



# world revolution

## Attacks on benefits are attacks on the whole working class

When the state cuts benefits, when politicians or the media make a big scandal about how much those not in work are getting, it is always in the name of fairness. For Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne, the long term unemployed will have to accept work placements, training, or just turn up and hang around in an office all day if there is no work or training for them, in order to be “fair for those who need it and fair for those who pay”. That’s when they are not claiming that toughness and a punitive approach is the kindest thing for those who are sick, disabled or unemployed. But is it true?

### Trying to make us forget there is a working class

The attacks on benefits have accelerated since the recession of 2008, so that we have seen the cap on benefits, the bedroom tax, and the vilification of claimants. The economy has not yet recovered from that recession, with GDP still more than 3% below the level of the first quarter of 2008. And it certainly isn’t only the unemployed who face attacks. The whole working class is facing a rise in the state pension age, with teachers and firefighters the latest to face a rise in the occupational pension age as well as greater costs and reduced pension benefits. Young adults will no longer get housing benefit at all – adding to the number forced to continue living with their parents. The whole public sector is facing a 1% pay cap, with NHS staff facing a pay freeze. Many workers face the threat of their firm being shut down if they don’t accept worse pay and conditions and a number of redundancies, most recently those at Grangemouth (see page 2). And we all face a rise of approximately 10% in energy prices from all the main suppliers – so much for competition and shopping around.

This is the ruling class’ idea of fairness – every part of the working class is affected by crisis, it’s tough, but it’s tough for everyone. In order for this argument to work we have to forget that we are part of the working class and accept the divisions and competition imposed on us: ‘strivers’ (those fortunate enough to have a job) against ‘shirkers’ (the unemployed); public sector against private sector; teachers against NHS workers in the struggle for scarce budgetary resources.



The reality is that we do have a common interest as workers. Let us take the example of making the unemployed work for their benefits and its so-called fairness to those who ‘pay’ because they are in work. If my job can be done by one of the unemployed on work placement, how soon do I either have to do the work for less or even lose my job? In capitalism there is always a larger or smaller number of unemployed, and every ‘striver’ with a job is also at risk of being forced into becoming an unemployed ‘shirker’.

It’s the same with every attack. If 18-25 year olds cannot get housing benefit that means very often they cannot get independent housing whether or not they have a job, especially in high cost areas

such as London. This affects the whole family with the parents putting up their adult children.

Attacks on those in work are no exception. If the state caps pay rises at 1% in the public sector, significantly below the official inflation rate of 2.7%, then through competition this has a downward effect on wages and salaries in general. Of course, when it comes to the pay freeze in the NHS this has a much wider effect. Just like the attacks on the unemployed, it comes with a pretence of fairness and a vilification of the victims. The excuse is that those working in the NHS already get an annual increase due to seniority, which is doubly dishonest – firstly because Agenda for Change is being imposed to introduce performance related pay, and secondly because the annual increases only apply to some of the staff for part of the time; and overall

as older staff retire they are replaced by younger on the lower pay scales. The vilification comes in the form of blaming those who work in the NHS for the deterioration that comes from poor staffing levels, poor training and perverse incentives imposed by the latest targets.

### With the whole working class under attack, we cannot fight back piecemeal

The attacks affect us all, so how can we all fight back against them? Recent strikes by school teachers, firefighters, and university lecturers and support staff show that there is a great deal of discontent. The issues are very similar when not

exactly the same: an increase in pension age for both firefighters and teachers; the question of pay in schools, where performance related pay is being brought in, and universities, where a 1% offer goes nowhere near overcoming the 13% deterioration in real pay; as well as the issue of increased workload for teachers. Meanwhile the CWU has called off strike action in the Post Offices and Royal Mail in a joint statement with management about future negotiation over the threat to jobs (about 1,500 under threat with the proposal to shut 75 offices) and to pay and terms during the Royal Mail privatisation.

But the actual strikes have seen the workers kept completely separate from each other. The NUT and NAS/UWT teaching unions called a series of regionally divided, one day strikes in October, calling off further action for negotiation. The university unions and Fire Brigades Union called one day and 4 hour demonstration strikes respectively in the same week but on different days. As usual with union strike action workers have been kept separate even when fighting on the same issues at the same time. The strike has been taken out of the hands of workers and made into an adjunct to union negotiation. The chance for workers to meet and discuss with others facing similar attacks in different industries has been avoided – because what is a necessity for the workers in taking their struggle forward is a danger for the forces of the ruling class ranged against them, the bosses, the state and the unions. **Alex 2.11.13**

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# Grangemouth

## Bosses attack and Unite ties workers' hands

The price for keeping the Grangemouth petro-chemical section, indeed the whole refinery, from shutting down: a no-strike agreement, a 3-year pay freeze, cuts in shift-pay and bonuses, less favourable conditions for new workers, "limited redundancies" and an end to the Final Salary pension scheme (more contributions from the workers, less pay out), has been "embraced, warts and all" by Len McCluskey and his Unite trade union. When asked on the BBC if this wasn't a humiliation, McClusey said no, "we sort out problems like this all the time". And indeed the actions of the trade union Unite go hand in hand with the bosses' attack. The workers at BA will attest to this where, a few years ago, the Unite union brought in a two-tier wage system, divided workers at Gatwick from Heathrow and cut wages and conditions to the extent that some workers and stewards tore up their union cards in angry meetings with the union representatives. Like BA, the events around Grangemouth demonstrate both the attacks raining down on the working class and, at the very least, the uselessness of the trade unions in representing the interests of the working class.

Much is made by papers like the Trotskyist *Socialist Worker* and the Stalinist *Morning Star* about the billionaire boss of Grangemouth "black-mailing" the workers and about the "greed" of the owner, but this is what capitalism does as a matter of fact and is increasingly forced to do as the crisis deepens and its profits are threatened. For those on the Left one answer is the nationalisation of the plant, as if that would in any way attenuate the exploitation of the workers. One of the first coordinated actions of the banks nationalised after the 2008 crisis was the sacking of tens of thousands of workers. One might think that the oil industry would be profitable, but this is far from the case as it constantly tries to lower costs through reducing wages and making inroads on working conditions and safety measures (look at BP in the US and the neglect that resulted in the Deepwater Horizon disaster in 2010). The Swiss-based, half Chinese-owned Grangemouth oil refinery, like many in Europe and Latin America, is suffering from the intense cut-throat competition with the US and Middle Eastern refineries on the oil market-place, while local demand has declined because of the recession.

This free-for-all also makes a mockery of the Coalition's 'recovery' talk about new investments and bold energy policies. The writing was on the wall with the so-called 'unthinkable' closure of the Coryton oil refinery in Essex over a year ago despite a Unite spokesman saying at the time that "it was a going concern ready to make a profit" (BBC Business News, 24.1.12). 850 jobs went here when the plant shut down despite more generalised protests from workers that included those of Grangemouth and the Lindsey refinery in Lincolnshire – protests that Unite disowned. Quite a few Coryton workers went to Saudi Arabia but many upped and moved to refineries around the UK, including Grangemouth. The Coryton plant was run on such tight margins that the whole place was a disaster waiting to happen and it did on October 31, 2007, where a fire and massive explosion shook homes fourteen miles away. Luckily for the workers it happened out of working hours, though the cloud of poison given off was toxic for miles around. Since that incident the plant saw over 20 "serious" (Health and Safety Executive) incidents up until it closed last year.

The fragility of the oil industry is by no means confined to Britain as is shown by the strike by 40,000 Petrobras workers in Brazil against attacks on their wages - which the union turned into an argument about nationalisation - and strikes and protests by petro-chemical workers in Portugal against cuts in their wages and conditions. It's the brutal logic of capitalism: if a firm doesn't make the required profits then the business shuts down and the workers are thrown out of a job and possibly out of their homes. Not only are the trade unions unable to confront the laws of capital, they are complicit in their functioning as well as the policing of the workers under their joint agreements, procedures and ever-extending commitments to 'flexibility'. The trade unions represent

a completely false opposition to the bosses while being complicit in their attacks. What did the Unite union do at Grangemouth?

The threat to close the Grangemouth petro-chemical division would have cost over 800 jobs immediately and threatened another 2600 direct and contractor jobs if the closure extended to the refinery, i.e., 8% of Scotland's manufacturing industry would have gone up in smoke. The company, Ineos, has been trying to change workers' terms and conditions since it bought the plant from BP seven years ago, so it's not like the unions were not warned of the impending attack. In April 2008, Grangemouth workers were involved in a strike over attacks on their pensions - the first strike at Grangemouth for 73 years. But here, this month, a clique of the Unite shop stewards organised a vote in one shop of a hundred workers, not against the attacks of the company, but against the actions of Ineos in enquiring into the time the union convenor was spending on Labour Party politics in Scotland. The attack on the workers was entirely secondary to the union which was more concerned with defending one of their own who was said to be involved in ballot rigging and other machinations around the corrupt politics of the Falkirk Labour Party. It's often said that the union leadership is 'out of touch', 'bureaucratic' and the 'rank-and-file' is the real union. There's something inescapably and intrinsically 'Stalin-esque' about the trade unions in that their structures and frameworks give rise to cliques and cabals of small minorities even with the best will in the world. They, and their practices, are the antithesis of the mass, open meetings of workers that can point the way forward.

The rank-and-file apparatus was indeed 'the real union' here at Grangemouth, reflecting the in-fighting and political machinations of the union

leadership, which has nothing to do with the class struggle. Eighty-one of the workers balloted voted to strike for the steward and the other 1300 direct workers and more than a thousand contractors who were Unite members didn't get a say. There's no wonder there was a lot of residual anger amongst the workers against the union for its actions and its non-action. When the boss threatened closure the union called off its pathetic forty-eight hour strike, and the work-to-rule and overtime ban that the workers were carrying out "in the interests of maintaining production". And when the closure threat was maintained the union capitulated, as evidenced by the words of Unite boss, McCluskey above and Unite's Scottish secretary, Pat Rafferty, pleading for talks (*Guardian*, 21/10/13) and agreeing to the no-strike agreement the previous day.

The rejection of the company plan didn't come through a Unite ballot but, as many reports said, from individual workers, about two-thirds of them, returning a 'no' to the company's plans. This at least showed a combative potential of the Grangemouth workers who were involved in solidarity actions with Coryton (above) and also involved in solidarity actions with the 2008 Tanker Drivers' strike. As the plant was 'saved' (for how long?) the TV concentrated on the justly relieved workers (though some criticism of the trade union came through), but there is a large core of workers here that have experience of solidarity actions and sometimes illegal struggle, who were clearly against the 'survival plan'. In the summer of 2008, Grangemouth workers showed solidarity with Shell tanker drivers as picketing and 'secondary actions' took place from Plymouth, through Wales and Somerset up to Cheshire, Lincolnshire and Scotland. The victory trumpeted by Unite here was a deal stitched-up by them and the bosses

which resulted in a pay offer just 0.7% more than the original offer to the Shell drivers. The real victory was in the often illegal solidarity actions of the workers across union divisions.<sup>1</sup>

Attacks have been raining down on oil industry workers, just like all workers, since the 90s particularly and we will see more Grangemouths and Colyton in the years to come as capitalism's crisis intensifies. It is very difficult for workers to struggle effectively in today's conditions, particularly when the firm is about to close down and your job is on the line, or in the face of what seems overwhelming odds and isolation. But these questions won't go away for the working class because the attacks of capital will become relentless. At Grangemouth the workers had the whole gamut of the state ranged against them: the 'evil' boss, Alex Salmond and his brand of Scottish nationalism, Westminster politics and Falkirk Labour Party plotting and scheming, the Trotskyists and Stalinists denouncing "fat cats" calling for nationalisation and ideas of 'workers' control' - and the Unite trade union also singing the left's tunes with its leader Len McCluskey saying on BBC News (24/10/13) that "the future of this plant is paramount to the shop stewards (pause) and the workers" and that he wouldn't allow "the future of Scotland to be put in peril". And so he puts himself and his union, and his compromised clique of shop stewards, at the service of the company in its ongoing attacks on the working class.

**Baboon 29/10/13**

1. see: <http://en.internationalism.org/worldrevolution/200807/2535/oil-tanker-drivers-strike-solidarity-fuels-struggle>

## Universities strike

### Workplace intervention

I work in Higher Education in a low-grade administrative function. My workforce is 'represented' by three unions: Unite, Unison and UCU. On the 31st October, and for the first time ever, all three unions called a sector-wide strike over the issue of pay.

The majority of workers in my office are not in any of the unions. One colleague, a member of the UCU, did support the ballot and voted to strike. As the strike neared it became clear that there was no effort whatsoever on behalf of the unions to publicise it to non-members. A Unison notice-board remained absolutely devoid of any information. My main source of information as to what was going on was my UCU colleague who forwards me anything she receives.

The response of the University was interesting, however. A couple of weeks before the strike date, they announced they were introducing the "Living Wage" for lower paid staff and that the senior management team were generously rescinding their "contractually and legally agreed" bonuses so that the Christmas bonus for staff could be re-introduced this year.

Nonetheless, it was only a week before the strike that any real awareness of it began to circulate in my office and that was mainly because I talked about it. The general response was negative. Most colleagues couldn't see the point of action. Even the colleague who had voted for the action was beginning to have doubts. She still agreed with the action, but her issue was the workload that she had to deal with.

It's difficult to convey the pressure our office is under this time of year. My UCU colleague is starting at 8 in the morning and leaving gone 6 at night, every day for months, then doing work at home evenings and weekends. Because of the nature of our functions, if we don't do the work that's assigned to us, it just doesn't get done. And it doesn't stop coming in if we're not there. Going

on leave is now a nightmare because you come back to the two weeks of work which isn't even touched in your absence. She simply felt terrified at the thought of having to work another weekend to catch up if she missed a day in the office.

Two days before the strike, the unions issued a joint statement to all workers, relying on their members to distribute it around the offices. This is despite the fact that they are fully aware that many offices have no members.

The letter set out the reasons for the action but contained a shocking (if you don't understand the true nature of the unions, that is) claim that non-members could not participate. It is, of course, something of a joke among left-communists that it is actually the unions that enforce all the anti-strike legislation.

In a previous UCU strike over pensions, I went to a mass UCU meeting to show solidarity and said I would not cross the picket line. The response of the presiding official was to tell everyone that people not involved in strike must go into work! I ignored the advice and joined the picket where I was welcomed - even the branch secretary was impressed enough and whenever I saw him always asked to make sure I had not suffered any reprisals. The regional official actually refused to speak to me on the picket!

In any case, while it is customary for the unions to enforce anti-strike legislation they are also in the business of enforcing anti-strike legislation that doesn't even exist! In fact, non-union members can join strikes and, as long as the strike itself is a "protected action", they enjoy the same right not to be dismissed as union members.

In response, I decided to issue my own leaflet. I kept it to one side of A4 and did not give 12 paragraph treatises on the role of the unions in decadence! I simply tried to answer the concerns of my colleagues and persuade them to strike. I challenged the assertion about non-member par-

ticipation from the unions, but did not go further than that.

I distributed the leaflet, leaving copies on everyone's desks first thing in the morning and waited somewhat nervously for my colleagues to come in. Several picked it up and read it and said nothing. As more arrived some discussion began. I was, naturally, teased a fair bit! My favourite comment was from our team manager who said while the University had asked people to report their strike status by 10am on the day, I had shown my dedication to the institution by doing it well in advance! It was meant in jest and I took it in that spirit.

Most colleagues were confused but there was some talk about the issues of the strike and although most agreed the cause was just either felt it didn't affect them (we have a high proportion of young, temporary staff) or that striking would make no difference. My overworked UCU colleague was unable to overcome her ambivalence.

Then another colleague came to speak to me and she was clearly disturbed by my leaflet. Originally she hadn't planned to join the action, but was no longer sure. She basically went through all the points in my leaflet and we discussed each of them. She was deeply disturbed that the unions would say something that was apparently not true (the point about protection for non-union members). She even thought I was a union rep and was a little confused when I said I wasn't and I certainly wasn't trying to sell the union! She asked me why I thought they had said what they said - she was clearly doubtful of my point but at the same time wasn't able to rebut it as I'd sourced my claim. I replied - prefacing it by making it clear I was wearing a cynical hat! - that they didn't really seem to be interested in pushing the strike and were more interested in making themselves the vehicle for discontent and hoovering up potential members than actually defending us. She was clearly disturbed by this (at one point I actually thought she was close to tears!) and said in her previous work-place she'd watched the unions do nothing while pay freezes were imposed and people continually laid off and that was why she hadn't joined here. I agreed with her points and

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# Miliband and the *Mail* Marxists are not patriots

It does not require a very radical starting point to expose the *Daily Mail's* attack on Ed Miliband through the medium of a thoroughly nasty and very poorly argued hack-job on Ed's father Ralph. The *Daily Mail* piece was so unpleasant that top Tories rushed to condemn it, and it emerged rather rapidly that the *Mail* had 'shot itself in the foot' with this one. If the paper had hoped to whip up a new panic about 'Red Ed' following Miliband Junior's announcement, at the Labour conference, of a plan to freeze energy prices, it mainly succeeded in directing the fire on itself while simultaneously embarrassing the Conservative Party.

The headline of the *Mail* article was 'The man who hated Britain' and the question of patriotism, of 'love for one's country', was the central issue being debated by left and right. In an intelligent article published in *The Guardian* at the height of the furore<sup>1</sup>, Priyamyada Gopal duly notes the squalid nature of the *Mail* article, with its subtly anti-semitic and anti-immigrant undertones, but she also asks some questions about the standard line of defence against the *Mail's* attack.

*"The defence of Ralph Miliband runs along wearily familiar lines – that he unambiguously proved his patriotism by fighting in the anti-Nazi war, which along with 'no apology for the empire' has become the principal litmus test for love of Britain. His lifelong commitment to a supple Marxism is noted but quietly skimmed over as an embarrassingly anachronistic aspect of an otherwise decent and loyal man. Yet a defence of Miliband senior which does not also challenge the red-bashing that often goes hand in hand with antisemitism is, at best, equivocal. More perniciously, it accepts the distorted terms set by the rightwing press which defines patriotism nar-*

1. <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/oct/02/daily-mail-ralph-miliband-marxists-patriots>

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said this was why I wasn't a member of the union, but that we still had to take a stand and this was an opportunity to do so.

The day of strike came and I went to one of the pickets, getting there early. While others picketed in shifts, I stayed for the full duration. Contrary to the union statement, I was not turned away. One member remembered me from the previous strike and welcomed me.

There was an initial tendency for people to picket in their own unions. I joined a UCU one and suggested moving to join a Unite picket further down the road but this was met with a bit of confusion and concern about the picket being "too big". Over the course of the day though, we were joined by Unison and Unite members so the picket took on a far more mixed quality.

There was not a great deal of discussion. Throughout the morning I managed to put a few points about effective struggles into conversation organically and people listened although I'm not sure they understood. The most in-depth discussion was with an NUT functionary who turned up to show solidarity and I chatted to her about unions. She was saying it must be tough when we're all in different unions, to which I pointed out I wasn't in a union at all unless you count the biggest group ... workers! She was a bit taken aback but accepted all the points about being divided up as she had raised them herself.

When the picket ended, I went to the rally. There were between 100 and 150 people there and it was the usual format of 45 minutes of branch secretaries and local and national functionaries giving more-or-less predictable speeches: workers are being dumped on, greedy bosses, greedy government, the unions have done a lot for everyone, get everyone to join the union!

The last 15 minutes was opened to the floor and more contributions from other officials and someone from the Socialist Party continued in the same vein. I finally plucked up courage to speak and asked a very simple question: are the unions going to carry on striking together or were they going to revert to the usual strategy of split strikes and instructing members to cross each others' picket lines?

*rowly through obedient adulation of monarchy, militarism and elitism".*

You might think that the author is going to challenge some very big shibboleth's here: patriotism itself, the Second World War... But then you would have to have missed the article's headline ('The Daily mail may not realise, but Marxists are patriots') and the argument developed in the ensuing paragraph, which is a left-wing apology for 'real' patriotism:

*"Ralph Miliband was not a patriot because he served in the navy. He was a lover of this country and its people precisely because he understood that institutions like the monarchy and the House of Lords symbolise and perpetuate inequality, and that militarism usually encourages the poor to die defending the interests of the privileged. His patriotism has more in common with long progressive patriotic traditions in Britain, from the Diggers and Levellers to the Chartists and anti-privatisation campaigners. It was about claiming land and country for the majority of its labouring denizens rather than the plutocrats and the powerful who live off the fat of the land while spouting an insincere 'nationalism' which serves less to create collective wellbeing than to prevent their privileges being questioned".*

It's true that the young workers' movement was often tinged with patriotic ideas. This was entirely understandable in an epoch (from the 17th to the 19th centuries) in which the formation of nation states contained a progressive element, because capitalism itself was an advance over feudalism and other outmoded social systems. But what was essential to formations like the Diggers and the Chartists was their vigorous defence of the exploited against the exploiters, which cannot but challenge all divisions among them and thus tend towards affirming the international unity of the

Embarrassed silence and ironic smiles from the panel followed. After what seemed like a very long awkward moment and after banging on for over half-an-hour about how the unions were standing together, the UCU national official finally said he had no information about that at the moment but the line at present is to stand together. The meeting was then wound up.

Back at work the next day, I learned that I had been the only one to join the strike. I wasn't at all surprised, of course. My friend told me she had sat in her car overcome with guilt for 45 minutes before finally going in. Although everyone came in, the atmosphere was subdued. I told her I understood and I do - and the important thing wasn't to cry over what was done but to understand what's being done to us.

What did my small action achieve? On the face of it, very little. None of my colleagues were persuaded to join the strike. But I was able to prevent them from sleepwalking into their decision - they were forced to make a conscious choice about their decision. A tiny seed of consciousness that may, one day, flower into something more significant.

I also showed that being a marxist is more than "reading clever books at lunchtime" which is often how people see me. It means standing up for something, even if only in a very small way. I also showed that it's possible to do so without brow-beating or being accusatory. At root, my colleagues were frightened and I understand because I was frightened too. I cannot judge others for crossing picket lines when I cannot honestly say if I will always have the courage not to.

Would my action have been any more effective had I been in the union? I can't see how. I would still have spoken against them both in my leaflet and at the meeting. And, more importantly, why would I give money to organisations that tell workers to cross picket lines? Demogorgon 2/11/2013

### The leaflet Official Strike Action 31/10/2013

*As I'm sure you've heard, all three unions have called official strike action on Thursday this week. After considering the matter, I have decided to support our colleagues in their decision to strike.*

class struggle. This was already explicit with the Communist Manifesto of 1848, which proclaimed that "the workers have no country" and looked forward to a global association of the producers.

At that time, the Manifesto still foresaw the possibility of temporary alliances with the more forward looking elements of the bourgeoisie. But this kind of alliance lost all meaning as the entire capitalist system entered an epoch of permanent, world-wide inter-imperialist conflict, announced most definitively by the outbreak of the First World War. At this point, marxists pronounced the death sentence on the nation state:

*"The nation state has outgrown itself – as a framework for the development of the productive forces, as a basis for class struggle, and especially as the state form of the dictatorship of the proletariat."* (Leon Trotsky, *Nashe Slovo*, 4 February, 1916)

In the last hundred years, humanity has been faced with a situation where it can only survive and move forward by breaking the chains of the nation state and rejecting all appeals to fight in its defence. This is why the question of internationalism has been such a fundamental dividing line in the history of the workers' movement in this century. Support for the First World War was the end of the line for the majority of the social democratic parties. Support for its re-run in 1939-45 marked the death of many of the political currents whose origins lay in a reaction against social democracy's betrayal in 1914: the Communist Parties, now entirely rotted by Stalinism, and even the majority of the Trotskyist organisations which had advertised their internationalism against Stalinism's nationalist abortions, 'socialism in one country' and the Popular Fronts.

Marxists are therefore not, in any shape or form, patriots. To love one's country, for the *Daily Mail*

*As the unions have already argued, pay in Higher Education has been eroded by 13% in the last four years. In fact, the wider situation is much worse and has been going on for far longer: "Median wages in the UK were stagnant from 2003 to 2008 despite GDP growth of 11 per cent in the period. Similar trends are evident in other advanced economies from the US to Germany. For some time, the pay of those in the bottom half of the earnings distribution has failed to track the path of headline economic growth".*

*Employers have been able to get away with eroding our working conditions for years because we have passively accepted it. As long as we continue to accept it, our pay will decline, our pensions will continue to be eroded and our workloads will increase. Taking strike action can send a powerful message that we won't accept these things any longer. But it will only be effective if we all stand together.*

*I understand that many of you will feel uneasy about taking strike action.*

*Going on strike means losing a day's pay and after years of declining pay, this is not a small problem! But we've already lost much more than that. How much more will we lose if we don't fight back?*

*Others are concerned about their workload and having to catch up after a day out of the office. As we all know, things are frantic this time of year! But how did we get to this state? As real wages have gone down, work-loads have increased. And every time we accept extra work we encourage the University to push more onto us further down the line.*

*If low-pay and high workloads are such a problem then there is even more reason to take a stand!*

*I know some will be afraid that that going on strike may result in losing their job. Because this is an official action, you cannot be dismissed for joining it. This protection also extends to non-union members who participate. Although the unions claim in their recent letter that "non-members are not allowed to participate in the strike", this is not true. In fact, according to the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)*

1. Missing Out: Why Ordinary Workers Are Experiencing Growth Without Gain, The Resolution Foundation, July 2011

means loving the Queen, the church, the armed forces – evidently the 'country' of a small elite. But the left version of this patriotism is no less faithful to key institutions of the capitalist state: the nationalised industries, as well as the unions and the rest of the so-called labour movement, which have long been integrated into the present social system.

Ralph Miliband was by all accounts a very good university teacher and he certainly had a thorough grounding in the writings of Marx. But his 'supple' marxism never challenged the notion that the working class had something to defend in the existing state. Politically he acted as a critical supporter of the Labour left and even his more theoretical contributions on marxism and the state end up enlisting Marx into the defence of the democratic republic. In an article on Lenin's *State and Revolution*, for example, he argues that Marx's writings could be interpreted in different ways – some statements pointing to the need to smash the old state, others towards its radical democratisation<sup>2</sup>. This is true – even after the Paris Commune, Marx did not entirely abandon the idea that the revolution could take place in the framework of the democratic republic. But Miliband, rather than grasping the historical significance of Lenin's 'update' on this position in the period of unbridled imperialism, takes Marx's imprecisions out of their historical context and uses them to speak in favour of a policy of democratising the existing state rather than destroying it.

In this sense Gopal is correct (but not for the reasons she thinks) to link Miliband's patriotism with his essentially democratic programme for capitalism:

*"It is time to junk the cheap and facile propaganda that socialism is reducible to Stalinist depredations. In Ralph Miliband's own anti-Stalinist understanding, socialism was about 'the wholesale transformation of the social order' by giving ordinary people control over the economic system, fully democratising a political system in which ordinary citizens feel disenfranchised and helpless, and ensuring 'a drastic levelling out of social inequality'. It is the abandonment of these democratic aspirations for the craven pieties of the *Daily Mail* that must really 'disturb everyone who loves this country'".*

In World War One, the idea of defending the democratic gains of the workers' movement inside capitalism was used to justify the war against German militarism (or Russian Czarism); the same ideology was used on a much vaster scale to mobilise the working class for the Second World War. In the day to day struggles of the working class, slogans based on the same basic concept – defence of the nationalised industries like the NHS, defence of 'trade union rights' and all the rest – are used to line workers up behind one part of the bourgeoisie against another.

Gopal argues that "Ralph Miliband would also have found his son's claim that capitalism can be 'made to work for working people' incoherent, and wilfully ignorant of how capitalism actually works". But in reality, Miliband Senior himself never broke from the idea that the capitalist state and capitalist social relations – suitably nationalised and democratised – can be made to work for working people. **Amos 31/10/13**

2. *Socialist Register*, 1970, republished here: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/miliband/1970/xx/staterev.htm>

*uk website, non-union members are allowed to join a strike in their workplace and receive the same legal protections: "Non-union members who take part in legal, official industrial action have the same rights as union members not to be dismissed as a result of taking action".*

*It should go without saying that all workers, regardless of their union-membership, have the same problems and should fight together to solve them.*

*I hope that you will support my decision and, if you feel able, join our colleagues so we can resist the erosion of our pay and conditions together.*

*Me*

2. <https://www.gov.uk/industrial-action-strikes/your-employment-rights-during-industrial-action>

# Lampedusa tragedy

## Capital and its politicians are responsible

At the beginning of October, an overloaded ship went down near Lampedusa in Italy. More than 350 immigrants died. A few days afterwards, another boat carrying migrants sank, and another ten people drowned. Every year in the Mediterranean 20,000 people lose their lives on the verge of reaching the sought-after Fortress Europe. Since the 1990s, the corpses of human beings fleeing from poverty and war have been piling up at the frontiers, along the coasts, in the deserts of the Sahara – like the 92 women and children from Niger abandoned by people smugglers to die of thirst and exhaustion in the Sahara at the end of the same month.

### The hypocrisy of the ruling class

The ruling class has shed copious crocodile tears about the Lampedusa tragedy because its scale, and its proximity to ‘home’, made it impossible to ignore. To have done so might have stirred up too much anger, too much thinking.

The sordid polemic about the failure of Italian fishermen to help the victims has also served to divert people’s attention towards the hunt for scapegoats – even though the current laws actually criminalise those who help illegal immigrants and in previous cases captains of fishing vessels have already been prosecuted for trying to “give assistance to illegal entry”.

The grand media coverage of the Lampedusa tragedy is aimed at creating a mental fog and obscuring the huge repressive apparatus set up by in a coordinated manner by the states. The ideological trap is made up, on the one hand, of overtly xenophobic propaganda and, on the other, by ‘humanitarian’ speeches which, by emphasising the ‘rights’ of the victims, serve to separate immigrants from other proletarians.

One thing should be clear: capitalism in crisis and its politicians are indeed responsible for this new tragedy. It’s they who compel thousands of hungry people to embark on ever-more suicidal adventures to get round the obstacles placed in their path. It’s therefore not surprising if these same politicians were jeered at the airport by a shocked and disgusted local population<sup>1</sup>.

### The proletariat is a class of immigrants

Like these immigrants, all proletarians are really those who have been ‘uprooted’. Since the beginning of capitalism, they have been torn away from the land and from artisan labour. In the Middle Ages the majority of the exploited remained tied to the land; the rising power of capital subjected them to a violent exodus from the countryside

*“The proletariat created by the breaking up of the bands of feudal retainers and by the forcible expropriation of the people from the soil, this ‘free’ proletariat could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world. On the other hand, these men, suddenly dragged from their wonted mode of life, could not as suddenly adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition”.*<sup>2</sup>

Historically capitalism developed on the basis of free access to labour power. To extract surplus value it generated enormous population shifts. It was the unity of the new conditions of the exploited that led the workers’ movement to recognise that “the workers have no country!”

In addition, without the slave trade from Africa in the 17th and 18th centuries, capitalism would

not have been able to develop so quickly in its industrial centres and through the slave ports of Liverpool, London, Bristol, Zeeland, Nantes and Bordeaux. In the 19th century, with the black labour force ‘freed’ into wage labour, economic growth fuelled even more massive displacements of populations, especially towards the American continent. From the early 19th century until 1914, 50 to 60 million Europeans headed towards the USA in search of work. At the beginning of the 20th century, nearly a million immigrants entered the USA every year. For Italy alone, between 1901 and 1913, nearly 8 million people became immigrants. During the ascendant phase of capitalism the system was able to absorb this mass of workers whose labour power was needed by an expanding economy.

### In decadent capitalism, the state becomes a bunker

With the historic decline of the system, migration and the displacement of populations have not stopped. On the contrary! Imperialist conflicts, especially the two world wars, economic crises, and disasters linked to climate change have fed ever-growing migrations. In 2010, it was estimated that there were 214 million migrants in the world (3.1% of the world population<sup>3</sup>). On the basis of climate change alone, certain projections estimate that there will be between 25 million and one billion extra migrants by 2050<sup>4</sup>.

Because of the permanent crisis of capital and the overproduction of commodities, migrants have come up against the limits of the market and the increasingly brutal rules imposed by the state. Capital can no longer integrate labour power on the same scale as before. Thus, in contrast to the period prior to the First World War when it opened its doors to the ‘huddled masses’, the USA has set up a whole system of quotas to drastically restrict entry, and is now building walls to halt the flow of migrants from Latin America. The economic crisis which opened up at the end of the 1960s has led all governments, especially in Europe, to set up heavy-handed patrols around the southern Mediterranean, employing an armada of boats to control the flow of migrants. The undeclared aim of the ruling class is clear: migrants should stay at home and rot. To ensure this, the good democrats of Europe, and notably France, have not hesitated to use the muscular services of a Gaddafi in Libya or the authorities in Morocco to make sure that those trying to reach Europe don’t get through the desert.

These controls at the frontiers, which have got tougher and tougher, are the product of decadence and of state capitalism. They are not new. In France for example:

*“The creation of identity cards in 1917 really overturned administrative and police practices. Today we are habituated to having our passports stamped and we no longer think about the police origins of the process. But it was by no means neutral that the institution of identity cards was initially aimed at the surveillance of foreigners in a period of open war”.*<sup>5</sup>

Today the paranoia of the state towards foreigners suspected of being troublemakers has reached unprecedented heights. Huge metal or concrete walls at the frontiers<sup>6</sup>, topped with barbed wire or electrified, are a sinister reminder of the death camps of the Second World War. In 1989, the European bourgeoisies celebrated the fall of the ‘Berlin Wall’ in the name of freedom. This was indeed a barbaric materialisation of the ‘Iron Curtain’; but those doing the celebrating have shown that they too are builders of walls!

3. Source: INED

4. 133 natural catastrophes were recorded in 1980. The number has gone up to over 350 a year in the last few years. See [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

5. P-J Deschott, F Huguenin, *La république xenophobe*, JC Lattès 2001

6. For example, at Sangatte in Northern Europe, in southern Europe (Ceuta, Melilla), on the US-Mexican border, in Israel faced with the Palestinians, in South Africa faced with the rest of the continent, or in Gabon where the authorities are in the process of constructing an electrified wall 2.40m high and 500 km long

### The tragic fate of the immigrants

The decadence of capitalism has become a period of vast displacements which have to be ‘controlled’. It’s the era of deportations, of concentration camps, of refugees (the number of Palestinian refugees went from 700,000 thousand in 1950 to 4.8 million in 2005). The genocide of the Armenians in 1915 led to the first mass movements of refugees of the 20th century. Between 1944 and 1951, nearly 20 million people were displaced or evacuated in Europe. The partition of states and other divisions have also resulted in massive displacements. While the ‘Iron Curtain’ blocked an exodus from Eastern Europe, the search for cheap labour power led the European countries to draw on the southern Mediterranean and Africa. Economic impoverishment and the ‘national liberation’ struggles produced by imperialist conflicts during the Cold War also fed the distress and displacement of a ruined peasantry, serving to create vast megacities surrounded by slums in the peripheral countries. These have become breeding grounds for mafia gangs involved in prostitution and the traffic of arms and drugs. Throughout the 20th and 21st centuries, refugee camps have sprung up like mushrooms, especially in Africa and the Middle East, where the population lives on the edge of survival, prey to famine, illness, and gangsters of all stripes.

### The explosion of ‘illegal’ work

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the eastern bloc, two major events have intervened, on top of the growth of military conflicts, to weigh on the labour market and increase the flow of migration:

- the deepening of the economic crisis, especially in the central countries;
- the emergence of China.

For an initial period, workers from the eastern countries went west; this coincided with the first relocations of industry and it helped to exert a powerful pressure on wages. In addition, countries which had previously been on the margins of the world market, such as India and China, opened up the possibility of uprooting millions of workers who had come from the countryside, swelling the ranks of a reserve army made up of unemployed proletarians who could be dragooned for work when needed.

The very low level of wages paid to these workers in the context of a saturated world market makes it possible to put further pressure on wages and results in even more relocations. This explains the fact that in the central countries since the 1990s the number of illegal and clandestine workers has exploded in certain sectors, despite the strengthening of controls. In 2000 there were about 5 million clandestine workers in Europe, 12 million in the USA and 20 million in India. The central states make ample use of this workforce, generally poorly qualified and without official papers, and whose extremely precarious position makes them ready to do pretty much anything for very low wages. Under the watchful eye of the state a whole parallel market has been created, sustained by workers who are subject to all kinds of blackmail and live in atrocious conditions. The majority of agricultural harvests are now being taken in by foreign workers, many of them illegal. In Italy, 65% of the agricultural labour force is illegal. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, 2 million Romanians migrated to southern Europe for agricultural work. In Spain, the housing ‘boom’ which came before the crash was to a large extent based on the sweat of underpaid clandestine workers, often from Latin American countries like Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, etc. To this we must add the grey areas of the economy, such as prostitution. In 2003, in a country like Moldavia, 30% of women aged between 18 and 25 had gone missing! In the same year, 500,000 prostitutes from eastern Europe were working in western Europe.

In Asia and in the Gulf monarchies, we see the same phenomena for domestic workers and building workers. In Qatar, immigrants make up 86% of the population, and, as the recent scandal about the preparations for the 2022 World Cup has revealed, many are working in conditions of near slavery.

Today, with the development of military tensions, we can already see an influx of people escaping war zones, especially from the Middle East and Africa.

### The proletarian combat

In the face of growing barbarism, of brutal police measures against immigrants and the xenophobic campaigns disseminated by the ruling class, the proletariat can only respond with indignation and with international class solidarity. This means rejecting any idea that immigrants and ‘foreigners’ are the cause of crisis and unemployment.

The media, especially those aligned to the Right, are constantly bombarding us with images of immigrants who foment crime and disorder and live as parasites from the ‘generous’ benefits handed out by western countries. In reality, it’s the immigrants who are the first victims of the system. This nauseating right wing propaganda has always been used to divide workers. But the more insidious traps are the ones laid by the ‘humanitarian’ Left, with its false generosity and good old common sense, which also divides the working class by treating immigrants as a special case.

Today, when factories are closing one after the other, when the order books are getting thinner despite all the talk of ‘recovery’, it is becoming increasingly clear that all proletarians are being hit by the crisis and growing poverty, whether immigrants or not. What meaning can there be in the idea of competition for jobs from illegal workers when jobs for everyone are disappearing?

Against this ideological offensive, against the policy of repression, the working class has to reaffirm its historical perspective. This begins with basic solidarity and advances towards recognising its own revolutionary strength in society. **WE**  
21/10/2013

## ICC Online: recent additions

### Syria: behind the diplomatic game, the impasse of a murderous system

*“... But whatever the outcome of this latest crisis and the decisions taken in government ministries, and whether or not there is a direct military intervention in Syria, we are seeing a spectacular rise in warlike tensions against a background of mounting chaos, of an increasingly uncontrollable situation which has made the clash of arms more and more widespread.”*

### The social movement in Brail, June 2013

*“...the June mobilisations in Brazil represent the most important spontaneous expression of the masses in this country and in Latin America over the past 30 years. This is why it’s crucial to draw the lessons of this movement from a class standpoint.”*

### The attack on the Westgate shopping centre in Nairobi

*“Today, along with the permanent and depraved battlefields of the “Democratic Republic of Congo” where child soldiers, mass rape, warlordism, religious irrationalism and disintegration are overlooked and manipulated by the major powers, the whole region is increasingly an imperialist free-for-all where any atrocity goes, a true crucible of capitalist barbarism.”*

**en.internationalism.org**

1. Alongside the Italian Prime Minister A Altano, there was the president of the European Commission M Barroso and C Maimstrom, the internal Chargé d’Affaires, who had come mainly to stress that, in the name of humanitarianism, they supported a hardening of the surveillance of the frontiers by the forces of ‘Frontex’

2. Marx, *Capital*, Vol 1 chapter XXVIII

# From junk food to famine part 1

## A system that poisons and starves

The media are full of unbearable images of children and whole families dying of starvation in a world where vast amounts of food are being thrown away. The violence of this absurd poverty seems to have no limits. 10,000 people die of hunger every day. A child under 10 dies of starvation every 5 seconds. 842 million people are suffering from severe undernourishment. And this misery is spreading throughout the world, reaching part of the population of the 'rich' world, where food banks are becoming increasingly common. And if we are not immediately faced with hunger, we are being made to feel culpable for the horrors stalking the 'third world'.



### The false explanations of the bourgeoisie

The 'experts' give us the most unbelievable explanations for all this. There are too many people. Our food regime is not adapted to the resources of the planet. We don't have enough respect for these resources. In short, everything is geared to making us feel as guilty as possible, while those who are really responsible for this are never denounced. Is it their fault that modest families in the 'Northern' countries have to buy food at the lowest prices at the supermarkets? Shouldn't we blame the 'consumers' for buying products made in the most dubious conditions? There are those who repeat this endlessly, and many of them tell us if we 'consume in a different way', everyone will be better off, including those in the poor countries. Our problem is that we are not being responsible. We eat too much and we eat badly, so it's all our fault if others are going hungry.

There's not much doubt that we eat badly, given all the colourings, sugars, and pesticides in our food. We will come back to that later on. But for now the question is this: how can we really understand this situation? Our planet is a very fertile place, blessed with an extremely rich and diverse ecosystem which contains vast potential. With more than 10Gha (10,000,000,000 hectares) of potentially cultivable land, it seems inconceivable

that with the current technology so many people should be facing starvation. And yet they are. If we compare the resources available on the planet with the actual use being made of them today, we can see immense contradictions, contradictions which are threatening the very survival of our species.

Let's look a bit more closely at these contradictions. As we said, the planet disposes of 10Gha of potentially cultivable land. According to a report published by the Institution of Mechanical Engineers in Britain<sup>1</sup>, the total amount of land actually being cultivated today represents 4.9Gha, i.e. around half of what is available for the production of food. This same report indicates that the average capacity of a one hectare field to produce grain or maize would make it possible, given current means, to feed between 19 and 22 people for a year, whereas the exploitation of a hectare destined for producing beef or lamb for human consumption makes it possible to feed around 1.5 people a year.

The existing productivity in the agro-food sector thus makes it possible to feed the whole world population. If millions of human beings are dying of hunger every day, the cause is this ignoble system which does not produce to satisfy the needs of humanity but to sell and make a profit. Here is the big difference with the famines of the Middle Ages: these were a result of the limited development of tools, of techniques, of the organisation of land and labour. Human beings continued to exploit every inch of land in order to make up for this lack of productivity. Today, under capitalism, humanity possesses extraordinary capacities which it is not using. Worse than that: the race for profit leads to immense waste:

*"In South-East Asian countries for example, losses of rice can range from 37% to 80% of total production depending on development stage, which amounts to total wastage in the region of about 180 million tonnes annually...The potential to provide 60-100% more food by simply eliminating losses, while simultaneously freeing up land, energy and water resources for other uses, is an opportunity that should not be ignored."*<sup>2</sup>

In Europe, 50% of food products end up in the bin – 240,000 tons every day.

In response to famines, putting a stop to such waste, to the destruction of unsold food, would appear to be the immediate measures that need to be taken, even if they are largely insufficient. But even these basic measures can't be taken by capitalism because in this society human welfare and the satisfaction of needs, even the most basic ones, is not at all the goal of production. Factories, machinery, capital only exist to make a profit and the workers are only fed so that they can produce surplus value, the source of profit. Measures that might seem simple and obvious can only be adopted by the proletariat in a revolutionary situation.

1. 'Global food, waste not, want not'  
2. *Global Food*



This said, in the long term, a society free from social classes and capital will have to take much more radical measures than this. The capitalist mode of production ravages nature, exhausts the soil, poisons the air. The majority of animal species are threatened with extinction if the destructive madness of this system isn't halted.

Those who are conscious of this situation can only react with indignation. But many claim that the way forward is to reduce consumption, and to practice negative growth. But the solution is neither 'productivist' (producing more and more without concern for the aim of production), or negative growth (producing less so that each human being lives just above the poverty line, which is impossible under capitalism with its inevitable class inequalities). It has to be much more radical and profound than that. If production is no longer spurred on by the hunt for profit but by the satisfaction of human need, then the conditions of production will have to change completely. In the realm of food production, all research, the whole organisation of labour and the soil, the process of distribution...will be guided by the respect for humanity and nature. But this implies the overthrow of capitalism.

### From scarcity to overproduction

From what we know today, agriculture first made its appearance around 10,000 years ago, somewhere around the south east of what is today Turkey. Since then, techniques have continued to develop, sometimes resulting in major leaps in output. The use of animals to pull the swing plough became general in antiquity, while the development of the wheeled plough and of three crop rotation around the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD led to definite improvements in production. However, it is important to remember that despite the advances that marked this long period<sup>3</sup>, the technical knowledge of the time did not make it possible to generate stable harvests from one year to the next. There were many examples of great famines that decimated the popu-

3. We can also refer to the work of Oliviér Serres (1539-1619) on the structure of agricultural practice

lation: in 1315 for example, as a result of a particularly cold and rainy year, harvests in France were 50% below that of previous years, resulting in the deaths of between 5 and 10% of the population. To a lesser extent the same phenomenon could be seen in 1348, this time followed by the Black Death which struck an already weakened population. To simplify, during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries when the climate was less favourable than in the previous period, there was a terrible famine every 20 or 30 years. It wasn't until the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century that agricultural production ceased to suffer so

severely from blows delivered by the climate. The progress in machinery and the use of fossil fuels (coal and oil), the advances in inorganic chemistry and the introduction of mineral fertilisers led to a considerable increase in output. With the development of capitalism, agriculture became an industry, in the image of the textile industry, or transport. Tasks were rigorously planned and the concept of the manufacturing process, with the scientific organisation of labour, permitted an unprecedented increase in productivity. All this led people to believe that periods of crisis and famine would give way to centuries of abundance. Most of the scientists of the day swore by the progress of science and thought that the development of capitalist society would be the remedy for all ills. Most, but not all. In 1845 for example, when capitalism was in full expansion, a terrible famine struck Ireland. Mildew and humid weather led to a fall in the potato crop of nearly 40%. The consequences for the population were dramatic – it is estimated that there were a million deaths between 1846 and 1851. But even if the techniques of the day were still fairly rudimentary, it would be a mistake to see the potato blight as the sole cause of the catastrophe. In contrast to what happened in 1780, Ireland's ports remained open due to the pressure of Protestant negotiators and Ireland carried on exporting food. While whole families on the island were dying of hunger, convoys of food belonging to the landlords, escorted by the army, set off for England. This is how England's capitalist development took place. The boundless cruelty of the capitalist system led Engels to write in 1882:

*"In the advanced industrial countries, we have subdued the forces of nature and harnessed them to the service of man; we have thus infinitely multiplied production to the point where a child today can produce what once took 100 adults. And what are the consequences? Growing over-work and mounting poverty for the masses, and every ten years, a huge debacle"* (*Dialectics of Nature*).

In the next article we will examine this subject in the context of the decadence of capitalism. **Enkidu 20/10/13**

## Discuss with the ICC and others through our online discussion forum

Extract from a longer post by Ernie on the recent social movements in Turkey and Brazil. The discussion can be found at <http://en.internationalism.org/forum/1056/jk1921/9203/indignation-heart-proletarian-dynamic>

The low level of strikes in the UK and elsewhere in the heartlands, the growing weight of nationalism particularly in important bastions of the class; Catalonia, Scotland, etc the rising tide of racism and turning on the other, the lack of interest in politics all appear to underline the growing impact of decomposition on the proletariat and increasingly raised the question: are all these indications of time running out? Within this context the social movements whilst having very interesting aspects do not really offer a long-term counter weight to these indications of the weakening of the class due the weight of democratism, citizenship and the weak influence of the proletariat...

If we take up what Lenin says in opposition to the Economists this difficult situation takes on a much more dynamic nature. Lenin's makes the central point that the bourgeoisie want to keep the proletariat's vision of its self imprisoned in the immediate, in the factory and industry, in his/her conditions and those of their children. Lenin's determined and intransigent struggle against the Economists was precisely because with their talk of the daily struggle being the most important aspect to the class struggle, their insistence that revolutionaries had to concentrate on working conditions, on factory bulletins laying out the actions of the bosses etc they were reinforcing this bourgeois ideological attack which aims to keep the proletariat trapped in the immediate and to stop its lifting its head up and looking beyond the factory and towards the future. For Lenin class consciousness meant the working class seeing that it had an alternative, that it had a leading role in society, that the proletariat had to understand the nature of all

the other classes of society, that it had to be indignant not only about its own conditions but those of the other strata of society and condemning the ruling class's and its state attacks on them. This consciousness was not solely expressed through strikes, but also through demonstrations, through the working class taking up its leading role through defending other strata (for example the mobilization of workers to defend Jewish communities against the pogroms). This vision does not mean that strikes are not important but they have to be seen as part of a wider mobilization.

In this context the recent upsurge of social movements takes on great importance. We have always said that what is most important about these movements is the fact that they tried to not only organise demonstrations but also discussions, activity, that at the core of these movements has been an elemental indignation about increasingly brutal crushing of the hopes that capitalism used to be able to hold out, no matter how illusory that was.

The core of these mobilizations, as comrades have pointed out, has been the unemployed, underemployed, and temporary workers which means young workers (though increasingly these conditions are effecting all generations): proletarians. The magnificent response of school children and students to the brutal deporting of the girl from Kosovo shows that this indignation and anger about the brutality of the state is having a powerful and mobilizing impact on the very young as well....

These movements have posed the very thing that was so evident by its almost total absence during the 70 and 80s during the massive mobilizations of the class in strike movements: politicization.....

# 60 years after the death of Stalin Stalinism still emits the stench of counter-revolution

Below is the translation of an article written by our comrades in Mexico and published in Spanish in number 133 of *Revolución Mundial* (March-April 2013).

The terror and the degeneration of the Russian Revolution are often explained solely through the personality of Stalin, an uncouth individual, a careerist and an adventurer. It is certain that his character was an important factor in the historical role played by Stalin, but not the only one.

60 years ago, on 6 March 1953, the world press announced the death of Stalin. "The mad dog is dead, the madness is over", was the popular adage employed in Spanish-speaking countries. But in the case of Stalin, such a statement was unjustified. If Stalin was at the helm of the physical and moral destruction of a whole generation of revolutionaries, if he openly contradicted all the internationalist principles of marxism and if he has been the leader of one of the major imperialist powers that presided over the division of world, his death in no way eliminated or halted the counter-revolutionary dynamic that he largely contributed to in his lifetime. This confirms that his role as a major player in the counter-revolution was made possible by the failure of the world revolution to extend. It was the isolation of the revolution that directly produced the degeneration of the Bolshevik Party and its transformation into a state party putting national interests above those of the world revolution.

The grim legacy of Stalin has served and continues to serve the interests of the ruling class. Winston Churchill, a well known figure of the exploiting class and bitter enemy of the proletariat, paid tribute to the services rendered by Stalin to the bourgeoisie, saying he "will be one of the great men in Russian history".

## Stalinism, the incarnation of the bourgeois counter-revolution

In the revolutionary wave that emerged during and after the First World War, it was the Russian proletariat at the head of the revolution of 1917 that produced the most powerful dynamic of the international wave. The process continued in 1918 when the battalions of the German working class rose up, seeking to spread the revolution, but they were ruthlessly crushed by the German bourgeois state led by Social Democracy with the broad collaboration of the democratic states. Attempts to spread the proletarian revolution were thus stifled and the triumphant Russian revolution became isolated. The bourgeoisie of the whole world then erected a *cordon sanitaire* around the proletariat in Russia, making it impossible to hold on to the power it had seized in 1917. It was under these conditions that the counter-revolution arose from within: the Bolshevik party lost all its working class vitality, fostering the emergence and dominance of a bourgeois faction that was led by Stalin.

Therefore, Stalinism is not the product of the communist revolution but rather the product of its defeat. Following to the letter the advice provided by Machiavelli, Stalin had no hesitation in resorting to intrigue, lies, manipulation and terror to install himself at the head of the state and to consolidate his power, strengthening the work of the counter-revolution by resorting to acts as ridiculous as rewriting history, doctoring photos by eliminating from them certain personalities he regarded as 'heretics' because of their oppositional stand. At the same time he promoted the cult of his personality and distorted the truth about the scale of repression and making this the core of his policy. This is why Stalinism is in no way a proletarian current; it is quite obvious that the means used and objectives pursued by Stalin and the group of careerists he surrounded himself with were overtly bourgeois.

With the ebbing of the revolutionary wave of 1917-23, the counter-revolution opened the door to the actions of Stalin. Thus, persecution, harassment and the physical elimination of combative proletarians were the first services he rendered to the ruling class. The world bourgeoisie applauded his methods, not only because an important generation of revolutionaries was wiped out but also

because it was done in the name of communism, tainting its image and throwing the whole working class into total confusion.

The charges trumped up by the political police, the use of concentration camps and other atrocities, were supported by all the democratic states. For example, even before the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev (in 1936) in which threats against their families and physical torture were used, the democratic states applauded the services that Stalin rendered to their system: through the medium of their 'worthy' representatives assembled at the League of Human Rights (headquarters in France), the bourgeoisie approved the perfect 'legality' of the purges and the trials. The declaration of the novelist Romain Rolland, Nobel Prize for Literature winner in 1915 and distinguished member of this organisation, is indicative of the attitude of the ruling class: "there is no reason to doubt the accusations against Zinoviev and Kamenev, individuals discredited for quite some time, who have twice been turncoats and gone back on their word. I do not know how I could dismiss as inventions or extracted confessions the public statements of the defendants themselves."

Similarly, before the forced exile of Trotsky and his subsequent hounding across the world, the Social Democratic government of Norway and the French government, in total complicity with Stalinism, did not hesitate to harass and ultimately expel the old Bolshevik.

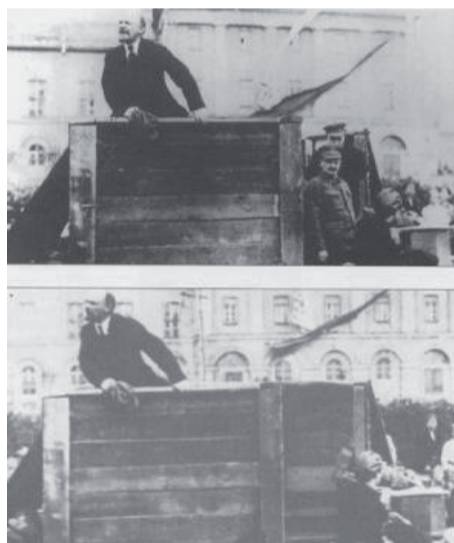


Photo taken during a speech by Lenin in 1920 with Trotsky present. Below, the same photo doctored by Stalin's henchmen.

## 'Socialism in one country' - the negation of marxism

The full extent of the decline of the Bolshevik Party was revealed in when Stalin introduced the doctrine of the possibility of building socialism in one country.

Immediately after Lenin's death in January 1924, Stalin hastened to place his pawns into key positions in the party and to focus his attacks on Trotsky, who was, after Lenin, the most respected revolutionary, and in the front line of the organised mass mobilisation of October 1917.

One proof of the departure of Stalin from the proletarian terrain is in formulating, along with Bukharin, the thesis of 'socialism in one country'. (Let's not forget that, some years later, Stalin would have Bukharin executed!). As the self-proclaimed 'supreme leader of the world proletariat' and the official voice of marxism, the best service that Stalin provided to the bourgeoisie was precisely this 'doctrine' that distorted and perverted proletarian internationalism, that had always been defended by the workers' movement. This policy discredited marxist theory, spreading and sowing confusion not only among the generation of proletarians of that period but also today amongst the current generation. For example, we are cynically presented with facts like the invasion of Czechoslovakia (1968), the crushing of the Hungarian uprising (1956), or the invasion of Afghanistan in the 1980s, as expressions of 'proletarian internationalism'. A character like Che Guevara claimed



Churchill and Stalin

that the shipment of arms to countries like Angola was a demonstration of proletarian internationalism. This is not at all a confusion but is a deliberate policy aimed at demolishing this central pillar of marxism.

In the *Principles of Communism* (1847), Engels clearly defended the internationalist argument attacked by Stalin: "Will it be possible for this revolution to take place in one country alone? No. By creating the world market, big industry has already brought all the peoples of the Earth, and especially the civilised peoples, into such close relation with one another that none is independent of what happens to the others."

Further, it has co-ordinated the social development of the civilised countries to such an extent that, in all of them, bourgeoisie and proletariat have become the decisive classes, and the struggle between them the great struggle of the day. It follows that the communist revolution will not merely be a national phenomenon but must take place simultaneously in all civilised countries (...) It is a universal revolution and will, accordingly, have a universal range".

The Bolsheviks, with Lenin at the helm, conceived the revolution in Russia as a first battle in the world revolution. That is why Stalin was lying when, to validate his thesis, he said it was a continuation of the teachings of Lenin. The bourgeois nature of this 'theory' dug the grave of the Bolshevik party and also that of the Communist International by subjecting these bodies to the defence of the interests of the Russian state.

## Stalinism, an important pillar in the reconstruction of the bourgeoisie in the USSR

The growth of terror through the concentration camps and the surveillance, control and repression organised through the NKVD (the secret police), etc., symbolise the counter-revolutionary juggernaut oiled by Stalin. But this is only the backdrop to the profound role it would fulfil: permitting the reconstitution of the bourgeoisie in the USSR.

The defeat of the world proletarian revolution and the disappearance of all the proletarian life from the Soviets provided the conditions for the establishment of a new bourgeoisie. It is true that the bourgeoisie was defeated by the proletarian revolution of 1917, but the subsequent ruin of the working class allowed Stalinism to rebuild the ruling class. The bourgeoisie's reappearance on the social scene did not come from the resurrection of the remnants of the old class (except in a few individual cases), or from the individual ownership of the means of production, but in the development of a capital that would appear depersonalised, with no individual faces, only in the incarnation of the party bureaucracy merged with the state, that is to say, under the form of state ownership of the means of production.

For this reason, assuming that the nationalisation of the means of production is the expression of a society different to capitalism or that it represented (or represents) a 'progressive step' is a mistake. Thus when Trotsky in *The Revolution Betrayed* explained that "state ownership of the means of production does not change cow dung into gold and does not confer an aura of holiness on the system of exploitation", he went on to insist on the fact that the USSR was a 'degenerated workers' state', which was an implied appeal for its defence. This was from the outset a profoundly confused conception. Trotskyism, above all after Trotsky's death, pushed this logic to its extreme by

dragooning the working class behind the defence of one imperialist camp, that of the USSR, during the Second World War, which demonstrated the Trotskyist current's abandonment of the proletarian terrain.

In fact, the behaviour of Stalinism during the Second World War openly demonstrated its bourgeois nature: in 1944 'the Red Army' cynically stood by while the Nazis crushed the Warsaw Uprising and, together with the Allies, participated in the re-division of imperialist spoils at the end of the war.

## The bourgeoisie pays tribute to the butchers of the imperialist war

As we said above, the world bourgeoisie has received and still benefits from the great service provided by Stalinism, even if hypocritically, it distanced itself from Stalin, calling his government evil, while not hesitating to use it to fuel patriotism and to justify the imperialist war of 1939-45. This policy has by no means exhausted itself.

The year 2012 was marked by an acceleration of the struggle in Georgia (formerly part of the USSR) between bourgeois factions. As part of this bourgeois quarrel, there was a return to invoking Stalin to feed a nationalist campaign.

At the end of 2012 and the first months of this year, the Georgian bourgeoisie, under the pretext of recovering its historical legacy, restored statues of Stalin to several cities. The Georgian bourgeoisie (mainly the ultra-nationalist party Georgian Dream) revived his memory for the sole reason that he was born in this region, but more particularly to spread numbing propaganda among the exploited and chain them to the defence of the local bourgeoisie.

Similarly, changing the name of the city of Volgograd to Stalingrad for six days during the festive commemoration of 'the defense of Stalingrad', more than just a provincial act, must be understood as a justification by the bourgeoisie of the imperialist war which ennoble the role played by butchers like Stalin.

But if the bourgeoisie pays tribute to the memory of its bloody guard dogs, the working class needs a better understanding of the world and how to change it. It needs to reclaim its own history and learn from its own experiences and to better recognise the anti-proletarian profile of Stalin and Stalinism; it has, above all, to discover the internationalist principles of marxism that the bourgeoisie has persistently distorted and attacked, because they are the key to real class action. **Tatlin, February 2013**

## International Review 152

### Social movements in Turkey and Brazil: Indignation at the heart of the proletarian dynamic

### 20<sup>th</sup> congress of the ICC

- Balance sheet of the congress
- Report on imperialist tensions
- Resolution on the international situation

### Bilan, the Dutch left, and the transition to communism (II)

# Tribute to our comrade Jean-Pierre

With the death of Jean-Pierre, the ICC has lost a seasoned comrade, a great fighter, and a remarkable character.

Jean-Pierre left us during the night of 13 September, following a long and incurable illness whose fatal outcome was recognised by everyone, including himself. For more than two years our comrade, who had greatly enjoyed playing sport, little by little lost the use of his limbs, his breathing and finally his speech. During this process, Jean-Pierre was always perfectly conscious of every moment in the evolution of his illness and its consequences. This lucidity obviously affected him profoundly because he knew he would have to give up so much of what he loved: physical activity, a direct contact with nature, in particular the mountains where he used to go on long rambles (he lived in the Alps), cooking... But he didn't accept this fatalistically. He wanted to stay at home for as long as possible and no one could make him change his mind about this. He firmly insisted on staying in this familiar, human space to maintain the closest possible links with his family, friends and comrades. This space was his access to the world, the place where he had his books, the place where he could talk about politics and current events until the last moment, the place where he could watch a film and talk about it, the place where he could read the poetry he liked. His strongest wish was to put limits on the medical procedures aimed at keeping him alive. He struggled to the end for these wishes to be respected. A few weeks before his death Jean-Pierre agreed to go to hospital for palliative care. He knew that he wouldn't be coming back home. Our comrade didn't submit to this, he chose it and assumed it. But always his concern was to give the maximum space to those close to him, to his children and his comrades, and to continue the political struggle. The hospital staff and the militants who shared his last moments testified that our comrade departed "with great serenity" despite the considerable suffering which gripped him to the end. We, his comrades, know that developing this serenity was the last work in his life. He was one of those personalities who demand admiration because of their tenacity and the courage with which they

face the end. We were all happy to be able to enter the personal and political space he so generously set aside for us. It gave us great pleasure and provided us with major lessons for our lives and our militancy. For all that, Jean-Pierre, we are infinitely grateful.

## An exemplary fighter

Jean-Pierre joined the ICC relatively late in his life. After being mobilised for the war in Algeria, which he experienced as a moment of unacceptable and unspeakable barbarism, he never stopped working for the perspective of constructing another society where these kinds of horrors would be banished forever. Holding on to this notion, he went through May 68 with all his hopes and all his confusions, in particular his communitarian ideas. He didn't discover the ICC until the 1990s. There he found the theoretical and practical coherence of marxism, which enabled him to make a real political break with the confused ideologies he had maintained up until then. This encounter rooted him firmly in the "passion for communism" (according to his own terms). His indignation towards a world full of barbarism had finally found the meaning he had been looking for, the combat for the world proletarian revolution.

After that our comrade situated the political struggle at the forefront of his life until his last moments. He was animated by a deep conviction and despite the fatal advance of his illness, every visit to him included a political discussion. As long as he could he participated in the regular meetings of the ICC and carried out his responsibilities as a militant. At the end, from his bed, he did it via the internet. He was especially insistent on paying his financial contributions so that he could still be part of the functioning of the organisation as much as his means allowed.

But above all, his concern to be rigorous was shown by his determination to defend organisational principles and their spirit by taking position on this difficult political question throughout the last few years. The comrade was convinced that the construction of an organisation of the proletariat is a difficult art which has to be learned and transmitted thanks to a theoretical effort. Con-

vinced as he was of the necessity for revolution, he sought to fight against all the obstacles that stand in the way of our class carrying out its task of emancipating humanity. He was always aware of the titanic, planetary dimension of this battle. A daily defensive battle, of course, but above all one that required a conscious approach, with a cultural element which can strengthen us for the offensive needed to overthrow the capitalist system. He was also profoundly aware of the weight of the dominant ideology pressing on the organisation and on the individuals within it, and of the perverse effects of social decomposition on relations between human beings. He knew that the real way to resist this pressure is to be found in the collective strength of debate in the organisation, based on moral principles and an intellectual depth. This concern never left him: how to struggle effectively, how to live up to your responsibilities, both as an individual militant and as an organisation, as a collective and associated body. It is because he had these concerns that he was so consistent at the level of the functioning of the organisation, always fighting against what as early as 1903 Lenin called the 'circle spirit', the vision of the organisation as a sum of individuals who come together purely on the basis of affinity. Such a vision was for him clearly and diametrically opposed to the real needs of a revolutionary organisation which can serve as a bridge to a real proletarian party in the future. The work of building the organisation thus has to be carried out in the 'party spirit'. He always took a position against the temptation to get together on an affinity basis. For him the organisation could not be reduced to a 'band of mates', a circle of friends, even if he maintained warm and fraternal relations with all his comrades and had strong ties of personal friendship with some of them. To use his expression, he contributed to this combat "with just a little thread of a voice" to his final breath.

His devotion, his tenacity, his commitment remains alive in all his comrades. He was an example for us of what a convinced militant can be.

## A remarkable and engaging personality

Jean-Pierre's personality was so engaging that

you can't pass over it in silence. He was always curious, his mind was always developing and he had a lot of empathy not only for those closest to him but for others he met on the way. His company always testified to these qualities. He knew that everybody evolves, that everybody is in constant movement and goes through crises which can be moments for going forward. He recognised this in himself and often gave the evidence for it. He was happy to talk about his long, complex and chaotic journey towards marxism and class positions. It was by no means a tranquil river and no doubt this is what sustained his interest in others, his respect for their contradictions, which he always saw in a positive light as a potential for advance. He always had this vision of the future which went beyond any easy criticisms.

Jean-Pierre was a great admirer of Rabelais. He loved the frankness that his work exudes, his sensual, crude and even brutal love for life. A good meal, generously shared, was something sacred for him, as a precious moment of conviviality. He often opened up his universe through reading out the texts and poems he admired. Those who knew him were privileged to share his great pleasure in this. The silences which sometimes followed also had an active content, the sense of mutual communication through listening. Jean-Pierre was an example of a fighter devoted to the organisation and the perspective of the revolution, and his temperament was that of a person animated by the love of freedom. He has left us his passion, his tastes, and in doing so has drawn us a sketch of what it is like to be a human being who sees the other as an integral part of his own happiness, who participates in the artistic and scientific dance of humanity.

The militants of the ICC share deeply the pain of his children, of his family, of his friends. We have lost our comrade Jean-Pierre, but his memory is ever-present for those who have had the good fortune to know him and work by his side.

The ICC salutes you, comrade, as an exemplary militant for the cause of communism, to which you gave the best of yourself. **ICC 15.10.2013**

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# Golden Dawn

## Democracy and fascism need each other

The stabbing of Greek rapper Pavlos Fyssas in September by a self-confessed member of Golden Dawn has led to a wave of official actions against the neo-Nazi party. Members, deputies and its leader have been arrested on charges of belonging to a criminal organisation, following the lifting of its parliamentary immunity. Individuals have been charged with murder, attempted murder, sex trafficking, money laundering, benefit and tax fraud. Its state funding has been suspended. Witnesses have given evidence of the involvement of the party in attacks on immigrants, extortion and arms smuggling.

Political parties have shown themselves united in their support of the measures taken, all agreeing that Golden Dawn (GD) is a serious threat to democracy. Alexis Tsipras, the leader of left wing opposition party Syriza supported the repressive measures: “The intervention shows that our democracy is standing firm and it is healthy” while suggesting that the ‘intervention’ had not gone far enough as Syriza called for all GD members to be arrested. The Greek Socialist Workers’ Party saw the actions of the coalition government as a “victory” and declared “We celebrate this development”, while demanding that there should also be a “cleansing” of the police.

The divisions in Greek politics have always run deep. Yet, on the economic level, the conservative New Democracy and the social democratic PASOK, after more than 35 years of alternating in government denouncing each other’s every move, joined together in a coalition government in November 2011 in order to impose even tougher austerity measures. Similarly, for all the different views of the economic calamity that Greece has been in over the last six years - whether or not, for example, to leave the EU - the parties have united in their defence of democracy. This is not before time for the Council of Europe’s human rights commissioner Nils Muiznieks who produced a report in April this year which said that Greece had perfectly adequate legal grounds to ban Golden Dawn. In February he had called on Greece to do more against offences committed by GD and its links with the police. He also recommended investigations into police brutality.

### Democratic backsliding

The state of democracy in Greece has been a preoccupation of the international bourgeoisie for some time. In a recent report from the Demos

think tank *Backsliders: Measuring Democracy in the EU*, Greece and Hungary come out as the most serious causes for concern. Greece is seen as “overwhelmed by extremely high unemployment, social unrest, endemic corruption and a severe disillusionment with the political establishment”.

On every count the report sees Greece coming out badly. It’s the most corrupt country in the EU, “... in countries like Greece and Italy corruption has risen in line with sluggish economic fortunes”. The catastrophic state of the economy is linked to widespread discontent – another recent report found Greeks now the most unhappy people in Europe. In the face of discontent “Some have argued that freedom of assembly has been challenged repeatedly by the Greek police, who have been accused of the use of teargas and violence against peaceful protesters and the incitement of riots since 2008”. The emergence of Golden Dawn is seen as pointing to a failing of the whole Greek ‘political class’. The links between GD and the police disturb the report’s authors.

The report is also concerned at the decline in turnout at Greek elections, although that is seen as a general problem: “countries across Western Europe are experiencing a sustained decline in voter turnout over the past 50 years, seemingly driven by increased apathy and a perceived absence of political choice.” In Greece, superficially, there might seem as though there was a tremendous range of choice, with a generous variety of parties from left, right and centre. However, as is seen elsewhere, the perception that in reality all parties stand for much the same has been dawning over a long period.

Although the Demos report is supposedly focussed on democracy, it has a wide-ranging brief. The treatment of immigrants is highlighted. “They can face tough conditions on arrival. Amnesty International has accused Greece of treating migrants like criminals and disregarding its obligations under international law. In January 2011 the European Court of Human Rights found Greece had violated Article 3 of the ECHR, which requires member states to prohibit torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, because of its poor asylum procedures”. Here the respectable parties of Greek democracy meet up with the neo-Nazi Golden Dawn. Members of GD have physically attacked migrants, while the Greek government has undertaken an official campaign.

In August 2012 the Greek coalition government launched Operation Xenios Zeus. Tens of thousands of people, supposedly illegal undocumented migrants, have been subjected to abusive stops and searches on the streets, and hours-long detention at police stations. Of 85,000 detained about 4200 (about 6%) have been faced with charges of unlawful entry. Many have been sent to the Amygdaleza detention centre in northern Athens (the ‘Greek Guantanamo’). Here, officially, 1600 migrants are held, forced to live in inhuman conditions, subject to police abuse, denied proper health care, with Muslims being attacked while at prayer, until they are deported. The head of the Greek police union said that conditions were inhuman and unacceptable for the guards as well. Xenios Zeus is the Greek patron of hospitality.

### Blaming foreigners

While Golden Dawn have attacked migrants on the streets, there are other foreigners who are more generally blamed for the current situation in Greece. The German Chancellor Angela Merkel is widely described as the ‘new Hitler’ because of the role of Germany in the imposition of austerity measures. The Left is only marginally more sophisticated when it attacks the Troika of the EU, IMF and European Central Bank, while calling for withdrawal from the EU. As government repression cracked down on Golden Dawn its spokesmen hinted at ‘foreign influences’ or compared Greek Prime Minister Samaras to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan. The parties of the bourgeoisie have a similar approach in practice and in rhetoric.

What concerns the bourgeoisie outside Greece is the potential for instability and the unpredictable role of Golden Dawn. In the democratic campaign GD can be portrayed as the force that goes beyond the framework of parliamentary democracy. But what Greek history of the last hundred years shows is that it has not only been under the dictatorship of Metaxas and the rule of the Colonels that the repression has been a central concern for the ruling class. In 1929 the Liberal government of Eleftherios Venizelos, for example, introduced the Idionymon law. This was aimed at “a minority that seeks the violent overthrow of the established social status quo by disseminating its principles and attracting followers, often through essays and underground means, and has put in danger the

security of society”. The penalty for those found guilty of having subversive ideas was imprisonment for six months or more, often on one of the islands of exile. Strikes effectively became illegal affronts to social peace. Venizelos specifically excluded using the law against fascists, and Metaxas used it as part of the legal apparatus of his own regime. Also, in the 1950s and 60s, in the period between the Greek Civil War and the advent of the Colonels, parties of the centre continued to preside over an apparatus that retained the camps and other instruments that had been used by the authoritarian dictatorships.

The rise of Golden Dawn was tolerated by the other parties of the Greek bourgeoisie until the killing of Pavlos Fyssas. GD had killed others before then, but the pressure to reinforce the apparatus of democracy became overwhelming. The new-found unity of the bourgeoisie against Golden Dawn has given an impetus to Greek democracy. However, this is not going to last forever. The early November killing of two members of Golden Dawn provoked much speculation on what would follow. One approach saw it as retaliation for the death of Fyssas and anticipated an escalation of tit-for-tat violence. This would not necessarily lead to greater instability as the Greek state would be in a position to say that further repression was required against other extremists, not just neo-Nazis. It is a commonplace in Greek ‘moderate’ politics to see all ‘extremists’ being essentially the same. Not only are Golden Dawn portrayed as a threat to democracy, there are other forces that can be labelled ‘extreme’ in order to be confronted by the state. These will certainly include militant workers and revolutionary groups.

The bourgeoisie in Greece has shown how its major parties can be united to impose harsh economic measures. It has rallied to the democratic capitalist state in the name of anti-fascism. Its biggest enemy is the working class. When the bourgeoisie unites against protests and struggles that are impelled by discontent, the state is prepared for physical repression, while others will pose as the friends of the exploited. In struggle you can expect to be attacked by Nazi thugs – the democratic state has a far wider weaponry, both repressive and ideological, and it is sophisticated enough to use the threat of fascism to bolster its own power. **Car 2/11/13**

## 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*.