what it has become, and how the working class stands in relation to its exploiters and oppressors. The text asks what would happen "*If one day we all woke up and just said, 'No'?*" In reality, the process that leads to revolution involves the development of class consciousness, drawing lessons from the setback of struggles, reflecting on the historic experience of the working class, and, ultimately, identifying the goal of communism. The protests of today can only be part of the movement toward a social revolution through the development of consciousness on a massive scale, a process that necessarily goes through numerous advances and retreats.

The post is right to point to the violence of state repression. In Ferguson armoured cars and snipers were routinely deployed. Local police throughout the US get military surplus equipment. The US has been in a lot of wars. That's a lot of weaponry for a system desperate to defend itself. It also underlines the necessary scale and consciousness required of the struggle against it.

There are a few formulations in the post that we would query. For example, the idea that "*the wealthy American capitalist can't afford a prosperous black nation*" is contrary to the way capitalism actually functions. If there ever is prosperity, a rising sector or national group with money to spend, then it offers capitalism possibilities to sell more of its commodities. Whatever the prejudices of individual bourgeois, capitalists like selling things, whatever the colour of the money, the buyer, or the government.

In terms of the repression of the bourgeoisie, this is posed worldwide, fundamentally because the working class is an international class, which can only threaten capitalist domination through an international struggle. As the text says "*workers have to unite together across racial lines in order to save society and possibly all of human civilization from destruction*". **ICC**

A Fire in the Master's House is Lit

Immediately outside the confines of a tightly packed apartment complex in Ferguson, Missouri lay the crumpled corpse of a young teenager. His body was left in the street for four hours. He had been shot six times by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. This dead young man had no criminal record and the police did not have a warrant for his arrest. His name was Michael Brown. He was 18 years old.

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/forum/1056/jamal/10234/ferguson-riots-fire-masters-house-lit>

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



So Ferguson joins the list, along with Sanford, Money, San Francisco, New York City, London, and so many other places in the United States and the world.

The response from the African-American community who are joined together with many other working people in St. Louis County has been fairly significant. However the rhetoric coming from people and the protests has ranged from black nationalism to "left liberalism" to libertarianism. Most of the dialogue has been based around the idea that race and human rights are the main issues in Michael Brown's death.

But what other forces are at work here?

The repression of the protests and anger from the people of Ferguson, and across the country, by police and other government forces has struck a chord with many Americans. Among the many questions being asked, why are so many black youth being killed in similar situations in America? Is the life of an African-American valued less than others? Why aren't the rights of African-American people better respected in the "democratic" system in America?

The capitalist system exploits all working people. Workers all over America are subjected to the same kinds of repression, even if the scale and drama of each situation varies.

There is a long tradition of the United States government violently suppressing street protests and assemblies by working class people! And all over the rest of the world!

Racism is at its core based on ethno-national divisions. The ruling class employs the police and the paramilitary (paid for by our taxes) who kill our children over bogus reasons because they themselves are inherently racist. Capitalism breeds racism. The wealthy American capitalist

can't afford a prosperous black nation, in Missouri, in California, in Africa or anywhere else. Capitalism means the competition of nations, races, economies and this relies directly on the elbow grease of all working men and women.

Ferguson, Missouri right now looks more like the West Bank than the United States. This is a common sentiment of the demonstrators, who have been talking back and forth with Palestinians and Egyptians about the best way to avoid tear gas and rubber bullets.

Why are the demonstrators in Gaza and Israel experiencing similar events to those of working class people in the "first world"? Why these experiences in a "developed" nation like the United States? Because working people have no borders, no countries. No matter where we live we are all subjected to the will of the state government, "democratic" or otherwise. It should come then as no surprise that the Ferguson police chief himself, along with many other St. Louis county police officers have actually trained weapons combat and guerrilla tactics in Israel in recent years.

Isn't it Ironic? Nope, it's just capitalism.

Working people have to continue to defend themselves against the brutal repression of the ruling class through the use of the capitalist state, whether it's economic repression, the repression of people's dignity, or the violent repression and murder of our youth.

But we have to carefully consider our tactics and methods and their effectiveness. Unchanneled anger gets us nowhere. More reflection and discussion is always necessary. Setting trashcans on fire and throwing rocks at armored personnel carriers and urban tanks is not the path to stopping

Continued on page 7

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*.