



world revolution

Terrorism: a force for imperialist war and against the class struggle

It may be that the recent terrorist attacks in France and Belgium are an expression of the difficulties facing “Islamic State” in the ground war in Iraq and Syria, but sudden murderous attacks on the population of the central countries of capitalism are fast becoming a fact of life, just as they have been for many years in Syria, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Turkey, Libya, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and numerous other countries caught up in today’s expanding war zone. In sum, the terrorists have “brought the war back home”, and even if Daesh is being militarily weakened in the area of its “Caliphate”, there are plenty of signs that the influence of this or similar groups is spreading to Africa and elsewhere. This is because the conditions which give rise to modern terrorism continue to ripen. Just as al-Qaida was pushed into the background as Enemy Number One by the rise of IS, so new gangs can emerge, and not necessarily Islamist: it looks as if the two most recent atrocities in Turkey were carried out by a wing or offshoot of the “Kurdish Workers’ Party”.

We live in a civilisation, the capitalist mode of production, which has long ceased to be a factor of progress for humanity, its most exalted ideals exposed as utterly degenerate and corrupt. As early as 1871, in the wake of the Paris Commune, Marx noted the cooperation of the great national rivals France and Prussia in crushing the uprising of the exploited, and predicted that in the future the call to “national war” would become no more than a hypocritical excuse for aggression and robbery, in the advanced capitalist zones at any rate. In 1915, in her *Junius Pamphlet*, Rosa Luxemburg insisted that from now on, in a planet dominated by huge imperialist powers, national war was everywhere a mere cover for imperialist appetites. The world wars and super-power conflicts that dominated the 20th century proved her absolutely correct.

And since the collapse of the great power blocs at the end of the 80s, war, the most overt expression of capitalist competition and crisis, has become ever-more irrational and chaotic, a situation highlighted by the carnage in Syria, which is being reduced to rubble by a host of armies and militias which are both at war with each other and which vie for the support of the many imperialist vultures flying over the region – the US, Russia, France, Britain, Iran, Saudi Arabia...



The irrational ideology of Islamic State is a clear product of this broader insanity. In the period of the blocs, opposition to the dominant imperialist powers tended to take on more classical forms of nationalism – the ideology of “national liberation” in which the aim was to develop new “independent” nation states, often with a sprinkling of “socialist” verbiage linked to the support of Russian or Chinese imperialism. In a period when not only blocs but national entities themselves are fragmenting, Islamic State’s pseudo-universalism has a wider appeal; but above all, in a period of history which constantly bears the threat of an end of history, of a collapse into barbarism under the weight of war and economic and ecological crisis, an ideology of the apocalypse, of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, becomes a real lure for the most marginalised and brutalised elements of bourgeois society. It is no accident that most of the personnel recruited for the attacks in France and Belgium come from the ranks of petty criminals who have taken the path of suicide and mass slaughter.

Terrorism and imperialist war

Terrorism has always been a weapon of despair, characteristically of layers in society who suffer the oppression of capitalist society but who have no future within it, of the “small bourgeois” ruined by the triumph of big capital. But 19th century terrorism was usually aimed at symbols of the old regime, at monarchs and other heads of state, and rarely targeted gatherings of ordinary citizens. Today’s terrorists seem to try to outdo each other in their cruelty. The Taliban faction which carried out the Easter attack on a park in Lahore claimed that it was “targeting Christians”. In reality it was targeting a children’s playground. Not just Christians but Christian children. And no matter to these gallant apostles that the majority of those killed were Muslims anyway. In Paris, people who like to listen to rock music, dance and have a drink were considered worthy of death in the IS communiqué lionising the attacks. But even these putrid “religious” justifications don’t stretch very far. Hitting a metro or an airport is aimed first and foremost in killing as many people as possible. This is because terrorism today is, overwhelm-

ingly, no longer the expression of an oppressed, if non-revolutionary, class in its resistance against capitalism. It is an instrument of imperialist war, of a fight to the death between capitalist regimes.

It is sometimes claimed, in justification of suicide attacks by Palestinians in Israel for example, that the suicide belt is the poor man’s drone or dive bomber. This is true – or at least morally true – only if you recognise that the “poor man” recruited for the cause of Daesh or Hamas is not fighting for the poor but for a rival set of exploiters, whether a local proto-state or the bigger imperialist powers that arm them and cover them diplomatically or ideologically. And whether carried out by semi-independent groups like Daesh, or directly by the secret services of countries like Syria and Iran (as in the case of a number of attacks on European targets in the 1980s), terrorism has become a useful adjunct of foreign policy to any state or would-be state trying to carve out a niche on the world arena.

This doesn’t mean that acts of terrorism aren’t also used by the more respectable states: the secret services of democratic countries like the USA and Britain, not leaving out Israel of course, have a long tradition of targeted assassinations and even false flag operations in the guise of overtly terrorist factions. But returning to the comparison between the suicide belt and the sophisticated fighter-bomber, it’s true that the model for the terrorists is less the clever liquidation of this or that troublesome individual by the CIA or Mossad, and

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What does it mean to struggle as part of the working class?

On hearing of a strike by nurses demanding better staffing levels at Europe's largest hospital, Charité, in Berlin last July a junior doctor in London said "They should do that here". Now the junior doctors are striking here in England in a dispute over a contract that involves both a pay cut and problems of staffing levels. The government claim that they have offered a pay rise, but it's one which will leave doctors thousands of pounds worse off due to a cut in out of hours pay. The claim that this is about 7 day working is equally outrageous, when the junior doctors have always covered nights and weekends, and rightly fear that increasing the weekend workload without increasing the number of staff would put patients at risk. In February secretary of state for Health, Jeremy Hunt, announced that the new contract would be imposed from August as negotiations had broken down.

The question facing junior doctors now, as with any sector of workers, is how to struggle. The BMA has escalated strike action from one day to two days in March and again on 6-8 April, and on 26-28 April will call an 18 hour strike without emergency cover – emergencies will be seen by other doctors. It is also launching a judicial review of the government decision on the contract – junior doctors have raised tens of thousands of pounds for this.

The problem here is that judicial review is clearly not an action that workers take collectively, but an appeal by citizens to the state and in the case of ongoing strike action nothing but a sideshow, a distraction to make it appear the BMA is doing something for junior doctors. Strike action, on the other hand, is the classical weapon of working class struggle and the plan to withdraw emergency cover sounds really militant – although other BMA members will be covering. Nevertheless the strikes are protest strikes in support of union negotiation, with the BMA website at pains to explain who may and may not join the strike, insisting that participation in the strike is an individual decision, and laying out how to picket legally (a maximum of 6) with a view to public support. And the rules on who can strike are indeed byzantine. If teachers have faced a situation where those in one union are told to cross a picket line of those in another, there are some doctors in the position of being told they can strike on Wednesday 6th, when they are formally employed by the NHS, but not on Thurs 7th when part of the same job is formally for Public Health England, for instance. Here we



can see the BMA is doing its best to rob the strike action of all collective solidarity and turn it into another protest by citizens.

Is this because junior doctors, however highly educated, are very inexperienced in class struggle? Last time they struck in 1975 the overwhelming majority were destined for a petty bourgeois position either as GPs running a small business or consultants with a private practice. After 40 years of pressure on NHS costs that is no longer the case, and while some will find more scope for business as NHS providers, or in the NHS bureaucracy, or both, others will be salaried workers. In this situation their union, the BMA, prides itself on representing all doctors whether employees or employers. Whatever is unusual about the BMA, it is containing this struggle just like any other union.

Calling workers out on strike for one or 2 days now and then as a demonstration to support or demand negotiation has been typical of struggles in the recent past, such as the electricians in 2011-12 or the teachers' strike over pensions on 28 March 2012; and before that the CWU used exactly the same tactic with postal workers. It is a tactic that gives the unions great control, even at the expense of anger by the workers and in spite of the efforts they make to break out of this control. For instance when electricians and students held separate demonstrations on the same day a large

group of electricians tried to get through to link up with the students instead of marching tamely off to Parliament. They were kettled and blocked. Similarly, while most unions would not emphasise that striking is an individual decision they achieve the same thing by emphasising the need to obey the law on picketing. So to struggle as part of the working class, rather than just being a bit of walk-on street theatre, means to come up against the unions. And as the electricians' demonstration showed, if the unions cannot maintain control and keep them isolated, the police will be there to do it for them.

The electricians who tried to get through to link up with a student demonstration showed another aspect of what it means to struggle as part of the working class – solidarity with other sectors, linking up with them, because their struggle is our struggle. When workers are isolated, as electricians, as postal workers, as junior doctors, they are very weak – even the massive and very militant miners' strike in 1984-5 was fatally weakened by being isolated in one sector. Strikes that spread across many sectors – France in 1968, Poland in 1980 – were much more powerful. The question of extending a struggle to link up with other workers is not just a useful tactic; it goes to the heart of what the working class is as the class that collectively produces in capitalism. And it is illegal. So a good citizen may withdraw his or her

labour from a particular boss with whom there is a contract of employment, but may not legally try to extend that struggle to others who are equally affected by the dispute. Workers in Port Talbot are not the only ones who are affected by the decisions of Tata Steel: a much greater number of workers in the supply chain also find their jobs at risk because they are all associated in various aspects of the production of goods that goes far wider than even a huge multinational. This is the basis for the working class, when it sees itself as a class, to develop the power of solidarity, and also to develop a perspective for society as a whole which is in total contradiction with capitalism's war of each against all.

Going back to the example of the junior doctors, their dispute has an impact on all those who rely on the health service, which is recognised but distorted in the totally false ideology of defending the NHS. So we have seen pickets with posters "hoot if you hear the NHS", as we have in many struggles in the health service, just as the miners called for support to British coal. It is a trap that keeps workers tied to their employer, their sector, their isolation from other workers. And it is clearly not true. Striking health service workers do not love the NHS, they are on strike against it because they are being exploited by it. What they 'love' is not the real NHS with all the cuts and cost savings, but the idea of a health service that gives them adequate resources to look after patients well and do a job they love. There is no perspective for such a health service in capitalism.

The issue of what it means to struggle as a part of the working class is not just a question for junior doctors, but for all of us. And it does not stop at being able to recognise the traps and obstacles put in place by unions, government, media or police, it also carries the perspective of a new society: "Class identity is not ... a kind of merely instinctive or semi-conscious feeling held by the workers ... It is itself an integral aspect of class consciousness, part of the process whereby the proletariat recognises itself as a distinct class with a unique role and potential in capitalist society. Furthermore, it is not limited to the purely economic domain but from the beginning had a powerfully cultural and moral element: as Rosa Luxemburg put it, the workers' movement is not limited to "bread and butter issues" but is a "great cultural movement"..."¹ Alex, 7.4.16

1. <http://en.internationalism.org/international-review/201601/13787/report-class-struggle>

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Terrorism: a force for imperialist war and against the class struggle

more the awesome destructive power of the cannons and aircraft of established armies, of weapons that can pulverise entire cities in a matter of days. The logic of imperialist war is the systematic massacre of entire populations – and this is something which has accelerated visibly over the last hundred years, with its progress from World War One, fought primarily between armies in the field, to the vast numbers of civilians carpet bombed or exterminated in death camps during World War Two, and on to the potential World War Three with its threat of the annihilation of the whole human race (a threat which has not at all disappeared in the new phase of chaotic militarism).

"Your armies kill our children with your planes, so we give you a taste of your own medicine, we kill your children with our suicide bombs". This is the oft-heard justification of the terrorists on their pre- or post-atrocity videos. And again this shows how faithfully they follow the ideology of imperialism. Far from addressing their anger at the real perpetrators of war and barbarism, the small class of exploiters and their state systems, their hatred is directed at entire populations of entire regions of the world, all of whom become legitimate targets, and they thus play their part in reinforcing the false unity between exploiter and exploited which keeps the whole rotten system creaking on. And this attitude of demonising entire swathes of

humanity is fully consistent with the dehumanising of particular groups who can then be subject to pogroms and terrorist bombings in the areas where you operate most commonly: Shia heretics, Christians, Yezidis, Jews, Kurds, Turks....

This ideology of revenge and hatred is echoed most clearly in the discourse of the right wing in Europe and America, who (while keeping their options open about blaming the Jews for the world's ills) tend today to see all Muslims or Islam itself as the real threat to peace and security, and who brand every refugee from the war-torn zones as a potential terrorist mole, thus justifying the most ruthless measures of expulsion and repression against them. This kind of scapegoating is another means of papering over the real class antagonisms in this society: capitalism is in a deep, irresolvable economic crisis, but don't investigate how capitalism functions to the benefit of the few and the misery of the many, blame it all on a part of the many, thus preventing the many from ever uniting against the few. It's a very old trick, but the rise of populism in Europe and America reminds us never to underestimate it.

The democratic state is not our friend

But the spread of terrorism, of radical Islamism and its Islamophobic and populist mirror images should not blind us to another very important

truth: in the countries of the capitalist centre, the main force safeguarding the system is the democratic state. And just as the democratic state is not averse to using terrorist methods, directly or indirectly, in its foreign policy, so it will use every terrorist attack to strengthen all its powers of social control and political repression. In Belgium, in the days after the Brussels attacks, the police powers of the state were dramatically reinforced: a new law was set in motion, increasing the possibility of raids and telephone-tapping, and introducing a closer following of "dubious" financial funding. As always, there was a very obvious presence of the police and army on the streets. Lessons were learned from the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks in Paris, which initially gave rise to spontaneous gatherings expressing anger and indignation, requiring a major effort of media and politicians to make sure all this was contained in the framework of national unity. This time there were clear calls by the police for people to stay at home. In sum, trust the democratic state, the only force that can protect us from this horrible menace. The media, meanwhile, urged the population to get used to the new daily ambiance of fear. Of course there was much debate about the apparent incompetence of the Belgian security services which ignored a number of clues prior to the attacks. But the net result of the investigations into such failings will

be to find ways of improving surveillance and supervision of the whole population.

Increasing the powers of the police state may help this or that ruling class in the incessant war between bourgeois factions and nations, but it will also be used against the population and the working class in particular in any future social explosions provoked by the crisis of the system, just as laws against terrorist groups who "hold democracy in contempt" can be used against authentically revolutionary political groups who put in question the whole capitalist system, including its democratic fireguards. But above all, just as the Islamist or nationalist ideology of the terrorists serves to bury the real class conflicts in every country, so the call for national unity behind the democratic state serves to prevent the exploited and the oppressed in any country from recognising that their only future lies in solidarity with their class brothers and sisters across the planet, and in the common struggle against a putrefying capitalist order.

Amos 7.4.16

Podemos

New clothes at the service of the capitalist emperor

If we are to believe the media bombardment that has been assaulting us in recent months, we are on the eve of an earthquake that will shake to the core the traditional scenario of the last thirty years, in which the People's Party of the right (PP) and the Socialist Party (PSOE) have succeeded each other alternately in power without anyone finding anything to complain about. This political chessboard is disturbed today by the eruption of 'emergent forces', and in particular by the most recent: Podemos. But Podemos represents nothing new.

Its political programme and its ideology are the classics of Stalinist regimes¹ defended by the so-called Communist parties (in reality virulently anti-communist) and their leftist acolytes of all stripes (Trotskyists, base unionists, anti-globalisation movements)², who are the main supporters of this pantomime of 'new politics'. The specificity of Podemos which justifies the stunt it has pulled for Spanish capitalism is that the troops of Iglesias (its leader) fulfil a special mission, very important for both the Spanish and the world bourgeoisie, which is to **erase the footprints of the movement of May 15** that shook the streets four and a half years ago.

The 'Pride of Spain': Iglesias against the internationalism of the movement of May 15

Four years ago, huge crowds took to the streets and squares not only in Spain but also in Greece, the USA, Israel, etc. "*This movement of indignation has spread internationally: to Spain, where the then Socialist government imposed one of the first and most draconian austerity plans; to Greece, the symbol of the crisis of sovereign debt; to the United States, the temple of world capitalism; to Egypt and Israel, focus of one of the worst and most entrenched imperialist conflicts, the Middle East.*" There were attempts, still timid and embryonic, at international solidarity: "*In Spain solidarity with the workers of Greece was expressed by slogans such as 'Athens resists, Madrid rises up'. The Oakland strikers (USA, November, 2011) said 'Solidarity with the occupation movement world wide' In Egypt it was agreed in the Cairo Declaration to support the movement in the United States.*

1. As we have already criticised in the previous issue of *Acción Proletaria*. See our article in Spanish: <http://es.internationalism.org/accionline/201406/4033/podemos-un-poder-del-estado-capitalista>

2. In fact, a large part of the workforce of the 'podemist' grouping is made up of militants from the 'anti-capitalist left' formed from the remnants of leftist organisations in the 1980s and from the umpteenth 'left' split from the Spanish 'Communist' party.



In Israel they shouted 'Netanyahu, Mubarak, El Assad are the same' and contacts were made with Palestinian workers.³

This internationalism, expressed spontaneously even in an embryonic way in the strongest moments of the Indignados movement, is something very dangerous for the bourgeoisie which justifies its domination of the proletariat by the existence of a supposed community of interest between exploiters and the exploited of each country.

From its origins, Podemos has been characterised by what they call a "*transversal*" discourse, that is to say, addressing both the 'disadvantaged' and business leaders to whom they have not ceased to send reassuring messages. But this supposed 'transversal' community is also the one invoked by the fraternal party of Podemos, the Greek Syriza party, to justify its compliance with the requirements of the European Union, which underpins an intensification of the attacks against the living and working conditions of the Greek workers. Instead of solidarity towards the victims, Iglesias, Errejón and the others solidarised with their executioner, Tsipras.

In this patriotic assault, the 'podemists' have distanced themselves from proposals to send soldiers into the areas occupied by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq on the grounds that "*they might be killed*". We have seen that, in contrast to their initial call to send troops into the areas occupied by the Islamic State (in Syria and Iraq), they then claimed that "*Spanish soldiers could be killed*". The 'argument' of the man with the ponytail⁴ is a very effective weapon to inject the poison of nationalism, and attempts to trap workers in the small and narrow world of the 'Spanish nation'.

No matter that the Syrian or Iraqi workers and peasants will be massacred? No matter that the population of Raqqa, the 'capital' proclaimed as the bastion of the Islamic State, is subject to the

3. Extract from our leaflet distributed internationally on the balance sheet of the 2011 movements: "2011. From indignation to hope," published on our website March 30, 2012 <http://en.internationalism.org/iconline/201203/4766/statement-social-movements-2011>

4. A reference to Iglesias.

threefold terror of its 'Islamist rulers', the bombing of Russia, US and France and also of the Assad militias? No matter that these territories will be transformed into a black hole where it becomes simply impossible to live? None of this we should worry about, according to the 'national philosophy' and jingoism of Mr. Iglesias! The only thing that matters is that no 'compatriot', no Spanish national can go to die there!

It is for this reason that the 'podemists' have joined as 'observers' the anti-jihadist pact signed by both the parties taking part in the invasion of Iraq (the Popular Party), the invasion of Afghanistan (PSOE) and by the candidates for the invasion of any country that would be made under the banner of the Spanish flag. It is for this reason that Podemos has promised Rajoy⁵ all the necessary support to deal with terrorist attacks, as it has already done for the victims of the recent attack in central Kabul⁶.

If we put our dreams in the ballot boxes, it will be a nightmare!

One of the most repeated slogans of the movement of May 15 was "*our dreams do not fit in your ballot box!*" Indeed, the Indignados movement arose with a strong tendency to reject bourgeois politics, elections,⁷ etc etc. In the movements of 2011, there began to be emphasised, with still many weaknesses and hesitations, a fact that, today, that is to say four years later, seems strange: "*These people, the workers, the exploited who have been presented as failures, idlers, incapable of taking the initiative or doing anything in common, have been able to unite, to share initiatives and to break out of the crippling passivity to which the daily normality of this system condemns them (...). It was the first step towards a real politics of the majority, far from the world of intrigues, of the world, lies and dodgy manoeuvres that is characteristic of the dominant politics. A politics that addresses all the issues that affect us, not just the economy or politics, but also the environment, ethics, culture, education or health.*"⁸

By contrast bourgeois politics advocates the isolation of each one of us; it argues that we must each consider ourselves as our own master faced

5. Spanish prime minister and leader of the People's Party.

6. Perpetrated by the Taliban in the diplomatic quarter and which killed four Afghan policemen and two Spaniards, after which the Spanish government declared it was "an attack against Spain."

7. It is not for nothing that the assemblies in the squares defiantly refused to follow the call for their dissolution during the "day of reflection" on 21 May.

8. Extract from the ICC international leaflet cited (the last passage is not included in the English version).

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Vitoria, the proletarian alternative

on Friday, some workplaces started to come out, and drew people to them, everybody joining in less than an hour into an assembly where workers proposed making a march into the centre (around six miles away) to try to bring out all the factories in the industrial zone. There were opinions against this, but in the end two-thirds of the meeting decided to go forward. The attempt failed and very few factories joined them. There were groups of workers who asked the demonstrators to hold a meeting in the Ramblas which they could go to after coming out of work. Also many people from the Buenavista neighbourhood joined them. In the Ramblas there were intermittent clashes the whole evening and a Moroccan worker was killed by the police who used the maximum savagery possible.

The Tarragonan experience shows that things may not turn out well at the beginning, but that the only way to go forward is to begin to move. The factory with the highest level of consciousness must not concentrate its strength on struggle in that particular factory; its higher consciousness must lead it to take up the task of generalising and extending working class action. In almost all the zones there were examples of factories that were the motive force for the movement: Kelvinator in Getafe, Superser in Pamplona, Standard in Ma-

drid, Duro-Felguera in Gijón, Caf in Beasíñ.

The other solidarity

In Euzkadi, all the unions and political organisations joined in a call for a day of struggle for March 8th. It was followed by some 500,000 people. A success in numbers, but a failure from the point of view of the conscious struggle of the working class. How is it to be explained, for example, that a worker from Basauri was killed on Monday and nobody lifted a finger on the following day to protest against the crime?

One-day struggles mean a whole series of things for the workers' movement which it is necessary to criticise and demystify.

1. In the first place, to stop for 24 hours and on the following day to return to work as if nothing had happened, serves to accustom the workers to the idea that their weapons of struggle (the strike, the demonstration) are means for pressuring the bourgeois state, not means for liberation which go on reinforcing our unity and weakening our enemy, until there is a violent confrontation.

2. In the second place, one-day struggles are demonstrations of force on the part of the parties of the Left against the state and other traditional factions of the bourgeoisie; they have the object

with problems which have a social character and must search for their solution through the individual act of voting in favour of professional politicians – a procedure which, over time, only results in greater atomisation and greater resignation.

The evolution of the trajectory of Podemos is very significant. In its early years, to strengthen the illusion of continuity with the movement of May 15, they reproduced and plagiarised the appearance of the assemblies and public debates to understand the causes of our sufferings, possible alternatives to offer, etc. But today, the so-called 'assemblies' of Podemos have become an undisguised knife fight between the different competing tendencies on the electoral lists.

Furthermore, the debates are today reduced to an approval of the list of recipes defended as a simple electoral programme of variable geometry, depending on the electoral needs of Iglesias and those of his gang.⁹

What will the future role of Podemos be?

The organisation of Podemos' 'internal' functioning is not in contradiction with its role, as the representatives of the wing most critical of this group would have us believe. It is in reality fully in line with the mission assigned to this party by the entire bourgeoisie: to convince the workers that any protest movement, any questioning of the control by the networks established by the democratic state to channel indignation about the future capitalism has in store for us, is inevitably doomed to die and finish up in their nets. Its ultimate aim is to convince us that it is useless to think we can fight against the system, because in the end the capitalist system will always recuperate this fight and entangle it in the institutions of the bourgeois state.

The movement of the Indignados in Spain, like those which arose in the following months in the United States or in Israel, or other expressions of weariness towards this capitalist system that turns human beings into vulgar commodities, failed to overcome the trap set by the bourgeois state, and particularly by those factions most able to sabotage any movement that puts capitalism into question. This does not mean that the possibility of a reflection, of a searching to learn the lessons of the causes of the weakening of these movements, does not exist - even in a latent form - in the dynamics of the current situation. The stimulants for this reflection are not missing. Capitalism is sinking every day into an abyss of growing misery for huge masses of the population, into multiplying outbreaks of war and terror, into a spreading scenario of ecological disaster. The exploiting class will always need, and will always be willing to pay handsomely, someone who proclaims at every street corner that the emperor is not naked, he only needs new clothes, like the ones Podemos, Syriza, Bernie Sanders in the USA or the 'Corbynistas' in Britain are willing to cut and tailor for him. **Paolo, 13 December 2015** (*Acción Proletaria*, organ of the ICC in Spain)

9. Of some 380,000 supporters that Podemos claims, only 15% took part in the primaries and only 4% mobilised for the adoption of its platform.

of convincing the ruling factions that they should take note of the Left's capacity for mobilisation and recognise that there is a role for the Left in the political game of the bourgeoisie. Although using methods different from parliamentary politics, they have the same end: to use the workers' struggle in conflicts between one faction of capital and another.

The meaning of the one-day struggles held in the whole of Euzkadi was the same, with a propaganda which placed the emphasis on the fact that the dead were Basques, assassinated by Spanish centralism.

The Left of the whole country has made use of the dead to attempt to convince the population about the need for democracy. Thus, there were numerous funeral processions, protesting against the 'violence of a government', and demanding the coming of another - a 'democratic' one - which would 'end all types of violence!' **March 1976**

ICC online

(February to April 2016)

German policy and the refugee problem: playing with fire

Second response to the Tampa Communist League, USA:

Once again on the party and its relation to the class

Reader's contribution:

Max Raphael and a Marxist perspective on art (Part 2), looking in particular at the art of the Palaeolithic caves

Environmental degradation

Health scandal at Flint, Michigan: Capitalism is poison

Marxism and science

On the book "And if time didn't exist?" by Carlo Rovelli: thought in movement. This article has provoked a debate on our online forum: <http://en.internationalism.org/forum/1056/ba-boon/13851/book-and-if-time-didn-t-exist-carlo-rovelli-thought-movement>

40 years ago: The nascent Spanish democracy murders the workers of Vitoria

Introduction

It is 40 years since the events that took place in the city of Vitoria, where, in 1976, in the context of falling wages due to the economic crisis there were important workers' movements throughout the country, and in Vitoria there were increasingly massive General Assemblies which elected a committee of revocable delegates. It was when a General Assembly was taking place in the Church of San Francisco that police unleashed repression against the workers gathered there. The then government minister, Señor Fraga Iribarne, founder and president of the Partido Popular (the People's Party) until his death, and honoured 'democrat', ordered the police to fire upon the workers, causing five deaths with many injured.

There was an overwhelming response by workers to these events, throughout the country there were solidarity demonstrations and massive assemblies. In Pamplona this ranged across the entire city. This expressed a mass struggle, united in demands and refusing to return to work until all their demands were met. The state had to partially concede.

In his first parliamentary speech on the occasion of the proposal of the investiture of Pedro Sánchez, Señor Iglesias (leader of Podemos) used this anniversary to endorse proposals for a "democratic renewal" and "social justice". However, in 1976, workers were confronted by a post Franco government that was carrying out the democratic transition which was organised with the international help of the old democracies of the then US bloc (Germany and France), in order to contain the enormous discontent and struggles. A year later the Moncloa Pact showed the unity of the whole bourgeoisie in its attack upon the proletariat under the ideological cover of democratic reform.

If there is a relationship between Vitoria in 1976 and the massive assemblies of 15M in Spain in 2011, with the dynamic of mass struggle¹ (despite those of 2011 not having a clearly proletarian identity); there is none between these events and Iglesias's party².

Before you read the article we would like to make some critical remarks about it. It was written when the ICC section in Spain had not yet been formed³. Inexperience and difficulties in assimilating our positions influence the article. Today, 40 years later, we think the following points are completely correct:

- The denunciation of the great manoeuvre represented by the 'establishing of democracy' in Spain whose consequences we are still living through;
- The unmasking of the coming together of all the political forces of the bourgeoisie, especially the self-proclaimed Left and extreme Left;
- The defence of proletarian means of struggle, in particular, the assemblies and the unification of the struggles;
- The defence of the communist perspective.

1. See our international leaflet 'From Indignation to hope' in WR 353 and at <http://en.internationalism.org/iconline/201203/4766/statement-social-movements-2011>

2. See the article in this issue of WR and an earlier in Acción Proletaria (our territorial publication in Spain) on the Podemos hoax <http://es.internationalism.org/iconline/201406/4033/podemos-un-poder-del-estado-capitalista>.

3. There was a nucleus formed by elements that came together in 1973 and who participated in a process of discussion that led to the formation of the ICC in 1975. This nucleus separated itself from this process in 1974 due to activist and workerist differences. A new group of militants made contact with the ICC in 1975 and, after a series of discussions, was definitively integrated in September 1976.

of the proletariat, the only alternative faced with the supposed reforms of a system dragging the great majority of humanity into poverty, war and barbarism

That said, the article has passages that reveal an overestimation of the immediate possibilities of the proletariat.

Thus, for example, it says "*and, next time, the police stations, barracks, post offices and telephone exchanges*". This overestimation of the possibilities of the situation suggests an almost pre-revolutionary moment. The international situation of the proletariat did not justify such propositions since the struggle had strongly declined following the explosive events in France 1968, Italy 1969 and Poland 1970, something that is ignored when it says, on the contrary, that "*Today, in all parts of the world the workers are striking against the conditions which the crisis is imposing on them and those strikes, even when suppressed, resurge with greater fighting spirit every time.*" This sees things in a very formal way, the proletariat was very far from the levels of consciousness and the politicisation of its struggles necessary for the posing of such aims.

Furthermore it affirms that there was "*the means to develop our unity, consciousness, and organisation through the experience of this period of struggle*". If it is true that there was an impressive unity and proliferation of assemblies, there was nevertheless much less of a clear conscious understanding of the necessity for the world proletarian revolution and the means for making this happen. But this same unity of the working class was not the same everywhere; there was a significant and powerful weight of sectoral, regional and other divisions. The assemblies had not taken on all the consequences and implications of their function in the class, and the committees of delegates were

occupied and manipulated by the unions and forces of the extreme left of the bourgeoisie.

The inexperience and difficulties of the assimilation of class positions to which the young sections of the ICC clearly adhered, is seen in the article's understanding of the October 1934 workers' insurrection in Asturias as a "*revolution*". Despite the enormous combativity displayed by the Asturian miners, the movement remained strictly within regional limits and was more the fruit of a provocation that forced the miners to insurrection than a conscious action they decided upon. At the same time, the world situation was an accumulation of physical and ideological defeats of the class, the triumphant counter-revolution, the preparation of the second imperialist slaughter which impeded the struggles taking up a revolutionary perspective. In reality, the Asturias insurrection has to be seen in the same light as the Austrian Social Democrats' provocation of workers in that country in February 1934 which led to a terrible defeat. Their Spanish colleagues, led by Largo Caballero who had the nerve to present himself as the "Lenin of Spain" (when in the Primo de Rivera dictatorship he was a state councillor to the dictator), leading the workers into a trap and leaving them there by sabotaging all attempts at solidarity in Madrid and other places⁴.

Rosa Luxemburg said that "*self-criticism, cruel and relentless criticism that goes to the root of evil is life and breath for the proletariat*". The honest highlighting of these errors gives us clarity and conviction in the struggle.

4. See our book (in Spanish) *1936: Franco and the Republic massacre the proletariat*. An online version can be found at <http://es.internationalism.org/booktree/539>

Vitoria, the proletarian alternative

The bourgeoisie has not concealed its anxiety about the strength displayed by the working class during the first three months of this year. The language used by the press and the statements made by public personalities give us an idea of the extent of that anxiety. For the Primate Cardinal "... *days of uncertainty for Spain are drawing near*"; for Ricardo de la Cierva (a bourgeois commentator) "... *the horizon is so black that I can't see any more.*" *Informaciones* (a Spanish periodical), faced with the avalanche of strikes, asks itself: "*Are we facing an attempt that is basically revolutionary?*"

Our strikes have shaken the country: all its regions and all its branches of production. The cities of Salamanca and Zamora, where 'nothing ever happens', have witnessed strikes in the construction and metal industries; even the blind went on strike and demonstrated in the streets.

Not even before the war has there been such a general movement. In January alone there have been more strikes than in all of 1975. Such a gigantic generalisation must serve to make us aware of the strength which we have, make us see that in this strength lies the road leading to the end of capitalist exploitation, which every day grows more unbearable.

That is the first lesson to draw, a lesson that has been present, more or less clearly, in the recent struggles. The building workers and others in Pamplona, Vitoria, Elda, Vigo, and Barcelona organised the strikes through assemblies, which were unified through a committee of delegates together with a general city assembly; they looked for the solidarity of all workers on the streets and backed by that accumulated strength and their autonomous organisation, they occupied the city, closing bars, offices, banks, and public departments.

To speak of communism, to speak of working class emancipation, is no longer considered utopian. We know that the day of revolution is still far off, but we know that on our way there, we have something very solid on which to lean: the experi-

ence of our brothers in Vitoria, Pamplona, Vigo, and other cities. That experience contains the means to unite us, the means to confront bourgeois power, to destroy it and to liberate ourselves. This experience forms part of the real resurgence of the proletariat throughout the entire world and takes up the revolutionary torch which set fire to Europe through the years 1917-21, and whose zenith saw the creation of the soviets in 1917 in Russia and the workers' councils in Germany in 1918.

It's essential to deepen these experiences, to generalise them to all places, and to ensure that such experiences should have a conscious organisation forged by the workers themselves. Clearly, the means are:

- the general strike
- the occupation of the cities, closing and paralysing offices, bars, public departments and, for the first time, police stations, jails, postal and telephone offices
- the autonomous organisation of our class in assemblies, unified in delegates' committees and in a general congress of workers' delegates
- the defence of our assemblies and demonstrations against the attacks of the repressive bodies of the state.

The road is long and difficult, but we are not starting from scratch; we have the experience of two centuries of workers' struggle behind us. Today, in all parts of the world the workers are striking against the conditions which the crisis is imposing on them and those strikes, even when suppressed, resurge with greater fighting spirit every time.

Murder and democracy: two sides of the same coin

If we have the means to develop our unity, consciousness, and organisation through the experience of this period of struggle, it is also true that the bourgeoisie is powerful and has many ways of defeating us, dividing us, and stopping our advance forward.

We have to have a very clear consciousness of

the methods the bourgeoisie is going to use to defeat our struggle. We can sum them up under two headings: **repression and democracy**. In less than two weeks, the pre-democratic government of Fraga assassinated more workers than the fascist government of Carrero Blanco did in two years!

Faced with the uncontrollable strength of the workers' struggles in Vitoria, Elda, Vigo, Pamplona, etc., there was no other response open to the capitalists than to resort to the most savage repression - and a fascist government would have done the same as a democratic one, or a 'workers' or 'revolutionary' one. Capitalism - under all its state forms - always speaks the same language. History provides us with too many examples: in 1918 the Social Democrat, Ebert, bloodily defeated the workers of Berlin, assassinating Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht; in 1921 the Bolshevik government used aerial bombardment to end the Kronstadt workers' insurrection¹; in 1931 the Swedish Conservative government killed nine workers in Adalen; in 1933 under the Spanish Republic, the progressive Azaña waded in blood at Casas Viejas while the fascist (today a democrat) Gil Robles drowned the workers' revolution of the Asturias under the barbarity of the Spanish Foreign Legion. After the massacre of the Second World War, the killings continued: Italy in 1947 under the Christian Democrats; Berlin in 1953 and Hungary in 1956 under 'Communist' governments; Poland in 1970; twelve miners killed during a miners' strike in South Africa in 1972; Argentina under the military regime, workers killed in Córdoba and Tucumán ...

The crimes committed in Vitoria, Elda, etc are

1. The crushing of the Kronstadt workers' was indeed a decisive step in the transformation of the soviet state into an instrument of capitalism, but we don't think this was the culminating point of the counter-revolutionary process that would make the Russian state fit without qualification into a list of capitalist states. See for example <http://en.internationalism.org/internationalreview/200001/9646/1921-proletariat-and-transitional-state>

not the work of an 'ultra' faction of the bourgeoisie as OICE² says in *Revolución* number 7, but the conscious and necessary response that capitalism, under whatever form of government, makes and will go on making to the proletarian menace. Carillo would have done the same as Fraga!

But repression is not enough if the working class continues to advance through every struggle and learns from each defeat. The reform of the institutions of the bourgeois state is essential in order to contain the workers' struggle, to divide it, and to imprison it within objectives which, far from destroying the system, consolidate and conserve it.

The events in Vitoria have not made the Government abandon its policy of reform.

They have not brought a crisis to the dreadful 'bunker'³. The Council of Ministers made the following declaration:

"*In consequence, the government (after the events in Vitoria) is disposed to act not only with the object of firmly maintaining public order, but also to create the objective conditions which permit a real social peace . . . particularly distressing are events such as those in Vitoria which are clearly intended to delay the programme of reforms which the Spanish people want and which the government is not prepared to renounce.*"

It is no contradiction to combine democracy with murder. Bloodbaths are not a monopoly of the fascists. All factions of capital use the same weapons

2. Organización de la Izquierda Comunista de España, *Revolución* was its publication, was an organisation of the so-called extreme left, which, in reality, is the left of capital, and, while adopting some of the positions of the Communist Left, in reality, perverted them and used them in its role of containing the autonomous movements of the proletariat and leading it into a dead end. Proof of this was their position according to which there are other fractions of the democratic bourgeoisie under which capitalist exploitation would be tolerable.

3. With this expression the article refers to those years in which a part of the state tried to stay anchored in Francoism.

Continued from page 4

against workers' rebellions.

But although it is a necessity for the Spanish bourgeoisie to defeat in blood and fire all independent workers' struggles, it must at the same time create the democratic political institutions it needs (like unions, parties, universal suffrage and other 'liberties') to avoid frontal confrontations like those at Vitoria by forcing the workers' struggles against exploitation into meaningless channels.

The vote, the unions, and the parties have a function: to contain the class, to erode its initiative, to confine it within the factory and the nation, diverting the horizon of its struggle towards 'socio-political' reforms such as the self-determination of the people, self-management, and anti-fascism. These are all weapons which the politicians of capital use to prevent us from becoming conscious that the only solution possible for our problems is to finish with exploitation once and for all.



Faced with a government incapable of controlling the situation, and whose only real language is crime, detention and provocation, the Democratic Opposition of the Right (liberals, Christian Democrats and Social Democrats) got together with the Left and extreme Left in the same endeavour - to channel the strike movement towards democratic reforms.

In an article appearing in *Mundo Diario* (a Stalinist-backed paper) entitled 'The Urgent Need for a Political Pact', Solé Tura, mouthpiece of the Catalan Communist Party, drew the following conclusions from the struggles in Vitoria, Pamplona, and Sabadell: "You have to be blind not to see that we are on the point of losing the big opportunity for establishing and stabilising a democracy in our country." He ended with the following proposal for immediate action: "Either we quickly reach an accord which encompasses the opposition and the consistent reformists to bring into being a democratic alternative, or we will very quickly reach a limit, and beyond that limit things are going to turn out very difficult for all, that is to say for the country."

What could be clearer? A party which pretends to be 'proletarian' and 'communist' measures struggles in terms of the interests of the 'Nation', which can only mean the owners of the 'fatherland': the capitalists.

The small groups to the left of the CP are more cautious, since they speak in the name of the 'working class and the people'; but their intervention is still more criminal because they present the same reforms which the CP and the bourgeoisie defend, as 'great victories for the working people'; at least the CP has the nerve to speak openly in the name of the bourgeoisie and the nation:

ORT, MCE and PTE⁴ in a joint declaration, after much snivelling about the assassinated workers and shouting about how evil and fascist Juan Carlos is, conclude the necessity for: "... a real unity of the democratic forces to fight in a consistent way for democracy against fascism, against the disunity and bourgeois vacillations of the Junta and the *Plataforma*."

Liga Comunista⁵ in their paper *Combate* number 40, criticise Ruiz Giménez and Tierno Galván (bourgeois radical democrats) for not going to the pro-amnesty demonstration in Madrid on January 20th, adding: "... the thousands of demonstrators didn't need their presence to defend the amnesty,

and other democratic aspirations of the masses which they (Giménez and Galván) don't know how to defend consistently."

Since the bourgeoisie don't know how to fight for the democracy which they need, LC will attend to the matter by telling workers that they should help the bourgeoisie out.

For the 'ultra-leftist' OICE, the balance sheet of Vitoria reads as follows: they attribute the criminal acts to a phantasmal 'ultra' faction of the bourgeoisie, and end up considering the workers' self-defence of their demonstrations and assemblies as provocations and adventurism; they consider the class as 'immature' for the 'democratic rupture' as for the 'socialist rupture'; finally they seize the chance to advertise themselves as a 'beacon' for the workers, attributing to themselves the 'honour' of having directed the struggle.

This 'anti-capitalist' and 'left communist' organisation doesn't say a word about the importance that this fight has for the advance of the workers' movement; nor does it draw the lessons by pointing out successes and errors so that the class can prepare itself for future struggles; nor does it see the fight within the world situation and the general struggle of the class. Not one word of all this; its total obsession is to show that the OICE is 'responsible', and that it didn't fall for any 'provocations'.

The left of capital

If we have reviewed the reactions of the groups of the Right, Left and extreme Left to the events in Vitoria, this has not been to expose them, and once having done so offer our merchandise as the best.

All comrades who want to engage in a permanent collective and organised struggle against capital must regroup themselves into a political organisation where we will forge a clear communist programme and a coherent intervention in the class struggle.

The problem we have to consider is whether those organisations of the Left and extreme Left who put themselves forward as the 'vanguard' of the proletariat really are useful instruments in the fight for communism.

For us the answer is no. For neither in the programme, nor in the organisation, nor in the consciousness of these groups can we find anything of use to that fight. Their programmes are never about communism and the practical means for achieving the consciousness and organisation necessary to create it. On the contrary, they call for 'liberties' (some call them democratic, others political), for a 'workers' trade union, for self-management, for workers' control ... in other words a minimal programme for the reform of capitalism, when we know from historical experience and from the experience of the democratic countries that this programme is not a 'step forward' but a dead-end which weakens us, divides us, and leads us to defeat.

Their organisations are models of bureaucracy and hierarchy, where all political discussion by militants is curtailed with a thousand excuses: the need for 'unity', the danger of falling into 'ultra-leftism', 'dogmatism' or 'purism' ... But their main danger lies in the recipes they serve up about how the workers should struggle. These recipes are always based on a division between economic struggle and political struggle. In effect, the Left in general and the extreme Left in even more confusing jargon have insisted that the recent struggles are economic (in January Camacho⁶ never stopped repeating this everywhere). The funny thing is that they utilise the same logic as the Right, which says "... economic strikes, yes; political strikes, no" (because they are managed by Moscow ... or by the French CGT). The Left rejects the 'accusation of politicisation' by separating, in the face of all reality, the economic from the political with the exactitude of a medieval scholastic. The Left does this because, according to them, the only politics the workers can have are the politics of the bourgeois opposition ... and that's the end of the discussion!

Who can believe, they ask themselves, that the class can struggle politically in an autonomous way? And the extreme Left too dusts down the poorest texts of Lenin in order to justify the same old counterrevolutionary idea that in the end the 6. Camacho (1918-2010) was the organiser of the diversion onto the union terrain with the initiative for Workers Commissions created in the struggles with the capitalist approach of a permanent organisation during the times of Franco. From here was born the CCOO union of which he was general secretary for many years.

workers can only arrive through their struggles with a 'trade union' consciousness.

Nobody denies that consciousness has to make its own way, and that in the majority of cases strikes begin for economic reasons. What we absolutely insist is counterrevolutionary is the haughty denial that consciousness is enriched by action; the posing of unbridgeable barriers between economic and political consciousness when all evidence shows that these moments constitute a permanent and continuous progression.

"... when they try to take exact account of the strikes, of the co-ordination, and other forms by which proletarians make into reality before our eyes their organisation as a class, some are invaded by a real terror; others show a lofty scorn."

"Do not say that the social movement excludes the political movement. There has never been a political movement which was not at the same time social." (Both quotes from Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*)

The guilty ones of Vitoria

It has been said that the dead of Vitoria have to be blamed on the role of the 'bunker' which led the workers to slaughter by continually provoking them. The workers only wanted the re-instatement of the twenty two sacked men of Forjas; the challenging attitude of the police and their exacerbation of violence provoked the tragedy; it was all a shady manoeuvre by the bunker to block democratisation. In fact the Government followed the events step by step and the order to fire came from the Civil Governor of Alava, who previously consulted with the Government. In Zamaraga, where the tragedy happened, a conversation by radio transmitter was intercepted between the Chief of Police and the Governor in which the latter specifically said that the former need not have any fear of shooting.

The Governor of Alava doesn't have any fame as an ultra-rightist; he is a man who has the complete confidence of Fraga and was appointed by him. Neither did the Civil Guard - the refuge of the ultras - poke their noses into the conflict at all.

Another cause which has been pointed out has been the intransigence of the Alava business men and their obstinacy in not negotiating with the workers. Forjas Alavesas and other isolated companies came to an agreement to concede a very substantial part of the demands, with the clear aim of dividing the workers and negotiating company by company. But the workers didn't allow this manoeuvre to succeed. They demanded that they should be given an overall settlement without dismissals or detentions. This was a political decision in which they put the unity of the class before negotiation and rewards (which they could see as pretty insecure). In the assemblies there were some very heated discussions about this and in the end the position of 'all or none' triumphed. In Forjas Alavesas, the board conceded everything: the factory assembly decided to go back to work but the joint assembly asked them to reconsider their decision and to continue to strike. The workers of Forjas accepted this.

This is very important. It means putting **class unity** before negotiation, before possible economic gains within a factory; it means understanding the political nature of the struggle for our demands (direct confrontation against capital and its state); it means recognising the power of the joint assembly of factories in struggle, the expression of the general movement of the class.

When people talk about the 'bunker' or of the irresponsibility of the Alava businessmen, they are inventing scapegoats. They see the savagery of the fascist wing of capital, but they draw a veil over the savagery of its democratic wing. Finally, they are hiding the fact that our class interests clash directly with the whole of capitalist order and that faced with our struggles, any bourgeois regime will employ the same criminal methods.

Vitoria is an example of a conscious and organised struggle by the proletariat against bourgeois power. It shows that in Vitoria workers grasped that our demands couldn't be satisfied within capitalist institutions (agreements, negotiations, unions ...), so it is necessary to prepare ourselves to face the inevitable confrontation with capital and its state.

The creation of scapegoats has a purpose: to make us believe that a trade unionist, economist struggle is viable and disrupted only by a reactionary and bunkerite element against whom we have to direct all our forces. At the same time those who put forward this line try to hide the revolutionary

content of the struggle in Vitoria and try to prevent us from facing reality. And this reality is that if we generalise our struggle and unify it autonomously in genuine class organs, the whole of the repression will fall upon us. It is therefore imperative to pose the issue of the organised and conscious defence of our assemblies and demonstrations.

Solidarity with Vitoria

Solidarity with Vitoria cannot be reduced to protest against the government's crimes; we have to understand how we can become united with the struggle of the Vitoria workers in support of their conscious and autonomous confrontation with bourgeois power.

In some places like in Navarre and Tarragona, there was a class response, while in others - Euzkadi, Catalonia - the dead were made use of by the Left to defend their democratic-nationalist alternative, confining the struggle to whimpering about the crimes.

It can be said that Madrid was a case apart. The exhaustion of the recent general strike weighed heavily on the workers there. There were places where symbolic stoppages of five minutes were made, while in other concerns (Torrejón, Intelsa and Kelvinator in Getafe ...) workers struck and went out onto the streets in an attempt to extend the fight, but without success.

In Navarre, the atmosphere was already combative when news arrived from Vitoria. That same Wednesday, May the 3rd, the textile industry was paralysed and 300 factories were on strike for the Collective Agreements of Navarre, a measure intended to favour workers in smaller enterprises. In this action the 'Council of Workers'⁷ (controlled by representatives of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO)) found itself overtaken by the workers who had elected an **assembly of factory delegates**. That very Wednesday afternoon, after news from Vitoria had arrived, 160 factory delegates had been meeting, and they decided to propose a general strike to their assemblies. On Thursday morning, they began to close factories, particularly in the area of the Landaben Polygon industrial estate. The main decision, which was taken in almost all the assemblies, was to go out into the streets, to extend the strike, to paralyse the city.

Pickets and demonstrations, called particularly by the workers of the following factories: Superser, Torfinosa, Perfil en Frio, Immanesa, were bringing other factories out into the street and closing shops and bars. As in the general strike of 1973, they again sang:

"Through the streets goes a song
Worker raise your fist,
Leave the machines, come out of the factory,
Go to the streets with a single cry: Revolution!
Revolution!"

After building huge barricades and engaging in hard clashes with the cops, the workers reached the centre, where the commercial and banking employees joined them unanimously. The most repeated cries were "We are workers; join us!" "Solidarity with Vitoria!" "Brothers of Vitoria, we shall not forget you!" The workers' districts were mobilised with everybody coming out into the streets. This happened especially in Rochapea, San Juan and Chantrea. The other Navarran towns were also united; Lesaca, where the workers of Laminaciones, having paralysed the town, set off on the road to Irún (the border town with France), although the Civil Guard dispersed them with shots. In Estella, Tafalla and Tudela there were total strikes. The movement lasted until the end of the week. To curtail it, the management put forward new economic offers to be considered at the Collective Agreements. On the other hand, the 'Council of Workers' put forward their demand for the re-instatement of those sacked in the Potasas conflict of 1975, which the management - cornered by the situation - agreed to negotiate on.

These concessions shortened the struggle, in the same way as the mopping-up work of the Workers Commissions (controlled not by the CP, but by the ORT and the MCE) which stressed the need for, 'conserving strength' for the single day of struggle called for all Euzkadi (the Basque Country) to celebrate the 8th of March. That day there were hardly any strikes in Navarre.

In Tarragona: in the refinery plant employing 3,000 workers, workers put forward a class response. On Thursday, the atmosphere was effervescent, but nothing concrete came of it. However, 7. An organ of the Francoist vertical union that was still active at that time

4. ORT, Organización Revolucionaria de Trabajadores; MCE Movimiento Comunista de España; PTE, Partido de los Trabajadores de España, were three leftist organisations.

5. A Spanish Mandeliste Trotskyist group

James Connolly and Irish nationalism

Much has changed in the nearly forty years since 1978 when this article was first published¹. The disappearance of the USSR dealt an all but fatal blow to many of those “bourgeois factions” around the world which in the past resorted to marxist phraseology to justify their crimes. The Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998 by the governments of Britain and Eire set up an Assembly for Northern Ireland where the one-time mortal foes Sinn Fein and the DUP share power on the backs of Northern Irish workers. The IRA and the UDA occupy themselves with more “normal” gangsterism: drug-running and protection rackets².

One thing has not changed: nationalism in all its forms remains the working class’ mortal enemy. The positions set forward in this article thus remain essentially valid: and, one hundred years after the Dublin Easter Rising, it still stands as an answer to all those who would hijack the memory of James Connolly, an Irish revolutionary socialist shot down by the British army, for the cause of Irish nationalism.

Some footnotes have been added to make certain historical points read more clearly today.

“The Labour movement is like no other movement. Its strength lies in being like no other movement. It is never so strong as when it stands alone” (James Connolly from “What is Our Programme”, published in the *Workers’ Republic*, 22 January 1916).

Ever since the outbreak of World War I, desperate factions of the bourgeoisie, determined to survive, have resorted to marxist phraseology and claimed a continuity with the workers’ movement in order to save their own skins. In Ireland, the Republicans and their leftist followers have laid their hands on James Connolly in order to justify their dirty work. In equating “Lenin and 1917” with “Connolly and 1916”, they try to sell their nationalist garbage to the workers.

The bourgeoisie has been telling us what has been happening in Northern Ireland since 1969³. On the one hand we have been told about the brave and disinterested attempts of the democratic British state to keep the Irish from tearing each other to pieces. On the other hand we have heard much about the struggle of the Irish nation for freedom and independence. In 1969, the leftists declared that in Ulster, the oppression of the Catholics (who in every other country in Western Europe, including Britain, are free men, unless they happen to be wage slaves) was the very basis of capitalism and imperialism in Ireland. And they declared that the workers of Ireland, both Catholic and Protestant, should support the IRA in the fight for national independence, because until such time as this all-Ireland State of Republican and Stalinist butchers has been established, the Irish working class remains too sectarian, too bigoted and ignorant to fight for its own class interests. Today, evidently, the patriots of the IRA are in retreat and disarray, hammered to the ground by the British Army. Ten years of bombings, mutilated corpses found in back alleys, a decade of massacre in which the British and Irish states, the Republican and the Protestant Extremists have all taken part, appears to be coming to an end. But we have seen that under decadent capitalism there is no peace, only the reorganization and reorientation of the slaughter. The workers of Belfast and Derry have certainly had enough of the politicians of Left and Right, of Orange and Green, who wipe the red blood of the workers from their hands in order to respectfully commemorate the dead. The conflict of factions of the bourgeoisie, their struggle for survival in a capitalist system locked in permanent crisis, leads inevitably, as it has in Ulster, to a terrorisation of the working class. We condemn all of these factions of the bourgeoisie, not simply as brutes and maniacs (of which there is of course no shortage), but as our class enemies.

1. In *World Revolution* 17, April 1978

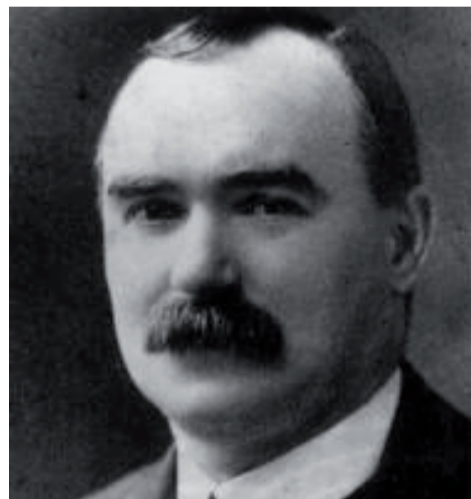
2. Sinn Fein is essentially the political wing of the Irish Republican Army, the Democratic Unionist Party is that of the various Protestant para-militaries like the Ulster Defence Association.

3. This was the year that the British Army was sent into Derry and Belfast in response to serious violence between Catholics and Protestants.

When we consider the question of nationalism in relation to the workers’ movement of the last century, we do so in order to show the absolutely anti-proletarian nature of the PLO, Polisario, the IRA and all the imperialist gangs of today. Marx was analysing capitalism in its period of emergence and development, when the bourgeoisie was declaring war on reactionary modes of production. For the advanced workers’ movement of his time, it was clear that nationalism – wars of unification to create nation states – was the economic and political means by which the bourgeoisie could crush feudalism and create an industrial society, an industrial proletariat. The creation of nation states meant the securing of particular areas of the globe for the development of capitalism. Communists at that time supported nationalist revolutions directed against feudalism, not out of patriotic feelings – on the contrary, the Communist Manifesto already announces that the workers have no fatherland – but because feudalism as such represented a threat to the development, indeed to the very existence not only of the bourgeoisie but of the proletariat as well. Therefore, support for national struggles is dependent upon the conviction that capitalism remains a progressively expanding system. In the last century the progressive role of capitalism remained obvious and indisputable. Today, however, only capitalism’s biggest supporters can find anything progressive about it.

In the period when Connolly was developing his analysis, towards the turn of the century in Ireland and the USA, it was becoming clear to revolutionaries that capitalism could no longer develop as before, in the days of headlong economic growth. Connolly concluded that there was no longer any place for an independent, industrialised Irish capitalism in this world:

“...the thoughtful Irish patriot will throw rant aside and freely recognise that it is impossible for Ireland to do what other countries cannot do, with their greater advantages, viz. to attain prosperity by establishing a manufacturing system in a world-market already glutted with every conceivable kind of commodity. It is well also to remember that even under the most favourable circumstances, even if by some miracle, we were able to cover the green fields of Erin with huge ugly factories, with chimneys belching forth volumes of smoke and coating the island with a sooty desolation, even then we would quickly find that under the conditions born of the capitalist system our one hope of keeping our feet as a manufacturing nation would depend upon our ability to work longer and harder for a lower wage than the other nations of Europe, in order that our middle class may have the opportunity of selling their goods at a lower price than their competitors” (Erin’s Hope, 1897).



Despite the confusions which Connolly held concerning nationalism, and which we shall examine in a moment, and despite the lack of clarity of the entire workers’ movement at that time concerning the possibility of a transition to socialism taking place within national or continental boundaries, for Irish revolutionaries at this time the reactionary character of Irish capitalism was already obvious. The revolutionary wave of 1917–23 and its defeat proved the impossibility of a transition to socialism except on a world scale, just as the fifty years of barbarism since then have shown that no



Devastation on Sackville Street, Dublin, where it crosses the River Liffey

country can escape the ever narrowing circle of economic chaos and imperialist slaughter. Today, the Republican/Left, blabbering about the nationalism of Marx and Lenin are about as marxist as the West German⁴ Maoists who propose a national war of German unification because Marx did likewise in 1848 (when Germany consisted of over 30 petty principalities and before the capitalist system had even been created on a world scale):

In 1898, Connolly wrote in the *Workers’ Republic*:

“Every war now is a capitalist move for new markets, and it is a move which capitalism must make or perish.”

With regard to the situation in China at that time, he added:

“...if this war cloud now gathering in the East does burst, it will be the last capitalist war, so the death of that baneful institution will be like its birth, bloody, muddy and ignominious.”

But how did it come about that this marxist who denounced his own bourgeoisie so clearly, and who denounced the entry of the Socialist Deputy Millerand into the French Cabinet as a compromise of the 2nd International with the class enemy, continued to put forward the struggle for national independence in Ireland as a struggle to be supported by the proletariat? Historically we can situate the growth of confusion on the national question within the context of the period of reformist activity leading up to the imperialist war of 1914–18. This was a period when the permanent organs of the working class were tending more and more to find a place for themselves within capitalist society. Connolly’s schema of an Irish Republic as a stage along the road to socialism is absolutely typical of the epoch in which he was writing.

“Since the abandonment of the unfortunate insurrectionism of the early Socialists whose hopes were exclusively concentrated on the eventual triumph of an uprising and barricade struggle, modern Socialism, relying on the slower but surer method of the ballot box, has directed the attention of its partisans towards the peaceful conquest of the forces of government in the interests of the revolutionary ideal.”

And in the same article, written in 1897, he concludes:

“Representative bodies in Ireland would express more directly the will of the Irish people than when those bodies reside in England. An Irish Republic would then be the natural depository of popular power; the weapon of popular emancipation, the only power which would show in the full light of day all those class antagonisms and lines of economic demarcation now obscured by the mists of bourgeois patriotism.”

In other words, whereas within Ireland a majority might be found who would vote for socialism, this Irish majority for Irish Socialism would van-

4. In 1978, Germany was still divided into a Western zone occupied by the American, British, and French armies, and an Eastern zone occupied by the Russian troops of the then USSR.

ish if the votes were counted within the Empire as a whole. Therefore, the need for an Irish Republic. Socialism in Ireland becomes purely an Irish affair. Years of reformist struggle within national boundaries were trapping revolutionaries inside a nationalist and parliamentary framework. The theoretical work of clarification undertaken by revolutionaries like Lenin, Trotsky, or indeed Connolly, was part of a bitter fight against the degeneration of the 2nd International. Their stand on the national question was a reaction to the brazen chauvinism and imperialist policies of the “Labour leaders”. In the case of Connolly, we find real encroachments of bourgeois ideology in his writings, which show that he never grasped the capitalist nature of the nation so clearly as Marx did. It was clear that under imperialism, nationalism would have a different significance than in the days of ascendant capitalism. Whether this new significance would be positive or negative for the proletariat remained to be seen. Lenin and Luxemburg debated this question in one of the most important attempts to come to terms with decadent capitalism.⁵

In *Labour in Irish History*, Connolly describes capitalism as being something alien to Ireland, whereas capitalism is no more “alien” in Ireland than in the USA. Connolly had always insisted upon the necessity for the proletariat to defend its class autonomy against the bourgeoisie. But the basis of organisational and ‘military’ independence is political autonomy – class consciousness. Because revolutionaries in Ireland were unable to break with nationalism after 1914, when capitalism’s progressive role had clearly come to an end, they were unable to firmly defend the class autonomy of the proletariat.

The final collapse of the pre-war workers’ movement in 1914, and the mobilisation of millions of workers for the imperialist slaughter, came as an enormous shock to revolutionaries. These events precipitated immense confusions: Liebknecht of the German Social Democratic Party failed to oppose the first war credits because he accepted party discipline; many Bolsheviks called for an end to the war through “pressure” on the governments. In Ireland, Jim Larkin, the hero of the 1913 Dublin lockout, at first spoke about the possibility of conditionally supporting the British government.

5. The First World War did not drag all parts of the world into the conflict, so that proletarian elements could be confused about the nature of the war and the period. The possibility of “independent” bourgeois development in the colonies or the concept of the imperialist war was seen as a manifestation of the decadence of the metropolitan capitalist countries rather than of the decadence of global capitalism. Despite the confusions within the Bolshevik Party on this question, this did not at this time lead them to identify with their own national capital. On the contrary, their views on this subject threatened to dismember the Russian Empire. Whereas for Connolly, his position led him into direct alliance with his own bourgeoisie.

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British troops and Irish prisoners of war

One of the most magnificent proletarian responses to the war was Connolly's *A Continental Revolution*, published on 15th August:

"But believing as I do that any action would be justified which would put a stop to this colossal crime now being perpetrated, I feel compelled to express the hope that ere long we may read of the paralysing of the internal transport service on the continent, even should the act of paralysing necessitate the erection of socialist barricades and acts of rioting by Socialist soldiers and sailors, as happened in Russia in 1905. (...) To me therefore, the Socialist of another country is a fellow-patriot, as the capitalist of my own country is a national enemy!"

These hopes for a continental revolt were not fulfilled in Connolly's lifetime. In face of a total mobilisation of the European proletariat, and the apparent lack of any possibility of a class solution to the crisis, Connolly began to abandon any class perspective. Because Ireland was under the control of the British state, opposition to that state was indeed the first duty of any revolutionary in Ireland. But only the proletariat can stop the war, just as only the proletariat can smash the system which produces such barbarism. The path which Connolly took after 1914, which led him to the barricades in the company of the petty bourgeois nationalists, was a total abandonment of what he had previously fought for. On 8th August he pointed out the conflict of interests between the workers on the one hand, and the bourgeoisie and the farmers within Ireland on the other; and he called for armed struggle in the streets, in order to *"set the torch to a European conflagration"*.

Nonetheless, the increasing importance of the nationalist perspective leads him to write: *"Should a German army land in Ireland tomorrow we should be perfectly justified in joining it if by so doing we could rid this country once and for all from its connection with the Brigand Empire that drags us unwillingly into this war"* (*"Our Duty in This Crisis"*, 8th August 1914).

The position which he develops, that the British Empire **alone** is responsible for the war – for a *"war upon the German nation"* – opens the way for a military alliance with other imperialist powers. This reaches an absolute zenith of confusion in the spring of 1916, where he holds up the patriots of Belgium (who were after all the cannon fodder of Belgian and British imperialism) as models to be emulated in Ireland.

The nationalist opposition to the war crystallised in Ireland around the Irish Republican Brotherhood whose petty bourgeois madness was well expressed by their leading luminary, Patrick Pearse. He announced in December 1915:

"The last sixteen months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth (...) the old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefields. Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country."

Because the workers were evidently not prepared to fight for the Irish Nation in 1916 the way they had fought for their own class interests in 1913⁶, Connolly, in turning his back on the proletarian solution, was forced to join forces with such people as Pearse, despite his profound mistrust of them. Even while workers in Dublin were striking, Connolly and his Citizens Army of the 1913 lockout were negotiating for a putsch with

6. The 1913 Dublin strike and lockout was one of the most important struggles of the working class in the last years before the war. The vast majority of the workers of Dublin were involved, but they suffered a serious defeat in part because of the failure of unions in Britain to offer them sufficient support.

the nationalists, to be armed by German imperialism and which would declare the erection of precisely the kind of parliamentary-democratic state as would soon be used to crush the German workers. For the Easter Rising, the Citizens Army was dissolved into the Volunteers of the nationalists. All pretense of class autonomy had to disappear. The Easter Rising of 1916, staged in the middle of the war (*"England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity"*) was quickly and savagely crushed by the British Army. The promised German aid, insufficient in any case, never got through. Just as to this day the IRA lacks a serious backer.

The workers' movement in Ireland collapsed after 1916; its traditions obliterated in a half century of nationalist and sectarian counter-revolution. 1916 paved the way for the War of Independence which was the last hopeless attempt of the Irish bourgeoisie to assert a measure of independence. And when, in response to the world-wide proletarian upsurge which followed the war, the Irish workers began to struggle on their own class terrain, the bourgeoisie of Belfast and Dublin turned their weapons against them. In Belfast, the class solidarity of the workers, Catholic and Protestant, culminating in the strikes of 1919, was repeatedly sabotaged by Loyalists and Nationalists. In Limerick the patriotic unions, forced to call a general strike, kept it, with the help of the IRA and the local bourgeoisie in Limerick, within the bounds of an "anti-British" movement, before abruptly breaking it off, after the intercession of the local bishop. In early 1922 the Republican government in Dublin smashed the strike and occupation movements of the railway workers in Cork, and the mill and creamery workers in Mallow. The workers were turned out by the local IRA commandant on the orders of the cavalier guerrilla, Michael Collins, and by the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, the proud "followers" of Larkin and Connolly. In addition, IRA trouble-shooters were moved in to prevent the outbreak of "disorder".

Regarding these events, the *Workers' Dreadnought* wrote: *"The Transport Workers' Federation had entered into an agreed national compromise from which the Mallow workers had dissented, we think, not only because they objected to any decrease of wages whatsoever, but because they are prepared to stand forth as rebels against the existing social order. They are fighting for a Workers' Republic and opposing the policies of the bourgeois Republicans, Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and the others who at present hold the reins of power in Southern Ireland. The Mallow Workers' Council, whether a temporary example which they knew could not be sustained, or as an attempt to put the match to the tinder of revolt for all Ireland, deliberately raised the Red Flag of proletarian rule."*

The participation of Connolly in 1916, which would never have happened had the European proletariat risen earlier against capital, is hailed by the bourgeoisie as the "fitting climax" to Connolly's political career. Once again the dispossessed class is to be robbed of its own experience, the memory of its own class fighters, who are now presented as calculating capitalist politicians on a par with bloody functionaries like Mao or Ho.⁷ The October Revolution showed that the real way out of barbarism does not involve fighting for nation states which are now so many barriers to the development of the productive forces. And so it remains the historic task of the world proletariat today: the global destruction of capitalism, the abolition of nations. **RC**

7. Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh, the leaders of the Stalinist state capitalist regimes in China and Vietnam respectively.

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"What's best for British capitalism" is a false question for the working class

today there was agreement between the main factions of the main parties, but also, in the No camp you could see the shared approach of right-winger Enoch Powell and left-winger Tony Benn. At that time the campaign was one aspect of the work of the Labour Party in power, trying to convince workers that they should abandon their struggles and put their faith in a party of the left. Today the working class is not struggling at all on the same scale as it was in the 1970s and 1980s, but, with a perspective for a world based on relations of solidarity rather than exploitation, it still has the potential to transform society. **Car 9/4/16**



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“What’s best for British capitalism” is a false question for the working class

The arguments by both sides in the UK’s Referendum on membership of the European Union are limited. They make outlandish claims on the benefits of Leaving or Remaining while warning of the dangers of their opponent’s policy in a perpetual pantomime of “Oh no it isn’t! Oh, yes it is!”

Yet it’s clear from the start that there can only be one winner, and that’s the British ruling capitalist class. We have been asked to examine every issue with one thought uppermost in our minds: “What is best for Britain?” To look at the effect on jobs, prices, benefits, pensions, family income, the prospects for businesses big and small, security, immigration, sovereignty, terrorism, anything you can think of is supposed to be looked at in terms of the UK’s membership of the EU. And ‘what is best for British capitalism’, as soon as it is considered in an international context, means ‘what is best for British imperialism’.

The fact that workers are exploited by the capitalist class means that their interests are not the same. Many groups and parties pretending to speak on behalf of the working class have recommendations on how to vote. The Labour Party says that Remaining provides jobs, investment and ‘social protection’. Many leftists are campaigning against EU membership on the grounds that the ‘bosses’ EU is against nationalisation, demands austerity, and attacks workers’ rights. In reality one of the main attacks on the working class in Britain today lies in the propaganda around the referendum and all the illusions in the democratic process and the EU that all the lying campaigners of the bourgeoisie are trying to foment.

Divisions in the British bourgeoisie

So, what is agreed by the Leave and Remain campaigns – what will benefit British business, what is good for the British capitalist state – is the shared basis of an ideological campaign which could have a disorienting effect on a working class that is already confused about where its interests lie and what capacity it has to change society. However, the differences between the In and Out campaigns are not all just theatre (although there is a lot of that) as there are, and have been for decades, real divergences in the ruling class on membership of the EU.

The dominant faction of the British bourgeoisie sees the benefits of the UK’s membership of the European Union at the economic, imperialist and

social level. Big businesses from the FTSE 100, the vast majority of manufacturing industry, big banks and other financial institutions, multinational corporations, much of local government, organisations representing lawyers and scientists, all recognise the importance of access to an EU market of 500 million people, the deals that the EU is capable of doing, the fact EU trade with the rest of the world is about 20% of global exports and imports, the investment that EU countries attract, and the necessity for the UK to be part of the EU as part of its imperialist strategy. Outside of Britain the main factions of a number of major capitalist countries also see the importance of the UK’s continuing EU membership. In Europe itself leading figures in Germany, France, Spain, Netherlands, and Sweden have expressed themselves in favour of Britain remaining.

Outside Europe it is significant that US President Obama is among those who support the UK continuing in Europe. The question of Britain’s relationship with the US is not simple. During the period of the two big imperialist blocs led by the US and the USSR Britain was an integral member of the western bloc, a loyal ally to the US. It was during this period that the EU’s predecessors, the European Coal and Steel Community, and its successor, the European Economic Community were founded, also, effectively, part of the US-led imperialist bloc. But, with the collapse of the eastern bloc, and the corresponding breakdown of the western bloc, British capitalism’s imperialist and economic interests implied different emphases in policy. At the imperialist level Britain has tried to pursue an independent orientation, while, at the same time, sustaining alliances with other powers when the situation has demanded it. At the economic level almost half of British trade is with the EU, while 20% of UK exports go to the US. In an article we published in WR 353 in 2012 (“Why British capitalism needs the EU”) we said that “*examination of Britain’s international trade shows that its economic interests have their main focal points in Europe and US. This helps to explain the actions of the British ruling class in recent years [...] While it would be an error to see a mechanical relationship between Britain’s economic and imperialist interests it would also be a mistake to deny any such link. Analysis of the economic dimension reveals some of the foundations of Britain’s strategy of maintaining a position between Europe and the US.*” For the US, the UK is

still a Trojan horse in the EU, a potential means to undermine the possibility of Germany strengthening itself as a rival to the US. For the UK, Germany is part of an important trading partnership, but also a potential imperialist antagonist.

But what about those campaigning for Britain to leave the EU? Who are they? What do they represent? Economically we have heard the managers of hedge funds favouring Brexit, along with, typically, smaller businesses and individual entrepreneurs. If there were nothing else to consider then this would be easy to explain. The law as it stands benefits hedge funds, but they are understandably inclined to rail against any form of regulation that might obstruct their pursuit of profit. With smaller businesses, their size might just be the result of a lack of competitiveness, but that doesn’t stop them blaming the EU, or the UK government, or the local council, or the practices of bigger businesses. Anything could be the target of their frustration, when quite possibly what they suffer mostly from are plain ‘market forces’.

However, politically, the factions of the bourgeoisie that support Brexit are notable by their variety, and are not obviously tied to any particular social group or strata. There are the extreme right parties from UKIP to the BNP, the eurosceptics of the Conservative Party, and, from the left, an array of Stalinists and Trotskyists. Here are a strange set of bedfellows with a wide range of rhetoric and hypocrisy. That the likes of Michael Gove and Iain Duncan Smith, who’ve been at the heart of government since 2010, part of a party that’s been in power for more than 60 of the last 100 years, can stand behind banners saying “Let’s Take Back Control” is a fine example of Double-speak from these longstanding functionaries of a long-established part of capitalism’s political apparatus. However, there is something else that the Leave factions have in common, and that is their attachment to the rhetoric of populism, the pose of standing against the ‘establishment’, a hankering after a mythical past, and battlers against an exterior threat. In a period of growing social decomposition populism is an increasing phenomenon. In the US there is the Tea Party and Donald Trump, in Germany there is AfD and Pegida, in France there is the Front National, and, from the left, there is Podemos in Spain and Syriza in Greece. Closer to home, in the 2015 UK General Election, the Scottish National Party’s populist

campaign was at the root of the removal of nearly all Labour’s Scottish MPs.

The classic example of the marriage of two career populists was at an Anti-EU meeting where Nigel Farage of UKIP introduced a speech from George Galloway from the Respect party (“*one of the greatest orators in the country*” and “*a towering figure on the left of British politics*”). Galloway explained that “*We are not pals. We are allies in one cause. Like Churchill and Stalin...*” The comparison was telling. Galloway sees the link up of left and right as being like an imperialist alliance in a war involving death and destruction on a massive scale. He is not wrong. Farage and Galloway do represent forces for imperialist war and destruction, but then so do all other factions of the ruling class. The more immediate problem posed by the rise of populism is this: while it is evidently a phenomenon that can be used by the bourgeoisie, there is the danger that it can escape the control of the main political parties and cause problems for the usual political manoeuvres of the bourgeoisie.

Working class interests

We don’t intend to speculate on the result of the coming Referendum. It is hard to see which factions of the bourgeoisie would benefit from a Leave victory which would seem to pose difficulties for British capitalism. But the British bourgeoisie is the most experienced in the world and would seem likely to be able to ensure a Remain victory, or at least be able to adapt to any other result.

What’s important for the working class is to see that the campaign around the EU Referendum is completely on the terrain of the ruling class. There is nothing to choose from the alternatives on offer as they both start and finish with the continuation of British capitalism and the demands of its imperialist drive.

For the working class the possibilities for social change do not lie in capitalism’s democratic process. For the struggle of the working class to be effective it needs to be conscious. At this stage, when workers have little sense of class identity, they need to be able to withstand the propaganda campaigns of all the different factions of the bourgeoisie. Forty years ago, in 1975, there was an earlier referendum on EU membership. Like

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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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

OUR ACTIVITY

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

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

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

OUR ORIGINS

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