



world revolution

Greek debt crisis

Capitalism means austerity, none of its parties oppose it

When the Greek government decided at short notice to call a referendum it was clear that the differences between the Syriza-led coalition and the IMF/ECB/EC Troika were minimal. When it came to the referendum campaign the differences between No and Yes sides, despite much melodramatic language, were, therefore, also limited.

Greek Finance Minister Varoufakis accused the Troika of trying to “humiliate” Greece. *“Why have they forced us to close the banks? To frighten people. And when it’s about spreading terror, that is known as terrorism.”* (El Mundo 4/7/15) Syriza claim that the purpose of the referendum was to improve the negotiating position of the Greek state. Meanwhile, the proponents of the Yes vote warned of the disastrous consequences of an exit from the Eurozone and the possibilities of leaving the EU.

Both sides mobilised the population as so many atomised individuals blindly following the campaigns of the bourgeoisie. A Greek professor quoted in the *New York Times* (3/7/15) said *“There is no discussion of the real issues ... They are exaggerating the feelings of fear and agony and creating an atmosphere that makes it impossible for anyone to think clearly.”* Thinking clearly is something that the bourgeoisie discourages at every opportunity. What it needs are millions trooping into polling stations to express their passivity in the face of the bourgeoisie’s economic attacks.

Negotiating austerity

When the coalition led by Syriza assumed office after January’s election it claimed that it would end austerity. Many naively believed that this was possible. The negotiations with the Troika were undertaken in an atmosphere of charge and counter-charge. However, as the June 30 deadline approached, when Greece would default if there was no agreement producing new funds, it seemed as though agreement was imminent. But the Greek government walked out of talks a few days before the deadline. Even after the deadline Syriza continued to make concessions on the measures proposed by the Troika.

In the end the sticking points were matters of detail. The Greek government accepted most of the proposed changes to VAT, with the exception of the special treatment of the Greek islands. It accepted most of the attacks on pensions, but not



‘No’ demonstration in Athens - supporting a false alternative

all. On defence cuts there were initially no concessions made by Syriza at all. After all national defence is one of the central concerns of every capitalist state, whether led by a party of the left, right or centre. In the end what was offered by the Greek state was close to what was demanded by the Troika.

As far as the austerity experienced in Greece over the last five years is concerned the prospect is only for the situation to worsen. The US and the IMF might speak more of restructuring debt relief, the EC/ECB more of the particular measures that must be introduced, and Syriza more about the suffering of the Greek people. No one can offer any improvements in the actual conditions of life of those living in Greece. Both Yes and No campaigns, apart from describing the impossible horrors of supporting the other side, insisted that following them would restore Greek pride. Both sides posed things in terms of the Greek nation, the Greek people and the Greek economy. Nationalists tell us that Greek workers should be proud of the fact that the Greeks work among the longest hours in Europe, despite the fact that this shows them to be among the least productive. The quality of Greek agriculture is often extolled, and yet 70% of food consumed in Greece is imported. In the final analysis Greek capitalism has proven uncompetitive and has lost out to larger and stronger economies. The problems of the Greek economy

are not due to the particular Hellenic problems of corruption and the non-payment of taxes (widespread though they are), but are an expression of the international crisis of decadent capitalism.

In reality in Greece there is no prospect for a reduction in unemployment, many taxes rise, wages and pensions will be further reduced, the age of retirement will go up to 67, and further public services will decline because of a lack of viability. In practice, for all their talk of opposition to austerity, Syriza have shown themselves

in continuity with the governments of New Democracy and Pasok that preceded it.

Fomenting divisions within the working class

If the population in Greece has suffered the rigours of sustained austerity, it is not unique. The economic crisis of capitalism, as it worsens, always means the capitalist class will make the working class, and other non-exploiting strata of the population, pay ... in reduced wages, lost jobs, higher prices, cut services, and ultimately in imperialist war. The anti-austerity rhetoric of parties such as Syriza is exposed as just so many words as soon as they are part of government.

But the working class does not only suffer from privation and pauperisation, it also faces capitalism’s ideology and its apparatus of democracy. In Greece, in the past there have been many general strikes ‘against austerity’, but these have been very much initiated, controlled and divided by the rival union federations. Far from developing any sense of class identity or the possibility of autonomous action, the unions have pulled the workers into relying on factions in parliament and supported the parties of the left. In the past this meant the social democrats Pasok and the Greek Stalinists (KKE), more recently it’s meant Syriza.

The fierce polarisation of Greek bourgeois politics continues to draw in the working class. Coups

and counter-coups in the 1920s and 30s, the dictatorship of Metaxas, the Civil War in the 1940s, the regime of the colonels (1967-74), the emergence of Pasok and New Democracy – all these past expressions of divisions within the ruling class have found workers rallied behind factions of the bourgeoisie rather than against it.

Although the question posed in the referendum was of Byzantine complexity, the answer was reduced to a choice between NAI or OXI (Yes or No). OXI is not a neutral term in modern Greek culture. Every 28 October in Greece is OXI Day, a national holiday celebrating the refusal of Metaxas of an ultimatum from the Axis powers and the entrance of Greece into the Second World War. In Greece today the political parties of the bourgeoisie compete to display their nationalist credentials. None of them can offer anything but further austerity and war.

It will be a great step forward for the working class when it realises that its interests are diametrically opposed to those of the bourgeoisie. In the past there have been political minorities in Greece that have defended the perspectives of working class revolution. During the 1940s the group around Agis Stinas defended an internationalist position against the Second World War. More recently there were internationalist voices during the social movements of 2009-2011. The way forward for the working class in Greece, even if it is not an immediate prospect, is to link its struggles with those of the world working class and to develop a truly internationalist and revolutionary perspective. **Car 4/7/15**

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After the election the bourgeoisie's ideological offensive continues

What is the significance, for the working class, of the first Tory majority government in 18 years? It is certainly going to mean even more draconian cuts in benefits, as we show elsewhere in this issue. On a wider scale the results of the election have reinforced the state's offensive against the proletariat at the ideological level. This is as important as its actions at the economic level. The new political line up of the British state's democratic facade has the aim of deepening the sense of disorientation within the working class in order to weaken its ability to develop its struggle, and above all its capacity to offer an alternative perspective to the hell of decaying capitalism. Thus the proletariat can expect a whole array of ideological attacks to be launched against it.

Democratic campaigns

The central theme of the current democratic campaigns is the idea that each 'citizen' can contribute to the political process. This was exemplified by the election itself. There was the constant message that the outcome of the election was in the balance, could go either way, thus it was important to vote. The polls showed Labour and Tories nearly neck and neck; there was the idea that UKIP may make a breakthrough; in Scotland the question was would Labour mobilize enough votes to stop the SNP decimating the number of Labour MPs? These questions were endlessly debated on the news. The whole message was this: voting could make a difference.

All the "surprise" at the results and the opinion polls getting it so wrong was guff. The secret polls carried out by the parties and the state showed the Tories would win. Also looking at the political situation made it clear the Tories would win. The Liberal Democrats signed their own death certificate when they joined the Coalition and agreed to rises in university tuition fees and other blatant attacks. The SNP's crushing of Labour in Scotland was hardly a surprise, given that the SNP set itself up as the radical opposition to the austerity measures that Labour quietly accepted. As for UKIP, this populist bogeyman served its role in stoking up the anti-immigrant atmosphere during the election: the others parties used them as a justification for making their own contribution to this poison, but then cast Farage and Co. aside and left them in disarray. The BNP had suffered the same fate previously.

The election campaign has also served to continue the nationalist campaigns around questions such as should Scottish MPs vote on matters related to England, or should there be an English assembly like in Scotland and Wales? During the election itself the threat of the SNP forming an alliance with Labour was used to scare voters. The election, like the Scottish referendum before it, has reinforced nationalist illusions in parts of the working class. In Scotland, which has a long history of proletarian militancy, the working class is confronted with an openly nationalist party representing itself as the radical alternative, as the only real opposition to the Tories.

This democratic circus is not going to stop now the election is behind us. There is now the prospect of months of ceaseless campaigning around the referendum about European Union membership. Workers will be called on see their interests as the same as those of the ruling class and to throw their weight into this 'decisive' historical vote. This will add further confusion and divisions as we are told we have to choose a side in this referendum, which will also stir up a new hornets' nest of nationalism and xenophobia.

The idea of democracy as a British value is also a central theme in the whole anti-terrorism campaign. The politicians were falling over themselves to take full advantage of the barbaric massacre of tourists in Tunisia to use the argument that in order to defend democracy it would be necessary to impose even more draconian anti-terror laws and measures.

Imperialist interests

The referendum on European membership is not simply a democratic circus. It is also an important part of the British bourgeoisie's attempt to counter

the efforts of its historical European imperialist rivals, France and above all Germany, to draw the EU under greater centralised control. The Eurozone crisis has seen German capitalism strengthening its dominant economic and political role in the EU. British imperialism on the other hand wants to use the referendum to reinforce its distinctive role in Europe – hence its drive to renegotiate the rules of membership, aimed at undermining German and French efforts to strengthen them. It's a mark of the confidence of the British ruling class, that it has called a referendum on the EU so quickly after the election. It would not do such a thing if it felt it would not get the right result. This demonstrates to those inclined to support British efforts to counter-balance Germany, such as Holland, that the British ruling class is not playing fast and loose with EU membership. The majority and strongest fraction of the British bourgeoisie is pro-EU, and it has reason to hope that the referendum will deliver a powerful defeat to the Eurosceptic fraction which crosses both Labour and Conservative Parties.

The new government is also seeking to take advantage of the growing chaos in Syria and the wider actions of Islamic State to regain the confidence of the population about military action abroad. Recent parliamentary debates about whether Britain should join in the bombing of Islamic State in Syria, rather than just in Iraq, have cleverly used the idea that the government has learnt the lessons of the debacle over Iraq. One of the central tasks of the Coalition government was to overcome popular distrust in the state's military actions following the Iraq war and the blatant lying about Weapons of Mass Destruction. The last government defeat two years ago over the bombing of Assad in Syria is being presented as a les-

son learned, as proof that the new government's proposals for action will take much more account of the democratic will of parliament. Again we see the bourgeoisie cynically using the bloodbath in Syria and the rise of Islamic State to further its own imperialist aims, above all its efforts to mobilise the population behind its military actions.

Terror and the climate of fear

As with the previous government and the Labour government before that, the new team is making every effort to whip up a climate of fear in the population. The murders in Tunisia and the cases of British citizens running off to join IS in Syria are the most recent excuses for strengthening the state's repression of the population. The government instruction that teachers must test children for signs of 'radicalisation' and inform the police and social services if they have any suspicions is another step in the integration of teachers, social workers and health workers into the work of the secret police. All such workers have to attend education classes about extremism and the defence of "British values", and are expected to cooperate with the police and security services. This is an integration of the "social" face of the state into the repressive apparatus that would impress the old Stalinist and fascist regimes.

These anti-terrorist measures fit in with the state's need to keep control of elements who might link up with hostile imperialist forces, but they will be unleashed on the working class and its revolutionary minorities in the future. Already the new guidelines for identifying 'extremists' includes anyone opposed to the bourgeoisie's democratic apparatus and in favour of its forcible overthrow.

Brutal attacks on working class living standards will continue

Tory Chancellor George Osborne is set in the July Budget to announce details of the new phase of the Spending Review which will undoubtedly continue the vicious attacks on benefits which have continued to hit the very poorest sectors of the working class under Labour and Coalition governments.

David Cameron has hinted at a plan to raid Working Tax Credit Benefits. He justified these cuts by wanting to abolish the 'merry-go-round' of benefits paid to people in work. Cameron has had the gall to make low pay part of his case for cuts. He argued, "We need to move from a low wage, high tax, high welfare society to a higher wage, lower tax, lower welfare society."

We cannot say precisely where the cuts will fall but the Tory election manifesto gave some important indications of the areas they are aiming at:

- Cut working-age social security spending by £12bn.
- Cap overall welfare spending over the course of the next parliament.
- Freeze the value of working age benefits for two years from April 2016.
- Deliver the universal credit reform of most existing welfare benefits.
- Lower the household benefits cap from £26,000 to £23,000.
- Reduce benefits for drug-addicted or obese claimants who refuse medical treatment to enable them to return to work, and force sick and disabled claimants to undergo psychological treatment

In a leaked exposé leaked before the election, Danny Alexander, the former Liberal Democrat chief secretary to the Treasury, said that in June 2012, members of an inner group of senior cabinet members were sent a paper by the Work and Pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith that involved:

- Limiting support to 2 children in child benefit and child tax credit, so cutting up to £3500 from a family with three children.
- Removing the higher rate child benefit from the

first child, an average cut of over £360 for every family with children.

- Means-testing child benefit – cutting £1750 for a two child middle income family
- Removing child benefit from 16 to 19 year olds – a cut of over £1000 for parents of a single child.
- Removing housing benefits for 18 to 21 year olds.

The director general of the right-leaning Institute for Economic Affairs think-tank supports the need for making savings in the welfare budget, but has said that the composition of the proposed cuts "looks set to be extremely unfair on the working age population [...] simply salami-slicing the value of tax credits will hit certain households hard".

Another area where the axe is due to fall is incapacity benefits. 'Reforming' incapacity benefit, crystallised in the notorious fit-for-work tests carried out by Atos, was a major PR disaster for the Coalition. Today, Atos has been replaced with a new agency – Maximus - but this body still has the function of throwing as many claimants off benefits. The Tories promise to push on with this, and with parallel reductions in the numbers of people receiving disability benefits, "so that help goes to those who really need it".

Labour isn't against austerity

This list of attacks planned by the new government could be greatly extended, but they already demonstrate that the Tories will ruthlessly accelerate the attacks on working class living standards carried out under the Coalition.

But just in case anyone should think that these attacks are the invention of the Tories, let's recall that the Coalition merely kept up the attacks of the previous Labour governments of Blair and Brown:

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jun/22/poor-families-hit-unfairly-welfare-cuts-institute-economic-affairs>

The loyal opposition

The right has emerged from the election with renewed strength, whilst Labour is in a "historic crisis", or so we are told. Labour is engulfed in a leadership campaign between Blairites and one hard left candidate in the shape of Jeremy Corbyn who is not seen as a serious contender. The other candidates talk mainly about the need to reconnect with the "core vote", to deal more realistically with the question of immigration, to be open about the necessity to make more cuts, to be the party of the Centre etc. At a time when the working class is suffering huge attacks it seems strange that the left face of the capitalist state is seeking to distance itself even further from the class, but this is a well thought-out strategy to reinforce the proletariat's loss of confidence in its ability to struggle against these attacks and to be able offer an alternative. The whole New Labour project was based on reinforcing the disorientation in the working class following the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, with its rejection of Labour's old-fashioned "socialist policies", and its emphasis on the democratic citizen and 'the people'.

Since the election there have been some small expressions of discontent, such as the unexpectedly large "anti-austerity" demonstrations called by the leftist Peoples' Assembly umbrella group in June, but these were well controlled events. Such discontent will mount but it will be trapped in the idea that the Tories are to blame for cuts in living standards, not the capitalist system. This new anti-Toryism, which was so powerful in the 1980s and early 1990s, leads nowhere but to looking to Labour and the trade unions to defend the working class, offering the working class a false choice between the left and right faces of British state capitalism. **Phil, 4.7.15**

"The consequences of Labour's welfare reforms were devastating. 52,399 benefit sanctions were inflicted on Jobseeker's Allowance claimants in March 2010. This was twice the number from just two years earlier and more than the 51,142 sanctions handed out by the Tories in September 2014..."

"In March 2010 the number of people on sickness benefits who had their benefits stopped for failure to carry out work related activity hit a high of 3,673. This is just slightly below the 3,828 sanctions handed out to this group in September 2014."

"To hear the current rhetoric from the TUC, you would think that mass benefit sanctions were a Tory invention. TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady recently released a statement saying 'Under this government the sanctions system has become a cruel maze in which it is all too easy for claimants to lose cash for minor breaches of rules and random decisions'. This was in response to a report showing the desperate toll that sanctions were taking on lone parents and most importantly their children. As far back as 2008 the government's own experts, the Social Security Advisory Committee, recommended that lone parents should not face sanctions. The Labour government rejected this advice". (Johnnie Void, 8/3/15, posted on the The Void)

Cutting working class living standards, subjecting proletarians to increased surveillance and repression, is not an 'ideological' choice of this or that bourgeois party. It is a remorseless necessity for the state in its defence of the profitability of the national economy in the face of an irresolvable economic crisis and the fierce competition of other nation states. Capitalist profit and human need are irreconcilably opposed. **Melmoth 28/6/15**

Fragility of the British 'recovery'

The British economy is growing. The latest GDP growth was 2.9% with a predicted growth of 2.4% for 2015 (*The Economist*, 4.7.15). At the same time average pay has increased faster than inflation in the year to March, in other words the fall in real wages has been halted. However, this does not tell the whole story and the economy in both the UK and the world, despite having emerged from the deep recession of 2008, remains fragile.

Stagnating productivity

"Productivity isn't everything, but in the long run it is almost everything"¹. Britain has become a low productivity economy, with output per worker per hour lagging behind Italy and Canada, and way behind France, Germany and the USA. A US worker can do in 3 weeks what will take a worker in the UK a month. It was improving at approximately 1.75% a year, or slightly faster than the rest of the group of 7 countries, until the start of the recession in 2007, since when productivity has stagnated in Britain although not in the other advanced countries, widening the gap. The loss of the improvement in productivity has been across the spectrum of economic activity particularly in manufacturing, but not excluding services. These sectors have seen either a very significant fall in productivity improvement, or a loss of productivity, since then. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) has noted a 0.3% increase in hourly productivity in the first quarter of this year, or 1.3% in the year to the end of March.

Whether or not this improvement is sustained, 8 years of stagnation has left productivity approximately 16% lower than it would have been if it had continued improving at the previous rate. This does not mean workers would be an average of £5,000 better off if productivity had continued to grow as before – it was the recession that caused the stagnation in productivity because capital

could no longer produce and sell so many products or services profitably. In fact some employers kept workers on through the recession, often at reduced pay, in the expectation of future growth so that unemployment did not rise so fast or so high as in previous recessions, which contributed to the initial fall in productivity at the start of the recession. This was accompanied by the cut in investment during the recession, leaving workers using fewer and more out of date machines.

Low productivity in Britain is also a long term problem that dates back to the start of the open crisis of capitalism at the end of the post World War 2 boom nearly 50 years ago. "Prof Haskel [of Imperial College] admits it is impossible to pin point one factor to explain why the economy has all of sudden become less efficient. Instead, he makes several conjectures. One is the slowdown in the amount of research and development undertaken by companies and the state since the 1970s compared with the immediate postwar period. As R&D's affect on productivity has a long lag, what happened forty years ago may help to explain the productivity problem Britain faces today."²

Productivity is a problem for British national capital³. It is something of an interminable mantra imposed in the public sector, in the NHS and in our schools, and predicted to be an important concern in the budget. It makes it harder to complete internationally. And it is driving down wages. There are dangers for the ruling class in imposing conditions of low pay, poor working conditions on a working class with strong traditions of struggle for too long – even while politicians of left and right have had some success with blaming these conditions, and unemployment, poor housing, etc. on immigration.

2. www.ft.com/cms/s/0/2f7f42e8-e2b2-11e4-aa1d-00144feab7de.html#axzz3epzhkdtH

3. In this article we are taking the statistics produced by the bourgeoisie at face value. However productivity is a complex problem that goes back to the 19th century and one we will need to come back to in future articles.

Fragility in the global economy

British national capital relies on its international trade for its survival and therefore on the health of the world economy. "In 2015, the IMF says, for the first time since 2007 every advanced economy will expand" (*The Economist*, 13.6.15) but hazards remain such as Greek debt and China's shaky markets and slowing growth, as well as the Brazilian and Russian economies likely to shrink this year. "The danger is that, having used up their arsenal, governments and central banks will not have the ammunition to fight the next recession". It's not that *The Economist* is predicting a recession on the horizon, but that they tend to come along regularly in capitalism and there are all sorts of fragilities in the world economy. Including Europe's debt and dependence on exports. The EU is Britain's most important partner accounting for approximately 50% of its trade in goods (imports and exports) and a substantial proportion of its trade in services. While any particular business may have a greater or lesser interest in the EU, the UK cannot grow indefinitely while the Euro area lags behind, with only 1% growth according to the latest figures and 1.5% predicted for this year.

What *The Economist* is most concerned about is the ability of the various economies to respond to a new crisis by increasing borrowing, manipulating the Government budget balance and interest rates. After the debt accumulated since 2007 and the exceptionally low interest rates – for instance in Britain Bank Base Rate never fell below 2% until 2007, and is now at 0.5% – you can see their concern. But when base rate is close to zero "Central banks' capacity to conduct QE [quantitative easing] is theoretically limitless ... markets will tolerate much more QE than economists had thought" (*The Economist*, 13.6.15). Lenders remain confident that the British government can repay loans despite a £1.5 trillion debt equal to 80% of GDP.

More cuts

While average pay has gone up a little higher than inflation after several years of falling real

wages, some of the poorest have done very badly such as care escorts averaging £7,400 with a loss of 3.3% or retail check out staff on around £9,160 down 3.4%⁴. The income gap has only widened as the working class is made to pay for the crisis.

The government response is to continue to impose more attacks on the working class (see page 2) with cuts and restrictions in budgets for social services, schools and health and particularly on immigration, are also being used to paint sections of the population as scapegoats for the problems in the economy. This is particularly the case for the attacks on working age benefits for those in work, out of work or unable to work.

What is the meaning of the fragility of the recovery?

Any attempt to follow the evolution of the economy naturally uses the statistics produced by the bourgeoisie for its own purposes: to help manage state policy to defend the national capital, to provide information for capitalists trying to make profitable decisions whether the economy is doing well or badly. On the other hand we are trying to follow the evolution of a decadent system, one in which the exploitative relations of production are in conflict with the forces of production, and most importantly the working class. It is not just a question of the fall in production with each recession – capitalism has always experienced that even when it was vigorously expanding across the globe – but also the fragile and anaemic recoveries or the various bubbles that follow in which the productive forces continue to be hindered. And all the while it is doing so in ways that damage both the environment and the health of the population and the working class in particular through pollution. **Alex 4.7.15**

4. <http://www.thisismoney.co.uk/money/news/article-2868911/Best-paid-UK-jobs-2014-Compare-pay-national-average.html>

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Reader's contribution

Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time!

of Islam in taking power and giving rise to a new society (even if it immediately disappointed the most radical of the followers of Muhammad such as Abu Dharr, for following wealth and status and becoming like all the other kingdoms) was successful while Christianity could only be co-opted and sanitised by its enemies in the form of the Roman empire...

What does all this have to do with idolatry?

The question to be posed then is what was it about monotheism that allowed it to be so closely connected to revolutionary movements. Firstly monotheism in its original sense implied a rejection of the worldly powers. The connection between 'having power over' and being the 'god of' someone was much clearer to those living in the ancient world than it is today in our so called 'secular' world; and in declaring that there was no 'god but God' as in the Islamic Shahada (declaration of faith) the early Muslims, like the early Jews and Christians, were directly challenging and rejecting the existing power structures of their times. It is obvious as well that monotheism in the case of Islam was a rebellion against the economic and social power connected with the worship of these idols. Control of the holy site of the Kaaba and the markets connected to it for example was central to the social-economic power structure of the day. This connection between 'theological' ideas and concrete economic and social questions was also much clearer in the ancient world than it appears today when the idolatry inherent to capitalism is hidden behind a veil of repression and 'common sense' and monotheism has long since been accommodated to worldly power.

Therefore not only did monotheism originally entail a rejection of the power structures, but also an attempt at a critique of the increasingly alienated economic structures and practices of the time. If we look at this question historically we see that the idea of a 'Supreme Being' is extremely common throughout the world and in all stages and forms of human society; and indeed Allah was just such a 'Supreme Being' recognised by the pre-Islamic Arab peoples as well as the Muslims. Why then does monotheism as such, i.e. a conscious and vehement denial and denunciation of all other gods, only emerge at a certain point in history? It is precisely because it is only when the economic break up and fragmentation of the tribal community had reached such a level that a symbol of a higher unity, one that goes beyond the tribal conception in that it aims to incorporate all of humanity, while also harking back to it in terms of its emphasis on solidarity and equality, can emerge.

What IS idolises

So where do IS stand in all this and how do they relate to idolatry? How do they relate to the 'gods' of our times? They like to portray themselves as being the only true heirs to the original followers of Muhammad and paint their current struggle almost as a re-run of the original struggles of Muhammad. While we must denounce these claims it is also necessary to analyse them from a historical perspective in order to really understand the differences and similarities between the two movements. This is the only way to avoid the bourgeois right wing/left wing or moderate/extremist dead ends. The problem with IS and their ilk is not, as the 'moderates' (both Muslim and non-Mus-

lim) claim, that they are 'extreme' or 'radical'. It is precisely the opposite - it is that they are not radical at all. They do not understand let alone offer an alternative to capitalism and in fact simply represent capitalism in its most raw, undisguised gangster form.

One key similarity between IS and the original movement of Muhammad lies in the historical context. Both are expressions of the disintegration of 'great civilisations' and a vacuum left by the collapse or non-existence of state power; as well as the desperate search for new ways of thinking and being which these historical situations at all times produce in those living through them. However this is where the similarity ends and the key differences in the two movements is most clearly illustrated.

Whereas the early Muslims aimed to unite all of humanity into one community and in practice their movement led to an enlarging of the community and allowed massive strides forward in various fields of life, not least morality, medicine and science, IS can only offer bloodshed, oppression and a shrinking and dividing of the community to a greater and greater extent. Early Islam saw itself as not starting a new religion but as the renewal and fulfilment of all the prophets sent to all the nations of the earth through time. IS on the other hand do not even recognise fellow Muslims as belonging to their community; extreme sectarianism and xenophobia have replaced the ideas of universal brotherhood and equality which gave early Islam its impetus. IS' 'takfiri' policies of denouncing all other Muslim groups and communities as well as all non-Muslims as non-believers, and hence legitimate targets of their brutal violence, are the polar opposite of the original Islamic con-

ception and practice. IS therefore can clearly be seen to worship the idols of 'their' religion and 'identity' serving the most deadly and corrosive idol of our times in the form of nationalism (albeit disguised with a veil of hypocritical talk of the Umma, the world community of Islam)...

Norman O Brown made an accurate enough observation when he said that Marxism and Islam agree on one proposition: "there will be one world or there will be none" (*The Challenge of Islam*, Norman O. Brown, 2009, p 12 – a collection of lectures first given at Santa Cruz university in 1980). In the past this uniting of humanity was envisioned in many traditions including Islam as a result of the actions of a conquering hero/prophet/messiah establishing a kingdom of peace and justice. This vision is flawed and can only be seen as a symbolic view of a change which for most of history was impossible to achieve in reality but now can only be achieved by the united self-determined force of the workers of the world. The Caliphate even in its most exalted sense cannot be a programme of progress in the present epoch for this precise reason. IS' vision is the most extreme example of the purely negative aspect of this vision and this is reflected in the fact that despite the fact that the Quran clearly states that there can be 'no compunction in religion', their only hope of achieving their insane ideal is to force the whole world at gun point (including even the vast majority of Sunni Muslims whom they supposedly represent) to bow before them... **Jaycee 3/7/15**

Theses on the class struggle in Britain

Over the last 40 years, the ICC in Britain has maintained a regular analysis of the situation in Britain – economic crisis, political manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie, the UK's imperialist role, and in particular the class struggle and the history of the workers' movement. We are republishing here one of our first efforts to develop an overall understanding of the class struggle in the country where capitalism initially had its most impetuous development (from *World Revolution* No7, July 1976). The text addresses one of the main problems which still confronts the class movement today – how to pass from immediate struggles of economic defence to a more global and political struggle based on a perspective of revolutionary social change. The 'Theses' provide some solid arguments about why this problem has been particularly marked in the working class in Britain, while at the same time examining the connection between this difficulty and the relatively weak tradition of revolutionary marxism in the UK. Subsequently, we have published a number of further studies which go deeper into this issue¹, but the basic approach in the Theses remains valid. Indeed, point 9 of the Theses could still be confidently written about the political milieu in Britain today: "...Sectarian rivalries between the different revolutionary groups; attachment to outmoded social democratic and syndicalist conceptions; above all the inability to understand the need for centralised organisation and political coherence were to obstruct the efforts of the British revolutionaries..."

The text was written during one of the short periods of retreat in the class struggle which marked the period between 1968 and 1989. It predicts that the austerity measures then being introduced by the Labour government would provoke a strong reaction from the class – a perspective verified by the 'Winter of Discontent' in 1979, and confirmed by subsequent movements of the class against the continuation of these attacks on its living standards orchestrated by Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. However, as with other analyses of the class struggle by the ICC during this period, there is a tendency to underestimate the depth of the problem which is precisely the a main focus of the Theses – the problem of politicisation – and thus to end with the hope that the passage to a higher level of class struggle would be far closer than it has turned out to be in reality. This is why we intend to produce some sequels to this text, aimed at elaborating a balance sheet of the class struggle in Britain in the four decades since the Theses were written – a period which has been marked by even greater challenges to the working class (the conscious counter-attack on the class mounted by the 'right in power/left

1. See in particular the book by Mark Hayes, *The British Communist Left 1914-1945, a contribution to the history of the revolutionary movement*, available from Amazon.co.uk; a complement to this book is the series 'The Struggle for the Class Party in Britain' published between 1997 and 2000. So far only the following article from the series is online but we intend to make the whole series available soon:
<http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201403/9573/1914-labour-and-unions-mobilise-workers-war>
 See also:

'History of the workers movement in Britain', covering the early phase of the movement
http://en.internationalism.org/wr/301_hwmb-01
<http://en.internationalism.org/wr/304/chartism-1848>
<http://en.internationalism.org/wr/305/hwmb-03>
 For the first decades of the 20th century
<http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/2007/sept/belfast-1907>
<http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/201102/4209/mass-strikes-britain-great-labour-unrest-1910-1914>
<http://en.internationalism.org/icconline/201412/11628/first-shop-stewards-movement-proletarian-response-trade-unionist-obstacle>
http://en.internationalism.org/wr/267_rev_against_war_01.html
http://en.internationalism.org/wr/271_rev_against_war_04.html
 'Notes on internationalist anarchism in Britain':
<http://en.internationalism.org/wr/344/brit-anarchy>
<http://en.internationalism.org/wr/345/brit-anarchy>

in opposition' manoeuvres of the 80s, the defeat of the miners' strike, the dismantling of traditional centres of working class militancy, the ideological offensive around the collapse of the eastern bloc after 1989, and the onset of the phase of capitalist decomposition).

1 The evolution of the proletarian class struggle in Britain has been fundamentally determined by the fact that Britain was the motherland of industrial capitalism, the first capitalist nation. From the first trade clubs and combinations of the late eighteenth century, the British proletariat pioneered the struggle to resist the ferocious exploitation of early capitalism. The British proletariat evolved the form of organization most suited to this defensive struggle: the trade union, and thus set a heroic example to the workers of the whole world. But just as the global generalisation of capitalist relations of production was, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to leave Britain lagging behind younger, more vigorous capitalisms, so the political development of the working class movement in Britain was to be severely retarded by the very factors which had been a source of strength for the movement in an earlier period.

2 The depth and tenacity of the trade union tradition in the British proletariat, the long period of struggle on an economic and reformist terrain, should not obscure the often violent political struggle which the proletariat of this country did embark upon in its early days. The secret armed associations organized by the Luddites; the 'physical force' wing of the Chartist movement: these and other tendencies testify to the existence of a genuinely insurrectionary tradition in the British working class and amply refute the notion of the eternally 'docile' and 'peaceful' British worker. Nevertheless, the political revolutionary element in the British workers' movement has always been, at best, a secondary one.

3 The main reason for this was the strength and stability of British capitalism in its ascendant epoch. The British bourgeoisie, having made its political revolution at a very early stage of its historic development, was able to boast the stability and self-confidence that comes from long years of peaceful domination. This was in profound contrast, for example, to the French bourgeoisie, which was still engaging in violent struggle against feudal and reactionary elements until the second half of the nineteenth century, giving the French proletariat an experience of insurrection and confrontation with the state long before the epoch of its own social revolution had dawned. Over this period of stability and prosperity, in which Britain was 'the workshop of the world', the British bourgeoisie was able to evolve a political apparatus eminently suitable to the peaceful containment of the class struggle: the regime of parliamentary democracy. Above all, the strength of British capital enabled it to make substantial concessions to the working class on the social, economic and political fronts: systematic rises in real earnings, reductions in the working day, education, electoral and trade union rights, etc. The huge successes obtained by the British workers' movement, through trade union struggles and through supporting progressive factions of the bourgeoisie in Parliament, were able to create in the workers' movement a strong conviction in the immutable efficacy of these methods. In the leadership of the movement, the bourgeois ideas of empiricism, gradualism and compromise were to penetrate so deeply that Marx and Engels sometimes despaired of creating a communist minority within the British labour movement.

4 The development of communist ideas, of proletarian political theory and organization, thus did not find its most important expression in Britain, but in other national sectors of the workers' movement. In the latter part of the nineteenth century, marxism as the theory of the proletarian revolution was developed by the revolutionary social democrats of Germany, Russia, and elsewhere. In Britain, the social democratic

movement in its marxist form had but shallow roots. And despite the importance of organizations like Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation and William Morris's Socialist League, their main reaction to the dominant empiricism and reformism in the British labour movement was a sectarian purism, an abstract disdain for the day-to-day struggles of the class. These attitudes tended to isolate them from the class movement and thus to enforce its economism.

5 In contrast to other nations, where the social democratic parties had been largely instrumental in setting up the trade unions, Britain did not acquire a mass social democratic party until the trade unions were faced with the necessity of creating an independent political party to defend their interests in Parliament. Because of the deeply conservative tendencies of the trade union leadership at that time, the emergence of the Labour Party in 1908 as the political wing of the trade unions could only accentuate the reformist character of this party. But more important, the Labour Party was established at a time when the revisionist, gradualist, and class-collaborationist tendencies of international social democracy had all but completed its effective integration into bourgeois society. In contrast to the Social Democratic Party of Germany and parties elsewhere, the Labour Party at its inception had no pretensions to be a revolutionary, or even a socialist party. The Labour Party was created too late to serve as an organ of reformist struggle of the class, but early enough to be used as a powerful weapon of bourgeois mystification in the era of capitalist decline that was clearly dawning by the beginning of this century.

6 In reaction to the growing bourgeoisification of the craft-based trade unions, but in essential continuity with the anti-political current which had grown up in the British workers' movement, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a considerable development of Syndicalist tendencies within the British working class. Syndicalist and industrial unionist ideas played an important part in the struggles which gave birth to unskilled workers' unions in the last decade of the nineteenth century, and in the process of amalgamation and centralization which led to the creation of big industrial unions



Chartist meeting 1848

in the 1900s: miners, railwaymen, transport workers. The militancy of the syndicalist current was amply demonstrated during the huge strike waves which swept the country between 1910 and 1914; and the influence of syndicalist ideas on the revolutionary minorities of the class could be seen in the programme of the De Leonist Socialist Labour Party, the emergence of a British section of the IWW and the penetration of industrial unionist ideas into other socialist organizations. The shop stewards and workers' committee movement, which emerged during World War 1 as an elemental class response to the integration of the official trade union apparatus into the imperialist war machine of the state, was in essential continuity with this syndicalist tradition.

7 The imperialist war of 1914-18, which put a temporary halt on the preceding strike waves, gave shattering proof of the integration of the unions and the Labour Party into the capitalist state, in common with the unions and social democratic parties of the world. By calling for an 'industrial truce' for the duration of the war – a truce which was a prelude to the militarization of labour and the outlawing of strikes – and by calling on the workers to sacrifice themselves in the interest of the 'nation', the unions and the Labour Party proved their value to the bourgeoisie at this critical juncture, but were irrevocably lost to the proletariat.

8 But if the war marked the definitive passage of the unions and social democracy into the camp of the bourgeoisie, it also demonstrated the inadequacy of syndicalism as a response to the new conditions of class struggle posed by the advent of capitalist decadence. As in Russia, Germany, Italy and elsewhere, the proletariat in Britain began to engage in a bitter class resistance as the barbarity of the war stripped it of most of the gains it had made in decades of reformist struggles. The munitions, engineering and miners' strikes during the war, and above all the massive general strikes in the Clyde and Belfast in 1919, were a formidable part of the revolutionary wave which swept the world after 1917. Together with the stirrings of revolt in the army and navy, these struggles showed that a revolutionary situation was maturing in Britain as well as in continental Europe. The bourgeoisie's recognition of this was demonstrated as much by the sending of troops and tanks to the Clyde in 1919 as by the government's ignominious climb-down in the face of the movement against British intervention in Soviet Russia in 1920. But if the bourgeoisie was able to recognize an objectively revolutionary situation, the leadership thrown up by the class struggle – the shop stewards and militants of the different socialist groups – proved unable to recognise it. Syndicalist ideas of seizing or gradually taking over industry as a way of abolishing capitalism; localist prejudices; the failure to link up the workers' strikes in the armed forces; above all the inability to see the necessity for the working class to centralise its struggle into a political assault on the capitalist state, into a fight for the soviet dictatorship: all these shortcomings

were to make it impossible for the mass strikes in Britain to take on a clearly insurrectionary character and thus link up with the proletarian revolution in Europe and Russia. These failings in the leadership of the class in turn reflected the inability of the British class as a whole to break out of the limitations of a trade unionist and reformist tradition, and to face up to the revolutionary tasks imposed by the new epoch.

9 The hesitancy of the general class movement in Britain was also reflected in the difficulties encountered by revolutionaries in this country in regrouping themselves into a centralized organization with a clear communist programme. As in Germany where the Communist Party was not constituted until the revolution had already got underway, so the Communist Party of Great Britain was not set up until 1920-1, when the main wave of struggle had already passed its peak. Sectarian rivalries between the different revolutionary groups; attachment to outmoded social democratic and syndicalist conceptions; above all the inability to understand the need for centralised organisation and political coherence were to obstruct the efforts of the British revolutionaries to form a really effective Communist Party. And when the CPGB was finally established, largely thanks to the intervention of the Communist International, it was to be profoundly marred by the signs of degeneration that were already clearly ap-

parent in the International. With the full support of the Comintern leadership, the CPGB adopted a programme shot through with opportunist tactics: participation in Parliament and trade unions, application for affiliation to the Labour Party, etc. The left wing communists were isolated and finally pushed aside, while the CPGB leadership became one of the most loyal travellers along the CI's path to class betrayal. When the Stalinist counter-revolution finally delivered the coup de grace to the International, the CPGB could only lamely follow the rest of its parties into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

10 In the struggle for a coherent revolutionary regroupment in the years 1914-24, there were some notable exceptions to the general confusion that prevailed in the British workers' movement: in particular the left wing of the British Socialist Party under John Maclean, who took a clear revolutionary defeatist position against the imperialist war; and the group around Sylvia Pankhurst's *Workers' Dreadnought*, which led the fight against the opportunist tactics of the CI and the CPGB. In the years 1917-24, the *Dreadnought* provided a vital focus for the elaboration of communist positions. Pankhurst's was the first tendency in Britain to establish real links with the Bolshevik Party and the Comintern; and it was the first to provide a forum for the struggle of the left communists against the degeneration of the CI; in particular the Russian left communists, the KAPD (the Communist Workers' Party of Germany) and the KAI (Communist Workers' International), with which the Pankhurst group attempted to regroup through a British Communist Workers' Party (CWP, subsequently the Communist Workers' Movement). But if the *Dreadnought* was a real expression of proletarian resistance to the growing opportunism of the Third International, it has also had severe weaknesses on the theoretical plane, expressing themselves in a tendency towards syndicalism and immediatism. These weaknesses made it impossible for the Pankhurst group to sustain itself after the revolutionary wave had subsided, to carry on the new tasks imposed by the onset of the counter-revolution. In other words, to carry out the theoretical reflection and preparation which are the work of the communist fraction in a period of reflux. The disappearance of the *Workers' Dreadnought* in 1924 was also the disappearance of any real left communist tradition in Britain until today, a factor which has weighed heavily on the newly emerging communist movement.

11 The weakness of the revolutionary movement in Britain, in conjunction with the momentary advantages won by British capital through its 'victory' in the imperialist war, allowed the British bourgeoisie to avoid a catastrophic confrontation with the class in the immediate post-war period. Through a series of temporary concessions, and through the counter-revolutionary manoeuvres of its left-wing agents, British capital weathered the revolutionary storm. But in fact the war had effectively deprived British imperialism of its former world supremacy. Lagging far behind its more dynamic US rival, British capital was struck with considerable savagery by the 1921 world economic crisis. In this situation the British bourgeoisie had no alternative but to launch a massive counter-offensive against the proletariat, in order to regain a competitive position on the world market. This attack - in the form of wage-cuts, lock-outs, and redundancies - was bound to lead to a new confrontation with a proletariat that had not yet suffered the huge physical defeats undergone by the Russian and European workers. This confrontation was narrowly avoided in 1921, due to the 'betrayal' of the Triple Alliance on 'Black Friday', and again in 1925 when the bourgeoisie retreated from a major clash in order to prepare its repressive forces (the so-called 'Red Friday'). In the context of a declining world revolutionary wave, these delays could only function to the advantage of the bourgeoisie. The final confrontation came when the revolutionary wave had almost entirely exhausted itself in Europe: 1926.

12 The General Strike of 1926 was thus the last flicker of the revolutionary wave in Europe, but the British proletariat went into battle with all the forces of the counter-revolution ranged against it: not only the Conservative Government of Baldwin and Churchill, which had meticulously prepared

itself to deal with the strike - but also the so-called 'workers' organizations', the trade unions and the Labour Party, which did everything they could to keep the strike within the bounds of a respectable 'industrial dispute'. The Stalinised Communist Party meanwhile provided a 'left' cover for this counter-revolutionary concert. Despite the militant spirit of the workers, despite local attempts at self-organization and at raising the level of struggle, the class found itself caught up in the sheer impossibility of a simple 'general strike' in the epoch of decadence. Failing to go onto the stage of insurrection, the strike could only fall back in defeat. Because of the isolation imposed on the struggle by the decline of the international revolution, the workers found it impossible to shatter the stranglehold of the forces of the counter-revolution in their own midst, and were finally abandoned to their fate by the shameless retreat of the unions. The demoralization and disarray caused by this defeat were to weigh heavily on the consciousness of the class for decades.



13 Its spirit finally broken by the collapse of the 1926 strike, the working class in Britain found itself almost completely incapable of resisting the effects of the 1929 world crisis, which began to hit Britain with appalling intensity in 1931. The utter prostration of the class movement was symbolised by charades like the Jarrow Hunger March, in which the workers were reduced to begging capitalism for the meanest crumbs. Along with the rest of the world proletariat, the workers in Britain found themselves being beaten further and further into the ground by the depression years, until they were ready for mobilization into the imperialist war of 1939-45, capital's 'solution' to the crisis. In the work of mobilizing the class with the call to 'defend democracy' and 'fight fascism', the unions and the Labour Party once again proved their importance as organs of the bourgeoisie; and this time they were ably assisted by the Communist Party, the newly-reconstituted shop stewards movement, and the Trotskyists, all of whom demanded the defence of the 'socialist fatherland' in Russia.

14 Having learned its lessons from the 1917-23 revolutionary wave, the world bourgeoisie did all it could to make sure that the end of the 1939-45 war did not give rise to another proletarian outburst. It thus combined a savage repression of the isolated workers' revolts that did occur (Italy, Germany, East Europe, Vietnam), with a series of conciliatory methods aimed at convincing the proletariat that its struggle against fascism had not been in vain. It became necessary to integrate the class into the running of society: in France, the Communist Party was brought into the government to encourage the workers in the 'reconstruction' of capitalism, while in Britain a Labour Government came to power, pledged to the building of a 'Welfare State' for the benefit of the working people.

15 Despite the austerity of the post-war years, the reconstruction gave world capitalism a breathing space of unprecedented length. In Britain the temporary expansion of markets gave rise to all the illusions of prosperity, of a 'consumer society'. The 1950s and early 1960s was thus the period in which the workers were told that they 'had never had it so good', a period of social calm and stability presided over by a complacent Conservative administration. During this period, which was actually one of ever-increasing rates of exploitation in exchange for a few consumer 'perks', there was an important development of unofficial strikes, especially in the car industry, where the militant spirit

of the workers set an example for the whole class. But the impact of these strikes could at that time be absorbed by economic concessions which removed the threat of their breaking out of local and sectional confines.

16 The re-emergence of the world capitalist crisis in the late 1960s led in Britain, as it did all over the globe, to a resurgence of class struggle on a scale not seen for nearly fifty years. The high point of this resurgence was the year 1972, the year of the national miners' strike, the building workers' strike and the London dockers' struggle which exploded into an unofficial general strike that filled the bourgeoisie with near panic. In these and other strikes, the class began to engage in forms of struggle which extended the autonomy and scope of the strikes towards open confrontation with the repressive forces of the state: occupations, flying pickets, unofficial strike committees. In particular the antagonism between the class and the trade unions was more and more revealed through these struggles.

17 Since 1972, however, there has been a definite decline in class combativity with the notable exception of some large-scale outbursts - like the miners' strike and the Scottish strike wave of 1974 - and certain localized strikes in which workers have achieved some autonomy from the union apparatus (Imperial Typewriters 1974), or come directly up against the state (Glasgow firemen 1973, Glasgow dustmen 1975). 1975 saw the lowest number of strikes since the onset of the crisis, and this despite the huge growth in unemployment, continually rising prices and increased exploitation which is the lot of the class in Britain as everywhere else today.

18 Even at its highest points, the new wave of class struggle in Britain has not yet reached the same level as it has in countries such as Spain, Argentina and Poland. This is in great part due to the strength of the democratic and trade union apparatus in which the British bourgeoisie, one of the most sophisticated and experienced ruling classes in the world, is still able to imprison the proletariat. The continued importance of the electoral circus, and more particularly of the Labour Party, as a means of sabotaging the class struggle, was demonstrated by the 1974 election which put an end to the dangers posed by the miners' strike and the three-day week. And although the majority of strikes are unofficial and are opposed by the trade union bureaucracy, they do not often elude the control of the shop stewards who remain the indispensable 'shock absorbers' of the unions and thus of the state within the factory. Although this is basically a reflection of the persistence of sectional and localist illusions in the class, the active role of the shop stewards in derailing and containing the workers' struggles must be recognized and denounced by revolutionaries; in the same way, the activities of the various leftist groups - Stalinists, Trotskyists, etc - must be attacked as so many ways of mystifying the class and diverting its struggle towards reactionary and fraudulent goals (nationalisations, self-management, the 'right to work', etc).

19 If the struggle of the British proletariat has in a general way been held back by democratic and trade unionist mystifications, the sector of the class in Ireland has been more particularly kept in line through the mystifications of nationalism and religious chauvinism, both of the 'Loyalist-Protestant' and 'Republican-Catholic' varieties. In a historical epoch in which so-called national liberation struggles everywhere can only have a reactionary character, the struggle between different factions of the bourgeoisie in Ireland seeking a 'national' solution to the 'Irish problem' can offer nothing to the working class. On the contrary, the continuing inability of the British and Irish bourgeoisie to establish a political framework capable of mediating these conflicts expresses the historical weakness of capitalism in this region and its inability to face up to the hammer blows of the world economic

crisis. The result of this is a barbarous social decomposition in which the working class in Northern Ireland is caught in a murderous crossfire between the different nationalist gangs (UDA, IRA, etc) and the 'official' forces of state repression. To support any of these forces is simply to participate in the mobilisation and slaughter of the proletariat; the only way for the working class in Ireland to extricate itself from this impasse is to find its own class terrain, rejecting the national and religious divisions imposed by capital and integrating itself into the mainstream of the international class struggle. This necessarily implies a merciless struggle against all the nationalist forces and all forms of bourgeois state power.

20 British capital is one of the weakest of all the advanced capitals. The brutal intensification of the crisis in this country is something that no government can possibly avoid, no matter how many measures of state intervention or financial juggling it resorts to. Today the British bourgeoisie, gaining in confidence because of the low level of class struggle, has felt able to begin the frontal attack on the working class which the crisis demands, although the full brunt of this attack is yet to come. With the full co-operation of the unions, the Labour government has launched a programme of wage freezes, lay-offs, and cuts in social welfare spending. For the moment the reaction of the British working class has been cautious in the extreme; it is as though it is waiting to see whether by 'pulling in its belt' for the time being, it will be able to benefit from the 'upturn' in the economy which, as the bourgeoisie never tires of saying, is 'just round the corner'.

21 But since the crisis will not disappear with the prayers of the bourgeoisie, the proletariat will sooner or later be forced to realise the uselessness of going along with the austerity measures of the bourgeois state; similarly it will more and more discover the ineffectiveness of sectional struggles as a way of defending its living standards. Although the transition to a higher level of struggle may not be on the immediate agenda in Britain, when it does occur it will probably be very brusque and unexpectedly violent, shattering the myth of the 'moderate' British working class. This is precisely because of the fact that, while the democratic and trade union apparatus has been used to such good effect by the British bourgeoisie, the very utilization of these weapons over such a long period of time is now more and more revealing their rottenness and decay. The workers' awareness of this decay has built up over the decades in a gradual, almost subterranean way, expressing itself in a widespread cynicism and disillusion with the 'workers' organizations'. But once this merely passive cynicism is transformed through a series of bitter struggles into a conscious and active political understanding of the nature of the so-called 'workers organisations', it will become clear that the lessons of the last sixty years have not been lost to the class in Britain.

22 When this transition to a higher level of struggle does occur, it is bound to confront the trade union apparatus with considerable fury because of the identification of the unions with the whole regime of austerity which is currently being foisted on to the class. The overt confrontation with the unions will be the signal for the appearance in Britain of those radical forms of struggle which have already sprung up in other countries: mass assemblies, wildcat strike committees completely outside the control of the stewards, generalized struggles affecting whole towns and regions, direct conflict with the repressive forces of the state.

23 In these deepening struggles, the proletariat in Britain will forge the consciousness of the necessity to join together with the workers of the whole world in the violent assault on the capitalist state. In the battle to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale, the proletariat in Britain will at last realize its immense potential strength, and will constitute one of the most important bastions of the world revolution.

Rosa Luxemburg belongs to the proletarian revolution, not to the social democrats!

*"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the 'consolation' of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it. Today, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists within the labor movement concur in this doctoring of Marxism". (Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 1917)*

January 15 1919, Rosa Luxemburg was assassinated, along with her comrade of combat Karl Liebknecht, by the Freikorps. These soldiers were under the orders of the minister Noske, a member of the SPD (German Social Democratic Party) who declared *"If a bloodhound is necessary, then I will be it!"* It was the Socialist party in power who orchestrated the bloody repression of the workers' insurrection in Berlin and assassinated one of the greatest figures of the international workers' movement.

This odious murder was prepared for a long time through a series of slanders against Rosa Luxemburg. "Red Rosa", "Rosa the incendiary", "Bloody Rosa", "Rosa the agent of Tsarism"... no lying attack against her was spared, culminating in the calls for a pogrom at the end of 1918/ beginning 1919, notably at the time of the "bloody week" in Berlin.

But just a few months after her murder, the bourgeoisie and the opportunists in the workers' movement began to make her into an inoffensive icon so as to canonise her, empty her of revolutionary content, degrade her and take the edge off this trenchant revolutionary. Above all for them Rosa Luxemburg mustn't remain the militant and exemplary revolutionary that she was; she had to be killed a second time, misrepresented into a sort of pacifist and feminist democrat. This is the real aim, in recent decades, of the work of "remembering". This magisterial passage by Lenin is also valid for the fate reserved by the bourgeoisie for Jean Jaurès. See <https://fr.internationalism.org/revolution-internationale/201409/9133/jean-jaures-et-mouvement-ouvrier>, which will be published in English soon.

branch "which aims to "rehabilitate" (that's to say recuperate) this great fighter for the revolution.

A constant campaign to distort the combat of Luxemburg and Lenin

In the 1930's in France for example, a whole current developed around Lucien Laurat, which increasingly ceded to the sirens of democracy and ended up arguing that from the very beginning of the "Bolshevik revolution", the "worm" of Lenin was in the "fruit" of the revolutionary project. This argument logically became the apology for the Republican Army in the war in Spain of 1936-39 and for the dragooning of the working class into the second world butchery under the cover of the fight against fascism. It supported the POUM in Spain and the Trotskyists in the "heroism" of their national resistance. This nauseous democratic propaganda went into paroxysms after the Second World War through people such as Rene Lefeuve, founder of the *Editions Spartacus*. The latter, in a collection of texts by Rosa Luxemburg², has a purely ideological preface and its 1946 title *Marxism against dictatorship* (a heading never used by Rosa Luxemburg!) presented this fighter for the revolution as radically hostile to Bolshevism, which is nothing other than a gross lie. In the introduction to the collection, Lefeuve writes that: *"all the great marxist theoreticians of renown: Karl Kautsky, Emile Vandervelde, Rodolphe Hilferding, Karl Renner, Georges Plekhanov – and ourselves in passing – denounced as much as Rosa Luxemburg the totalitarian doctrine of Lenin as absolutely contrary to the principle of marxism"*.

Stalin mummified Lenin and perverted his thoughts into a terrifying dogma. "Bloody" Rosa Luxemburg became a sort of saint for democracy. The Stalinist counter-revolution rapidly generated two new putrid and complementary ideologies: attractive "Luxemburgism" on one side and repellent "Marxism-Leninism" on the other. Really just two faces of the same coin or rather two jaws of the same trap with the same result: reject the "bloodthirsty" Bolsheviks and admire the figure offered by a "pacifist" Rosa, like you admire a lion in a cage.

2. "Problems of socialist organisation" (1904), "The masses and the leaders" – (1903), "Freedom of criticism and freedom of science" (1899).

In Western Germany 1974 (the FRG), they even printed stamps bearing the image of Rosa Luxemburg!

A new campaign against the proletariat and its revolutionary organisations

After the collapse of the eastern bloc and the disappearance of the USSR, this vast ideological campaign was dug up again and amplified so as to feed the so-called "death of communism" zealously decreed by the bourgeoisie with the fall of the Berlin Wall. Official ideology here pursued the greatest lie in history, fraudulently assimilating communism with Stalinism. It is a particularly effective ideological weapon in the hands of the dominant class. Because if since the 1990's the proletariat has had so many difficulties to see itself as a social force, to develop its consciousness and its organisation, it is really because it is cut off from its past, it's lost its identity, it doesn't know where it's come from or where it's going. If communism is Stalinism, this horror which has finally failed, then why fight for it? Why study the history of the workers' movement when it will only lead to the Stalinist catastrophe? It is this logic and this poison that the bourgeoisie wants to put in our heads! And the presentation of Rosa as a pacifist and enemy of Lenin, the "dictator over the proletariat", the "spiritual father of Stalin", is one of the blackest chapters in this ignoble propaganda. Whether they are conscious of it or not, those who participate in this sham fight against the working class.

Today on blogs and forums, in bookshops and kiosks, throughout Europe and in the world, a new nauseous campaign has resurfaced in order to again distort the image of the militant Rosa Luxemburg. Thus, from television programmes, Rosa Luxemburg again appears under the sole traits of a "woman" and a "pacifist". The very-well known and acclaimed paper, *Le Monde*, published an article in September 2013, written by a certain Jean-Marc Daniel, a professor of ESCP Europe, with the very evocative title: "Rosa Luxemburg, marxist-pacifist". This association of the words "marxist" and "pacifist" is gob-smacking: for the ruling class the "real marxist" is one who abdicates from the class war, renounces the insurrection and the overthrow of capitalism.

Numerous books have now been published, including children's literature, where Rosa Luxemburg is again presented as a relentless adversary of the Bolsheviks and of the "dictator" Lenin. Conferences and debate are also organised here and there, as was the case in Paris recently under the aegis of the "Luxemburgist" democratic histo-



rians of the group *Critique Sociale*. Even within the arts, the MAIF prize 2014 was awarded to the sculptor Nicolas Milhe for his project "Rosa Luxemburg"! This is a real ovation for Rosa ... on condition that she is opposed to her comrades in the fight, to the Bolsheviks, to the Russian revolution, in short opposed to revolution. The recuperation of Rosa Luxemburg in order to turn her into an "inoffensive icon" is a vast enterprise of ideological intoxication. It aims to inject the idea that the proletariat must fight to construct... not a global communist society but a "more democratic" society. After the odious propaganda of the *Black Book of Communism*, it is henceforth this idea of Luxemburg as the enemy of the Bolsheviks which is very seriously and officially taught in school programmes³.

The stakes for the bourgeoisie today are to convince the most critical and recalcitrant elements that there is no other future than the defence of the democratic bourgeoisie. But behind this distortion there is also the campaign of the recuperation of Rosa Luxemburg by all sorts of democrats, with another unsaid objective, which is to discredit and demonise the real positions of revolutionary organisations. **Olga, November 7 2014**

3. See on our French internet site: <https://fr.internationalism.org/icconline/201409/9138/falsification-histoire-programmes-scolaires>

Rosa Luxemburg and the Junius Pamphlet Introduction to the first Korean edition

The ICC has contributed to the first Korean edition of Rosa Luxemburg's Junius Pamphlet, written 100 years ago in response to the carnage of the First World War. We are publishing extracts of the introduction in this paper, while the full text can be found on our website. In its 100 year 'commemorations' of the war, the ruling class and its propaganda machine offers us so many forms of apology for the massacre; revolutionaries on the other hand can take pride in celebrating the moral and intellectual courage of those internationalists who stood against the war and for the proletarian revolution.

The Junius Pamphlet was written as a first major theoretical-political analysis of the First World War which had inaugurated a world historic change. A machine of destruction was set in motion, massacring human beings on a scale never seen before. For example in the north of France and in Flanders (Belgium) within a few weeks hundreds of thousands of soldiers were killed through the use of new weapons such as mustard gas. Some 20 million dead were counted by the end of the war. And immediately after the war an epidemic which later became known as "the Spanish flu" provoked the death of another 20 million exhausted and often undernourished people.

On 4 August 1914, the parliamentary group of the

German Social Democratic Party voted in support of war credits. For the first time, the leadership of a proletarian party, and in this case one of the oldest and most influential parties of the Second International, betrayed the most crucial principle of internationalism: workers have no fatherland. A group of the few remaining internationalists in Germany came together in the apartment of Rosa Luxemburg and began to organise the defence of internationalism against the traitors. A year later a first international meeting of internationalists was organised in the Swiss village of Zimmerwald¹. In response to the unleashing of the war and the betrayal of the leadership of Social Democracy revolutionaries started to put forward an analysis of the roots of the war and its consequences. Rosa Luxemburg's pamphlet *The Crisis of Social Democracy* and the *Theses on the Tasks of International Social Democracy* which she drafted were part of these international efforts to understand the new situation for humanity and to draw out the perspectives for the work of revolutionaries. She wrote her text only a few months after the beginning of the war in April 1915, producing it in prison under the nom de guerre "Junius". Due to the conditions of war the text could not be published immediately; only in January 1916 could it be published outside of Germany. In view of the

1. http://en.internationalism.org/wr/290_zimmerwald.html; <http://en.internationalism.org/node/3154>

new world historic situation her slogan was first of all: understand in depth what happened, why the war could begin and above all learn from our own mistakes. It was necessary to make a ruthless and fearless self-critique.

Searching for the roots

In several chapters of her pamphlet she analysed the historic development of capitalism. She showed how and why capitalism in its world-wide expansion had to constantly conquer new markets and how those countries which "arrived (too) late" had no other choice but to snatch away conquests from "those who had arrived first" by means of violence, i.e. war. These chapters on the ascent of imperialism illustrate the role of war in the capitalist system. She unmasked the imperialist ambitions of all states and recognised that this development was not triggered off by a single country alone. *"(...) Imperialism is not the creation of any one or of any group of states. It is the product of a particular stage of ripeness in the world development of capital, an innately international condition, an indivisible whole"* (Chapter 7).

The analysis she had put forward in the 1890s, arguing that Poland could no longer become an independent state and revolutionaries could no longer support the demand for national self-determination, was confirmed by the events of the world war. Rosa Luxemburg was amongst the first

in the revolutionary camp to reject any support of national wars of defence. *"Every socialist policy that depends upon this determining historic milieu, that is willing to fix its policies in the world whirlpool from the point of view of a single nation, is built upon a foundation of sand."* (Chapter 7)

The few months of war helped Rosa Luxemburg to grasp the new characteristics of this war, which would lead to the economic ruin of most of the participating countries.

After having analysed the new historical conditions, this qualitatively new phase rooted in the laws and contradictions of capitalism itself, she underlined the subjective conditions for the unleashing of war. Her conclusion: without the betrayal of the leadership of Social Democracy, the oldest and strongest workers' party, and without the proclamation of social peace (i.e. the prohibition of strikes) in the factories, a pact which the trade unions signed with the capitalists, in short without the mobilisation of the working class for war through Social Democracy and the trade unions, the war could never have been begun.

Consequences for the working class and humanity

While Social Democracy in Germany called for support for the fatherland, Luxemburg insisted on

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the crucial role of the working class for the ending of the war. And she warned against the pacifist hope that capitalism might eliminate its own drive to war and destruction. She recognised the danger that if capitalism continued to exist the very survival of humanity would be at risk. Humanity was faced with the alternative between socialism and barbarism.

Consequences for revolutionaries

Faced with the betrayal by the SPD leadership, the determined internationalists in Germany around Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, Franz Mehring and others did not want to let the SPD leadership bring the whole party under its control, because the party leadership did not have the majority of the party behind it. The group round Luxemburg stood for the regroupment of all internationalist forces in the party and the preparation of a new International on a new basis. Luxemburg drafted the "Theses on the tasks of International Social Democracy" which were published as an annexe to the Junius Pamphlet and adopted with a few changes by the newly founded Spartacusbund as the guidelines of the group.

The significance of the Junius pamphlet

As well as offering a historical-theoretical framework for understanding the qualitatively new step taken by capitalism, Luxemburg's pamphlet offered a political framework for the activities of revolutionaries. Its main ideas (the historical development of imperialism, the perspectives of capitalist society in its decadent phase, socialism or barbarism, the question of internationalism in the workers' movement and the task of revolutionaries) and its method (go to the roots and clarify the principles of each question, a ruthless self-critique, the long-term view for the task of revolutionaries) are all points of reference valid not only for the period of the First World War but to this day.

The theoretical-historical foundations of the Junius Pamphlet can be found in another text, which Rosa Luxemburg wrote before World War One (*The Accumulation of Capital*). In this text she outlined the driving forces of capitalism, its basic contradictions and why the accumulation of capital from a certain phase on inevitably leads to war and destruction.

In the same way as the publication of *The Accumulation of Capital* had already provoked con-

siderable controversy in the workers' movement, the publication of the Junius Pamphlet also gave rise to passionate debate amongst internationalists. In particular, Luxemburg's conclusion that with the development of capitalism imperialism had become the cancer of all countries, whether big or small, and that thus the call for 'national self-determination' was no longer on the agenda, caused a big controversy. In the midst of the war a thorough-going debate started amongst interna-



tionalists, in which Lenin was one of the strongest critics of Luxemburg.

However, it is important to underline that this debate took place within the framework of a common internationalist standpoint, a shared perspective of proletarian revolution. The discussion about the deeper roots of the development of imperialism, of the betrayal of internationalism and the perspectives of the struggle, never prevented them from pulling in the same direction - fighting for the overthrow of the capitalist system, under the most adverse conditions of repression and exile.

The revolutionary spirit of Rosa Luxemburg during the war

In the face of this historic disaster for humanity, this betrayal by the former workers' party, Rosa Luxemburg gave an example of the revolutionary spirit, of an unwavering, determination and a capacity to carry out theoretical-political analysis with a long-term view.

The unfolding of this unheard of level of barbarism and the betrayal of the party was a true shock for revolutionaries and led to a feeling of depression amongst some of them. Many revolutionaries in Germany were thrown into jail or driven into exile. Rosa Luxemburg herself was detained in jail for most of the war. Altogether she spent 3 years 4 months in jail during the 4 years 4 months of war. After having been thrown into prison in order to break her determination and to silence her, the reaction of Luxemburg was to fight back with the weapon of theory. She wrote the *Anticritique*,

a reply to criticisms of her book *The Accumulation of Capital*. During her activities as a teacher at the German Social Democratic party school she had given courses on political economy. Now, in prison she wrote her *Introduction to Political Economy* using the initial material she had used as a party teacher. And she also dealt with questions of literature and culture. She wrote a foreword to the book of the Russian author Korolenko *History of my Contemporary* and translated his book into German. And it was from prison that she also wrote her first analysis of the Russian revolution, *On the Russian Revolution*, developing some first important points for a critique of the errors made by the revolution in Russia.

Of course Luxemburg suffered from being locked-up in jail, but this could never break her will or undermine her morale. It is highly inspiring to read her notes and correspondence during her time in prison. The large variety of issues that she dealt with in prison and the series of letters on art and literature give testimony to an untameable, creative spirit. "Often I do nothing else but read and write from 6 in the morning until 9 in the evening"².

Faced with the moral bankruptcy of capitalism and the perspective of socialism or barbarism she not only flung herself into the most determined struggle, but she also maintained her courageous spirit even after the terrible loss of people who were very close to her. She preserved her strength through her theoretical efforts, her capacity to follow other passions (such as for drawing and for botany) and through a large network of support from outside. She received food from outside of the prison (because of the bad health of her stomach, which required a special diet). Her writings were repeatedly smuggled out of prison (sometimes with the connivance of the prison guards). While in prison she corresponded with a lot of comrades, gave them advice and supported them as best as she could from behind prison walls. No prison cell could be thick enough to silence her and to prevent her from offering her support to individual people, to her comrades and to the working class as a whole. Thus her voice could be 'heard' outside of the prison - politically and as a human being. The day she was released from prison some 1000 workers (many of them women) waited at the prison gate for her and accompanied her home.

Her time in prison was in continuity with her whole life. **D**

2. letter from Rosa Luxemburg to Clara Zetkin, July 1, 1916

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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 on the world that our papers cannot.

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

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Islamic State cannot destroy the real idols of our time!

By starting a new heading of 'Readers' Contributions' on our website, and occasionally in our paper, we hope to encourage our readers and sympathisers to write texts and articles which can go into greater depth than is possible in our discussion forum, and so stimulate a longer term reflection. These articles, while being broadly based on proletarian politics, need not fully represent the positions of the ICC, or may deal with issues on which the ICC does not have a collective view. The following article is a good example of what we mean: as an attempt to explore the historical origins of Islam and to situate the actions of the current 'Islamic State' against this background, it raises questions which are of general concern to marxists but which can also give rise to a fruitful confrontation of ideas. The complete version of this article appears on our website.

Recently there have been fresh reports of the cultural destruction wrought by the IS thugs in Iraq as these 'brave monotheists' cast down long dead idols of past civilisations. In the process destroying links to the time when Iraq was the cradle of civilisation while making a handy profit on the black market with what they didn't destroy. This cultural destruction and the attendant attitude of contempt for the past is not only reactionary but also completely in sync with wider trends within bourgeois society and culture both Western, 'modern' and 'secular' and in the backward view of religious fundamentalism. After all no civilisation in history has been more culturally destructive than capitalism which has destroyed almost every other culture and social form in existence.

These 'Islamic' gangsters want to depict themselves as modern day heirs of Moses and Mohammed, casting down pagan idols, ignoring the fact that no one worships these idols anymore and haven't done for over a thousand years. In actuality IS do nothing and can do nothing to oppose the real problem of idolatry in the modern world, because they serve the very same idols as the rest of the world bourgeoisie.

What is idolatry?

Many Marxist writers including Marx himself have pointed out the connection between our concepts of alienation, fetishisation and reification with the older concept of idolatry. Erich Fromm, in his book *Marx's Concept of Man*, makes the

point particularly explicit when he says:

"The whole concept of alienation found its first expression in Western thought in the Old Testament concept of idolatry. The essence of what the prophets call "idolatry" is not that man worships many gods instead of only one. It is that the idols are the work of man's own hands -- they are things, and man bows down and worships things; worships that which he has created himself. In doing so he transforms himself into a thing. He transfers to the things of his creation the attributes of his own life, and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he is in touch with himself only by the worship of the idol. He has become estranged from his own life forces, from the wealth of his own potentialities, and is in touch with himself only in the indirect way of submission to life frozen in the idols" (Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, 1961, page 39)

This is true of things which are not directly created by man as well, for example a natural object such as a tree; even an idea or experience such as success or love can become idols. This happens when they are fetishised and separated off from their true being which is always in connection with other beings and with being as a whole. This is the essence of reification, the giving of independent power and existence to something which is in reality a part of a whole or one aspect of a dialectical relation. 'Reification' is therefore fundamentally the same as 'deification' because it involves cutting off and turning a partial aspect of reality into a 'god'.

By this reckoning modern capitalism is perhaps the most idolatrous society to date, as it is pre-eminently the society of the 'thing'. Not only in the sense of its worship of commodities and its elevation of Profit as the jealous God of the whole human race, but also in the way that this effects its entire worldview and its whole mode of consciousness. This is not altered by the fact that this idolatry is a repressed, unconscious idolatry; in the spirit of typical bourgeois cynicism the idea that people worship things like greed, success, their own ego or any other expression of reified modern power is denied by all or at least turned into a minor criticism of 'popular' culture; the extent to which this 'worship' is hard-wired into the system itself is vehemently denied.

Monotheism in History

All three monotheistic religions began as a re-

bellion of the oppressed. There are numerous theories about what the true origins of Judaism were; the official founding myth of Judaism is the rebellion against slavery led by Moses. However historians disagree on how much historicity can be lent to this tale. Norman Gottwald¹ put forward a theory in the 1970s that was at first derided among mainstream historians but has gained more traction even in these circles since then: that Judaism in fact started as a 'peasant revolt' which aimed to 're-tribalise' society (i.e. to go back towards primitive communistic ideals and practices), to avoid the necessity of the state and to create a more egalitarian and free society than the Cannanite society he claims they lived in prior to this. Whatever the case might be it is almost certain that a rebellion of some oppressed strata was fundamentally involved. Christianity starts as a rebellion not just of 'the Jews' against Rome but was fundamentally a movement of the most oppressed and exploited of the time (Kautsky in *Foundations of Christianity* refers to the proletariat of the day, although its nature was very different from the proletariat under capitalism). This can be seen in the explicit communism of the early Christians (as well as other Jewish groups of the time such as the Essenes) which is more pronounced in Christianity than all other religions, although it is present in nearly all religions to some extent.

Islam was not a movement of the most dispossessed alone, of an equivalent to Kautsky's proletariat. However it was certainly a movement of the oppressed; in particular it was a movement of the oppressed tribal groups, those who had not emerged to take control of the power and wealth of the newly emerging economic and social reality of 6th and 7th century Arabia. It was a movement which drew in support from all the oppressed strata of this social reality: the poor, women, orphans and widows, unprotected foreigners and slaves, and which attacked the power and the sources of wealth of the leading tribes such as the Quraish (the tribe Muhammad, although an orphan, belonged to).

Islam painted itself from the start as a return to a previous way of being. Firstly this meant that Arabs should remember their own moral codes that had been lost in the rush towards individual success and economic ruthlessness. A 'pagan' morality of self interest and prideful contempt

1. *The Tribes of Yaweh, A Sociology of the Religion of Liberated Israel, 1250-1050BCE*, New York, 1979

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.

for the 'weak' became widespread as the emerging relations of private property eroded the tribal principles based on caring for all members of the community. War and blood feuds had also gotten out of control. This is where the newness of the Islamic morality really comes into play. The shifting influence of moral responsibility from the tribe collectively as in the traditional Arab worldview of the time to an 'individualistic' morality which saw the individual as alone being responsible for his/her actions in Islam reflects many contradictory historical tendencies. Firstly, it can be said to represent the growing alienation of the individual from the community; however it is a community by this point which has already degenerated and no longer fits the new historical circumstances. This expresses itself in the way that this 'individualistic' morality was able to help combat the prevalence of blood feuds in which one life from a tribe was seen as being interchangeable for another.

Islam was also a movement of a growing merchant class and it would be wrong to obscure or diminish this fact. Marx and Engels in the little writing they did dedicate to the history of Islam make the accurate observation that Islam was the ideological basis which expressed and gave body to the movement towards Arab unification and an early kind of 'nationalism'. This unification was made possible and could only be made possible at this time through the growing importance of trade and the merchant class in general.

The fact that Islam was less radical than Christianity in its rejection of money and possessions is not only connected to the fact that Christianity was a more 'proletarian' movement and was therefore expressing the views of people who could see firsthand, to an extent the majority of Arabs of this time could not, the inherent problems and injustices that money and trade create. It reflects also a difference in 'temperament' between the two movements; Christianity was a movement of a class which, as rebellious they might have been, had no realistic way in which to establish their 'kingdom of God' on earth and could only imagine it coming through an apocalyptic struggle with the aid of divine intervention; the early Muslims on the other hand had a realistic programme of social reform and saw the 'end times' and the perfect age of righteousness as still firmly in the future, not as an immediate goal. This was why the revolution

Continued on page 3

Political positions of the ICC

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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*.